



Trees are ring barked long before they are harvested, a practice evolved of the economy of effort needed to eek out a living from hard land. the wood seasons standing and dries making it half the weight, a bit of lateral thinking!



Beech with bilberry



The wood working skills of these Romanian villagers is outstanding



Fomitopsis pinicola a.k.a the red banded polypore, common on broadleaf and spruce in the region (here on *Fagus sylvatica*)



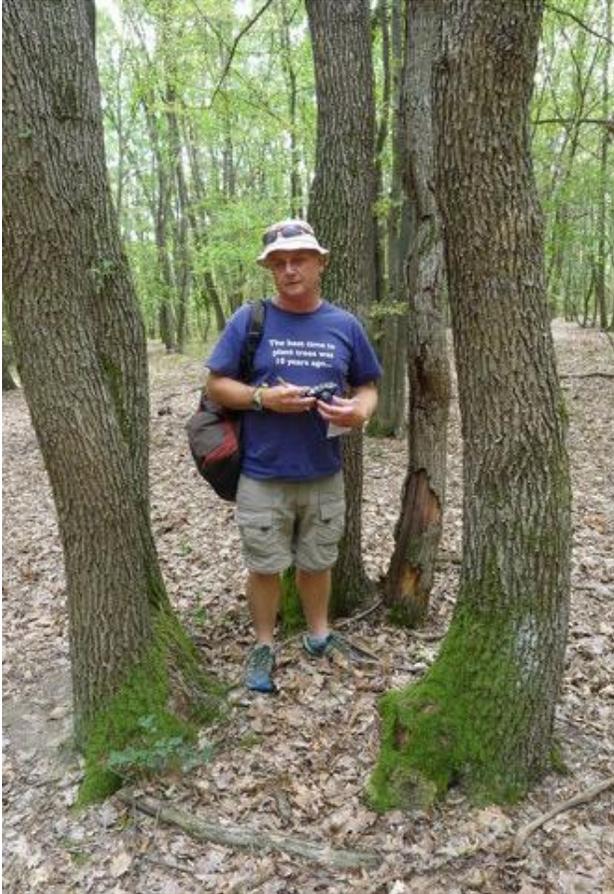
These *Fagus* are ring barked as described (different times) one is now ready to be harvested for use, the other in another year or so.



Bilberries doing well in a forest clearing created by felling



Fagus with *F. fommentarius*



The tree hunter my ol mate Rob McBride standing in amongst regrowth from a felled Q. petrea, which made up the majority of this particular woodland.



Nothing is wasted, the wood stack to the left is strips from the offcuts from milling timber, they will be used for many items, the bark covered outer planks are often used to create fencing boards. The stack further to the rear is produced from pollards and has many uses.



This scene shows the high pastures used for hay production, cattle never graze here, they are taken to higher pastures, these hay meadows reserved purely for winter feed production. This produces a rich wildflower habitat where butterflies and many species of Grass hopper thrive.



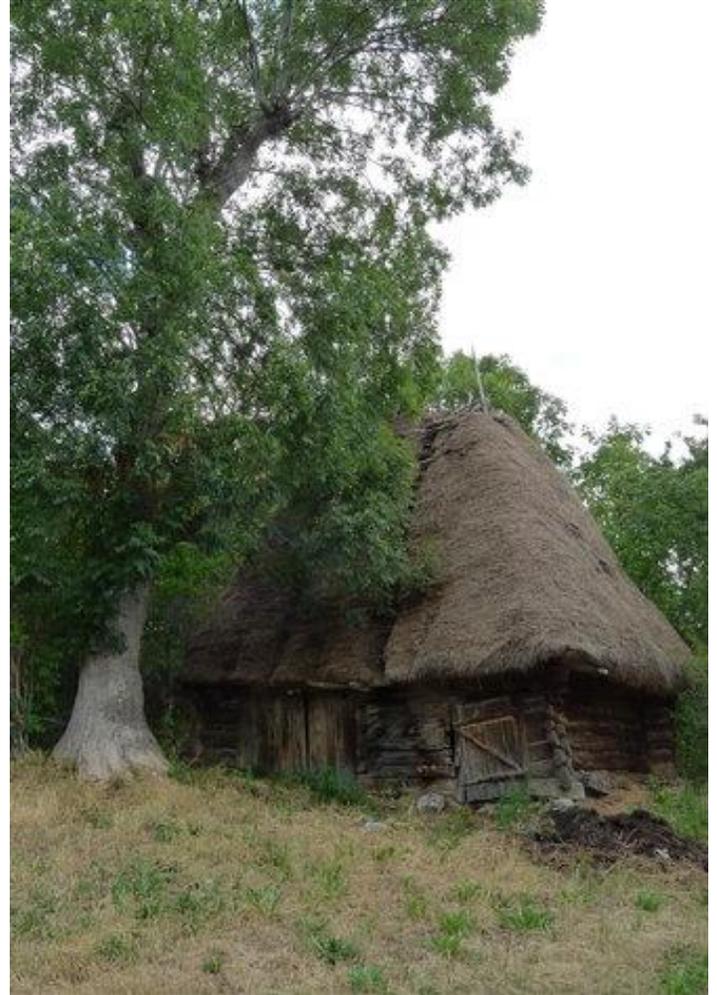
Willow pollard close to homestead and a typical Romanian haystack, brought down from the high meadow to be kept close to the overwintering cattle as snow in winter means getting out is impossible, everything is based close to home in preparation for the snow



There are so many skills to preserve, tapestry is a common theme.



Even an old Hay fork broken has a use! recycling taken to extremes is a common theme.



Everything is done for economy of movements; here an Ash (F. excelsior) pollard used to supplement winter hay stocks is right next to the barn the cows are kept in overwinter, keeping transport to a minimum.





[Re: Romainia - Mountain Forests](#)

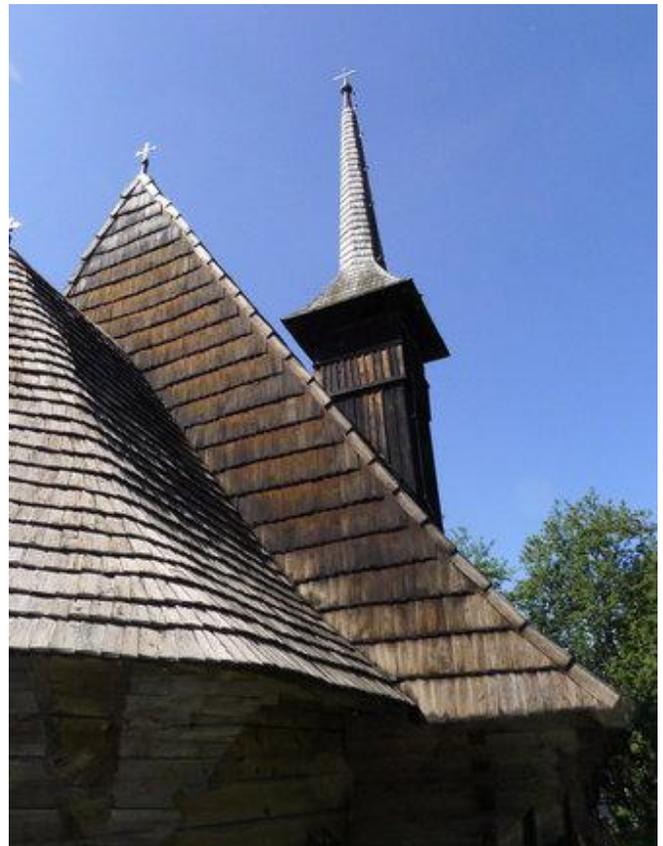
by **hamadryad** » Sun Aug 12, 2012 4:28 pm

James Parton wrote: *I have worked with two guys from Romania and one woman. It makes for interesting conversation. The Carpathian culture looks not much different from the Appalachian one I know. They do things more as we used to do a few decades back. Thatched barns I don't think were ever common here though wood shingled barns were.*



Typical beech regeneration on the mountains.

Anthony Croft



From what I saw wooden slates were also common and suspect this came later, and was more common in the valley depths as opposed to high on the hillsides here. modern tiles also making an appearance, probably introduced by the Turks/Romans?

Anthony Croft

[Kip and Laura's Place](#)

by **dbhguru** » Sun Aug 12, 2012 5:01 pm

NTS, The attached Word File provides an account of Monic's and my stay in Durango, CO, from June 26th until July 20th. Both Monica and I loved the time we spent taking care of Kip and Laura Stransky's house. But the account covers much more. Hope it is enjoyable.

 [Kip and Laura's Place.doc](#) (2.15 MiB)

Robert T. Leverett

Kip and Laura's Place

By Bob Leverett

(with editorial emendations by Monica Leverett)

Introduction

For the past 7 years, save 2007, Monica and I have made a trip from our home in Florence, MA, to the Rocky Mountain West. We have special places we visit on the way, and we add a few new locations each trip, but our main focus are sites in Colorado and Wyoming. For me, the western excursions are more than a serial stream of vacations; they are a necessity. I need the open spaces of the West, the high, dry air, the mountains, the canyons, and the uncluttered roads. I need high light levels, and freedom from the noise and congestion of the East, which I find increasingly claustrophobic. Monica is most understanding of my need to go west, so around

the middle of June, off we go. Well, it isn't quite that simple. Let me explain.

We're not rich, so budgeting for a long trip presents us with challenges. Or at least, that would be the case were it not for some extraordinary friends. We often house sit for two to four weeks, and that reduces our expense to a manageable level. This past June 26th to July 20th, we "house-sat" for friends, Kip and Laura Stransky, in Durango, Colorado. This is the account of our experiences during that time period.

Durango and Environs

Durango is in the Rockies, but that doesn't peg it precisely, because the Rocky Mountains encompass a vast geographical area. They are considered to be one of the longest mountain chains on the planet – extending over 3,000 miles, and the terrain is very varied. The Rockies are generally dated to between 55 and 80 million years before the present. This was the main uplift, called the Laramide Orogeny, but, as we see them today, the individual ranges weren't uplifted all at the same time. Ages of today's ranges vary from as young as nine million years (Grand Tetons) to as old as eighty. In fact, the Rockies aren't a range of mountains, but a chain of ranges and sub-ranges with varying geological histories, dating back to a common origin – I think. Local names prevail throughout. In southwestern Colorado, we find the San Juans. Their origin is considered to be around twenty-five million years before the present. They were our destination. Durango is located in the shadows of the San Juan Mountains and their sub-ranges, the combination of which comprises Colorado's most extensive mountainous region. The San Juans boast thirteen peaks rising to the elevation of 14,000 feet – fourteeners, as they are called in Colorado. Colorado has 53 or 54, which is all of them for the Rockies. Outside Colorado, Wyoming's Gannett Peak comes closest to reaching the hallowed threshold at 13,804 feet (NAVD 29). Beyond the fourteeners, the San Juans boast the largest geographical area of land over 10,000 feet within the lower 48 states plus Hawaii.

With the San Juans as a backdrop, the town of Durango sits at an altitude of 6,512 feet, or so the sign says when you reach the city limits. I don't know where that elevation was taken, perhaps at the courthouse. The Animas River runs through Durango, and has its lowest elevation, somewhat below 6,400 feet, at the southern boundary. Elsewhere around Durango, ridges and mountains are everywhere to be seen. Elevations range from about 6,400 to over 7,000 feet within the settled area of Durango. Raider Ridge east of Fort Lewis College has points over 7,000 feet. Animas City Mountain is 8,163 feet and is part of Durango, although not a settled part.

Outside the town to the north, the land builds up in elevation following the scenic Animas River Valley until the San Juans are encountered. U.S. 550 crosses 10,640-foot Coal Bank Pass and 10,910-foot Molas Pass on its way to the historic mining town of Silverton. To the west, U.S. 160 climbs to about 8,400 feet going to the small town of Mancos. This is also the route to Mesa Verde National Park. Eastward, U.S. 160 ambles for a number of miles, crossing a small outlier range of the San Juans called the HDs. It is a long haul to snowy Wolf Creek pass at 10,860 feet and down to the wide San Luis Valley, largest high mountain valley in North America.

When you drive into Durango, via U.S. 160, from east or west, you see that the town is almost encircled by mountains. U.S. 550 South is the only direct route that allows one to avoid a significant mountain pass with winter implications. The closest Interstate in Colorado is I-70, which is around 150 miles distant. Lack of an Interstate is often considered a drawback to living in Durango, but in my view, the lack of a throughway like I-70 is a blessing. It keeps Durango from being too convenient, thus preserving some of the region's culture and history that would otherwise eventually be swallowed up in development such as is seen on the eastern front of the Rockies. The kind of development that has exploded in the Denver corridor gobbles up open space, and conditions the population to a lifestyle that is distinctly urban with all the negative implications. So far, Durango has escaped that menace. I hope that doesn't change.

Kip and Laura's Place

One area near the southern border of Durango lies on what is called Florida (pronounced Flo-REE-da) Mesa, which is bounded by the Animas River to the west and the Florida River to the east. Kip and Laura live on the mesa, just off U.S. Route 550. Their property ends on a steep bank going down to the flood plain of the Animas River. My GPS gave the elevation as 6,630 feet. Kip and Laura's home is a place of sweeping panoramas. Looking westward, beyond the Animas River lies the La Plata sub-range of the San Juans. The mountains visible directly from the house rise to almost 13,000 feet. So, the view from the kitchen is a picture window classic, morning, noon, or evening. And the sunsets are often vivid. I'll present the first image from Kip and Laura's place as a not untypical sunset that we observed. It produced contemplative feelings that gave us cause to think about what is really important in life – musings about quality over quantity, simplicity over complexity, and space over sprawl.



I should point out that the climate on the Florida Mesa varies greatly. I can't speak to the winters, but during summer, it can be hot in the day. However, the evenings cool off, usually into the mid-50s. That's good sleeping weather and there is usually a breeze that wafts in, billowing out the curtains on the south and west sides of the bedroom.

Here is another view from behind Kip and Laura's house emphasizing the sunsets. The high peak in the left side of the image is 12,790-foot Lewis Mountain, named for a Lieutenant Colonel killed in the Indian wars of the region. Durango's Fort Lewis College is also named for the good colonel.



Now for a daytime view looking northward. In the next image, the main part of Durango lies in the basin near the center of the photo and extending to the left. The vegetation in the immediate foreground includes pinyon pine, juniper, and native grasses. Kip keeps a substantial level of cover for the small animals that can make use of it, e.g. rabbits.

I should explain that attention to wildlife needs on the property fits with Kip's background with the Colorado Division of Wildlife. In retirement, he's able to pursue his gardening impulses, but he never strays far from his roots. He's been known to deposit a deer carcass behind his house so he and Laura can watch mountain lions feed. I think that is just pretty darn cool.



So far, I have focused mainly on the land surrounding Kip and Laura's place. But I'd like to bring their actual home to life as Monica and I experienced it over the course of the nearly four weeks we stayed there. From here on, I'll refer to the place as KLP, i.e. Kip and Laura's Place.

KLP is not merely a house or a home in any of the conventional uses of the term. KLP is a vegetative and wildlife sanctuary. The physical house is immersed in nature. It offers an intimate connection to the surrounding vegetation, wildlife, and scenery of the region while providing the comforts of a physical structure that is welcoming and convenient without sacrificing its connectivity to the Earth. That is a mouthful, but I hope it conveys the difference between how most of us live and KLP. Here is an example. We could look out a window virtually any day and often witness a scene such as the following.



We could go out on the deck and watch the wildlife from an even closer vantage point. The deck is mainly on the north side of the house, but a corridor wraps around to the west side that provides access to bird feeders.

Monica loved the deck. In the mornings she enjoyed her first cup of coffee sitting out there. She was surrounded by Kip's flowers arranged in pots (she kept them well watered), pinyons with avian life, an apricot tree that provided fruit during our stay sufficient to feed all Durango, and a partial view of distant mountains. Some homeowners might fear the close proximity of the pinyons that lean over the house, but they act as extensions of the house, providing a transition from indoors to out-of-doors, a surprisingly seamless transition. Then there is the apricot tree on the east side of the main deck.

I developed a special relationship with that apricot tree. I would go out in the morning and find a fresh supply of apricots strewn around the deck and walkway, which I would dutifully sweep up. Next morning would be a repeat. One morning, I grew weary of the cleanup and said some choice words to the fecund apricot tree, then went indoors to get a broom. Upon returning, the tree immediately dropped two apricots squarely on my head as I stepped out the door. I got the message. Nice, nice apricot tree.

Here is a look at the deck. Notice the green hose. That was Monica's job. You can also see some apricots in the upper right corner.

I observe that homeowners throughout Durango may also see deer in their yards, but the deer might or might not be welcome. But in KLP, the deer are an integral part of the environment – co-residents. So are raccoons and other smaller animals, and occasionally, a mountain lion will pay the property a visit. In fact, one made swift work of 17 chickens in the chicken coup on one occasion when Laura went to check on them. You take the good with the challenging.



I don't want to leave the impression that KLP is untrammelled nature. Kip is a master gardener and the house is surrounded by exquisite floral displays. In addition, apricot trees uncharacteristically blend with pinyons and junipers to provide a more domestic ambiance. Down stairs, Laura has a piano and organ. Plenty of refinement. But, you quickly comes to realize that everything cooperates with everything else in a way that makes you feel as if you are simultaneously one with the land, one with the house, and one with the wildlife. Neither Monica nor I could ever recall experiencing anything quite like the feelings that we had, and of course the spiritual imprint of Kip and Laura permeates all corners.

The Daily Routine

In addition to maintaining a presence, our role in house sitting was to care for the two cats, which we came to love, feed the chickens, collect their eggs, feed the birds, feed the fish, and do a not inconsiderable amount of watering. Oh yes, and to periodically make a run to get fresh water for the house since the well does not produce enough to support cooking, bathing, cleaning, etc. Kip has a truck and a 250-gallon tank and also a trailer with a 500-gallon tank. Leery of the trailer, I used the truck and the 250-gallon tank. Monica and I worked as a team. We felt accomplished in our maintaining potable water for the house, and also learned a thing or two about water conservation. Laura had given us some hints before she and Kip left for China.

I should mention that irrigation water is used from the ranch across the road to provide for watering the outdoor plants. I had to keep a filter clean and to be sure to follow a protocol that kept all areas sufficiently watered. I got pretty good at it, if I do say so. It gave me a feeling of contributing and earning my keep. Then the deer ate all of Kip's lilies and I felt that I had somehow let KLP down.

However, it is all part of the cycle. Kip and Laura enjoy the flowers when they have them and then are gracious in surrendering the delicate blossoms to a different cause. They are not trying to control nature or sterilize their surrounding so that they become separated from the natural surroundings. That's what most of us do, but it isn't Kip and Laura's way.

One of the main reasons to house sit was to provide companionship to the cats. The two cats, Eddie and Pippin, are both characters. They are inside cats although they have a large area in which to roam, including two outdoor spaces that are fenced to prevent escape.

Eddie was named by one of Kip and Laura's high school exchange students, who decided he was special – Special Ed. It didn't take Eddie long to own me body and soul. He was master and I was his vassal. He was laid back, and I had no fear of being scratched. If there was a possibility of food or a treat, Eddie was there in a heartbeat, earning our nickname for him of "Fast Eddie." He also was quite enterprising: he learned how to open the greenhouse door if it wasn't locked, and had artistically "improved" the outdoor screen door trying to get out to be with us. He just wanted to be with people.

Pippin was a different story. He had issues, and was definitely a slightly anxious, though lovable, cat. He made quite an impression on Monica, who came to understand him and his personality and his needs in a deep way. Pippin has gorgeous green eyes, and likes to be a meditative sphinx with front paws extended. I liked Pippin, but was always wary of him. He would lie on his side, wanting his back scratched, but once that operation commenced, he sometimes changed his mind, and would suddenly take a swipe at me. I learned to be ready to quickly pull back. Yet he was always happy to see us, and clearly liked getting attention. Sometimes we sang to him. We both miss

the cats even now. They are an integral part of the energy signature of KLP, and help make the place what it is.

Monica was supremely disciplined about our chores. Once up in the morning, she in soldierly fashion assigned us our duties. On a typical day, I started our morning coffee and retrieved the paper. I would then go across the road and insure that the irrigation water was running and that a cow had not stepped on the filter. I'd clean it, then return and get watering underway. We'd have our morning walk down the road. The same dogs always barked, and across the road was a field with a small prairie dog town. That's something you don't see every day, at least next to your house. We would watch them scurry around.

After our walk, we'd collect the chicken food and go feed the girls, as I called them. I usually collected the eggs because a couple of the girls pecked a little, and that made Monica nervous. Upon return, we'd have fresh eggs and some scrumptious bacon from Nature's Oasis organic foods store – one of the best we've ever shopped. It was about a maximum of fifteen minutes from egg retrieval to the cooking pan. Now that, folks, is the meaning of fresh.

On our morning walks, we'd look over across the Animas River Valley and contemplate the view. The cool dry air of the morning made me feel pretty chipper. By contrast, a walk around the block here in Florence in the humid air is more of a chore. I miss our morning Florida Mesa walks.

I was especially interested in the topography. The nearer ridges on the other side of the valley reach elevations of around 8,200 feet. The valley floor is about 6,400 feet. Farther distant, the high peaks of the La Platas rise to elevations of 11,000 to nearly 13,000 feet. The mix of closer and more distant peaks produces a range of colors and textures that constantly beckoned to be photographed. In time I identified every major peak, using topographical maps and a compass. I am compulsive about knowing the landmarks.

I would be remiss if I didn't discuss Kip and Laura's bed. It sounds like that might be a little too personal, but their bed is unique. Kip and Laura are both tall

people, especially Kip. The windows in their bedroom are fairly high, and both want to be able to see out when lying in bed. So they built up the bed. In fact, they built it up so high that they had to give us shorties makeshift stools so that we could climb aboard. Once in bed, it seemed a long way to the floor. I worried about rolling out for a night or two, but then settled in just fine. The payoff is definitely there. A delightful nightly breeze would come in and we could see out to the clouds, moon and stars. It felt so wholesome. The nights were a wonderful experience, and I still think about them. I vote for Kip and Laura's bed for top sleeping arrangement of the year.

Side Trips

While house sitting, we took some side trips, and I hosted a tree-measuring event that involved the Durango Herald newspaper, Laser Technology Inc. from Denver, the U.S. Forest Service, and Great Old Broads for Wilderness. The event was organized to re-measure three champion trees, the tallest of their species in Colorado, and perhaps the entire Rocky Mountain chain, if western Idaho is excluded. First was a Rocky Mountain Ponderosa Pine at 160.6 feet in height. Second was a Rocky Mountain Douglas Fir at 160.1 feet in height. The third was a Colorado Blue Spruce at 159.0 feet in height. All are extraordinary trees. Steve Colburn, North American Sales Director for LTI, helped in the measurement. The event was an even greater success because of Laurie Swisher, old growth specialist for the San Juan National Forest. Laurie contributed greatly in identifying species and age characteristics, and in confirming ages of 3 of the trees. After our outing, Laurie returned to core two of the three trees we measured. The pine is 270 years old. The spruce is 227. Laurie also aged a large Ponderosa that we passed on the trail at between 380 and 390 years. Combining Laurie's tree ages with our heights established a precedent. Hopefully, a partnership is developing between the Western Native Tree Society (WNTS) and the Forest Service to document notable trees in the San Juans. It is the kind of partnership I've been seeking, since I want our WNTS data to count for something. Through Laurie, I think it will. Oh, yes, and we made the front page of the Herald.

Monica and I also went up Goulding Creek in the La Platas with visiting friends Dr. Nancy Weiss and Carol Wise. We did the trip twice. The objective on the second trip was the confirmation of the height of a Colorado Blue Spruce that I'd discovered on the second visit. We were also accompanied by Associate Executive Director of "Great Old Broads for Wilderness", Rose Chilcoat. Rose had been a nature interpreter at Mesa Verde NP and had held positions within the U.S. Forest Service. She earned her way that day by driving off some pesky cattle from the trail and one intimidating bull. She used a high-pitched call that sent the bovines scurrying. She had obviously cleared cattle from a trail countless times in the Forest Service, and was none too pleased at the presence of the bull, which apparently is a violation of Forest Service rules. The cattle can overgraze the high mountain meadows, creating ecological problems. It is an issue on the plate of the Great Old Broads. By the way, Monica and I both joined Great Old Broads while in Durango. I'm known as a Great Old Bro. Whew! I still watch my phraseology when addressing one of the ladies. But what great ladies they are.

The trail up Goulding Creek starts at 7,890 feet and continues to slightly over 10,000 feet. We stopped at 9,435 feet to allow me to measure an exceptional Colorado Blue Spruce that turned out to be 150 feet tall on the button. Its 10.2-foot girth made it impressive tree both up close and from a distance. It represented the 4th Colorado Blue I've measured to over 150 feet in height.

But the trek was not only about trees. The views on the way up were the eye-grabbers. Here is a scene looking back at one of the Hermosa Cliffs and beyond across the Animas River Valley and into Missionary Ridge. An aspen trunk is on the right.



Here are four views near the point we turned around. We're in alpine tundra. The first image looks back on the trail. The tiny figure in the background, center is Monica.

The most scenic of our side trips was a climb part way up 12,972-foot Engineer Mountain. We combined scenery with outstanding tree confirmations by yours truly. First, I'll present my confirmations. I measured a 135-foot tall Englemann Spruce growing at an altitude of 11,050 feet. For me that is a record height for the altitude for any species. And so far as I know, it is a record for the entire Rocky Mountain biome at 11,000 feet or more. And just below Coal Bank Pass, there is an Englemann Spruce I re-measure every year that is now 142.0 feet in height. It grows at an altitude of 10,560 feet or two miles. This is also a record height for the altitude. In fact, I could generate a half dozen more height records for the respective altitudes in the San Juans. Where might they receive competition? At the altitudes quoted, it won't be farther north. And I doubt that New Mexico to the south can better the numbers, being drier and hotter. How can I be so sure? Going farther north, the timberline drops dramatically, so that you don't get trees at all at 11,000 feet when you hit Wyoming. In southern Montana, the timberline is around 10,000 feet, and so on.



One of the most attractive features of the San Juans is their multicolored rock strata. You can see it in the photograph below. The peaks in the center right are well above 13,000 feet. You pass them on the west when crossing 10,222-foot Lizard Head Pass on part of the San Juan Scenic Byway. Last year Monica and I camped at Lizard Head and gazed into the western slopes of the mountains seen in the image.

While I measured trees, Monica documented the wild flowers. For Monica, the wild flowers alone on Engineer Mountain made our trip worthwhile. We would like to have gone to the top, but we decided that our conditioning wasn't up to trying to make it, so we called it quits at 11,850 feet for me, and 11,800 for Monica. Last year, we turned around at 11,600 feet. Next year?



Turning the camera around 180 degrees, the West Needle Mountains dominate the skyline. They reach altitudes of 13,200 feet and slightly more. Beyond them are the Needle Mountains crowned by three fourteeners, Eolus, Sunlight, and Windom.

When taking the Durango to Silverton scenic railway, the route follows the Animas River through a spectacular gorge that threads its way between the West needles and the Needles. Monica and I have taken the trip twice, and will likely take it again next summer.

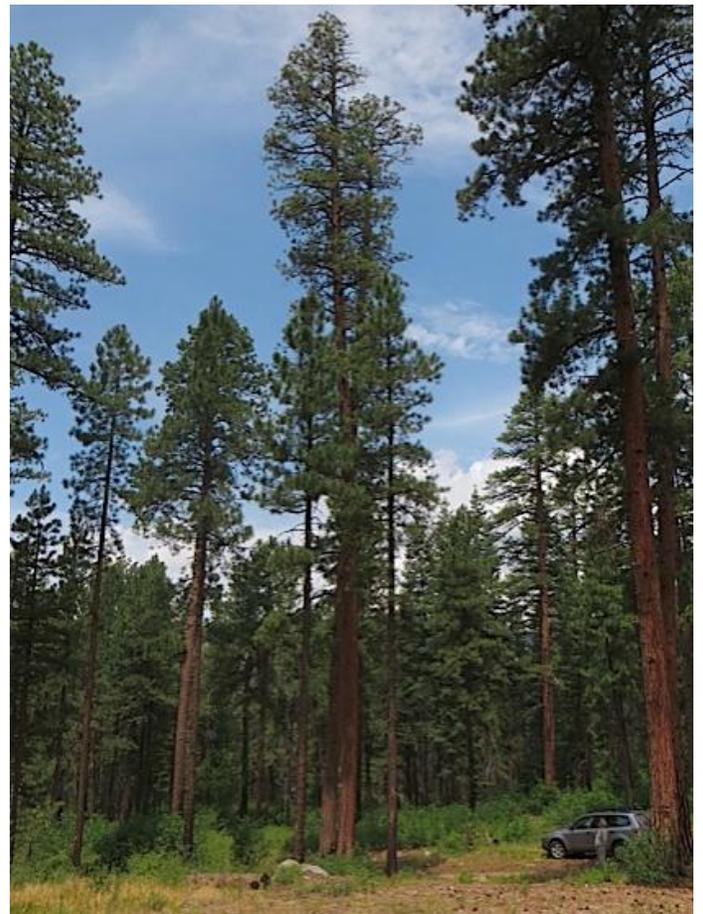


And now to the flowers. Indian Paintbrush anyone? The color of the paintbrush growing high on Engineer is spectacular. There are other species growing in the meadows, but the paintbrush steals the show. The image below highlights the paintbrush. The peak is Engineer.

While in the meadow, we met some people who had met other people who had seen large bear tracks across a snowfield down the ridge to the left in the second photograph. There aren't supposed to be any grizzlies in the San Juans, but reports occasionally come in from people who swear that they've seen one. The San Juans are vast. Who knows?



On another side trip, we went to Vallecito Reservoir east of Durango. There is a series of U.S. Forest Service campgrounds near the shores of the reservoir that I had been directed toward to hunt for large Ponderosa Pines, and one in particular that was purportedly around 13 feet in girth. The best I could find was one that measured 11.4 feet in circumference. However, I did find lots of old pines and some fairly tall ones. Two reach 135 feet in height, which appears to be the maximum for that region. Many of the older pines top out at between 110 and 125 feet, but they experience some kind of growth barrier after that and quit going upward. A third Ponderosa inside a campground made 131 feet. It is shown in the center of the photograph below. Monica and our Subaru are in the image for scale.



The pines often look shorter than they are because their needles are long and that makes the tops appear closer to the observer. One develops a feel for tree height by subconsciously evaluating a variety of distance and shape factors. It is a species-dependent

talent. Each species has a visual signature that provides clues as to girth and height as seen from varying distances. Friends of mine such as NTS president Will Blozan possess a sharper eye than I have, though I'm not bad. Will often estimates the height of trees to a foot or two of measured height – or even closer.

A Dose of Culture

Our side trips were not all nature oriented. We visited the famous Strater Hotel to hear Honky-tonk piano at the Diamond Belle Saloon. The Strater was a favorite place of western novelist Louis L'Amour because the piano music inspired him in his western literary recreations. Evidently, he always asked for Room 222 directly above the saloon. We got to hear Johnny Maddox play, which would have been a treat had it not been for an obnoxious group at an adjoining table. Political discussions don't go well with ragtime piano music, but we still managed to get a demonstration of Maddox's talents still lively in his late 80s. You can Google Johnny Maddox to learn about his distinguished career. Oh yes, and the Strater claims its share of old hotel ghosts. The ghosts all seem to have a lingering awareness of their commercial contributions, and decide to stick around as opposed to moving toward the light. And finally, there's always a connection, real or imagined, forged between these old hotels and Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. That famous pair did get around. Who knows?

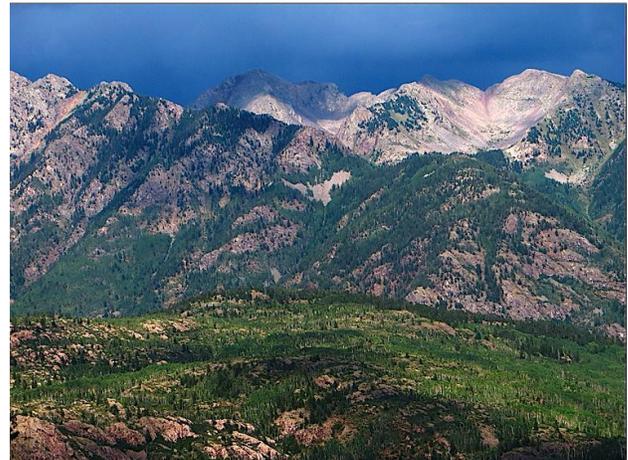
We also attended several concerts put on as part of the Music in the Mountains Festival held at Durango Mountain Ski Resort. We attended one concert with Dick White and Faye Schrater., and the other with Steve and Bea Colburn. We also attended Dick and Foxie Mason's 30th wedding anniversary. Dick and Foxie have a beautiful home at the base of an imposing wall of cliffs. Our friends Dr. Nancy Weiss and Carol Wise were able to join us at the celebration. Carol is a former fund raiser with TNC, and an incredibly good one. She wasted no time promoting my article that was on the front page of the Durango Herald, and before I knew it, I was getting invitations from ranchers to outfit Monica and me for trail rides to search for more big trees. Carol

accomplished in minutes what I could not have done in days.

We socialized with our dear friends Paul and Beverly Dittmer and Dick White and Faye Schrater. Dick and Faye are responsible for Durango becoming our other home, since they arranged the first of our many house-sitting assignments. Dick will be mayor of Durango next year, and we will be house-sitting for Dick and Faye for three weeks next summer. We owe much to the Dittmers for connecting us to the organizers of Music in the Mountains, and others.

Monica also used our visit to reconnect with friend and composer Katy Freiberger. Katy is from Dallas, Texas, but owns a home in Durango. She is a jewel and has introduced Monica to many members of Music in the Mountains. Monica is presently working with a student in the Five College area to get a performance of Katy's award-winning song cycle "The Coffee-Pot Face."

I'll close our social activities with a scene looking eastward from Durango Mountain while at a concert. The weather was building up to a storm and the color palette presented to us with reflections from the clouds, mountains, rocks, and vegetation. The mountains are the West Needles.



Looking Back on Our Time at KLP

Many people have comfortable homes and artfully landscaped yards. We have a beautiful home in Florence, MA, and people constantly comment on how good it feels. The same can be said for the homes of many of our friends. Everybody's home is

special in some way, but for Monica and me, KLP was just what we needed for the time and circumstances – a healing environment close to Mother Earth.

In KLP, Kip and Laura have created a sanctuary that embodies their values in a variety of ways. For years, they have served as surrogate parents to foreign high school exchange students. They have hosted students from Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America. The students quickly take to Kip and Laura and come to consider them their “other parents”. Pictures of Kip and Laura’s “other children” hang on a wall and keep memories fresh. Other artifacts adorn the walls, and the pantry shelves hold foods with unreadable labels in kanji and cyrillic script.

Kip and Laura are known for their mission work, so it comes as no surprise to their friends when visitors speak of them in glowing terms. Simply stated, Kip and Laura have big hearts with room for all, and by all, I mean denizens of the non-human as well as human world. At KLP, all critters are welcome. For instance, Kip is an accomplished birder. So, as one might expect, KLP has several bird feeders, and they are functional. Hummingbirds are a given, and we fed black-chinned, broad-tailed and rufous hummingbirds while we were there. We really got to know black-headed grosbeaks, a new bird for us Easterners, and we saw an occasional oriole. Laura calls in and feeds the crows every morning, but we didn’t master her technique. I sounded more like a buzzard than a crow. Monica did much better, but still only succeeded in getting some crows one morning. However, in Kip and Laura’s view, if the raccoons get the bird food, so be it, and they did more than once while we were there. The effect of the inclusiveness is a wonderful ambience that creates a mutual bonding of species. We had never experienced anything quite like it. Would we house-sit for Kip and Laura again? Absolutely.

The conclusion we came to from our experiences is that KLP is hallowed ground that has absorbed Kip’s and Laura’s qualities as caretakers. But I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge that those qualities are a reflection of Kip and Laura’s religion. They are members of a local Lutheran church, which we have come to recognize as a community of gentle souls

who walk the talk. Monica has played for the congregation at Sunday services. Although Monica and I are not church-goers at this point in our lives, if we were, Kip and Laura’s church is the one we’d both choose.

I grew up in the southern Bible Belt where every Sunday I heard sermons that were often more militant than loving. Many sermons come across as unnecessarily judgmental, and the radio and television sermons were, in truth, obnoxious. They still are. Big evangelical egos supplanted real spiritual feeling. I got fed up with the pretense and drifted away from regular attendance. But Kip and Laura and their church are the real deal, and KLP fully reflects their spirit. Thanks to Kip and Laura for a wonderful time at KLP. Both Monica and I carry the memories of those sunsets and thirst for more. Health allowing, next year we’ll stand on some Durango mesa and gaze again into that dazzling evening spectacle.

I’ll now close with a final Florida Mesa sunset. It vividly states what no words from me can accurately convey.



Robert Leverett

[Green and Yampa River - Dinosaur National Monument, CO](#)

by **dbhguru** » Sun Aug 12, 2012 8:04 pm

Mark, Thanks. Glad you enjoyed it. The possibilities in colorful Colorado are endlessly deep.

After we left Durango, we went back to Crestone and then up to Dinosaur. Attached is an image from Monica's iPad that we took while in the national monument. The contorted geology is revealed so clearly. The river is 2,550 vertical feet below us. One heck of a view and the other side of the narrow ridge we were on has an equally impressive view. Heck, everything is impressive. Oh yes, please double click on the image to expand it. Looks so much better.



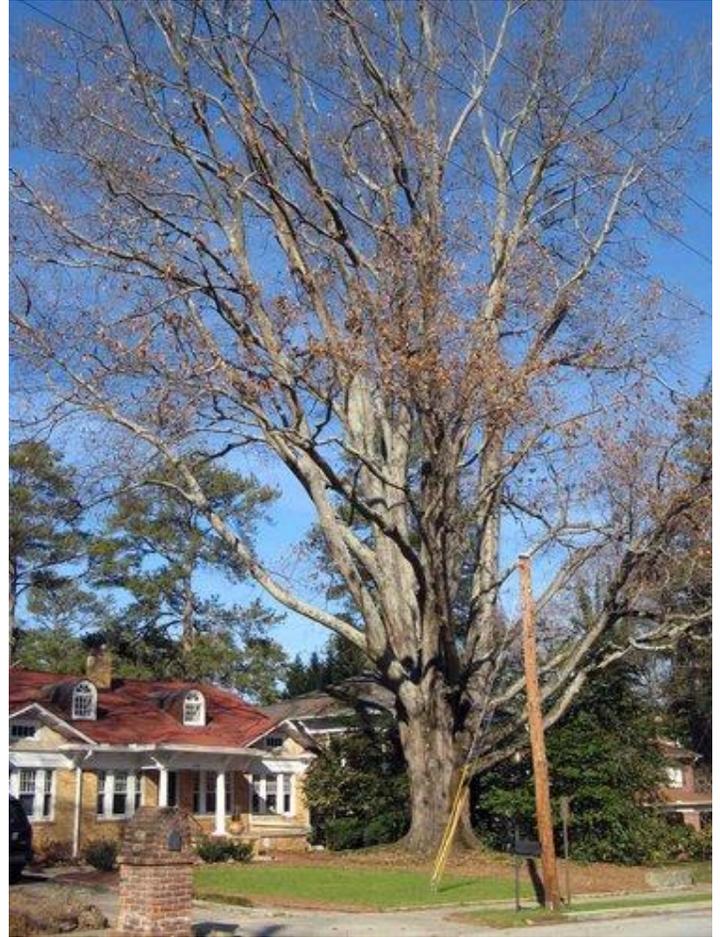
Robert T. Leverett

[Once again, LARGE SIZE doesn't equal OLD AGE, \(GA\)](#)

by **eliahd24** » Tue Aug 14, 2012 12:01 pm

Hello NTS family. It is with some sadness that I write to let you know that a Georgia state champion Oak has recently come down. It was located on private property just beside Emory University in Atlanta, GA. It had a large (widening) split in the

crown and coming down the trunk. I had previously identified it as Northern Red, though upon closer inspection I believe it may have been a Black Oak. Regardless, it is now dead. It was truly a beast at 20'1" cbh x 123.4' tall x 115' spread.



Grand (young) oak

But the real reason I'm writing is to let you know just how young this tree was. It took 3 days to remove the giant crown and trunk of this tree. At the end of the 3rd day, all that remained was a 3 foot high stump that was big enough to serve as a stage for the homeowners kids to play on. I was able to locate a single defined pith and counted 88 rings from bark to pith. I figured I'd round up and call it 90 total. 90 years old and 20 FEET in circumference! Some of those rings were nearly 1" apart! This bad boy was putting on 4+ inches of girth per year in some years.

The guesses of its age were consistently around 150-170 by most folks (novices and experts alike). We all thought it was pre-Civil war, but no. Not even close!

So, once again the amazing growing ability of an open grown oak tree in a region with 50" rain/year is shown. And large size does NOT equal old age!

Oh and here's a link to a YouTube video I took during the last stages of trunk removal:

http://youtu.be/ONdW9dVPy_E

Eli Dickerson

[Stray Photographs from the Western US](#)

by **dbhguru** » Mon Aug 13, 2012 8:53 am

NTS,

I'm sorting through the photos I took with Monica's iPad and wanted to share a few. The iPad's camera does a good job of dealing with high light levels with a mix of shadows. Attached is an image from our first hike up onto the Diamond in the Medicine Bow Mountains of southeastern Wyoming. The Diamond is one of the points you hike to from Lake Marie. Its elevation is 11,720 feet. I'm sending a higher pixel version than I normally include. Double clicking on the attachment will expand it so that the full detail can be seen. I expect all of you know to do that, but some photos posted to the BBS are very low resolution and don't expand.

The Medicine Bow range is one of Monica's and my favorite locations. The alpine zone of the mountains is highly accessible, and incredibly photogenic. At 12,013 feet, Medicine Bow Peak is the highest point in the Snowy Range part of the Medicine Bows. The range extends into Colorado where Mount Zirkel is the highest point at slightly over 12,200 feet. Interestingly, the continental divide runs through the next range to the west of the Medicine Bows, the Sierra Madres. That range is actually lower than the Medicine Bow.

The highest part of the Wyoming Medicine Bow is named the Snowy Range, however, that isn't because of snow, but the brilliant, white quartzite rock that caps the range. It is visible for miles and is usually mistaken for snow. However, the Snowy Range does get quite a bit of snow. I think somewhere between 200 and 300 inches annually.

There once lived a subspecies of bison called the mountain bison and it roamed the Medicine Bow. Old bleached bones have been found. Very interesting. Also, as one might expect, the Medicine Bow were sacred to Native Americans. It goes with the territory.

The University of Wyoming at Laramie has a mountaineering school of some sort. They use the Snowy Range as a training ground. Technical climbs of 1,000 vertical feet are possible, and there is the remains of an old airplane crash on the side of Medicine Bow Peak. Can't remember when it occurred, but parts of the aircraft can still be seen.

On our climb up Medicine Bow Peak everyone we encountered was in excellent physical condition (no surprise there). It was inspiring to see so many bronzed, fit people. There are no tourist trap places around the area, so you see mainly people who come to hike. Most refreshing.



Robert T. Leverett

Re: Kip and Laura's Place, CO

by dbhguru » Mon Aug 13, 2012 11:33 am

Larry Tucei wrote: Bob, Mark is so correct your writing is outstanding as usual. The photos were also good and from your description KLP sounds like a great place to be. I plan on coming out next summer. Hopefully I can help you with some tree discoveries and whatever else you many need.

Larry, Sooooooper Doooper! We'll have a blast, and we'll have lots of folks ready to help us locate big trees. Biff Stransky was a Forest Service employee in recreation. He knows where many big trees are that he says are a must to see. We've just begun our exploration of Colorado's La Platas. Sky's the limit. Here's another stray photograph. It is on the side of Engineer Mountain. Engineer will be one of the destinations next year to see if we can improve on 135 feet at 11,050 feet.



Robert T. Leverett

Bulletin of the ENTS, Volume 7, No. 2, Spring 2012

Edited by Don Bragg Mon Aug 13, 2012 5:54 pm

Bulletin of the Eastern Native Tree Society, Volume 7, No. 2, Spring 2012

http://www.nativetreesociety.org/bulletin/b7_2/B_ENTS_v07_02.pdf

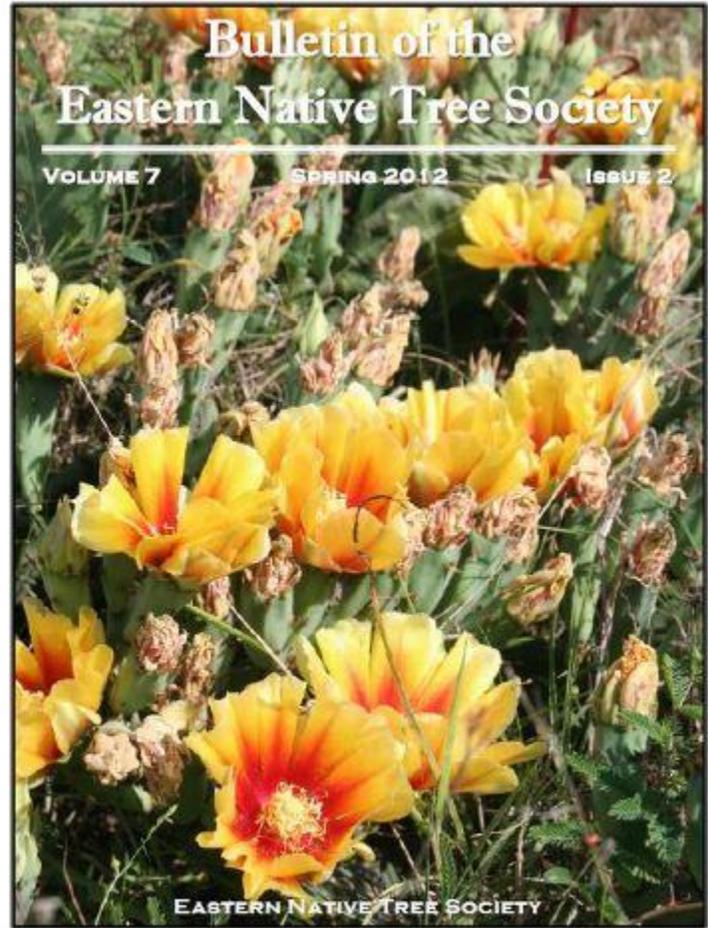


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Those interested in reproducing materials (articles or photographs) from the Bulletin of the Eastern Native Tree Society should contact either the Editor-in-Chief or individual

would be candidates for submission. So everyone - get off the dime and write up your research findings.

Edward Frank

SCOPE OF MATERIAL

The Bulletin of the Eastern Native Tree Society accepts solicited and unsolicited submissions of many different types, from quasi-technical field reports to poetry, from peer-reviewed scientific papers to digital photographs of trees and forests. This diverse set of offerings also necessitates that (1) contributors specifically identify what type of submission they are providing; (2) all submissions should follow the standards and guidelines for publication in the Bulletin; and (3) the submission must be new and original material or be accompanied by all appropriate permissions by the copyright holder. All authors also agree to bear the responsibility of securing any required permissions, and further certify that they have not engaged in any type of plagiarism or illegal activity regarding the material they are submitting.

For complete submission instructions see the latest issue of the Bulletin: <http://www.ents-bbs.org/viewtopic.php?f=17&t=4416>

Bulletin Articles Needed

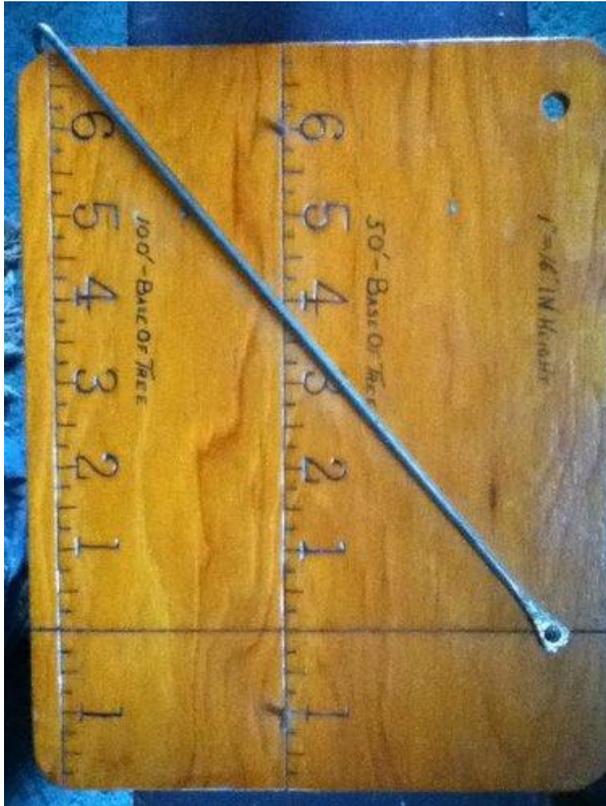
by **edfrank** » Wed Aug 15, 2012 12:02 am

NTS, I want to strongly encourage members who have science based articles or projects related to trees and forest hanging in the wind, partially completed, or even sitting away in a drawer somewhere, to finish them. When complete, please submit them to the Bulletin of the Eastern Native Tree Society for consideration for potential publication. Dr. Don Bragg is doing an excellent job with editing the Bulletins, but can't do much without appropriate materials submitted for inclusion. Perhaps more formal write-ups of site descriptions of note, etc.

Wooden Clinometer

by **edfrank** » Wed Aug 15, 2012 6:31 pm

Sky Davis posted this photograph to Facebook today. I thought it was cool and wanted to share it here. It is a wooden clinometer:



How does it work? You go out the distance marked on the scales - either 50 feet or 100 feet from the base of the tree. Hold the wooden block level (in the position shown) at your eye, and line up the wire with the top of the tree. Read the height on the appropriate scale in "16's" of feet. 16 feet is a log length. You can see that works the tan 45 degrees is 1 so at fifty feet, if the top of the tree is at 45 degrees, the tree is approximately 50 feet tall (various error types notwithstanding) that is a little over 3 log lengths. That is the height of the tree above eye level. Next check where the level line at the base intersects the tree and add that distance + or - to the total tree height.

Edward Frank

Tim and Bob Duo in Mohawk (MA)

by **dbhguru** » Wed Aug 15, 2012 6:38 pm

NTS, Today District Director Tom Zelazo and yours truly walked the Mahican-Mohawk Trail looking for signs of adelgid and formulating a plan to prioritize treatments that may begin in September. Along the way we renewed acquaintances with old friends. Here's an image of the Dr. John Waldman Beech.

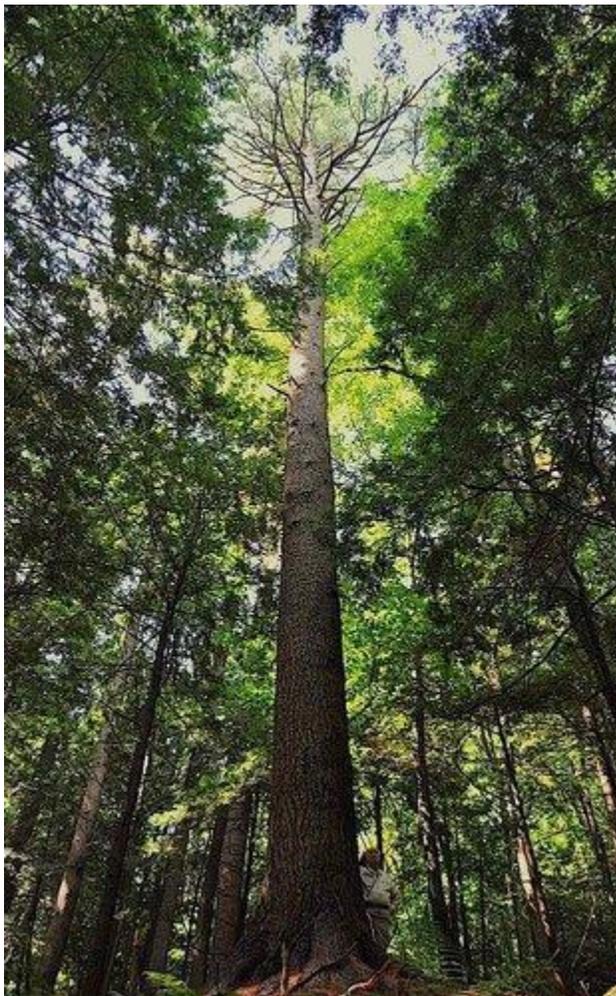


John's beech has grown to a height of 115.3 feet with a girth of 8.3. I also took a couple of shots of the Northern Sentinels, which are drop dead gorgeous pines. The one Tim is leaning on is 10.7 feet in girth and right on 138 feet in height.



On our return trip, we stopped for me to re-measure a white pine grown in the Rachel Carson stand. Bingo! It is no 150.1 feet tall and 9.9 feet in girth. It becomes number 127 over 150 feet in Mohawk. Despite the fungus that is causing New England pines to shed needles, the Mohawk pines will survive, at least for a few more years. Having just returned from an extraordinary trip out West, I was happy when my reaction to Mohawk had not changed. It was a great place when I left. It is a great place on my return.

I'll be concentrating on prioritizing hemlock treatments over the next few weeks. Lots to do. Here is a shot Tim took of me next to Jake. Jake's crown has been thinned by the fungus. I hope the champion recovers full foliage next season.



Robert T. Leverett

Somewhere

by **dbhguru** » Thu Aug 16, 2012 7:44 am

NTS , As Monica and I traveled north from Dinosaur NM, across the southern Uintas and down to Flaming Gorge, we looked for a place to spend the night. A motel with cabins in Manila, Utah served the purpose. Our cabin was spacious. After getting set up, we went out on a deck and low and behold observed the following scene.



The people in the adjoining cabin were out snapping pictures and exclaiming. Both ends were visible. That meant two pots of gold. But alas, someone else must have grabbed them.

Robert T. Leverett



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1bFr2SWP1I>

Re: Somewhere

by **Rand** » Thu Aug 16, 2012 11:56 am

dbhguru wrote: Rand, The main and subordinate rainbows were brighter, especially the main one. My photography failed to capture their vividness.

That's a bummer. I hate it when that happens. I chased a rainbow at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison that had faded by the time I got a good angle on it. The light started out good (right):

Then I saw a rainbow, but the light shifted by the time I found a good place to get out of my car and get a good angle on it (below):



Re: Tim and Bob Duo in Mohawk (MA)

by **Joe** » Thu Aug 16, 2012 7:43 pm

Larry Tucei wrote: I hope science can do something about it. I often wonder why the Forest service doesn't react more quickly on these types of attacks.

Oh, I wish somebody would do much more to solve these tree disease problems. As a practicing forester, I see every day countless white pines that are severely damaged from the white pine weevil. Since that insect doesn't kill the trees- apparently little has been done to fight them, though the problem has been here in New England for generations. But, the damage causes tremendous economic loss to the owners.

Regarding the chestnut blight, somebody from the American Chestnut Foundation told a story at a chestnut field event a few years ago- that when the problem arose, the word went out to cut all the chestnut before they died- but now it's believed that many might have been resistant- so that was an overreaction. It seems that ecological problems are almost as difficult to deal with as political problems- not because people don't want to solve the problems but we humans just aren't smart enough- and we only succeed through trial and error.

Joe Zorzin

[NASA | Forest Recovering From Mt St Helens Eruption](#)

by **edfrank** » Wed Aug 15, 2012 8:13 pm

NASA | Forest Recovering From Mt St Helens Eruption

The 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption was one of the most significant natural disasters in the US in the past half-century. Landsat captured the extent of and recovery from the destruction. (Credit: NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center/NASA's Earth Observatory)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqRAnpJu8jQ>



http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/landsat/news/40th-top10-st-helens.html

Most of the geologic processes that shape our planet, such as the creeping movement of tectonic plates, are often too slow to see on human timescales, but every so often, geology produces a moment with in-your-face intensity.

The explosive eruption of Mount St. Helens in Washington State on May 18, 1980, was such a moment. Situated on a subduction zone where the Juan de Fuca Plate in the Pacific descends under the North American Plate, Mount St. Helens is one of a number of Cascade Range volcanoes that stretch from British Columbia to northern California. The peak is the most active volcano of the group, sitting over an area where the Earth's surface holds in the melted solid rock.

Landsats 2, 3, 5 and 7 captured the Mount St. Helens eruption and subsequent recovery of its surrounding ecosystem over the last 32 years. The scenes collected by Landsat 2 and 3 from 1980 to 1983 show vegetation in red. Natural color images appear with the launch of the new Thermal Mapper instrument on Landsat 5 in 1984 and continued with Landsat 7.

The first three seconds of the visualization depict the condition of the volcano prior to the morning of May 18. It has a conical, glacier-clad peak like the others in the Cascades chain and had been inactive since the mid-nineteenth century. Scientists began actively monitoring Mount St. Helens in March 1980 when the volcano "reawakened" with a 4.2-magnitude earthquake and started venting steam.

On the morning of the now-historic eruption, a 5.2-magnitude earthquake triggered the sequence of events that would be life altering to many in the area. A massive slab of the northern slope of Mount St. Helens collapsed and roared over the landscape in an enormous debris avalanche—the largest in recorded history. With a gigantic hole ripped down the volcano's side, superheated gases and rock fragments exploded laterally instead of vertically—something that had not been witnessed and recorded before in modern times.

The blast raged with wind speeds reaching 200 to 250 miles per hour (320 to 400 kilometers per hour) at temperatures of 680°F (360°C), flattening and scorching trees. For more than nine hours after the lateral blast, Mount St. Helens gushed an ash plume that reached 15 miles high into the atmosphere, and in 15 days, circled the globe. Deadly pyroclastic flows, at least 1,300°F (704°C), spewed from the crater and covered 6 square miles (15 square

kilometers) under feet of choking pumice.
continued....

This video is public domain and can be downloaded
at: <http://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/goto?10550>

Posted by Edward Frank

[Re: NASA | Forest Recovering From Mt St Helens Eruption](#)

by **Rand** » Thu Aug 16, 2012 11:47 am

Pictures from my visited of St Helens in the summer of 2010. I would have taken a shot of hiked up into the crater if they hadn't been having some sort of geologist's shindig at the time with helicopters flying in and out. I hear their fines aren't very forgiving.

Anyway I found a set of photos on flicker from a group that hiked into the crater:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/brewbooks/6161016651/in/set-72157627702097030/>





A view of the toe of the debris/pyroclastic flow where it entered Spirit Lake



And finally a picture from a campground just outside the blast zone to the east of the volcano to give you an idea what the original forest looked like.



Rand Brown

128 - YIPPEE (MTSF, MA)

by dbhguru » Fri Aug 17, 2012 12:51 pm

NTS, Yesterday, Monica, friend Marjorie Barrell and I went to Mohawk to revisit some favored sites and look for more hemlock woolly adelgid. I did find a small amount of adelgid on the summit of Thumper Mtn. That's the bad news. Thumper is a small ridge with lots of heart. It is a very aesthetic spot - one of Monica's favorites. Here is a scene going up the ridge.



Monica and Marjorie at the top. It was here I found adelgid on two summit hemlocks. Other trees are in fine shape.



We'll be hunting for adelgid over the next few weeks and trying to determine the extent of coverage, the characteristics of the sites, etc. Everybody agrees that now is the time to catch it and do treatments. NTS role will be to find the occurrences, describe them, and help prioritize the treatments.

The thinning of the crowns of the Mohawk pines continues to be disturbing. So far researchers who have identified the fungi haven't determines the long term impacts. But I am hoping that it will not get steadily worse. According to researchers, the fungi seem to favor extremes, i.e. pines growing in very wet or dry areas. However, my observations in Mohawk is that the fungi are not that discriminating. I see the impact across the spectrum of growing environments. Since I observe the crowns of the Mohawk pines more than any other human in the known universe, Tim is relying on me to classify the level of defoliation for different areas. That is another job for the coming weeks.

On the good news side, we revisited Marjorie's favorite pine. Here are two images of Marjorie in silent communication with her tree.





Naturally, I had to re-measure Marjorie's pine and it is 151.0 feet. It becomes number 128. I evidently hadn't found the top on my past measurement and had the pine at 148.0 feet on March 16, 2010. I don't think it grew 2.1 feet since that last measurement, although close. Regardless, it is now a member of the exclusive 150-Club. I'm glad Marjorie's tree has entered the club. She relates to her tree at a deep level. I was impressed.

I also went over to the Jake Swamp tree and photographed its crown. Nowhere in New England can one witness the view of a higher twig of a tree above its base. While I was in Colorado, Tim Zelazo took a group around inspecting the damage to the pines from the fungus. One person was a U.S. Forest Service researcher who was mightily impressed with the pines in Mohawk, observing that they didn't have ANYTHING in the New England research forests to compare with what he was seeing. Smart researcher. Which brings me to a point:



Now that I'm back and in the swing of things, I am thinking fresh thoughts about Mohawk and its significance. How much importance, value, worth, etc. is there intrinsically? How much is there because of the intense amount of attention that it has been given by NTS? I'm a little too prejudiced to be counted as an objective contributor. But I'm wondering what some of the rest of you think. How much importance can reasonably be given to the elements I report on. You all have seen many images taken in Mohawk and have read the statistics and have a pretty good basis of comparison to other sites in Massachusetts, New England, the Northeast, and the entire East. Is Mohawk Trail State Forest of principal value more because so much of New England has crappy, abused forests as described by myself and Joe Zorzin? Beyond its obvious aesthetic appeal, what value can realistically be placed on Mohawk's reserve of exceptionally tall pines? Examining other potential sources of information about the trees exposes a void. For example, if we relied on sources like the University of Massachusetts forestry school to keep us informed about the exceptional trees of Mohawk Trail State Forest, the place wouldn't be a bleep on the forest radar scope. I'm serious. In the past, Mohawk would have fared little better via official DCR literature. Thankfully, that is now changing, and changing rapidly, but we are obviously deeply involved in the transition, and will likely remain so. I'm so focused in promoting Mohawk that I seldom think about the what would happen in our absence, but I expect a gradual return

to anonymity. Then, maybe not. Maybe the ground has been sufficiently seeded over the past 25 years as to permanently change the culture.

Related to the above musings, why have we in NTS had to work so hard to bring this state park-forest into public consciousness? Just wondering? I would appreciate any comments/observations the rest of you would be willing to make. I like to have fresh thoughts when talking to members of the public who show interest in Mohawk, but wonder why they hadn't heard about the place's exceptional trees before.

Robert T. Leverett

[Gatonska Soundscapes on Datscha Radio, Berlin, Germany](#)

by **michael gatonska** » Fri Aug 17, 2012

Just wanted to let NTS know that one or two of my soundscapes are to be broadcast as a part of Datscha Radio's "a garden in the air" 2012 Festival. The schedule will be posted on the 18th of this month, so I will add it to this post should anyone have an interest in tuning in. <http://datscharadio.de/en/artists/>

About Datscha Radio:

To create a garden for listening and international cooperation which appeals to all of the senses - this is the aim of Datscha-Radio. For 7 days, 24 hours, from 24th to 31st of August, we will be broadcasting directly from a typical Berlin garden patch. Rain or shine!



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkUoOBvhdzo>

I believe one of my soundscapes will be Red Oak Leaves

Composers Garden & Nightloops

Alexander Baker
Attila Fias & John Kameel Farah
Clémentine DeLaHaut
Daniel Blinkhorn
Dinah Bird
Dirk Hülstrunk
Els Viaene
Etienne Noiseau
Felix Schröder
Georg Klein
Jair-Rohm Parker Wells
John Blue
John Arndt
Jonathan Prior
Jose Manuel Garcia
Karen Hancock
Lasse-Mark Riek
Mark Matthes Kammerorchester
Michael Farley
Michael Gatonska
Miquel Parera Jaques
Nikolaus Gerzewski
Patrick Franke
Peter Cusack
raw audio (Gabi Schaffner)
Samuel Mittelman
Sandra Cuesta
Sherre Delys
Sirpa Jokinen
SouthernCrossReview
Stijn Demeulenaere
Susi Mahacke Production
Suspicion Breeds Confidence
Udo Noll
William Engelen

... further updates will follow after 18th of August.

Michael Gatonska

[Re: Somewhere](#)

by **Don** » Fri Aug 17, 2012 3:27 pm

They're so ephemeral, those rainbows...at the end of a long day while working on North Rim of Grand Canyon, near Cape Royal, we were drawn to Royal Point, as sunset and a storm neared. Its normally a fifteen minute walk, but we made it in ten, to see the storm front just overtaking the edge of the South Rim. The alignment of the sun and the clouds, and the curve of the Canyon as it changes cardinal bearings from nearly South to nearly North created an unusual rainbow (at least in my experience) as it completed a circular rainbow.

We quickly grabbed our cameras out of our daypacks and attempted to capture it...only to find that we'd have needed a very wide angle lens, and our point and shoot cameras weren't up to the task.

Well, it did get permanently inscribed in our memories, as did the thunder and lightning storm that soon chased us back to our work vehicle, with several very nearby, simultaneous thunder and lightning down-strikes (we made the return trip in five minutes!). August on the North Rim, in the middle of the Monsoon season is often a humbling time, the power of the elements there are often heart stopping.

Thanks Ed for thinking of the beautiful original version of "Somewhere...", one of my favorites!

*Don Bertollette - President/Moderator, WNTS BBS
Restoration Forester (Retired)
Science Center
Grand Canyon National Park
BJCP Apprentice Beer Judge*

View my Alaska Big Tree List Webpage at:
<http://www.akbigtreelist.org>

[Re: # 128 - YIPPEE \(MTSF, MA\)](#)

by **Larry Tucei** » Sat Aug 18, 2012 8:09 am

Bob, Congrats on another 150' White Pine. Without you leading the way for the Forests at MTSF I don't think they would have been noticed by as many, me for example. You have brought the MTSF to the people and the right people. But not just MTSF many other Forests! NTS is one of if not the best group of tree advocates in the country. Without you, Will, Ed, Don, Don, Lee and many others places like MTSF, Cook, Congaree, etc., would not get the true recognition that they deserve. Places like these need to be protected, studied and cherished by all! Thanks Bob!!! On the last comment "but wonder why they hadn't heard about the place's exceptional trees before". In Mississippi for example we have many National Forests, State Parks, etc., but often they don't get the recognition or appreciation that they deserve. In this modern age we seem to be forgetting our bond with the natural world, you and others has pointed this out on many occasions. I guess it's up to us at NTS to make sure places like these are on the radar. One of most important things I think is to get our children introduced to the Forests for they are the future! Maybe MTSF could have a childrens trail with numbered stops and a small booklet for parents to help the children learn the different Trees, Plants, etc.

Larry Tucei

[Re: # 128 - YIPPEE \(MTSF, MA\)](#)

by **dbhguru** » Sat Aug 18, 2012 10:02 am

Larry, Most of the time I just lower my head and charge with little thought to why's and wherefore's, but on occasion, I reflect back on what has happened over the past 25 years here in erudite Massachusetts and puzzle over the dynamics. We're supposed to be in the forefront, intellectually, but when dealing with forest topics, it is not necessarily the case. To understand the political environment, one must punch

through lots of layers (for lack of a better term). There is the government layer, which we might call officialdom, mostly state and local, but some federal. There is the environmental organizations layer; the timber community layer; the academic layer; and there are individual nature writers, photographers, etc. The general public absorbs information about forested properties and forest issues through these layers. Some important professional groups work at the big picture, research level, e.g. Harvard Forest, and others are focused on individual wooded properties such as the Friends of the Holyoke Range. One comes into contact with representatives from most of these layers on an important forest issue. So what's my point?

The hard thing for me to get into my noodle is that places like MTSF, MSF, Ice Glen, and Bryant Woods passed virtually unnoticed through all the layers - except us. This means a lot of experienced, highly educated people are only now seeing what is in the named places with a comparative and more appreciative eye and realizing their importance as sources of state pride worth protecting. The exceptions are organizations such as Mass Audubon and Harvard Forest that we work with directly.

As a bottom line, I'm trying to sort it out so that when I give public talks, I can give credible explanations to satisfy the puzzled looks I sometimes get. I'm usually in evangelist mode and don't stop to reflect on why what I'm saying may sound improbable to some of my listeners (Is this guy giving us the facts? Why hadn't we heard of these places before?). The attendees may like me, personally, or at least my enthusiasm, but I expect that they leave unconvinced that what I'm told them is indeed true. It does seem improbable, which makes its authenticity all the interesting.

I hope what I've said above doesn't sound like complaining. I'm not. I'm thankful for our progress. I've simply reached a point where, in reflection, I'd like to better understand the dynamics of what has been going on. Maybe there's a book in there somewhere.

Robert T. Leverett

[Re: # 128 - YIPPEE \(MTSF, MA\)](#)

by **Don** » Sat Aug 18, 2012 10:28 pm

Bob- I noticed that the third image had a tree with a tag on it. Having worked for several land management agencies and attended several forestry schools, I recognize that as part of the record keeping system, so that the scientific method can be maintained, so that researchers can verify one's work. But even tags get worn, chewed, taken off over time (30-40 years is about as much as I'd expect them to last, on average, across regions).

Where do you see NTS in this scheme of things?

What is the likelihood that future researchers will be able to: find individual trees, access associated published data, record growth data after we've gone beyond our ability to get around in the forest?

Don Bertollette

[Re: # 128 - YIPPEE \(MTSF, MA\)](#)

by **dbhguru** » Sun Aug 19, 2012 5:43 pm

Don, The tags are ours. We put them on to allow us to monitor growth of individual trees over the years. Alas, the information has not been in demand. I use the tags to identify candidates that are about to break some dimensional threshold in reporting to others. There may come a time when the tags serve other functions to include monitoring the health of individual trees.

In terms of the future, I expect that the tags will continue to serve limited purposes. I'd like to acquaint others who might like to do research. Mass Audubon, Harvard Forest, etc. know the tags are there. They definitely are under-used. From my particular perspective, I'll continue to make data available on individual trees to DCR. They get all my data, but it is overwhelmingly dimensional data as of specific dates.

Robert T. Leverett

Western Native Tree Society Colorado Summary

by **dbhguru** » Sat Aug 18, 2012 11:05 am

NTS, The attached spreadsheet gives a summary of prominent and representative tree measurements for Colorado. Hundreds of trees have been measured, but no point in including the ordinary.

 [WNTS-Best-a.xls](#)

I have no idea how many secluded ravines there are in Colorado with Ponderosas, Doug Firs, Colorado Blues, and Englemanns reaching the big numbers. Finding out is a mission that I'd like to undertake. We would be breaking new ground. Here is a sample of what is out there on the Internet relative to the maximum dimensions achieved by several species.

Englemann Spruce

USDA Natural Conservation Service

Heights to 60 meters

Utah State Extension Service

Growth Characteristics: Engelmann spruce is a large tree, averaging 30 inches in diameter and 90 feet in height.

Wikipedia

Picea engelmannii is a medium-sized to large evergreen tree growing to 25–40 m (82-131 ft) tall, exceptionally to 65 m (213 ft) tall, and with a trunk diameter of up to 1.5 m (4 ft, 9 in).

Montana Plant-Life Association

Description

General: straight, spire-like evergreen tree up to 50 m. tall, the trunk seldom over 1 m. thick.

North American Silvics

Growth and Yield- Engelmann spruce is one of the

largest of the high-mountain species. Under favorable conditions, average stand diameter will vary from 38.1 to 76.2 cm (15 to 30 in), and average dominant height from 14 to 40 m (45 to 130 ft), depending upon site quality and density (20). Individual trees may exceed 101.6 cm (40 in) in diameter and 49 m (160 ft) in height (60). Engelmann spruce is a long-lived tree, maturing in about 300 years. Dominant spruces are often 250 to 450 years old, and trees 500 to 600 years old are not uncommon (13).

Some Other species in North American Silvics

Colorado Blue Spruce

Growth and Yield- Blue spruce is apparently a long-lived tree, surviving up to 600 years or more. Diameter growth is slow; trees 10 to 13 cm (4 to 5 in) in d.b.h. may be 125 to 135 years old; at 46 to 56 cm (18 to 22 in), they may be 275 to 350 years of age (84). The "1982 National Register of Big Trees" lists the largest blue spruce as 154.4 cm (60.8 in) in d.b.h. and 38.4 m (126 ft) tall, on the Gunnison National Forest, CO.

Ponderosa Pine

Growth and Yield- Ponderosa pine grows to impressive size. Stems 263 cm (103.5 in) in d.b.h. and 70.7 m (232 ft) in height have been recorded (13). Diameters at breast height of 76 to 127 cm (30 to 50 in) and heights of 27.4 to 39.6 m (90 to 130 ft) are common throughout most of its range. Trees often reach ages of 300 to 600 years.

Douglas Fir

The interior variety of Douglas-fir does not attain the growth rates, dimensions, or age of the coastal variety. Site class for Rocky Mountain Douglas-fir is usually IV or V (site index 24 to 37 m or 80 to 120 ft at age 100) when compared with the growth of this species in the Pacific Northwest (1,43). On low sites, growth is sometimes so slow that trees do not reach saw-log size before old age and decadence overtake them. Interior Douglas-fir reaches an average height of 30 to 37 m (100 to 120 ft) with a d.b.h. between 38 and 102 cm (15 and 40 in) in 200 to 300 years. On the best sites, dominant trees may attain a height of

49 m (160 ft) and a d.b.h. of 152 cm (60 in) (23). Diameter growth becomes extremely slow and height growth practically ceases after age 200. Interior Douglas-fir, however, appears capable of response to release by accelerated diameter growth at any size or age (35). The interior variety is not as long lived as the coastal variety and rarely lives more than 400 years, although more than 700 annual rings have been counted on stumps (23).

Red Spruce

Growth and Yield- Red spruce is a medium-size tree at maturity, reaching 30 to 61 cm (12 to 24 in) in d.b.h. and 18 to 23 m (60 to 75 ft) in height in the Northeast, and up to 35 m (115 ft) in the Appalachian Mountains. Its maximum age is about 400 years (22). The American Forestry Association lists a tree 133 cm (52.5 in) in d.b.h. and 33.5 m (110 ft) tall in Great Smoky National Park in North Carolina as the largest living red spruce.

Need I comment? Ball's in our court.

Robert T. Leverett

[Now 222 Confirmed Redwoods Over 350 feet](#)

by **M.W.Taylor** » Sat Aug 18, 2012 5:53 pm

The attachment below is the "latest and the greatest" effort to document all coast redwoods over 350 feet. All trees on this list have been measured with either tripod mounted Impulse200LR by Chris Atkins or myself or direct tape drop by Dr. Stephen Sillett. All LiDAR trees from the Save the Redwoods League LiDAR fly-overs have been verified from the ground.

This new list includes all known 350'+ redwoods by Save the Redwoods League scientists Dr. Stephen Sillett and Dr. Robert Van Pelt and all my other tree colleagues who search for, climb and measure the tallest redwoods. One particular new redwood on the list is quite remarkable. "The Pole". Its dbh is 7ft but it stands over 350 ft tall!

There are now 223 coast redwoods confirmed taller than 350 feet !!!!!

[Re: 222 Confirmed Redwoods Over 350 ft. LiDAR project concludes](#)

by **M.W.Taylor** » Sun Aug 19, 2012 4:31 pm

Will Blozan wrote: Michael, Great list of great trees! The "Pole" tree sounds really impressive. I am inspired to list all tuliptrees over 180' as an eastern surrogate for your west coast "super trees" list. Or maybe all trees over 180' (this would be two species; e. white pine and tuliptree). Such a list would be relatively short and easy to manage. Now we just need to come up with names...

BTW, do you have an average range of error for the LiDAR hits versus the laser heights? That would be useful information to know.

Will,

In the flat areas like Humboldt Redwoods State Park the LiDAR was usually within 3 feet accuracy and tended to be on the conservative side. For steep hill areas the LIDAR often over-estimated by 20 feet more more due to the fact that redwoods tend to lean down-hill in notch canyons as they seek the open areas for more light. If the tree grows near a ravine this over-estimation from LiDAR was more the norm than the exception. Perhaps only 50% of the LiDAR hit list trees from Redwood National Park were actually trees over 350 feet. From Humboldt Redwoods State Park nearly 100% of the LiDAR returns that came back as being over 350 feet were actually trees over 350 feet when confirmed from the ground or climber deployed tape. It depends on the terrain and how well the ground/trunk interface was captured. For steep and dense canopies the ground determination is a great challenge.

Michael Taylor

[Medicine Bow - The Narrative](#)

by **dbhguru** » Tue Aug 21, 2012 2:18 pm

NTS, The attached WORD file provides an accounting of Monica's and my time in the Medicine Bow in early August. I hope it affords some enjoyable reading.

Scenic Medicine Bow by Bob Leverett

Introduction

Since 2005, Monica and I have spent a month or more each summer in the American West, save 2007, when we were selling my Holyoke house. The Rocky Mountains are the primary destination of our western excursions, but those venerable summits cover a lot of territory. So we must be selective. Let me explain.

The Rocky Mountains are vast. They form a chain of named ranges, stretching over 3,000 miles in length. Their northern origin is in British Columbia and Alberta, and they end in northern New Mexico. As a consequence, they are generally considered to be the second longest mountain chain on the planet, trailing the incomparable Andes of South America. However, to get a feel for just how much distance we're talking about, the Rockies are double the length of the Appalachians (1,500) miles, over four times the length of the Cascades of California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, and seven and a half times the length of California's Sierra Nevada. In places the chain is 300 miles wide. So when speaking of visiting the Rockies, qualifiers are necessary.

The geological province of the Rockies is usually divided into northern, middle, and southern sections. The three sections are further divided into separate ranges. Altogether, there are over 100 ranges within the chain. And to further complicate the matter, the ranges usually include sub-ranges, which are still called ranges on the maps. Naming mountainous areas brings into play geology, history, and politics. History and politics generally obscures the geology. I have read descriptions by unaware authors that speak of the sub-ranges as virtually

distinct mountain areas. Actually, the relationship between chains, ranges, and sub-ranges, usually over-extends the mountain interest of most people, but for me the distinctions are as important as any political subdivisions. I would admit that range distinctions are not necessary to their appreciation, but correctly naming the components helps to sort out what can be a bewilderingly complicated landscape.

Some people who have seen the Rockies from Canada to New Mexico consider the northern section to be the most scenic. To my mind, all three regions are equally worthy, but for time and distance reasons, we typically concentrate on the middle and southern sections, which by the way, include the highest parts of the entire chain. For example, the fifty-three peaks of the Rockies exceeding 14,000 feet are all in Colorado. A total of 691 peaks in the chain exceed 13,000 feet of which 51 are in the Middle Rockies and the remaining 637 in the southern Rockies. The United States has them all. I'm unaware of any careful count of peaks over 12,000 feet, but the number far exceeds a thousand.

Before leaving this altitudinal profile, and just for comparison, California has 147 peaks over 13,000 feet and Alaska has probably around 60. I say probably, because the criteria for what constitutes a separate peak have not been standardized between Alaska and the lower 48 states. Authoritative lists give 41 for Alaska, but that is based on 500 feet of geographical prominence between a peak and the next higher one to it. (The elevation must drop 500 vertical feet to the lowest point of the saddle joining the peak with its nearest higher neighbor.) The lower 48 rules are 300 feet for western mountains and 200 feet for eastern ones.

On this trip, we concentrated on areas in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming. Not surprisingly, the Tetons of Wyoming figured prominently in our itinerary as did the colorful San Juans and spiritually powerful Sangre de Cristos of Colorado. We hiked in all these ranges, beginning with the Sangres. Our first excursions were at altitudes of between 7,500 and 9,500 feet. We needed to get acclimatized (I'll be giving an account of our Sangre experiences in a future article).

After leaving the Sangres, we continued with climbs in that altitude range in Colorado's La Platas. We then decided we were ready for the big time. We climbed high onto 12,972-foot Engineer Mountain in Colorado's San Juans, but stopping at 11,800 feet. Given the state of the weather and the steepness of the mountain, it made sense, and upon our return, we assumed that we were finished climbing at altitudes in that range for the season. Our later climbs in the Tetons were well under 10,000. But, before leaving the mountain West, it turned out that we had one last high altitude trek left in us. This is the account of that last adventure.

Going South

As we started home we were going to spend time in Wyoming's Big Horn Mountains, then drive farther east to the Black Hills before leaving the western mountains. However, the smoke from numerous wildfires in Montana caused us to abandon our plans and turn south. The smoke was more than a nuisance; it was a health hazard. But fate smiled on us. Not far past Casper, Wyoming, we encountered clear skies because winds from the west kept the smoke at bay. It hung like a curtain in the sky. What a relief it was to see distant horizons! Following our chosen direction, we decided to revisit the Medicine Bow in southeastern Wyoming. Both of us revere those sacred summits. We had visited that range of the Southern Rockies together on several past occasions and had camped there once. The Medicine Bow scenery is spectacular, and alpine country with amazing floral displays is very accessible. To our thinking, the Medicine Bow is the perfect place for hikers and backpackers. There is technical climbing for those who can do it, but one can reach elevations above 11,000 feet on an excellent trail system without being exposed to dangerous climbing conditions.

Before getting into the specifics of our jaunts, let me give a little information about the Medicine Bow and environs. The Medicine Bow country is the setting for the much-acclaimed western novel by Owen Wister, *The Virginian*. The mountain range is 100 miles long and is partly in Colorado. At 12,951 feet, Clark Peak on the Colorado side is the highest point. In Wyoming, it is 12,013-foot

Medicine Bow Peak. A number of other summits in Wyoming's portion lie between 11,000 and 11,755 feet. The highest part of the Wyoming part is called the snowy range because of its 2.0 – 2.4-billion year old quartzite rock, which is often brilliant white, giving it the appearance of snow from a distance.

The origin of the Medicine Bow Mountains is usually described as continental compression that occurred during the Laramide Orogeny between 55 and 80 million years ago. Traces of multicellular animals may be preserved in this ancient rock, which makes it of special scientific interest. The mountains are convenient for wildlife enthusiasts who want to see wildlife from the safety of their vehicles and don't want to worry about grizzly bears. There are none in the Medicine Bow, but there are moose, elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, mountain lion, and black bear. If there are any bison, I'm unaware of them. Monica and I were fortunate enough to see moose on this trip. In fact, it was our best ever moose sighting.



There are not only the Medicine Bow Mountains, but also a river named the Medicine Bow, and surprisingly, a town. I find the name both very western and very pleasing to the ear. Its origin is as follows. I've taken a quote from the town's website.

"The name "Medicine Bow" is legendary and reputedly derives its origin from the Native American tribes that frequented the area, mainly the Arapaho and Cheyenne. Along the banks of the river, the

Native Americans found excellent material for making their bows. To them, anything they found good for a purpose was called "good medicine." Thus, the Native Americans named the river flowing through the area the Medicine Bow River, and since the headwaters of the river originated in the mountains to the South, they were called the "Medicine Bow Mountains".

I apologize for not have an image or two of the town and the river. Alas, I'm always too much in a hurry to get to the mountains. But there is reason. The mountains are what call to me, and one mountain in particular. The highest summit, Medicine Bow Peak, is something of a geologic mystery. Here is what Wikipedia has to say about the peak:

"The peak is part of a proterozoic quartzite ridge that juts above the Snowy Range. It was glaciated until quite recently, and year-round snowfields are still present on its flanks. Periglacial polygons, also known as "stone nets", are located above the timberline. Several glacial lakes are located at the base of the peak.

Geologic publications have suggested that the Snowy Pass Supergroup at the peak is significantly older than, and unrelated to, the orogeny of the surrounding Medicine Bow mountains.[1] These publications often refer to the mountain as "Medicine Peak", and its rock as "Precambrian Medicine Peak Quartzite". The quartzite, which lies unconformably on gneissic basement rock, has been analyzed for traces of Precambrian life. The findings may be pseudofossils."

The Approach

We approached the Medicine Bow Mountains from the northwest, a high, dry region of Wyoming where mountains are distant features of the landscape. A past article in National Geographic described Wyoming as high, wide, and windy. It was an appropriate description then, and nothing has changed since. A map of Wyoming reveals the state as wide basins and plains interlaced with mountain ranges. Travelers can cross east to west and north to south with only casual interaction with high mountains. One must leave the Interstates and seek the more rural routes. One such route is Wyoming

Route 130. We reached 130 by first connecting with I-80, traveling west on the Interstate for about 30 miles to make the connection with 130, east of Rawlins, Wyoming. The area we traveled through isn't one of Monica's favorites. It is dry and the landforms not of special interest, but once south of I-80, the scene changes. To the west, the Sierra Madre rise to provide the path of the Continental Divide. To the east, the Medicine Bow make their topographical statement. They stretch along the horizon, not as a sawtooth series of peaks such as is common in the northern Rockies, but as a flowing ridgeline with little hint of what lies on their eastern slopes.

Our first destination was the small town of Saratoga. It is a traditional stopover for us on our way to the Medicine Bow. We usually fill the vehicle with gasoline and often stop by the visitor center. The altitude of Saratoga is listed as 6,791 feet. Outside of Saratoga being a kind of gateway between the Sierra Madre and the Medicine Bow, it is a quite out-of-the-way place. However, the "Steinley Cup microbrew competition" is held annually in Saratoga. And oh yes, Saratoga and Encampment are fishing capitals within the Cowboy State.

Leaving Saratoga, we headed east on 130. We had in mind staying at a lodge in the Medicine Bow, and we did find a spot. The Ten Mile Inn, about 15 miles from Snowy Range Pass, has spacious cabins. We got one that suited our needs, and we were there at the right time. In the winter, the place is a snowmobile haven, and that would not be to my tastes. I'm glad our landlady is able to make a living in the area, and we may well stay at Ten Mile next year, but we wouldn't want to stay there in the winter.

Our Arrival

After checking in and getting settled, we headed up to the high country. From about 7,500 feet elevation, Route 130 climbs to 10,500 feet at Lake Marie. The 3,000-foot gain in elevation occurs over 14 miles. The grade averages 4%, so travelers really aren't that conscious of how much altitude is gained unless one observes the changing vegetation, particularly the trees – species and shapes. Near Lake Marie, one is reaching timberline, and the exposed

rock and scree make it apparent that a different eco-zone has been reached. Then one comes into view of a scene so lovely that one is transported away. It gives one pause to meditate, which is what Monica does when we reach the small glacial lake.



There is a string of glacial lakes along the eastern side of the Snowy Range, but to see them one needs to gain some altitude, which is just what we did. The trail begins at the parking area for Lake Marie and winds its way through Englemann Spruce and alpine meadows on the way to commanding views of the Medicine Bow high country and southward toward Colorado. Here is a view from the trail looking toward Colorado. One sees the patchy remains of the forest that a few hundred vertical feet lower becomes continuous. The scree-covered slopes thrust upward to create rocky domes.



A bit farther up the trail, the footing became more difficult. Instead of intermittent rocks, we were on all rock, and the size of the individual rocks varied significantly. It was no longer ideal trail conditions for Monica or me. In particular, Monica is uncomfortable on loose rock and as the size of the stones gets larger, footing becomes increasingly difficult for her. As a younger fellow, I rock hopped with gleeful enjoyment. Nothing was too much to tackle. As an older fellow, my testosterone-filled days have passed, and stiff knees and declining balance have taken their toll. We reached a point where we decided that neither our feet or knees were up to continuing if we wanted to have reserves for the following day.

In the following image, Monica is paying attention to her feet as rock size begins to vary. At this point we were still okay, but shortly thereafter, we were climbing up and down instead of moving forward. The hazy horizon is courtesy of wildfires in the Ferris Mountain area not far from Casper, Wyoming. We were spared that on our way to the Medicine Bow, but there had been movement of the smoke southward so that distant horizons were no longer clearly outlined.



Despite foot discomfort and a strong wind encountered along the trail, our attentions never swerved from the spectacular scenery. To the south, the panorama continued to unfold with distant peaks in Colorado's towering Front Range trying to express themselves in the increasingly polluted air of the Fort

Collins to Denver corridor. To the west, the Medicine Bow tail off gradually, giving way to the valley of the North Platte River and then on to the Sierra Madre. There's lots of space to contemplate. However, to the east, the land suddenly plunges off the rock walls that define the eastern escarpment of the Snowy Range. Going up to the edge is a dizzying experience. One approaches the drop-off with caution, especially when the wind gusts, as it was doing on that evening. Speaking of wind, my hat blew off the top of my head several times. Fortunately, it has a tie to hold it on, so I wasn't chasing it, just pulling it back onto my head from around my neck and trying to force it ever into a tighter fit.

The following scene looks northeastward. The conical peak right of center is 11,398-foot Sugar Loaf. Behind Sugar Loaf is the long relatively flat summit of Brown's Peak that reaches to 11,722 feet. The alpine lake is Lookout Lake. The gap in the center of the image separates Brown's Peak from the big ridge that includes Medicine Bow Peak.



Hugging the rocks, a small stand of young spruce caught my eye. The timberline lies between 10,500 and about 11,100 feet. It varies depending on the amount of exposure a spot has. Some spots receive almost constant wind and are devoid of trees. Other areas are sheltered and trees take hold. Places where snow is dumped don't have trees. Any tree has a constant struggle to survive above 10,500 feet in this area.



After a climb to 11,160 feet, Monica and I turned around and descended. We were satisfied with what we had accomplished and decided that the next day we would try to hike to North Gap Lake. There isn't much elevation gain, the scenery is spectacular, but you do have to scramble over rocks.

After our descent, we drove down the mountain and stopped at the Rendezvous Lodge, a good restaurant just east of Ten Mile Lodge. The main course satisfied our palettes. Then despite Monica giving me a sideways glance, I ordered a very hefty dessert, justifying it because of the energy expended on the climb up onto School House Rock. Monica was persuaded and shared the wild berry cobbler. Afterwards, we drove back to Ten Mile, and went promptly to sleep.

Medicine Bow Peak

After breakfast at Rendezvous Lodge the next morning, we headed for the high country. As we neared the parking area at Libby Lake, it occurred to me that I wanted Monica at least to have the experience of being on the side of Medicine Bow Peak. So we changed plans and started on the trail to the Snowy Range's highest summit. The following image sequence tells the story.

The trail starts at about 10,700 feet and goes around the east side of Libby Lake. In the image below, the gap on the right separates Brown's Peak from the Medicine Bow massif. This gap had been

the planned destination before we switched to Medicine Bow Peak.



Looking directly across Libby Lake toward 11,755-foot Old Main the view looked as follows.



Once around the northern side of Sugar Loaf, the terrain began to change. The full bulk of 12,013-foot Medicine Bow Peak loomed ahead of us. In the following image, the summit is almost in the center. It is rounded and a snowfield lies below. The conifers in the foreground are Englemann Spruce. There are small bodies of water scattered around. The impact remains from the mountain glaciers from 10,000+ years ago. In years when there's lots of snow, banks will persist into mid-August, and occasionally early September. By late September, snow begins to return to the high country.



Once up the trail and onto the slopes of Medicine Bow, the alpine country spreads out like a carpet with features embedded into it. Many species of wild flowers were evident on our climb. Going from the micro to the macro, looking into the distance, alpine lakes suddenly appear, and other peaks and ridges present themselves as inviting destinations for future treks. The visitor feels on top of the world, and those with strong religious convictions can be heard to proclaim that they are truly in God's country. One can fully enjoy the experience, because the trek back down is not that long. Round trip distance is slightly less than four miles. And in our ascent, at these early scenic feasts, the trail had not become so rocky.



The lake in the upper left in the above image is South Gap Lake. There's a hint of a lake beyond, shown as a dab of blue. I used a telephoto to bring the scene closer. The image below shows South Gap Lake and North Gap Lake beyond.



Two years ago Monica and I were on the shores of South Gap Lake when a very attractive, physically fit young woman was coming from the direction of North Gap. The three of us had a brief conversation. She was from Switzerland, working in New York City. She had gotten claustrophobic and needed to visit real mountains. So she backpacked to North Gap Lake and spent the night somewhere on its shores. Monica and I were impressed, and hope to do the same next year. The few people one encounters here are always a pleasure to meet. North Gap is just the kind of place we're looking for: an experience that is semi-wilderness.

Some folks puzzle over the name 'Snowy Range' when they don't see much snow in late summer. But as explained, the range derives its name from the brilliant quartzite rock that caps many of the upper slopes. The following image speaks volumes.



From the area where I photographed North and South Gap Lakes, turning my camera close to 180 degrees, I took an image of the cliff wall that runs from Lake Marie to the end of South Gap Lake. We had been at the south end of the wall the evening before. In the image below, the prominent sharp summit in the shadows is 11,755-foot Old Main. Lake Marie is the most distant of the water bodies.



The serious mountain aficionado comes to know the peaks, lakes, trees, flora and fauna, and very importantly, moods of the mountains. One watches for signs of building storm clouds. To be caught on Medicine Bow Peak in a summer thunderstorm is no laughing matter: one's life is at risk. Most climbers and hikers try to get off the mountain before 1:00 or 2:00PM, some as early as 12:00 noon. However, on our day, it was apparent

that we were going to be blessed with topnotch weather all day. We only had to worry about absorbing too much ultraviolet sunlight at high altitude. But we had protection, so up we went.

The next image shows the steepness of the trail. Monica is watching her feet. At places we had to use our hands to surmount small ledges or large rock outcroppings. They aren't dangerous, just hard for old folks..



We were among the oldest people that we encountered on the trail. However, it was inspirational to see a lot of physically fit people. Medicine Bow weeds out those who are not in good physical condition. It also weeds out folks who haven't become acclimatized.

When I was a young buck in the Air Force, I covered the long stretch from Lake Marie up to School House Rock, out the ridge past the Diamond and Old Main, and on to Medicine Bow, crossing its summit, continuing on to the end of the high ridge, dropping down to the gap, and up onto Browns Peak. I then came back off Brown's Peak and my late wife Jani was at Lewis Lake with our car. Though the trek was long, it was not dangerous. I did do a few technical climbs on Medicine Bow - never anything too challenging, but still dangerous, which brings me to a brief digression.

There is a fine line between hiking and mountain climbing. When you begin having to use your hands, the transition has started. A difficulty

scale has been developed by climbers to rate the routes up mountains. Class 1 is just hiking. No use of the hands is needed and falls are not likely to result in serious injury. The main trail up Medicine Bow Peak is not Class 1. It is Class 2. In the late 1960s, I did class 3.5 to 4 when I climbed in the Medicine Bow during my Air Force years. On those routes, falls would have been near fatal or fatal. One definitely gains wisdom with age or loses one's nerve.

As we continued up the mountain, Monica was a real trooper. I was worried about her knees on the descent, but she was resolute. We were pushing on, she said flatly. She had not come that far on such a perfect day only to let some rocks defeat her.

To be perfectly truthful, we didn't go to the absolute top of Medicine Bow. We stopped at the altitude of 11,930 feet according to my GPS. The final scramble is on rocks that were accident producers. For us at this stage of life, it was too risky. There were people who were moving faster than we were, passing us, and this caused both of us to lose concentration. A small consolation was that others made the same decision to stop as we did.

So, alas, we fell short of the summit by 83 vertical feet. But where we stopped, we could survey the surrounding peaks and valleys just as well. Here is an image of the boulder field we were on. You can see across to Brown's Peak at 11,722 feet. It's the flat peak in the center of the image.

