



A series of photos captured during an annular eclipse in 2012. (Courtesy photo/Suzanne Taylor)

## ECLIPSE

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Dr. M. Suzanne Taylor, President of the Gunnison Valley Observatory board of directors, explained Colorado is lucky because it will experience two eclipses in the next seven months: Saturday’s, and a total eclipse in April where the moon will com-

pletely cover the sun.

“For each solar eclipse there’s a pretty narrow path that it takes,” she said. Any given location on earth can experience an eclipse, she said — but a total eclipse may only happen every hundred years, or more.

“It’s a question of how the moon and the sun and the earth line up,” she said.

And after these next two eclipses, Taylor said it will be at least a decade before another graces North America.

Prior to the eclipse, the sun will shine like it does any other day, before the moon slowly starts creeping in front of it.

“As the eclipse starts, it looks like a piece of the sun is cut out,” Taylor said.

This piece will get bigger and bigger, until finally the moon covers the sun completely, save for the ring of fire.

If you’re planning on looking at it, Taylor said it’s important to wear specially made eclipse glasses.

“Do not stare at the sun with regular sunglasses,” she said, as this could burn your retinas. She

explained the sun is not brighter during an eclipse, but the danger is different because people otherwise would not start directly into the sun.

However, she clarified normal sunglasses are fine for other activities happening during the eclipse, and the special glasses are only necessary when you’re looking right into the sun.

If you haven’t made plans to head south or west yet, there are still nearby opportunities for viewing the eclipse.

The Gunnison Valley Observatory will be hosting an open event at the Gunnison Library Saturday starting at 9 a.m., where members of the public will be able to look at the eclipse through telescopes.

# Opening day memories



## Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Preparing for the opening day of big game season can be a monumental task. It was 1972 and I was preparing for my first deer season that I was allowed to participate in. I had been preparing for this day for upwards of a dozen years.

Hunting in the west was a way of life, and my family was no different. The problem was, I was being raised by grandparents who were too old for hunting in the mountains, and too old for a whiny little kid, but we were stuck with each other.

I could hunt anytime I wanted if I stayed on our property. Unfortunately, game was rather scarce on our little place. What I really wanted was to go deer hunting with the men.

My old man mentor of all things outdoor related was Mr. Caster, a long-time friend of the family. Everyone loved Mr. Caster except my old grandmother, who considered him a reprobate.

She did not want him influencing her innocent little grandson with his “evil ways of the devil.” Alas, after months of begging, arguing, and whining, she gave in, and said I can go deer hunting with him.

It is not that my grandmother did not like Mr. Caster, she just did not agree with his ways. Mr. Caster told outrageous stories, liked loose women, smoked Chesterfield Kings, drank whiskey, knew hundreds of swear words, and shared this knowledge profusely with me. In other words, Mr. Caster was the perfect mentor for a boy.

Grandma was easy. I now had to convince



This right here is what opening day is all about, and missing the folks that taught me how. (Courtesy photo/USFWS)

Mr. Caster to take me along, when he and his best friend, Mr. Inkman, headed to the mountains for a week of hunting. As I argued with Mr. Caster to allow me to tag along, he offered excuses like his old war wounds, blinding headaches, severe chest pains, a cold coming on, and about anything else he could think of.

This banter went on for upwards of a week before he finally caved and said I can go along. He was deeply concerned about what Mr. Inkman was going to say about bringing a little kid along for the hunt. I said, “For gosh sakes, don’t bring no kid along. Just you, me and Mr. Inkman is plenty.” He agreed that was more than enough.

My hunting trip with Mr. Caster and Mr. Inkman approached with the speed of a slow-moving glacier, left over from a long-forgotten ice age. I spent most of my free time trying to borrow a rifle, since purchasing one for myself was completely out of the question. First, I had no money, and secondly, grandma put a strong executive veto on the idea. That left borrowing one.

Then, as now, folks did

not stand in line to loan out their hunting rifles to new hunters. When I mentioned it to my grandfather, he just glared at me, then offered a resounding, “No.” That was that. Next candidate was Mr. Caster.

When I asked him, he just broke out into laughter, with tears of mirth streaming down his face. I looked crestfallen, having learned long ago this was the best look to use on Mr. Caster. It worked, and he finally agreed to let me use his old 30/30, which kicked like a piledriver.

I rushed home, lugging that 30/30 and several boxes of ammo to practice with. First, I nailed a target to a dead cottonwood tree behind our place, stepped back a hundred paces. I held that rifle tight to my five foot tall, and scrawny ninety pound frame, and fired at the target.

My own recollection of the event was that I had been struck by lightning or an atom bomb from the Russians. When my vision cleared and my nose stopped bleeding, I tried a second shot, which yielded similar results.

Nevertheless, I practiced every day after school, packed and repacked

my gear, and awaited the big day. Eventually, the nosebleeds went away, my hearing came back, and I had learned to keep my eyes open when I shot the thing.

The night before, I laid out all my gear and rifle by the door. My hunting vest, hunting boots, and hat were not about to be forgotten since I wore them to bed. My grandmother got up early and made a thermos full of hot coffee for me and threw in a bag of homemade sweet rolls for the trip.

Mr. Caster picked me up at 3 a.m. in his old Jeep Wagoneer and we rumbled over to Mr. Inkman’s house, where he was outside waiting. Mr. Inkman was a fine gentleman, with a temper shorter than the belly legs of a rattlesnake, and I was an expert at setting off his temper, albeit unintentionally.

Mr. Inkman sat in the truck, right on top of my thermos, which made him jump up and smack his head on the roof of the Wagoneer. He launched an oath of profanity that defoliated all the shrubbery for a mile around, asking me, “Why is that thing on the seat?”

I told him it was “Ok” and that, “I didn’t think he hurt the thermos none.” Mr. Inkman was incredibly happy to hear that.

I did not get a deer that first season but that was ok. Sure, I lined up on a couple bucks during the trip but always hesitated too long, thinking about how that 30/30 was going to cross my eyes when I pulled the trigger.

What I did get from that trip was an understanding. The entire trip, I interacted with those two raunchy, smelly, old woodsmen. I listened to every one of their old stories, repeatedly.

They both got their bucks, and I was part of it. I sat up at the campfire, listening to coyotes, and more stories from the old men. I decided right then and there, this was what I wanted to do every day, forever.

I hunted several more years with those two old woodsmen, and I even shot a buck on my second year with them. Both of those men crossed the last horizon many years ago, but they are still with me whenever I am afield.

As an adult, I have hunted all around the world for

all kinds of game, including dangerous game on three continents, but it is the buck deer with a set of antlers that still makes my knees wobble, and I hope he always will.

This year, as I sit on a mountain across from a distant tree line, watching tomorrow form in the east, as it hemorrhages into sky with brilliant orange and red colors, I say a few words of thanks to Mr. Caster and Mr. Inkman for bringing me along 50 some years ago. They introduced me to deer, hunting, and the most important day of the year, opening day.

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