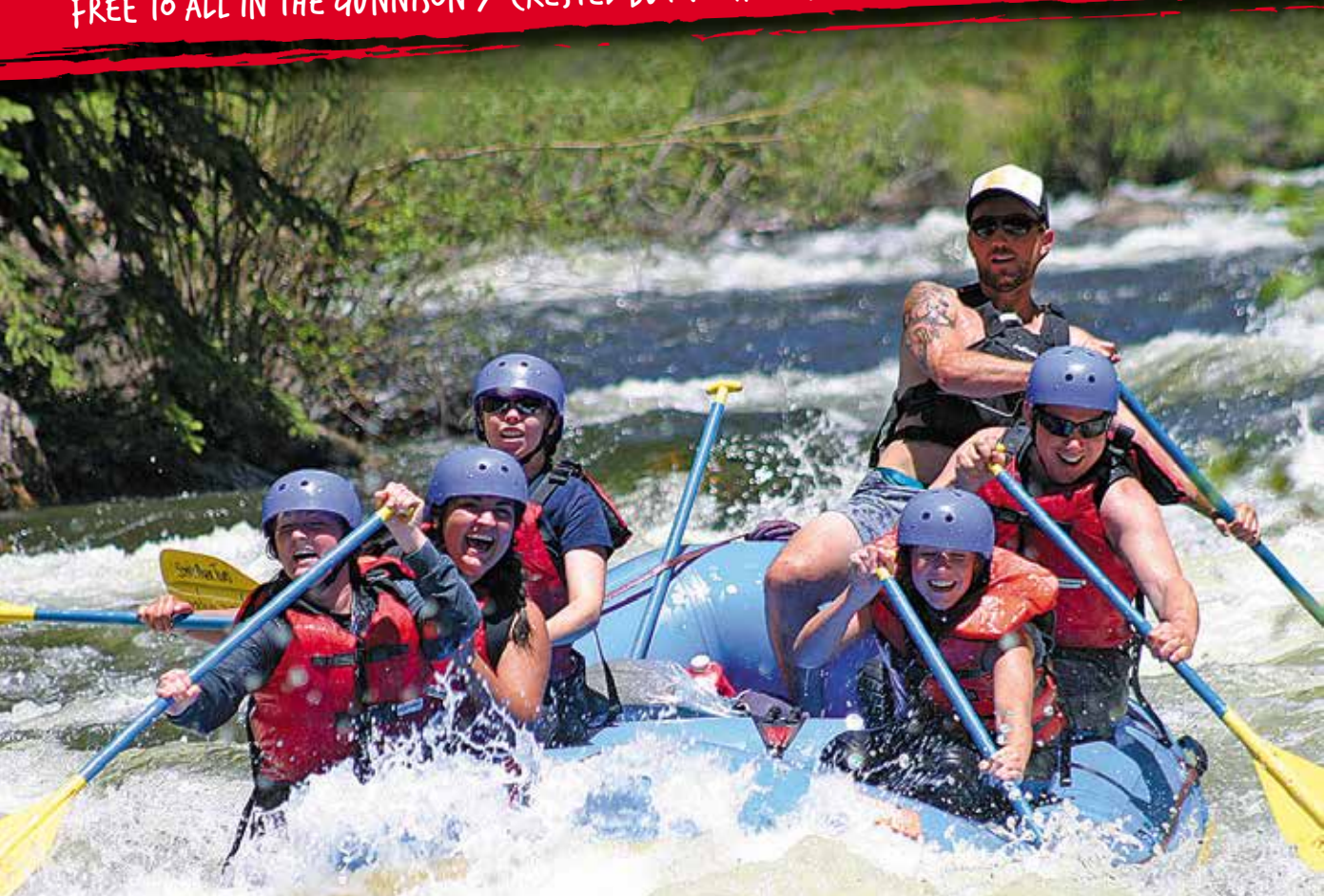


FREE TO ALL IN THE GUNNISON / CRESTED BUTTE VALLEY 2018



FAMILY ADVENTURE GUIDE



WHAT WILL YOU DO TODAY?

FISH • CAMP • RAFT • BIKE • CLIMB • HIKE • WATCH

"Miles of Smiles" Scenic River Tours Inc.



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Exciting Whitewater Trips
- Fun Family Floats
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HIKING!

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and scroll down to the Hiking button for a fabulous description of hiking trails in the valley!



HUNGRY YET?



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**DAILY LUNCH & DINNER SPECIALS
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A true Crested Butte original, named after one of our favorite ski runs on the mountain. Try our Curry Shrimp & Coconut Salad, Cajun Chicken Pasta, our San Diego-style Fish Tacos, Jerk Chicken, Steaks, and Artichoke-Cheddar Soup in a bread bowl.

Voted Crested Butte's Best Bloody Mary and Burger.

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Photo by Scenic River Tours

The Gunnison River *Whitewater* PARK

Dogs Welcome!



The Gunnison River Whitewater Park, located just west of Gunnison, is the site of the annual Gunnison River Festival in June. It is one of the city's favorite gathering places for locals and visitors to walk, picnic, fish, and, of course, enjoy the river.

It includes several manmade rock structures which create waves for rafters and kayakers. Designed to create big waves with an eddy below to recirculate the boater back around, you'll find folks playing in the river at this spot for hours on end on all sorts of watercraft. It's the perfect place to hone your river-running skills without actually going downstream for miles. These waves are always the highlight of a trip down the Gunnison River.

The Whitewater Park is a great place to relax and watch the river flow. There are restrooms, changing areas, picnic tables, and a short hiking trail, as well as several put-ins and take-outs for river runners. The Gunnison recreation path is also accessible from the Whitewater Park and Hartman Rocks Recreation Area lies to the south.

HOW TO GET HERE: Take Highway 50 west out of Gunnison. Less than a half mile out of town, you'll cross over the river and the turn to the Whitewater Park is on your left with a sign indicating the entrance. ◀



Gunnison River Festival Photo by UGWCD

15TH ANNUAL *Celebration* OF RIVERS

15th Annual "Celebration of Rivers" welcomes all water enthusiast to come paddle, compete, learn and share their passion of the river life.

This year's festival kicks off Friday evening with the Rocky Mountain Rafts Downriver Raft and Kayak Race on Taylor River and Hell's Belles live in concert at the I Bar Ranch. Enjoy the music while you compete or enjoy a taste of river recipes created in the Dutch oven Cook off. Saturday, we launch from the North Bridge on the Gunnison River honoring a local hero with the Matt Brown Memorial Family Float. This parade is open to everyone - we want to fill the river with rafts, SUPs, kayaks, duckies... down to Gunnison Whitewater Park. Whitewater action and comps in the park all afternoon - Surfing, Canine Big Air, Raft Rodeo, SUP river race, Kayak comp, Hooligan race, Education expo and Kids zone. Awards and live music wrap up the day on South Main, Gunnison, with Polyculture, mountain reggae music and beer garden. Clear smooth waters at Blue Mesa serve as a perfect venue for a Sculling Demo, Sunday morning. The public is invited to this "hands on" experience and row with the pros! ◀◀



THE GUNNISON RIVER FESTIVAL

JUNE 22- 24, 2018

RIVER FEST BLOCK PARTY IS SATURDAY NIGHT on South Main Street with **LIVEMUSIC** starting at 6:00pm

This Land is My Land, This Land is Your Land - HELP US...

The Gunnison Valley offers a tremendous wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities in a variety of beautiful settings. This is due, in large part, to the 1.8 million acres of public lands in the valley. These are your lands - managed for you by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service (NPS). It is important to remember that you share this land with all of the rest of our citizens.

The Gunnison County Commissioners have taken the wise position of opposing any attempts to privatize these lands or transfer them to state control because they understand the importance of keeping these lands available to all our citizens and managed as a valuable national treasure. The residents of the valley are also wise enough to form strong partnerships with our land managers both to have a say in how their lands are managed and to assist in the job of caring for our public lands. We encourage all the visitors to our valley to enjoy the richness of these lands and, at the same time, to join us in caring for these lands that we all benefit from.

All recreation activities have the potential to damage the resources on public lands such as soil, vegetation, wildlife & water. Taking simple steps to minimize your impacts will help ensure these values continue to be available for our enjoyment as well as for future generations.

TRAVEL LIGHTLY ON THE LAND - Vehicles give us easy access to many recreation opportunities but they also have the potential to cause a lot of damage. On all public lands in the valley vehicles and mountain bikes must stay on designated roads and trails. Fortunately there are literally thousands of miles of designated roads and trails in the valley to allow you to access recreation opportunities on your public lands. Drop by the local USFS, BLM or NPS office to find maps showing which routes are designated for each type of use. These maps are also handy in showing which lands are public and private to help you avoid trespassing problems. In Colorado, a landowner does not have to post his land boundaries to keep you out - it is your responsibility to know where you are and avoid trespassing.

LEAVE NO TRACE CAMPING - Camping is allowed just about anywhere on public lands. On NPS lands around

Blue Mesa Reservoir and on USFS lands in the Taylor River Canyon and Gothic Corridor you must camp only in the developed campgrounds. Dispersed camping is allowed just about everywhere else. If you are in a vehicle you must stay on the designated routes that lead to popular campsites or park just off designated routes. The camping limit is 14 days and you may not reside on public lands. We encourage you to become familiar with Leave No Trace guidelines to reduce your camp impacts.

FIRES - Use a stove for cooking rather than a campfire - it is easier, cleaner and a lot less smoky. If you do have a fire reduce the impacts by keeping it small - no more than 2 ft. in diameter. Use an existing fire ring if there is one rather than building a new one. Use only dead wood that is down on the ground. Use smaller fuel (about as big around as your arm) rather than big logs so that they burn completely and don't leave a mess behind. Don't leave the fire unattended or the wind could come up and start a wildfire. Be sure your fire is completely out when you leave camp. During dry summer months when the fire danger is high we sometimes have to put on a fire ban. If you are camping during that time check with agency offices to see if there are any bans in effect.

We recommend you camp at least 100 ft. from any lake or stream to avoid impacting wildlife and riparian vegetation. When you go to the bathroom away from restrooms choose a spot at least 150 ft. from water to avoid contamination. Dig a cat hole about 6 inches deep and bury your waste along with your toilet paper. Black bears are a possibility in camp so keep things clean and hang your food in a tree at night. Do not hammer nails into trees - it opens them up for infection. When you leave, pack out all your trash and remove all traces of your stay.

FISHING AND HUNTING - is regulated by the Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) agency. They set the seasons, sell licenses, and check your tags or creels. Licenses are necessary for any hunting or fishing activity and are available at several shops in the valley as well as the CPW office in Gunnison. They also have a variety of brochures to help you understand the rules and regulations so be sure to pick them up before you head out.

RESPECT OTHER VISITORS - Avoid loud voices & noises and let nature's sounds prevail. Keep control of your pets and don't let them chase wildlife or bother other visitors. Drive carefully on backcountry roads. In mountain driving uphill traffic has the right of way. On single track trails hikers should step off the trail to let horses pass and bikers should yield to both hikers and horses. Everyone is here to have a good time. Greet other visitors with hello and a smile and everyone's day will be a little brighter.

GETTING MORE INFORMATION

■ U.S. Forest Service

216 N. Colorado St. Gunnison, CO 81230
(970) 641-0471 • www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug

■ Bureau of Land Management

210 W. Spencer Ave. Suite A, Gunnison, CO 81230
(970) 642-4940 • www.co.blm.gov/gra/index.html

■ National Park Service

Elk Creek Marina - 15 miles W of Gunnison on Highway 50
(970) 641-2337 • www.nps.gov/cure

■ Colorado Parks & Wildlife

300 W. New York Ave. Gunnison, CO
(970) 641-7060 • www.wildlife.state.co.us ◀

PUBLIC LANDS TRAIL OHV INFO!



There are many special qualities about the Gunnison Valley that make living here so great, but for most it's the vast landscapes we use for recreation. Chances are, rain or shine, you're outside enjoying our public lands. Gunnison has plenty of off-roading activities, and if you're interested in ATVs, side-by-sides, dirt bikes, here's a guide to getting the most out of our extensive trail system!

4WD TRAILS

These trails are dual-track, meaning there are two tracks allowing for the passage of Jeeps, side-by-sides and other motorized vehicles with 4-wheel drive. These are some of the most common trails in our valley, and they often connect across USFS and BLM lands. The most difficult 4WD trails often require technical ability to safely navigate large rocks and steep cliffs, while the simplest of trails meander across fields and wind through forests. During the summer months, there are many hidden gems of the old frontier to be found in Taylor Park, such as Slaughterhouse Gulch, Pieplant Mill, and Lily Pond. For those looking for a challenge, there's Tincup Pass leading to St. Elmo, or Italian Creek to American Flag Mountain and Reno Ridge.

50" TRAILS

Although these trails are limited to vehicles that are 50" wide, there are still plenty of them to be found. Most ATVs are narrow enough to explore these areas, but keep in mind that they are predominately used by dirt bikes. It's important to follow trail etiquette when encountering others on the trail, which we will cover later.

SINGLE-TRACK TRAILS

Mostly used by dirt bikes and non-motorized travelers, such as mountain bikes, these trails venture deep into the Gunnison National forest. Doctor Park trail is a popular route near Spring Creek, and Timberline trail follows the trees that rim the Sawatch Range. There are absolutely NO dual-track vehicles allowed in these areas, including ATVs!

HIKING TRAILS

These trails are popularly used for foot-traffic and equestrians. Although they do exist in public lands, they are predominantly found in designated Wilderness areas. There are NO motorized vehicles of any kind allowed in Wilderness areas.

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

While these trails can seem remote and isolated, there is a high chance that you will encounter other riders

during the busiest summer months, as well as powder days on snowmobile terrain. It's crucial to remain respectful of our vast trails in order to keep them usable for everyone. Although trail etiquette applies to all recreation, this is especially important for motorized off-road vehicles. Here are some ideas to make sure our public lands are treated respectfully.

■ **Stay the Trail** - To ensure trails, creeks, and surrounding land stay intact, never go off-trail! Damage to the trail may lead to its closure while the USFS or BLM make repairs.

■ **Right of Way** - If you meet other riders on a trail, the riders going UPHILL have the right of way. Safely make room for them to pass if the trail is narrow, then continue to ride downhill.

■ **Hand Signals** - In large groups of off-road vehicles, it is important to let other groups know how many riders are in your party, especially in narrow areas or around sharp corners. The first rider in the group indicates with their fingers how many vehicles are behind them, then the last rider in the group holds up a fist to indicate they are the last. This makes sure that other groups aren't caught off guard when coming around corners.

■ **Slow Down!** - Never exceed your riding capabilities. Leave space between your vehicle and the rider in front of you to lessen the risk of a collision. Also slow down for other vehicles, livestock, equestrians and pedestrians.

■ **Headlights** - Leaving your headlights on, even in the daytime, can make you more visible to other riders. This is especially important on days when visibility is low from dust or snow.

■ **Wildlife** - Observing wildlife from a distance is one of the many perks of off-roading, but NEVER approach or disturb the animal. Moose may seem aloof and awkward, but they can become aggressive and are much faster than they look.

■ **Permits** - Off-roading vehicles MUST receive an OHV permit to be allowed on public lands! Display your sticker prominently.

We all know how important our public lands are, and we want to keep them as pristine and wonderful as we found them. So get outside, enjoy our trails any way you can, and respect the outdoors!

- Jennifer Leth ◀◀



Gunnison Valley Observatory

Photos www.gunnisonvalleyobservatory.com

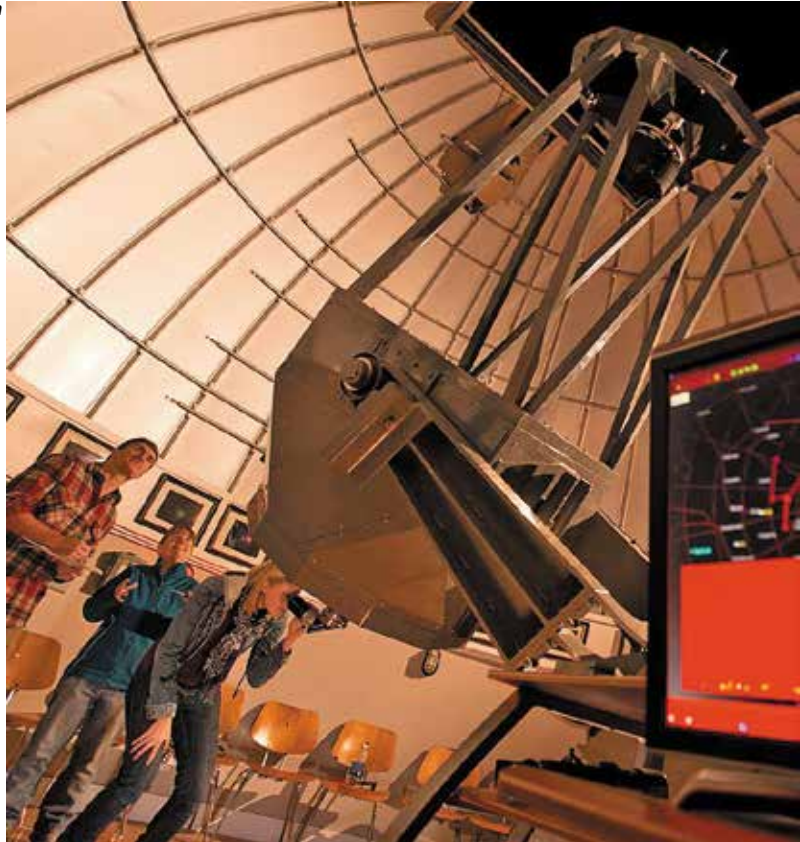
Carpe Noctem - Seize the Night

The Gunnison Valley Observatory offers a variety of activities for educators, students and the public. The Observatory is open Friday and Saturday evenings for public viewing from the second week in June through the second week in September. It opens at sunset, but the programs start at dusk, it has to be dark!

Everyone gets a chance to ascend to the dome and view a night sky object after the roll off roof is activated. They also provide smaller telescopes for viewing outside and lots of educational posters and photographs.

The Observatory is located south of Gunnison at 2804 County Rd 38 across from the Hartman Rocks Recreation Area. From Gunnison, travel west on Highway 50, turn left before crossing the Gunnison River onto County Road 38, continue around the airport runway then head south about a mile. The Observatory will be on your left inside the dirt berm.

For more information on programs and visiting the Observatory go to www.gunnisonvalleyobservatory.com or call (970) 642-1111. No reservations are required; admission is by donation. ◀◀





The family friendly Roaring Judy Fish Hatchery is 15 miles north of Gunnison on the way to Crested Butte on Hwy 135. Each year the hatchery raises and stocks almost 3.4 million fish. A cold water facility and home to the largest kokanee salmon run in the U.S., Roaring Judy raises fingerlings and catchables of kokanee salmon, cutthroat and rainbow trout.

Eggs are hatched in fresh spring water until they are big enough to be transferred to the concrete 'nurse basins' where they are still protected from predators. They are then moved to larger troughs called 'raceways', where they continue to grow until they are stocked into Colorado's lakes and streams.

The state record brown trout was caught here weighing in at just over 30 pounds! Part of the hatchery property is an 840 acre wildlife area that is a popular destination for fishing and wildlife watching. Fishing is available from dawn to dusk. No fishing from August 1 to October 31 during the Kokanee run. If you don't want to catch them, you can merely watch them swim around in the ponds!

There are several great birding trails to walk to catch sight of the songbirds like Wilson's Snipe, Yellow Warbler, Red-naped Sapsucker, Fox Sparrow, and Willow Flycatcher. You may also see raptors Red Tailed Hawks or Golden Eagles. Bald Eagles are more common in the fall through February.

Funds to maintain this amazing wildlife area come from fishing licenses. ◀◀





**Every Saturday,
9:30AM - 1:00PM
Downtown Gunnison**
Intersection of Main & Virginia.

2018 SEASON KICKS OFF!

**June 16, 2018 thru
October 27, 2018**

**EAT
LOCAL
CRESTED
BUTTE**



Every Sunday
2nd and Elk Avenue, Crested Butte
May 27th through October 7th 2018
10:00AM to 2:00PM

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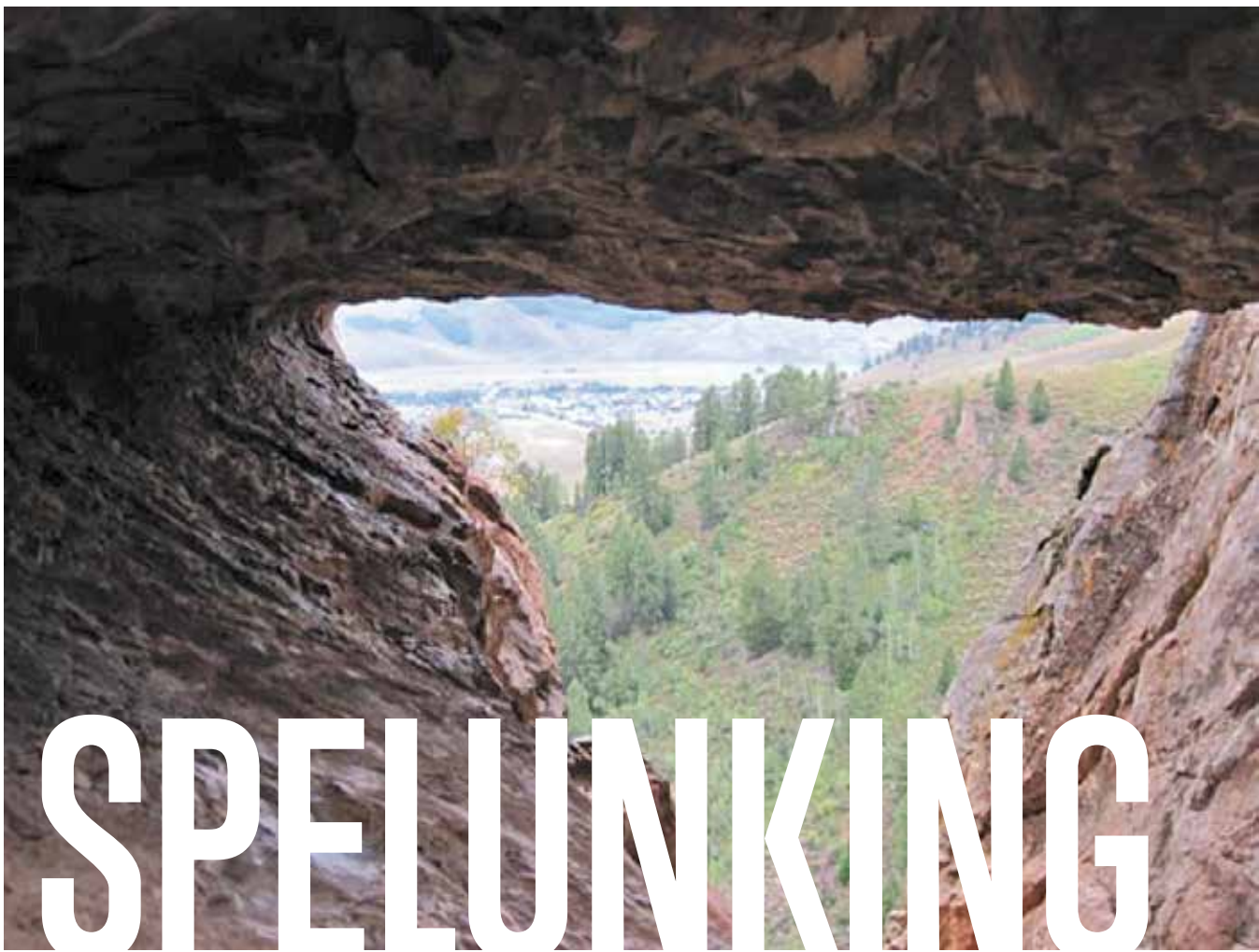
Summer Bus Schedule

May 26 - September 3, 2018

Real-Time Arrival Information

The RTA has real-time arrival information available for smartphones. Download the Transit app

NORTHBOUND											SOUTHBOUND			
Gunnison to Mt. Crested Butte											Mt. CB to Gunnison			
Gunnison Community Schools	11th & Virginia	Safeway (Spruce & Hwy 50)	Teller & Hwy 50	Western (Colorado & Ohio)	Denver & Hwy 135	Spencer & Hwy 135	Tall Texan (flag stop)	Almont (flag stop)	CB South (Red Mt. Park)	Mt. CB Transit Center	Crested Butte 4-Way	CB South (Red Mt. Park)	Almont (flag stop)	
6:30 AM	6:32 AM	6:36 AM	6:38 AM	6:40 AM	6:43 AM	6:45 AM	6:47 AM	6:55 AM	7:12 AM	6:40 AM	6:48 AM	7:00 AM	7:14 AM	
7:30 AM	7:32 AM	7:36 AM	7:38 AM	7:40 AM	7:43 AM	7:45 AM	7:47 AM	7:55 AM	8:12 AM	7:45 AM	7:53 AM	8:05 AM	8:19 AM	
8:35 AM	8:37 AM	8:41 AM	8:43 AM	8:45 AM	8:48 AM	8:50 AM	8:52 AM	9:00 AM	9:17 AM	8:45 AM	8:53 AM	9:05 AM	9:19 AM	
9:35 AM	9:37 AM	9:41 AM	9:43 AM	9:45 AM	9:48 AM	9:50 AM	9:52 AM	10:00 AM	10:17 AM	9:50 AM	9:58 AM	10:10 AM	10:24 AM	
11:00 AM	11:02 AM	11:06 AM	11:08 AM	11:10 AM	11:13 AM	11:15 AM	11:17 AM	11:25 AM	11:42 AM	12:15 PM	12:23 PM	12:35 PM	12:49 PM	
1:05 PM	1:07 PM	1:11 PM	1:13 PM	1:15 PM	1:18 PM	1:20 PM	1:22 PM	1:30 PM	1:47 PM	2:20 PM	2:28 PM	2:40 PM	2:54 PM	
3:10 PM	3:12 PM	3:16 PM	3:18 PM	3:20 PM	3:23 PM	3:25 PM	3:27 PM	3:35 PM	3:52 PM	4:30 PM	4:38 PM	4:50 PM	5:04 PM	
5:20 PM	5:22 PM	5:26 PM	5:28 PM	5:30 PM	5:33 PM	5:35 PM	5:37 PM	5:45 PM	6:02 PM	5:30 PM	5:38 PM	5:50 PM	6:04 PM	
6:20 PM	6:22 PM	6:26 PM	6:28 PM	6:30 PM	6:33 PM	6:35 PM	6:37 PM	6:45 PM	7:02 PM	6:35 PM	6:43 PM	6:55 PM	7:09 PM	
8:05 PM	8:07 PM	8:11 PM	8:13 PM	8:15 PM	8:18 PM	8:20 PM	8:22 PM	8:30 PM	8:47 PM	9:20 PM	9:28 PM	9:40 PM	9:54 PM	
10:10 PM	10:12 PM	10:16 PM	10:18 PM	10:20 PM	10:23 PM	10:25 PM	10:27 PM	10:35 PM	10:52 PM	11:25 PM	11:33 PM	11:45 PM	11:59 PM	



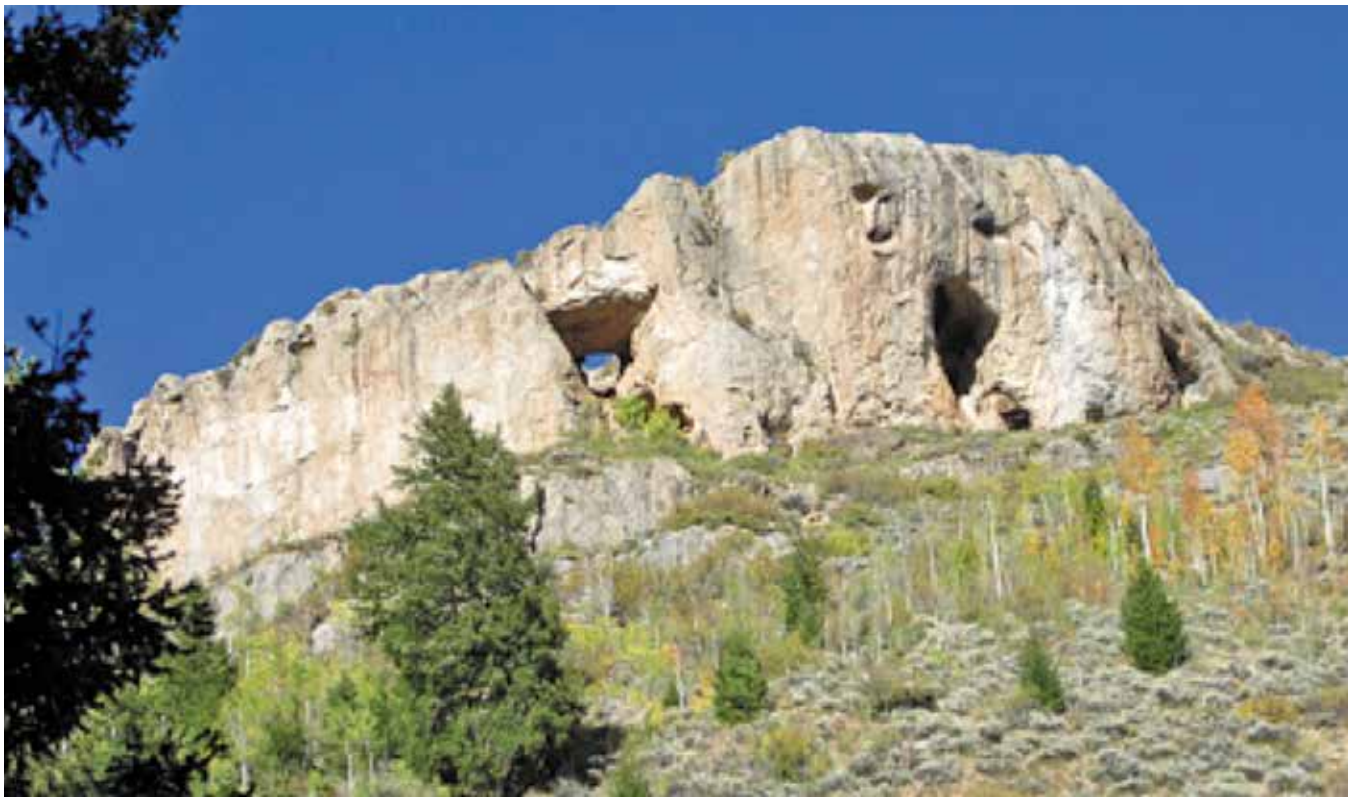
SPELUNKING

Mojave Location Database of Caves

There are several caves to be explored in Gunnison County, some easier to get to than others. The Cement Creek Caves are 1.8 miles down County Road 740 (Cement Creek Road at CB South). Parking lot is on the right, trailhead is on the left. The trail is just over 1.5 miles out and back, and it is pretty steep but the trail is good.

GUNNISON COUNTY

- **Cement Creek Caves** - White River N.F. - N38 49.655 - W106 52.054(OMS) - 500 feet of passage, 3 caves in all.
- **Crooked Grotto** - Gunnison N.F. - N38 49.722 - W106 42.211 (FC) - 90 feet of passage
- **Giant Grotto** - Gunnison N.F. - N38 49.686 - W106 42.291 (FC) - Large entrance, dig possibilities
- **Hunters Camp Cave** - Gunnison N.F. - N38 49.694 - W106 42.231 (FC) - 45 foot passage pinches out
- **Indian Shelter** - Gunnison N.F. - N38 52.302 - W107 19.841 (FC) - Can be seen from the Coal Creek road from these coordinates.
- **Signature Chamber** - Gunnison N.F. - N38 49.717 - W106 42.232 (FC) - About 100 feet of passage, one fairly large room
- **Storehouse Grotto** - Gunnison N.F. - N38 49.708 - W106 42.151 (FC) - 2 entrances, 40 feet of passage
- **Willow Creek Shelter** - Gunnison N.F. - N38 47.304 - W107 19.529 (FC) - Near Willow Creek. Has a cool column in the middle of the cave. ◀◀



Cement Creek Caves
Photos by Travel Crested Butte

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PIZZA & PASTA

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Photo courtesy of gunnisoncrestedbutte.com

BIG BLUE FESTIVAL

August 24 - August 25, 2018

Newest SUP Event on Colorado's Largest Body of Water is now happy to partner with KBUT Community Radio for a weekend of SUPing, Music and Camping (formerly the KBUT Kampout).

This weekend event is an event for all ages and abilities! Join us Saturday, August 25, 2018 for the best Stand-Up Paddleboard event in Colorado. SUP races, clinics, games, and more are all included in your admission. Put it on your calendar!

SUP Event: Old Stevens Creek day use area on Blue Mesa Reservoir. Located about 15 minutes west of Gunnison on Highway 50.

Music & Camping: at the I Bar Ranch located at 850 County Road 49, just east of Gunnison.

Getting to and from: We will be providing shuttles if you would prefer not to drive.

STANDUP PADDLING BOARDING

Stand-up paddleboarding is one of the fastest growing sports in the country. And for a good reason, it's super fun! It's also easy to do and can take you places you have never been. It is also a great workout that will improve your core strength and balance.

Blue Mesa Reservoir has 96 miles of shoreline and several great places to check out. Go early, the wind usually picks up in the afternoon and can make paddling more of a chore than the Zen like (or party like) experience it can be. The Iola Boat Ramp has parking and access to the lake, take a left off the ramp and follow the shoreline. If you are looking for a beach type access, go to the parking area on Hwy 149 just over the Lake City Bridge from Hwy 50. Depending on water levels, you can

access the river under the bridge, or head straight to the lake across the road. Dry Creek has parking and restrooms, and a beach too.

Once you've become comfortable on your SUP, you can take in the sights at the Dillon Pinnacles. You can park at the trailhead 15 miles west of Gunnison on Hwy 50, and access the lake down the boat ramp. Paddle to your right and view the pinnacles from the lake, and keep going around to the West Elk Arm and paddle up to view the pinnacles from an angle most people won't see.



Photo courtesy of gunnisoncrestedbutte.com

You can also paddle up the Lake Fork Arm by parking at the Lake Fork Marina 26.5 miles west of Gunnison. ◀◀

BURGERS N BREWS

- June 26
Jollification Project
- July 10
Cadillac Angels
- July 17
Halden Wofford & The Hi Beams
- July 24
I Draw Slow
- July 31
Jackson Melnick
- August 7
Tony Furtado
- August 14
Coral Creek
- August 21
Kids of the Gunnison Valley

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COAL CREEK DISTILLERY AND IRWIN BREWING CO.

CASTLE CREEK GUITARS

2018 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES



CLASSIC COLORADO

- June 19
Striking Matches
- June 22
Hell's Belles
- July 3
Shenandoah
- July 5
The Wailers
- July 12
Dale Watson and His Lone Stars
- July 18
Michael Martin Murphey
- July 25
Sawyer Brown
- August 1
Asleep at the Wheel
- August 10
The Bellamy Bros
- August 12
The Motet
- August 16
Pure Prairie League

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Titos • Turner Automotive • Western State Colorado University



RAFTING



Photo by Scenic River Tours

Rivers are the recreational lifeblood of the Gunnison Country. Whether you're looking for fast whitewater action, easy family floating, or something in between, there's a river section for you. Rafting, kayaking, and even stand-up paddle boarding are very popular with locals and visitors alike, and are close and convenient to Gunnison, Crested Butte, and Lake City.

What is it that draws people back over and over to float the Gunnison Country's beautiful rivers? There's just something magical about river running that seems to get in the blood. Moving along at nature's pace, sometimes fast and exciting, other times slow and thoughtful, you become a part of the surroundings. You see things from a different point of view. The canyon walls look bigger, the colors more vibrant. Thoughts of the real world fade from memory as you become immersed in the river's natural beauty, splendor, and the wonder of what is to come around the next bend.

Here are some of the most popular river segments to float in the area.

THE GUNNISON RIVER is a favorite of just about everyone. Starting in Almont, the Gunnison runs 25 miles to Blue Mesa Reservoir, skirting the town of Gunnison about halfway down and then plunging through the exciting Gunnison Whitewater Park before entering the Curecanti National Recreation Area. This is a relatively easy section (class I-II+), although scouting is advised for inexperienced boaters at the Whitewater Park during high water.

Public put-ins and take-outs are available at Almont, the North Bridge on Highway 135, West Tomichi

Riverway, the Whitewater Park in Gunnison, McCabe's Lane, and Wilson's Landing, just upstream of Blue Mesa Reservoir. Trips can range from an hour to all day depending on your route. The most scenic section of the Gunnison is from North Bridge to McCabes Lane and lasts about two hours. This is a great trip for novices, families with young children, or those just wanting an easier trip.

THE TAYLOR RIVER starts high on the Continental Divide and runs into Taylor Reservoir. Releases from the reservoir ensure great water levels for rafting and kayaking all summer long on both the Taylor and Gunnison rivers. The Upper Taylor is a small, steep, fast class III-IV section with trip lengths from two hours to all day, while the Lower Taylor from Five-mile Bridge to Almont is the easier section (class II+). The Forest Service has river access sites with restrooms at the upper put-in, South Bank, and Five-mile Bridge.

THE LAKE FORK of the Gunnison starts high in the San Juan Mountains and runs north into Blue Mesa Reservoir. The Lake Fork relies on snowmelt for water and comes on fast and furious in the spring. The Lake Fork rafting season starts in May and generally lasts through early July. There are two main runs on the Lake Fork. The first section, called "the box," is a class I-II+ run through a beautiful canyon lasting about three hours. The Red Bridge section is an exhilarating run of class III-IV rapids and is about two hours long. This is one of the least traveled rivers in our state because of its remoteness and short rafting season, but is well worth the effort.

For the true adrenaline junkies, there are class V kayak runs on the Slate, Oh-Be-Joyful, and East Rivers

▶▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Scenic River Tours Guided Fishing Trips



Scenic River Tours offers guided fishing trips on over 181 miles of rivers and streams, and 17 miles of lakes and reservoir shorelines in the Taylor and Cebolla Ranger Districts alone. We are also permitted on the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River, and on Taylor Reservoir. Rainbow, Brown, Brook Trout and Cutthroats are the most common species found here. You will also encounter big Pikes in the reservoir.

Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, Brook Trout and Cutthroat. Access Gold Medal stretches for a peaceful yet exhilarating Colorado fly fishing experience.

See more at: <http://www.gunnisoncrestedbutte.com/activities/spring/recreation-sports/fishing>

We enjoy teaching beginners, and our guides are also in tune with the most seasoned anglers and can show you productive waters.

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above Crested Butte. These are truly expert-only sections with dangerous drops and waterfalls that should only be attempted by expert kayakers. Kayakers from around the country gather each June for the Oh-Be-Joyful kayak race, this year on June 16th starting at 1pm.”

With so many different river sections to run, visitors should seek information from a local outfitter to find the section that best meets their needs and experience level.

Scenic River Tours in Gunnison has over 30 years of commercial river-running experience in the Gunnison area. They are happy to answer any questions you might have about the area’s rivers, including trip difficulty, trip lengths, water levels, and private property issues. They offer a wide variety of rafting and kayaking trips for all ages and abilities and also have a shuttle service for private river runners.

Scenic River Tour’s Gunnison office has a full gear shop and rental fleet for the do-it-yourselfers.

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BIRDING

IN THE GUNNISON VALLEY

by Arden Anderson

Wildlife watching is one of the most popular outdoor activities in the country and the same is true in the Gunnison Valley. Young and old alike love to see native wildlife in their natural habitat. But wildlife isn't just made up of deer and elk and bighorn sheep. By far the most numerous, the most colorful and the easiest to observe species of wildlife around are our feathered friends. It is this fact that encourages millions of people each year to grab some binoculars, invest in a field guide and wander through a variety of outdoor habitats in search of birds. For some folks birdwatching, also known as birding, is a sidelight while they do other activities and for others it is the primary reason for the trip. Whatever your motivation, birding gives you an excuse to look at the natural world a little closer and this is always an interesting experience. When you go slow enough to look and listen for birds you end up seeing, hearing and learning a whole lot more.

Since birds are so mobile it helps to have binoculars to see them from a distance. You often hear birds

before you see them so it is best to walk quietly so you can hear that faint chirp that alerts you that something is nearby. Use your eyes as well as your ears. Look for unusual movement in the vegetation. Gravity will draw a falling leaf or branch downward but if you see movement to the side or up you know it is something moving under its own power.

Birds are easy to appreciate just for their beauty but if you want a little intellectual challenge use a guidebook to put a name on the species you see. This is easy for some birds like the large, slow flying and distinctively colored Black Billed Magpie. It can be much more challenging to see the subtle differences between the grays and browns of some fast moving sparrow species. Sometimes you have to combine careful observation with the habitat they are in and the song that you hear to come up with a correct identification.

Just like all wildlife, birds are tied to habitats that provide them good opportunities for food, water, shelter and nesting. If you want to see a variety of birds it helps to visit a



variety of habitats. Some of the major habitat types you can visit around here are sagebrush hills, cottonwood riparian, aspen, Ponderosa Pine, Spruce/Fir and Alpine. As a rule, higher elevation areas tend to support fewer different species of birds than lowland areas. But over the years more than 270 species of birds have been seen in the valley and our high altitude habitats support species that aren't commonly seen elsewhere. These include Gunnison Sage Grouse, Dippers, White Tailed Ptarmigan, and all 3 varieties of Rosy Finches.

Here are some suggested areas to look for birds in a variety of habitats:

■ **NEVERSINK** - a Park Service picnic area with a hiking trail in Cottonwood Riparian along the Gunnison River. It is located just south of Highway 50 about 5 miles west of Gunnison.

■ **MCCABE LANE WETLANDS** - the ponds and willows in this small area attract migrating waterfowl and other riparian species. Drive about 4 miles west of Gunnison on Highway 50 turn left on County Road 32, cross the bridge over the Gunnison River then look for the left turn into a small parking lot with a sign for the wetlands.

■ **GOLD BASIN ROAD** - a 15 mile (4 on pavement, 11 on dirt) road passable by 2 wheel drive vehicles that crosses Sagebrush, Ponderosa and Aspen habitats. Look for Gunnison Sage Grouse in the drainages especially around mile 7 to 10. To get there, drive just west of Gunnison and just before crossing the Gunnison River bridges turn left (south) on County Road 38.

■ **RAINBOW LAKE ROAD** - about 12 miles of well maintained dirt road that traverses a variety of habitat types including Sagebrush, Willow riparian, Aspen, & Spruce. Hiking into the West Elk Wilderness from the end of the road can take you up to the Alpine zone to look for Rosy Finches and Ptarmigan. To get there drive west on Hwy 50 about 14 miles to a large dirt road heading north.

■ **BLUE MESA RESERVOIR** - the largest lake in Colorado attracts a variety of water birds particularly during the Spring and Fall Migration. It is located along Hwy 50 west of Gunnison.

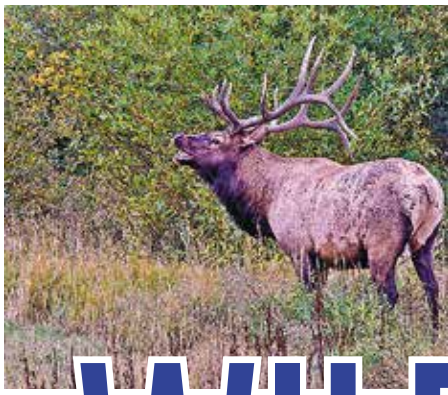
■ **TAYLOR RIVER TO CUMBERLAND PASS LOOP** - this scenic drive is suitable for 2 wheel drive vehicles though it is

dirt road for half its length. You go north of Gunnison 10 miles to Almont and turn right onto the Taylor River Road. Continue on up to Taylor Park Reservoir and turn on the wide dirt road toward Tincup. Continue thru Tincup, over Cumberland Pass, down through Pitkin to Highway 50 and turn right to return to Gunnison. Along the way you will pass Aspen, Lodgepole Pine and Spruce Forest, riverside riparian, lake and alpine habitats. Be sure to look for bighorn sheep north of the Taylor River in the first 5 miles beyond Almont.

At the Forest Service office at 216 N. Colorado St. in Gunnison you can pick up a free checklist for the birds of the valley that tells you what species occur here, how common they are, what time of year they are here and which habitats they are found in. Happy birding. ◀◀

Rob & Dani Wattles
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All photos by Arden Anderson

WILDLIFE WATCHING

in the Gunnison Valley

by Arden Anderson

A highlight of any trip to the Gunnison Valley is an unexpected meeting with some of the other creatures that make this valley their home. Another article talks about finding birds in this area so this piece will give you some tips on connecting with other wildlife species - particularly mammals. Despite the abundance of good habitat and healthy wildlife populations in this area many of these mammals have a natural tendency to avoid people so they are not often easy to see. Here are some tips that may help increase your chances of a close encounter with our furry neighbors.

First, some general tips:

Get Up Early - in the Spring, Summer and Fall many mammal species have a general pattern of being active in the early morning and late afternoon and resting during the middle of the day. You will have the most luck seeing them if you follow these patterns. These times also offer the best light for photographing the animals you see.

Travel Quietly - animals usually have great hearing and know the noises associated with people. You will have the most luck spotting wildlife if you park your vehicle and get out to walk. While you walk be as quiet



as you can both with your talking and your footsteps. Keep your pets under control to avoid scaring wildlife away.

Visit a Variety of Habitats - different species are adapted to different habitats. Learn a bit about the species you are searching for to figure out the best place to look for them. Rich riparian areas along streams are home to Raccoon, Mink, Muskrat, Beaver and Moose. Sagebrush shrublands are favored by prairie dogs, badger, coyote and Pronghorn. Forested lands provide food and cover for Squirrels, Chipmunks, Weasels, Marten, Mule Deer and Elk. Rocky slopes & meadows are preferred by Bighorn Sheep. Alpine tundra above tree line is used by Marmots, Pika and Mountain Goat.

With those thoughts in mind let's look at a few of the larger mammals you might run into.

Elk or Wapiti - we have large populations of this herbivore in the valley but they tend to avoid people and aren't easy to find. During the summer they usually spend their time in the higher forests. Morning and evening see them going into open meadows or above tree line to graze on grasses. During the middle of the day they are more commonly found resting in cool forested areas. Use your binoculars to try to spot them before they spot you.

Mule Deer - this shrub eater is smaller than elk and tends to favor lower elevations. A few can be seen grazing around town in Gunnison or in the open fields along the highways. Also look for them at about 8,500 ft. and above particularly on the edge of aspen forests. Some will go up to tree line at about 11,500 ft. They are less cautious

than elk and more commonly seen. They also follow the tendency to be more active in the morning and evening.

Bighorn Sheep - this iconic symbol of the Rocky Mountains feels most at home in open rocky country and nearby meadows. In this basin their populations are very localized. The best places to look for them include small herds on the north side of Blue Mesa Reservoir just east of the middle bridge, the Almont area (north of Gunnison) north of the Taylor River in the first few miles of the Taylor River Road and the upper part of Cochetopa Canyon (Highway 114 east of Gunnison) around mile marker 16. Again early morning and late afternoon are the best times to look.

Moose - reintroduced into the Valley about 25 years ago these large herbivores have a small but healthy population. They favor the willows found in wet riparian areas. They are usually solitary or a cow with a calf. They wander prodigiously and could be anywhere in the valley.

Mountain Goat - small and isolated populations tend to live above tree line. They are tough to find but your best chance may be hiking the ridges up from the top of Cottonwood Pass up by Taylor Park.

Black Bear - occur singly or in small family groups and favor forested areas from 8,000 ft. to tree line. It is rare to run across a bear unless you are careless with your food while you are camping. Remove temptation by keeping food in your car or tied up in a tree at night. ◀



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