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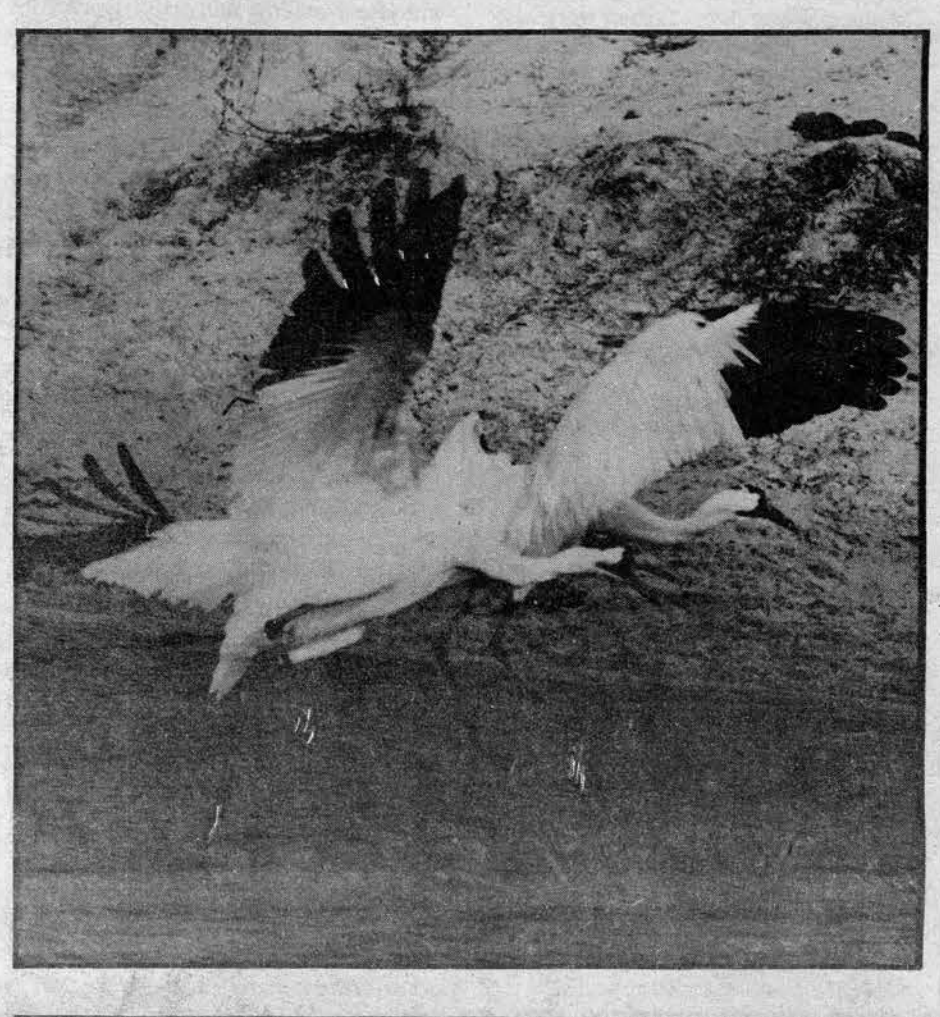
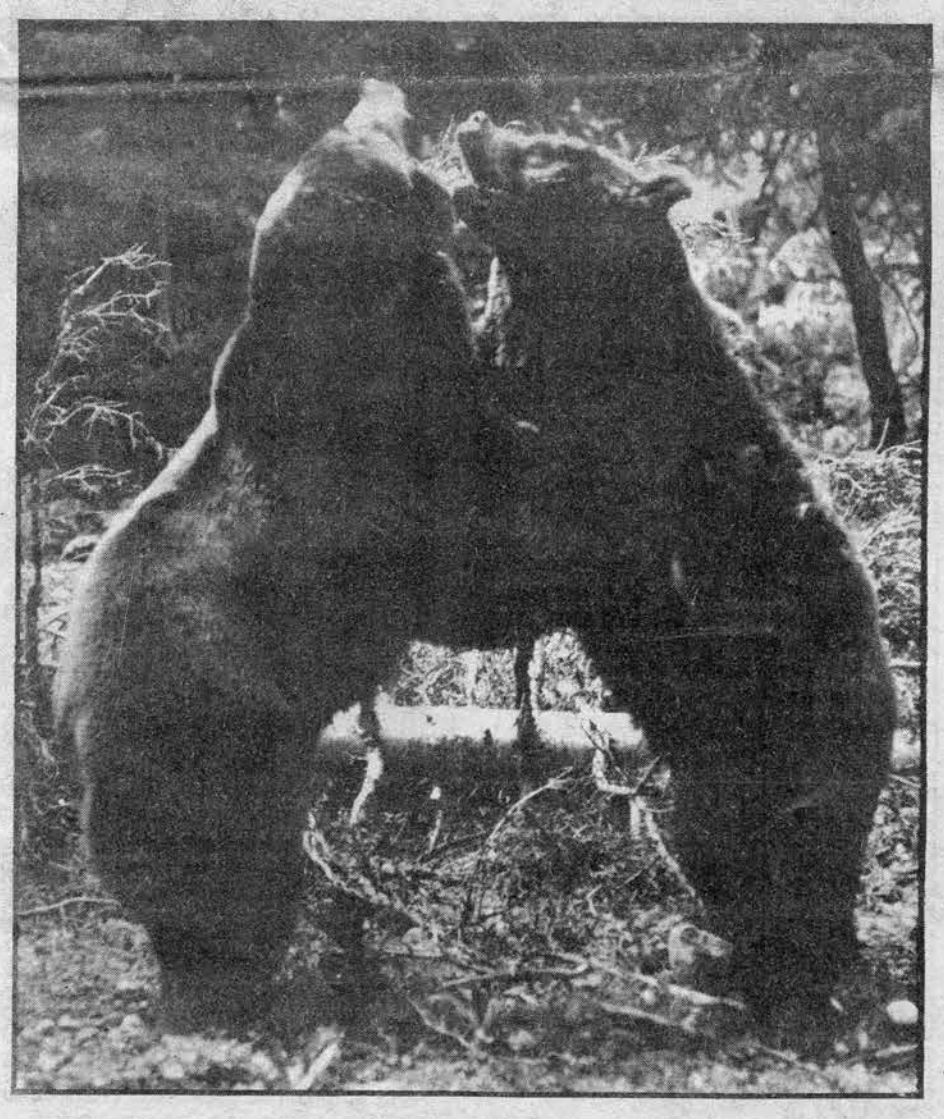
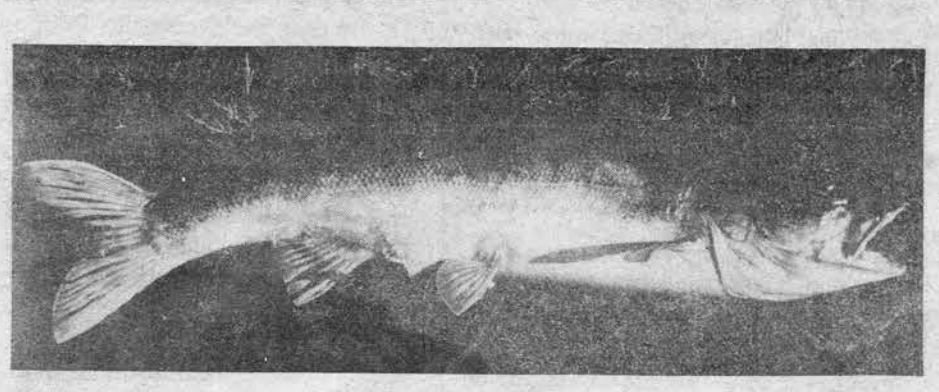
High Country News

June 10, 1985 Vol. 17 No. 11 A Paper for People who Care about the West One Dollar







PHOTOS: *Squawfish by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Grizzly bears by Stouffer Productions, Ltd.; Whooping cranes by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Black-footed ferret by Tim Clark*

A Special Issue

The Endangered Species Act is thus far a glass hammer

The 1960s and 1970s were binge years for environmental legislation. One after another, the Congress passed and the presidents -- mostly Nixon, but also LBJ, Ford and Carter -- signed laws to cleanse the air and water, protect or at least more carefully despoil public lands, and to publicly scrutinize major development decisions.

If words were deeds, the 1980s would be good clean years of crisp, blue air and sparkling, fish-filled waters. Instead, we are deep into a hangover: the tough, headache-producing work of seeing whether legal phrases can produce results. To take a spectacular example, despite the Clean Air and Clean Water acts, our forests and lakes face potentially fatal threats from acid rain. And despite the 1973 Endangered Species Act, plants and animals continue to vanish from the earth at a rapid pace. Those who might be expected to make most vigorous use of the Act -- the environmental groups -- view it as a hammer made of glass, good they fear for only one hard knock.

If true, that is tragic, for there are an enormous number of species in jeopardy. This Special Issue of *HCN* examines several of them: glamour animals such as the grizzly, whooping crane and black-footed ferret, as well as more humble members of this dolorous club: the humpbacked chub and squawfish.

Unless our idea of safeguarding species is to put them in zoos, habitats are a central part of any discussion. The Issue opens with water, as writer Jeanne Englert surveys the effects of the Act on dam building in the Platte and Colorado river basins. As introduction, she talks of the snail darter and furbish lousewort and gives the law's history -- in a phrase, Congress didn't know what it was doing when it passed the Act in 1973. Out of that ignorance came a powerfully written law, but one which may be enforceable only for animals which have the protection of public opinion.

Writer Staci Hobbet writes of two species. First, about the black-footed ferret (which may be politically protectable because of its "cuteness") and its last hideout in a Wyoming prairie-dog town. Although the biological and geographic scope of the story is small, the political landscape

is large, as she describes the scientific and bureaucratic swamp grown up around efforts to implement the Act. That this swamp was created to help mankind avoid turning the biblical "dominion" into extermination, doesn't make it any more attractive. Her second story is more scientific than political: an account of the uncertainty about grizzlies and their habitat which came out of the recent Griz '85 conference in Wyoming.

The Special Issue ends with an opinion piece by John Nutter of the Nature Conservancy on the web of life, and the peril we have put it and ourselves into by choosing to live outside its limits. Nutter also supplies a summation of the issue in his quotation of Aldo Leopold: "The first prerequisite of intelligent tinkering is to save all the pieces."

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Tribes lobby for environmental clout

Several Indian tribes sent representatives to Washington, D.C., this spring to push for legislative changes and appropriations they think necessary for environmental protection on the reservations.

Describing Indian people as the nation's first environmentalists, Merle Garcia, governor of the Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico, told Congress: "Under the alleged protection of the federal government... we as Indian people are suffering the destruction of our natural resources, which we were able to preserve on our own through the centuries... It is not fair or just that tribal governments should be deprived of the tools to protect our environment under the environmental programs of this country."

Garcia spoke on May 1 to members of a U.S. Senate appropriations subcommittee considering funding for the Environmental Protection Agency. He and David Lester, executive director of the Council of Energy Resource Tribes in Denver, said EPA needed more money to implement the Indian policy the agency adopted last year. EPA had asked each of its regions to allocate part of its budget for Indian programs, but had not asked Congress for a special Indian funding increase.

The new EPA Indian policy focuses on the need to delegate environmental protection programs to tribes as they are now delegated to states. (Tribes consider themselves the legal equivalent of states.) Lester said he feared that without specific direction from Congress, all the EPA money would be claimed by non-Indians.

Tribes had been generally ignored in the early 1970s when Congress passed the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts. Tribes were also ignored in 1980, when Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, known as the Superfund law. Consequently, tribes had no authority to protect their reservation environments.

In addition, the EPA's authority over reservations is not always clear, according to the agency's Leigh Price in Washington. This had led to jurisdictional disputes with states, which EPA says have no authority to regulate reservations.

Last fall, Robert J. Martin, a Washington, D.C., consultant for several tribes, contacted the Senate environment committee about including tribes under the Superfund reauthorization. Sens. Gary Hart, D-Co., and James Abdnor, R-S.D., then sponsored amendments that provide for tribes entering cooperative agreements for cleaning up wastes and being notified of toxic substance incidents on their lands. Because they have such a limited tax base, the tribes would not have to pay 10 percent matching cleanup costs. The federal government would pay 100 percent.

Although the Superfund amendments passed the Senate environment committee in March, the water amendments were more controversial. Jep Seman of Sen. Hart's staff said the laws are difficult to change because they've been on the books so long, and committee members resisted giving tribes regulatory or standard-making authority. Both EPA and the tribe's consultant urged language that would delegate to tribes the same authority as states.

Recently, the Senate environment committee agreed to provide grants to tribes for sewage treatment plants and technical assistance on drinking water. It also agreed to allow the EPA administrator to waive matching fund requirements for tribes. On May 16, the full Senate included those amendments in its reauthorization of the Safe Drinking Act.

The House Energy Committee also voted to reauthorize the Safe Drinking Water Act with the Indian amendments, but added standard-making and regulatory authority by tribes as well. The full House has not yet voted, but presumably the legislation will go to a Senate-House conference committee.

Seman said the prospects for passage of the three bills are "very good" in the Senate. The Superfund bill should be on the Senate floor in June. Martin predicts the Superfund reauthorization will make it to the President's desk this year. He expects the others early next year, if not before.

--Marjane Ambler

High Country News

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Dear friends,

You can be the first on your block to wear a new *High Country News* t-shirt. The design, by former *HCN* art director Kathy Bogan, is of a mountain goat peering over its shoulder. The shirts are of excellent quality, and come in black printing on a white shirt and white printing on a red shirt, in small, medium, large, and extra-large. The postage-paid cost is $8.50.

Staff test-wore one of the white shirts on a three-day trek through the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park in southeastern Utah over the Memorial Day holiday, and we can attest that they are tough shirts which dry quickly in the desert's five percent humidity.

For those of you who do not trust the mail, the availability of the shirts provides yet another reason to attend the first annual *HCN* climb up Mount Lamborn, outside Paonia. The shirts will be on sale for $7.50.

We will assemble at 7:45 A.M., Saturday, June 22, at the *High Country News* office: 124 Grand Avenue, Paonia. Starting at about 6,000 feet of elevation, the climb to and from the 11,396 peak should take about 8 hours. Mt. Lamborn is on the western edge of a belt of mountains, and offers views all the way west to the La Sals in Utah and east into the West Elk Wilderness. The hike will require endurance but not daredevilry. Please call us at 303/527-4898 for further information.

We know from our mail that a few present subscribers have received the direct mail letter we recently sent to 10,000 members of five conservation organizations. It is the paper's first experiment with direct mail in several years, and the results thus far are good. We understand that present subscribers are annoyed at getting solicited by a newspaper they already subscribe to, but "merging and purging" the sample lists with our subscriber lists would be incredibly expensive for us. So we ask your understanding.

Boise, Idaho, writer Pat Ford, who has a followup story on the Priest Lake situation in this issue, would like to correct two errors in his April 29 front page story. First, a typo changed the founding of the Kootenai Environmental Alliance from 1968 to 1978. The KEA became an Idaho Conservation League chapter in 1978.

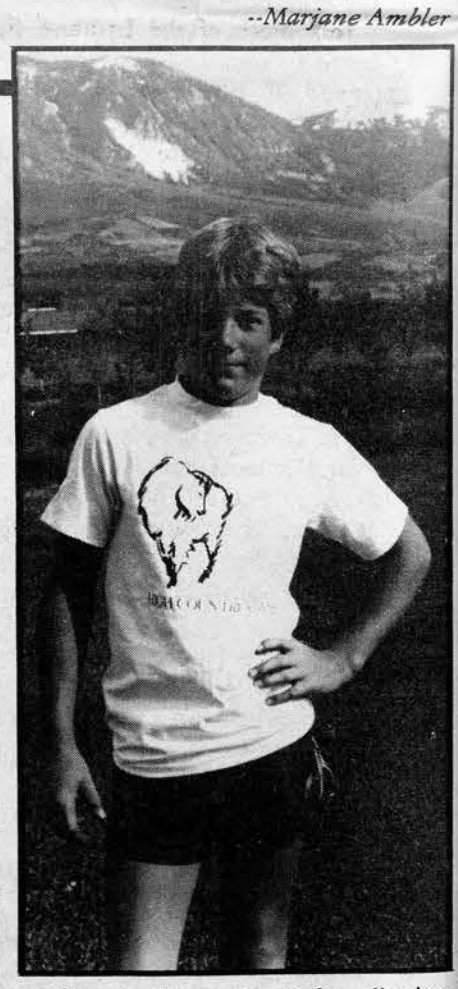
Second, the story had the Priest Lake Coalition attorney, Paul Vogel, being replaced too soon by attorney Scott Reed. Vogel represented the coalition through the Land Board meeting held May 15.

Vogel is leaving because his work for the coalition and for the Bonner County Commission creates a conflict of interest. To resolve the conflict, he chose to keep the county position and leave the coalition, where Reed has now replaced him.

HCN received some Colorado-wide attention in the May 28 *Denver Post* in a lengthy story by reporter Jim Carrier. It was an interesting experience to be on the other side of the typewriter and camera.

Finally, we know it is spring because you can't get out of town. The entire country seems to be slipping, and it is showing no respect for roads. To the east, the dirt Kebler Pass road to Crested Butte, which was closed all winter by snow, is now closed by a mud slide into the Ruby Anthracite Creek. To the north, the McClure Pass road is open, but as happens every spring it is slip-sliding into the Muddy Creek on one side while getting bombarded by boulders from above. And to the south, the Black Mesa road to Gunnison is one-lane in several places because the other lane has slid down towards the Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

--the staff



Tie plant cleanup advances in Wyoming

Union Pacific has agreed that a slurry wall around its closed tie treatment plant in Laramie, Wyoming, will be only the first step in the cleanup of contaminated soils and ground water there (*HCN*, 10/1/84).

The plant, closed in 1983 after 97 years of operation, is ranked on the EPA's list of the 300 worst hazardous waste sites in the United States. Soils and groundwater at the site contain high levels of poison and cancer-causing chemicals, and some pollutants have reached the Laramie River, which flows along the west side of the plant. This spring UP completed a cleanup of four waste ponds and began demolition of the plant buildings. UP is now negotiating the final phase of cleanup with the EPA and Wyoming's Department of Environmental Quality.

Since the railroad company proposed a slurry wall last August, there has been mounting pressure from an ad-hoc citizens group, city and county officials and the state Environmental Protection Agency for more extensive measures. All pressed for eventual removal or on-site destruction of the contaminants.

In a public meeting in Laramie on May 16, UP spokesman John Bromley said the company had never considered the slurry wall anything but a "first step" toward cleanup. Later, he said UP had been misunderstood on this point "largely for emotional reasons: As soon as people heard the words 'slurry wall,' they immediately reacted against it without letting us get any further."

Jeff Stern of the Laramie River Cleanup Council said his group was pleased, if a bit confused, at UP's recent statements. He said that "everybody (at the May meeting) knew that this was a big, big turnaround" for UP. In their August report, the company said all other cleanup methods were too expensive and wouldn't lead to any greater measure of environmental protection.

Stern said the citizen group's main concern now is that the slurry wall be put in place as quickly as possible. Vera Moritz of the EPA in Denver agreed. Annual flooding of the Laramie River coincides with a "groundwater flood" that flushes more contaminants into the river, she said.

The slurry wall is actually a trench filled with bentonite and soil. Contaminants will be pumped from the ground within the walled area to force the groundwater flow inward toward the site and assure that contaminants do not spread.

At the recent public meeting, UP also announced design changes from their original slurry wall proposal, coinciding with changes proposed by state hydrology consultant John Cherry. Besides increasing the trench depth from 50 to 60 feet on the western, most critical side of the plant, UP proposes to move a 2,500-foot-long stretch of the Laramie River 150 feet west from its present location. The move would allow the western slurry wall to be moved outward so that the entire area of contaminants could be contained.

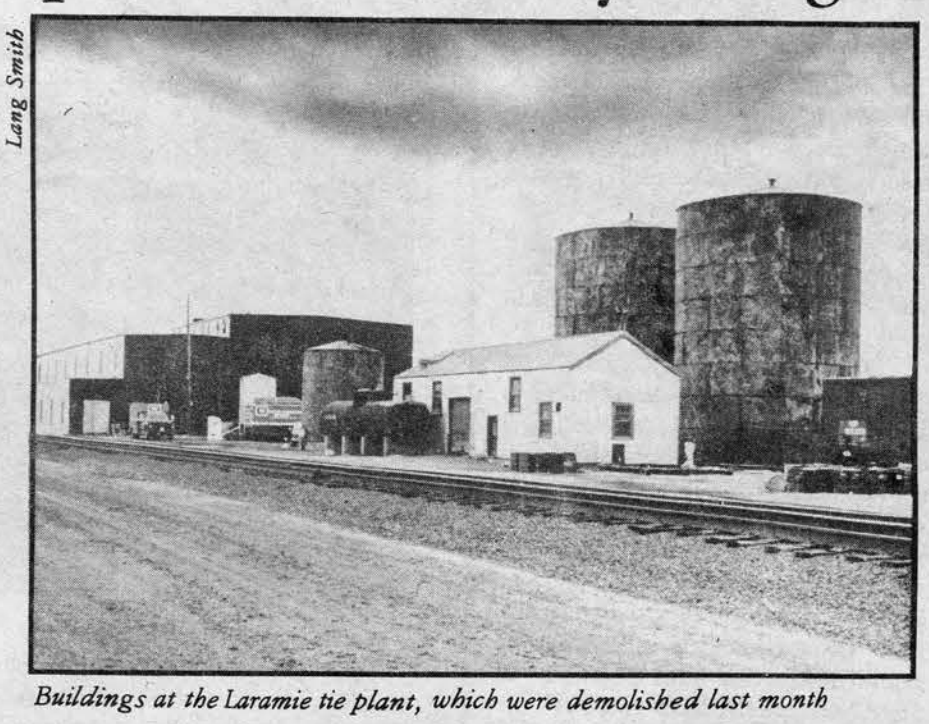
Meanwhile, UP has been responding to other complaints and concerns of EPA and the Cleanup Council. The company recently completed drilling wells and collecting data after EPA said a 1984 report describing the extent of contamination contained "critical data gaps." Though the new data won't be out until late June at the earliest, UP's Bromley said so far there are no big surprises. Contamination extends up to 90 feet into the bedrock, but it's moving "very slowly," he said.

Last fall, former tie plant employees revealed to the Laramie River Cleanup Council that PCB-containing transformers had been buried at the site (*HCN*, 12/24/84). UP then conducted a search and found two empty transformers above ground near the plant buildings. They said testing showed no contamination in the area.

Finally, 10 water wells near the tie plant were tested for contamination for the first time this spring. EPA found no traces of any of the over 100 known contaminants from the waste site.

--Mary Moran

Lang Smith



Buildings at the Laramie tie plant, which were demolished last month

Firm stung by coal 'bargain'

The coal edifice constructed by former Interior Secretary James Watt lost another wall May 29 when U.S. District Judge James Battin ruled that 364 million tons of federal coal in Montana's Powder River Basin had been leased illegally in 1982.

He cancelled the leases and ordered Western Energy Co., a subsidiary of Montana Power Co., to cease mining on Colstrip Tracts A and B. A company spokesman told Associated Press, "It's one of the most severe things that has happened to us as a company."

The Powder River sales were controversial because of the $100 million loss the federal government suffered. But the judge threw out the leases because the lease sale environmental impact statement didn't consider the effects on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Tribe. He is yet to rule on the environmental and reclamation issues raised by the Northern Plains Resource Council, the Powder River Basin Resource Council and the Montana and National Wildlife federations.

Margie MacDonald of NPRC said, "This case shows that by ramrodding the leases through and by pushing the regulations to their limits, James Watt didn't do anybody any favor."

--Ed Marston

Agency unhorses helicopters

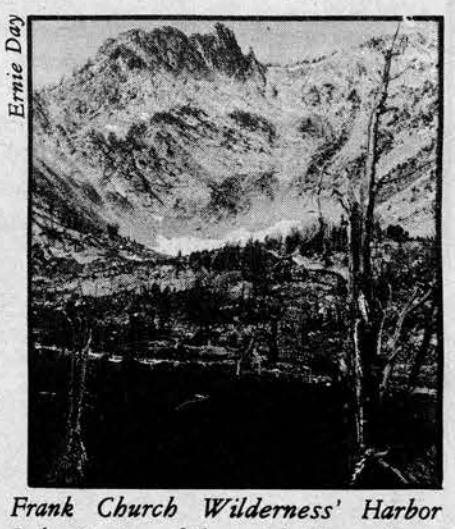
The Forest Service and Environmental Protection Agency came to belated agreement last month on the touchy question of flying helicopters into wilderness areas to test lakes for acid rain.

Although EPA had hoped to gain access to the 425 wilderness lakes by helicopter (*HCN*, 5/27/85), the agreement allows travel only by horse or on foot. Forest Service personnel will collect the water samples. To check the accuracy of the test results, however, the Forest Service said it will allow EPA to use helicopters to collect samples from a few lakes in wilderness.

"If the comparability testing shows significant differences between samples," said Forest Service Chief Max Peterson, "we have no choice but to use helicopters to collect the data from additional lakes next year." As part of EPA's nationwide study, a total of 888 lakes in 10 Western states will be tested beginning this August.

--the staff

Ernie Day



Frank Church Wilderness' Harbor Lake, proposed for acid rain study

BARBS

Us too.

U.S. Senator Jake Garn of Utah told reporters: "If I were about 10 years younger I'd choose being a working astronaut over being a senator so fast it'd make your head swim."

HOTLINE

Inholdings bought out

Thanks to the Trust for Public Land, parts of the Conundrum Creek Trail inside western Colorado's Maroon Bells - Snowmass Wilderness won't turn into summer condos. The trailhead is nine miles from the resort town of Aspen. Acting as intermediary, the Trust optioned 472 acres including two miles of creek and the popular trail that leads through 14,000 foot mountains to Conundrum Hot Springs. On May 9, the land on four patented mining claims was purchased for $950,000 with funds authorized by Congress under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

SCS gets new chief

Texas rancher Wilson Scaling was named chief of the Soil Conservation Service May 21 by Agriculture Secretary John Block. Scaling is the eighth chief in the 50-year history of SCS and replaces Peter Myers, the newly-confirmed assistant secretary of agriculture. Block called Scaling "an active conservationist."

When industry complies

Contrary to popular belief, mandated compliance with anti-pollution laws has not caused a decline in industrial productivity in this country, reports the Congressional Budget Office. In a study released in late March, CBO determined that "environmental regulation has not been a major contributor to a loss in the efficiency of the U.S. private economy." Further, these regulations may even improve productivity, the report says, by incorporating pollution-related costs into industry's economic planning. Nevertheless, the National Coal Association says that compared to Japan, Canada and West Germany, this country's regulatory-related costs have been higher.

Raccoon gets political

Wyoming Farm Bureau members were not pleased by a recent issue of "The Adventures of Ranger Rick," a magazine for children published by the National Wildlife Federation. In one story, cartoon character Raccoon Ranger Rick and his friends blame ranchers when they find a camping area has been trampled by cattle: "Don't the ranchers care about the land and wildlife?" Odie Skunk asks. "Oh, some do," answers Roberto Ringtail, "but it seems more care only about making money." According to the *Casper Star-Tribune*, the Wildlife Federation intended the story to focus mainly on the arid Southwest and didn't mean to unfairly attack all ranchers.

HOTLINE

Exxon to mitigate

Exxon USA escaped with a fraction of the impact mitigation funds the Wyoming Game and Fish Department initially demanded of it. Game and Fish had asked for $8.3 million to cushion the effects of Exxon's LaBarge sour gas project in southwestern Wyoming. Then, at the Industrial Siting Council hearings in Kemmerer, it agreed to a $1.3 million figure to improve fisheries, buy stream easements and to perform other tasks. Game and Fish said it appeared the impacts might be less than originally feared and that Exxon may drill 45 wells instead of 64 wells. In addition, Exxon agreed to pay $75,000 to the Wyoming Wildlife Federation to do its own mitigation, including the rebuilding of a large beaver dam destroyed by vandalism.

Black Canyon suit

The dispute over the value of 4,200 acres of land on the north rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison (*HCN*, 10/15/85) in western Colorado has gone to court. Rancher Richard Mott has filed an inverse condemnation suit to force the National Park Service to buy the land at his price for addition to the Black Canyon National Monument. Mott's 1984 appraisals showed the land worth $600 an acre. The government appraiser valued it at $200 an acre. The situation is complicated by the Southwest Production Credit Association, which has foreclosed on the land.

Working for wildlife

Defenders of Wildlife

More people volunteer to work for wildlife in the Rocky Mountains and High Plains states than in any other region of the nation, says the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Volunteers put in 527,150 hours in 1984 for a contribution estimated at more than $3 million. Work ranged from habitat survey to computer programming in the eight states of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Montana, South and North Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska.

Survey is off

Inaccurate survey lines have thrown the ownership of oil and gas leases into question in Wyoming's Powder River Basin. No one is sure now who gets ownership rights, or the expensive responsibility for reclamation. The Bureau of Land Management recently reported that maps for 107 townships in Campbell County don't match original surveys from 1883. The boundaries laid out 100 years ago were legally set, says BLM, and disputes on leases and wells arising from newer surveys must be resolved in favor of the original land locations. BLM predicts it will take about 20 years to resurvey the townships, which means oil and gas exploration will probably slack off while companies wait to see who owns what.

Goldsmith wins round one at Priest Lake

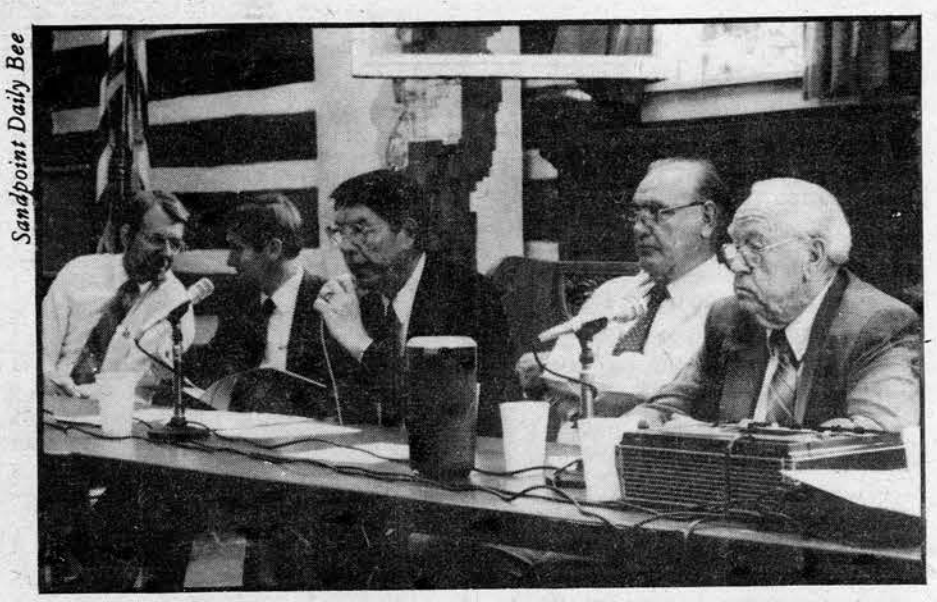
The Idaho Land Board approved a land exchange with British financier James Goldsmith May 15, enabling him to pursue plans for a massive resort on the east shore of primitive Priest Lake in Idaho's Panhandle (*HCN*, 4/29/85). The Priest Lake Coalition opposed the exchange and said it would appeal the 3-2 decision in court.

"This board has a constitutional obligation to manage these lands as trustees for the state public school endowment," said Republican Attorney General Jim Jones. No other alternative would be as "attractive to the endowment," he added, since it will receive a net gain of $2.5 million. Fellow Republicans Jerry Evans and Pete Cenarrusa, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Secretary of State respectively, also voted for the land exchange.

Goldsmith's proposal to the state was an equal-value exchange of 6,818 Goldsmith acres for 3,724 state acres, and a gift to the state of 3,132 additional acres. In their motion, the Land Board majority increased the gift from Goldsmith to 4,400 acres. After a short consultation, Goldsmith's representatives accepted the amended deal.

Gov. John Evans and State Auditor Joe Williams, both Democrats, voted against the exchange. Their major reason was the 90 percent-plus opposition in North Idaho. "Diamond (Goldsmith's corporation) had to convince people in North Idaho this was in their interest. They failed. My job is to represent those Idahoans," said Gov. Evans. Neither Attorney General Jones nor Superintendent Evans, who carried the majority debate, mentioned the public opposition.

A handful of North Idahoans attended the Boise meeting. Dean Stevens, who owns a marina on Priest Lake, drove 500 miles from his home to be present. His reaction to the vote was a loud "Infamy!"



Sandpoint Daily Bee

The Idaho Land Board at a 1984 Priest Lake hearing in Sandpoint. From left to right: Superintendent of Public Instruction Jerry Evans, Attorney General Jim Jones, Gov. John Evans, Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa and State Auditor Joe Williams.

"I expected this outcome," said Priest Lake Coalition attorney Paul Vogel. "But I feel very empty right now. A lot of people in North Idaho will feel the same when they hear the news."

In short presentations before the Land Board voted, Priest Lake Coalition members and Goldsmith's attorney again aired wide disagreement over benefits and costs of the exchange. The Coalition calculated the exchange would provide three cents per student per year for Idaho public schools, and reiterated the nearly complete opposition of North Idaho educators to the exchange. Goldsmith attorney Woody Richards said the Endowment Fund would gain $15 million, not the $1.2 million calculated by the Board's hearing officer.

Coeur d'Alene attorney Scott Reed, who now takes over from Vogel as Coalition attorney, said, "We're going to pursue the matter in every forum possible." That will probably begin with a petition for rehearing to the Land Board, followed by an appeal to District Court in Ada County. "Whenever you've lost, you're behind," said Reed. "But I'm optimistic about our opportunity to change the decision. Goldsmith has a lot of hurdles to tackle yet."

Reed said an appeal could cause Goldsmith problems in moving ahead since developments that are contested in court make investors wary. Reed also said the Coalition will meet shortly to determine its legal and public strategy. The Coalition must choose whether to make a serious political effort to reverse the decision or start concentrating on fighting it locally through planning and zoning arenas, or both.

--Pat Ford

Can Denver kick its bluegrass habit?

Although water is scarce in Colorado, the Denver Water Board estimates that single-family homes in the city use 40 percent of the water they buy for lawns. Lush lawns in a desert environment are expensive and may well be impossible by the 1990s if a severe water shortage occurs as predicted.

Searching for a term to describe more appropriate landscape practices, a group in 1981 coined "xeriscape," or dry landscaping. The group, which included landscape contractors, sod growers, the university extension service and Denver Water Board, listed several ways homeowners could use less water more efficiently.

The methods include improving the soil, reducing the use of bluegrass -- which requires 18 gallons of water per square foot each year -- expanding mulch areas, using native plants adapted to the arid climate and zoning plants according to their water demands. The group found that an often used method of limiting water use -- black plastic covered by rock -- created a summer heat wave around the house.

Shannon Downing-Baum

Denver Water Department's administration building

Four years ago, the original xeriscape task force developed a demonstration garden next to the administration building of the city's water department. The garden includes 80 different species of water-conserving plants, five types of turf, seven mulches and drip and spray irrigation systems. A second xeriscape garden is now being planted at the Denver Botanic Gardens and a third is planned for the Overland Pond Educational Park. Several groups have taken up the xeriscape approach, including the Denver Audubon Society, which will take a lecture-slide show to interested groups. For more information about xeriscape call 623-2500, ext. 412, or write: Ken Ball, Conservation Officer, Denver Water Dept., Denver, CO.

--Shannon Downing-Baum

BARBS

Just stick to the hard news, please.

A headline in the May 15 *Deseret News* asks: "Is death just the flipside of life?"

Better dead than belted.

Montana legislator Stan Stephens of Havre opposes a mandatory seat belt law: "How many freedoms are we going to take away from the people?" he asked.

BULLETIN BOARD

MANAGING GLACIER'S GRIZZLIES

Proposed guidlines for managing grizzly bears in Montana's Glacier National Park are now public. The guidelines are an interagency effort involving the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management. A public meeting will be held June 11 at 7 p.m. at the conference training hall at Park Headquarters in West Glacier, and written comments will be received by superintendent Robert Hardeen until July 24. The guidelines and a map illustrating grizzly bear management situations in Glacier are available from Glacier National Park, West Glacier, Montana 59936.

GROUNDWATER POLLUTION STUDY

Gathering information on groundwater contamination from businesses, conservation groups, government officials and the public is the focus of a new group called the National Groundwater Policy Forum. The Forum is chaired by Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt and sponsored by the Conservation Foundation and the National Governors' Association. Members of the forum range from corporate officials of Monsanto and Standard Oil Co. to lawyers for Environmental Defense Fund. The group plans to hold public hearings around the country and present their findings to Congress next year. For more information call the Conservation Foundation offices at 202/797-4300.

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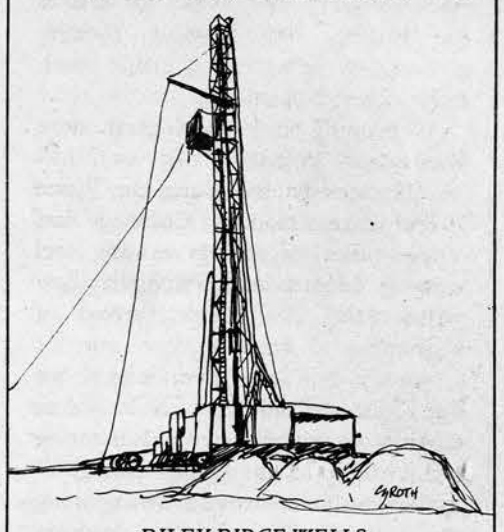
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

LET THE GOOD TIMES LAST

It is a common contradiction that the very organizations that exist to fight for mankind and nature often provide their employees and volunteers with the worst physical and emotional environment in which to work. Non-profit groups, including those which concentrate on the environment, could easily use as their logos overflowing ashtrays and half-filled styrofoam cups of cold coffee rather than blue skies and untouched forests. The problem of harried workers engaged in good causes is confronted head on by writer Anne Herbert in the March 1985 *Whole Earth Review*. She asks: How can people dedicated to good work get into a frame of mind in which they will do good, joyous, productive work? How can they stay away from constant pressure and panic without falling into bureaucratic drowsiness? Her answer is contained in a review of a book titled: *The C Zone: Peak Performance Under Pressure*, by Robert Kriegel and Marilyn Harris Kriegel.



RILEY RIDGE WELLS

Three more oil and gas wells are in the works for the Riley Ridge oil field west of Big Piney, Wyoming. Exxon has submitted a request to the Bureau of Land Management for the wells in the Lakeridge Unit. Two of the 18,000-foot wells would be on the Bridger-Teton National Forest near Deadline Ridge and Porcupine Creek and would require about one mile of new roads. The third well is on state land in the Darby Creek area with access crossing the National Forest. While the overall land management is set out in a 1984 environmental impact statement for Riley Ridge, a scoping statement on the new wells has been prepared. Copies of it are available at the Big Piney District Ranger's Office and the BLM Pinedale Resource Area Office, or write Bridger-Teton National Forest, P.O. Box 1888, Jackson, WY 82001.

HUNTING IN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed new hunting and fishing programs on 20 national wildlife refuges. The proposals would bring hunting or fishing to some refuges for the first time, and new programs to other refuges already open to some hunting or fishing. Most of the proposals are for sport fishing in refuges of the southeastern United States; only two Western refuges are affected. One of these is the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona, acquired recently by the Fish and Wildlife Service to protect endangered masked bobwhite quail habitat (*HCN*, 5/13/85). Until the new refuge master plan is completed, the agency wants to continue the former private landowners' policy of migratory bird and big game hunting, with a strict ban on all quail hunting. Both fishing and a possible elk hunt are proposed for Washington state's Columbian White-tailed Deer National Wildlife Refuge. For information on specific proposals or to comment write to Associate Director - Wildlife Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 18th and C Streets NW, Room 3252, Washington, D.C. 20240. Comments are due June 17.

PACIFIC COAST PARKS

Doug and Bobbe Tatreau's *Parks of the Pacific Coast*, a guide to 34 park areas in California, Oregon and Washington, provides large maps, 70 fine photos and brief but useful descriptions for travelers.

The East Woods Press, 429 East Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28203. Paper. $10.95. 160 pages. Locater maps, photos.

THE LITERARY WEST

Sun Valley, Idaho, will be the setting of a contemporary Western literature workshop late this month. The workshop will examine the region's literature, its themes, how it is affected by the landscape, and how it interacts with the American literary mainstream. Authors William Kittridge, Ron McFarland, Patricia Clark Smith and A.B. Guthrie will present readings. The workshop is sponsored by the Sun Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities and can be taken for college credit through Idaho State University, Boise State University or the University of Idaho. The workshop, at the Elkhorn Resort in Sun Valley, costs $30. The dates are June 24-26, but all registration is due by June 14. Call Charlene Lutes, project coordinator, at 208/622-9371.

NEW WILDERNESS DIRECTOR

The Montana Wilderness Association recently hired John Gatchell as its new program director in charge of rallying support for another 2.2 million acres of wilderness in Montana. Gatchell is from Whitefish, Montana, and was a grassroots activist in the Flathead Valley for seven years. He was president of the Flathead Coalition and vice president of the Bob Marshall Alliance. The Montana Wilderness Association can be contacted at P.O. Box 635, Helena, MT 59624 (406/422-0597).

COURSES ON THE AMERICAN WEST

The Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, has begun its 6th annual Summer Institute in Western American Studies. The Institute is offering five one-week courses scheduled from June 3 to July 6. Each course will explore topics relating to the history, art and culture of the Rocky Mountain West. Course topics include American landscape painting, legends, the Plains Indians, social history and folklore. Tuition is $100 for each course; some scholarships are available. Request admission and scholarship materials from the Education Department, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Box 1000, Cody, WY 82414.

BIGHORN COALITION FORMED

Ranchers, conservationists, hunters, outfitters and other local citizens who object to the Forest Service's plans for Wyoming's Bighorn National Forest recently formed the Bighorn Forest Users Coalition. The coalition unites 34 groups, ranging from the Sierra Club and the Sheridan County Hunters and Guides, to Texans for the Bighorns. They oppose building 2,000 miles of roads in the Bighorns as well as a proposal to allow more oil and gas leasing. The coalition agrees that agriculture and recreation -- including hunting and fishing -- form the region's economic base, and that management changes proposed by the Forest Service would threaten wildlife populations, increase stream sedimentation and jeopardize the Cloud Peak Wilderness. For more information on who's in the coalition and what they're up to, call their office at 307/683-2261.

LAND SWAP HEARINGS

National hearings in 25 cities will be held June 19-28 on the proposed interchange of certain lands and minerals responsibilities between the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Written comments will also be accepted until July 8. The proposal to interchange about 35 million acres of land between the two agencies and the transfer to the Forest Service of the responsibility for federal minerals within areas of Forest Service jurisdiction was announced last January. The proposal's goals are to improve public service and administrative efficiency, while reducing agency costs.

Implementation guide summaries on a state-by-state basis and legislative concepts on the proposal are now available. The summaries include revisions made in the original proposal as a result of discussions between field officials and the heads of both agencies.

Hearings, at which speakers may be limited to five minutes, will be held in the West at the following:

Arizona, in Safford, 6/19, 7 p.m., Old Armory, Highway 70; in Phoenix, 6/20, 1 and 7 p.m., Longview Middle School; in Prescott, 6/21, 7 p.m., Prescott Jr. High. *Colorado*, in Grand Junction, 6/26, 7 p.m., Howard Johnson's, I-70; in Denver, 6/27, 7 p.m., Clarion Hotel. *Idaho*, in Pocatello, 6/24, 4 p.m., Idaho State University College of Ed., Auditorium; in Boise, 6/27, 1 p.m. City Hall. *Montana*, in Helena, 6/25, 7 p.m., U.S. District Court, Rm. 551, Federal Building. *Nevada*, in Las Vegas, 6/24, 6 p.m., Clark County Library; in Reno, 6/25, 7 p.m., Reno/Sparks Convention Cntr. South Hall; in Elko, 6/26, 7 p.m. Elko Convention Center.

New Mexico, in Albuquerque, 6/24, 1 and 7 p.m., Univ. of New Mexico Conference Center; in Roswell, 6/25, 1 and 7 p.m., Roswell Inn. *North Dakota*, in Dickinson, 6/26, 7 p.m., Holiday Inn, I-94 and Rt. 22. *Oregon*, in Salem, 6/26, 7 p.m., Scottish Rite Temple; in Bend, 6/27, 1 and 7 p.m., Deschutes NF Office, 1645 E. Highway 20. *Utah*, in Richfield, 6/19, 3 p.m., Sevier Co. Courthouse; in Salt Lake City, 6/20, 2 and 7 p.m., Salt Palace, Room C-104. *National*, in Washington, D.C., 6/27, 1 p.m., Interior Dept., Auditorium.

MONTANA RIVER RECREATION RULES

The Montana Fish and Game Commission has new responsibilities for limiting access and recreational uses of the state's rivers and streams. To that end, the commission has drawn up new procedural rules. Comments on the rules can be aired at a public meeting in Helena on Wednesday, June 12, at 7:30 p.m. in Jorgensen's Restaurant and Lounge, 1714 11th Avenue. Written comments can be submitted until June 21; send them to Robert Lane, Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1420 East Sixth Ave., Helena, MT 59620. Call 406/444-2535 to get a copy of the proposed plans.

FIELD COURSES IN YELLOWSTONE

Learn about Yellowstone National Park's edible and medicinal plants, its bird life and hydrothermal systems by attending some of the Yellowstone Institute's 37 field courses this summer. Classes range from "Natural History of Beaver Ponds and Marshes," which is offered for academic credit, to "Lakes of Yellowstone by Canoe," which takes students into remote areas for five-day excursions. Most classes are based in cabins overlooking the Lamar Valley. The Yellowstone Institute is sponsored by the Yellowstone Library and Museum Association. For details on dates, fees and a free course catalogue, write P.O. Box 117, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190.

The Endangered Species Act

Congress wasn't thinking of the earth's humbler creatures when it passed this law

by Jeanne Englert

As he reminisced about passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, Bill Cleary, now director of the western Colorado-based Club 20 but who was then an aide to a congressman, chuckled wryly. "I don't think Congress gave it a lot of thought," he said. "They just didn't want to see the noble creatures -- like the eagle, the bears -- disappear from the earth. It was kind of a motherhood thing."

Certainly, he said, when it passed the Act, Congress was not trying to save the furbish lousewort (a rare plant which threatened to hold up construction of the Dickey-Lincoln pump-storage project on the St. John River in Maine) or the Colorado squawfish or bonytail chub.

"Yes, the Endangered Species Act was definitely a sleeper," said Cliff Merritt of the American Wilderness Alliance. "There were a few who were aware of its potential implications -- like in designating critical habitat -- but not many. Remember that the 1960s and 1970s were famous for environmental legislation, starting with the Wilderness Act in 1964, NEPA in 1969, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Bill, the BLM Organic Act, two forest acts and reformed U.S. Forest Service practices." Merritt added that the Endangered Species Act had strong support from the public and was championed by Sens. Gaylord Nelson, and Bill Proxmire, who found allies in Montana's Lee Metcalf and Idaho's Frank Church.

Did anyone think then that the Endangered Species Act might stop dams or impede water development in the West?

"No," said Cleary. "They didn't anticipate those problems. What Congress had in mind were the big, noble, glamorous animals and birds. But, yes, it could indeed stop all water resource development dead in its tracks."

Perhaps, but environmentalists don't think the Act has that power. Not after their experience with the snail darter, the fish that made the Tellico Dam national news.

In 1979, the Tellico Dam in northeast Tennessee was almost stopped by this pretty little perch, which lived in the waters of the Little Tennessee River and the Tellico stream which feeds it. Zyg Plater, the lawyer who litigated the Tellico Dam case by invoking the Endangered Species Act, says he used it only as an issue of last resort. None of the other arguments advanced for stopping the TVA project had been effective.

There seemed to be plenty of other issues. The Little Tennessee was the last stretch of free-flowing water in northeast Tennessee. Within a radius of 60 miles of the Tellico Dam, there were 25 other artificial impoundments of water. Completion of Tellico would evict families from hard-won homesteads and destroy 16,000 acres of rich riverbottom land as well as the ancestral graves and sacred sites of the Cherokee Indians. (In Cherokee, *ade la egwa* or "tellico" means "big money.") But in the eyes of the law, people, graves and rich farmland didn't have the clout the snail darter had.

"Even 95 percent completed, it was better to stop further construction of the Tellico Dam," Zyg told the participants in a legal seminar at a Washington dam and water conference in 1981. "I only brought up the snail darter because none of our other arguments had prevailed."

Plater won that case, and the snail darter became for the moment the most infamous fish in America. It was one thing to save the grizzly bear or the bald eagle, but a tiny perch in northeast Tennessee?

"The snail darter case was wrongly decided by the Supreme Court," says Bob Golten, who as counsel for the National Wildlife Federation litigated the first case under the Act in 1974. "I took a look at the scene, saw the snail darter -- somebody scooped it up in a helmet as I recall -- and I said, 'This is a loser.'

"If you've got a whooping crane, eagle or gray wolf, you have a more appealing fact situation. I was afraid the snail darter would generate a reaction which would damage the statute and the credibility of the environmental movement."

It seemed to Golten that the Supreme Court, in upholding the snail darter spawning grounds over completion of the Tellico dam, was mocking the statute, and inviting Congress to change it. "It (the case) had an impact on people like me, making me even more sensitive to it afterward, to its political implications."

Nevertheless, Golten was sucessful in requiring the Mississippi Highway Department to pay $10 million to buy habitat for 40 Mississippi sandhill cranes whose habitat was threatened by construction of a state highway. And though in the end the snail darter did not stop completion of the Tellico dam -- Congress voted to exempt the Tellico from requirements of the Act -- the case stands as a symbol of the Act's power to stop water development projects. That is especially true in the Upper Colorado and the South Platte river basins. There, on both sides of the Continental Divide, future water projects threaten the habitats of three endangered species of fish as well as the spring nesting and feeding grounds of the whooping crane south of Kearney, Nebraska.

Whooping cranes and their more numerous cousins, the sandhill cranes, need habitat along the Platte in the eastern plains of Colorado and in Nebraska for spring nesting and feeding. Mother cranes need shallow water and open areas devoid of vegetation to keep an eye out for predators. But water diversions above the Kearney feeding grounds take so much water out of the river that spring flows are no longer strong enough to uproot shrubs and trees growing along the river. The birds, lacking alternatives, cluster in what's left of riverine habitat.

And so in 1978, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated about 60 miles of the Platte River in central Nebraska as critical habitat for the whooping crane. Soon after, its habitat became an issue in the environmental impact statement for the Grayrocks project of Basin Electric Power Cooperative on the Laramie River, a North Platte tributary in eastern Wyoming.

Jeopardy opinions were also issued for the Wildcat project of Riverside Irrigation District and Public Service Company of Colorado, and for the Narrows reclamation project, both in northeast Colorado. In each case, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that further depletions of the flow of the South Platte would prevent the river from scrubbing out the woody undergrowth.

The Grayrocks case was settled in 1978, when Basin Electric agreed to pay $7.5 million to establish the Platte River Whooping Crane Habitat Maintenance Trust. Interest from that fund has been used to acquire 6,000 acres of land along the Platte River. According to Greg Hobbs, attorney for the development-oriented Colorado Water Congress, the Trust will be able to maintain the crane's habitat by mechanical methods, such as the "bush hog," which can cut trees up to eight inches in diameter. In his opinion, such measures, with perhaps some regulation of the river to provide optimum flow conditions, will allow continued water development in the Platte River Basin.

A Platte River coordinating committee composed of representatives of federal agencies, state water interests, water-user groups and environmentalists has been formed to try to work out an amicable compromise. The report of that group is expected next year.

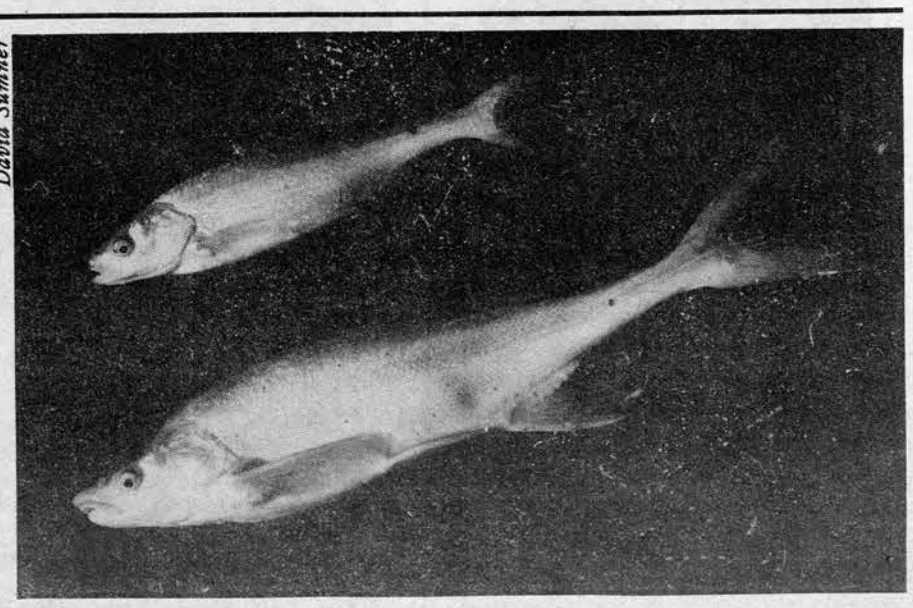
But the jeopardy opinion on the Narrows project still stands, and according to Don Christienson, longtime foe of the Narrows project, a recently released environmental impact statement on the Narrows was attacked by the Environmental Protection Agency as being insufficient in mitigation measures to protect that critical habitat zone in central Nebraska. As it stands now, the whooping crane could stop the Narrows project.

Environmentalists, still proceeding cautiously, would like to see more detailed hydrological studies done on the river. They may not be pushing it, because of the Tellico Dam experience, but they have the law on their side.

Critical habitat is a legal designation, and the whooping crane is still an endangered species, with little more than 100 left. In addition, the whooping crane, like the grizzly bear and the bald eagle, is popular. So much has been written about it that water projects which threaten its feeding grounds could face strong opposition.

Not so with the three endangered fishes on the western side of the Rockies in the Colorado River Basin. They are the Colorado squawfish -- a

David Sumner



Humpback chub

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Kent and Donna Dannen

Sandhill cranes and cottonwoods along the Platte River, Nebraska

large minnow which can weigh up to 60 pounds -- the humpback chub and the bonytail chub. None of the three have even the limited appeal of a snail darter. The humpback chub, for example, looks like some sort of mutant, or like the deformed fish found in the polluted waters of Lake Erie. All three have been labeled in the past as "trash fish," a term Roland Fischer of the Colorado River Water Conservation District still uses in anger at the thought that these native fish might have the power to stop water projects in Western Colorado.

In the late 1970s, jeopardy opinions were issued on several western Colorado Bureau of Reclamation projects, including the Dallas Creek and Dolores projects, both of which were under construction; the West Divide project, which has been shelved by the Bureau because of a poor benefit-cost ratio; and the Upalco project in Utah. The grounds for issuing those jeopardy opinions were that the dams would cause water-temperature problems and flow fluctuations which interfere with spawning.

But according to attorney Hobbs, it isn't dams which pose the greatest threat to the fish. He says it is past eradication programs of the federal and state governments designed to poison "rough" fish in favor of establishing game fisheries which decimated their populations, as well as predation by warm water game fish such as bass, pike, and catfish. (Nevertheless, it is a fact that below dams these fish don't do well. The water is too cold for them to thrive.) Hobbs suggests that hatcheries be established for these species, which can then be introduced into the river after they have grown large enough to compete with the game fish. That is one of the "non-flow alternatives" favored by the Colorado Water Congress, Club 20 and other water-development interests.

The environmentalists haven't rejected the idea of stocking the Upper Colorado River Basin with hatchery-reared squawfish and chubs. But they prefer another approach, one which will require some changes in Western water law.

"Hatcheries on an experimental level... o.k., but that's not the answer," says Connie Albrecht, the Colorado representative of Friends of the Earth, and a member of the coordinating committee now trying to work out a compromise between no further development of the Upper Colorado River Basin and all-out development which would destroy the chances of the fishes' survival.

She says western Colorado will soon have surplus water as a result of federal salinity control projects which are lining ditches to prevent seepage and rehabilitating older irrigation systems. There is also less land needing irrigation water as farmers abandon farming.

"Those farmers, they don't want to lose their water rights, but under the existing use-it, lose-it system, they will," Albrecht says. "Why not make it so that they could lease that surplus water to maintain stream flows while retaining the water rights? If that could be done, there might be even more of an inducement for farmers to use their water more efficiently.

"The water developers would like to put a few thou into fish hatcheries, but we have to maintain an ecosystem on the river. Otherwise, it's gonna be just a damn ditch," she says.

Albrecht envisions establishment of a fund similar to the Platte River Habitat Maintenance Trust, to which the water developers would contribute and which would be used for recovery of the species.

Jim Martin, attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund, says what is needed is a change in water law to allow organizations to acquire water rights for that purpose. Currently only the state itself can do so, through the Colorado Water Conservation Board. That board, which is made up of governor-appointed members, has been reluctant to make minimum-flow water right filings.

Despite the controversy, the fish have yet to impede any Colorado projects. The jeopardy opinions issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service stand, but the Bureau of Reclamation continues to construct the Dallas Creek and Dolores projects. Other projects proposed by energy companies on the Colorado mainstem have been granted "no-jeopardy" status although no one knows what the cumulative effect would be if all were built.

Yet the water-development interests see the Endangered Species Act as a threat to their state-granted water rights -- the "law of the river." Those river compacts were forged decades before the environmentally oriented legislation of the 1970s. Compacts on the Colorado and the Platte rivers allocated the entire flows of the river systems to the various states through which the rivers flow.

The foundation of river compacts and of Western water law is a narrow definition of "beneficial use." Only water diverted from a stream is defined as "use." Water left in a stream, whether for birds or fish or, for that matter, for human recreation, is considered wasted.

But now the Endangered Species Act is also part of the "law of the river." And no one participating on the coordinating committees to work out solutioins for the South Platte or Colorado knows if the two can be reconciled.

In an attempt to eliminate the question, the Colorado Water Congress sent Greg Hobbs to Washington in March. His mission was to convince Congress to amend the Endangered Species Act, which is up for reauthorization this year, by exempting the Upper Basin states from its provisions. The water interests argued that maintenance of stream flow for habitat interferes with state water rights.

The environmentalists were in Washington, too, arguing for small changes in state water law to allow them to purchase rights to protect instream flows. It now appears the Act will be reauthorized for at least a year, and probably for three, without substantial change.

In the meantime, George Miller, D-Ca., chairman of the House Water and Power Subcommittee, which is the authorizing spigot for every major bureau project, succeeded in kicking the Narrows project out of the 1985 supplemental appropriations water bill. His committee could not recommend funding for the Narrows project, Miller told Tom Bevill, chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee, because Colorado has made no provisions for cost-sharing and because the Narrows, which has risen in cost from $90 to $410 million, has bumped against its cost ceiling.

Miller didn't say anything about birds.

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Jeanne Englert is a freelance writer in Lafayette, Colorado. This article was made possible by the High Country News Research Fund.

Line Reference Target LRT-BE4

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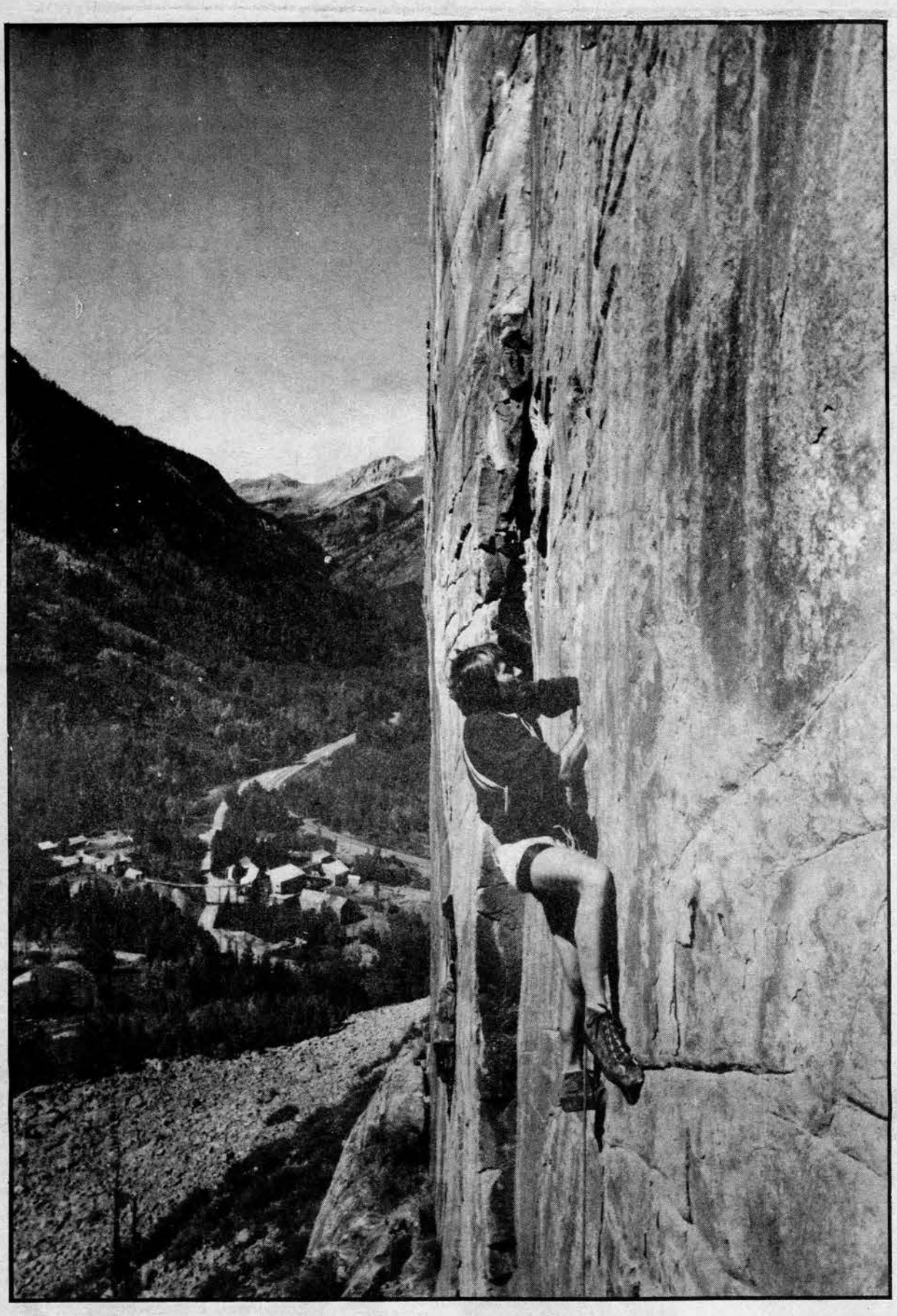

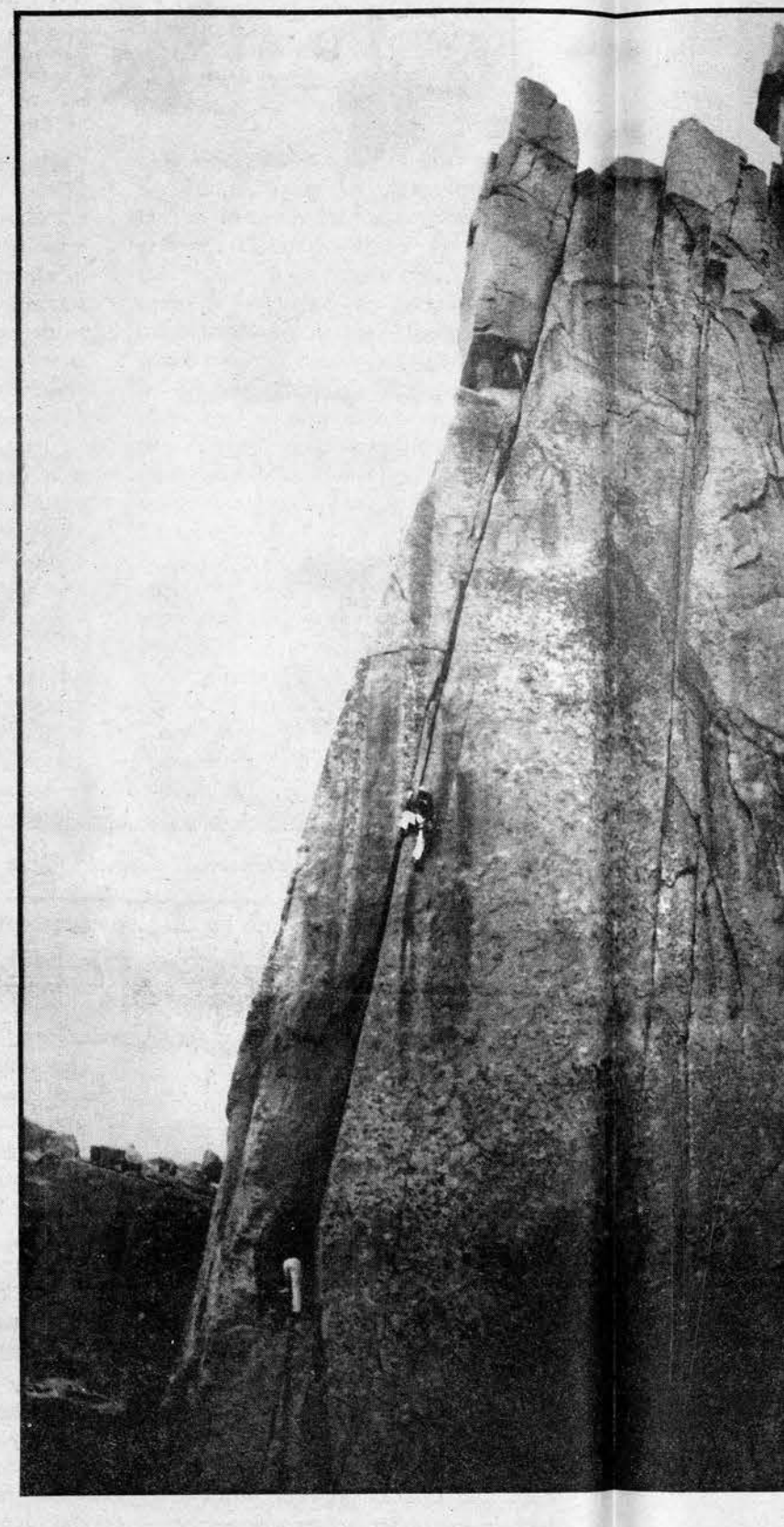

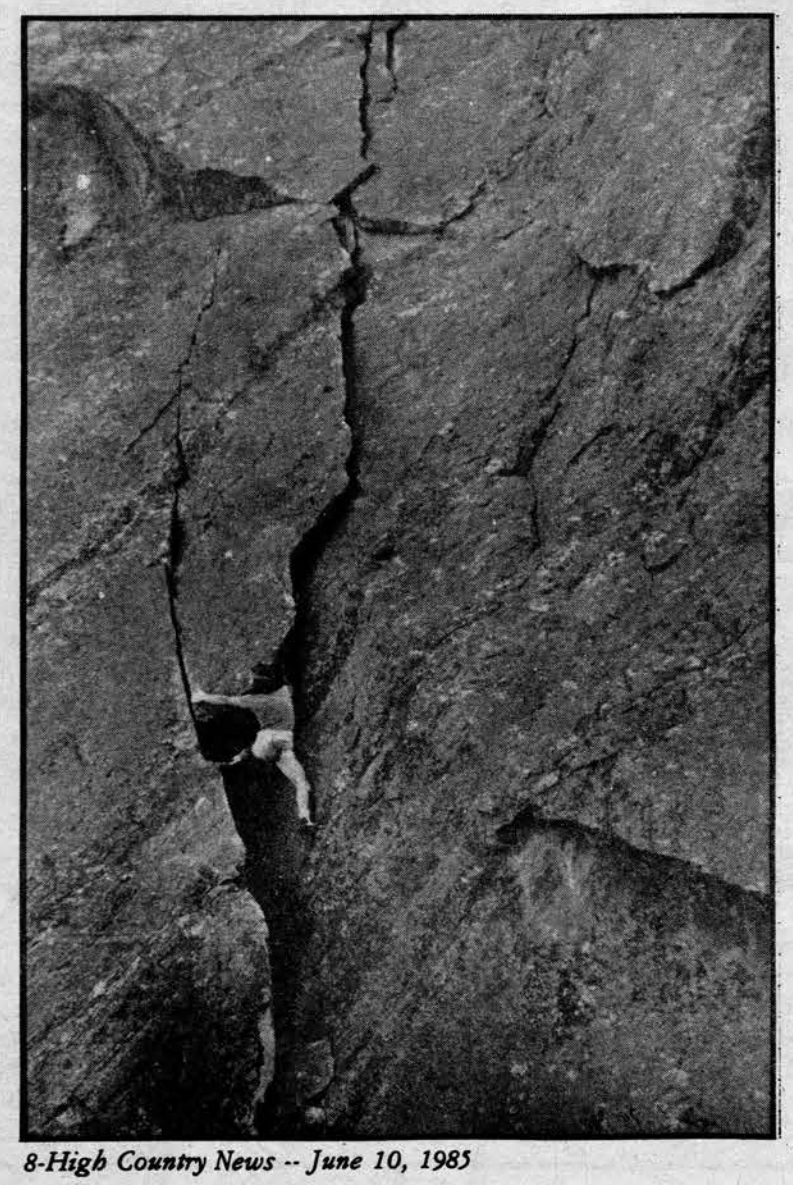

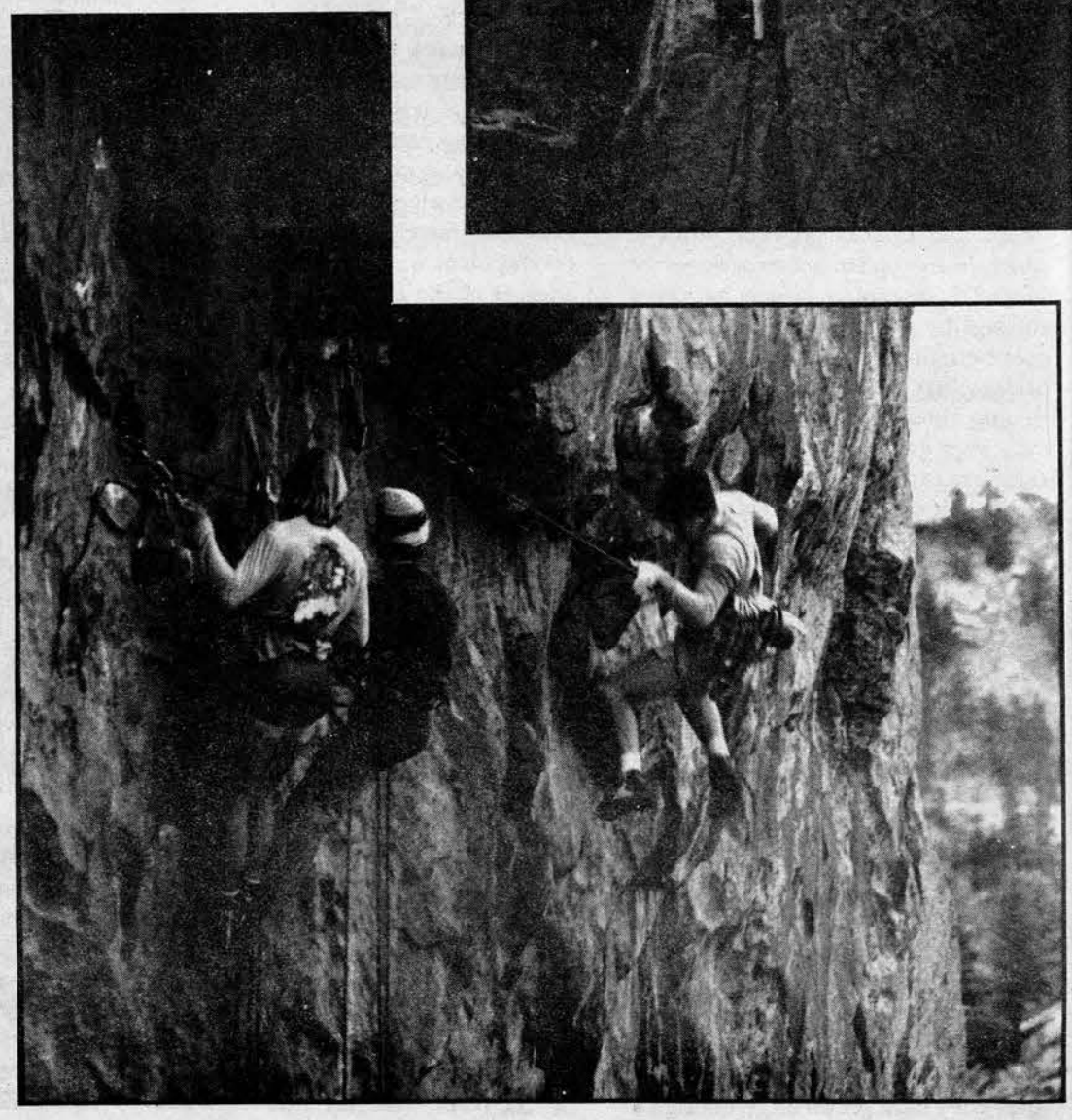

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Photos by Glenn Randall

PHOTOS, clockwise from left: Mark Sonnenfeld takes a fall in Eldorado Canyon State Park near Boulder; Dan Stone, Eldorado Canyon; Bill Kees above Telluride; Pikes Peak; Jeff Achey leads a trio in Eldorado Canyon; Skip Guernin climbs Lumpy Ridge just north of Estes Park; Sue Patenaude concentrates on her next handhold in the Garden of the Gods near Colorado Springs.

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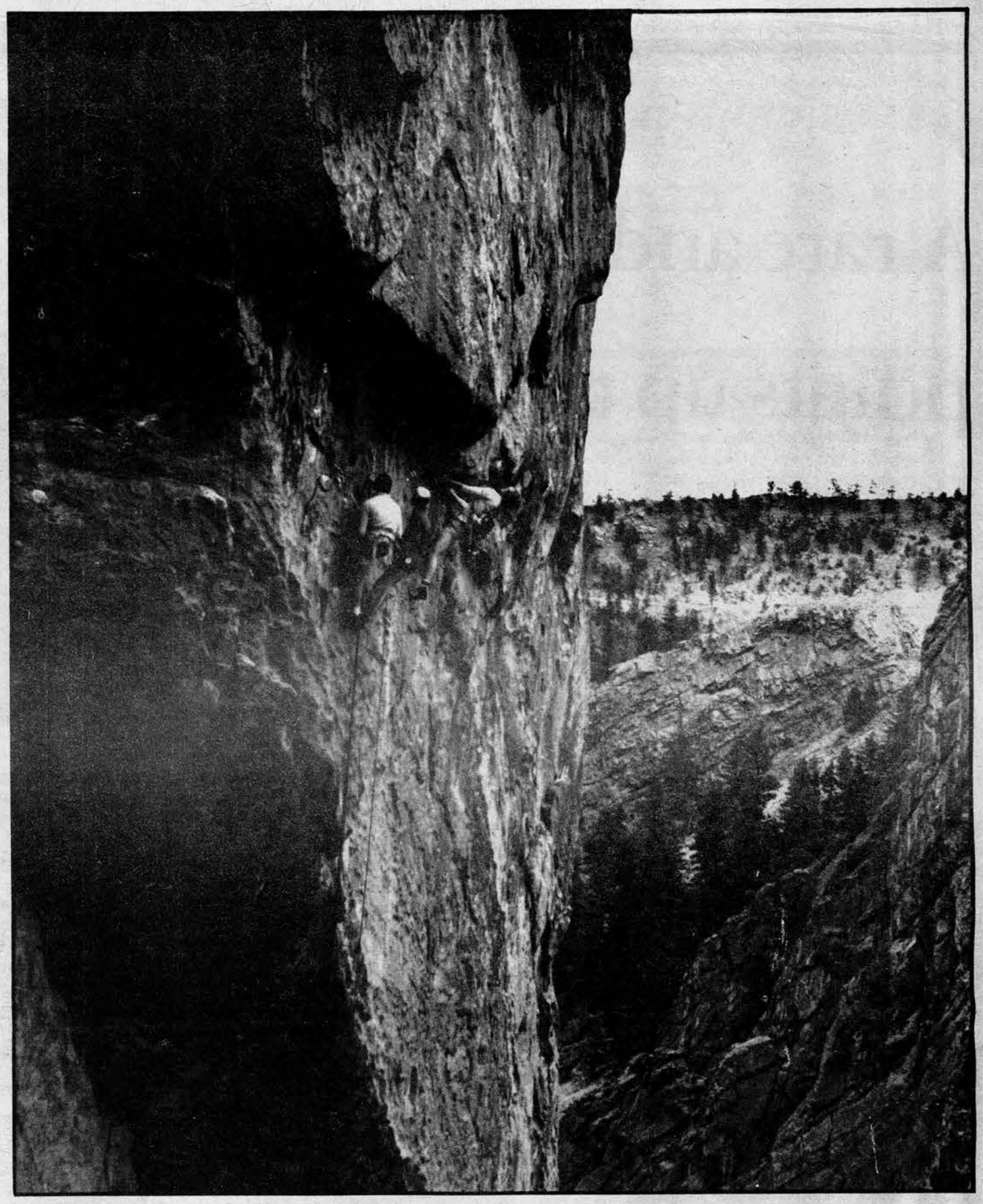
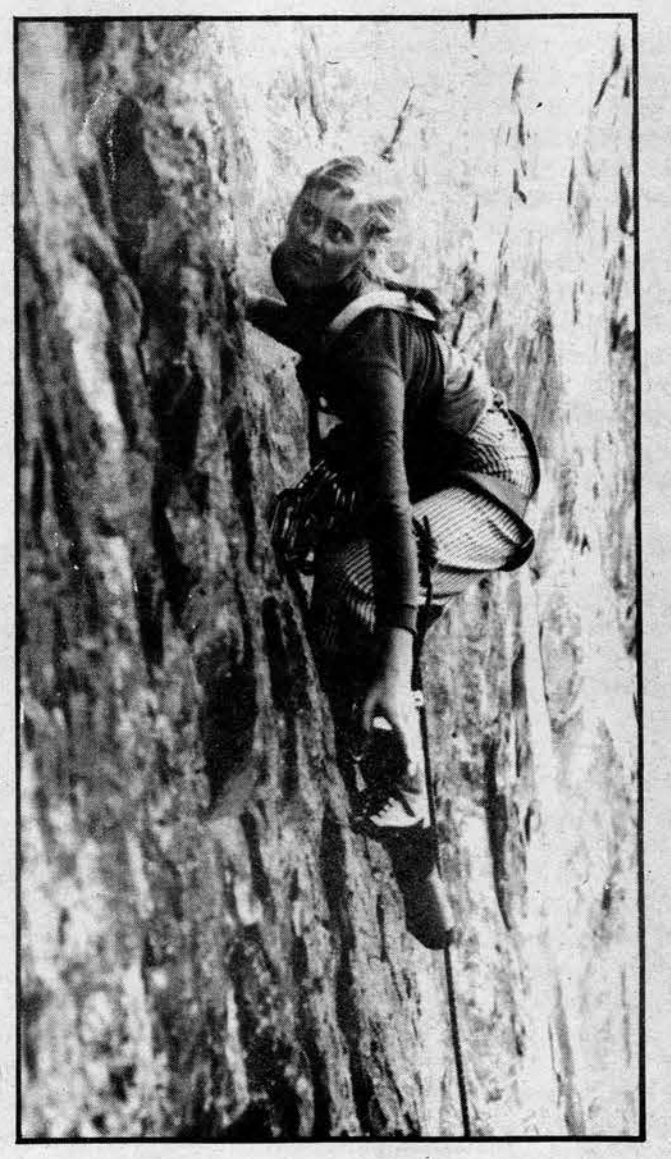
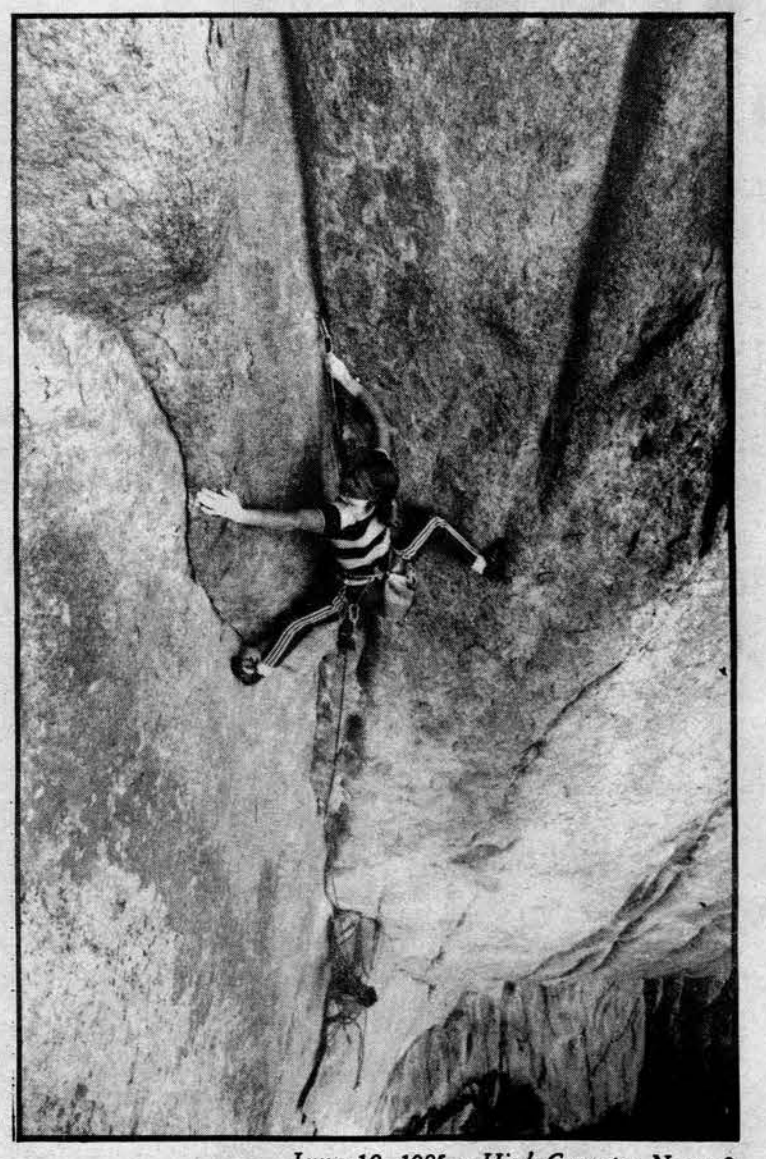
Glenn Randall is a free-lance writer, photographer and rock climber from Boulder, Colorado.







A rare and tiny ferret points up the nation's muddled approach to endangered species

Tim Clark

by Staci Wertz Hobbet

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced plans in May to 'harvest' young black-footed ferrets this fall from the only known population of the endangered species. The animals will be taken to the Game and Fish Department's Sybille Wildlife Research Unit near Laramie in preparation for captive breeding. The decision was made at a meeting held May 21, and ends one aspect of an ongoing controversy.

The recovery project has scored many research successes and has been praised for its rapport with ranchers and landowners in the Meeteetse, Wyoming, area, where the wild population was discovered in 1981. But progress toward captive breeding has been rocky and slow. Debate about whether to remove ferrets from the Meeteetse colony, where to put them, and how to fund the expensive and risky attempt has exacerbated differences among scientists and administrators in state, federal and private agencies and groups. Charges of turf-building, ego-waving and stonewalling are heard on all sides.

The decision to remove ferrets comes after more than two years of discussion one biologist describes as "the god-damnedest zoo I've ever been involved in." Fortunately, the animals and their habitat are surviving the delay in captive breeding. The population may even be increasing, although researchers say it may be that survey techniques, and not the ferret population, have improved. There are thought to be about 129 ferrets at Meeteetse.

With the green light flashing for captive breeding and the wild ferret population free of immediate crisis, the recovery program would seem poised for success. But the program, like those for other endangered species, is administered and influenced by at least nine interest groups, and further modified by politics, economics, and public interest. That there has been infighting in the ferret program surprises no one. For example, both the California condor and the Yellowstone grizzly bear have been caught in similar storms in their respective recovery programs.

Criticisms are commonly heard of particular individuals or agencies. But information from an increasing number of endangered species recovery programs points the longest finger at the system of management, not at the people.

The black-footed ferret, a 1½-pound mustelid, is North America's only native ferret and was, until its discovery in northwestern Wyoming, thought by many to be extinct. Its original range was very nearly the same as its main prey, the prairie dog, and included the plains from Alberta and Saskatchewan south to Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. Although widespread, the ferret population was probably never large. It is now thought that plowing of prairieland and wholesale poisoning of prairie dogs decimated both the dog and the ferret.

The last Wyoming ferret, prior to those in Meeteetse, was found dead in 1972. In 1974, the last known wild ferrets, members of a small poplation in South Dakota, disappeared. A few of the South Dakota ferrets had been transferred to an Eastern breeding facility for captive breeding, but those died as well. The population, long isolated, may have developed genetic problems which doomed the captive breeding attempt. Extensive searches for other ferret colonies in the mid and late 1970s turned up only a few scattered skulls.

But in September of 1981, a ranch dog near Meeteetse killed an animal which approached its food dish in the night. Rancher John Hogg found the ferret in the morning but didn't know what it was. At the urging of his wife, he took the body to the town taxidermist, who quickly identified the species and called authorities. A several weeks' long search turned up the Meeteetse colony, and research has continued since.

The research is directed by the Black-footed Ferret Advisory Team. The team was brought together by Wyoming Game and Fish and is made up of representatives from it, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, University of Wyoming, National Wildlife Federation, Wyoming State Land Board, U.S. Forest Service and the ranching community. Its goals, according to Game and Fish Director Don Dexter, are to define ferret research needs, review research proposals, establish a cooperative research fund and recommend management strategies based on the research.

The federal Fish and Wildlife Service has taken a subsidiary role in the ferret program even though the Endangered Species Act of 1973 gives it lead authority. Only four months after the discovery in Meeteetse, the agency had transferred primary responsibility to Wyoming Game and Fish, a move some doubt it was empowered to make. Despite serious problems with the state-run effort, Fish and Wildlife has not tried to recover control. Some suggest their reluctance may be an echo of the Sagebrush Rebellion. With the ferrets on private ranch land, and with Wyoming a state which zealously guards its independence, the federal agency may believe the program can only be run successfully by a state agency.

From the beginning, the state effort and the ferret advisory team (BFAT is its abbreviation) was controversial. Harry Harju, a Game and Fish biologist, expected that. "You just can't tell a scientist -- any scientist -- that you don't think his research is what should be done right now and not get some bruised feelings."

The team was criticized for the research it allowed on the ferret colony, and for the research it didn't allow. But it was also criticized for its makeup, its narrow perspective, its priorities and its bureaucratization of the ferret study.

Individual pride has been the project's curse. Researchers cannot even agree who first found the ferrets in Meeteetse, says Harju. Irritation and annoyance result when one individual or group takes what seems to be undue credit. "I'm about as tired of the egos as I can get," says Harju, adding that Game and Fish deserved some blame too. "But we had people running around back East saying they were the great white guru of ferrets whether they were doing anything or not."

Harju will not say who the "great white guru" is, but some of his irritation centers on Tim Clark, a Jackson, Wyoming, private researcher and head of the Biota team which continues to conduct research in the Meeteetse area.

Clark had searched unsuccessfully for black-footed ferrets for eight years prior to the 1981 discovery, and press reports have often intimated that he found the first live animals. Although Clark, in his June 1983 *National Geographic* article, acknowledges that a cowboy saw the first live ferret, and then led Fish and Wildlife agents to the spot, the confusion persists. One of Clark's main sponsors, the Wildlife Preservation Trust International, recently published an update of the ferret recovery program in which it said, "Most members will recall that it was Dr. Clark's efforts that led to the successful location of so many ferrets in the state."

The confusion may come from the multiple efforts that led the Fish and Wildlife Service to see and trap the first live ferrets. Clark had publicized the ferret search with "Ferret Wanted" posters for years, and it can be argued that his efforts alerted the Hogg family, the town taxidermist and the cowboy to the animals. If anyone could feel left out of the credit, it's the

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cowboy, but no one we contacted could recall his name.

In addition to the quarrel over discovery, differences in philosophy and interpretation interfere with cooperation. Game and Fish, burdened with a responsibility for the species, has taken what Clark, in a paper given to the Wildlife Society in April, characterizes as a "cover your ass" approach to recovery. The "risk aversive" response of a "classic bureaucracy" to a high risk, uncertain situation can result in "the worst situation" for an endangered species, said Clark. He also said the price for avoiding hazards is the failure to act quickly enough to recover the species.

But the agency defends its cautious approach to an animal that biologists see as extremely vulnerable to extinction. "When your butt's not on the line, you can propose whatever you want to," says Harju.

What Game and Fish has proposed is a $250,000 captive breeding facility at Sybille Wildlife Research Unit which could be ready, possibly, by the fall 1986. The agency's Tom Thorne, who is the ferret's main veterinarian, says plans include a large building with individual cages to restrict the ferret's activity as little as possible. Each female would be given several nest boxes to choose from and, "with a little luck and money," outside runs would also be built. Approximately six small prairie dog colonies "about the size of a living room" would be established outside. The colonies would serve as practice grounds for the young ferrets which, according to Thorne, must be extensively trained prior to release.

The proposal, backed by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, did not allow for ferrets to be held or bred outside of the state in the near future. Nor did the proposal seek to harvest ferrets this fall in anticipation of completion of a captive breeding facility. Such stockpiling may make sense because preliminary research shows that young ferrets, dispersing in the fall in search of neighboring ferret colonies, experience a 60 to 80 percent mortality rate.

But Harju disagrees with the dispersal data. The data is tentative, he says, and there may be very little dispersal and mortality among the young. Biologists who trust the dispersal data brand the young ferrets as "surplus," and ripe for the harvest. There are no other colonies to receive dispersing young, they reason, so the animals may be safely taken and held until the captive breeding facility is ready.

Many ferret supporters also express frustration with the agency's refusal to let ferrets leave the state. But Tom Thorne says, "Our Commission wants to keep the animals in the state. Supposedly they have a feel as to what the public wants and we're not so sure the public wants to see the ferrets leave."

Thorne also says that ferrets, sent to breed outside of their natural range, would have difficulty adjusting to the low humidity and temperature fluxes in their natural range once they were returned and released. At least one facility within the ferret's former range, the Denver Zoo, has offered to hold ferrets at no charge to the agency, according to the zoo's general curator, Ed Schmitt. Thorne says, "I'm opposed to it." He says, "Zoos notoriously have their disease outbreaks," and that, if ferrets contracted diseases in other facilities and then were transferred into the wild, "the results could haunt us for the rest of the program."

Ron Crete, Endangered Species biologist for Fish and Wildlife in Montana, says, "There will always be a risk. You can build a brand new facility (as Game and Fish is proposing to do) and you might have distemper in the cinder blocks or you can have fleas come hopping in from the coyote that ran through the yard yesterday. All you can do is minimize the risk. It's an imperfect world out there."

In addition to fear of disease, Harju considers it cost ineffective to "put a few ferrets here and a few ferrets there" as many biologists recommend. "That's your old all-our-eggs-are-in-one-basket argument," he says. "If money is so tight, why not pool it? And besides, if we still have a population in the wild (and one at Sybille) we don't have our eggs all in one basket."

Lack of outside money for the captive breeding facility at Sybille is another issue. Federal budget cuts have weakened state and federal coffers. Fish and Wildlife has budgeted approximately $200,000 for the program, but it will not be available until the fall, 1986. Other 'add-on' funding promised by the feds at the May 21 meeting may be available prior to that, and there is some hope, according to the ferret advisory team program coordinator, Dave Belitsky, that a trust set up by the National Wildlife Federation will grant funds. These sources are still uncertain, however, and the $250,000 needed to build the Sybille facility is not in hand. Wyoming's own Conservation Stamp Fund could, according to Harju, be tapped for the funds without endangering other state wildlife programs, "but we haven't approached the Commission with it."

This is "the god-damnedest zoo I've ever been involved in."

An Associated Press article in early May, which quoted Harju, intimated that captive breeding would not take place in the fall of 1985 because "Eastern conservation groups" had failed to follow up on their earlier financial promises. Harju was quoted as saying the conservation groups had led the state to believe that "money was no problem" but that when Wyoming announced the ferrets would stay in Wyoming the groups "lost interest."

The "Eastern conservation groups" says Harju and veterinarian Thorne, are the New York Zoological Society and the Wildlife Preservation Trust International, both strong financial backers of Tim Clark's ferret research.

"We have not lost interest in captive breeding," says the director of the New York Zoological Society, Chuck Carr, "and we are exceedingly frustrated with governmental agencies that are impeding it; in our view they are putting the ferret in jeopardy." Both Carr and the executive director of the Wildlife Preservation Trust International, Jon Jensen, deny that support from their groups was made contingent upon the ferrets leaving Wyoming. "That's just not accurate," says Jensen, adding that the recovery is "a regional, even a national issue" and that ferrets should be given to a number of facilities.

The Game and Fish plans include sending ferrets out of Wyoming, but, according to Thorne, that "is some years down the road." First, a breeding colony would have to be established successfully at Sybille, he said, "and the first surplus produced by captive breeding should be introduced (into the wild). Then they can go to another captive program."

Jensen's Wildlife Preservation Trust International attempted to bypass Game and Fish by proposing an alternative plan to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service just prior to the May 21 meeting. The proposal called for sending six ferrets to a facility at Washington State University, which has successfully bred other mustelids. The University pledged $62,000 to upgrade the facility for the ferrets. But Game and Fish viewed the proposal as a spreading of efforts which should be pooled with the Department's. Thorne, expressing frustration with the group's proposal, said that not only did the Trust not come across with funds for the Department's efforts "but what's more irritating is that they're willing to fund other projects. To me, that's a pretty good double-cross."

Jensen, in response to the criticism, said he didn't "understand their conception. All proposals are subject to their approval anyway. We never even had a formal request from the Game and Fish (for financial support)." The Trust, he said, frustrated with the delays, saw the Washington State facility as "a most viable step toward the captive breeding effort."

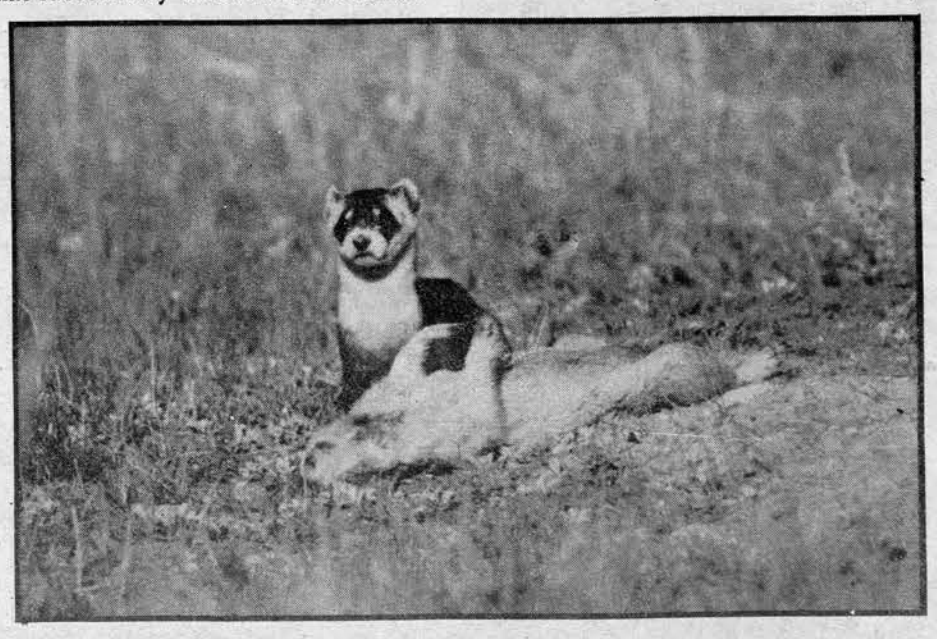
Tim Clark viewed the Washington proposal as a "creative opportunity." Fish and Wildlife biologist Ron Crete says, "Washington State is willing to offer their facilities. They're not trying to steal Wyoming's thunder. It's a free opportunity, a parallel opportunity."

New York Zoological Society director Chuck Carr says he understands why Wyoming has not pursued other facilities, including the Bronx Zoo and Fish and Wildlife's Patauxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, both of which have long and successful histories of captive breeding animals closely related to the ferret. "The state of Wyoming has made it abundantly clear that they wanted a breeding facility, something of an elaborate facility; they want structures, they want major federal investment in their state."

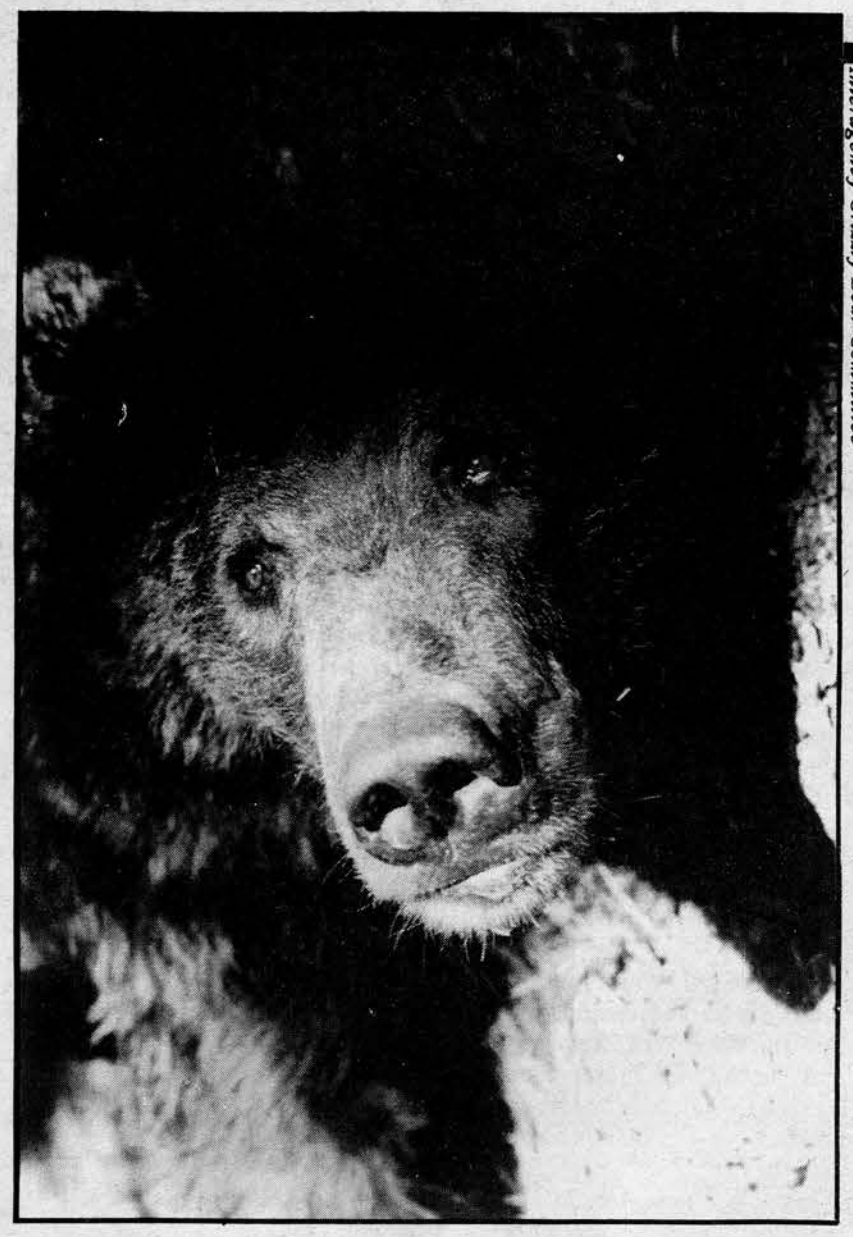
Harry Harju laughs at the charge. "If Sybille were bent on becoming a primary research unit in the U.S. we would have done it a hell of a lot sooner than this. There's been no attempt to make Sybille more important or bigger. I can't conceive

(Continued on page 14)

Tim Clark photos



Successful ferret with prairie dog prey



Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee

What do grizzly bear watchers, outfitters and researchers have in common?

Not much.

by Staci Wertz Hobbet

Opinions about grizzly bears proliferated at 'Griz '85,' a symposium sponsored by the Casper, Wyoming, Murie Audubon Society this May.

In one room of bear advocates sat people who said the bear is nearly extinct in the lower 48 states, while others were convinced the population is healthy and increasing. Some said the remaining bear ecosystems should be set aside as inviolate havens for the bear; others advocated grizzly hunting seasons and the continuing development of wilderness areas.

Everyone agreed the bear should be saved. The question has been and continues to be how.

John Craighead and his brother Frank pioneered grizzly research in Yellowstone in 1959 and both have been at the forefront of research and controversy ever since. John Craighead's presentation to the audience of 200 centered around the goal of protecting habitat, the strongest theme of the symposium.

"In all the years of studying bears," said Craighead, "we know less about the habitat than we do about the bears." He encouraged an overview of bear ecosystems using a standardized method so that data gathered by various researchers and agencies could be shared.

A method Craighead has tested in both Montana and Alaska, using satellite images of earth, is a promising one, he said. The system enables researchers to categorize vegetation types without constant use of labor-intensive ground crews. Each kind of vegetation has its own 'spectral signature,' he said, and once an index is established, analysis can be done from the satellite images.

"In this way," said Craighead, "an entire ecosystem can be mapped and quantified." Data would enable scientists to estimate the carrying capacity of any given ecosystem and "judge the progress of recovery programs," he said.

Hank Fischer, who has been with Defenders of Wildlife for nearly 10 years, quickly moved the discussion into controversy. The grizzly bear issue in Montana, he said, has become acrimonious and divisive.

The sore point is hunting, which is allowed in and around Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness northeast of Missoula. It is the only grizzly season in the lower 48 states. Supporters argue that at worst the hunt is not hurting the bear population, and at best is a beneficial management tool. Critics, represented at the symposium by Fischer, insist it's inappropriate to hunt a species which has been officially designated as 'Threatened' under the Endangered Species Act.

"During the past year," said Fischer, "I've learned that no single issue evokes as much heat and emotion." Efforts to separate facts from speculation have been fruitless, he said, and his entreaties to the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, which licenses the hunt, "have met a stone wall."

Fischer said Defenders of Wildlife is not involved in the moral question of hunting. "Were the grizzly not threatened with extinction, there wouldn't be an issue." Fischer argued that the theory that hunting instills in the bear a necessary fear of man is unproved.

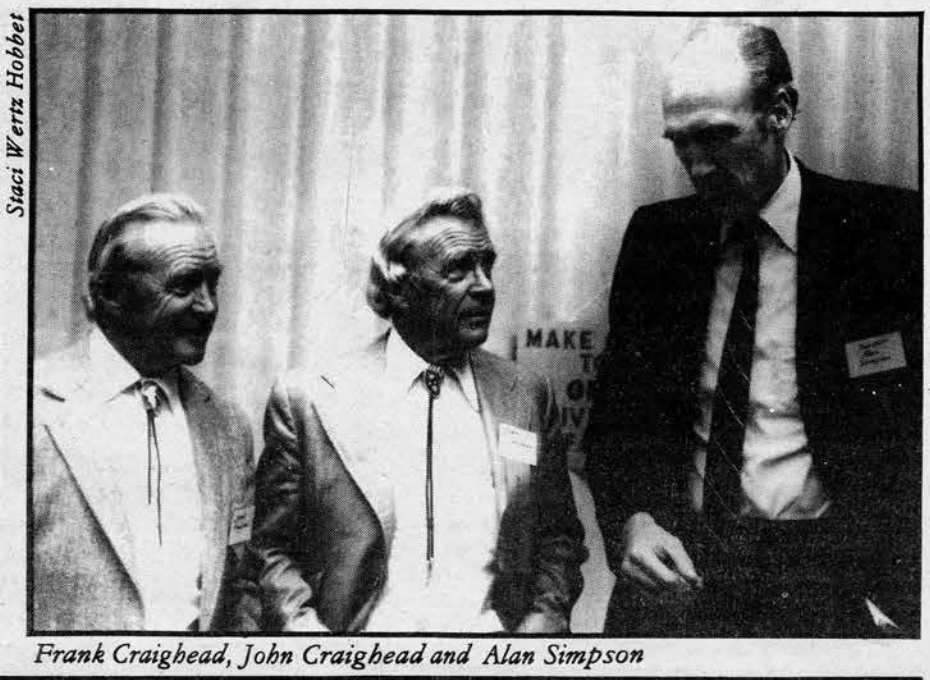
"We don't know whether this premise is true or not. And even if it is, at some point -- such as when populations are threatened with extinction -- the value of hunting is outweighed by the mortality it causes." Fischer said the real issue is whether hunting is promoting recovery or not. Citing the Endangered Species Act, Fischer said hunting of threatened species "was permissible only in the extraordinary case where there are excessive population pressures." Most bear experts agree grizzly numbers are decreasing and, although exact population numbers are not known, there is no data to suggest excess local populations.

Fischer said his biggest concern was the "ominous undertone to this entire grizzly bear hunting discussion: that the state of Montana will stop supporting the grizzly bear recovery and refuse to contribute money to grizzly research and management if it can't have a grizzly bear hunting season." In an effort to force the state to seriously review its management of the grizzly, Defenders has given notice of intent to sue the Department under the Endangered Species Act.

Staci Wertz Hobbet

Hank Fischer

In a strong rebuttal to Fischer's statements, Jim Posewitz, leader of the resource assess-



Staci Wertz Hobbet

Frank Craighead, John Craighead and Alan Simpson

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ment unit of the wildlife department, denied that the state would hold grizzlies hostage to the hunt.

"When the Clark Fork was polluted we didn't tell the fishermen to go home and forget about their sport," Posewitz said. "We went after and continue to go after the sources of pollution. We took on the sturgeon chub in the Powder River because it was our responsibility, and not because we sell fishing licenses. The chub isn't a trophy on anyone's wall; it isn't even in a minnow bucket."

Montana isn't one of the last strongholds of the grizzly by accident, Posewitz maintained. He said the state's management deserved credit for the relatively healthy populations in Montana. Assertions that the state stonewalls critics are false, said Posewitz, citing the Department's efforts to inform the public. "I know of no organization that is more open to public participation."

Posewitz listed several Department successes in recovering Montana's game species, and forecast equal success for the grizzly. He congratulated the Nature Conservancy on its recent acquisition of Pine Butte Swamp and other critical grizzly bear habitat along the Rocky Mountain Front, part of the Sawtooth Ridge east of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. "It's hard not to get excited about what can happen. We must retard the losses and hang onto the fragments of a diminishing world," Posewitz said.

When politicians and bear managers use the word 'zealot' to complain about vociferous bear advocates, they make the term sound generic. It isn't; it means Tony Povilitis. Povilitis has his own brand of bear advocacy under the banner of Campaign for Yellowstone's Bears, and he is an untiring, uncompromising bear preservationist.

Now a professor of wildlife ecology and conservation at the University of Colorado, Povilitis was studying deer in South America in 1981 when he became frustrated by the continuing bear controversies on the other side of the equator. He came home, went to Yellowstone and began distributing leaflets in the park.

"I quickly realized I'd end up behind bars if I tried to fight park policy that way," Povilitis said. He went back to Boulder, formed a coalition and turned to Frank and John Craighead for support. Povilitis' proposal for the recovery of the grizzlies, which is endorsed by the Craigheads, calls for stringent habitat protection, elimination of all human activity which might threaten critical habitat, extensive research to expand the data on bears and improvements in the "overall health and security of the grizzly."

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Tony Povilitis

But the proposal is thought by many to be too restrictive, severely limiting human use of the park. Critics of Povilitis like to remind him of the Yellowstone Park Act, approved by the U.S. Congress in March of 1872, which states that the park was to be "set apart as a public park or pleasuring-park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." The Act didn't mention bears.

But to Povilitis, the park without bears is a ruined park. Even the idea of luring grizzlies back into the central part of the park by baiting them with strategically placed elk carcasses, an idea supported by the Craigheads, gets only lukewarm approval from Povilitis.

"It might be our only viable alternative, the only way to insure survival of the bears," he said, "but I think it will make the park too zoo-like."

Povilitis is warned at every turn that his stridency may benumb or drive bear supporters away. Senator Alan Simpson, R-Wy., in an address at the symposium, warned that overly restrictive management practices might "alienate the public that we are going to direly need if we are going to save the grizzly bear."

Warnings don't sway Povilitis. 'Nuisance' bears killed by bear managers are the result of over-development of the bears' habitat and not because of the misbehavior of bears or people, he said. The 'myth' that people and bears misbehave and thus kill each other, he said, shifts the focus from management of the bears' ecosystem to management of the bear.

"While grizzly bear management, involving the relocation of problem animals, campground patrols, public education and other such activities is essential, it is no substitute for planning that would allow only a level of land use compatible with grizzly bear conservation." But to some politicians, Povilitis continued, management on this scale "is going to be very frightening. It smacks of planning and planning smacks of socialism."

"I had a talk with some of my friends just recently," said Povilitis. "We talked about how you know when you're right, and do you stand up for something even when you become unpopular. I just think you have to stand up for what you believe in."

"I'm outspoken and not very subtle," Harold Turner introduced himself. Co-owner of the Triangle X Ranch in Grand Teton National Park, and an outfitter whose family has worked in the area for over 50 years, Turner believes grizzly bear numbers are on the increase.

"It used to be if you saw a grizzly you'd talk about it for the rest of the year, but now we see them and don't even mention it."

Turner and his two brothers lead back-country expeditions into a 150-square-mile area comprising the central parts of the Teton Wilderness and southern Yellowstone. "I only know our small area," he said, "but I feel I'm an expert there." The bear population there is healthy, he said.

In 1983, a sight-census was conducted by the Jackson Hole Guides and Outfitters Association. The Association also collected sighting data from the Forest Service, added it to written reports from members and other individual sightings, and came up with an "extremely conservative number of 119 grizzlies in the Teton Wilderness and the shallow, southern Yellowstone," said Turner. He called the census "as good a sight-census as has been done in the Wilderness." The figures were compiled by an Association member who is a "trained wildlife statistician."

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Harold Turner

"We know that in our area alone there were six reproducing females, and at least two other sows with cubs on our periphery," Turner reported. That number makes up a little over a third of the total number of sow grizzlies predicted by some authorities to be in the entire ecosystem. Turner said he could speak with certainty only about bears in his area, and "it might be the best habitat in the whole ecosystem."

To critics who argue that outfitters cannot identify bears with certainty, Turner countered that "you get to know your grizzlies because of the different colors of the bears, the ages and sizes of the cubs. If you see the same bear over and over again, it isn't tough." One sow, he said, has been in his area for 10 years and has produced seven cubs in five years. She is easy to identify because "she's extremely small for a grizzly."

Turner said he disagreed with "many of the ideas, philosophies and management procedures now in effect" in the Yellowstone ecosystem. "The problem began when they closed down the dumps." It seems "rather silly," he said, to "experiment with a whole lot of ways we're not sure of when we know that supplemental feeding of the bear works."

Critics of supplemental feeding say it would make the park a zoo. "But it's already zoo-like," said Turner. "Anytime you can walk within 15 feet of elk and moose and bison -- that's zoo-like."

Turner opposes closing down large sections of the park to human use. "I think we've got to raise the bear -- and we can do it -- with bear and man co-existing," he said. If bears are raised in areas sealed off from humans, Turner warned, the bears will be unused to and unafraid of them.

"Then, on down the road, maybe sometime later this century, when the American people say, 'We *are* going to use this land,' they are going to meet up with grizzlies who haven't had any contact with people." In confrontations of that sort, said Turner, "I can guarantee you the bear is going to lose."

Even though outfitters spend an enormous amount of time in the field, he added, they are seldom drawn upon to give comments on the grizzly population. "In all the bear studies that have been conducted, I've only been contacted by two people." And yet, he said, "We're in such a super position to give some input."

Len Sargent is a tall, greying Montanan with a string tie and 2,000 acres of ranchland on the north side of Yellowstone Park. "My card says Corwin Springs, Montana," he said, "which has a population of about two. We live in the suburbs of Corwin Springs."

A self-described rancher-conservationist, Sargent said, "If you're a good rancher, you're a good conservationist. These days, some ranchers will even admit they're environmentalists -- it's no longer an epithet."

In 25 years of ranching, he said, only one calf has been lost to a grizzly. "If we lose the bear, the park is no longer a wild place, and I'm afaid I'm going to have to hear my grandchildren say, 'Why aren't there any grizzlies in Yellowstone?' and I'll have to say, 'Well, for a lot of lame political reasons.' "

Sargent criticized the leasing of mineral tracts surrounding the park on land which is part of the grizzly's range. "Homestake Mine is starting up even though gold prices are low," he said, and the Ski Yellowstone project is still viable, although Montana's ski resorts are finding the financial going hard.

"The guy in charge of Ski Yellowstone is in jail for stealing from his father," said Sargent. "Now the Park Service is waiting to see if he's financially stable; I guess that means they're waiting to see if he can continue to steal from his father."

While stressing the fact that he is not a grizzly bear expert, Sargent offered his ideas on how to proceed toward bear recovery. "It seems we have two roads. We need additional and further research and we're taking good strides there, but we also need to stop doing some of the things (development) that are now in process and start doing practical things." If we wait to finish all the research before we take those practical steps, "there won't be anything left to do.

"You'll hear people ask, 'What good is a grizzly?' " said Sargent.

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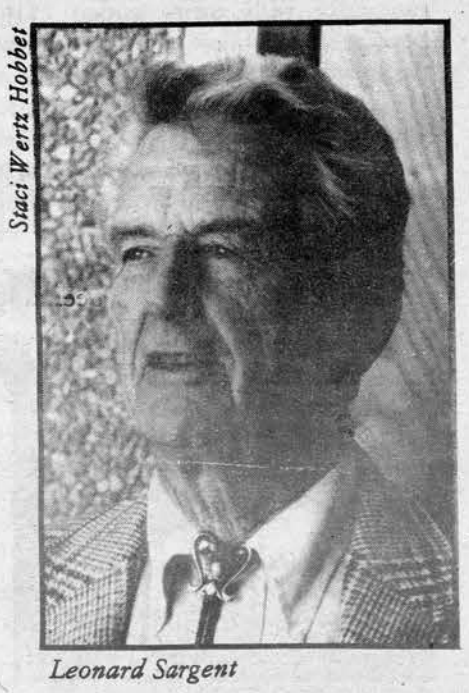

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Leonard Sargent

Grizzlies...

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"Well, that's like asking, 'What good is art or music or literature or dance?' If you ask that question you won't understand the answer anyway."

Dr. Ulysses S. Seal, a research medical doctor from the University of Minneapolis VA Medical Center, laid one grizzly controversy to rest. Seal, an expert on the drug most commonly used to anesthetize bears during field studies, debunked stories that blamed the drug's use for bear attacks on humans.

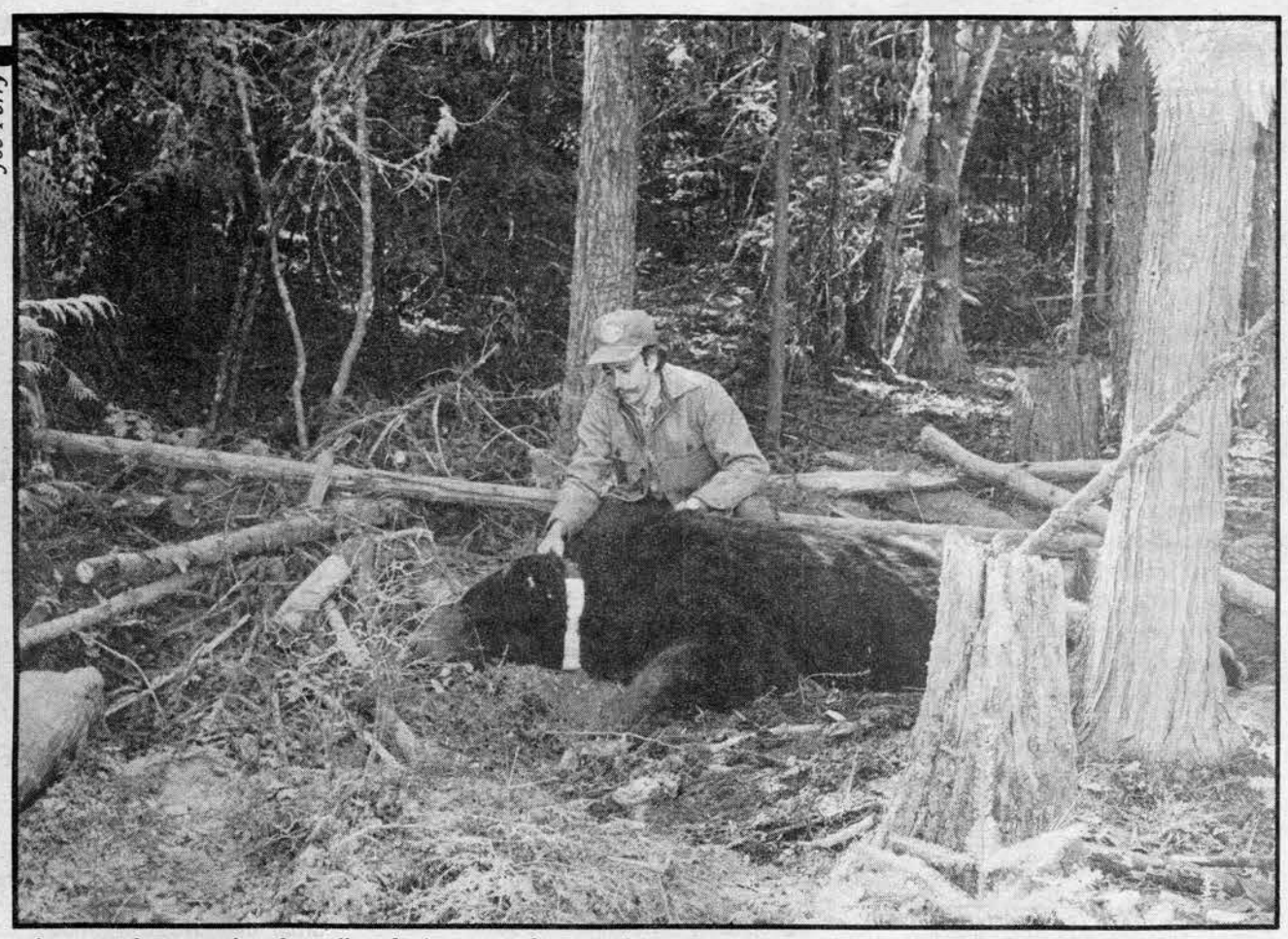
Seal said there is no evidence to link bear aggressiveness toward humans with Sernylan, also known commonly as PCP or 'angel dust.' When abused by humans, however, it can cause psychotic and violent behavior.

The controversy arose when, last summer, after several maulings and one death were caused by grizzlies near Yellowstone National Park, CBS News aired a story linking PCP with "increasing aggressiveness" in Yellowstone's grizzlies. Reporter Terry Drinkwater's report, which juxtaposed clips of PCP-intoxicated humans with clips of bear attack survivors describing the attacking bear ("His head was so big and his eyes were just glowing, just that red glow."), intimated that bears, under the influence of PCP, were becoming crazed. Drinkwater said that bear No. 15, which killed and partially consumed a camper near Yellowstone in 1983, "had been immobilized by PCP perhaps as many as 11 times." Bear No. 15 was captured and killed.

Seal said that Bear No. 15 had been drugged with PCP five times in six years before the attack, but never more than once per year. The last drugging took place eight months before the fatal attack on the camper.

PCP, he said, stays in the grizzly's system only a short while and metabolizes completely within 10 days. Only about one in 10 human users of the drug exhibit violent behavior, he reported, and that behavior can be controlled by the use of a tranquilizer. It has been routine in the Yellowstone studies to administer PCP with a tranquilizer called acepromazine. No one knows, he said, why Bear No. 15 attacked.

Joe Perry



Chris Servheen with radio-collared, 480-pound grizzly bear

Chris Servheen is recovery coordinator for the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. It is his job to oversee the dynamic amalgam of state and federal agencies which makes up the committee. Servheen has a Ph.D. in biology and worked as a graduate student with John Craighead. Nevertheless, he is sometimes described as a 'biopolitician' -- a noun with a distinctly negative connotation -- because he is a bureaucrat.

Besides directing policy for people and bears, Servheen is often called upon to comment to the public when controversy arises. One example he related was the question: Why do bears snort angel dust?

Servheen said accelerated education of law enforcement personnel in the grizzly bear ecosystem is now an interagency priority. Another is increased visibility of rangers and backcountry patrols, both to thwart poaching and to end dirty wilderness camps which lure grizzlies into confrontations with humans. Outfitters in many national forest areas, however, are using government-supplied lockers and game meat poles, Servheen said.

In addition, the Committee is emphasizing research to measure effects on the bear such as increasing roading and backcountry recreation. Identifying conflicts caused by multiple use is the goal of studies, he said, and a habitat suitability index is also being developed so that the exact needs of the bears can be understood.

Because of the committee's prime responsibility, it has been a natural target for criticism. Servheen called for increased and continuing cooperation among bear supporters so that "the grizzly can remain a viable part of our lives."

Servheen's colleague on the IGBC committee, Wyoming assistant game warden Dale Strickland, talked freely about the criticisms.

"I voted against formation of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee," he said. "I didn't think it could handle (the problems of the grizzly bears in) all 48 states when we weren't handling Yellowstone. But I didn't realize the commitments on the parts of the agencies." Strickland emphasized that every action taken has its ramifications.

"Someone has got to be in charge of the grizzly and its habitat," he said. "I'm anxious to end management by committee, too." But he concluded that conservation groups, scientists and other factions should "lead, follow or get the hell out of the way."

□

Staci Hobbet is a freelance writer in Casper, Wyoming. She tells us that audio cassettes of the Casper symposium an be purchased from Audio Productions, 1505 Alta Vista Drive, Casper, Wyoming 82601 (307/265-1028).

Ferrets...

(Continued from page 11)

of anyone being foolish enough to make that kind of statement."

Though members of the agency feel under seige, some outsiders voice sympathy with their caution. Jim Dougherty, Curator of Mammals at the Bronx Zoo, says, "After all, it's a very small population and they're responsible for it. They lose control if the animals go out of state and what if they go someplace and they all die? But if Wyoming screws it up, they've got no one to blame but themselves."

Tim Clark

Increasingly, participants in the program are looking to reorganization, which was a goal of the May 21 meeting. "BFAT can't serve all the purposes we need it to at all times," said Ron Crete. "It's not a panacea: it's an organization unto itself which does serve a purpose, but it tries to do more than it's capable of."

In a paper given at a recent black-footed ferret workshop, ecologist Mike Bogan of the Denver Wildlife Research Center said, "We still lack a strong hand at the helm of the ferret research ship." Bogan called for a new advisory board, which would recognize that the animal it is protecting "has national significance and interest and thus the responsibilities go beyond state boundaries."

Tim Clark has also expressed the need for a change, not just with ferrets, but with all endangered species and other "high visibility wildlife." Clark concludes that the rigidity and "top to bottom" power structure of bureaucracies limit the ability to respond to quickly changing situations which affect endangered species. He calls for a more open system.

The May 21 meeting addressed some of these concerns. But the advisory team remains unchanged and, Clark says, by promising financial support while leaving the organization unaltered, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be intimating that the project's slow progress is due only to lack of proper funding.

Clark's predecessors in analyzing organization structures, Michael Soule and O.H. Frankel, said that a "paralysis of procrastination" often results when scientists fear their data is inadequate to justify action, even when the data or "precise theory or information... may never arrive."

While the bureaucratic and organizational debate continues, so does some work. Further research in Meeteetse this summer will determine how many ferrets can be taken to Sybille this fall. If the population has remained stable as many as 10 ferrets may be harvested and maintained at Sybille until a full-scale captive breeding facility can be built there. Other research will continue the 'mark and recapture' studies from previous summers; a study of the ferret's underground activities; and further investigation into the relationship between the ferret and the prairie dog. In addition, Tom Thorne may begin to sample blood from captured ferrets in an attempt to analyze the genetic makeup of the population. There is concern that the ferret colony, due to long isolation, has become genetically uniform.

A new "interstate committee" -- also a result of the May meeting -- will take shape this summer. Made up of biologists from several Western states interested in recovering the ferret, the committee will begin studies to determine the best area for reintroduction of the ferrets into the wild once, or if, they are bred at Sybille.

More controversies may loom ahead, says John Cada, a Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks biologist. Other states are eager to reintroduce ferrets and "everyone wants to be first" to receive ferrets bred in Wyoming. But he is confident that the May meeting was a "turning point" in the program which "healed many wounds. I'm an eternal optimist. There are no problems that can't be solved with compromise."

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GUEST ESSAY

Our tinkering has been anything but intelligent

by John Nutter

Because I work full time for the Nature Conservancy, which is in the business of protecting natural areas and the diversity of life they contain, I have compiled some thick files on the subject. Looking through them I am always struck by how great the consensus is that species extinction is of grave concern to mankind. The conservationist Aldo Leopold put it most succinctly when he wrote: "The first prerequisite of intelligent tinkering is to save all the pieces."

Yet it is only by good luck that we still have *Zea diploperennis*, a wild relative of domestic corn, living in the wild. The trait that makes it of immense interest to corn breeders is that it is a perennial, for breeding the perennial characteristic into corn could save our society millions of dollars in energy and fertilizer costs.

Other examples, some obscure, fill my files: Mud leeches, for instance, help shed light on the mysteries of neural specificity -- how nerve cells teach each other where they are and what they do. An edible fungus grown in China possesses anti-clotting properties, perhaps explaining the low rate of heart attacks in that country. A common sea squid from the family Tunicates secretes chemicals proven to be powerful healers of viral infection, potentially including the viruses that cause herpes.

Closer to home is Indian mandrake, a plant native to the northeastern United States. It is the source of a compound that has shown promise in treating one type of lung cancer. And at Brigham Young University, the botany and range science department discovered that pygmy rabbits are exceptionally sensitive to environmental changes. The rabbits are helpful in identifying sagebrush that could be used to reclaim mine spoils.

Along similar lines of research, scientists have discovered that many wild plants contain high levels of phytoestrogen, a natural form of birth control. Could extinction of some plant species lead to overpopulation of some wildlife, or conversely, could deterioration of habitat force animals to eat plants high in phytoestrogen, thus decimating their numbers? We don't know the answers yet.

Perhaps the most dramatic story I've collected is about the Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortes, who decreed in 1521 that anyone found growing amaranth would be put to death. Amaranth seeds were used in Aztec religious ceremonies which Cortes felt threatened his control of Mexico. The National Academy of Sciences concluded 460 years later that amaranth contains a higher quality of protein than that found in milk. Because amaranth can grow under a variety of conditions, the grain has enormous potential for the future.

Fortunately, those of us concerned with preserving natural areas and "useless species" are no longer considered threatening enough to be condemned to death. The facts about our ecological heritage are becoming well known. It is estimated that 45 percent of the medical prescriptions written in the United States each year contain at least one substance that was first found in a living plant or other organism.

A recent study of an Indian tribe in northern Bolivia found that the Indians use 85 percent of the trees, shrubs, vines and herbs surrounding them for goods, clothing, housing, medicine, transportation and even money. Despite these startling numbers, scientists estimate that only one plant species in 100, and perhaps a lower percentage of animal species, have been intensively screened for their benefit to us.

Besides these utilitarian arguments, there is another issue which many feel may be the most significant for preserving our biological diversity: the pleasure we all derive from it. We have not yet been able to put a value on a soaring bald eagle or playful sea otter.

But if we are convinced that it makes sense to keep our natural resource options open by preserving the greatest diversity of species, why can't we rely on zoos, aquaria or seed banks, thus allowing us to develop our remaining wild habitats to their fullest economic potential for man? Why can't we collect and store wild grass seed so that we're free to convert the last native prairie to cornfield?

Again there is overwhelming consensus among natural scientists. The only way to preserve most species is in the wild. To begin with, we simply do not have the capacity to store the millions of land-based species now known to science. Furthermore, many species depend on the dynamism of the ecosystem in which they occur. A handful of soil and litter is home for dozens of insects, mites and nematodes, most of which are just visible to the naked eye. Then there are the millions of mostly microscopic fungi and bacteria. The interdependency of these organisms is impossible to recreate out of the wild.

There are other values to natural areas besides their ability to store the genetic information of component species. Just as we learn only so much about health body functions from the study of disease, so we can only learn a little about healthy ecosystems from a study of damaged ecosystems. Preserving natural ecosystems can help us understand how we can create more stable and successful human environments.

If we are convinced that preserving as much ecological diversity in natural areas as possible is important, what must we do? Our approach calls for a systematic process, beginning with a nationwide inventory. Areas which contain natural diversity can then be identified and protected. This system of "living libraries" has been our goal in partnership with federal and state agencies. But we all have a long way to go.

□

John Nutter is vice president of the Nature Conservancy and is based in San Francisco. He recently took part in a workshop on natural diversity in Wyoming and this article is an adaptation of a talk he gave to state and federal officials. The Nature Conservancy has worked with 34 state governments to establish State Natural Heritage Programs, and in the last 30 years the Conservancy has also acquired more than 2 million acres on behalf of public agencies. Recommended reading: *The Value of Conserving Genetic Resources*, published by the Interior Department, and the Nov.-Dec. '83 issue of the Nature Conservancy's magazine, entitled, "What's a species worth?" The magazine, *TNC News*, is at 1800 N. Kent St., Arlington, VA 22209.

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BOOK NOTES

Extermination policies succeeded

The Grizzly in the Southwest

David E. Brown. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985. 274 pages. $19.95, cloth.

Review by Michael L. Smith

The last grizzly of record in the Southwest was killed by an outfitter in the San Juan Mountains of southern Colorado in September 1979. Following that incident, a two-year search by the Colorado Division of Wildlife for a remnant population in the same area was unsuccessful. So it is that in reading David Brown's recent book, *The Grizzly in the Southwest*, we are reading natural history in the true sense of the term.

In tracing the path that led to the disappearance of the grizzly in the southern portion of its range, Brown has drawn on a wide variety of sources including letters, interviews, official reports of the Predatory Animal and Rodent Control branch of the U.S. Biological Survey, and a wealth of anecdotal accounts which, if published at all, often had limited circulation. The historical material tells a story at once sad and fascinating of a relentless campaign waged against the great bear during the settlement of the Southwest.

In Brown's extensively documented book, we learn of the professional bear hunters, often quirky and reclusive, who sought untamed lands and rugged life. At least one, after being attacked by a bear he had wounded, took pleasure later in tormenting trapped bears with hot iron rods before killing them. These individuals were all too efficient in practicing their craft. In helping to extirpate the grizzly, they also hastened the "taming" of the land -- the very thing many of them had sought to escape.

Given Brown's thorough detective work, *The Grizzly in the Southwest* might have emerged as a book of interest primarily to students of Southwest history. But Brown has compiled his material with the additional insights of the wildlife professional. He has written a work which gives us a biological profile of the grizzly living in a niche different from that still occupied by the great bear in the Northern Rockies.

Why did the grizzly disappear from the Southwest? Why is its reintroduction into that region such an unlikely prospect even though suitable wilderness habitat still exists?

"The answer is cattle, and more specifically, the Southwest livestock industry," Brown writes. Historically one of the most potent political forces in the Southwest, the livestock industry brought to the Southwest a mindset that would not tolerate the grizzly, an industry that decimated the bear's habitat and a political clout that bent state and federal agencies to aid it in exterminating this magnificent animal.

Near the close of the grizzly's story in the 1920s, some wildlife agents realized that the bears' disappearance was imminent. A few spoke for keeping the bear as a part of the historical and biological legacy of the region. But the momentum was too great and the last few grizzlies faded, one bear at a time, into history. One sentence summing up this final decline haunts the reader: "His later numbers appear to have been overestimated, and he was gone before anyone believed it." This sentence contains a grim lesson. If we do not heed that lesson, the same sentence could again apply, the next time in the Cabinet Mountains or even in the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

This excellent book deserves a wide readership, both for its detailed history and for its insights into what could happen again. The book includes many photos of historic interest and an extensive bibliography.

□

Michael L. Smith works for a natural resources consulting firm in Boulder, Colorado, and serves on the Division of Wildlife's Bear Management Advisory Task Force.

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Final Notice to Lessees (NTL);
on Cultural Resource Surveys

The Montana State Office, Bureau of Land Management, has issued the final NTL (NTL-MSO-1-85) for the administration of cultural resource protection as it pertains to oil and gas operations.

The NTL interprets the laws, regulations, and orders related to cultural resources and oil and gas operations and provides guidelines to operators for the conducting of cultural resource surveys.

Copies of the NTL (5 pages) are available from Mr. Del Fortner at:

Bureau of Land Management
Montana State Office
Division of Mineral Resources (922)
P.O. Box 36800
Billings, MT 59107
Phone: 406/657-6291

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LETTERS

PAINFULLY SLOW

Dear *HCN*,

They say a drop of water continually falling on a rock will after thousands of years erode the rock --.

I have told you and I have told every conservation organization I pay dues to the same story. If immigration is not controlled in the United States it will be just a few years and there will be little wilderness and all nature problems will be compounded.

Obviously the people in your section of the United States live in a fools' paradise.

Where do they think American citizens go to when they are crowded out by illegal and legal aliens crowding their neighborhood? Obviously, they get out. Where do they go? Anywhere, just get out!

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W.J. Worthington
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