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High Country News

October 21, 1991

Vol. 23 No. 19

A Paper for People who Care about the West

One dollar

STING UNCOVERS EAGLE-KILLERS



Stouffer Productions Ltd.

INSIDE

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USDA, Forest Service
Redwoods, Sierra National Forest

Some ranchers keep an old tradition alive

by Michael Milstein

In the April issue of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association magazine, an ad for the Wyoming Predator Control Service suggested a "Private Approach" to handling animals that prey on livestock. The ad pictured a helicopter and gave two Laramie, Wyo., phone numbers.

Those numbers are now disconnected. While working, though, they provided access for government agents to infiltrate what documents call a "network" of illicit trade in highly toxic poisons.

The poisons were used illegally throughout the West to kill eagles and other wildlife thought to attack livestock, primarily sheep.

Listed as "private predator control consultants," Wyoming Predator Control Service was a fake firm. It was designed to entice those looking for lawbreaking services, and was part of an 18-month federal probe of poisoning in the West.

Working under cover, agents bought an array of illegal poisons, learned how to lace carcasses with them, and visited ranches where deadly baits were left for predators.

On Sept. 5, officers raided and confiscated poisons from three sites: a Wyoming Department of Agriculture laboratory in Cheyenne, a ranch near Laramie, and a Pueblo, Colo., firm that manufactured cyanide guns illegal in the United States.

The raids revealed the secret sting that officials say has turned up evidence of eagle poisonings in Wyoming, Colorado, Montana and Utah, and continues to turn up more evidence.

Federal officials say the investigation has grown to include at least 15 ranchers and several businesses in five states. No charges have yet been filed. After examining evidence taken in the first three searches and following leads from one suspect to the next, tight-lipped prosecutors plan to ask grand juries for

indictments within the next few months.

Court documents filed to get search warrants, though, sketch a picture of a deadly subculture that federal wildlife agent Terry Grosz says is turning Western rangelands into "killing fields."

These scenes come 20 years after a celebrated case in which Wyoming rancher Herman Werner was indicted for having 366 eagles and seven geese killed by helicopter-borne gunners over his four-county ranch.

Officers admit what has turned up in this investigation, itself prompted by rising numbers of suspicious deaths of eagles, coyotes, foxes and prairie dogs all over the West, suggests nothing has changed.

This time they hope the results will be different. It took months to charge Werner, and he died before ever coming to trial.

As part of the latest probe, officers

Continued on page 10

Dear friends,



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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Tom Bell
Editor emeritus

Ed Marston
Publisher

Betsy Marston
Editor

Linda Bacigalupi
Associate publisher

Florence Williams
Staff reporter

C.L. Rawlins
Poetry editor

Diane Sylvain
Production/graphics

Cindy Wehling
Desktop publishing/darkroom

Ann Ulrich
Typesetting

Kay Henry Bartlett, manager
Gretchen Nicholoff
Circulation/business

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Thanks, Walkin' Jim

Walkin' Jim Stoltz of Big Sky, Mont., brought a message of celebration and hope to Paonia on Oct. 1. Walkin' Jim is a traveling troubadour, whose show, "Forever Wild," features glorious color slides taken during his 18,000 miles of hikes in the West's wilderness areas. As one of the 100 people who attended his show at the Paradise Theatre said, "He walks the talk."

Walkin' Jim accompanies his slides of landscapes, grizzlies, sunrises, desert turtles and creeks with music and song.

The benefit left *High Country News* \$385 less poor. From Paonia, Walkin' Jim takes his road show southeast. Catch it if you can.

Fall visitors

Outdoor educators Ken and Sue Kerchenfaut of Fresno, Calif., dropped in on their way from Mission Wolf in southern Colorado, where Sue was kissed by a black female wolf. The wolf "was just saying hello," according to Sue.

T.V. McCarren, a subscriber from Mountain Home, Idaho, came by with Joe, his dog. Joan Leon, who moved to Paonia recently from San Luis Obispo, Calif., came by with friends Betty Schetzer and GlennaDeane Dovey. GlennaDeane said she had spent two days in Prescott, Ariz., attending the Earth First! trial. The amount of money the government spent teaching activists how to commit sabotage was a radicalizing experience, she said.

High Country News functions as a grassroots organization, with approximately 150 chapters, which we call free-lance writers, spread around the region. Among the few who have been in Paonia is Susie Waddoups Jones, who visited in early October, and who writes for *HCN* and other publications out of Pagosa Springs, Colo.

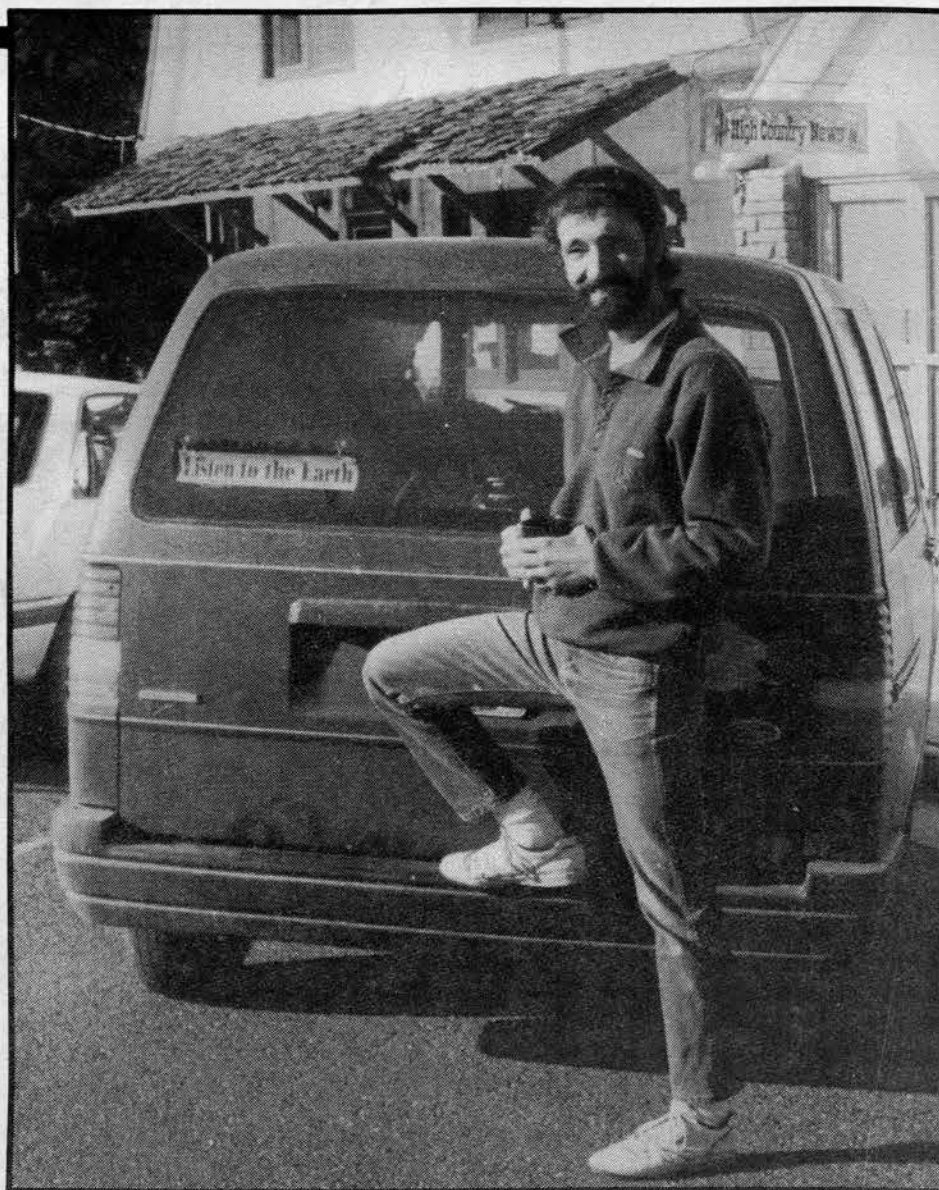
Jim Ruder of Colorado Springs, Colo., came by to say hello. Jim says he has lived throughout the West, including Moab and the Navajo Nation, and that *HCN* keeps him in touch. Sally Swain, until recently a resident of nearby Hotchkiss, came by on a trip back from her new home in Colorado Springs.

We also get visits through the mail. The Knighton family of Bainbridge Island, Wash., sent us an address change announcing that Kirk, Mary and Tim had been joined by Maria, born Aug. 11. Welcome. Paul Rauber says he is the new kid on the block at *Sierra Magazine* in San Francisco, and as a result gets *HCN* last. "So please send me my own sub."

Dan Booker called from Ann Arbor, Mich., to say that although *HCN* can be depressing reading, he loves it. Tom Keefe writes from North Bennington, Vt., to say that *HCN* keeps him in touch with the Four Corners region, the Tetons and the high Rockies. He also told us who his favorite National Park interpreters are: a man named Cornucopia in Chaco Canyon and Burt Begay in Canyon de Chelly.

Like so many agencies it covers, *HCN* has now been audited by the U.S. General Accounting Office, and come up deficient. Sue Naiberk of the GAO's Denver office writes to say: "I am chagrined that our agency is sometimes referred to as the 'Government Accounting Office,' most recently in your Sept. 23 Dear Friends column."

More seriously, writer Julie Titone of Spokane says an editing error changed the meaning of part of her story about



Betsy Marston

Walkin' Jim Stoltz outside the HCN office before hitting the road

Plum Creek Corp.'s changed approach to logging. The "big mess" mentioned by a local conservationist referred to the Three Sisters sale on the west side of Lake Pend Oreille, rather than to the site visited, and praised, by Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus.

Green reporters form a group

Editor Betsy Marston and staff reporter Florence Williams spent a weekend in Boulder, Colo., with several hundred environmental reporters from around the country. It was the first annual meeting of the Society of Environmental Journalists, led by Philadelphia *Inquirer* reporter Jim Detjen.

Panels at the three-day meeting ranged from discussions of the nitty-gritty of risk analysis to Western water to how small news organizations cover the environment. In addition, energy expert Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute at Old Snowmass, Colo., and Colorado Sen. Tim Wirth spoke to the reporters.

The event attracted a flock of *HCN* free-lancers, including Ron Baird of the *Colorado Daily*; Tony Davis of the *Albuquerque Tribune*; Steve Stuebner of the *Idaho Statesman*; Bert Lindler of the *Great Falls (Montana) Tribune*; Becky Rumsey of Boulder's *KGUN* radio; Seattle free-lancer Sarah McCoy; Michael Milstein, who covers northern Wyoming for the *Billings (Montana) Gazette*; Julie Titone of the *Spokesman-Review* and *Spokane Chronicle*; Professor Michael Frome of Western Washing-

ton University in Bellingham; and photographer John Fielder, founder of Westcliffe Publishers in Colorado.

Those interested in the new group may contact membership manager Amy Gahan, 6200 Wayne Ave., Apt. A305, Philadelphia, PA 19144; 215/849-3841.

Elsewhere in Boulder that weekend, 8,000 college students were hearing from David Brower and others at the annual meeting of the Student Environmental Action Coalition. The group has shown impressive growth: It has gone from four members in 1989 to 30,000 today.

Condolences

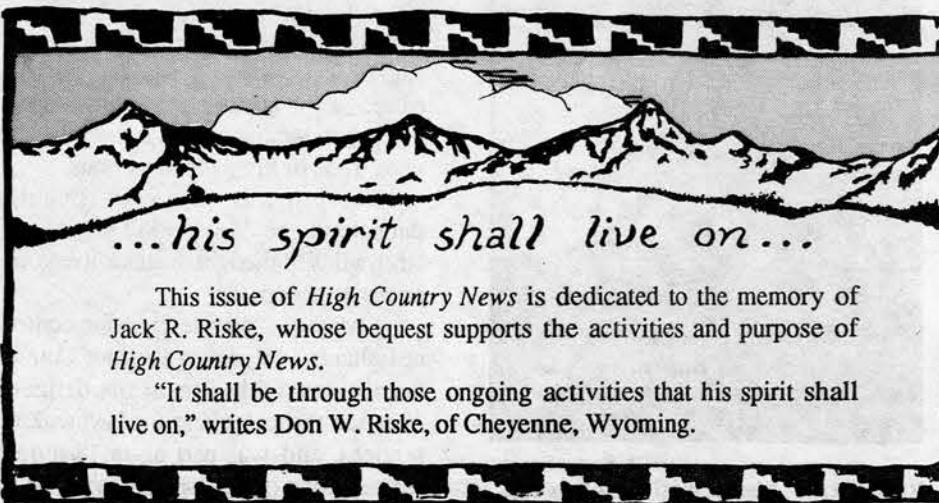
Staff attended a memorial service on October 11 at the Hotchkiss Methodist Church for Doris Ellis, 74, a librarian in the Hotchkiss area and a former proof-reader for *High Country News*. We extend our condolences to her family.

— Ed Marston and Betsy Marston
for the staff

BARBS

Does that also include public land used by ranchers, miners and wool growers?

Wyoming Sen. Al Simpson told state legislators recently that people should act as citizens first, and not as members of the American Association of Retired Persons, or veterans' organizations, or any other group that lobbies Congress for federal money, according to the *Casper Star-Tribune*.



WESTERN ROUNDUP



Randy Hayes

Anti-nuclear activist Bill Chisholm blocks a truck carrying high-level nuclear waste from Fort St. Vrain to INEL

Idaho is forced to accept nuclear waste

A semi-truck hauled the first of more than 200 planned shipments of high-level nuclear waste across Idaho's borders Oct. 5, cracking Gov. Cecil Andrus' three-year ban on waste shipments.

When the first shipment rolled into the state port of entry before dawn, only one man, Bill Chisholm of Buhl, stood in the way. "I'm only 160 pounds — the truck was a lot bigger than me, and I couldn't stop it by myself," Chisholm said. "But I had to make the political statement that had to be made."

Standing eye-to-eye with the semi-truck's front grill, Chisholm refused to budge. Pocatello police carried him away to a patrol car and arrested him on charges of failing to obey a police order. He was jailed briefly in Pocatello and later released.

"If we lose this one, they (the U.S. Department of Energy) will trample us on every other environmental issue," Chisholm said. "State sovereignty is on the line."

A Sept. 20 decision by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals swept aside Andrus' aggressive stand against the storage of nuclear waste at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, a DOE weapons pro-

duction and research facility.

Justices ruled that a 1965 agreement between the DOE and Colorado-based Public Service Co. predated the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which gives states some leverage to block waste storage on environmental grounds. DOE officials have repeatedly said they wanted the fuel rods from PSC's reactor core for research into recycling nuclear fuel, such as uranium-235 and thorium.

However, in the court hearing, Idaho officials confirmed that DOE had no authority or funding to work on recycling nuclear fuel at the present time. Federal attorneys admitted that, for the time being, they sought to store the waste at INEL, just as Andrus had asserted all along.

"It is clear that they want to make Idaho a high-level waste dump against the people's will," the governor said.

Andrus' stance has mounted pressure on the DOE to open a permanent nuclear waste dump in Yucca Mountain, Nev. However, local opposition has prevented the testing of that facility for some time.

Public Service Co. officials lauded the court decision. The utility plans to convert its reactor to a natural gas and

solar power facility. Until it gets rid of the remaining segments of the reactor core — it has 1,482 fuel elements to unload — it spends \$2.5 million per month to keep the fuel in safe storage at the Fort St. Vrain reactor in Colorado.

The DOE will pay the utility \$5.4 million for the core, payable upon delivery at the INEL, according to court records. Prior to Andrus' waste ban, PSC had sent three segments of the eight-segment core in the early 1980s.

Andrus says he has not given up the fight to block future shipments. His staff discovered that INEL lacks an air-quality permit for above-ground storage of waste. Idaho Attorney General Larry Echolaw is seeking a court injunction to halt shipments until the DOE completes the six-month process of applying for a permit. DOE officials say they do not need the permit. The court has yet to rule.

Chisholm says the state ought to get Russian President Boris Yeltsin to help block the shipments. "That's how big this thing really is," he said.

— Steve Stuebner

Steve Stuebner writes for the *Idaho Statesman*.

HOTLINE

Wildlife and stress

The animals seemed calm, but sensors revealed incipient panic. The cause was planes flying fast and low to the ground, and the effect on bighorn sheep was heart rates accelerated by 400 percent. Researchers at Utah State University and Hill Air Force Base report that this stress raises body temperatures, which weakens the animals' immune systems and makes them more susceptible to disease. During a recent \$1 million test, F-16 jets, helicopters and airplanes flew over elk, antelope and bighorn sheep. The *Salt Lake Tribune* says researchers want to find out if continuous exposure to low-flying aircraft hinders breeding, migration or the life span of the three species. The study's conclusions will be used in the preparation of environmental impact studies for the military.

Showdown averted at Dann Ranch

Last-minute talks have headed off a confrontation between the Bureau of Land Management and supporters of Mary and Carrie Dann, Western Shoshone ranchers in Crescent Valley, Nev. The "handshake" agreement was worked out between Nevada BLM director Billy Templeton, Carrie Dann and Raymond Yowell, chief of the Western Shoshone National Council. It came only a day after bids were opened for a contract to remove around 1,000 cows and horses the Danns have been grazing without a permit on public lands surrounding their ranch. The agreement calls for the Danns to "substantially" reduce the number of livestock being grazed on the remote Cortez Mountains. Carrie Dann said the agreement was "all right" since the family planned to round up and sell many of their calves and horses this fall anyway. The BLM also agreed to work with a Western Shoshone grazing association that Yowell said would be formed by the national council to administer and oversee tribal grazing rights on the public lands. The compromise, however, may have just put off the conflict until spring, when the Danns will turn their livestock out on the public range again. Yowell said the council would negotiate with the BLM to determine the number of cattle the Danns could turn out in the spring. But a BLM spokesman said there was no way the Danns would be allowed to graze more livestock than the roughly 170 head for which the family is licensed. The Dann sisters have maintained that the family ranch cannot survive at that level. Moreover, the Western Shoshones assert that the "public land" rightfully belongs to the tribe. (HCN, 9/9/91.)

Rancher sues the Forest Service

Wayne and Jean Hage, owners of the Pine Creek Ranch in central Nevada, have filed a \$28.4 million lawsuit against the Forest Service in U.S. Claims Court in Washington, D.C.

The Hages charge the agency with "a long series of illegal actions" in administering the ranch's grazing allotments on the Toiyabe National Forest.

"These illegal actions came to a dramatic head on July 27 and 28," a statement from the Hages said, "when over two dozen special Forest Service agents, armed with semi-automatic firearms, seized and later sold 74 head of Pine Creek Ranch's cattle" (HCN, 9/9/91).

The Forest Service said the cattle

were found on an allotment where grazing privileges had been suspended for five years to allow the land to recover from overgrazing.

The Hages have since liquidated the rest of their 2,000-head herd at a loss in order to avoid further confiscations, their statement said. The plaintiffs seek damages and compensation from the Forest Service for the "taking" of the Pine Creek Ranch and the loss of use of water rights on federal lands.

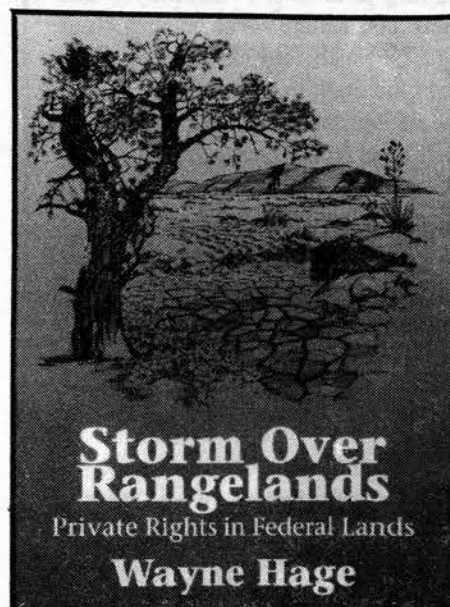
"The Forest Service has finally succeeded in putting us out of business," said Wayne Hage, who charged that the agency's actions were a vendetta for his political activism.

Hage claimed not to have the wherewithal to sue the government; the Federal Lands Legal Foundation, which he helped found earlier this year "to protect the rights of federal grazing permittees through litigation," is supporting the lawsuit.

The "takings" specialists who are representing the Hages say the "landmark case" will affect 27,000 federal lands ranchers.

"This is a make or break case," said attorney Mark Pollot. "The outcome will determine whether the Forest Service can continue its campaign of regulatory intimidation to drive cattlemen off the federal range."

— Jon Christensen



HOTLINE

Here for centuries, gone in days

Some 800 years after their creation, eight large clay pots and baskets were found by an amateur archaeologist flying over a remote area near Sedona, Ariz. Three days later, half the pots were missing. The story began in July, when Andy Seagal was exploring Sinagua cultural sites by helicopter and discovered the eight containers intact in a small isolated cave. But when officials from the Coconino National Forest returned to examine the discovery site a few days later, they found half the items gone. This prompted officials to remove the remaining artifacts even though "we would have preferred to leave everything undisturbed and preserve the cave as a time capsule," said Forest Service archaeologist Peter Pilles, in the *Arizona Republic*. The three baskets and a jar were made by Sinagua tribe members who lived in the Verde Valley some 600 to 1,500 years ago. The Forest Service has identified some suspects and hopes to make arrests soon.



Moths make a grizzly's meal

Moths are a major food source for grizzly bears, according to independent researchers Steve and Marilyn French. The couple, who have spent nine years studying grizzly bears in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, say that 90 percent of the grizzlies' summer diet is made up of moths. The discovery that army cutworm moths and not whitebark pine nuts, as previously thought, make up the bears' most important summer food could change the way grizzly bear recovery is managed, reports the *Jackson Hole Guide*. The researchers have observed grizzlies eating thousands of moths a day, digging the insects out from the rocks and crevices of Yellowstone's alpine slopes. The bears follow the moths to the high mountains in early June and remain there all summer, a period which represents more than a third of a grizzly bear's life. Steve French says that grizzly bear recovery zones need to be expanded to encompass these high-mountain moth fields. "A lot of people don't think the alpine (environment) is important to bears. We're beginning to think it's vital. Maybe this is their last refuge — or an important refuge," French told the *Jackson Hole News*. One night the researchers counted 24 bears on one slope, slurping up the moths. The alpine environment is dangerous, however. Lightning strikes the exposed ridges, and rolling boulders sometimes injure the grizzlies.

BARBS

Just blame the messenger.

In a recent speech made at a Forest Service reunion held in Glenwood Springs, Colo., Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson complained, "We're getting caught up in a lot of bad publicity. We're getting beat up by the Congress, by the press and the courts."



Military maneuvers over the West

The U.S. military heads west again

Less than two years after Defense Secretary Richard Cheney placed a moratorium on new land acquisitions, the military has renewed efforts to seek new bombing and training ranges on public lands throughout the West.

Riding the tide of patriotism that swept the nation in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war, the military seeks to expand ranges or build new ones in Washington, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Colorado and California. At least 1.5 million acres of public land hang in the balance.

As the military moves forward with its proposals, groups such as the Rural Alliance for Military Accountability and Citizen Alert continue to press for a national needs assessment for military training.

Grace Bukowski, a staffer for both groups in Reno, Nev., said the military controls about 30 million acres of public and private land across the United States, a chunk of a little more than half the size of Utah.

According to the Pentagon's records, as requested by Rep. Bruce Vento, the Democratic chairman of the House Interior Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks, the military controls a staggering amount of public lands:

- It conducts 163 different training activities in 57 national forests and on 1.7 million acres of land;
- Three million acres of national forest are available for military use through 33 memorandums of understanding with

the Department of Defense;

• About 17 million acres of Bureau of Land Management property have been withdrawn for military use.

To Bukowski, all of this shows that the Pentagon should justify the need for new training areas before it purchases new ranges. "I want to see them go to Congress and say, 'This is what we have, and this is why we need more' ... If someone were to look at the overall picture, there would be some serious questions."

— Stephen Stuebner

Stephen Stuebner reports for the *Idaho Statesman*.

The Air Force targets a remote Idaho county

GRAND VIEW, Idaho — Deep inside southern Idaho's Owyhee County, three spectacular canyons surround a high, grassy plateau. The quiet is nearly deafening. Only the occasional chirp of a mountain bluebird breaks the silence — until an Air Force jet screams by.

Here, on Dickshooter Ridge, Gov. Cecil Andrus has proposed the 147,000-acre Big Springs Training Range for the Air Force and Idaho Air National Guard. Although it is much smaller than the previously proposed Saylor Creek base expansion plan, environmentalists say they are surprised Andrus would select such a sensitive area to conduct military maneuvers.

"They couldn't have picked a worse spot," says Wendy Wilson. She and her husband Phil Lansing lead commercial canoe trips through the spectacular canyon country.

The plateau's rivers and canyons, Battle Creek, Deep Creek, the East Fork of the Owyhee River and the Bruneau River, are all candidates for federal protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act or the Wilderness Act. The proposed base includes 61,000 acres of a wilderness study area and would eliminate plans for a national park.

Military jets already fly training operations over the area, which lies near Mountain Home Air Force base, in south-central Idaho, and the Saylor Creek range, in the southeastern part of the state. As a training ground for Persian Gulf-style maneuvers, the Big Springs base could generate revenue for the state and help keep the existing bases open, says the governor's

aide David Jett.

This reasoning does not assuage critics. Robert Digrazia, board member of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, says sonic booms and low-flying aircraft would devastate the Owyhee's desert bighorn sheep population. First transplanted to the Idaho desert in the 1960s, more than 1,000 sheep roam the area's rocky canyons. A third of the country's entire population of the declining sheep species resides here.

"The sheep live in the canyons for a reason," says Digrazia. "The flight activity causes them to disperse into the desert where they get overstressed and die."

Gubernatorial aide Jett says it's premature to tell whether sheep would be harmed. He notes that military aircraft have flown at low levels here for years, while the bighorn herd has grown.

"That may be true," responds hunter Robert Stevens, "but now the Air Force is talking about conducting Desert Storm exercises in Owyhee County. There's no comparison."

In order to appease opponents, Gov. Andrus placed restrictions on his offer to the military. The Big Springs proposal is just a fraction of the size considered in the highly criticized Saylor Creek expansion. Here, no live bombings would be allowed, and supersonic flight must be 10,000 feet above the ground. Andrus also established a buffer zone to help protect the desert bighorns.

Ranchers like the proposed Owyhee site. Simplot Land and Livestock Co., the largest in the state, helped Idaho's governor select a spot

where two ranchers want to sell out. All four members of the state's congressional delegation support the proposal, saying the Big Springs plan saved the Mountain Home base from the Defense Department's recent hitlist of base closures.

BLM director Cy Jamison also approves of the training ground, which would sit on agency land, even though BLM Boise District Ranger David Brunner has said that alternative locations should be studied.

Environmentalists warn that Big Springs may not be big enough for the land-hungry military. The Big Springs proposal may be part of a much larger design, says Stevens, a former Navy pilot. He says the U.S. Air Force seeks a giant training complex straddling the borders of Idaho, Oregon and Nevada.

"It's going to be big," says Stevens. "This is going to be the great battlefield of the continental United States. We're going to be the only place left with enough open space to do it."

Both Air Force and state officials deny such a plan. Says Jett: "There is no support for it in Idaho nor would there be any political support for it if that happened."

Stevens says the military already has reserved air space in the three-state area. On a map of air space in the West, no other large expanse of undeveloped land exists for military training.

Air Force authorities plan to write an environmental impact statement on the Big Springs proposal. A final decision is not expected until 1994.

— Stephen Stuebner

Utility baits fish program with dollars

The Columbia River appears to be too small for two of its native fish: squawfish and salmon. In an effort to ease stress on endangered salmon, wildlife officials in Oregon and Washington have placed a bounty on the head of its chief predator, the northern squawfish.

The Bonneville Power Administration is offering reward money to anglers who "Catch A Killer and Save A Salmon," as advertised along the river.

So far, the campaign has met with striking success in reducing the squawfish population. Anglers have caught more than 200,000 squawfish, and at \$3 a head, some have made over \$500 in a day. But does it help the salmon?

"There are a lot of unknowns," says Anthony Nigro, a fisheries biologist for the state of Oregon. "(Killing squawfish) is not a panacea. It is just one part of the problem."

The northern squawfish, averaging about eight pounds, is the largest member of the minnow family. It happily coexisted with salmon before numerous dams were built on the Columbia River. Then the dams, with their cool, still reservoirs, increased habitat for the squawfish but wreaked havoc on the migratory salmon, as well as on steelhead trout.

The Bonneville Power Administration, the agency responsible for managing the hydroelectric dams, hopes the bounty will rescue the declining fish so that it won't

have to change its dam operations. Through a combination of four fisheries, Bonneville intends to reduce by 20 percent the squawfish that feed on salmon smolts.

The fishing season, which ran through Sept. 22, yielded 210,000 squawfish, surpassing Bonneville's goal. The agency wants to repeat the program for the next five years. But despite the response, not everyone expects the bounty program to prove successful.

Bill Bakke, executive director of Oregon Trout Inc., says the squawfish program is a bandage for bigger problems in the ecosystem.

"We should be trying to protect our wildlife diversity instead of trying to eliminate it," Bakke says. "The bounty idea — that this animal is bad and we are going to eliminate it because we want to save another animal — is all screwed up ethically. And it doesn't make any biological sense."

Sara Vickerman, regional program director of Defenders of Wildlife, agrees. "Bounties as a wildlife management program went out with the Dark Ages. This program is based on an arrogance and insensitivity to nature."

Bonneville Power is funding the bounty program for \$5.8 million this year and has committed to more funding in the future. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is studying the effects of the bounty on the Columbia River

ecosystem, and the commercial uses of the harvested squawfish.

Nigro says the program should be viewed as a grand experiment although "we can't guarantee that this program will do anything." He says research does indicate that northern squawfish are responsible for 80 percent of salmon predation.

Whatever the research shows, Nigro says most bounty programs fail. First, it is an unreasonable goal to eradicate a population, he says, and second, few bounty systems have ever been evaluated.

Nigro says the northern squawfish harvest rate will still protect the fish itself.

The Washington Department of Wildlife, which is administering the bounty program, is trying to monitor its success. It has set up 15 check stations along the Columbia from Lewistown to the Bonneville Dam. Anglers register at the beginning of each day at one of the stations and later return to check in their fish and receive a mail-in voucher. The squawfish, after having their tails removed for identification, can be kept by the angler or handed in at the check site.

Fish that are turned in at the check site go to Oregon State University, which is looking for a commercial market, such as food or fertilizer, for northern squawfish.

So far salmon and steelhead have not recovered their former numbers through fish ladders, hatcheries, or the

Killer Squawfish: How To Catch 'Em



A guide for anglers on catching the northern squawfish

Bonneville
POWER ADMINISTRATION

barging and trucking of young fish. Only time will tell if the threatened fish will now benefit with the removal of this other nemesis.

— *John Vincent Rosapepe*

The writer lives in Portland, Oregon.

BLM office tries, and tries again, to buy private land

The Bureau of Land Management office in Grand Junction, Colo., has responded enthusiastically to the agency's new agenda of recreation and land protection. Two years ago, the BLM staff, with lightning speed and a crew of volunteers, built the 136-mile Kokopelli mountain bike trail through the desert lands between Grand Junction and Moab, Utah. The Grand Junction staff has also improved rafting access along the Colorado River corridor and helped clean up Rabbit Valley.

But in another category — acquisition of private lands — the Grand Junction office has been a failure. It has formally attempted to obtain 14 parcels of land over the last two years, and acquired none of them. Over the last 18 years the office has initiated attempts to buy or trade 200 properties without any success.

Now, in a major new attempt, the Grand Junction staff recently proposed acquiring 16 parcels of private land totaling 2,000 acres near the Colorado River in Ruby Canyon, about 20 miles southwest of Grand Junction. The BLM set its sights on the Ruby Canyon properties four years ago, after studies indicated several endangered species, a number of ancient Indian rock paintings, and distinctive riparian and semi-desert landscape there. The privately owned parcels are currently scattered among BLM holdings, which makes management of both the private and public land difficult, according to BLM area manager John Singlaub.

The time appears right to obtain the private land. Many of the owners are interested in exchanging their land in Ruby Canyon for federal property elsewhere. For them, the rugged landscape makes grazing cattle difficult and the proximity to the Colorado River creates conflict with recreationists.

"We have willing sellers that are

not interested in pursuing subdivisions or developments that could damage the river corridor," said Carlos Sauvage, the BLM's real estate specialist in Grand Junction. "All the landowners are sincerely concerned about the area and want to work with the BLM to ensure its protection."

But if the past record is any guide, the BLM will be unable to acquire the private land. Instead, the parcels will be bought by people who want them for their access to the river or nearby public lands, or as scenic homesites.

As a possible sign of things to come, four out of the 10 property owners have thus far received BLM bids for their land, and all four owners rejected the bids.

Chris Jouffas, who has two properties totaling 320 acres, said that federal appraisers are not valuing the lands according to their use for recreation or access. Instead, BLM appraisals are evaluating the land, in at least one case, for "low-density" recreation potential. "The whole country loses out through this short-sightedness," he said. "It's a thorn in everybody's side."

Jouffas wants to trade his property in Ruby Canyon for acreage next to his ranch near Vail, Colo. But until federal appraisals meet his expectations, he plans to hold on to the land.

Depending on who you talk to, the roadblock to BLM acquisitions is either the inflated expectations of landowners or an antiquated appraisal system that is unable to take into account non-traditional values. At present, BLM appraisers review the history of the property, regional market sales, and utility or natural resource access. Elements such as scenic quality, solitude, or investment potential do not play a major role in property appraisals.

Another problem may be the centralized appraisal bureaucracy. All

appraisers are based in Denver, which may make them "less sensitive" to the regional real estate markets and property values, one observer said. On the other hand, such centralization does insulate the appraisers from in-house pressures they might get from managers eager to buy or exchange land.

And such standard guides as comparable sales can be misleading. Transactions in Ruby Canyon have been few in number and, with one recent exception, low in price, said Sauvage. Most of the private parcels in Ruby Canyon are former homestead sites, and have been passed down or sold to people who knew or were related to the original owners. Since such transactions have not taken place on the open market, contends Sauvage, the real estate prices do not reflect current land expectations or true "open market" value.

But Al Wagner, Colorado's chief BLM appraiser, attributes the failed efforts to two factors: the residual effects of Grand Junction's oil shale boom in the early 1980s and the "transitional" nature of property in the area.

"Where we've been stymied is the fact that Grand Junction was one of the cities that experienced tremendous growth, and values were going up in the early 1980s," he said. "What you're seeing now is properties not selling for nearly what they did at that time."

Speculation has also played a role, said Wagner, by raising landowners' expectations. One of the area's most accessible properties, the Spann Ranch, recently sold for \$600,000, almost twice the BLM appraisal price. This made the BLM's purchase efforts more difficult, as property owners expected similar prices. But Wagner discounted the price paid for the Spann property as "an example of an uninformed buyer." Only time will tell if the Spann buyer paid too much or if

the sale represents the new value of land along the corridor.

Low appraisals are not the only problem. Several BLM officials said restrictions imposed on the Department of Interior make such transactions difficult. Before 1983, all DOI agencies could negotiate above the appraised price by 25 percent, with department approval. But routine 25 percent increases by managers at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service caught the attention of federal auditors in the early 1980s, according to Grand Junction BLM district director Bruce Conrad. So, in 1983, Congress tacked on to the Appropriations Act for the Department of the Interior a section limiting DOI spending to appraised value of the property.

"We've got to change our process so that the line manager can negotiate the intangible benefits," said Conrad.

Matt Millenbach, chief of the BLM's Division of Lands and Realty, concurs with Conrad, but said that such "intangibles" are "impossible to appraise in the market because they have no market value."

In 1988, Congress passed the Federal Land Exchange Facilitation Act, which could expedite property acquisitions by allowing BLM officials and property owners to voluntarily take their case before federally appointed arbitrators, said Mike Ford, branch chief of the BLM's Division of Lands in Washington, D.C. Officials expect regulations to implement the act to be released by the Office of Management and Budget.

Until FLEFA regulations are enacted, said Sauvage, the Grand Junction office will probably continue to fail in its quest for private lands. "The whole BLM image suffers when our system chronically fails."

— *Jane Bailie*
HCN summer intern

Does the Sierra Club lack a strong, green spirit?

"I love the Sierra Club," says David Orr, chair of the national forest committee for the northern California Sierra Club. "That's why I want to change it."

After watching timber companies gobble up roadless land while the massive Sierra Club bureaucracy in San Francisco and Washington, D.C., sat on its hands, Orr decided to act.

"I discovered that the club refused to take a stand against clearcutting, and the more I called around the country and asked people, the more horror stories I heard," he recalls.

Using Jeff DeBonis' Forest Service watchdog group as inspiration, Orr last spring founded the Association of Sierra Club Members for Environmental Ethics (ASCME); its purpose is to address the group's supposed weakness in protecting wild lands. Despite the lack of publicity or a large organizing effort, ASCME has over 50 members, Orr says, including leaders in 25 Sierra Club chapters who are interested in forming ASCME affiliates.

"We average two inquiry letters a day," says Orr from his home in Davis, Calif.

Though criticism of the Sierra Club leadership takes many forms, Western critics say that the national office is allowing too much destruction of wild lands in their region. They say the club is long on negotiation, but short on action.

"The Sierra Club's policy of accommodation has been a proven failure," says Tim Hermack, director of Oregon's Native Forest Council. "For every wilderness they created they sacrificed a greater amount of public land."

But Bruce Hamilton, director of field services in the Sierra Club's San Francisco office, believes that the group's give-and-take posture is successful in saving wilderness.

"It gives you an opening," Hamilton says. "It sets up a new system, and if you have the political power you can fill that system."

For David Orr, such an incremental approach is too sluggish for the current rate of wilderness destruction. "We want to see the club use good strategy. We want them to negotiate from a position of strength."

While internal dissent in progressive organizations is common, its critics say the Sierra Club is notorious for undercutting the efforts of its grassroots.

In New Mexico,

Sierra Club member George Grossman participated in the controversial Timber Task Force negotiations on the Santa Fe National Forest (HCN, 7/1/91) without any direction from the national leadership. Then, after the agreement was completed, Grossman says his state chapter decided he could not represent the club.

"They just said that the agreement wasn't binding," Grossman reports.



Colorado activists fighting to protect a roadless area in the San Juan Mountains from planned development say they were irritated by the Sierra Club's refusal to help.

Jasper Carlton, director of Boulder's Biodiversity Legal Foundation, says, "The failure of the Sierra Club to come to the defense of that area typifies their failure to protect elements of natural diversity throughout the Northern Rockies."

Not infrequently, the Sierra Club is criticized for making more concessions than necessary in bargaining with timber interests. Mitch Friedman, director of Washington's Greater Ecosystem Alliance, reports that National Trails, a Sierra Club-dominated group, lobbied Congress in 1989 to reduce the amount of timber cut in Oregon and Washington from the 4.2 billion board-feet of the previous year to 3.8 billion board-feet.

Though that amount was far above what local groups thought sustainable, the Sierra Club

defended its position, telling grassroots activists it was the smallest cut politically feasible.

The eventual timber yield for that year showed the Sierra Club had been

overly timid, Friedman says. "Because of politics, lawsuits, and everything else, the actual cut was far below what they had been lobbying for."

In one of its more surprising moves last year, the Sierra Club intervened in a timber-sale appeal in Idaho's Clearwater National Forest on the side of the Forest Service.

Dennis Baird, who sits on the club's national Public Lands Council, signed on

**'I love the
Sierra Club. That's
why I want to
change it.'**

—David Orr

against a timber-sale appeal brought by local forest-watch activist Bill Haskins.

"The area was well suited for timber harvest," Baird said at the time. "And we have to look at an area like that as part of any settlement on the Clearwater. We can't afford to needlessly downsize the timber industry. Idaho is just too poor a state to be (throwing people out of work)."

Haskins' appeal was eventually upheld and the timber sale was withdrawn.

In Utah, the Sierra Club has found itself more preservationist than one group — the Utah Wilderness Association. The head of the group, Dick Carter, says he has seen his efforts undercut when the National Sierra Club takes positions Carter finds unattainable.

Carter, who has been criticized by other groups for demanding too little, says: "We find the Sierra Club trying to use a model that doesn't work in this state," Carter says, noting that Utah's conservative delegation leaves environmentalists little room to maneuver.

"The Sierra Club often takes a position that is so far out that it jeopardizes the only kind of discussion that we can have in a state like Utah," Carter adds.

Tim Hermack of the Native Forest Council has tried repeatedly to get the club to back his bill, The Native Forest Protection Act, which would ban clearcutting on all national forests.

"The Sierra Club has undermined us at every step," Hermack says. "They have done their best to announce that our vision is politically unrealistic, that it would represent political suicide."

Mike Bader, executive director of the Missoula-based Alliance for the Wild Rockies, saw his group's bill get much the same treatment after working with grassroots activists in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming.

"It's not a very extreme bill," says Bader. "It just protects wilderness that's not yet developed."

Despite the club's lack of support, last winter Bader and other alliance members were able to get Rep. Pete Kostmayer, D-Pa., to agree to sponsor the bill in the House of Representatives.

But just before the bill was to be introduced in May, a Sierra Club staff member told Kostmayer that the bill had serious flaws, says Ric Bailey, a board member of Alliance for the Wild Rockies. Bailey says that Kostmayer was told that wilderness areas in the

bill contained interstate highways and even towns that would have to be evacuated if the bill passed. The club staff member reportedly told Kostmayer that he would look like a fool if he introduced the bill.

But Kostmayer checked out the alleged problems with alliance members, and then challenged the Sierra Club to provide maps supporting its claims. The maps were never produced for Kostmayer, Bailey says.

"That's not true and we never said it," rejoins Larry Mehlhaff of the Sierra Club's Northern Plains office. Mehlhaff says that the Sierra Club opposed the bill because not enough grassroots organizing was done to ensure its passage in Congress. "My suggestion has been time and time again that the alliance should work with the grassroots and get a proposal that the majority of conservationists are happy with," Mehlhaff says.

"There are nearly 4 million people on record behind this bill," fumes Bader. "We have Greenpeace and two Audubon chapters in the region who are behind it. The vast majority of the areas (in the bill) were suggested by our member groups — homeowner groups, sportsmen, outfitters — people who know the land," he adds.

For the Sierra Club, the issue came down to political strategy. "I love thinking bioregionally," says Hamilton. "But politically it's a nightmare."

Most critics of the Sierra Club say they only want to see the organization get better. "We're working to increase the club's membership," says Orr. "We want to get back the many former members who left out of disgust with the leadership's weak position."

ASCME wants the club to take a strong stand against wilderness destruction. "Their strategy is to size up the political landscape and then to base their actions on that," says Bader. "I'd rather see them facilitating grassroots proposals."

Jasper Carlton would like a Sierra Club leadership less anxious to negotiate. "They do not exhaust all of the administrative and legal remedies available to them," he says.

But Bruce Hamilton has his doubts about the effectiveness of legal solutions. "If you really care about (a specific forest), NEPA or the Endangered Species Act won't save it. The only thing that will save that forest is getting some very specific federal legislation as to how the forest is managed."

Mark Weinstein of the Washington, D.C.-based Save America's Forests believes that the tendency toward accommodation is widespread among environmental groups. "A lot of times environmentalists are light on experience with that kind of hardball negotiation. They make a moderate proposal and then just stick with it," he notes.

Andy Kerr, director of the Oregon Natural Resources Council, disagrees with the national Sierra Club's approach more on strategy than philosophy. "For the most part the Sierra Club's problem is naiveté," he says.

With interest in ASCME increasing among club members, founder David Orr sees his work cut out for him. "We want to make the Sierra Club into the kind of group that John Muir would be proud of," he says. "We're not taking the Sierra Club over. We're taking it back."

ASCME can be reached at Box 1591, Davis, CA 95617.

—Jack Thorndike

Jack Thorndike is an environmental journalist in Missoula, Montana.



Jim Baca: An unusual Western politician

To an organization representing New Mexico ranchers and miners, he's "Public Lands Enemy No. 1." To many New Mexico environmentalists, he's the great green hope — and the man they'd most like to see as governor some day.

Jim Baca, state land commissioner, is little known outside New Mexico, but, with his knack for challenging tradition and shaking up the established power structure, Baca is becoming famous or notorious, depending on your point of view.

"I think he's the best elected politician this state has," says Henry Oat, head of the Santa Fe-based East Fork Preservation Coalition, an environmental group trying to protect the Jemez Mountains of northern New Mexico. Oat wants him to run for governor.

"He's sold out to the environmentalists," says Manuel "Rudy" Pacheco, New Mexico coordinator of People for the West, a group committed to keeping public lands open to cattle grazing, mining and logging. "He's not representing the people that put him in office."

Baca fiercely safeguards New Mexico's land, and the revenue that flows from it. In two terms, he has enraged the state's livestock industry with proposed reforms, has tightened environmental law and sped up wilderness designations.

Baca, 45, serves on the board of The Wilderness Society, which has led people like Pacheco to charge him with having a conflict of interest.

Baca doesn't see it that way. He's proud of his environmental credentials, and gratified by the support he gets from the environmental community.

As for running for governor, "I'm happy as land commissioner," says Baca. He adds that he will run for land commissioner again in 1994, "because it's impossible to get everything done in one term."

A short, bespectacled man whose roots in New Mexico date back some 400 years, Baca says he is used to taking heat.

As a television journalist with KOAT-TV in the 1970s, he won an award for investigating air pollution at the Four Corners power plant. He says the experience taught him that great abuses exist, and that reforms are possible. He's also not afraid to ask hard questions and to push for answers.

As state liquor director in the early 1980s, he again helped reform a corrupt industry.

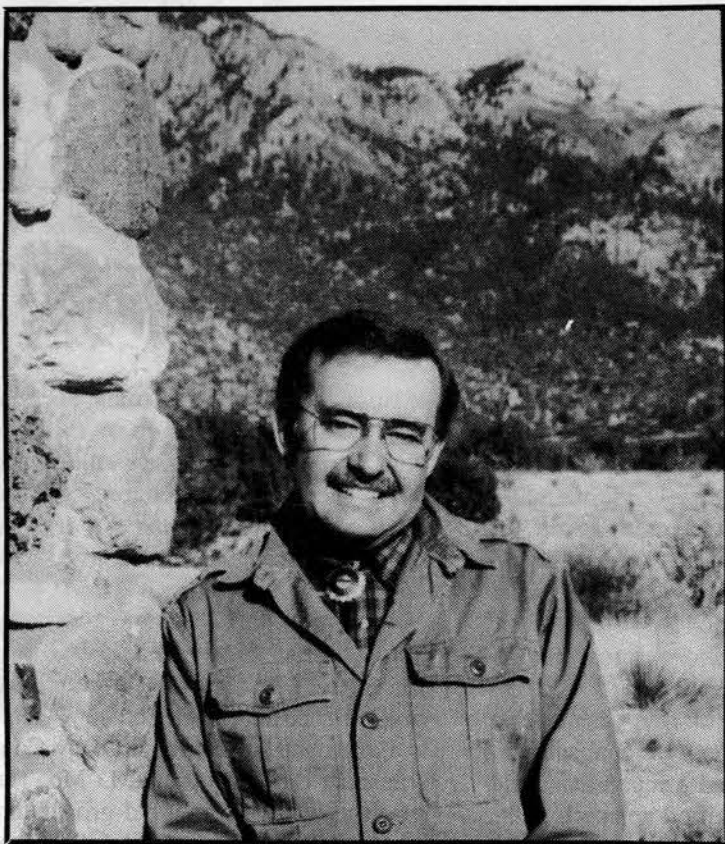
Baca's job as land commissioner, which is as close as you can get to being an interior secretary of New Mexico, is a powerful one.

Former Gov. John Miles, when asked in 1944 why he was running for state land commissioner instead of seeking another term as governor, said: "I've already been governor. Now I want to hold the most powerful position in the state." The office's authority springs directly from the state constitution and is independent of the legislature or the governor's office.

The office is also critical to funding education in New Mexico. The land commissioner must manage 8.75 million surface acres of state trust lands and 13.4 million mineral acres for the "beneficiaries" — largely the public schools and universities.

The land produces big money. For example, 89 percent of the \$2.9 billion fund is made up of royalties from these trust lands. That fund earned \$258.9 million in interest alone in 1990.

Twenty-five cents of every dollar spent on public schools last year origi-



Jim Baca is New Mexico's commissioner of public lands

nated from state trust lands. The land produces money primarily from oil and gas leases and from royalties collected from oil and gas production.

Baca has made enemies for his stance on the 1872 Mining Law. The law, currently being debated in Congress, is defended by the mining industry, which says that reform will cost jobs. But environmentalists say that without reform, the mining industry will continue to pollute the landscape with toxic mine waste.

Baca says the law is costing New Mexico money by not requiring companies to pay royalties on the minerals they extract from public federal lands. Because New Mexico does charge such royalties for its lands, mining companies prefer the federal lands — and that makes Baca angry.

"If you were a mining company, where would you go to do your mining?" Baca asked.

'There aren't too many like him out there.'

Baca also says the law's lax environmental regulations have polluted state lands adjacent to mined federal lands.

This has not endeared him to People for the West, which recently labeled him "Public Lands Enemy No. 1."

The livestock industry isn't crazy about him either. During his first term as

land commissioner, from 1982-1986, Baca provoked a class-action lawsuit from ranchers after he enacted a phased 250-percent increase in grazing fees on state trust lands. The move was applauded by environmentalists who objected to the rates the state was charging lessees.

But in October 1986, a Santa Fe district judge sided with the ranchers. The judge threw out the proposed fees, ruling that they

imposed too harsh an economic burden on ranchers.

In this term, Baca has ruffled ranchers' feathers with two proposals, the first to allow hikers and others access to the same land leased by ranchers.

The other proposal offers incentives to encourage ranchers not to overgraze the land, even though ranchers say they don't overgraze the land now.

Neither proposal has generated the opposition that Baca's grazing fee-hike did a few years ago.

"As far as this term of office goes, he hasn't done much yet that has detrimentally affected the ranching business," said Bud Eppers, president of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association.

Baca has primarily won kudos from environmentalists for standing up to the 1872 Mining Law. He also won praise for expediting wilderness exchanges with the federal government to provide permanent protection to state lands.

On other fronts, he has called for greater protection of piñon trees, which are bulldozed to clear land for grazing and cut for firewood. Baca currently heads an alternative fuels task force, and, to prove that he practices what he preaches, he says his car will soon run on natural gas.

"I'm glad to see such a public official in the West," said Katherine Bueler of the Public Lands Action Network. "There aren't too many like him out here."

— Keith Easthouse

Keith Easthouse is a reporter in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

HOTLINE

A refinery will close in Wyoming

The 78-year-old Amoco oil refinery in Casper, Wyo., announced it will close in two months, putting 200 people out of work. Refinery manager Larry McVay said \$150 million needed for environmental controls "tipped the scales," along with the plant's small size, limited oil flexibility and marginal performance. The refinery has had a history of problems meeting state and local environmental regulations and was recently fined \$50,000 for violating a waste water discharge agreement with the city, AP reports. But keeping up with environmental regulations was only one factor in an economic equation that equalled closure for the Casper plant, one of Amoco's smallest refineries. The last decade has seen oil prices plummet from a high of \$45 a barrel to below \$10, forcing oil companies to close regional offices in an effort to revamp their operations nationwide. Since 1982, Casper, pop. 46,742, has lost roughly 10,000 jobs due to the industry shake-down. The plant's distance from Denver, the primary market for its product, and declining production of sweet crude oil in Wyoming contributed to the shut-down, Wyoming Sen. Malcolm Wallop, R, told the *Casper Star-Tribune*.

Triangle X Ranch investigated

A team of investigators last month said the Triangle X Ranch, a private operation in Grand Teton National Park, had violated several National Park Service regulations. The investigation was called after former Grand Teton Park Superintendent Jack Stark alleged the ranch was harming park resources. The ranch, owned in part by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner, had improperly buried waste, dug gravel and spilled motor oil in park lands, according to a report by the federal fact-finding team. The report also said the operators of the ranch had an "adversarial relationship" with park managers and "philosophical differences" with officials over how the ranch should be run. But Triangle X, a licensed concession, caused no permanent damage, said the report. The investigators, who were dispatched by Park Service Director James Ridenour, were unable to verify allegations of overgrazing. They recommended that an environmental assessment be written before Triangle X operators apply for a new concession license in 1992.



Potted plants and toxic waste

EPA administrator William Reilly has ordered an audit of 45 major contractors working on cleaning up Superfund sites. Reilly told The Associated Press that contractors are spending too much money on activities unrelated to treating 1,245 toxic waste sites. One contractor billed the Environmental Protection Agency for a \$1,600 Christmas party, and another spends \$150 a month for potted office plants. "We didn't find any gold-plated toilets," said Reilly, "but potted plants, Christmas parties and things of that sort don't belong in this program." Reilly has ordered a review of each contract in an attempt to cut overhead spending. All 45 contracts cost the agency \$265 million.

HOTLINE

Reprieve for grizzlies

Montana's Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission canceled the state's fall hunting season for grizzly bears. The commission's 5-0 vote came a day after a federal judge granted a preliminary injunction barring the hunt, scheduled to begin Oct. 1. The ruling was issued in a suit brought by the Fund for Animals, the Swan View Coalition and Jasper Carlton of the Biodiversity Legal Foundation. They charged that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service violated the Endangered Species Act, which states that a threatened species can only be hunted in

the "extraordinary case where population pressure cannot be otherwise relieved." Although the grizzly bear has been listed as a threatened species since 1975, the federal agency has allowed limited hunting of the bear in a 9,600-square-mile area of northwestern Montana. The agency has said that the hunt maintains "the grizzly bear's natural human-avoidance behavior" and preserves the species by reducing bear-human contact. In his ruling, Judge Michael Boudin said there was not enough proof that population pressure exists for grizzlies or that there is a "surplus" of bears. Since grizzly hunting began, 124 animals have been killed. The judge is expected to schedule a full hearing of the case after Dec. 1.

Four scientists analyze ancient forest for a congressional committee

by Tom Abate

The struggle over the cutting of the Pacific Northwest's forests has created a legal, bureaucratic and political tangle of court decisions, bureaucratic recommendations and enacted and proposed congressional bills.

Now, a group of four scientists, at the request of a congressional subcommittee, has compiled a report that could make possible a unified approach to the welter of lawsuits, agency recommendations, appeals of agency actions, and proposed laws. It goes beyond spotted owls, to look at ecosystems and dependent species, including loggers.

The report, which brings together

existing science and economics, does not provide any magic cutting of the Gordian knot. Instead, it presents the courts, the agencies and the Congress with an array of 14 options, letting the decision makers distribute pain in informed, precisely calculated amounts.

The plan, titled "Late Successional Forests of the Pacific Northwest," was presented at a public hearing before the House Subcommittee on Forestry, Family Farms and Energy, chaired by Congressman Harold Volkmer, D-Mo. The report maps key tracts of old-growth forest considered necessary for the survival of the spotted owl, marbled murrelet, Pacific salmon and other old growth-dependent species.

"This is the first time we have ever seen what an ecosystem approach to for-

est management might be," said Norman Johnson, a forestry professor at Oregon State University. "It was an attempt to get to the bottom of all this, rather than dealing on a species-to-species basis."

Johnson was one of the four scientists asked by Volkmer to draw up a Pacific Northwest forest management plan that would give Congress a basis for legislation independent of the Forest Service, according to subcommittee staff member Jim Lyons.

In addition to showing which forests should be preserved, Lyons said the four scientists were asked to estimate how this protection would affect timber employment in the region.

"We asked the four not to narrow the scope to owls," Lyons said. "To my knowledge this is the first time Congress

A new report looks at ecosystems and dependent species, including loggers



A hiker is dwarfed by Western red cedar in Washington

Phillip Renault

t forests ttee

has asked for anything like this."

The scientists, who have been called everything from the Four Wisemen to the Gang of Four, include Forest Service biologist Jack Ward Thomas, author of a 1990 report urging that 8.2 million acres of old growth be set

aside to protect the spotted owl; Jerry Franklin, a University of Washington ecologist and proponent of "new forestry"; John Gordon, dean of the Forestry Department at Yale University; and Professor Johnson. They began their work in June at a conference in Portland attended by 200 forestry, biology and fisheries specialists, who identified critical habitats, ranked them in priority, and assessed the job loss if they were removed from timber harvesting.

The report the four scientists presented to Volkmers committee on Oct. 8 contained 14 options Congress could choose from in deciding how much of the Pacific Northwest old growth to protect. The options ranged from a plan to allow the sale of 4 billion board-feet of timber with a considerable loss of wildlife, to high wildlife protection with timber harvests of less than a billion board-feet and the loss of 60,000 jobs.

"It now becomes a very clearcut political question," said Jack Ward Thomas. "There is no free lunch. The increasing environmental protection comes at a real cost."

Timber industry representative Mark Rey attacked the report, saying there was no way that four scientists, working on a crash project over the summer, could do a better job than "14 years of Forest Service work."

"This report is largely, if not wholly, opinion based," Rey said. "It tells you more about political science than biological science."

But Rindy O'Brien, a lobbyist with The Wilderness Society, said the new report could form the basis for a legislative solution to the spotted owl controversy, and a model for environmental management in other regions.

"We've been advocating this same sort of biodiversity process in Yellowstone," she said. "Preserving the ecosystem was what we thought the National Forest Practices Act was all about. Unfortunately, Congress had to go outside the Forest Service to find four scientists to tell them how to do it."

But before the new ecosystem management plan can become a model for further action, it will have to prove useful in helping to resolve the current old-growth impasse, which traces its roots to the timber sales of the 1980s.

The national forests have historically supplied about half of the trees cut in the Pacific Northwest. Companies bid for the right to cut trees on public lands in timber sales that have a two- or three-year lifespan. During the 1980s, private log-

gers cut an average of 4.4 billion board-feet of lumber per year on public lands.

Environmental groups called the rate of logging excessive and said the prices paid for timber were too low to cover building roads and other Forest Service expenses. But most of all, timber sale opponents objected to loss of old-growth forests of Douglas-fir.

By 1988, evidence began to build that the loss of old growth was destroying the breeding and nesting grounds of the Northern spotted owl, allowing environmentalists to begin challenging the Forest Service with ignoring the Endangered Species Act.

In 1989, such legal and administrative challenges forced timber sales down to 2.8 billion board-feet, but logging continued at a higher rate because the companies were able to cut timber from trees bought in previous timber sales.

In July 1990, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officially designated the spotted owl a threatened species, giving environmental groups even greater clout to oppose logging in the Pacific Northwest.

To counteract the Endangered Species Act, timber industry advocates attached an amendment to the 1989 Interior Appropriations bill. This amendment, called Section 318, required the Forest Service to set an annual timber sale level of 3.85 billion board-feet and exempted the sales from certain judicial challenges.

In September 1990, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals threw out the

exemption language and environmentalists began challenging timber sales in court, arguing that the loss of habitat was threatening the owl.

In February, U.S. District Judge Thomas Zilly decided it wasn't enough to simply designate the owl a threatened species. He ordered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to designate a protected area for the bird.

Fish and Wildlife compiled a preliminary report earmarking 11.6 million acres of forest in Washington, Oregon and Northern California for owl habitat. A final review in August lowered the protected area to 8.2 million acres, which is where that proposal currently stands.

Meanwhile, in May, U.S. District Court Judge William Dwyer issued an injunction blocking 80 percent of this year's timber harvest sales. He ruled that the Forest Service had failed to adequately address protection for the spotted owl. The Dwyer decision had the effect of limiting timber sales to roughly 1 billion board-feet, less than a quarter of its 1980 levels.

"Right now the timber sale program is at an impasse," said Jack Ward Thomas. "We are shut down. The Bureau of Land Management program is very close to shut down, too."

Thomas said that the timber industry's pain is still "largely rhetorical" because there is wood in the pipeline from earlier timber sales. The lumber market is also slow at the moment, due to the recession.

"But when housing starts to pick up,



USDA, Forest Service

Sunlight filters through the redwood canopy in California's Sierra National Forest

the pain will become real," Thomas predicted.

In a move that indicated the desperation of timber interests, Rindy O'Brien of The Wilderness Society said that even as Congress was taking its first look at the new ecosystem management plan on Oct. 8, pro-industry legislators were trying to invalidate Judge Dwyer's court order by attaching an amendment to the Interior Appropriations Bill.

"The long-term strategy of the timber industry seems to be getting another year's fix on timber harvests," she said.

"The other side has no intention to compromise," said timber lobbyist Mark Rey. "They have us nailed to the cross."

Rick Olson, a spokesman for Congressman Sid Morrison, R-Wash., said the Pacific Northwest congressional delegation recently sat down with industry and environmental representatives, but found the two sides far apart.

"The key question is whether folks are ready to compromise," Olson said. "So far we haven't seen that."

Rick Lyons of Congressman Volkmers committee said it was too early to tell what will come of the ecosystem management report, although his boss hoped a consensus position would emerge.

"It was clearly our intention to provide enough information for Congress to draw up a bill if the members choose to act," Lyons said. "We'll just have to wait and see."

Lyons said Congress would be most likely to fashion a compromise bill that incorporates elements of several existing proposals. These include: HR 842 from Rep. James Jontz, D-Ind., to create a system of old-growth reserves; HR 1590 from Rep. Bruce Vento, D-Minn., that combines old-growth protection with relief for rural communities; SB 1536 from Sen. Brock Adams, D-Wash., to retrain workers rendered jobless from spotted owl preserves; and SB 1156 from Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., that would exempt some timber sales from judicial review and provide for worker retraining.

"All the pieces are there," Lyons said. "What is required is for them to come together with enough support from all the parties."

Fashioning any such compromise will take the lawmakers and lobbyists months. But one of the scientists who put the ecosystem report together in a few weeks, at a cost of about \$50,000, said the exercise could show there is a better way to solve environmental disputes than by fighting battles in court.

"A lot of us are afraid of a backlash against the Endangered Species Act," said John Gordon of Yale University. "We can't keep doing end runs and saying, 'Hah, we've found another snail darter, you lose.' We have to lay all the cards out on the table."

Tom Abate is a free-lance writer specializing in science and the environment.

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'God Squad' examines Oregon forests

Secretary of Interior Manuel Lujan convened a special "God Squad" committee this month to determine the fate of 44 timber sales on BLM land in Oregon.

The sales had been blocked by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which cited harm to the endangered Northern spotted owl. Lujan convened the committee at the request of Bureau of Land Management Director Cy Jamison, who complained that without the sales, timber harvests would be down 75 percent on the agency's land in Oregon.

The seven-person panel must decide by February whether to grant an exemption to the Endangered Species Act on 4,570 acres of BLM

land. The committee will hold a hearing and receive testimony on the act's economic impacts to the region.

Joining the Interior Secretary on the panel are the secretaries of the departments of Agriculture and the Army, the administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the chair of the president's Council on Economic Affairs, and a representative from Oregon.

In 1979, a similar God Squad determined a water project could proceed despite harm to the endangered snail darter, says Interior spokesman Erik Olsen.

— Florence Williams

The ad that
"stung"
some
Western
ranchers

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Eagle-killers uncovered ...

(Continued from page 1)

have bought and seized enough Compound 1080, strychnine, cyanide and thallium sulfate — all banned from general use in 1972 — and toxic insecticide, "to probably kill every man, woman, child and predatory mammal in the western United States," said Galen Buterbaugh, regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

His agency is conducting the probe along with the Environmental Protection Agency.

"Certain ranchers can be seriously impacted by predators, but this is something more," Buterbaugh says. "There are some folks out there who seem to do this with a great deal of enthusiasm and pride. It goes beyond just protecting their livestock." But, Buterbaugh added, the ranchers killing predators illegally still seemed to be in a minority.

Among the most prominent of the dealers, according to documents, was Randy Graham, the predator program manager for the Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

Wyoming Agriculture Commissioner Don Rolston announced that he would place Graham on administrative leave; later he said Graham would be fired. Rolston also halted predator control activities in Wyoming pending a review of the department's predator lab.

Although the federal Agriculture Department runs tax-funded predator control programs through its Animal Damage Control branch, some poison-handling responsibilities are delegated to states. Graham was supposed to teach ranchers how to use legal poison devices and make sure that only certified users could get any.

Instead, records allege, Graham sold illegal raw poison from safes at the state

lab to undercover informants and agents, and told them how to use it to kill eagles.

Fox six containers of strychnine, a can of cyanide, and two cans of Compound 1080, which is so toxic that a dose smaller than a pinhead will kill a coyote, Graham charged \$850. He also made 1080-tainted lard squares in ice cube trays.

"Graham indicated that he knew that the killing of eagles is illegal," documents read, "but he said it is a widespread practice among sheep ranchers."

Eagles, mostly golden eagles, do kill sheep, especially newborn lambs that are



Bald eagles rest on the limbs of a tree

easy targets on the open range, which Grosz charges stockmen have turned into a "supermarket for predators."

In a survey, Wyoming ranchers reported losing 5,600 lambs and 200 sheep to eagles in 1990, outdone only by coyotes and foxes. That amounted to eagle damage worth \$183,000, out of \$2 million attributed to predators, although those survey figures may be inflated.

A natural hazard, predators are just one of many walls closing in on today's ranchers, who have dominated Western ranges for more than a century. Pressure is growing to raise grazing fees on public land up to their market value. Many ranchers interpret this as an environmental strategy to force livestock off the public range.

Due to rising foreign imports, sheep ranchers this year are getting \$67 a head, the lowest price in a decade. Ranchers are also made nervous by suggestions that multi-million-dollar wool sub-

sidies should be cut.

Recently, the Wyoming Wool Growers newsletter urged ranchers to boycott General Electric for sponsoring National Audubon Society television specials about range abuse.

"My main concern with all these laws and restrictions is what is the future of the sheepmen," third-generation rancher Jeanne Camino wrote to the Buffalo, Wyo., *Bulletin* after the poison raids became public. "With imported lambs, the middle man, and the elements the sheepmen are the endangered species."

Camino, who invokes the specter of "a lamb still alive having a coyote tearing its guts out" in her letter, does not doubt some ranchers resort to poisons as

an illegal way to safeguard their future.

Last winter, she says, federal agents disguised as fox trappers searched her ranch for dead eagles; this fall they returned in coats and ties (one wore a wool jacket, Camino points out) and asked whether her family uses poisons. They do not, she insists. They rely mostly on government trappers but won't hesitate to shoot a coyote roaming through their sheep.

"We're not a bunch of macho people trying to slaughter all the coyotes and eagles for the sake of killing," says Camino, recounting the scene of an eagle carting off a lamb. "It's done to protect ourselves and make a living that's looking pretty destitute right now. We're not trying to destroy animals; we're just trying to make enough money to pay our bills and send our children to college."

Poisoning is not a new technique. Strychnine was largely responsible for the eradication of predators such as wolves and bears in much of the West. It is deadly, easy, and is hard to detect except when it is too effective: Agents have found eagle corpses just a few feet away from poisoned baits.

That still occurs, say federal agents, even though most traditional toxins are banned. Cyanide is permitted only in spring-loaded anti-coyote devices and Compound 1080 is available only in sheep collars that kill attacking coyotes. Strychnine is available only in laced oats

for underground gopher control.

Threads in the toxic web, documents say, lead from state staffer Graham throughout predator control and ranching circles. Laramie sheepman Dick Strom, a member of his county predator control board (his license plate, according to a search warrant, is "5-WOOL"), sold agents a variety of poisons and talked of setting out poisoned hot dogs to kill coyotes, foxes and domestic dogs.

Texas trapper Roy McBride, famed for tracking cougars and rare Florida panthers for the National Park Service, is described as a "pesticide trafficker."

Humane Coyote Getters Inc., the Pueblo firm that legally manufactured gunpowder-charged cyanide coyote shells for other countries, such as Canada, Peru, Mexico and South Africa, also illegally sold them in this country, documents appear to indicate.

With a covert federal informant as an intermediary, Coyote Getters owner Ray Hall bought 200 pounds of Graham's cyanide, stashed in an old trailer house outside Cheyenne. Hall told of selling cyanide shells to the former Oklahoma director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal Damage Control program, as well as to others "all over the Western United States."

Documents listing such buyers were among items seized in a search of the Pueblo firm. Records of the fictitious Laramie business, which officials will not further describe, may well reveal more.

"This only proves impacts on wildlife today are as insidious and widespread as they ever were," says John Zelazny, conservation director for the Wyoming Wildlife Federation. "It's like incest or crack dealing; only when you shed some light on them do you see how sick and pervasive they are."

Most offenses described in court documents are misdemeanors, carrying maximum penalties of a year in jail and a \$100,000 fine. Killing more than one eagle is a felony.

But cases are difficult to build. Few come to trial and sentences are often light. A man who last year pled guilty to selling Compound 1080 to kill eagles was fined \$500 plus a year of probation.

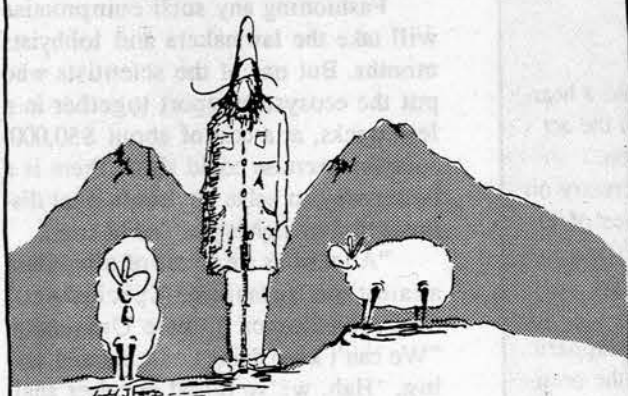
Another potential penalty comes from the federal government: The Secretary of Interior can revoke public land grazing permits of anyone convicted of poisoning eagles or other endangered species.

"I would like to say one thing, though," rancher Strom muses, declining to talk about allegations against him. "The Supreme Court, in my opinion, has protected a lot of the habitual criminals, and the rapists and murderers and the arsonists. And, as far as I'm concerned, the Endangered Species Act protects the predators and wildlife at the cost of other wildlife and domestic livestock." ■

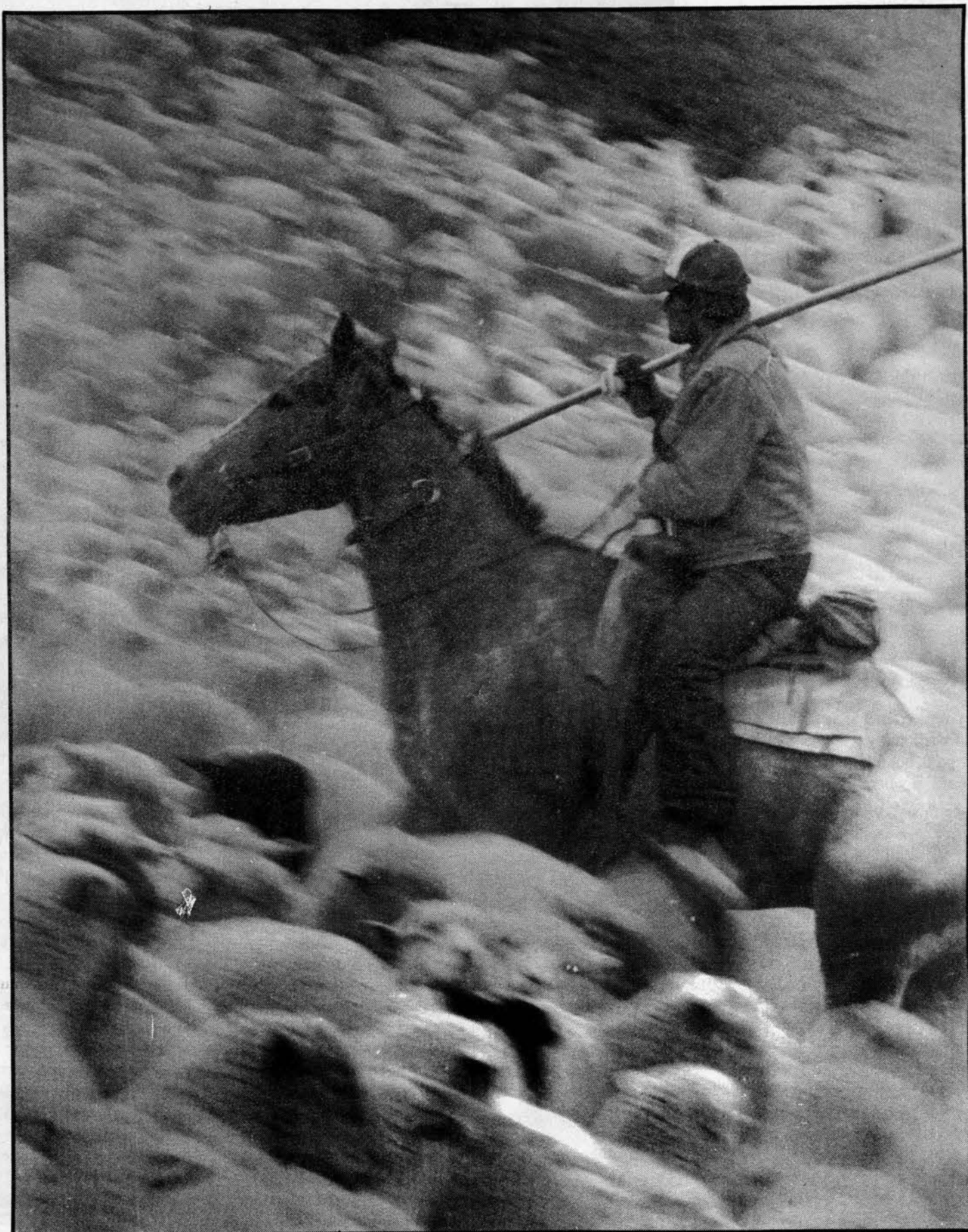
Michael Milstein covers Wyoming for the *Billings Gazette*.

This article was paid for by the HCN Research Fund.

Find Yourself in Wyoming??



"Well I was workin' in the uranium mines but that got shut down, so then I went to work in a lumber yard till they went broke. I lucked out and found a job in a gas station... but they had a leaking underground storage tank. So now I'm herdin' sheep and they want to turn wolves loose!!... Is the camera off, I need to CUSS.... CAN I NOW?"



Allen Best

Sam Robinson and his horse wade through an ocean of sheep

by Allen Best

John Muir called them "hooved locusts."

Cattlemen in the Old West despised them and the ranchers who brought them to open range.

As a sheepman, Sam Robinson admits to some biases of his own, based on spending nearly all his 35 summers at sheep camps. Like his father before him, and like a string of fathers that goes back nearly 130 years, he's content to mind the woolies, getting on his horse at first light, taking off the saddle after the stars have begun to twinkle. He says sheep have not only failed to harm the mountains near Vail, Colo., where he has grazed them for the last 11 summers, they've also done the ecosystem some good.

"It's been grazed for 84 years, and I doubt that this country looked any better 84 years ago than it does now. It may have looked worse," he says.

Robinson says sheep have gotten a bum rap, mostly because of ignorance. There have been abuses of the land by sheepmen, he agrees, and probably there is some abuse by cattle ranchers.

"The difference," he explains, "is that the cowboy turns 'em loose while the sheepman stays with them the whole time."

Eco-grazing

Shepherd follows his flock, and the seasons

His constant attention to 3,000 ewes and lambs is at the core of his defense. The sheep work uphill toward vegetation on the slopes, sweeping from Camp Hale up to far above timberline at 12,000 and 13,000 feet. In a way, he considers himself a gardener and his sheep the farm implements.

If you had a garden, you would plow it, which is what the rodents and pocket gophers do, he says. Then you would rake it smooth, which is what his sheep do to the mounds as they tromp up the mountainsides, at the same time drilling in seeds, giving the plants a better chance to sprout. Then you might mulch your garden and finally you'd fertilize. All these things, he says, his sheep do.

The key to it all, though, is the nitrogen balance of the soil. Without animals

grazing on the land, the soil tends to get too much carbon. Too much carbon limits the microbe activity in the soil. But a grazing animal will help keep the nitrogen in balance, he says.

Sheep, elk, cattle or buffalo — any ruminant will do, although some mix of animals tends to work best. Some mountain bison would complement what his sheep do to the alpine slopes very well, he says, although they disappeared long ago.

Deer and elk could perform the same functions as his sheep, he agrees, but they are limited by winter range.

Cattle don't do well at more than 10,000 feet, but sheep thrive. Sam Robinson thinks his sheep are the highest and best use of the high mountains between Vail and Leadville.

A cycle of seasons

For all practical purposes, Robinson's year begins and ends with the autumnal equinox. That's when he takes his flock off the range, sells his lambs, then returns the ewes to his home ranch at the head of Piceance Creek between Rifle and Meeker in western Colorado.

Winter is a time for cutting losses. Mountain lions and coyotes both take their toll, and the toll mounts even more rapidly in early spring, after the ewes have given birth, and the flock grazes in the rapidly warming piñon and juniper.

After spring has passed in the high desert and then in the low mountains, Robinson trucks his flocks to Camp Hale, where they graze in late June and early July. As the snowfields shrink and the slopes above timberline turn green, he pushes the sheep first here and then over yonder, directing them to the emerging spots of lushness, trying not to allow them to linger for long — something that is rarely a problem with the always competitive sheep, he says — or push too fast.

The sheep have got to eat their vegetables, too, he says. Left to their own whims, they'd all rush to the nearest ice cream parlor of bluebells or clover.

Ideally, says Robinson, his sheep

Continued on next page

Sheepherding near Vail, Colorado ...

(Continued from previous page)

will never take more than 40 percent of the forage on any portion of the 20,000-acre allotment he has from the U.S. Forest Service. Coyotes and bad weather, though, sometimes make the goal more difficult to attain.

"If the coyotes are bad, that tends to concentrate the sheep in a place where they feel more secure, and that can cause a problem," he says. "And if the weather is bad, they tend to pull into a place out of the storm."

But, from year to year, the grazing patterns of his sheep balance out, he says.

After the freezes, usually in late August, plants above timberline dry out, and Robinson must give his sheep more land to cover.

Water is no problem. Most of what they need they get from what they eat. They will eat snow — they would rather do that than drink water. Occasionally, they will stop at a creek or pond, but not for more than a minute. Water is where predators linger, so for sheep, as for other animals, water is dangerous.

Coyotes are a constant aggravation. Robinson uses a variety of tools to keep them at bay. On a pole amid his sheep he mounts a device that flashes. He also places snares and leg-hold traps on the mountainsides. "You better check them twice a day," he says. "Maybe with the field glasses, but you check them."

Another device he uses could, for lack of a better word, be called a boom box. Propane seeps into a chamber and is periodically ignited, creating a boom that echoes across the valley.

Robinson kills coyotes. In the course of a summer he'll lose 10 or 12 lambs or ewes, sometimes a lot more. In the lower elevations near Rifle, where the lambs spend the first few weeks of their lives, he loses even more — 4 percent altogether in a normal year.

Mountain lions are a menace to his sheep in the lower elevations, but not in the high mountains. Bears are rarely a problem.

On his daily rounds he carries a .270-caliber rifle in a scabbard attached to his saddle. "That way they don't suffer," he says of the coyotes. "They're dead when I hit them."

Robinson says he has no particular animosity toward coyotes. He lauds their inventiveness. "They're so adaptable, they never cease to amaze me."

Not all coyotes will kill, he says. "I've seen them out in the middle of sheep, looking for gophers. I've also seen them work a herd of sheep like a good border collie, back and forth until they have the one they want, then run him out and kill him."

Admiration, though, falls far short of tolerance. Unlike other predators, coyotes will kill the very best of sheep, he says, and too often they will not eat the meat, or eat only a little of it.

"If a fella had to just feed 'em, that wouldn't be so bad," he says, "but they kill so much that they don't eat."

He claims to not kill coyotes until they have started killing his sheep. But eventually, he says, all coyotes will become killers, and when they do he hears about it late at night, when the animals are coyodeling their boasts.

The next morning the sheep will be restless, contradictory, reluctant. One such morning was in mid-September. The night before, two sheep had been killed high on the slopes of 13,200-foot Jacque Peak, behind Copper Mountain.

Normally the sheep will graze up a mountain. "A lamb will go uphill three days after it's born," Robinson figures the uphill urge is largely instinct, but it's also common sense. "It puts the feed closer to their mouths, so they don't have to bend down so far," he explains.

The sheep will bed down near the top of a ridge, at 13,000 feet if the mountain goes that high. Cold isn't a problem for them, although heat sometimes is, even in the mountains around Vail.

At first light Robinson mounts his horse and rides high above timberline, herding the sheep back down toward the bottom of the valley, which often is clogged with willows. Getting the sheep to move through those willows, particularly if they're frightened by coyotes, gives a herder some of his greatest challenges.

'I should have shot the owner and trained the dog — but there's laws against that, too.'

"What's the matter with you?" he sneered at his sheep on that morning in mid-September, spinning his horse around amid the woolies. "So what if the coyotes got one or two of you last night? Are you scared of coyotes? Well, I'm meaner than any coyote."

Shooting coyotes is one thing. Shooting dogs, although it's also legal if they're harassing his sheep, is impractical.

A few days before the incident on Jacque Peak, he had been grazing his sheep along Guller Creek, a few miles west of Copper Mountain, where a new

ski hut, Janet's Cabin, is located.

The Colorado Trail, a hiking and biking trail, also crosses the valley.

Robinson says that a mountain biker and his wife were heading up the trail, above timberline, accompanied by their German shepherd dog. The dog cut out one ewe from the herd and ran her down

and started chewing on her.

"It didn't kill her, but it might as well have," says Robinson. "She suffered worse than death before she died."

"I went and shot her, and shot at the dog, but I didn't want to kill it in front of him. I like my dogs, too. I should have shot the owner and trained the dog — but there's laws against that, too."

"I told him he had no business bringing a dog up here. Even a dog that's well behaved will chase if given a chance, particularly if there is more than one dog."

Robinson said he was discouraged

by the incident. The guy seemed nice, but not aware. That cuts to the quick of his animosity toward "industrial strength recreation," as he calls it.

Backcountry huts, well-publicized trails, mountain bikes — he's got problems with all of them, and he fears eventually they will drive him from the land.

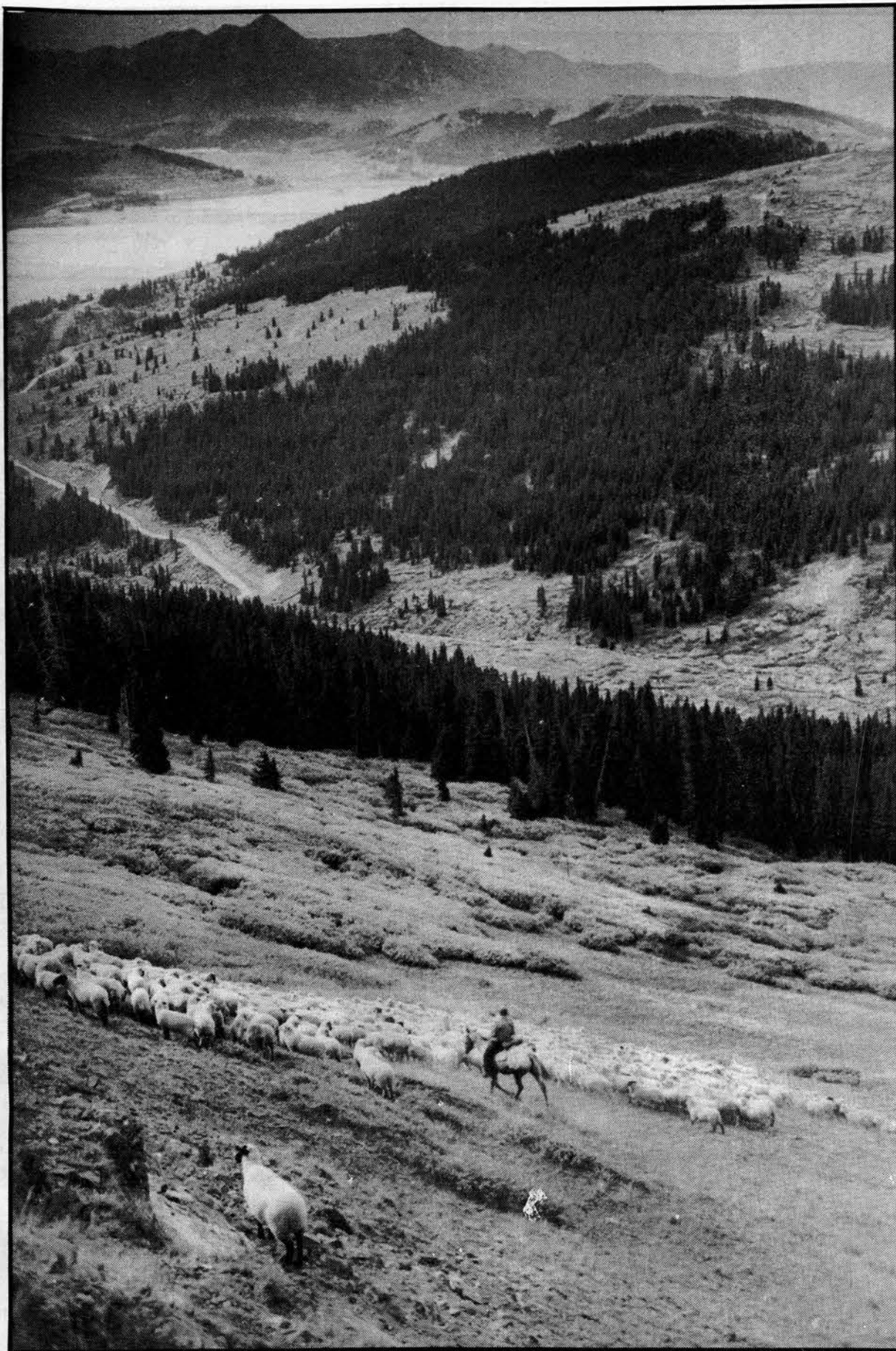
First, mountain bikes. "I think they're great fun. I love 'em. But keep them on the roads. Don't bring them out here. Out on the trails, they're OK, although you can expect to have twice as much trail maintenance where you have mountain bikes. One mountain bike alone in the mountains isn't going to hurt anything, but a thousand of them ...," his voice trails off.

Of backcountry huts originally designed for winter use, he believes all will eventually become havens for too many people. That won't help wildlife or the hikers who want more primitive conditions in the backcountry.

"Just like a lot of things that started out as a good idea, people don't take the time to consider the consequences of their actions," he says of the huts.

His disagreement comes down to his perception that "people are just too damned thick to go concentrating use like that."

He also harbors reservations about the Colorado Trail that crosses the Rock-



Allen Best

Robinson tends sheep in the mountains near Leadville, Colorado

Robinson family occupies an ever-narrowing niche

The Robinson family strikes a balance between modern and primitive. They spend the school year in a two-story home made of aspen logs not far from where Sam grew up on the headwaters of Piceance Creek, between Rifle and Meeker.

They spend summers in a cramped seven-by-23-foot trailer that is pulled up back roads to be near the sheep as the band is herded across the miles of tundra and high mountain meadows.

They take along a television, which usually will pull in two or three Denver stations, sometimes even a station from Milwaukee or Indiana. But there is no end of things to do.

Eleven-year-old Collin accompanies his dad on horseback one day every week or two, learning the trade, keeping an eye out for coyotes. When he grows up, he says, he wants to be either a shepherd or an aerospace engineer.

Samantha, who is in third grade, and Sierra, a kindergartener, play in the mud and amuse one another. Both are good riders, although Sierra is scarcely larger than the horse's head.

Sam is happy to stay in the backcountry for a week or two at a time, but Cheri likes civilization a bit more. Every third day or so she's ready to go to Leadville or Vail to get fresh copies of *The Denver Post* or, if it's available, *The New York Times*. She always likes a shower.

Cheri's grown accustomed to the sheepherding life, but it wasn't an immediate love. She grew up in suburban Los Angeles, where her father was a college football coach. She had planned to become an interpreter for the deaf, and spent her first two years of college in the San Fernando Valley of California.



Allen Best

Samantha, Sam, Sierra and Cheri outside their trailer near Chicago Ridge

She opted for a more rural conclusion to her college education, though, transferring to Utah State University. Her classes veered in new directions, and she ended up with a degree in dance.

Whereas his wife was a city girl, or at least suburban, Sam has rural roots. Sometime in the 1860s his ancestors immigrated to Utah from England, settling in Iron County, Utah, to raise sheep near where the Beaverhead Ski Area now is located. A great-grandfather from his mother's side stopped in Utah on the way to the gold fields and

also raised cattle and sheep.

Sam Robinson's grandfather moved to Colorado in 1920, settling first near Debeque, then moving to the Piceance Creek ranch where Sam and his family now live.

An era of confrontation and sometimes violence between cattlemen and sheepmen was ending. Sam's granddad packed a six-shooter at all times. Cattlemen still hadn't accepted sheep on the public range, and stories are still told about the cattlemen running sheep over cliffs and burning herders out of

their camps — or worse. Sam says that in places like Meeker, some animosity toward sheep remains.

Sam's father, Howard, also warned of animosity from other quarters.

"My dad told me when I was about 8 or 9 that someday this would all be a big playground," he recalls. "So he knew."

"Consequently, he discouraged me all my life against getting into the business. 'Go be a lawyer, go be a mechanic,'" he said. "Anything but sheep."

— A. B.

ies, although he admits he probably would have authorized it had he been in charge. "But I would have taken a lot more time doing it, and given a lot more consideration to wildlife, and maybe even talked to a shepherd or two. I might have stopped and asked where the trail might be the least harmful. And not just to the sheep, because the sheepmen themselves, generally speaking, are more concerned with the land itself than they are with their sheep."

Robinson spends a fair amount of his time talking with visitors to the area where he grazes his sheep. Most are thrilled to see his sheep and to watch him riding on horseback.

He readily acknowledges the romance in what he does. Not so his wife, who says she sometimes feels like she's an attraction in Disneyland.

She recalls one time riding on a horse near Ptarmigan Pass, up from Camp Hale, in the rain. The wind had given her an earache, her hands were stiff from the cold, and one leg was raw and almost bloody from rubbing against the horse. Then the horse almost threw her.

A capable horsewoman, she stayed on. A woman sitting in a Cherokee was watching her, and Cheri heard her say: "I wish I could do that. Isn't it beautiful?"

Cheri's reaction: "I wish you were doing it."

Not all visitors to the backcountry, though, find the sheepherding admirable. "They're not thrilled, and they're mad," Robinson says, to see domestic animals.

Sometimes Robinson will give them a brief lecture about range ecology and

the role of sheep.

"Like I said before, I am more intimate with this mountain than I am with my wife," he says. "I'm not a wife beater. I'm not going to beat this place up."

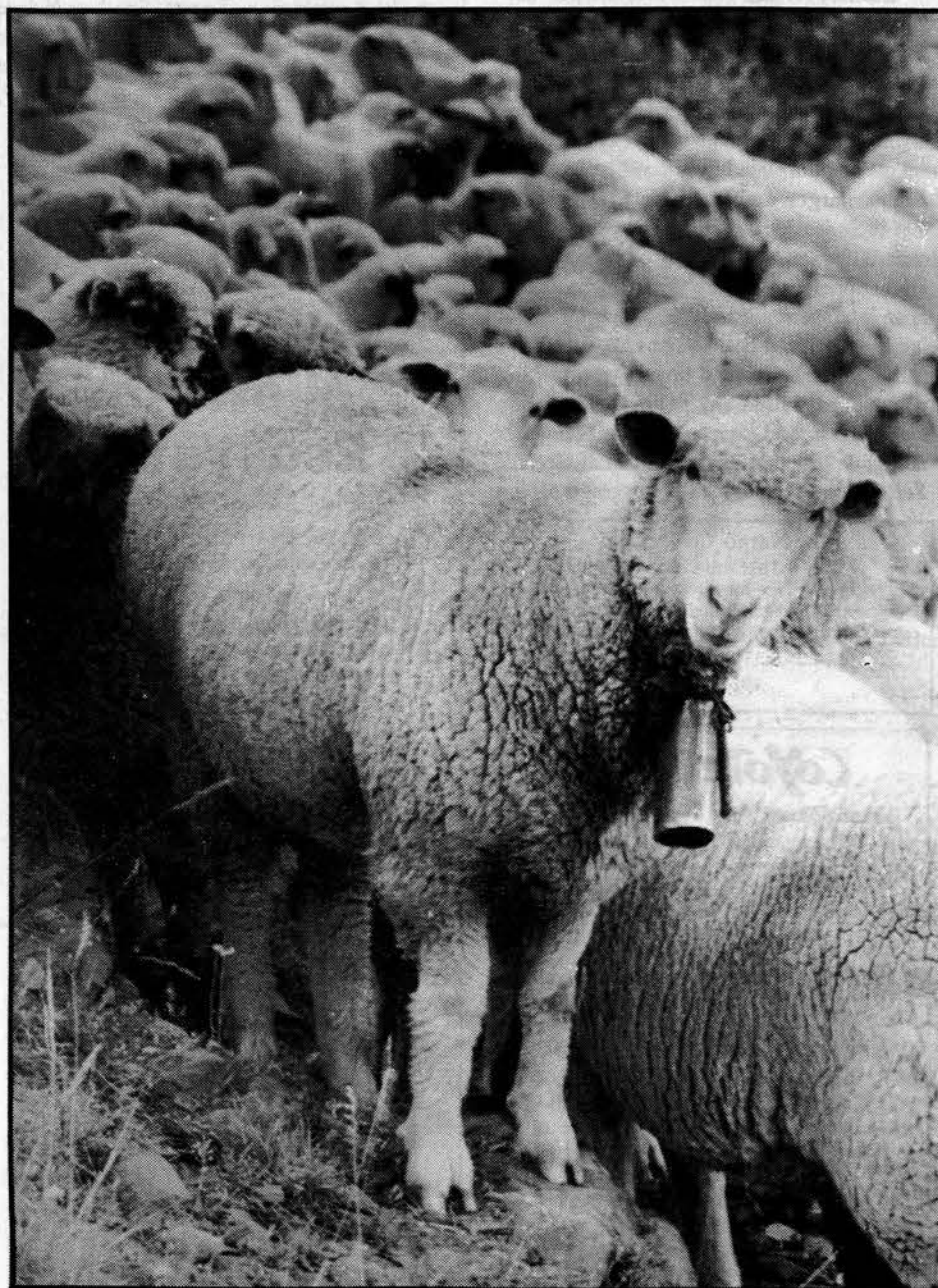
Sometimes his antagonists are persuaded, sometimes they continue to think sheep destroy the mountain tundra.

Ultimately, believes Robinson, that may be his undoing. He has no plans to quit sheepherding. He loves being in the mountains, being his own master. "The real danger," he says, "lies in someone who has a cousin who is a congressman or something like that, and he pulls a few strings in the Forest Service or whatever, and they can snap their fingers and I'm gone."

Until or unless that happens, though, he's enjoying every day, every minute of his time in the mountains. "What the hell, I won't be modest," he says while discussing why he's there. Then he goes to that cramped trailer, the one barely large enough to lie down in, and somewhere finds a guitar.

In his college days, he says, he flirted with the coffee house circuit. Now he just pleases himself in his style, something of a cross between John Denver and Michael Martin Murphy.

"It's hard and it's lonely out living with the sheep," he sings, "a way of life that few men really know. It's full of joy and sorrow as anyone could stand, and once it's yours it never lets you go."



Allen Best

Allen Best writes for *The Vail Trail*.

BULLETIN BOARD



National Park Service

Wheeler Peak

PLAN FOR GREAT BASIN NATIONAL PARK

A draft management plan for Nevada's 300,000-acre Great Basin National Park, established in 1986, is now available for public comment. The park boasts over 30 limestone caves, forests of bristlecone pines containing some of the oldest trees in the world and the spectacular 13,061-foot Wheeler Peak. At issue are grazing policy, mining potential and the extent of development within the park. The draft management plan proposes a new visitor center as well as increased camping facilities and improved access to and within the park. This preferred alternative would allow grazing and examine the validity of the 247 existing mining claims, although no mining occurs in the park at this time. Three other alternatives offer varying amounts of development and grazing, but one provides "maximum natural resource protection" with the most stringent grazing controls and no new visitor service areas. The general management plan will serve as a guiding philosophy for the park during the next 15 years. Public hearings will be held in Reno, Nev., Nov. 18 at the Holiday Inn, on 1000 E. Sixth St.; Ely, Nev., Nov. 19 at the Bristlecone Convention Center; Baker, Nev., Nov. 20 at Baker Hall; and Salt Lake City, Utah, Nov. 21 at the Utah Department of Natural Resources auditorium at 1636 W. North Temple. All meetings begin at 7 pm. For a copy of the draft or to submit written comments, write Superintendent, Great Basin National Park, Baker, NV 89311; 702/234-7331.

TOWARD A GREATER YELLOWSTONE

Because of his 1984 book, *Greater Yellowstone: The National Park and Adjacent Wildlands*, Utah native Rick Reese has been widely credited with popularizing the concept of a Yellowstone ecosystem. Reese urged that we see the park not as an island, cut off and unrelated to adjacent lands, but as a much larger and highly interrelated area that includes Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks and portions of six surrounding national forests. As Dick Knight, leader of an interagency grizzly bear study team, put it: "Most grizzly bears cross state, forest and park boundaries several times a year, making populations within any political jurisdiction meaningless and cooperative management a necessity." In this second edition of *Greater Yellowstone*, Reese adds coverage of the

1988 fires, explaining the natural role fire plays in forest growth cycles. A new preface discusses the politics that are shaping future management decisions.

American & World Geographic Publishing, P.O. Box 5630, Helena, MT 59624; 406/443-2842. Paperback: \$14.95 plus \$1.50 for shipping. 103 pages. Illustrated with many photos and maps.

THEY SPEAK FOR PREDATORS

The fate of grizzlies, wolves and coyotes in their native habitats depends on public education and action — not just in the well-known greater Yellowstone ecosystem but throughout the country. That conviction, along with five years' experience as predator advocates, prompted Montanans Tom Skeele and Phil Knight to create the Predator Project early this year. The project tracks wolf and grizzly bear protection and recovery plans, as well as working for reform of Animal Damage Control activities on public lands across the United States. The project operates on a shoestring budget, with volunteers distributing newsletters and action alerts to individuals and groups interested in predator issues. Currently, the project is calling for public comment on planned environmental assessments of predator-control projects on the San Juan, White River, and Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison national forests in Colorado. To find out what you can do to get involved with predator issues, or to lend your support, write Predator Project, P.O. Box 6733, Bozeman, MT 59711 (406/585-9607).

TIMBER WATCH

The Colorado Environmental Coalition's September 1991 newsletter provides an excellent analysis of activities on several national forests, including the Rio Grande, the White River, and the San Juan. If the newsletter is correct, the personality and biases of each forest's supervisor are major factors in determining forest policy. CEC can be reached at 777 Grand St., #606, Denver, CO 80203; 303/837-8701.

ARIZONA EARTH RALLY

Cave Creek, Ariz., hosts the third annual Earth Rally Oct. 26-27 for members of environmental groups. Live reptiles and mammals will be on display, and a puppet theater will perform plays about rainforest destruction, toxic waste and the importance of recycling. Guided nature walks are also on tap as well as performances by local musicians and poets. Speakers include Arizona Green Party's Hans Olsen and Dr. Bob Witzeman of the Audubon Society. For more information, contact Dria Jewell, 602/488-3927, or Tom Anderson, 602/252-3755.

"[A] milestone volume."

—Robert D. Barbee, Superintendent,
Yellowstone National Park

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

Redefining America's Wilderness Heritage

edited by Robert B. Keiter and Mark S. Boyce; foreword by Luna B. Leopold

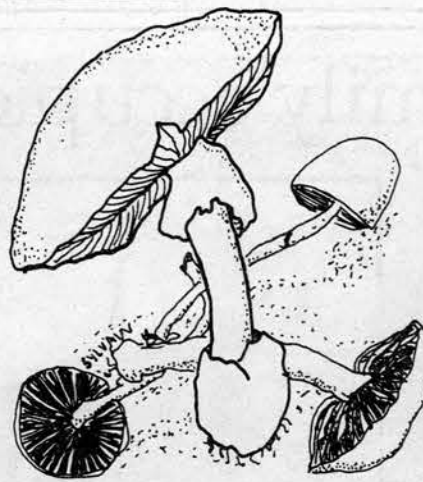
Generously illustrated with special archival photographs, this landmark book discusses key resource management issues in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. 53 illus. \$45.00

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Seattle Chapter



ALPINE SPAGHETTI

For hikers who thought backcountry cuisine consisted of gorp and gritty coffee, Forest Service veteran Rick Swain offers an alternative. In the *Wilderness Ranger Cookbook*, Swain lists 80 recipes that you can cook quickly, that taste good and don't create "a lot of mess." Swain suggests dishes such as tofu curry and alpine tortellini, but warns they should only be eaten outdoors. Your appetite is a lot less discriminating after hiking 10 miles in the backcountry, he says. Swain also wants nature enthusiasts to be aware of conservation, and he sprinkles wilderness quotations and a list of wilderness areas and suggested readings throughout the book. The recipes were gathered from other rangers with years of experience in making "practical, down-in-the-dirt" meals. Proceeds from the book go to the San Juan National Forest Association program for training rangers.

Falcon Press, Box 1718, Helena, MT 59624. Cloth: \$7.95, 111 pages. Illustrated with photos and drawings, edited by Valerie Brunell. Books can be ordered for \$7.95 plus \$2 mailing fee from the San Juan National Forest Association, Box 2261, Durango, CO 81302.

DON'T DRINK THE WATER

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OTHER VOICES

Military closes in on Colorado

by Grace Bukowski

Although the Department of Defense has not announced plans for a major airspace expansion in southeast Colorado and western Kansas, propellers are certainly revving up.

The Redeye Complex, currently sought by the 140th Tactical Fighter Wing of the Colorado Air National Guard, would run more than 11,000 aircraft sorties and operate 24 hours a day. Although the military proposes to operate the complex only 24 days per year, it marks the beginning of what could become a full-time training ground with ever greater requests for airspace and land following.

The state air national guard, located at the Buckley base in eastern Colorado, is converting from A-7 attack aircraft to F-16 multi-mission fighter jets. The F-16 is capable of flying at night and during bad weather as low as 100 feet above the ground.

If approved by the Federal Aviation Commission, the Redeye Complex would combine seven military operation areas, which are large blocks of airspace, and a myriad of low-altitude military training routes, which are best described as aerial highways.

Redeye would provide the 140th wing with the opportunity to train with more than 16 different types of military aircraft, including bombers, fighters, transport and cargo planes.

Repeated supersonic booms at Redeye could pave the way for the designation of the complex as an official Supersonic Operations Area, as has occurred in Utah and Nevada.

Once the FAA approves the 24-days-a-year operation, the door will be open for easy expansions. Major changes to the proposal can be made with little

or no public notification.

Just as the size and intensity of use of the proposal remain unclear, so does the type of training that would take place there. In Nevada, similar exercises with electronic warfare require over 3 million



Diane Sylvain

acres of land. The Redeye Complex proposal could easily grow into the type of bombing and electronic range that citizen groups have kicked out of other states.

Part of the proposal calls for dropping chaff and flares throughout the entire Redeye Complex. Chaff is aluminized silica fibers. When dispersed in the air,

these slivers of metal interfere with other aircraft's radar.

The F-16 alone is capable of carrying 30 chaff cartridges and 15 flares. Chaff is not biodegradable and skin irritation to humans and wildlife has plagued other areas of the country where it is dropped in aerial exercises. Hay farmers in the region may experience economic losses once chaff is found in the feed. Wildlife, too, may suffer from ingestion of chaff and from the startle effect of supersonic booms.

Although the Redeye Complex concept has been in the works for three years, opportunities for public involvement have been virtually nonexistent. The FAA has the authority to challenge all military airspace proposals, but its historic role is to act as a rubber stamp.

The result: Military activities taking place in the nation's airspace have evolved to the point where the skies have become hazardous to both aviators and rural residents.

The Redeye Complex provides just one more example of the military's assumption that sparsely populated areas of the West are expendable. But people can fight back by demanding a full environmental impact statement on the Redeye proposal.

For more information, contact the Rural Alliance for Military Accountability, 502 East John Street, Suite D, Carson City, NV 89706, or the Custer County Action Association, NO MOA Project, P.O. Box 186, Westcliffe, CO 81252 (719/783-2652).

Grace Bukowski, a citizen activist, works for the Rural Alliance for Military Accountability in Nevada.

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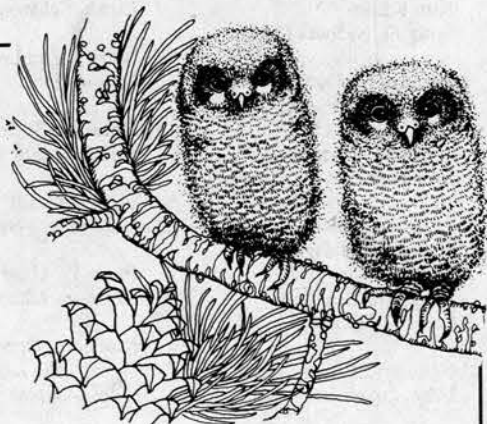
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