

OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

# OUTDOORS UNLIMITED

THE VOICE OF THE OUTDOORS

DECEMBER 2019/JANUARY 2020

## WORKING WITH MAGAZINES

10 Tips to help you get it right  
| p. 10



Norm Strung Youth  
Writing Contest  
winners, Macro  
photography tips  
AND MORE.

# OUTDOORS UNLIMITED

DECEMBER 2019/JANUARY 2020 | VOL. 80, NO. 7

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### ON THE COVER

**BY PAUL QUENEAU** | *A pair of great egrets sound off during the early July nesting season on a popular rookery tree at Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge, South Carolina.*

### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Diving into the deep end

**A**s your new Executive Director, I'm absolutely thrilled to join this august organization and be entrusted to execute the Board's vision for the next steps in OWAA's evolution. I was enthused and inspired when Kay Maghan with Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism first brought OWAA to my attention and I was overjoyed when I was eventually offered the position by your Board of Directors. I thank them all for their trust.

If you'd like to learn more about me, please don't hesitate to review my professional experience on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/cchesak/>). And please do reach out to connect with me on that platform too, if you like.

While I certainly still have much to learn, I'm already 'diving into the deep end' and getting up to speed as quickly as I can. During this time, some of my personal immediate goals will include:

**Listen & Learn** – I have much to learn and look forward to many conversations with the OWAA staff, board and members.

**Plan** – I'm a consummate planner and love a good plan. Plans provide us with a joint vector to follow but I'm never afraid to deviate, adjust or modify to best meet the situation, respond to outside influences, and ensure that we're doing the best we can to meet the needs of the member. I'll be taking copious notes as I learn and will build those notes first into an outline, then eventually specific goals and ultimately a more detailed plan for my own work. I'll then work with the Board to apply that planning process for the organization as a whole.

**Understand** – I'll need to know what the needs of the members are, how we are meeting them, what areas we can improve upon and expand in, and what OWAA can better do to leverage the collective body to better benefit you, the member.

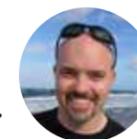
**Expand Benefits** – As I review the membership program, I'll keep a focused eye out for new opportunities. I'll leverage my previous experiences and my contacts within the outdoor and travel industries to try to bring you new membership benefits, story-generating activities like press trips, additional professional development, new business leads and more.

**Partnerships** – I've spent many years crafting partnerships between nonprofits and brands and I look forward to finding new ways to serve our community in partnership with other entities.

**Build Membership** – As I step forward, I'll be personally looking to recruit new members to OWAA while also constructing a comprehensive, organization-wide strategy to build, strengthen and further our community.

In closing, I thank you for your dedication to your craft, your continued trust in this association and your engagement within the OWAA community. Working in concert, I believe that we will achieve great new things for this organization.

— *With more than 20 years' experience in the outdoor and travel industries, Chesak is the 17th executive director of OWAA.*



### Outdoor Writers Association of America

Our mission: improve the professional skills of our members, set the highest ethical and communications standards, encourage public enjoyment and conservation of natural resources and mentor the next generation of professional outdoor communicators.



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Mentorship



OWAA President Tim Mead is a freelance writer and photographer from North Carolina with hundreds of credits in national and regional magazines.

Tim Mead  
OWAA president  
ancientanglertim@aol.com

**C**hez Chesak is now OWAA's new Executive Director. By now you will have received our news release announcing his appointment, and this issue of OU contains his first message to the membership. I'm not going to rehash those missives. Yet, I need to say, "Welcome." I look forward to working with Chez to urge OWAA to the future.

Among the benefits of OWAA membership is mentorship. In part, mentorship is reflected in OWAA's annual conference where leaders in the field share their expertise. A few years ago, Paul Smith and Paul Queneau alerted me to things my DSLR camera could do that I did not know. And if you did not get some chuckles from Kris Millgate's description of filming with drones, you weren't paying attention.

Mentorship is also reflected in the networking OWAA membership provides. New friends bring new ideas for improving skills.

OWAA also helps fund mentorship. The Bodie McDowell Scholarship Fund supports students studying at accredited colleges and universities. Over the last decade, the McDowell Scholarship Fund has distributed more than \$185,000 in the last decade and \$47,000 in the last two years.

The Norm Strung Youth Writing Awards contest provides awards to students in junior high and senior high. In the last decade, youth writers have received more than \$15,000. Most years the funding has come from supportive sponsors like Safari Club International

and Falcon Books. This year, Lodge kicked in cast iron cookware for each of the winners. The winning entries in the 2019 Norm Strung competition are in this issue.

For OWAA members and nonmembers, the John Madson Fellowship Fund awards grants to attend various writer workshops. This year, the Madson Fellowship provided \$3000 to three writers. Over the last decade, 21 persons have benefited to the tune of \$25,000.

Mentorship is about sharing and expanding skills. OWAA has a long history of shared mentoring. And the more we can do so, the better for all. Sign up for the 2020 conference the Jay Peak Resort in Vermont to join in. See you there.

## HELP NEEDED TO JUDGE EIC

OWAA is built on the contributions of volunteers, and there's no better place to chip in than being a judge in the 2020 Excellence In Craft Contest.

If you would like to be a judge, contact Contest Committee chair Phil Bloom at philbloom.owaa@frontier.com by no later than Dec. 31, 2019.

The only restriction is you can't judge an EIC category that you have entered.

# Chesak named executive director of OWAA



*I couldn't be more thrilled to be a part of OWAA. This position marries two of my consummate passions, writing and the outdoors, together within one powerful and influential community.*

**M**ISSOULA, MT, Oct. 1, 2019 — The Outdoor Writers Association of America, the nation's premier organization of outdoor media, announces the hiring of "Chez" Chesak as its new Executive Director.

"I couldn't be more thrilled to be a part of OWAA," Chesak said. "This position marries two of my consummate passions, writing and the outdoors, together within one powerful and influential community."

Chesak comes to OWAA with more than 20 years' experience in the outdoor and travel industries, most recently as a travel writer and tourism consultant. He served as Vice President of Business Development for the Adventure Travel Trade Association and as Executive Director of the Family Travel Association.

He also spent nine years working for conservation-focused outdoor organizations.

"We are excited to have Chez taking the helm of OWAA," said Paul Queneau, former OWAA board president and chair of the group's executive director search committee. "He has a deep breadth of skills and experience that should serve this organization well amid an evolving media landscape and as we approach our 100th anniversary."

Chesak has lived all over the United States and traveled to 35 countries. He's an avid outdoors person who's happiest on a trail, on skis or nestled in a sleeping bag.

He becomes the 17th executive director of OWAA in its 93-year history and succeeds Phil Bloom, who has served as OWAA's acting director since February.

"Chez brings a deep well of organizational experience to OWAA, and I'm looking forward to working with him to maintain the rich tradition of OWAA," OWAA President Tim Mead said. "I should also offer a word of thanks to Phil Bloom for his service as we sought a permanent ED."

Chesak's words and images have appeared in the Los Angeles Times, Good Housekeeping, Rachel Ray Every Day, Family Fun, Fatherly, Family Travel (Australia), Yahoo Travel, Family Vacation Critic, Everett Potter's Travel Report, WorldFootprints.com, CincinnatiRefined.com and GreenMatters.com. He's also done occasional travel segments on the morning show of his local FOX affiliate.

As a business consultant, Chesak has forged corporate partnerships, increased business development, planned and launched new initiatives, and is experienced in public relations and organizational leadership. Consulting since 2015, he's worked with such brands as Adventure.com, Austin Adventures, TourRadar.com and others.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English and International Politics from Wesleyan University (Middletown, Connecticut) and earned four varsity letters in football. He spent the summer of 1993 driving solo in a VW around the United States.

Chesak deployed to Iraq with a U.S. Army line unit in 2005, and during his 11-month stint wrote a series of "Letters from Iraq" that were published in The Idaho Statesman.

From 1993 to 1998 he held jobs with the Times Free Press newspaper in Ayer, Massachusetts, the Supreme Court of the United States and Island Press in Washington, D.C., and the Union of Concerned Scientists in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Chesak currently lives with his family in Cincinnati, Ohio.

He said, "I cannot wait to start helping our members — those that inspire their audiences to get outside more often — to grow, thrive, and further succeed in their profession."

# A warming climate and cheatgrass

BY CHRIS MADSON |  
CHEYENNE, WYOMING

**C**HEATGRASS MAY BE THE FIRST EXOTIC PLANT to make its way to the New World. No one's quite sure how it got here. There are unconfirmed reports of cheatgrass in the records of botanists from eastern Pennsylvania as early as 1790 and from New York state as early as 1843. One specimen from eastern Pennsylvania was collected in 1859.

The long history of cheatgrass in America may be part of the reason it gets so little attention. Over generations, we've gotten used to it and to the cataclysmic effects it's had in the sagebrush grasslands of the intermountain West.

A generation of settlers in sagebrush country prepared the way for cheatgrass, first with livestock, then with the railroad and the plow. Demand for beef in the mining camps of California, Colorado, and Nevada led to large cattle drives, intense grazing, and, in many of the driest parts of the region, the destruction of organic crusts that protected the underlying soil. Shipments of livestock by rail almost certainly brought cheatgrass seed to the sage; the use of contaminated straw for packing material probably contributed more seed; and the advent of wheat farming also contributed to the introduction of the exotic grass.

By the early 20th century, huge tracts of cold desert from the Palouse grasslands of eastern Washington to the shrublands of Nevada and Utah had been overrun by cheat.

By 1992, the U.S. Forest Service estimated that, in the five states comprising the Great Basin, more than 2.8 million acres of public land had a "monoculture" of cheatgrass. Another 13.8 million acres supporting significant stands of cheatgrass in the understory and more than



Photo courtesy of Chris Madson

62 million acres were at risk of cheatgrass invasion.

Cheatgrass thrives on the arid rangelands of the interior West. It's one of the earliest plants to green up in the spring, taking full advantage of snowmelt. By the middle of summer when native grasses and forbs are just beginning to grow, it sets seed and dies back, providing a near-perfect fuel for wildfires. Shrub steppes and grasslands that seldom saw fires before settlement may see cheat-driven fires every three to five years. The regular burning wipes out dominant shrubs like big sagebrush and, at higher elevations, bitterbrush and mountain mahogany, along with most of the warm-season grasses.

The loss of this forage has dire consequences for native wildlife, from mule deer and pronghorns to sagebrush obligates like Brewer's sparrows, black-throated sparrows, sage thrashers, and sage grouse, both the federally threatened Gunnison's and the greater sage grouse, which is only moderately better off than its smaller cousin.

Managers have given up on the idea that cheatgrass can be eradicated—these days, they're just looking for ways to control the plant. A new herbicide has

shown some promise, and researchers are experimenting with bacteria and fungi that attack the plant or its seeds. The difficulty with all these approaches remains a matter of scale—how can we possibly find the money and manpower to treat tens of millions of acres of land that are already infested?

As if the essential ecological challenge weren't difficult enough, we've found a way to make it even worse: climate change. While cheatgrass already grows in all the contiguous 48 states, along with Alaska, its worst effects have been contained by its aversion to cold weather. The native grasses and forbs of the prairies of Wyoming, Montana, and southern Canada handle the cold better than cheatgrass does, but a 2- to 4-degree increase in temperature would be enough to tip the balance.

As environmental problems go, the cheatgrass invasion doesn't have a very high profile, at least, for the vast majority of Americans. The sagebrush grassland is the Rodney Dangerfield of our natural systems—it gets little respect and even less attention.

I offer it here as one more in a rapidly growing list of difficulties that are magnified by the overarching impact of a changing climate. Nearly every issue we face today—immigration, social unrest, agricultural productivity, weather disasters, supplies of clean water . . . or cheatgrass—is made worse by what we're doing to our climate. The natural world is no exception. Native plants and animals, native systems, entire landscapes and the ways of life they have supported are failing before our eyes.

For the people who call the West home, the scourge of cheatgrass is an intransigent problem. For the rest of America, it could serve as a metaphor and a prediction of what's to come. We ignore it at our peril.

# ISRAEL TRIP: Case lesson in journalistic research ethics

BY PETER SCHROEDER |  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

**H**OW DO YOU DECIDE WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE ON A PRESS TRIP? For me, I have three criteria: Can I get an article from it? Will they pay expenses? Can I write what I want without restrictions? If these conditions are satisfied, I will accept and don't care who hosts the trip. But a recent journey made me weigh decisions more carefully.

Last fall I traveled to Israel on a press trip organized by the Ski Club of International Journalists (SCIJ) with support provided by the Israeli government and several Israeli private enterprises.

The week-long itinerary balanced the historic (Masada, Akko, Caesarea), modern (desalination plant, wineries, Fassuta, Tel Aviv), biblical (Jerusalem, Nazareth), political (West Bank, Golan Heights, Kibbutz Ein Gedi), and recreational (Hadera, Dead Sea, Tel Aviv).

After we returned, controversy began. Other journalist colleagues who did not participate on the trip deemed the visit unprofessional, unethical, and contrary to the standards of journalistic integrity. Wow! I was taken aback.

Why? The first criticism was the

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**How else would I find a quote that sums up the complexity of the region as succinctly as Michael Asi... "We are Israeli but not Jewish, Arab but not Muslim, Catholic but not Roman Catholic."**

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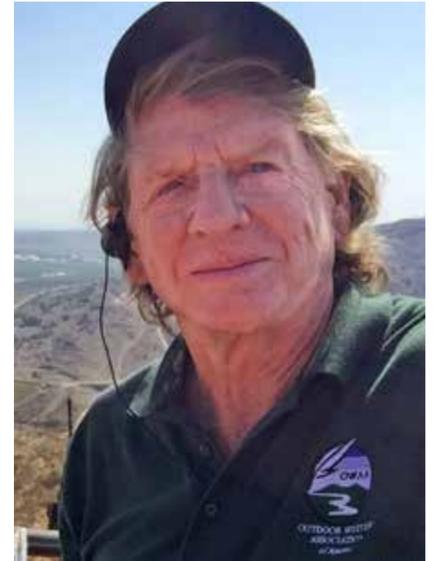
itinerary included a visit to the Golan Heights, territory in Syria that was captured by Israel in 1967. When annexed by Israel in 1981, the U.N. Security Council said the action violated the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibiting acquisition of territory by force. Our travels also included presentations by Israelis living in the settlement of Katzrin about the local Golan Winery. International law regards the Israelis living there as illegal settlers.

The second criticism was that we participating journalists compromised the integrity of SCIJ by visiting territory that Israel occupies. Critics asserted we were unwittingly used as public relations tools. While in the Golan Heights, settlers (and most likely government representatives) photographed us enjoying ourselves and commenting on the excellent wine, as though this were all part of Israel.

The third criticism was the suggestion that after being feted on an excursion paid for by the Israeli Government, we would be unlikely to write anything negative about our experience.

After reflecting on these complaints, I decide to reject all three criticisms. This trip was about journalistic research and I needed to be there, regardless of the circumstances, for the first-hand experience. How else can I talk to Australian U.N. peacekeepers stationed on the border with Syria? Only when hearing the continuous gunfire of ISIS troops do I grasp how the fighting continues unabated. By seeing three Arab countries—Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia—less than a quarter mile away practically surrounding the southernmost city of Eilat do I understand why militaries of all countries are on constant alert.

How else would I find a quote that sums up the complexity of the region as succinctly as Michael Asi, Greek Orthodox priest in the Christian village of



"Peter Schroeder wondering: Is it ethical to be here on occupied land at the Golan Heights on an Israeli-sponsored press trip?" Photo courtesy of Peter Schroeder

Fassuta in northern Israel (which is subject to frequent shelling by the nearby guns of Lebanon): "We are Israeli but not Jewish, Arab but not Muslim, Catholic but not Roman Catholic."

Bottom line: I'm glad I went on this research trip, which I could never afford as a freelance writer, and would gladly go again. Regardless of the occupied land issue, I found it informative to visit the Golan Heights. And, my articles are balanced and avoid political controversies.

— Peter Schroeder is a freelance writer and photographer based in Seattle, Washington, and Sonoma, California. His work covers downhill skiing, cruising under sail, scuba diving, and adventure travel. An OWAA member since 1994, he has served twice on the board and as an officer, and is a grateful recipient of the Ham Brown Award.



Rediscovered Bookshop. Photo courtesy of Kris Millgate.



learned to write with “I” perspective, then proudly submitted 15,000 words.

With my 2-minute TV attention span, 15,000 words seemed novel worthy. Books are just long magazine stories, right? Wrong. My publisher, Inkshares, took those 15,000 words, dumped them down to 8,000 and said, dig deeper.

If you're going for a particular feel, like personal, you really have to go for it. You're asking your audience to give up dollars and hours for your book. You shouldn't discount that ask by shortchanging the commitment. If you want them to read it all, you better thoroughly write it all.

My final manuscript is 50,000 words and none are wasted space filler. That kind of intense commitment turns a short story collection into a memoir.

My Place Among Men has three parts. Most of my first draft is in Part II: Chasing. That's about my career and where news stories are blended in. Part I: Hiding is about my childhood. Part III: Finding is about motherhood. Just by section description, you can tell I got personal, intimately personal.

#### In the writing phase you will:

- 1 - Write until your eyes and fingers bleed.
- 2 - Rewrite with those bleeding eyes and fingers.
- 3 - Fact check and massage every sentence until it reads like a work of art.

insight with you now in hopes of saving you a few stumbles.

#### PART I: WRITING

My first book, My Place Among Men, is based on my career as an outdoor journalist. I gathered the most intriguing news stories I've covered in the last two decades and turned them into chapters.

I created the collection because people started asking me what it's like to chase wildfire and tackle deer. That's when I realized my audience wanted personal perspective. As a journalist, I'm trained to keep “me” out of my work. Personal doesn't go in news. It goes in a book, so I

# CRACKING SPINE

Beating the book world in parts

BY KRIS MILLGATE |  
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO

**I** COMMITTED TO TWO GOALS IN 2018. One, help my son train for his first long-distance trail race. Two, write a book. The first was a smashing good time of smoke, heat, dust and my son beating me to the finish line by 30 minutes.

The success of the second goal is yet to be seen. Not because I didn't complete it, but because books take much longer than a year. This I know now. Here are a few other things I've discovered while diving into the world of printed page. I share this

*I created the collection because people started asking me what it's like to chase wildfire and tackle deer. That's when I realized my audience wanted personal perspective.*

4 - Learn a new format. Books put commas in places that newspapers don't.

5 - Accept changes and decline changes made by you and your editors.

6 - Organize a style sheet of character names and places for consistency.

#### PART II: PUBLISHING

Publishing may start before final manuscript is done so be prepared to be writing and proofing at the same time. I lost track of how many rounds of editing my manuscript went through while layout was going on. I also lost track of how many editors red inked it, but it was all for the better of the book. Be open to guidance from publishing professionals. They know what they're doing. If they don't, you picked the wrong publisher.



Look at the book cover to the left. I created the blue and pink cover when I launched my book campaign in January 2018. The green and pink leaf cover is what officially published August 2019. Major design change. Text changed too. The main title held, but the secondary heading changed.

#### In the publishing phase you will:

- 1 - Approve front cover design after multiple versions and tweaks.
- 2 - Create front matter and back matter. This is everything that isn't a chapter, such as; copyright, dedication, about author etc.
- 3 - Make minor corrections in copy, but no more moving/adding/deleting chapters.
- 4 - Recruit credible sources to read e-book and provide advanced reviews.

5 - Choose most powerful element for back cover.

6 - Spread release date through all media avenues you have access to.

#### PART III: SELLING

Thinking I could turn a book in one year proves I didn't understand how long the process really takes. It took me just under two years and that's considered fast.

I worked on selling the beast from the beginning, and I still do it beyond publish date. I'm fortunate enough to have video and photo for a lot of my chapters because the stories come from news assignments. I have an aggressive multi-media campaign, which I manage while also doing other paid assignments I produce as a freelance journalist to keep my family fed.

Books don't feed your family, even when copies sell well, so don't write a book for money. You'll be disappointed. Find a different reason so the process is more tolerable.

#### In the selling phase you will:

- 1 - Celebrate huge on the publish date.
- 2 - Promote the book without feeling weird about tooting your own horn.
- 3 - Share reviews submitted by credible reviewers.
- 4 - Buy a lot of quick-dry, no-smear signing pens.
- 5 - Sit at a lot of tables in a lot of shops and sign a lot of books.
- 6 - Be open to your audience's reaction. It feels overwhelming at first, but own your words and then roll with response to those words. Response spreads buzz about your book.

I wrote My Place Among Men to expand my media reach, strengthen my skills as an outdoor communicator and challenge myself. I also wrote it because people asked for it. Any good journalist knows you must be interested in what your audience keys in on. When they ask you where to go fishing, you know where to send them. When they ask you what it's like to do your job as the lone woman in the woods running around with beards, you better be prepared to answer honestly, even if it's awkward.

People asking me about my place among men helped me find my place in this world. Now it's all neatly spelled out in a book with a shredded leaf on the cover.

— Outdoor journalist Kris Millgate is based in Idaho where she runs trail and chases trout. Sometimes she even catches them when she doesn't have a camera, or a kid, on her back. Her first book “My Place Among Men” is available now. [www.tightlinemedia.com](http://www.tightlinemedia.com)

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Matt Clark, Graphic Designer/Web Developer at Kelsey Roseth Communications, LLC

BY TOM CARNEY |  
BELMONT, MICHIGAN

**T**HE WORLD OF FREELANCE WRITING IS EXTREMELY COMPETITIVE. Money is tight, markets are shrinking, and editors are reluctant to assign stories to people outside of their “stables” of writers. It’s just too easy for editors to say, “No, thank you,” rather than take a chance on new writers.

Because anyone would like to get paid for having fun outdoors and writing about it, freelance gigs for outdoor communicators are even more difficult to come by.

The key to breaking into the magazine market is to make it hard or impossible for an editor to say, “No.” And the key to that is to present yourself as 100% professional in attitude, attention to detail, work ethic and work quality.

Most of the tips below apply to anyone trying to improve as a communicator in any field.

**1 Be a pro.** To write for money, you’re telling an editor and the public, “I am a professional.” Professionals learn the technical aspects of their jobs; in this case that means grammar, proofreading and extreme self-editing. Those imply looking for what’s bad. But you can also look for how to make things better: parallel structure, using lively language and metaphors more than similes.

**2 Work to establish a rapport with an editor.** Not so much that when you call they say, “There’s my buddy, let’s go fishin’,” but, “There’s that person who is a pleasure to work with and who has taught me to have confidence in what he/she proposes.”

**3 Give editors what they ask for.** If the guidelines say to deliver photos in digital form only, don’t send an editor a handful of prints and expect him to get them scanned for you. If they tell you they want 1,500 words, don’t send them 2,300.

And make sure to study the publication so you deliver appropriate slants in your queries.

**4 Don’t turn down work.** If an editor is steering work your way, take it. It’s OK to be a bit anxious if it’s on a topic or task you’re unfamiliar with. That gives you reason to learn new skills.

**5 Learn to take good photos and you’ll sell more stories.** That’s the sad fact of the matter for writers, but there it is. “Sometimes you’ve just got to put down the shotgun or fishing rod,” veteran outdoor communicator Tom Huggler once advised, “and just take photographs.”

**6 Give specific titles to images and supply captions clearly matched with those titles.** When submitting a complete story packet with text and photos, don’t merely toss in photos with labels like, “DSCF0058.jpg,” and so on. That sends the editor on a wild goose chase.

Provide a contact sheet so the editor can compare photos easily instead of having to open them all. Give each image a clearly identifiable name like, “Guide setting decoys at dawn,” “English setter leaping after flushing woodcock,” or “Angler and Sunset [vertical]” and “Angler and Sunset [horizontal].”

**7 Meet your deadlines.** Deadlines are sacrosanct. Don’t wait until a deadline has arrived or (Gulp!) has departed before you let an editor know you need more time. But better yet, don’t ever put yourself in a position of needing more time.

**8 If you want to write well, read a lot—and not just outdoor stuff.** The more you read, the more experience you’ll get with the language of literature (as opposed to everyday conversation). When you subliminally grasp the “feel” of words and their sounds and rhythms, you develop the ability and the need to bring such music to your own words.

**9 Develop thick skin.** You’ll hear, “No” or “This doesn’t meet our needs,” about 100 times more than “Yes please,” and “Nice

job.” Tough as it sounds, you need to develop thick skins, at least to the degree that you don’t take rejection personally.

**10 If the story isn’t about you, then keep the first-person references to a minimum.** For example, a guy submitted a story that was supposed to be about hunting chukars. The story was 1,700 words long; 10% of the words referred to himself and 3% to the birds. This is not to suggest first-person references should never be used but rather that writers should evaluate their use, checking to see if they’re necessary or if they draw the reader’s attention away from the topic and towards the writer. Try training yourself to take more field notes about the scenes and actions rather than your own reactions to them. That way, you’ll have more to write about than just memories of your personal experiences.

— Tom Carney has excelled as a freelance writer for more than 35 years with over 75 awards for his books, magazine and newspaper writing, and photography. He lives in Michigan, with his wife, Maureen, their Irish red and white setter, Abbey, and their Llewellyn setter, Lizzy.

## Finding your niche

BY HOLLY ENDERSBY | POLLOCK, IDAHO

**F**INDING A SPECIALTY AREA TO WRITE ABOUT can be lucrative and interesting, as long as your niche is unique despite the broader topic area.

Years ago, I began writing about horses, their training, breeding and showing, but other writers were covering those areas. However, I noticed health issues were infrequently covered in most equine magazines. With a university veterinary college in my town, reaching out to experts was easy and more doors opened for detailed, scientifically accurate veterinary articles written for the lay reader. This was a lucrative niche that few writers in the horse world ventured into. I wrote my first article on West Nile Virus to be published in Western Horseman magazine and became known as the go-to person for several magazines when they wanted articles from national experts on health issues. I developed a unique focus and over the years it brought in plenty of assignments.

Twenty years ago, few publications featured women-centered hunting and angling articles, again a niche I developed, both in our local newspaper and in national magazines. Thankfully, those times have changed.

However, even though time has passed, look carefully at magazines, blogs, and e-zines to find what’s missing and how you can provide it. You’ll be surprised at the gaps in coverage. Recently, a woman asked blog readers how they handled hygiene on long pack trips. It’s a blog I regularly monitor, and it gave me a great idea for another article, one I didn’t realize was so interesting to folks. So even though the broader topic is hunting and packing, a woman-centered focus for an article is perfect.

A few years ago, preparing for semi-retirement, I looked in my home and neighboring state to see if there were publications where I could establish a niche, but without the pressure and deadlines of national outlets. Yep. Found them! Two senior publications that had no outdoor articles and were simply begging for well-written short pieces on hunting, fishing, snowshoeing, fitness, resorts, profiles of outdoorsmen and women and adventure travel.

But as I looked over the publications, I wondered what else they were missing. Well, a wine column, of course! So, I offered that option to the publisher and explained why it fit in the magazines and I was off to the wineries in two states, as well as sampling wines from around the world. But this niche was even more specific. Knowing retirees would be reading these publications, I only reviewed wines under \$20, a price-point most folks on fixed incomes could swallow.

Another niche I’ve used repeatedly is a focus on other OWAA members. Many of our members lead exciting outdoor lives, and they are always up for an interview and article highlighting their experiences and expertise. Who doesn’t want to talk about their passion and their accomplishments? OWAA members are a gold mine for the industrious niche seeker.

By using your imagination and investigative skills, you’ll find plenty of niche opportunities for the enterprising outdoor communicator. And don’t be shy about pitching a completely new idea to an editor. They’re usually delighted to get something they’ve never thought of for their publication. Wine, anyone?

— Holly is an award-winning outdoor writer and has been an OWAA member since 2000.

# What editors want

## (PART 2)

Magazine editors talk pitches & more

BY SUZANNE DOWNING |  
HUSON, MONTANA

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF OU, editors from Sidetracked, High Country News and Atlas Obscura shared valuable magazine pitching tips. In part two, three editors from a variety of magazine types share their tips on organization, photographs, word count, marketing yourself and more.

### ARKANSAS WILDLIFE LOCAL MAGAZINE

**Editor:** Jeff Williams  
Jeffrey.williams@agfc.ar.gov  
www.agfc.com

Arkansas Wildlife magazine features conservation, hunting and fishing articles. Recent articles like, “Biologists Tip Scales to favor Walleye” and “When the Blood-gar Moon Aligns” give you a flavor of what types of stories to pitch.

“I can’t tell you how many travel pieces I’ve received or ‘how-to’ stories I could write myself in 30 minutes,” editor Jeff Williams said.

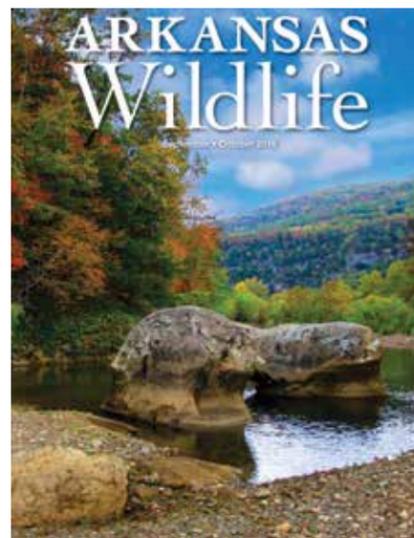
And word count matters. “Articles in Arkansas Wildlife tend to fit a few patterns when it comes to length. Chances are I’m not even going to read a story that’s three times as long as something we usually run (sure, there are exceptions),” he said.

He also wants freelancers to study Arkansas Wildlife’s style before pitching. “As a freelancer, you’re probably not going to get every style nuance correct but at least give it a shot,” he said.

Williams wants to see your previous work. So, send him links. “I like to know that the writer has done this before and done it well. The pitch should be for an article that flows with others that have appeared in the magazine—not necessarily the same topics but something that, logically, we would write about.”

And he stresses the pitch should be well written. “Typos and grammatical errors pretty much are killers.”

Williams wishes good freelancers knew how to better market themselves and poor freelancers would polish their skills before



submitting work. Unlike some other editors, Williams likes phone calls.

“Talking to an editor and creating a relationship goes a long way toward selling a story,” he said.

**The pitch should be for an article that flows with others that have appeared in the magazine—not necessarily the same topics but something that, logically, we would write about.**

### MOUNTAIN LIFE ANNUAL ANNUAL MAGAZINE

**Editorial director:** Leslie Anthony  
www.mountainlifemedia.ca

Mountain Life Annual features stories that appeal to anyone who engages in outdoor activity—regardless of age or comfort level. Through ideas, art and exceptional photography, the magazine goes beyond the bravado of adventure to highlight the social, cultural and environmental contexts behind outdoor adventures. They value inspiration over aspiration.

Editorial director Leslie Anthony wants freelancers to know the mission of Mountain Life’s annual editorial magazine. What it runs and doesn’t run. And what it will pay for.

“Be aware of the quality of writing/photography required,” Anthony said. “Other than a single yearly adventure grant applicable to all Mountain Life media titles, we don’t fund trips.”

Anthony said a pitch stands out to

her when, “it’s addressed to me and not a publisher or editor of one of our other titles; second, it concerns something unique.”

And she wants pitches that cover in-depth issues—more than just travel and adventure.

“Mountain Life Annual is not interested in adventure for adventure’s sake,” she said. “Every story, no matter the size, must have a socio-cultural, political or environmental tie-in. For example: ‘We are going to do a rad climb of Mt. Improbable’ is of zero interest, but ‘We are going to climb



Mt. Improbable with some local tribespeople to help them find a new water source now that their glacier is melting due to climate change’ would be spot on.”

She also likes to repurpose visually stunning stories that have run elsewhere but could be told with a new angle or haven’t been given the space they deserve.

### FLY TYER MAGAZINE NICHE MAGAZINE

**Editor:** David Klausmeyer  
flytyermagazine@gmail.com

For David Klausmeyer, a one- or two-line pitch doesn’t work. “I don’t even look at these,” he said. “The author didn’t take the time to flesh out his ideas, and I’m not a mind reader.”

Backed with 30 years of professional publishing experience, he has a golden rule for pitching an article. “A query pitch is nothing more than a sales pitch, and an editor judges an author’s ability to write based on his pitch. If the sales pitch is poorly written, then I assume the article will be poor, too. No one likes to buy from a shoddy salesman.”

Klausmeyer likes to see finished articles and compares disorganized or un-finished articles to plumbing. “It’s like a plumber saying he cut all the pipes and installed the new sink, but he’ll leave it to you to

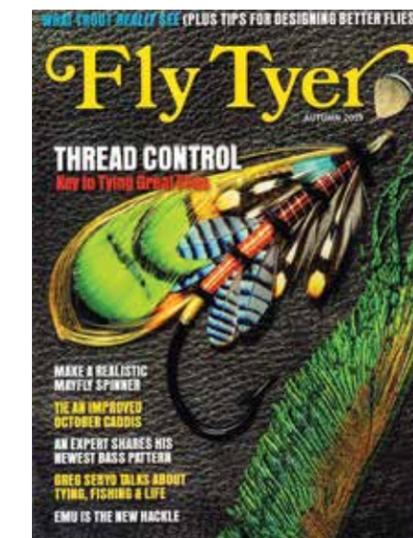
finish the job.”

To make a pitch stand out in his inbox, make sure it’s well organized and well written. And always include photographs. “Because of the nature of my magazine, I must see sample photographs. Pitches with good images go to the top of the pile every time.”

Klausmeyer encourages writers to read Fly Tyer magazine, and he knows when a writer doesn’t put in the time. “When dealing with authors, I can immediately tell the difference between the two,” he said.

At his level in the publishing world, running a publication with a small paid readership of 25,000, he said not to waste your time and money with an agent.

“First, if you need an agent to pitch me, then you probably haven’t read the magazine,” Klausmeyer said. “Second, most agents probably know less than you about this market. My magazine is about how to tie flies (it’s a very practical hobby publication), yet a couple of times a year I



get pitches for poetry and cartoons just because they contain something about fish or fishing. That agent knows nothing, and that author’s career is going nowhere.”

# How to improve your macro photography using focus stacking

BY TIM FEATHERS |  
SCHOFIELD, WISCONSIN

**D**ESPITE HAVING SOME NICE CAMERA EQUIPMENT, I've always struggled with macro photography. No matter what camera settings I used, my results were less than optimal. I seemed limited by a small depth of field and a lack of clarity in the photos. I wondered what my limiting factor was: lens, lighting, equipment, or knowledge?

You'd think macro photography would be comparatively easy. Unlike landscape or wildlife photography, you have more control over lighting, your subject isn't intent on avoiding you and you have the time you need to plan your composition. But I find photographing things really close up has its challenges. As you get closer to your subject, even the tiniest breeze creates subject blurring motion. Depth of field (the amount of your photo in focus from front to back) becomes razor thin.

The standard equipment for macro photography is a quality tripod to hold your camera steady, a macro lens to focus close to your subject, and a remote camera trigger to minimize movement.

But even with the basic equipment and a good understanding of the three main camera controls (aperture, ISO, and shutter speed), I couldn't create the quality of macro photos I wanted. When researching, I came across the term "focus stacking" but didn't understand what it meant. Earlier this year I decided to do more research to get a handle on focus stacking and see if the technique would improve my macro photography work.

To simply explain focus stacking, let's say I'm taking a photograph of a clump of three flowers; one closer to my lens, one farther and one between the two. Normally, even with a small aperture to create the largest depth of field possible, only one of the three flowers would be in focus. Whichever flower I chose to focus on,



A camera connected to a focus rail. Photo by Tim Feathers.

the other two were in various stages of blurriness.

But with focus stacking, I took multiple photos so I had a photo with each of the three flowers clearly in focus. Then, using a program like Photoshop, I "stacked" the photos and let the program pick the parts of each photo that are most in focus and combine them into one photograph. Result? One photograph with each element in focus. Something I couldn't achieve with a single photograph regardless of my camera settings.

On my first attempts at focus stacking, I hand-held the camera and moved closer while taking photos. This resulted in the photographs not lining up. And, while Photoshop can correct misaligned photos up to a point, I discovered simply hand-holding the camera was not going to achieve the results I wanted. With the camera on a tripod, I had to keep moving the tripod forward for each shot. Also not possible to keep things aligned.

The solution was a focus rail. A focus rail attaches to the tripod head and the camera attaches to the focus rail. It slides

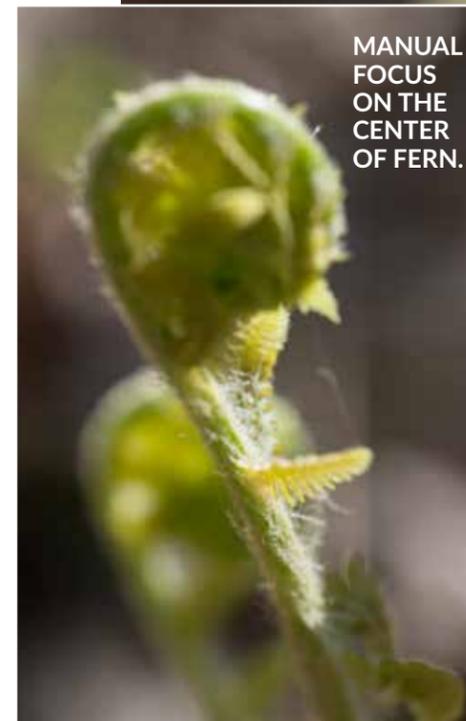
back and forth with precision. The one I purchased is a manual rail, meaning I turn a small knob to move my camera back and forth. There are automatic rails you can program to move in perfect increments, but that was beyond my needs.

This spring, armed with my new knowledge of focus stacking and a focus rail, I set up my tripod in front of a fiddlehead fern. I set my camera to manual focus so the camera didn't change focus during a series of images to be focus stacked. I focused on the nearest part of the plant and took a photo. Then, I gently turned the winder to move the camera a bit closer. Another shot. I repeated this about a dozen times.

Once home, I loaded all the images in Photoshop. Once Photoshop finished combining the best focused parts of each image, I had a beautiful image of the fiddlehead fern showing all of the details in focus from front to back!

— Tim Feathers joined OWAA in 2019 after retiring from 30 years of teaching art. He likes to combine nature and fine art in his photography.

FINAL IMAGE OF  
FERN AFTER FOCUS  
STACKING.



MANUAL  
FOCUS  
ON THE  
CENTER  
OF FERN.

# HISTORY LESSON: VERMONT'S SECRET COMPOUND

BY GARY MOORE

**D**O YOU LIKE  
A LITTLE  
INTRIGUE?

Perhaps an assassination of a man in Brussels who once ran the Space Research Corporation and its 6,000-acre test site that straddled the border between Highwater, Quebec and Jay, Vermont will interest you.



Canadian weapons engineer Gerald Bull developed and tested powerful, long-range guns within a short drive from Jay Peak. For a while in the late 60s and early 70s Bull was the darling of the U.S. and Canadian governments. He was even made a U.S. citizen by a special act of Congress so he could have a top secret clearance.

Bull's fortunes changed as he began trying to work deals with various foreign governments and by 1979, Dr. Bull and some of his colleagues found themselves accused of illegally shipping arms to South Africa in violation of a U.S. and United Nations embargo.

Bull died on March 20, 1990, in Brussels, when he was shot at close range. Some accused the Israeli secret police, the Mossad, of carrying out the assassination although nothing was ever proven.

At the time of his death, he was said to be working with Saddam Hussein, to build a 100-yard-long Supergun. You can understand why the Israelis' and many other governments might not mind if he no longer existed.

Following Bull's assignment in Brussels and the abandonment of the test site, a gun 172 feet long was found. Had you been at Jay Peak in the early 70s you would have heard the big guns fire just over the ridge.

As you ride the tram to the summit this summer, look to the north where the secret compound once was and imagine what took place there.

For those who like their intrigue fictional, best-selling author Louise Penny and her Inspector Gamache books are much acclaimed. I mention Penny as she lives in Knowlton, Quebec, a short drive from Jay Peak and most of her novels are centered nearby in the Eastern Townships, Montreal and Quebec City. I've heard from a couple of her fans who are interested in taking a tour of several of the locations featured in her mystery novels.

— Gary Moore is the local chair for the 2020 OWAA conference and has been a member of OWAA since 1985. He's a past president, director emeritus and life member of the New England Outdoor Writers Association. He and Linda, his wife of 49 years, live in the woods of Vermont in a home they built in 1973.

# Building this year's conference agenda

BY PAT WRAY | CORVALLIS, OREGON

**I**F YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE, how would you plan the agenda?

My approach was to gather a group of interested people, ask for ideas and then, before they got away, ask for help in arranging speakers and seminars. Those people are hard at work, even as you read this.

Our primary theme essentially chose itself: "A Changing World; Challenges and Opportunities" reflects today's national and global upheaval in multiple arenas: weather patterns, social conflict, unchecked pollution, precipitous decline of fish, wild-life species and more.

We're incorporating two exceptional keynote speakers. Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*, the trailblazing book on global warming and Doug Ladd, a well-known naturalist who will present a blueprint for creating a culture of stewardship of nature.

The general theme of change, challenge and opportunity will be reflected in several other newsmaker sessions, with subjects including: "Dam Removal, Pros and Cons;" "Are We Loving Nature to Death? If So, What Can We Do About It?" "Native Fish Restoration, Successes and Failures;" "Controlling Invasive Species...with Invasive Species."

We've also incorporated a secondary newsmaker thread: "Disaster Preparation; How to Help Your Family and Your Audience Prepare for a: Hurricane, Wildfire, Tornado, Flood, Earthquake, Widespread Loss of Power or an EMP (electromagnetic pulse)."

This second theme is a little unusual, I know, but here's my thinking. Natural disasters are becoming more frequent, and more intense, as climate change worsens. In 15 years as a volunteer Red Cross disaster responder, I've seen over and over again how much better prepared for disasters outdoors folk are than average citizens. While hundreds of people line up waiting for handouts from the Red Cross and other charitable organizations, hunters, hikers, fishermen and others with a similar mindset are calmly taking care of their families with tents, sleeping bags, propane stoves and heaters, water filters and other outdoor-related equipment. The longer the disaster continues, the more important that sort of gear—and knowledge—becomes.

No one, literally, no one, is better prepared and better able to educate their audience about preparing for disaster than members of OWAA are. We want to provide you with tools to help you do so. These tools will include the Disaster Preparation presentation and shorter sessions on how to start a fire,

overnight survival and wilderness medicine, building a Disaster Go-Bag, how to tie four knots that will save your life, how to respond to an attack by cougars, bears and mean humans (hint: all different responses).

We've got a great lineup of Craft Improvement sessions as well. These include: "Landscape Photography," "Keeping the Journal in Journalism," "How to be Somebody on the Web... and Make it Pay," "The Artist in Residence Program; Is it Right for You?" "Working on Company Publications with Words and Photos," "Taking Video and Editing it on Your Cell Phone," "Mirrorless Cameras," "4/3 Cameras," and "Writing for Kids."

A few of our sessions don't easily fit into categories. One of the most important is "Guns in America." This plenary session will feature Steve Sanetti, NSSF President and CEO and David Yamane, Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. Steve will present a history of firearms in the United States from colonial times to the present day. David will focus on the corresponding evolution of American gun culture during that same period. There will be no axes ground in this presentation, just an exploration of one of the most profound and influential aspects of American life since our beginning.

Another unusual session is entitled "OWAA: Where We've Been, Where We Are, Where We Want to Go." Headlined by Tom Huggler, Glenn Sapir and Emily Stone. This session will probably end up as a wide-ranging discussion involving as many of the audience as want to participate. This will be your chance to help chart OWAA's course into the future, because notes taken in this session will be used in the development of our next strategic plan. If you care about the future of OWAA, this will be the place to be.

In addition to Breakout Day, during which you'll be able to shoot rifles, shotguns, pistols, longbows, recurves, compounds and crossbows, and test a whole lineup of products from Supporting Groups, we also have a series of outdoor skills sessions scheduled throughout the conference. These will include, "How to Pack for an Extended Backpacking Trip," "How to Improve Your Casting Technique (not just fly casting)," "How to Call Elk, Deer, Moose and Varmints," and "How to Set Snares (and release your dog if he's caught in one)."

Finally, we'll have a demonstration of gutless field dressing and shortly thereafter we'll have lunch. Sorry. Couldn't help it.

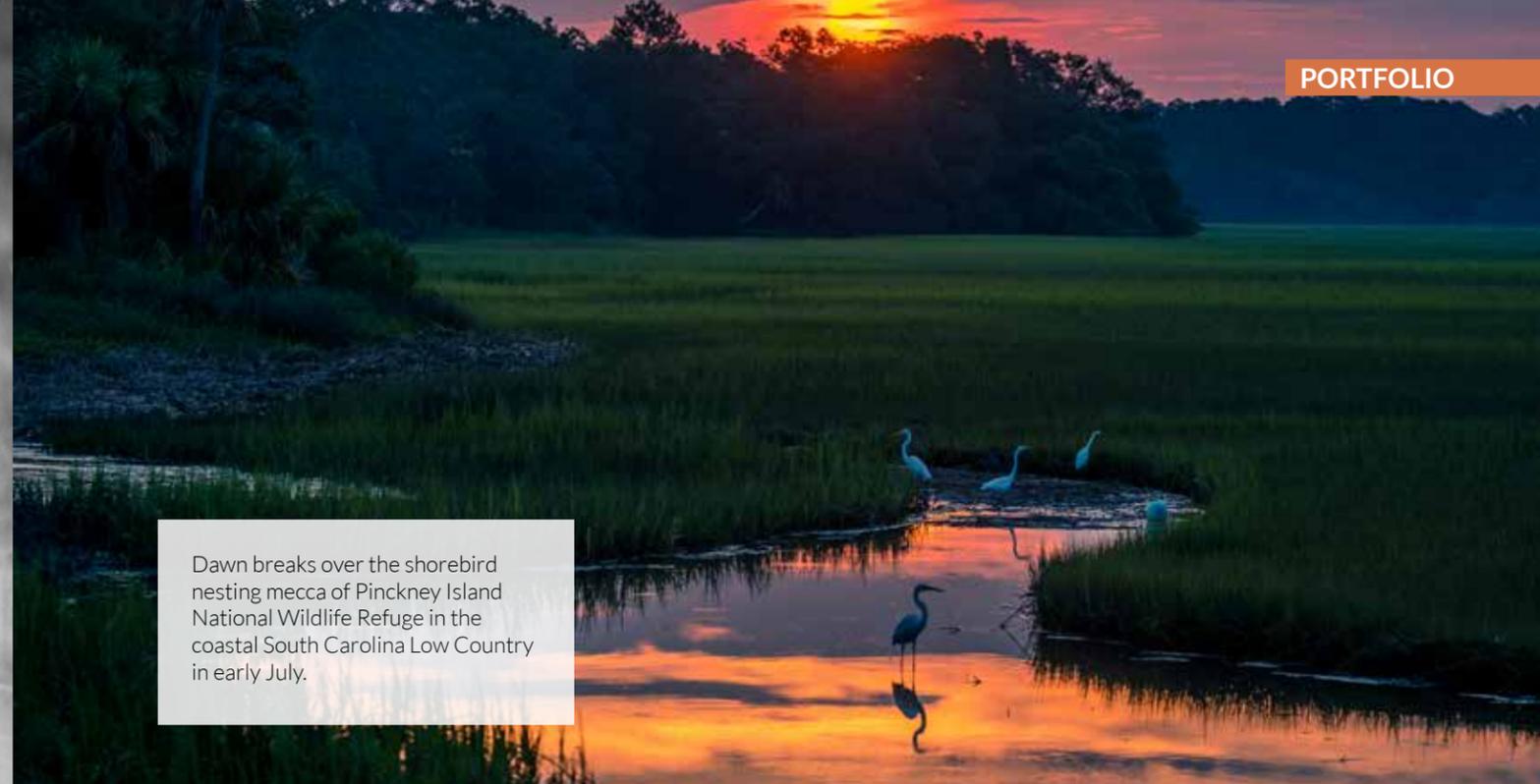
Our conference at the Jay Peak Resort in Vermont this year will be one of the most diverse, hard hitting and exciting conferences ever. Make your plans now.

— Pat Wray, Conference Chair

**PAUL QUENEAU |**  
**MISSOULA, MONTANA**

Paul Queneau is conservation editor of Bugle magazine at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and also a freelance writer and photographer as time allows. He's served as an OWAA board member, secretary and most recently as President. He lives in Missoula, Montana, with his wife Laura and two high-school-age sons Liam and Jackson, both of whom love photography, too.

A longtime Canon DSLR photographer, Paul spent the past six months shooting Sony mirrorless cameras, which he says has enhanced the control and creativity of his imagery work. This portfolio showcases some of his favorite images taken on mirrorless cameras in 2019. Keep an eye out in the next issue for his full review of the benefits and downfalls of going mirrorless.



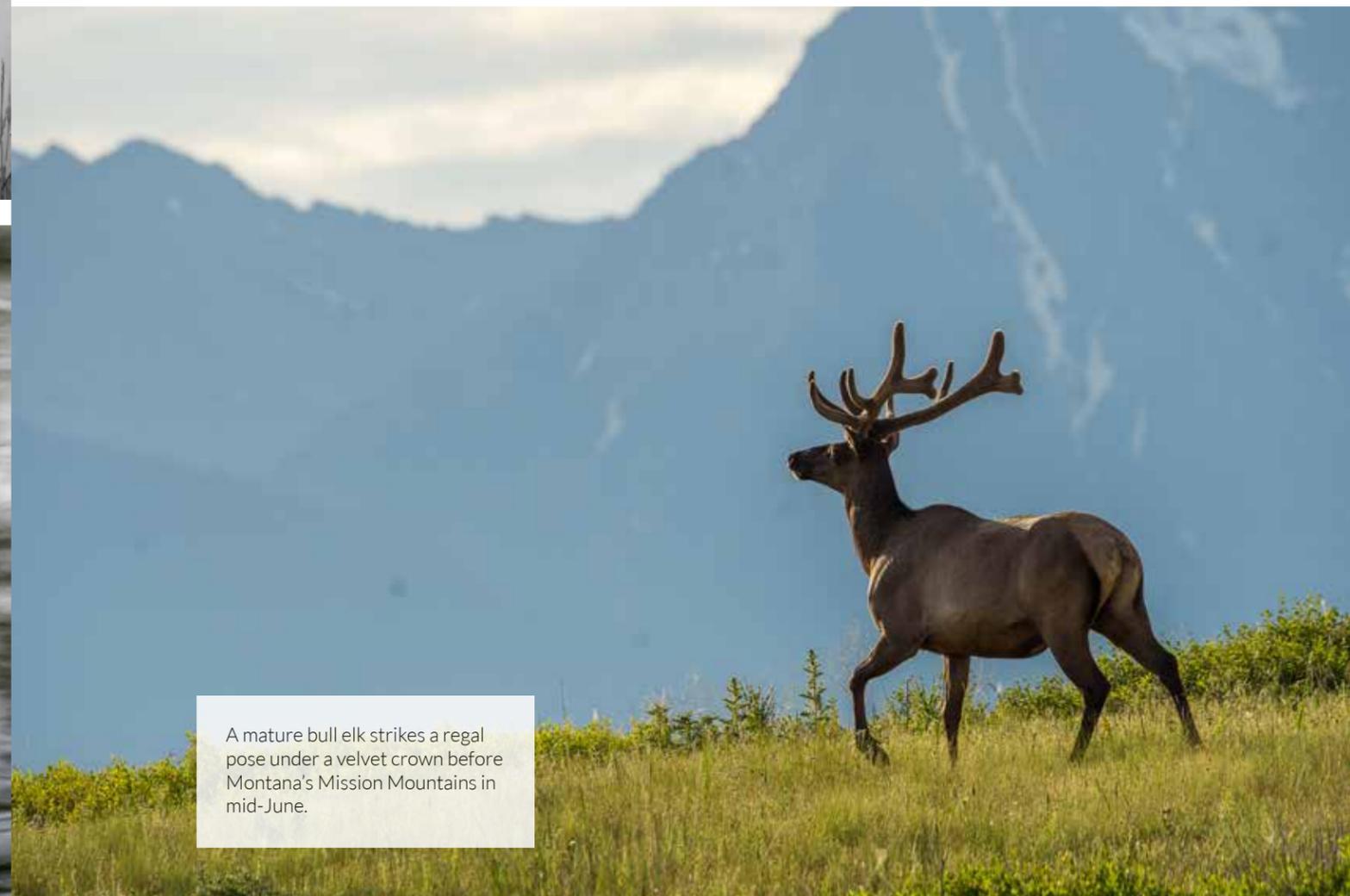
Dawn breaks over the shorebird nesting mecca of Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge in the coastal South Carolina Low Country in early July.



TOP: Besieged by insects, an old bull bison kicks up a dust bath in Western Montana.

BOTTOM LEFT: Flying Colors: a male painted bunting in full breeding plumage brings a rare and wonderful tropical exuberance to the South Carolina coast.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A tricolored heron hunts a tidal creek on the southern Atlantic coast for unsuspecting fish.



A mature bull elk strikes a regal pose under a velvet crown before Montana's Mission Mountains in mid-June.



ABOVE: As an early fall snow storm blankets Western Montana, a bachelor pair of white-tailed deer pause to take in each other's countenance while sparring. These playful, pre-rut jousts establish dominance and help avoid what can be deadly battles during the November mating season.

RIGHT: A male dusky grouse eyes a suspicious-looking photographer on a grassy western Montana hillside.



## BOOKSHELF

### JUSTIN CODY'S RACE TO SURVIVAL

**AUTHOR:** Cliff Jacobson

**INFO:** Amazon Digital Services LLC, softcover, 135 pp., color, Ages 12+, \$12.95.

Thirteen-year-old Justin Cody is failing two classes and is addicted to texting and video games. Forced to take a wilderness canoe trip in Canada with his Grandpa Henry, Justin is thrust into a race for survival when the two discover a stolen top-secret drone developed by the U.S. Military. Grandpa Henry is kidnapped and Justin, who knows nothing about canoeing and camping, must journey alone to a distant lake that promises rescue. A riveting high-adventure tale and wilderness skills book in one. Learn important outdoor skills, including how to make a fire in the rain, stormproof your camp, tie useful knots, find wild edible foods, survive wildlife encounters, and more.

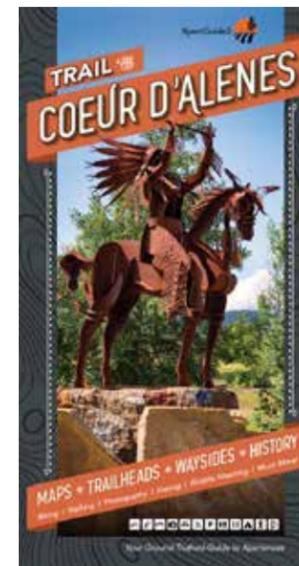


### TRAIL OF THE COEUR D'ALENES

**AUTHOR:** Mary Terra-Berns & Judi Cronin

**INFO:** XpertGuide2, 96 pp. 57 color photos, 18 historic photos, 2 illustrations; \$18.00 paperback, \$9.99 e-book.

This book is a complete guide to the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes, an award winning 73.2-mile rail-trail that crosses the panhandle of Idaho. A front cover foldout map shows the route traveling from the Palouse Prairie to the Bitterroot Mountains along Lake Coeur d'Alene and Coeur d'Alene River. Each of the 19 trailheads and 20 waysides are described with distances between each site and amenities noted. Written by a local author with expert knowledge of the trail, the text describes unique features, historical highlights, and interesting stories. Color and historical black and white photos complement the text. This informative guide easily slips into a bike jersey pocket, day pack, or purse.

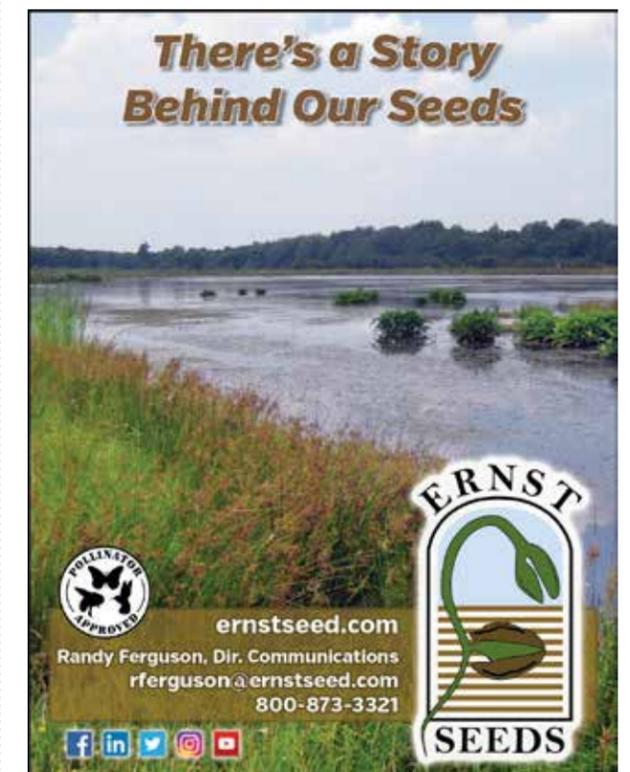
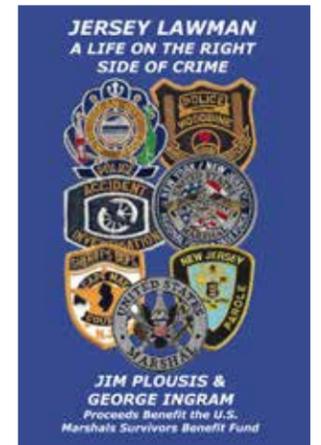


### JERSEY LAWMAN: A LIFE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF CRIME

**AUTHORS:** Jim Plousis & George Ingram

**INFO:** Callahan Services, LLC, paperback, 524 pp.; \$19.95.

In a book that TV personality John Walsh calls the story of "a remarkable career in law enforcement," author James Plousis describes the exciting people, cases, and issues he's been involved with over more than four decades—Donald J. Trump, Bernie Madoff, 9/11, Little Nicky Scarfo, Hurricane Katrina, Chris Christie, and much more. Written in clear, straight-ahead prose, "Jersey Lawman: A Life On the Right Side of Crime" is the product of a life spent helping good people and putting the bad ones behind bars. "I have played many law-enforcement roles as a sheriff, cop, and federal agent in television and movies, so it is an honor to recommend this book about the real life of a sheriff and U.S. marshal in New Jersey," said award-winning actor Brian Denney. "Jim Plousis is a man I know and have worked with to make Camden, New Jersey, a safer community." Proceeds benefit the U.S. Marshals Survivors Benefit Fund.



**W**ITH THIS YEAR'S WINNERS OF THE NORM STRUNG YOUTH WRITING CONTEST, the future looks bright for our upcoming generation of outdoor communicators. The 2019 Norm Strung Youth Writing Contest drew a number of entrants from across the nation. OWAA thanks the generous OWAA members who made cash gifts possible and Lodge Manufacturing for donating cast iron cookware to winners.

### JUNIOR PROSE, 1ST PLACE

# Celebrating My First Successful Hunt

RYAN MARINAK | ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA

**T**HE DEER WALKED IN FRONT OF THE STAND. My heart was beating fast against my chest. Dad handed me the crossbow and whispered, "Take your time."

I held the crossbow up to my face and looked through the scope. I was looking at a mature eight-point. He looked up at me just as I was getting into good shooting position. I froze. He snorted then took off running up the hill.

"You can't move very much when a deer is looking at you," Dad said after the deer was gone and we were sure it had vanished.

I thought about what just happened. I couldn't believe I missed my chance at an eight-pointer. It was by far the biggest deer I had seen all year.

I let out a slow, deep, breath.

We sat for another hour, but we didn't see anything. I was cold, so we decided to walk across a field to a different tree stand. Leaves crunched beneath our feet as we walked through the field. The wind rustled through the high grass. A bird chirped in a nearby tree. All of these sounds were beautiful.

At that moment I thought of earlier in the morning when we were walking to our stand. The light of the moon was so bright that we could see where we were going without flashlights. The frozen grass was so crunchy that you could hear the slightest bit of movement.

Suddenly, Dad froze. I was so wrapped up in my thoughts that I nearly ran into him. "Get down," he whispered to me. I did as he said and sat on the ground.

I watched as he started to army crawl across the field we were in. I looked in the direction he was crawling, and I saw two does and a buck near the edge of the field about a hundred yards away. As I looked closer, I realized it was an eight-point. My heart started to beat fast.

The three deer walked into the forest and away from us. My dad motioned for me to come over.

We carefully walked to the stand where we last saw the three deer. About 30 minutes later, a six-point came walking out of the woods. It was the perfect size for me to shoot, but I wasn't comfortable shooting a moving target.

I thought to myself that I could probably hit it, but I might not kill it. The buck walked into the woods and it laid down about 60 yards away from our stand.

Every time it lifted its head or turned to lick itself, I would get excited because I thought it would get up.

For the next hour, we didn't see any other deer. By now it was 11, and my stomach was growling.

Finally, we saw the buck get up. It started to walk toward us. Dad handed me the crossbow and I eased it into a good position when the deer wasn't looking. It walked into the field and turned broadside toward us. It was the perfect shot.

I pulled the trigger lightly and prayed it would hit the deer. My part was over. Now all that had to happen was the arrow needed to strike a spot where it would kill him quickly. I watched as the arrow hit the side of the deer. It ran off into the woods. I was so excited. This could be my first ever deer.

"Good job, buddy!" Dad said to me. I grinned at him. Dad and I waited 10 minutes to make sure that I had made a good shot.

We climbed out of the stand and started to follow the blood trail. It was easy to follow and was 60 yards away from the stand. I was so happy.

I had my first deer, a young six-point! We took pictures of it with the family and brought it back to the house to celebrate my first ever deer.

### SENIOR PROSE, 1ST PLACE

# Hunting For Humility

NATALIE SCOTT | CLAYTON, WASHINGTON

**I**T'S A HUMBLING EXPERIENCE TO WITNESS A CREATURE'S LAST BREATH; not everyone has the opportunity to choose life or death for another. During hunting season, families in our community dedicate time to find a deer worth harvesting. My family believes our best memories stem from these hunts. My father has always reminded me that as fierce as hunting is, it's a sport of personal development. It's not about the win for the killer; it's about being the master of life. It took years, but on the hunt of a lifetime, I finally understood his words.

Dawn broke. I exhaled; my breath visible. Blearily, I observed my surroundings. Excitement pulsed through my veins at the sight of golden wheat fields and evergreen sagebrush blanketing the hillsides. Sunlight flooded the horizon, illuminating the morning dew resting upon my every surrounding. It would last a mere minute before disintegrating. I relished the sight for as long as I could before I began navigating the broken trail as the moisture evaporated. Perched upon a rock, I was overlooking a vast, empty field. The area was promising; we were almost guaranteed a kill. I scanned the environment with the scope of my partner-in-crime, my .30-06. I managed to get as comfortable as I could without creating much noise and prepared for a long day.

Hours passed. The wind delivered chills down my spine. Behind me, I noticed two men in fluorescent orange. I slipped my radio out of my pocket and called for Dad. He confirmed that he and my grandfather were the men I saw. I felt a pang of disappointment in my chest, realizing those woods were empty.

Miles later, I found myself hiking once again, examining the tree line ahead of me. The only movement was made by the wind rustling the crisp leaves of the trees. I turned to Dad, about seven paces behind me. His expression told me that he too was frustrated, but still hopeful. Suddenly, the soft static of the radio in my earpiece welcomed the words of Kevin, our host.

"I got one! He's in my pickup and I'm headed your way!" Kevin exclaimed. It was the first kill. I was excited for Kevin's success, but knew the process of field dressing this animal would eat away the remaining daylight. Stifling my frustration, I awaited the growl of the diesel truck.

The work with Kevin's deer was completed as the sun finally set. With ravenous appetites and aching bodies in dire need of rest, we left to bed after dinner. Eerie sounds of the night echoed in my ears as I succumbed to my exhaustion.

The next morning, I groggily stumbled to the truck. Minutes later, I was outside, savoring the icy breeze. I saw Dad abruptly drop on one knee and spin his rifle over his shoulder, peering through the scope. I crept beside him, noticing a leash of deer across the valley. My heavy breathing fogged my scope and I

inhaled sharply. I exhaled, waiting for the pause between breaths. As I approached this point, I clutched the stock of the rifle and steadied my stance. I squeezed the trigger, absorbed the recoil, and saw the deer hightail out with the rest of the herd. Not a kill shot. Before long, I'm down in the field, replaying the scene in my head while searching for blood. I spotted a speck of blood in the stubble field, and then another. A splatter peppered the ground with bright red freckles, and a trail led in the deer's direction. I knew my shot was sloppy. Amateur mistake.

Three hours we tracked this deer. Frustration grew as we hiked up the bluff where the herd was last spotted. Our breathing deepened, our strides lengthened, and we crested the incline. I sensed motion in my periphery and turned to face the herd, bedded about 90 yards below us. I spun my rifle over my shoulder, dropped on one knee, and ducked behind cover. I scanned for my wounded deer, but she was nowhere in sight.

My arm fatigued, Dad took over, immediately spotting a legal buck. He encouraged me to take a shot, but I couldn't steady myself. He took a knee and instructed me to rest the gun on his shoulder. I synced my breathing with his and braced myself to pull the trigger. I placed the crosshairs on the white patch of his upper chest, hugging the gun close, and fired. Dust plumed just before him; I missed. The deer whipped around, but before he could escape, Dad had already taken a shot of his own. The buck collapsed behind a rise in the soil.

In all my years as a hunter, that was my first missed shot. Overcome by disappointment, Dad reminded me to take the opportunity to recognize my mistakes and grow. Hunting is a sport of development, which I'd heard my entire life, but this was the first time I'd understood its meaning.

We journeyed out to where the deer went down, stopping short before the bluff. Hearing movement, we spotted him quickly. His hind legs were paralyzed, and he struggled to get away. With reverence, Dad took a final shot to the buck's neck. The deafening whisper of its last breath reverberated across the canyon.

How rarely we are in the dramatic presence of death. Prior to this, I had never witnessed anyone's passing. While I lacked any previous affiliation with this animal, I felt a strange closeness and connection, of shared vulnerability and fate. Recognizing death as a part of life was something I knew, yet never felt. To this day, it shapes my perception of death. I promised this experience wouldn't prohibit me from pulling the trigger again, but every time I see those crosshairs over another creature of God, I hesitate and contemplate the power I yield. I'll always remember that last plume of breath, the slight twitching of its body, and its glossy eyes looking beyond me, into something larger than life itself.

## SENIOR POETRY, 1ST PLACE

## The Watering Hole

LANDIS BLUBAUGH | BELLVILLE, OHIO

The watering hole sees  
many things, the rainfall  
through the trees;  
Every fish that swims,  
every bird that sings.  
Oh, many things it sees!

As hunters stalk through  
the silent wood, the brook  
sheds many a tear;  
Mourning sadly as it  
should, for every falling deer.

Watch melting snow seep  
through the ground, and  
branches come to bud;  
And sounds of spring born  
all around, squelchy puddles  
of mud.

See the shining summer  
sun, smell the fragrant  
breeze.  
Carefree days of animal  
fun, racing around with ease.

And as leaves die and summer ends,  
and songbirds fly down south;  
The watering hole dries up  
and ends, empty like a gaping mouth.

When winter dawns and  
snow is thick, neatly covering everything;  
Animals wait, as inner  
clocks tick, for the coming of the spring.

The watering hole, it sees  
so much, it watches quietly;  
When nights are dark, and  
quiet as such, it gets rest finally.

## JUNIOR POETRY, 1ST PLACE

## Ocean Beauty

KESTREL LINEHAN | WESTPORT ISLAND, MAINE

The salty cool air of the ocean  
rustles through my hair,  
as I stare at the endless blues of the ocean.  
I wonder where it ends,  
so calm and still.  
Little waves lap at the rocks.  
My eyes search for a seal,  
or a dolphin, any beautiful sea creature  
willing to give up its disguise to the world.  
A lonely seagull calls out from its perch.  
The mist from the morning covers my view,  
just for a second, then blows away  
as fast as it came.  
My face is moist from the mist.  
Suddenly, my dad yells, "Whale."  
I turn back, too late to see it.  
I'm disappointed, and my head sags.  
Determined to see the beautiful animal,  
I search the sea.  
Then, an elegant dark blue fin emerges  
from the sea like a monster from the depth.  
The fin is the color of the ocean: dark and blue.  
The fin is fast and majestic like a ballerina.  
The whale will be in my heart forever.

## JUNIOR POETRY, 3RD PLACE

## Canoe on the Lake

ZACH BURTON | KIRBYVILLE, MISSOURI

I glide across the reflective waters  
The sound of the paddles  
Pulls me forward  
Swish, Swish, Swish  
I take in the sight  
Of nature at its peak  
Not touched or changed  
By anyone but itself  
Fish leap out of the water  
Trees sway in the cool morning breeze  
Heron wade through the shallows  
Dragonflies hover above the water  
Everything is as it should be  
Boaters and rowers only go by  
To go where they want to go  
A fishing cove or the Landing  
Or just for exercise  
Not realizing that this perfect nature is around them

## SENIOR POETRY, 2ND PLACE

A Letter to My Parents From the Sawatch  
Mountains and San Rafael Swell

RILEY LEVINE | BLAUVELT, NEW YORK

I often ask myself,  
when did this moment begin?  
Where does this moment end?  
At what point do these narratives get lost in translation,  
contorted pines along the jagged mountainside of a story?

What words do I use?  
What meaningless shapes do I etch in firelight onto these pages,  
grasping for definition in this finite selection of expression?

My life has been a compilation of moments,  
an assembly line of experiences.  
The individual I have become, a seamless enactment of the one  
before.

Until the converging plasmic lines on the map,  
are indistinguishable shapes fading into the mammoth back-  
ground  
of terrain I have not memorized how to traverse.

My right hand flutters, arrives at a lone compass  
whose poles are defined by judgement, and the mask I wear to  
escape it.

Left hand steadily clasps a watch,  
infinite orbit of numbers as checkmarks,  
until time is an indistinguishable goal  
always hidden somewhere just ahead.

I am an unknown wanderer  
who can recite your story better than I can recite my own.  
So, I began this moment.

Shredded feigned topography maps of shackling paradigms,  
onto cragged boulder fields above a frigid alpine lake,  
waiting for whispering wind to carry them away, beyond sight.

You told me, to stray from the map,  
I found myself,  
lost, smiling  
praying to be part of a dance, concealed behind  
jagged white crested mountains as they shatter cloudless blue  
empyrean.

Elk prance across yellow grasslands,  
Grey jays swoop into verdant foliage  
I stand bound on the sidelines,  
longing to be humbled,

Pining to harmonize,  
Yearning to immerse myself in a song  
I am too blinded by preconceived hierarchy to hear.

Yet tone deaf I join,  
Submerge myself into red rock canyons,  
Let eyes lose themselves in rippling towers,  
Looking for answers in auric, rose hued mesa light.

It is here isolated from amusement,  
I have learned how to dance.  
In these open shackles of separation,  
I have defined new paradigms.

Repainted my existence onto  
cave walls in earthen mud hues together we ground ourselves,  
Together wrestle perception under starlight  
Yet together spring forth in the morning dew  
laughing glistening, playing on yucca spines.

I am lost between the cottonwoods of identity,  
like water seeking a purpose unto which I surrender myself.

I prostrate between sweet, scented sage brush  
their stories tempt me,  
Yet, I am summoned back by the rejoicing of willow leaves in  
wind.

I am summoned back,  
Directionless,  
Timeless,  
Dancing

On a web of moments  
Tightly woven aspirations  
Suspended above fragmented blueprints.

Adrift, a flock in empyrean,  
we have taught each other to sing,  
I have learned to harmonize.

But at what point do these songs get lost in translation, woven  
into stories  
like the roots of aspens seeking meaning beneath depleted earth.

These are not stories, squarely etched into mountainsides,  
not contorted in frequent gusts of wind.

Continued on page 29

## JUNIOR PROSE, 2ND PLACE

# Sharing the Heritage

ANNIE BRANNON | CHANDLER, OKLAHOMA

**“WAKE UP, IT’S TIME TO GO.”**

Confused thoughts entered my mind: Go where? I don’t want to go anywhere. Can’t I just sleep.

“Papa and your dad are getting ready. I have your coats in the kitchen.”

Oh, right. Hunting.

I had decided last night that hunting sounded like the greatest thing in the world, but right now, at 5 a.m., I was definitely not feeling that way. So, I went back to sleep, or tried to. I laid there in agonizing deliberation. Do I want to go hunting? Will I get in the way?

Finally, after what seemed like hours to a 10-year-old, I got up and went to my grandmother’s living room and curled up on her couch. I was hoping someone else would make the decision for me.

“Well look who’s bright-eyed and bushy tailed!” I heard Papa chuckle. My glasses were cold and askew in front of my half-

closed eyes, and the only thing bushy was my hair. “Are you coming?”

Just the simple question gave me my answer. Fifteen minutes later, I was hit with a blast of cold air as the garage door opened, making me doubt my choice once again, but not for long. I curled up in the front seat of my dad’s truck and started to feel excited on the short drive over to what my family calls the Fish Farm.

We walked over to my dad’s deer blind and I did my best to stay out of the way while my grandpa helped dad get ready in the ground-level blind.

I followed Papa along the curving tree line in the pre-dawn light, stifling many questions. I almost ran into my grandpa as he stopped and abruptly turned around to show me how to climb the tree blind safely. As I stepped into the little white box, I found that Papa had placed two buckets with pads on the lids to serve as our seats. He followed with our things and revealed

his “secret” stash of snacks from one of his many pockets. We sat on our buckets and watched the opposite tree line, our breath rising in sparking clouds.

Silently shivering, I stared at the trees, willing something, anything to move. Papa handed me a blanket, rough and worn from staying in the blind all the time and scanned the trees behind us before settling back to stare in front again.

I watched him now, losing interest in the statue-like trees, and took note of how comfortable he was. He fit there like gears in a clock. His eyes moved across the field, following a well-worn path. His cracked, tough hands held the gun loosely, but ready to fire at any moment. The posture of an experienced hunter was obvious as he sat there, completely relaxed, without a care in the world.

We didn’t kill a deer that day, but I didn’t mind. The memory will forever be with me.

## JUNIOR PROSE, 3RD PLACE

# Extending My Time on the Trap Line

KENDRA SMITH | HOUTZDALE, PENNSYLVANIA

**WHEN I THINK BACK TO THE FALL OF 2017,** I still get butterflies remembering all of the success and great times with friends and family that I had that year in the outdoors.

I was lucky enough to harvest my first archery buck, a doe with the muzzleloader, a fall turkey and a bear in Maine. In addition, I took my first rabbit while hunting with dogs, and a few squirrels.

I didn’t think that I could top the excitement from that season until I discovered beaver trapping. Beaver trapping gave me

52 more days of fun in the woods. Every day on the trap line was an adventure.

The day after Christmas was a cold, snowy day, and my dad and I had set out to run a beaver trap line. The temperature was single digits and brrr was it cold.

The first couple of days that we went out, our traps were empty. Then one night, I had a sleepover at my house and invited some friends. I’m not sure what my friends thought when I drug them out of their warm, cozy beds at the crack of dawn to go out into the cold to check the traps. But there were high-fives all around when

we discovered that we got our first beaver. I was so happy to share my love of the outdoors with my three best friends.

Just like hunting, not every day was a success. There were highs and lows.

Some days we would come home with empty traps and our boots frozen to our feet. But even on those days, it was exciting to be in the woods and see the wildlife.

For example, one morning we saw a turkey. It started clucking, and I began copying its sounds with my mouth. The turkey got closer and closer. It was only about 40 yards until we had to break

up my conversation with the turkey so I wouldn’t be late for school.

We saw other wildlife as well. There were some deer that we would see in the same spot every morning. We started naming the deer and would look forward to checking on them every day. We named one of them Mr. Fluffers because of his thick winter coat.

On another occasion, we saw a ton of rabbits, so we called our hunting buddy and pastor who had introduced me to rabbit hunting with dogs, and suggested he should load up his dog, Duke, and head out to the woods.

Another one of my favorite things about beaver trapping was getting to spend time with my dad every morning, because even if we didn’t catch anything, we still had fun together.

My dad always explained to me the importance of taking care of our equipment.

One time, when we were walking the trap line, I slipped and dropped our conibear trap setters in the water. After slipping on the ice, I took an unwanted swim in the chilly water. I had to walk back to the vehicle with my boots completely filled with water, but I finally had the setters in my hands again while my dad and I

laughed the whole way out.

My dad and I spent more time together in our garage skinning and fleshing the beavers.

We even tanned a few ourselves. I plan to make a beaver dreamcatcher that I want to hang in my room to remind me of all the memories I had that season.

The cold hands and frozen toes were all worth it when we came home with beavers and muskrats, and just seeing our hard work and dedication pay off. We ended our season with 10 beavers and 9 muskrats.

Our biggest beaver was 52 pounds, and our total beaver weight was 335 pounds.

## SENIOR PROSE, 3RD PLACE

# A Winter’s Hunt to Remember

SHANE O’SHEA | PLYMOUTH MEETING, PENNSYLVANIA

**MY LEGS RIPPED THROUGH THE ICE** like freshly sharpened saws with unforgiving teeth. The warmth from my body was harnessed by my heavy winter coat, but an occasional gust of wind brought a chilling surprise on my determined face.

The sensation of my eyes hardening to the cold only made me faster, stronger, and more efficient in my quest. My eyes only shifted quickly for a short time, but they would immediately return to the focused lenses of success.

I could feel the tickle my moistened nose as I noted the sweet scent of the winter pines.

The bitter air sharply entered my mouth and puffed in and out of my cheeks.

The white dusted field began to merge into a rugged terrain of roots and towering trees.

The scene was about to change. We darted eagerly into the forest.

I face to the left to see my brother on one side of me, his face unflinching yet faintly acknowledging my stare.

His heavy black coat seemed to make him stand out, like some sort of leader, or mythological figure.

I admired his dedication and ability to be such an outstanding advocate for his own protocol.

I snapped back in place, imitating his spiritual form.

From the rear, I could hear the crunches of snow echoing like a galloping horse. My brother slid across the snow smoothly and stopped abruptly. We clumsily followed.

Observing in curiosity, we slowly peered from behind him, creeping forward to get a closer look at his findings. Blood.

Through the wooden, sappy obstacle course laid a woven trail of speckled red dots. I hunched my body downward and studied the

drops as if I were a bee landing on a sugary flower.

My brother nodded to us as if confirming the plan; we nodded back in overwhelming accord.

As my brother scurried forward, we followed attentively. This run felt decelerated, as we needed to pay close attention to the pattern and direction of the abstract art of the doe. My ears perked as we halted concertedly.

The faint cry of the injured doe immediately mustered our roar of pride and excitement; my brother looked at us in astonishment yet seemingly unconcealed gratification. She was close. Really close.

The sun melted into the horizon, barely visible to us behind the forked trees and their intrusive limbs. Our feet had reached the point of insensitivity.

The scent of the red ice was unsurpassed by any surrounding smells.

The icy soles of our feet contrasted the furious fire of our smoky breath, and the doe was finally in our sights. Her limp and whine made our blood surge and our teeth clench.

Pouncing forward, our knives sank into the flesh of the prey, almost immediately seeming to violently console her grace.

We felt that moment. That moment of amazing pride with a pinch of remorse.

That moment of unfathomable spirituality yet feeling slightly impure. That moment of feeling essential to the order of nature yet feeling like you’ve inflicted some degree of damage. We knew one thing, though; we knew we were close to The Great Spirit; we were closer to my brother.

Looking over the deep canyons and silver hills, we stood there with painted teeth, on the silent forest floor, and howled at the moon.

## SENIOR PROSE, 2ND PLACE

# Old Enough

LEE VAN DYCK | WINONA, MINNESOTA

**B**EING THE YOUNGEST IN MY FAMILY and the youngest of nine cousins, I was never old enough to do what I wanted. I wasn't big enough to ride on the roller coaster, drive the go-carts, or, worst of all, old enough to go on hunting trips with my dad and papa.

I would listen to their enthusiastic conversations about their upcoming hunts, take in every detail they planned, and wish I could go with them. I thought the day would never come when I could join them.

Then I turned 13 and my dad said I would be old enough to go on a Western hunt the fall of my 8th-grade year. I anxiously waited for the planning to begin.

Summer flew by and the air turned crisp and cool. When my Wyoming hunting license came in the mail, I studied it carefully and knew it was a reality.

One of the best parts of the trip was planning for it and the anticipation I felt. We had to pack camo clothes, cooking supplies, food, our rifles, sleeping bags, tents, etc. We went to the gun range to practice our long-range shooting.

Finally, the day I had been waiting for arrived – Oct. 1 – and we hit the open road!

We left bright and early. It was fun to see the changing landscape as we drove along. First, I saw the rolling hills, wooded bluffs, and rustic farms of Minnesota. Then we went through the Missouri Breaks with its draws, canyons, and towering pine and cedar trees.

Next, we entered South Dakota with its flat plains and Badlands where the outlaws used to hide. We drove farther and then we hit the Black Hills and the Bear Mountains. I noticed the Indian grass, pine trees, and the rocky formations.

Finally, we crossed into Wyoming, with its dry hills and sagebrush, which smells so good. There was big, wide-open land

as far as I could see.

We found a place to set up camp. We had three large canvas tents for supplies, cooking, and sleeping. From our campsite, we could see mountains a quarter mile away. I went for a hike up the mountain.

First, I had to go through a couple of canyons with rocky slopes and sandy bottoms. Then I reached a flat meadow on the side of the mountain, called a bench. From there, I had to go straight up a steep grassy incline. When I reached the top, on the horizon I could see a cross 10 feet away from the edge. It was something like out of a movie.

The cross was made out of pine branches nailed together, surrounded by shale rocks to hold it up, and was engraved with the name "Harley" and the year "1878" on it. I thought about who this man might have been, what brought him there, and how he died. I'd like to think he was a mountain man who lived in the wild, but I'll never know.

The sun was going down and dusk was settling across the land. I was descending the mountain when I saw one of my tracks in the sand in the canyon from when I was hiking up. I saw another set, and it was mountain lion tracks 6 inches from my tracks. I started getting the feeling that something was watching me.

I saw something out of the corner of my eye, but it was probably just my imagination. I crossed through the canyon and walked by several caves. Finally, I reached our camp just in time for supper. I had a lot to tell around the campfire that night!

The darkness deepened and the stars and the moon illuminated the sky. I saw two shooting stars. The first one looked turquoise in color, and the second one was a bright white shooting star. The night sky was never-ending, and there was no man-made light around us. Off in

the northeast there was a storm putting on a big lightning show.

We turned in for the night in our tent. The wind picked up and gave the whispering pines their voice as they spoke softly. We could hear the yipping and howling of coyotes down in the canyons around us. The cattle bellowed in the distance, and the sharp-tailed grouse beat its wings on the ground to claim its territory. These sounds made the night come alive.

We woke early to get ready for our hunt. We walked a couple of miles when we came upon two nice pronghorn bucks. We ducked behind a hill and belly crawled to the top of it. We found a patch of sagebrush to use us and blend us in with our surroundings.

Lying on the ground on my belly, I steadied my gun, and my dad's range-finder read 270 yards. I looked through the scope and put the crosshairs right on the shoulder of the pronghorn. My heart raced with excitement as I squeezed the trigger slowly.

I hit him and could hear the impact and saw it hunch up before it started to run. It ran 100 yards and started to stumble and then reared up and fell flat on its back. I jumped up and gave my dad and papa a high-five and a big hug! We celebrated and went to find the pronghorn.

We took pictures and field dressed it. We took it back to camp and had fresh pronghorn loin with hash browns and bacon for supper. It tasted delicious and is a meal I will always remember.

Spending this time with my dad and papa was important and meaningful to me. It was my first Western hunt and it was a success. It was a trip I will always remember, and I look forward to many more to come.

I can definitely say it was worth waiting for the time I was finally old enough.

## SENIOR POETRY, 3RD PLACE

# Kayaking: A Whale of an Adventure

NATHAN PHUONG | FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

It is good to get on the water,  
Alaskan swells slopping onto my forearms.  
I shell the water away with an arm's reach of paddle,  
the crests snap through the length of my kayak  
like crumbling glaciers.  
It is best to trail in the tense  
bull kelp when the humpback whale huffs  
half-breaths and yawns in even smaller fish  
lops leathery tail like a blooded battler-banner overhead.  
The beast brushes wails into the cavities  
of my heart, intoning raw acoustics  
into the chambers there.  
Tides run from the whale's jaw, and with them  
seep my week's worries, plasma to be folded in the tides  
and baked on some distant, sultry shore.  
Like ravens of the sea, gulls bob and clap wings  
over fish quickened to the surface  
by the wallowing whale below.  
The tufted puffin chases his troops,  
as the passing kingfisher swoops disdainful wings  
overhead. Cormorants jut bright beaks  
against slow rollers and low light.  
Gray sky tamps down around my droplet-flecked jacket,  
as spotted seals moan  
at the fat-hungry cold of the rising surf.  
Unwittingly, I make swift strokes shoreward, but farther out  
the whale continues his feeding. Gruff  
breakers lather his sides,  
but he does not flee the surface.  
Instead, it is only my eyes that sting  
from the salt-spray  
while whitecaps run streaming off the whale's back.

## JUNIOR POETRY, 2ND PLACE

# Kalaloch

NESTOR POWERS | WINDSOR, MAINE

The heavy rain pummels me  
as a dark purple blue crab  
scuttles along the bright pink sea anemone.  
It hides under a gray stone,  
that moves with each wave that sways in and out.  
I step over a rock covered in yellow  
barnacles like popcorn on a gray floor.  
My mouth drops as I avoid  
black and blue mussels  
spread in little patches like a checkers board.  
A neon blue sea star,  
millions of feet swaying in the tide,  
tries to catch food to eat.  
A red sea cucumber points its spikes  
to camouflage itself  
from a white herring gull  
poking at it with its beak.  
Gray rocks cover soaked  
brown sand.  
The wind and water of the Pacific  
crashes and waves pull my attention to them.  
They demand to notice their white tipped water,  
the smell of ocean;  
and the cold in my hand. They draw  
my attention from Maine's Atlantic.  
The colors overwhelm me as I gaze  
off into nowhere wondering:  
How is a whole world  
living in this one tiny tidepool?  
So much life in such a small place!  
So much life among brilliant colors,  
so near roaring waves.

## "A Letter to My Parents" continued from page 25

So please do not read them as such.

These are the aspen roots, barren soil, mountainsides, and wind.  
There is no need to assemble them into memoir, no need to translate them into song

It is your song just as it is mine,  
I simply came to understand its cadence in a different way.

Where will this song end?  
When did this song begin?  
I often ask myself.

**DONORS**

August and September brought monetary gifts from generous donors. These tax-deductible donations are dedicated to funds designed to boost OWAA efforts ranging from education programs to operational costs. For details about OWAA funds, contact OWAA headquarters at 406-728-7434.

**OPERATING FUND**

Michael Hamilton  
Renaissance Family Trust

**NEW MEMBERS**

New member listings include references to acronyms that relate to Skills, Subject Matter and Sections. A key for those acronyms can be found at <http://owaa.org/about-owaa-skills-subject-matter-sections/>.

**PHIL KINER**, 8225 Arrow Wood Lane, Cheyenne, WY, 82009. (C) 307-630-6362, (H) 307-635-1451, pkiner@philkiner.com, www.philkiner.com. A competitive trapshooter and trapshooting instructor, he wrote a monthly feature "The Secret" for Trap & Field magazine for more than 25 years. He currently writes "Kiner's Diner" that features recipes from trap shooters. He produced three how-to trapshooting videos titled "Phil Kiner's Trapshooting Clinic." He holds two trapshooting records, is a 30-time American Trapshooting Association All-American and a member of the ATA and Wyoming Trapshooting halls of fame, and of the Wyoming Sports Hall of Fame. (Marsha). Skills: LOVW. Subject Matter: DT. Sections: Magazine. Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Chris Madson.

**STEVE RAMIREZ**, 280 Katie Court, Boerne, TX, 78006. (W) 210-544-9403, Outdoor and conservation author whose first book - Casting Forward: Fishing Tales in the Texas Hill Country - was published in 2020 by Lyons Press. He has written for several magazines (Trout, Flyfish Journal, Tail, Texas Sporting Journal, Texas Trophy Hunters, Explore, Under Wild Skies) and has short fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction published

in Cutthroat, Houston Library Review, and Pecan Grove Review. Skills BLOW. Subject Matter: ABCLOPQRS Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Matt Miller.

**JESSICA SALL**, 4034 Fairview Industrial Dr. SE, Salem, OR, 97302. (W) 503-947-6923. (C) 503-931-6858, jessica.sall@state.or.us. As web communications coordinator for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (MyODFW.com), her duties include writing, soliciting, and editing content related to hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities; developing and maintaining web content style guide and digital writing best practices; and soliciting, compiling and posting weekly/annual updates of hunting/fishing/wildlife viewing opportunities. Skills: EOS. Subject Matter: ABCO. Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Bill Monroe.

**WIL SENSING**, 417 E. 7th St., Moscow, ID, 83843. (H) 615-828-3236, wilcsensing@gmail.com. A filmmaker and photographer for Northwoods Collective / Project Upland. (Grace). Skills: SV. Subject Matter: ACDEGO. Sections: Broadcast, Photography. Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Kris Millgate.

**GAIL VELEY**, 85 S. Highway 18, Brookside, UT, 84782. (W) 435-231-0127. gbveley@live.com, www.gailveleyquestrian.com. Freelance magazine writer, author of My Top Ten Favorite Horse Stories and the Lessons Learned. Graduate of Ohio State's journalism school. Worked as grant writer and reporter, and as development assistant at The Wilds, a private, non-profit safari park and conservation center in Ohio. Skills: BENO. Subject Matter: SU. Sections: Communications/Media Relations, Magazine, Newspaper. (Thomas Johnson). Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Tim Mead.

**MAYTAL AGASI**, 2709 Wycliff Rd., Raleigh, NC, 27607. maytalagasi@gmail.com. 2019 Bodie McDowell Scholarship recipient. Undergraduate at University of Colorado, majoring in environmental studies with minor in art history. Works as

a summer camp counselor and at campus recycling center. Skills: C. Subject Matter: GLPRS. Sections: Media Relations. Approved for Student membership.

**ANNA BUTLER**, 6020 Stanton Ave., Apt. 16, Pittsburgh, PA, 15206. anna.butler@chatham.edu. 2019 Bodie McDowell Scholarship recipient. Graduate student at Chatham University in creative writing. Managing editor of The Fourth River literary journal. Skills: CEO. Subject Matter: GLNOQS. Approved for Student membership.

**ANDREW DUNDAS**, 415 Cananero Dr., Fairview NC 28730. atdsch150@gmail.com. 2019 Bodie McDowell Scholarship recipient. Undergraduate student in journalism at University of North Carolina. Skills: MOS. Subject Matter: LRS. Sections: Broadcast, Newspaper, Photography. Approved for Student membership.

**ABIGAIL KULL**, 18932 Hillside Rd., Morrison, IL, 61270. ag-kull@wiu.edu. 2019 Bodie McDowell Scholarship recipient. Undergraduate at Western Illinois University majoring in recreation, parks, tourism, administration. Outdoor educator at The YMCA of the Rockies/Snow Mountain Ranch, teaching students rock climbing, archery, outdoor survival, ecology, orienteering and teambuilding. Wild Keeper for Keeping Nature Wild. Skills: ILO. Subject Matter: AGLPS. Sections: Magazine, Newspaper. Approved for Student membership.

**SARAH SCHOTT**, 3451 CR 256, Vickery, OH 43464. Saraschott00@gmail.com. 2019 Bodie McDowell Scholarship recipient. Undergraduate student in natural resource management, minor in community outreach education at Ohio State University. Intern at Columbus Recreation and Parks Dept. Sections: Communications, Media Relations. Subject Matter: ACDEFGIJKLOQRSTU. Approved for Student membership.

**TODD CORAYER**, 30 George St., Wakefield, RI, 02879, (H) 401-714-4420, tcorayer@fishwrapwriter.com, http://www.fishwrapwriter.com. Freelance writer of Fish Wrap, a weekly outdoors column,

Southern Rhode Island newspapers. Fishing Editor, OELMAG.com. Monthly fishing columnist, Shore Times magazine, On The Water magazine. Writer/Host of reserve Fishing and Outdoor Report on WPRO-FM and WEEI FM. Host of Golf Destinations TV for September and October. Recent pieces in Double Gun Journal and Sporting Classics. Work at The Preserve at Boulder Hills includes creating and recording radio and television advertisements, magazine editorials, promotions and marketing materials. Skills: ENORTW. Subject Matter: ABCDF-NORS. Sections: Magazine, Newspaper, Radio, TV/Video. (Alison) Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Tom Sadler.

**JACQUELINE R. KEHOE**, 305 Norris Ct., Apt 2W, Madison, WI, 53703, jacqueline.r.kehoe@gmail.com, www.

jacquelinekehoe.com. Freelance writer, editor and photographer whose work has been published in National Geographic, AFAR, Backpacker and Matador Network. An amateur historical geologist and self-professed national parks geek. Skills: EOS. Subject Matter: L. Sections: Media Relations, Photography. Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Danielle Taylor.

**EILEEN STEGEMANN**, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY. 12233-4502. (W) 518-402-8047, Eileen.stegemann@dec.ny.gov, www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/conservationist.html. Managing Editor of Conservationist magazine, a bi-monthly New York State-focused magazine produced by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Conservationist focuses on natural resources and outdoor recreation in New York State. Skills: EW.

Subject Matter: AGOS. Sections: M. Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Glenn Sapir.

**REINSTATED MEMBERS**

Reinstated member listings include references to acronyms that relate to skills, subject matter and sections. A key for those acronyms can be found at <http://owaa.org/about-owaa-skills-subject-matter-sections/>.

**Craig Bihrlle**, 2702 Tyler Parkway, Bismarck, ND, 58503. 701-214-9963. craigbihrlle@gmail.com. Communications supervisor for North Dakota Game & Fish Department; freelance writer and photographer. Skills: EOS. Subject Matter: ACLOR. (Liz) Approved for Active membership; sponsored by Nick Lowrey.

**MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS****TIM FEATHERS**

Tim recently retired from teaching art for 30 years. He took up digital photography 10 years ago. After doing portrait and wedding photography on the side, he realized his true love is combining nature and fine art photography. Much of his photography is from northern Wisconsin and Upper

Michigan and is based at Whispering Point, a 20-acre property with a lakeside log cabin that he and his wife (Renee) bought a couple of years ago.

**JIM HARRIS**

Jim is the managing editor for Arkansas Wildlife magazine. He also compiles weekly fishing and waterfowl reports and is a member of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's Facebook team monitoring correspondence with customers and answering questions through all social media outlets.

**SARA KANGAS**

Sara is the director of communications for the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). She graduated from Texas A&M with a bachelor's degree in entomology. If she's not in the office, you can find her tracking cool bugs.

**CHRIS WOOD**

Chris is the president and CEO of Trout Unlimited. Before joining TU in 2001, he was the senior policy and communications advisor to the chief of the U.S. Forest Service. He began his career as a temporary employee with the Forest Service in Idaho and also worked for the Bureau of Land Management's fish and wildlife program. He's the author and co-author of numerous papers and articles and three books.



OUTDOOR WRITERS  
ASSOCIATION  
*of America*

## OUTDOOR WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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**OUTDOORS UNLIMITED**  
December 2019/January 2020  
Vol. 80, No. 7

# Meet a member



**NAME:** Holly Endersby

**RESIDENCE:** Pollock, Idaho

**OWAA MEMBER SINCE:** 2000

I was born in Chicago but moved West for graduate school and found great outdoor adventures. Prior to becoming an outdoor writer, I was a high school vice principal and principal at two elementary and two middle schools. After early

retirement, I started outdoor writing full time but also moved into conservation advocacy jobs.

### WHAT DREW YOU TO THE FIELD?

I love being outdoors and wanted to share that passion with others. Originally my work focused on horses but gradually expanded to include fishing, hunting, snow sports and outdoor travel. It is great to engage in these activities and get paid for it.

### WHAT ENTICED YOU TO JOIN OWAA?

It was clear to me that OWAA was the premier outdoor writer's organization and by joining and making new friends and meeting supporting members my ability to sell my work would expand greatly.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OUTDOOR ACTIVITY?

I love riding my horses all summer and using them while hunting in the fall, but winter brings snowshoeing and spring and summer call for fishing and hiking: Might as well do it all.

### WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

Now I write outdoor articles for two senior publications. I'm currently putting together a piece on choosing the right Alaska fishing trip and a piece on an OWAA member, Jack Ballard, who is a prolific Montana outdoor writer.

### WHAT HAVE YOU GAINED FROM THE ORGANIZATION?

OWAA has allowed me to expand my work horizons and try areas I might never have explored. Although I started writing for magazines, I have written for radio, tv, newspapers, e-zines and co-authored a book due to skills and contacts I made at conference.

— *Holly has been an award-winning outdoor writer for 25 years, working in newspaper, magazines, TV and web-based magazines. She was the first Conservation Director for Backcountry Hunters & Anglers.*