

what might be their final migration to Antarctica. But as Franny's history begins to unspool, it becomes clear that she is chasing more than just the birds. It's an ode to a disappearing world and a breathtaking page-turner about the possibility of hope

against all odds.

#### **Natural Wonders of Colorado**

By Todd Caudle (Skyline Press) \$12.95  
As local photographer Todd Caudle says in his introduction, this collection "is the

vision of one photographer who loves his home state with a passion and cannot even conceive of a day when he will not actively seek out its beauty, whether with a camera or not. It is also a snapshot of what Colorado currently is, and in some places, what it

used to be."

Until next month, happy reading.  
The staff at Covered Treasures can be contacted at [books@ocn.me](mailto:books@ocn.me).

### February Library Events

## Library reopens with limited services; adult reading program begins

By Harriet Halbig

Beginning in mid-January, the Monument Library reopened to a limited number of patrons at a time. Patrons are welcome to come in and claim their holds and browse the collection for new reading and viewing materials. Computers are available and, although a reservation is no longer required, they must be booked with a staff member before use.

Curbside service remains available. You can call 488-2370 ahead of your arrival and find your materials outside or simply drop by and ring the doorbell on the shelf

near the door and we will come to you.

Some furniture has been reintroduced for those who might wish to come and read the newspaper. We do, however, request that you keep your visit relatively brief.

All programs are cancelled until further notice, and meeting rooms remain unavailable.

Masks are required for all patrons age 3 and older, and social distancing is also required.

The 2021 Winter Adult Reading Program begins on Feb. 1 and continues through March 31. You may register online

at the district website, [ppld.org](http://ppld.org), or come in and register in person.

The program is a bit different this year. Rather than logging titles of books read, this year participants log reading in 30-minute increments and can also participate in a variety of activities for credit toward prizes.

After 15 reading segments or activities, you will receive a set of reusable utensils and a Rocky Mountain Chocolate bar. After another 15 days of reading or activities, you will receive the annual program mug and a chance for a drawing for the grand prize. At least 15 of the entries must be for reading.

Activities are listed on the website and include a number of craft projects made from kits available and reading a book in an unfamiliar genre or writing a review.

Current hours for the Monument Library are 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 through 5 on Friday and Saturday. The library is closed on Sunday.

We hope to see you soon at the library.

Harriet Halbig may be reached at [harriethalbig@ocn.me](mailto:harriethalbig@ocn.me).

On the Trail (in memory of Tim Watkins)

## Ham radio from the mountaintop

By Lisa Hatfield

On New Year's Day, a group from the Tri-Lakes Monument Radio Association climbed Mt. Herman, elevation 9,063 feet, with radios and portable antennas. Some of them used High Frequency (HF) radio and Morse code to contact amateur radio operators on both coasts of the U.S. and even one in France. Others used Very High Frequency (VHF) radios to make local contacts from Monument to Peyton, Rocky Flats, and even a peak-to-peak contact with Mount Flora, a 13,000-foot mountain near Georgetown.

The universal purpose of amateur (ham) radio is to have fun messing around with radios. It's for non-commercial use, and all operators need an FCC license. It can provide emergency public service communications in times of disaster. But what

keeps hams' batteries charged in between times?

One competitive incentive is Summits on the Air (SOTA), an award scheme for radio amateurs that encourages local and international portable amateur radio operations that promote emergency awareness and communications in mountainous areas. A similar program, Parks on the Air (POTA), awards points for communications from national and state parks.

Monument resident Joyce Witte recently earned her "Mountain Goat" Award in SOTA after activating on 187 peaks over the last four years. There are awards for activators (those who ascend to the summits) and chasers (who either operate from home, a local hilltop or are even activators on other summits).

Mt. Herman is the most (ham) radio-active peak in Colorado, largely due to Steve Galchutt, whose call sign is WG0AT. He's been hiking with his goats and playing radio from the summit for 25 years, over a decade before SOTA came to North America.

For more information, see <https://w0tlm.org/>, or Amateur Radio W0TLM under Weekly and Monthly Events on page 30.

Lisa Hatfield can be contacted at [lisahatfield@ocn.me](mailto:lisahatfield@ocn.me).

Right: John Roach (left) logs contacts and Joyce Witte calls on ham radio at the top of Mt. Herman on Jan. 1. Photo by Lisa Hatfield.



High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

## February gardening: free flowers, free food

By Janet Sellers

"We are a product of our landscape—good landscapes make good food, good food makes clever and healthy people."

—Patrick Padden

### Edible landscaping

We can't eat the lawn, but lawns are the largest crop in the United States—while less than 2 percent of our population does farming! A productive edible landscape can be very beautiful, filled with flowers, wafting scents of lemon thyme or mint, with perennials easiest to care for. Edible landscapes need good planning—they go to seed, need prudent care and placement for ongoing good looks—but no mowing! Berry bushes, herbal groundcovers, and most salad greens thrive here year-round, even tomatoes kept as perennials will overwinter in indoor pots and debut in June.

### Companion planting

For years I've used marigolds and spear-

mint to keep pests out of the garden, and the year that we did square-foot gardening with companion planting we had the best yields at Monument Community Garden, experimenting for local gardening success and companion planting of plant "friends" multiplied the harvests manifold.

### Air layering for trees and shrubs—free plants

This year, I'm going to try air layering for my flowering crabapple instead of pruning and pitching the branches. In spring, as the trees enter their growth cycle, I'll choose a branch still on the tree, peel back the bark about 2 to 3 inches all the way around, wrap that in moist sphagnum moss, secure with twine and wrap with plastic. Rooting takes two to four weeks or up to three months. Cutting it off below the new roots, I can pot or plant it in the yard. I'm actually hoping to do several from my pink crabapple and from my apricot tree and roses, too. Many

plants will propagate this way.

Janet Sellers is an avid, thrifty lazy gardener—letting Mother Nature do the hard work—saving seeds and bouquet stems all year. Send your gardening tips for our area to [JanetSellers@ocn.me](mailto:JanetSellers@ocn.me).



Art Matters

## Van Gogh and the deadly blank canvas

By Janet Sellers

February is one of the coldest months of the year in our area. In light of that, I thought I would share some of my warm and favorite thoughts on Vincent van Gogh, who is still able to warm the hearts of the world over 130 years after his death.

"Just slap anything on when you see a blank canvas staring you in the face like some imbecile. You don't know how paralyzing that is, that stare of a blank canvas, which says to the painter, 'You can't do a thing'. The canvas has an idiotic stare and mesmerizes some painters so much that they turn into idiots themselves. Many painters are afraid in front of the blank canvas,

but the blank canvas is afraid of the real, passionate painter who dares and who has broken the spell of 'you can't' once and for all."—Letter to Theo van Gogh, October 1884

Vincent van Gogh also wrote of himself, "In both figure and landscape ... I want to get to the point where people say of my work: that man feels deeply, that man feels keenly..." and indeed, he made it to worldly and financial success for all time, but not in his lifetime. He sold only one painting during his life, yet nowadays they go for many millions of dollars to collectors who can see the value in the beautiful works that reflect his heart and soul.

Van Gogh is supportive in his letters

to his brother Theo, and even when things seem hopeless, the man found a way out of the terror of the blank page and into extraordinary beauty to share with us. Van Gogh considered painting to be more gratifying than drawing, but he maintained, "it is absolutely necessary to be able to draw the right proportion and the position of the object pretty correctly before one begins. If one makes mistakes in this, the whole thing comes to nothing."

Drawing is where the thinking and observation occurs, where the planning and the effort and the struggle reside. The word "drawing" means to obtain, to take in, to search. In making drawings, the artist is searching and struggling and obtaining the desired result. Drawing is the core of visual

thinking, the light in the dark and the cure for the blank canvas. Cognoscenti art collectors often seek out and savor the drawings of artists as much or more than paintings and other works.

The essence of drawing, of putting down thoughts in forms, and even going over those forms on the page to get it just right, is fascinating to witness, and it is ours to see in historic and contemporary drawings. It is the visible trail of the mind's path of imagination.

Janet Sellers is an artist who makes lots of stuff: drawings, paintings, large scale street murals, sculptures, and photographs. Contact her at [JanetSellers@ocn.me](mailto:JanetSellers@ocn.me)

