

## Let's welcome fall

My personal body clock has never been able to align with the seasons. Although it is true Colorado has a problem recognizing seasons, it can also be a problem for me. Where else can it be warm and rainy in December and snow during mid-May? Mother Nature can absorb some of the blame as to why my seasoned clock is always screwed up.

When I was a kid, Colorado schools let out for "summer vacation" the first week of June. Summer meant all the normal fun things, like swimming and tubing in the creek. Somehow, Mother Nature never got the word that "summer vacation" was here, because the temperature of that creek was about 34 degrees. The snow that fed that creek probably melted just a few hours before we dove in. Obviously it was summer in name only. Real summer does not arrive until July.

As I age, my clock is still not in line with the seasons. Here we are with fall well underway, and my body still feels like summer and perhaps some of you suffer from the same plight. There are some very good reasons for the problems your system has adjusting to the season and why you may not feel up to par.

Fall is the time for cooler evenings and shorter days, as the daily amount of sunshine decreases. People are talking nonstop about football, hunting and a score of fall activities. The reduced sunlight can affect you from your mood to your sleep.

The sun sits lower in the sky during the autumn. Couple that with more overcast days, and you have more sunlight reflected away from the earth's surface, resulting in even less light penetration.

Apparently I am not the only sufferer who does not adjust to seasons very well. According to a study from Harvard Medical School, most people sleep



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



Fall is a beautiful time to be in Colorado, with leaves turning color and skies being overcast and the temperatures cooler. Fall also affects people's sleep and general mood, as well as eating habits. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

more in October than any other month of the year. The study showed people sleep an average of 2.7 hours more per day because of a condition known as hypersomnia, which is the opposite of insomnia.

When the sun's ultraviolet rays hit your eyes, a chemical reaction occurs that controls your circadian sleep rhythms. The shift in sun exposure can knock your sleep cycle off for a few weeks while your body adjusts.

As sunlight hits your skin, it fortifies your vitamin D levels. With shorter days — and we spend less time outdoors during the fall — the lack of sunlight makes your level of vitamin D become depleted. This shortage can leave you feeling tired.

Some folks will develop a seasonal effective disorder, which is a fancy way of saying "depressed." A study at St. Joseph's Hospital in Canada found a direct link to vitamin D and your mood. The study found that depressed women who took a vitamin D supplement for 12 weeks experienced a significant lift in spirits.

If all the problems with sleep and mood aren't enough, the National Institute of Mental Health says

we eat more carbs in the fall. The cooler weather must trick your mind into thinking you need to pile on some calories for the winter, just like an animal heading into hibernation. At least I now have an excuse to overeat and can blame it on the seasons.

Cheer up because the onset of fall is not all bad as your brain can see significant benefits with the cooler weather. Scorching summer heat causes problems with your memory, temper and ability to solve problems. As your body works to cool itself, it draws energy away from your brain, undercutting its ability to operate properly.

As for me, fall represents the end to those days where the temperatures ranged from unbearable to unbelievable. Fall is also hunting season and that means I will not be around town much but will spend more time outdoors. Here is to hoping you enjoy your fall, but if not, cheer up, it will be snowing soon.

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## Tracking down ancient ruins

My compatriots, Brian Haas and Rand Greubel, and I had driven deep into the backcountry of the Uncompahgre Plateau.

As we descended along a rocky two track we exited the deep woods that obscured the rugged canyons that are known as "the Escalante."

Before us was a grand vista of high mesas and vermilion cliffs with the Grand Mesa on the distant horizon. Our goal was an ancient and almost forgotten prehistoric ruin made of dry-laid rock.

From a vantage point above one of Escalante Creek's major forks we scanned the terrain below for any hints to the whereabouts of the archaeological site. We had some pretty good directions, but in rugged canyon country features such as an Indian ruin could hide in plain sight.

After a few minutes of scoping out the landscape we located a rocky area below us that had the characteristics of a ruin. The two-track snaked down to the canyon floor; we pulled off on a short spur, parked our vehicles, and began hiking toward the



### Outdoors

By Bill Harris

suspected ruin.

Throughout the years I have developed a strong interest in the history and prehistory of western Colorado. To scratch that itch, I joined the Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS) in 1984. The Chipeta Chapter is the Montrose affiliate of CAS and has been around since 1935. I went on as many of the chapter's field trips as I could to learn where the local archaeological sites were.

Beyond learning where many sites were located, I was introduced to the early-day archaeologists who did the first fieldwork in western Colorado. A list of early-day archaeologists includes C.T. Hurst, founder of CAS, Robert Lister, Marie Wormington, J.A. Jeancon, the Woodburys

and Harold and Betty Huscher.

I became interested in the work of the Huschers through my interactions with archaeologist and historian Steve Baker, president of Centuries Research Inc., and long-time CAS member, Carlyle "Squint" Moore. Squint befriended Harold Huscher during the 1930s when Huscher lived in Roubideau Canyon. Baker became acquainted with Huscher during his graduate school years in the 1970s.

The archaeological site Brian, Rand and I were trying to locate was one that the Huschers had investigated between 1939 and 1941. It is one of nine sites on the Western Slope that the Huschers highlighted in their important article "Hogans Builders of Colorado" that was published in "Southwestern Lore" in 1943.

After bushwhacking through sagebrush, serviceberry and scrub oak, we found the site; two adjacent structures with low dry-laid rock walls. After inspecting the ruin and combing the ground around it for

artifacts, we recorded the site's location, did some measurements and photographed the site's features.

Artifacts associated with these sites include sherds of pottery linked to the Ancestral Puebloan culture of southwest Colorado. The pottery types and radio-carbon dates obtained from these ruins place their occupation in the 10th and 11th centuries.

Were these people migrants from the Four

Corners, or a separate culture influenced by their neighbors? Prehistoric corn found buried in a Montrose County West End rock shelter was dated at around 400 B.C. The cultural prehistory of western Colorado is complex, presenting archaeologists with lots of questions.

Our understanding of ancient cultures has evolved over the last 70 years. Revisiting sites and reexamining the artifacts from these sites

that were studied during an era when they were initially discovered by archaeologists provides additional insight into the lifeway of those prehistoric civilizations.

For me, the best part is getting into the backcountry and experiencing the landscape as those people did over a thousand years ago.

Bill Harris has traveled the back country of the Colorado Plateau since 1976 and is author of "Bicycling the Uncompahgre Plateau."

### If you go

Visiting archaeological sites should be done with great caution, so as not to inadvertently damage them. Disturbing sites such as digging for artifacts is illegal, and taking artifacts removes valuable clues to interpreting sites. The Chipeta Chapter conducts regular field trips to archaeological sites, but you must be a member to go on them. The chapter meets on the third Wednesday of most months at the Montrose United Methodist Church.

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