books&authors
SPECIAL ISSUE AND GUIDE

High Country News

For people who care about the West

THE LONG VIEW

Terry Tempest Williams and the refuge of change | Aaron A. Abeyta's 'black sheep'
Plus: profiles, interviews, reviews, new books

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High Country News

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Editor's note

The West's messy intersections

A few weeks ago, I heard author Terry Tempest Williams deliver the keynote address at the annual SHIFT conference in Jackson, Wyoming. The conference, which *High Country News* sponsors, deals with the interesting, and at times messy, intersection of the West's conservation and recreation communities.

It's messy because the people who recreate on our public lands don't always agree on how they should be managed. Most SHIFT attendees agreed, for instance, that the half-billion acre federal estate should not be transferred to states and corporations. But allowing mountain bikes in wilderness? That's something worth scrapping over, as a packed crowd demonstrated at a raucous happy hour session.

Hundreds also crowded into the town's Center for the Arts to hear Williams, whose intimate and acclaimed memoir, *Refuge*, was published a quarter century ago. Since then, she has stood like a literary traffic monitor at the many uncomfortable intersections where the wild meets the human. And periodically she jumps into the flow herself: In February, she and her husband, Brooke, successfully bid on federal oil and gas leases near Arches National Park, only to have the Bureau of Land Management rescind them when the couple openly declared that they would not develop them.

In Jackson, Williams was both activist and author. Just minutes into her talk, she invited the 35 young conservationists in the conference's Emerging Leaders program to come up on stage and asked several to tell their own stories. The audience, perhaps expecting a more traditional wilderness sermon, squirmed a bit. But the storytellers validated Williams' conviction that the conservation community must listen to the next generation, since the planet's future lies in their hands. It was a memorable evening with an edge.

Readers will notice a similar edge in this special "Books and Authors" issue, which includes Williams' reflections about how her own feelings about the Great Salt Lake have evolved since she wrote *Refuge*. Though she laments the human-caused changes that have left the lake at its lowest recorded levels, she also embraces the ecosystem as beautiful, fluid and beyond control. And now, she says, it's in the hands of a new generation. Righteous indignation has mellowed into something more uncertain and humble.

Aaron Abeyta's essay, "Wilderness in Four Parts," also explores a changing narrative, this one about his family's deep roots in Colorado's San Luis Valley. As he gathers "fragments and words and stories" about his mysterious "black sheep" great-grandfather, he asks: "Can you spend an entire life forgetting the man that is your blessing and curse?"

By remembering his family, Abeyta is ultimately seeking his own place in the world, just as Williams does when she re-enters the baptismal waters of the Great Salt Lake. We invite you to wade into this special issue, to find your own place, and to explore the messy, fluid and mysterious West.

—Paul Larmer, executive director/publisher

The Long View

BOOKS & AUTHORS
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High Country News

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◀ **Gunnison Bay in the Great Salt Lake, with its salted shoreline and water made pink by colored algae and bacteria.** ALISHA ANDERSON

▼ **Victor "Cuba" Hernandez's summer trailer in the mountains of the Cruces Basin Wilderness, where he tends Abeyta family sheep.** STEVE IMMEL

DEPARTMENTS

On the cover

Author Terry Tempest Williams on the shore of the Great Salt Lake. ALISHA ANDERSON

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ABEYTA

BERRY

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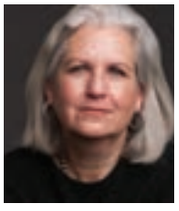


WILLIAMS

Aaron A. Abeyta is the author of five books and recipient of the American Book and Colorado Book awards. Abeyta is a professor of English at Adams State University, and he makes his home in Antonito, Colorado, where he also serves as mayor.

Michael Berry is a freelance writer based in Berkeley, California. For more than 25 years, he has covered science fiction and fantasy for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Follow @mlberry.

Gloria Dickie is a freelance science and environmental journalist based in Boulder, Colorado.

Melissa Hart is the author of two adult memoirs and the YA novel *Avenging the Owl*. She's happiest roaming Oregon's forests and rivers with her husband, 9-year-old daughter and their adventurous rescued terrier. melissahart.com

Jeremy Miller lives in Richmond, California. His recent work has appeared in *Harper's*, *Pacific Standard*, *Nautilus* and *Orion*.

Kathleen Dean Moore writes from a cabin on an Alaskan island during the summer. In the winters, she lives in Corvallis, Oregon, across the street from her former Oregon State University colleague, Michael Mix.

R. Kelley's online fantasy novel, *The Crack in the Ceiling*, is somewhere in the cyberspace slush pile at Amazon.com under the pseudonym Cody Kelly.

Jenny Shank's novel, *The Ringer*, won the High Plains Book Award. Her work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Guardian* and *McSweeney's*.

Terry Tempest Williams is the author of several books, including *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, and most recently, *The Hour of Land: A Personal Topography of America's National Parks*. She lives in Castle Valley, Utah.

FROM OUR WEBSITE: HCN.ORG

An unidentified man at the federal courthouse in Portland, where Ammon and Ryan Bundy and other occupiers of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge were found not guilty in October. BETH NAKAMURA/THE OREGONIAN

A shocking verdict for Malheur

In late October, a 12-person jury found Ammon and Ryan Bundy and five others not guilty of charges stemming from the armed occupation of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge earlier this year. The verdict shocked attorneys and observers on all sides of the high-profile case, which lasted six weeks. Critics of the occupation fear the verdict will embolden like-minded Westerners to use threats or violence to force federal land agencies to bend to their will. Cliven, Ryan and Ammon Bundy, among others, will answer for charges related to the 2014 Bunkerville standoff during a separate trial in Las Vegas, Nevada, this February. **TAY WILES**
MORE: hcne.ws/Bundys-acquitted

54 Percent of accuracy with which Arizona Department of Game and Fish observers can distinguish among three species of chub.

Three Southwest chub species were reclassified as one, spurring debate among scientists about species management. The fish have different protection levels under the Endangered Species Act: Only one is listed, while two await a decision. Their fate depends on how the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service interprets the reclassification. **ANNA V. SMITH** MORE: hcne.ws/chubby-fish

Understanding #DAPL

In early November, protests over the Dakota Access oil pipeline intensified as demonstrators were pushed back, out of the way of construction. To better understand the fight against the pipeline, it's essential to revisit history. In his essay "Reckoning at Standing Rock," Paul VanDevelder writes: "The conflict is less about the pipeline and oil profits and much more about the federal government's trust doctrine with the tribes." **PAUL VANDEVELDER**
MORE: hcne.ws/DAPL-roots.

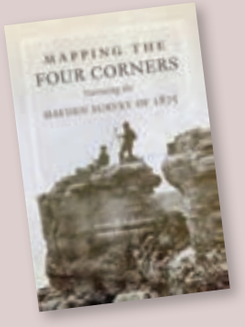
Greg Cournoyer, a Yankton Sioux, Steven Gray, a Cheyenne River Sioux, and Catcher Cuts the Rope of the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana lead a march to the Dakota Access oil pipeline route on the edge of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota in September. TERRAY SYLVESTER

Essential books for UNDERSTANDING THE WEST

These suggestions range from the 1700s to the present day. All are from Jeff Lee and Ann Martin, of the Rocky Mountain Land Library, unless otherwise noted.

Anza's California Expeditions by Herbert Bolton (University of California Press, 1930). These five volumes describe the first settlers of California, in 1774-1776. My own ancestors were on this legendary expedition, which was led by Capt. Juan Bautista de Anza.
–Al Tapia, reader

Mapping the Four Corners: Narrating the Hayden Survey of 1875 edited by Robert S. McPherson and Susan Rhoades Neel (University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), captures the long-unheard voices of survey members during the 1875 season, when they traveled through Hispanic settlements in Colorado and New Mexico, Mesa Verde, Hovenweep and the Hopi mesas.



Our Indian Summer in the Far West by Samuel Nugent Townshend (University of Oklahoma Press, 2016). The story of Townshend and photographer John George Hyde's 1879 tour of the American West: two Englishmen making sense of a region undergoing rapid changes.

Science fiction author Kim Stanley Robinson. WILLIAM MERCER MCLEOD

Science fiction's climate visionary

A conversation with Kim Stanley Robinson

BY MICHAEL BERRY

Among novelists who engage directly with environmental issues, Kim Stanley Robinson has few equals. The Davis, California, science fiction writer is the author of 17 novels that address issues of ecology and space exploration, climate change and alternatives to capitalism.

Raised in Orange County, Robinson started his career with the Three Californias Trilogy *(Ace / Tor, 1984-1990), which proposed three very different futures —apocalyptic, dystopian and utopian — for the state. He achieved wide critical and popular acclaim for his* Mars Trilogy *(Bantam Books, 1992-1996), a 2,000-page saga of the colonization of the Red Planet; individual volumes won Hugo and Nebula awards. Later books include the near-future* Antarctica *(Bantam, 1997), the alternate history* The Years of Rice and Salt *(Bantam, 2002) and* 2312 *(Orbit Books, 2012), featuring human habitats spread across the solar system.*

Robinson works both to engage his readership and warn them about the precarious health of the planet. His most recent novel, Aurora *(Orbit, 2015), describes the overwhelming challenges in maintaining a human-friendly ecological balance aboard a starship headed to another solar system. Last year, Del Rey Books published* Green Earth*, a one-volume revised compilation of his* Science in the Capital Trilogy *(Bantam, 2004-2007), which explores the politics of near-future natural disasters and climate change. Next year will see the publication of* New York 2140*, which is set in a Manhattan inundated by sea-level rise.*

High Country News *contributor Michael Berry recently met with Robinson at the author's home. This interview has been edited for space and clarity.*

High Country News Your *Mars Trilogy*, published in the mid-1990s, explored the idea of terraforming that planet — manipulating it for human habitation. What are your thoughts on that now, especially in light of billionaire inventor Elon Musk's recently announced plans for colonizing Mars?

Kim Stanley Robinson The actual project of going to and terraforming Mars is interesting, but the timeline for it I radically condensed for storytelling purposes. Really, the timeline of terraforming Mars is on the scale of *thousands* of years. Talking about it now is a way of talking about what we have to do here on Earth. It's a metaphor for what we have to do here, rather than an active plan or blueprint for (going to Mars) right now.

We've discovered that soil on Mars is

filled with toxic perchlorates and there isn't near as much nitrogen as planetologists thought. Also, when I wrote those books everybody in the scientific community was assuming Mars was dead. Now this remote possibility of microbial life underground on Mars is enough that all three of these things should slow down ideas of terraforming.

Musk's plan resembles my *Mars Trilogy* and earlier science fiction stories. What he proposed is not going to happen. It's a fantasy.

HCN Last year, your publication of *Aurora* apparently angered some fans by pointing out the unlikelihood of spreading humanity to another solar system and emphasizing the need to protect the one planet we live on. Why do you think some readers reacted so vehemently?

KSR Well, I pushed that button on purpose. I wanted to anger the crowd of people who seem so devoted to going to the stars, as if human destiny were to be defined by whether we become a star-faring civilization.

I thought that was wrong. I thought they were ignoring new data about the microbiome and our ecological realities in order to indulge in a fantasy, partly of escape, partly of expansion. It seems that for these people this is a secular replacement for religion, having to do with transcendence, admitting that there's probably not an afterlife, but if humanity were to last and to spread (to other stars), then one's species would then go on and on. Which would be satisfactory, as a kind of a secular afterlife for your descendants.

But it ignores that we're just a part of a larger ecology. We're completely implicated with Earth and its biosphere, to the point where we can't get off of it without very quickly getting sick in ways that can't be mitigated.

If you take the long term of *thousands* of years, maybe a technology could be built that would get people to other stars. But as I pointed out in *Aurora*, when you get to other planets and go around other stars, your problems have just begun. If the other planet is alive, you have some serious problems. If it's dead, you have to terraform, and that's a thousands-of-years project while you're still stuck in your starship. What I tried to do was to kill an idea and to refocus humanity's attention on Earth. It was a fairly intense project for me.

HCN *Green Planets* (Wesleyan University Press, 2014), the essay collection you edited with Gerry Canavan in 2014, addresses ecology and science fiction. How does science fiction teach people to think about the future, especially about climate change?

KSR It teaches about history, and that the present itself is this historical moment. When you read enough science fiction, you realize this is just one point in a historical flow where things could have been different. If something went different in the past, we'd have a different now. The things we do now are going to make anything from dystopia to utopia.

Every science fiction novel involves two ways of reading it. It's a true attempt to imagine a real future in detail, with thick texture. On the other hand, it's always metaphorical or allegorical. *2312*, for instance, is about the Year 2312 and what really might come to pass, but it's also about right now and the way we're changing ourselves biologically, and the social system of the rich and the poor.

We're completely implicated with Earth and its biosphere, to the point where we can't get off of it without very quickly getting sick in ways that can't be mitigated.

HCN Your next novel is *New York 2140*, coming out in March from Orbit. Can you give us a preview?

KSR There's been a radical (50-foot) sea-level rise, and the book has to do with coping. What I want to explore is the idea that the coming climate crisis will force us to invent a kind of post-capitalism, but that global capitalism will not let go of our social systems easily. It's entrenched, it's defensive, and it's incredibly powerful. What would (a new system) require in the way of political evolution or revolution? Some interesting radical economics coming out of the 2008 crash made suggestions as to how to recapture capital for people and for the biosphere, rather than for the famous one percent. So I tell that story. It's kind of a utopian history. *New York 2140* is a much more positive project than *Aurora*. I think humans are going to cope, and it's going to be a stimulus to some good new developments.

HCN What kinds of changes do you think might happen in the Western U.S. by 2140?

KSR If there was a 50-foot sea-level rise, we'd be underwater right here. This is 37 feet above sea level. I've thought about California with that kind of sea-level rise. People have said, "We'll dam the Golden Gate." Well, we're not going to dam the Golden Gate. They haven't thought it through. That's not going to work. We'll have to adjust to drownings of coastal structures.

In the Central Valley, (radical sea-level rise) would be an amazing disaster that we may indeed have to cope with. These extensive droughts we're experiencing would become worse, and warmer temperatures mean less snowpack. Because of the need to capture precipitation when it's not snow, what we'll want are the tule marshes back, to turn the Central Valley into a gigantic sponge, holding water back from going out the Golden Gate by a gigantic hydraulic system, partly ecological and partly mechanical. There's a California climate future that I haven't written that involves making the Central Valley a sponge and changing our industrial ag practices.

Our industrial agriculture is destructive. It's a profit-motive ag, not really for food or for people right now. That is going to have to change. It will be stressful. There will be a lot of anger and political controversy, but California's been really good so far. It's been cutting-edge, and it's been done by a multicultural society. So it's a place to be proud of currently, and there's hope that it could lead the way, and cope with the changing temperatures.

HCN In the face of daunting news about the degradation of our environment, how do you retain positivity?

KSR I think (optimism) is a necessary political position. It's a matter of will. I choose it as a way of saying it's important to keep working, to stay positive for the sake of our descendants. I do the things you need to. I keep a vegetable garden, compost, ride my bike, have photovoltaic (panels) on the roof. In general, I'm doing what suburban Americans ought to do, because we are the ones burning more than our fair share of energy on the planet.

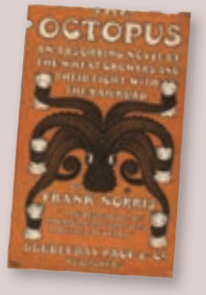
Permaculture is a necessary part of utopia, where utopia becomes ecological and agricultural and not just social. It keeps you grounded in the biosphere. I try to write about it and live by its guidance as much as I can.

I love the Sierra Nevada with all my heart. As I've gotten older, I've realized that you can't see everything on this earth, and it burns a lot of carbon to try. As a Californian, I get up to the Sierra Nevada, one of the great mountain ranges of the world, particularly if you want to backpack. It's purely recreational. It's not a sustainable action. But I think it informs my writing. □

The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions by Randolph B. Marcy (Skyhorse Publishing, 2014). Marcy, a captain in the U.S. Army, wrote this detailed guidebook in 1859 for Western pioneers, covering what to pack, which trails to take, cooking tips, and what Native American tribes travelers were likely to meet along the way. Marcy's guide immerses you in history's nitty-gritty details.

The Octopus by Frank Norris (Penguin, 1994). This novel, set in California and originally published in 1901, explains the role that railroads played in 1880, when opportunity turned to greed. Railroad laws still affect today's laws and policies in the West.

–Kim Brown, reader



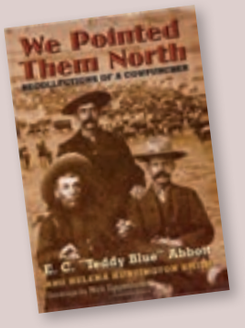
Diné Bahane': The Navajo Creation Story by Paul Zolbrod (University of New Mexico, 1987). Zolbrod's new translation renders the power and delicacy of the oral storytelling performance on the page through a poetic idiom appropriate to the Navajo oral tradition.

–Judy Perkins, reader

Ranch Life and the Hunting-Trail by Theodore Roosevelt (Bonanza Books, 1978). Roosevelt occupied his North Dakota ranch during that brief time of the real Old West, after the buffalo but before widespread fencing, when cowboys were widely employed to tend cattle and drive them to market. Remington's illustrations, created especially for this book, bring the characters to vivid life.

–Crista Worthy, reader

We Pointed Them North: Recollections of a Cowpuncher by E.C. Abbott & Helena Huntington Smith (Lakeside Press, 2012). Abbott, a cowboy during the boom cattle years between 1870 and 1890, was part of many a *Lonesome Dove*-like cattle drive from Texas to Montana. This wonderful 1955 book gives you a real feel for what life was like on the trail.



The Thunder Tree: Lessons from an Urban Wildland by Robert Michael Pyle (Houghton-Mifflin, 1993). This beautifully written memoir could be subtitled "The Making of a Naturalist." Pyle is one of the leading nature writers of today, but it was back in his childhood, along Denver's Highline Canal, that the die was cast. *The Thunder Tree* has become a rallying cry for the importance of nature in a child's life.

Shapeshifter

A conversation with Stephen Graham Jones

BY JENNY SHANK

Author and English professor Stephen Graham Jones in his book-lined office at University of Colorado in Boulder. ANTHONY CAMERA

Stephen Graham Jones has published more than 20 books and hundreds of short stories in genres ranging from literary fiction and horror to science fiction and crime. Among other honors, he's won a National Endowment for the Arts Grant and the Independent Publishers Multicultural Award. Jones, who grew up in West Texas, is currently a professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he lives with his family. His father is a member of the Blackfeet Nation, and Jones often accompanied him on childhood visits to the tribe's Montana reservation.

Jones' most recent novel, the tender, funny and fresh Mongrels *(William Morrow, 2016), tells the story of a boy growing up in an itinerant family of werewolves who travel the Southwest, moving whenever their lycanthropic behavior causes trouble. In December, the University of New Mexico Press will publish* The Fictions of Stephen Graham Jones*, a compendium of critical essays about his work. Jones said wryly, "It's scary to think about reading it. I don't know if I really want to know what's inside my head."*

HCN *contributor Jenny Shank recently spoke to Jones near his home in Boulder.*

High Country News You've said that you "got really tired of people asking in interviews, 'What's supposed to be Indian about this?' " and that in several books you've disguised elements that come from Native culture.

Stephen Graham Jones My book *Growing up Dead in Texas* (MP Publishing LTD, 2012) only has the word "Indian" once in it. But to me that book is so Indian. It's the life patterns that are Indian, not the skin tone or cultural heritage. It's a way of existing in the world, a world you don't always plug into the way you feel that you're supposed to.

HCN You've said, "American Indians so often get cast as the werewolf in so many stories." What do you mean by that?

SGJ The first time I saw this was in an episode of *CHiPs*, where Ponch and Jon get on the trail of this Native dude. He's typified like Indians often are on film, in denim jeans, a flannel shirt, and a headband. I guess I shouldn't wear a headband! (Laughs.) But they almost have the mystery solved, they decide the Indian dude is responsible, and they look up and he's a wolf — there's a wolf there where the Indian dude was standing. I've seen it in so many things, such as the movie version of *The Wolfen*. It has Edward James Olmos playing a Native dude, and he goes out and pretends to be a werewolf.

The reason that happens, I think, is because of the stereotype that Native people are super in tune with nature, and werewolves are super in tune with nature, so that elides them both.

I wrote *Mongrels* right after teaching Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (the Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel in which Jewish people during the Holocaust are depicted as mice). It made me think, how would an Indian get drawn in *Maus*? Of course, it would be as a wolf. That's just how people think of Indians.

HCN When your novels include explicit Native American characters or themes, how do you subvert the expected?

SGJ I once read an article called "The Homing Pattern in Native American Fiction." It documents the difference between Western novels and Native American novels. In Western novels like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, it's about one person rising up above the crowd to exceptionalize himself and say, "I matter, listen to me." Whereas in American Indian novels, they take an exiled or banished figure, starting out on the periphery of the community, and then that person spirals into the center of the community and finds wholeness by reintegrating with his culture. *Ceremony* (by Leslie Marmon Silko) and *House Made of Dawn* (by N. Scott Momaday) work like that. I felt that was a dangerous sort of essentialism to subscribe to because it presumes that the culture you're reintegrating with is automatically good. What if that culture is bad? To presume that all Indians are good and all non-Indians are bad is the same kind of stuff that they've laid on us all the time.

So I wrote *The Fast Red Road* (Fiction Collective 2, 2000) about a guy who's working as an indentured gaffer in the porn industry in Provo, Utah, and has to come home for his father's funeral. So he's doing that same pattern of cycling back into the community. But he gets to the center and finds out that his dad and this so-called Native community is a total sham and is corrupt.

HCN What do you consider to be the difference between *Mongrels* and "real horror"?

SGJ *Mongrels* is about family, life and coming of age. Horror takes as its main push to disturb someone, to make them not want to turn their lights off at night, to make them suspicious of everyone around them. Horror tries to unsettle you, whereas *Mongrels* tries to situate you in a family.

HCN Why do you enjoy writing horror?

SGJ I just like to hide around the corner and scare people. It's one of my favorite things in the world. At home, I love to put masks on and call the dog for a treat and scare the dog. (Laughs.) I just have that impulse. Horror fiction, unlike any other genre, can elicit a visceral response from the reader.

I think we need horror. We (humans) grew up on the savannah. Everything wanted to bite into the back of our skulls and kill us. The world was full of teeth. The world is getting more and more sterile — we're shining a light into all of the shadows. Nevertheless, we're programmed as a species to need those teeth in the darkness. Horror keeps us aware of the shadows. □

Come for the scenery; stay for the activism

Kathleen Alcalá shares insights from a climate oasis

BY MELISSA HART

"Ultimately, if we can't make sustainability work on Bainbridge Island, blessed with an abundance of resources, how can we expect it to work anywhere else?"

Kathleen Alcalá spent six years seeking answers to this question, hitching rides on fishing boats and tramping through vineyards and greenhouses. Her long graying hair disheveled by the wind, she knelt alongside clam diggers on the chilly beaches of Bainbridge Island, Washington, where she and her husband have lived for the past two decades, in a quiet home sheltered by Douglas firs. What she found on Bainbridge was a rich, deep history of food production nourished by the wisdom of generations — from the first inhabitants, the Suquamish Tribes, to the immigrants who came to farm and fish this small woodsy island 10 miles off the coast of Seattle.

Alcalá, who has master's degrees from both the University of New Orleans and the University of Washington and a BA in linguistics from Stanford, appears serene in the face of climate change. She's focused on action instead of hand-wringing, and believes that the collective knowledge of various cultures can help us protect temperate, water-rich regions like her island home, allowing them to remain habitable for as long as possible, by as many people as possible.

A novelist and author of the new nonfiction book *The Deepest Roots: Finding Food and Community on a Pacific Northwest Island*, Alcalá looks to the earliest island residents for clues about how to approach rising temperatures and vanishing snowfall. "The Suquamish understood what was going on with land and food and climate change around them," she says. "They knew there were cycles much bigger than any individual lifetime."

The history of farming in the U.S., she points out, has its own cycles, and we have long relied largely on immigrants to cultivate and harvest our food. Bainbridge is no exception. Croatian refugees and Native Americans have tended the fields. First Nations people from Canada came to pick berries, and Japanese Americans farmed until the government forced them into internment camps after Pearl Harbor was bombed.

Across the world, Alcalá says, people try to designate an "other," a scapegoat for social and political issues. "This has happened to the Mexicans over and over in the Western United States," she explains. "They tend to be more marginalized because it's easier than owning up to the things that the people in power have done. Even in our politics today, it's really fear-mongering, it's this notion that we should be afraid of these people."

The island's farmers and fisher folk, with their wealth of knowledge in land and water-use management, are the primary subject of *Deepest Roots*. A self-described "middle-aged author with a bad back," she studied those who tended the land before her and gleaned wisdom from neighbors who raise chickens, bees, sheep and heirloom vegetables, even while battling developers to preserve farmland. Inspired, she began to coax her own broccoli and zucchini plants from a rented raised bed. She became political, winning the battle to save a landmark neighborhood fir. And she acknowledged her responsibility to help prepare her community for the inevitable influx of people seeking arable land when heat and drought devastate other parts of the world. "We're not trying to exclude people from where we live," she says, "because I think that's exactly the opposite of what needs to happen."

Migration away from economic hardship and starvation to a more promising area of the world is nothing new, she reminds us. "Get to know your neighbors. Even if you don't share their politics, you might really need each other at some point." As an example, she cites partnerships between farmers and suburban Seattle homeowners that transform front-yard lawns into luxuriant rows of cabbages and lettuce and beans, which are then donated to meal programs and food banks. A nonprofit learning center called IslandWood brings Seattle schoolchildren to Bainbridge; photos show rapt students gazing into pond nets and plunging their hands into compost bins. Alcalá wants to create a similar sea-to-table program, allowing students to observe fishermen and women at work and enabling schools to serve seafood that kids have helped harvest. "And I'd really like to see pea patches and farm areas created closer to schools and homes," she adds.

Researching her book, Alcalá says, has turned her into a crusader for sustainability. Simply reading about the subject, she observes, is passive. "It's another thing entirely to give up an evening to go to a city council meeting and try to have input into whether or not we set aside land for agricultural use as opposed to development," she says. "My hope for this book is that people will come for the scenery and stay for the activism." □

JOVELLE TAMAYO

Uncommon Westerner

Name Kathleen Alcalá

Age 62

Hometown Bainbridge Island, Washington

Vocation Author, writing teacher, gardener and sustainability activist

Family background "My parents are from Mexico and came north during the Mexican Revolution with their families."

Sources of inspiration The Sonoran Desert in Southern California, where she grew up, and her current island home in the Pacific Northwest.

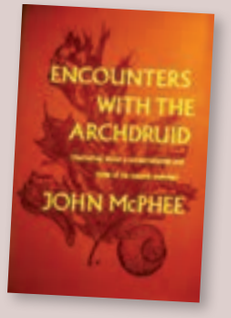
Why she became a writer "I grew up surrounded by the stories of my aunts and uncles from Mexico. Often they were stories with no endings. So I began to make up the endings, research the history, and write my own stories."

Favorite moments from researching her newest book "The most fun was suiting up and handling a beehive. A queen hatched on the beekeeper's hand as I watched, and he was thrilled. I also went to a sheep slaughter, the saddest thing, and my neighbor took me to dig geoducks. People not familiar with the giant clam think it is weird."

The Way it is: New and Selected Poems by William Stafford (Graywolf Press, 1999). There are many perceptive voices that celebrate the poetry of Western days and nights, but for us the poems of William Stafford (1914-1993) always come quickly to mind. His discerning eye ranges from Kansas to the Pacific Northwest. We'll keep coming back to his simple words, packing so much emotion and clarity.

Under the Banner of Heaven by Jon Krakauer (Anchor, 2004). One-quarter of Westerners are Mormons. This book describes how they ended up in the West, and the culture and influence they continue to have today.

–JoAnn Kalenak, HCN *subscriptions marketer*



Encounters with the Archdruid by John McPhee (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980) was first published in 1971, and it might just have radicalized anybody who read it 45 years ago. McPhee joins a rafting trip down the Colorado River that included David Brower, executive director of the Sierra Club, and Floyd Dominy, then chief of the federal Bureau of Reclamation. Dominy believed that almost every river would be better if tamed with a big fat dam, while Brower mourned Glen Canyon Dam, which created a stagnant Lake Powell.

–Betsy Marston, HCN *Writers on the Range editor*

Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape edited by Barry Lopez (Trinity University Press, 2006). Lopez and Debra Gwartney asked fellow writers to expand on common (and not so common) landscape terms, matching authors such as Barbara Kingsolver, Robert Hass and Luis Alberto Urrea with rich words like *tidepool, midden, buffalo jump* and *kiss tank*. The land comes alive in the pages of this one-of-a-kind book.

Grow: Stories from the Urban Food Movement by Stephen Grace (Bangtail Press, 2015). The urban agriculture movement has to be one of the most positive and exciting developments over the past years. Our absolute favorite is Grace's generously written story about Denver's urban farmers. It's about food, yes, but community, too!

The Walk by William deBuys (Trinity University Press, 2007). Why does the Western landscape affect us so deeply? Writers from N. Scott Momaday to James Galvin have shared their personal geographies, but we find ourselves returning to this book – a northern New Mexico memoir of home, community and the small patch of land that deBuys keeps walking through.

Oil and Water by Stephen Grace (UCRA Publishing, 2016) and **The Man Who Thought He Owned Water** by Tershia d'Elgin (University Press of Colorado, 2016) remind us that we all need to pay attention to who is doing what with the Colorado River if we want to have a sustainable future.

–Patricia Rettig, reader

Rocky Mountain Land Library connects readers and landscapes

A vision takes shape for rural and urban branches, book clubs and workshops

BY GLORIA DICKIE

At Buffalo Peaks Ranch in Colorado, a cluster of whitewashed buildings and tin-sided barns, aspiring and accomplished illustrators have gathered around the main house's front porch in camp chairs on a late summer morning. Clutching cream-colored sketching paper and blue enamel mugs filled with lukewarm coffee, they're participants in an illustrated field journal class. A cool breeze flips pages and coaxes the old rocking chair on the porch into motion. Down at the ranch's southwestern edge, past barbed wire fences and prairie dog burrows, the South Platte River bubbles by.

It's been eight years since Jeff Lee and Ann Martin first laid eyes on this ranch, built in 1862 on the golden plains of South Park, 90 miles southwest of Denver. For years, the couple, who met in 1986 while working at Denver's famed Tattered Cover bookstore, had been searching for a home for the Rocky Mountain Land Library — their "residential" library of more than 35,000 books, many dedicated to wild Western landscapes. Now, with a 95-year lease on the ranch from the city of Aurora, the library, which hosts monthly summer book clubs and workshops for poets, artists and naturalists, is slowly taking shape.

The ranch is a far cry from the project's inspiration — Gladstone's, the old "Harry Potteresque" residential library in Flintshire, North Wales, which Lee and Martin visited 20 years ago during a book-buying trip for the Tattered Cover. Unlike American libraries, it allows patrons to stay overnight in barebones dormitories on site, never far from the legendary book collection of the longtime Victorian prime minister, William Ewart Gladstone.

"We went away thinking, 'God, wouldn't that be wonderful if something like this was in the Southern Rockies,' " says Lee, now in his 60s. "We had always gravitated towards natural history books — books about the land."

For years, Lee and Martin visited properties all over Colorado, looking for a suitable home for the many thousands of books they had collected from bargain bins and donations, ranging from the usual suspects — paperbacks by Wallace Stegner and Ed Abbey — to rarities such as original clothbound volumes of Theodore Roosevelt's *Hunting Tales of the West*. But something was always missing; the place's connection to the West's history wasn't strong enough or the location wasn't right. Then, a friend recommended Park County, known for its investment in heritage tourism. Buffalo Peaks Ranch, located near the ghost town of Garo, was just what they had imagined: a place that reflected the region's cultural history— ranching, mining, Native American settlements — as well as its natural history. "It's not just nature that defines a land library," says Lee; "it's how people have interacted with the land over millennia."

Phase one of the renovations, now underway, will see the property's seven buildings converted into year-round lodging, workshop and classroom spaces, a welcome center and a commercial kitchen, with a number of themed library spaces — from ranching to women in the West — scattered throughout. The main focus right now is fundraising, says Lee, who says they need to raise about $6 million from private donors, federal and state grants, and membership fees. Already, they've received a $60,000 grant from the South Park National Heritage Area.

The project is partnering with the University of Colorado Denver's Graduate School of Architecture, whose students have come up with designs for the library as part of their coursework, and a pro bono architect. And for the past two summers, volunteers from the historic preservation nonprofit HistoriCorps have painted buildings and replaced three roofs.

The library is already looking to expand beyond the ranch, Lee tells me with soft-spoken enthusiasm, perched on a stool in its makeshift main room. Behind him, tables teem with railroad history tomes. Already, 3,000 books from the couple's collection are housed at Denver Water's Kassler Center southwest of the city, where they comprise the Waterton Canyon Kids and Educators Library. And just days earlier, Lee and Martin had found the perfect location for the final component of their vision — an urban branch in downtown Denver.

"It's the old Puritan Pie Company building in Curtis Park. It's just one of those beautiful old Denver factory buildings," he says. Though Curtis Park is gentrifying, the neighborhood has always been one of the most diverse in the city. "There's a very strong African American foothold there in both history and culture."

As part of what the pair dubs the "Headwaters-to-Plains" initiative, the Denver branch will focus on urban homesteading (beekeeping, gardens and backyard chickens), and feature a kids' nature library. Now, they have to raise another $1 million to get that branch fully up and running. "Philosophically, if we really want to tell the story of the land," says Lee, "having both the rural and urban is so important." □

The modest cluster of buildings at Buffalo Peaks Ranch houses the Rocky Mountain Land Library, a collection of books related to natural history and western landscapes. GLORIA DICKIE

New books for fall reading

"I've found my consolation in the Breaks, the ten thousand shades of blue in the sky, tree bark the color of dried blood, the squabbling of birds and the rotation of stars; poetry." -Allen Morris Jones, *A Bloom of Bones*

"I think all kids start out Hopi. They don't separate the real from the pretend, the living from the dead, the essence from its many forms. They see a fluidity to dogness: a rez dog, Clifford the cartoon dog, a stuffed dog, a boy barking like a dog, a hot dog." -Charlie Quimby, *Inhabited*

"I've spent more than half my life pointed northward, trying to answer private questions about violence and belonging and cold." -Blair Braverman, *Welcome to the Goddamn Ice Cube*

These quotes are from three of the new fall books I'm looking forward to reading, along with Brit Bennett's debut novel *The Mothers*, about secrets in a black community in Southern California, Steven Schulte's *As Precious as Blood*, a history of water in *HCN*'s Western Slope, Colorado, home, and wildlife biologist Bruce L. Smith's *Stories from Afield*.

Several longtime *HCN* contributors have new titles. Board member **Florence Williams** studies how the natural world revitalizes us in *The Nature Fix*. Fans of "Rants From the Hill," **Michael Branch**'s hcn.org blog on life in the Great Basin Desert, will relish *Raising Wild*. **Michael Engelhard** has two books: a memoir about his wildland travels, and a history of the relationship between polar bears and humans. Essayist **Aaron Gilbreath** describes the "journey of growing up in contemporary America" in *Everything We Don't Know*, while **Nick Neely**'s *Coast Range* explores the Pacific Northwest's geology and wildlife. And Bill McKibben recommends *Piano Tide* by **Kathleen Dean Moore**, "a savagely funny and deeply insightful novel of the tidepool and rainforest country she knows so well."

Here are some of fall's most promising titles, alphabetically by author. No publication month is shown for titles already available. **JODI PETERSON**

FICTION

The Bones of Paradise Jonis Agee, Morrow

The Angel of History: A Novel
Rabih Alameddine, Atlantic Monthly Press

The Legend of Jesse Smoke: A Novel
Robert Bausch, Bloomsbury

The Mothers: A Novel Brit Bennett, Riverhead

The Terranauts T.C. Boyle, Ecco

Good Morning, Midnight: A Novel
Lily Brooks-Dalton, Random House

The Underworld: A Novel
Kevin Canty, W.W. Norton & Company, March

Huck Out West: A Novel
Robert Coover, W.W. Norton & Company, January

Dodger Blue Will Fill Your Soul
Bryan Allen Fierro, University of Arizona Press

The Kid: A Novel Ron Hansen, Scribner

Monterey Bay: A Novel
Lindsay Hatton, Penguin Press

IQ Joe Ide, Mulholland Books

In the Not Quite Dark: Stories
Dana Johnson, Counterpoint Press

A Bloom of Bones
Allen Morris Jones, Ig Publishing

The Outside Lands: A Novel
Hannah Kohler, St. Martin's

Pull Me Under
Kelly Luce, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Shelter in Place Alexander Maksik, Europa

Piano Tide: A Novel Kathleen Dean Moore, Counterpoint Press, December

The Annual Big Arsenic Fishing Contest! John Nichols, University of New Mexico Press

Mammoth: A Novel
Douglas Perry, Amberjack Publishing

Inhabited Charlie Quimby, Torrey House Press

My Bad: A Mile High Noir
Manuel Ramos, Arte Público Press

Freebird: A Novel
Jon Raymond, Graywolf Press, January 2017

The Talker: Stories
Mary Sojourner, Torrey House Press, March 2017

Black Wave Michelle Tea, Amethyst Editions

NONFICTION, BIOGRAPHY, MEMOIR

The Grid: The Fraying Wires between Americans and Our Energy Future
Gretchen Bakke, Bloomsbury

Alaska Range: Exploring the Last Great Wild
Carl Battreall, Mountaineers Books

Raising Wild: Dispatches from a Home in the Wilderness Michael Branch, Roost Books

Welcome to the Goddamn Ice Cube: Chasing Fear and Finding Home in the Great White North Blair Braverman, Ecco

Through Early Yellowstone: Adventuring by Bicycle, Covered Wagon, Foot, Horseback, and Skis ed. Janet Chapple, Granite Peak Publications

The Earth is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West
Peter Cozzens, Penguin Random House

Losing Eden: An Environmental History of the American West Sarah Dant, Wiley-Blackwell

The Man Who Thought He Owned Water: On the Brink with American Farms, Cities and Food
Tershia d'Elgin, University Press of Colorado and Utah State University Press

Where the Wind Dreams of Staying: Searching for Purpose and Place in the West Eric Dieterle, Oregon State University Press

Coming of Age at the End of Nature: A Generation Faces Living on a Changed Planet
ed. Julie Dunlap and Susan A. Cohen, Trinity University Press

American Wild: Explorations from the Grand Canyon to the Arctic Ocean
Michael Engelhard, Hiraeth Press

Ice Bear: The Cultural History of an Arctic Icon
Michael Engelhard, University of Washington Press

Walking to Listen Andrew Forsthoefel, Bloomsbury

Everything We Don't Know: Essays
Aaron Gilbreath, Curbside Splendor

Black Elk: The Life of an American Visionary Joe Jackson Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Where Water is Gold: Life and Livelihood in Alaska's Bristol Bay Carl Johnson, Mountaineers Books

The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature J. Drew Lanham, Milkweed Editions

Yellowstone Ranger
Jerry Mernin, Riverbend Publishing

Not So Golden State: Sustainability vs. the California Dream Char Miller, Trinity University Press

Wild America: A Personal Celebration of the National Parks David Muench and Roly Smith, Rucksack Readers

Coast Range: A Collection from the Pacific Edge
Nick Neely, Counterpoint

The Peace in Peril: The Real Cost of the Site C Dam Christopher Pollon, Harbour Publishing

Through a Green Lens: Fifty Years of Writing for Nature Robert Michael Pyle, Oregon State University

The Northern Rockies: A Fire Survey and **The Southwest: A Fire Survey** Stephen J. Pyne, University of Arizona Press

The New Trail of Tears: How Washington Is Destroying American Indians
Naomi Schaefer Riley, Encounter Books

Wildlife Politics Bruce Rocheleau, Cambridge University Press, March 2017

Temperance Creek: A Memoir
Pamela Royes, Counterpoint Press

Migrant Deaths in the Arizona Desert: La vida no vale nada ed. Raquel Rubio-Goldsmith et al., University of Arizona Press

Turning Homeward: Restoring Hope and Nature in the Urban Wild Adrienne Ross Scanlan, Mountaineers Books

As Precious as Blood: The Western Slope in Colorado's Water Wars, 1900–1970
Steven C. Schulte, University Press of Colorado

Saving Wyoming's Hoback: The Grassroots Movement that Stopped Natural Gas Development Florence Rose Shepard and Susan Marsh, University of Utah Press

Stories from Afield: Adventures with Wild Things in Wild Places Bruce L. Smith, University of Nebraska Press

Defending Giants: The Redwood Wars and the Transformation of American Environmental Politics Darren F. Speece, University of Washington Press

Land of Enchantment: A Memoir
Leigh Stein, Plume

The Unsettlers: In Search of the Good Life in Today's America Mark Sundeen, Riverhead, January 2017

Underground Ranger: Adventures in Carlsbad Caverns National Park and Other Remarkable Places Doug Thompson, University of New Mexico Press

Beaver's Fire: A Regional Portfolio (1970-2010)
George Venn, Redbat Books

Babe in the Woods: Building a Life, One Log at a Time Yvonne Wakefield, Boldface Books

No Barriers: A Blind Man's Journey to Kayak the Grand Canyon Erik Weihenmayer and Buddy Levy, St. Martin's/Dunne

The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier and More Creative Florence Williams, W.W. Norton & Company, February 2017

Lassoing the Sun: A Year in America's National Parks Mark Woods, Thomas Dunne Books

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OWL: A YEAR IN THE LIVES OF NORTH AMERICAN OWLS
By Paul Bannick
217 pages, hardcover: $34.95.
Mountaineers Books, 2016

Owls, with their nocturnal and enigmatic habits, are often seen as otherworldly – even sublime. Paul Bannick's photographs in *Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls* offer an enlightening look at 19 species in Canada and the U.S.

Bannick captures the elusive raptors in moments of both action and repose. In one photo, a tiny northern pygmy-owl pulls its prey, a large bat, into its nest. In another, a juvenile great gray owl awkwardly clings to a tree while attempting to learn how to fly, its large yellow eyes staring at the camera. There are striking shots of birds in full flight, particularly one of a snowy owl on a snow-white background.

Bannick's writing intertwines stories about his personal encounters with owls with information about their natural history. He writes, "Since owls live in nearly every habitat in North America, their stories are the stories of our natural landscapes." **ANNA V. SMITH**

WEB EXTRA See more Paul Bannick owl photos at **hcn.org**.

Snowy owls commonly winter along coastlines where they pursue seabird or rodent prey from the tops of driftwood. PAUL BANNICK

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David R. Wilson | Aliso Viejo, CA
Kent Winterholler | Park City, UT
Edith Zagona | Boulder, CO

High profile visitors

In September, we hosted "On the Wild Road," our inaugural tour for *High Country News* Travel. The trip, which was co-sponsored and organized by Seven Directions Tours of Santa Fe, took a small group on a whirlwind tour to places like Yellowstone National Park, the Wild Animal Sanctuary in Denver, the Raptor Center in Wyoming, and a wild horse management center in Wyoming, with 10 percent of the proceeds going to the sanctuaries and preserves. Trip participants got to have dinner with *HCN* Publisher **Paul Larmer**, and **Brian Calvert**, our managing editor.

Trip photographer **Jim O'Donnell** described the experience: "Along the way we met with biologists, educators, wildlife sanctuary and preserve operators. … This was an opportunity to get a better handle on the challenges faced by people working to protect wildlife and to find a way to become a better wildlife activist." See O'Donnell's website for photos: www.aroundtheworldineighty-years.com/wildlife-conservation-tourism. And thanks again to everyone who participated. We hope to do another trip, so stay tuned.

A big thanks to everyone who stopped by our Paonia headquarters in October. It was a wonderfully diverse assortment. **Liz** and **Clair Roberts**, who were on their way to a National Park Service ranger get-together, have been subscribers since 1976, but this was their first tour. **Jana Milford** and **Rick Adcock** of Boulder, Colorado, also toured the office while visiting **Laurie Milford**, *HCN*'s development director. Colorado Sen. **Michael Bennet** and congressional candidate **Gail Schwartz** took a break from the campaign trail to chat before grabbing a bite in town.

Eight students from a sculpture graduate seminar at the University of Colorado-Boulder came by to see how an issue gets made, and a group of students from the High Desert Center, an educational program that offers a residential gap-year program, visited *HCN* during a tour of Paonia led by our former publisher, Ed Marston. The students — some home-schooled, others recent high school graduates — came from around the country and were excited to hear about the magazine from our Writers on the Range editor, Betsy Marston.

In late October, our little office turned into a music venue, when we hosted an impromptu concert by **Odell Fox**, a bluegrass band from Austin, Texas. They played a few acoustic tunes for us before their Paonia performance, giving our ears a treat, as well as giving our eyes a much-needed break from our computer screens. Thanks to all our friends for stopping by!

Lastly, a correction: In the elections issue (*HCN*, 10/3/16) our story "Western races to watch" implied that there was a governor's race in Colorado this year. The seat is not up for election; we regret the error.

—Lyndsey Gilpin, for the staff

The band Odell Fox treated the office to a few tunes while they were traveling through Paonia, Colorado. BROOKE WARREN

FEATURE BY
TERRY
TEMPEST
WILLIAMS

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY ALISHA
ANDERSON

The Lost Daughter of

The cure for anything is salt water:

SWEAT

It is hot. Alisha Anderson and I have just passed the Golden Spike National Historic Site on our way to the *Spiral Jetty*. Alisha is a former student of mine from the Environmental Humanities Graduate Program at the University of Utah. She is a woman in love with Great Salt Lake, 28 years old, the same age I was when I sought solace from this inland sea. We are on a pilgrimage on this Labor Day weekend to chart the changes of a capricious body of water.

From the corner of my eye, a flash of wings: A burrowing owl has just landed on a barbed wire fence post. We stop. Its yellow eyes could burn grasses with its stare; we blink before it does. These small diurnal predators with their long spindly legs are ground-dwelling tricksters. Once inside their mounds, their calls register as rattlesnakes, mimicking the dry shaking of their tails: A warning, "Do not enter." A second owl, hidden in the sage, flies out and meets the first on top of their mound. To me, these are the signature species of the Great Basin.

I am home.

It has been 25 years since *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* was published, a quiet book about the rise of Great Salt Lake in the 1980s and the deaths of my mother and grandmother from cancers caused by what I believe was radiation fallout, from nuclear bombs tested in the Nevada desert.

Much has changed since then. The record high lake level of 4,211.85 feet — reached in January 1987, the month of my mother's passing — has fallen to drought so severe that the North Arm near Promontory Point hit a historic low of 4,189.00 feet, breaking the previous record of 4,191.35 feet, set in 1963.

The flooding lake that I knew has become the shrinking lake that Alisha knows. We are both Mormon women drawn to water, seeking solace from the cities that raised us to conform. I

the Oceans

sweat, tears or the sea. –Isak Dinesen

have left my religion; Alisha embraces it. Both of us pray to the beauty of creation. What binds us together is change. Climate change: two words that were not in my vocabulary when I wrote *Refuge,* in 1983.

The lake has shrunk from roughly 3,300 square miles in 1988 to less than 950 square miles today. One could say this is its cyclic nature; Great Salt Lake has risen and fallen for millennia. But that is only partially true. Researchers show that the lake has dropped an additional 11 feet from pre-settlement times due to our anthropogenic thirst for the fresh waters that feed it. And we are still not sated. Consider the hare-brained Bear River Diversion Plan, which is tied to the construction of other regional water projects — like the Lake Powell pipeline, which promises Utah's water to China — and you begin to see the craziness of politics in Utah. Add climate change, which is exacerbating drought in the American West, and you wonder whether we will come to our senses and embrace water conservation, or hasten the demise of this dying lake in a withered basin.

In the 1980s, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* was underwater. When I visited this iconic work of land art for the first time close to a decade ago, it was newly exposed, glistening with salt crystals. Today, it is a black spiral made of basalt stones, contrasting with a white lakebed, baked, cracked and folded from the heat.

Alisha has spent the past year walking the boundaries of this disappearing lake. Like Smithson and Nancy Holt, she is a land artist, only instead of creating spirals and *Sun Tunnels* on the salt flats, she creates ephemeral art that belongs to the act of creation itself. She is not concerned about who will see it. Her work is more than an artist's engagement with the world; it is ceremony, and it honors the land itself.

Last year, Alisha lived near Willard Bay on the edge of Great Salt Lake. Every morning and evening, she walked the dike that held the water, an invocation and benediction of each day. When she learned that the dike she was walking on had been made from the stones and shards that had survived through time from the ancient village of the Fremont People who lived there, perhaps even their very bones, she turned her shock and outrage into art. One winter day after a snowstorm, she carried a bucket of red powder — sandstone she had crushed with a mortar and pestle — onto the dike and created a pictograph of her own, in homage to the ancient artists whose work still remains in rock alcoves above the lake.

"We are walking our choices," Alisha says.

She turns and points to what appear as islands on the horizon — Antelope, Fremont, Gunnison and Dolphin — and tells me they are no longer islands at all, but bodies of land now connected to the mainland. Gunnison Island is home to a nesting colony of white pelicans. What do we call an island that is no more? A *notland*? A *peninsuland*? We traverse a reshaped territory, but it is nothing the Great Basin hasn't witnessed before.

As we walk to the *Spiral Jetty*, other pilgrims walk with us. There is no small talk. I hear fragments of conversations with words like "entropy" and "apocalypse" and "drought" wafting on the hot dry wind. When we reach the center of the spiral, I hold the same question I held 25 years ago in the pages of my book: "How do we find refuge in change?"

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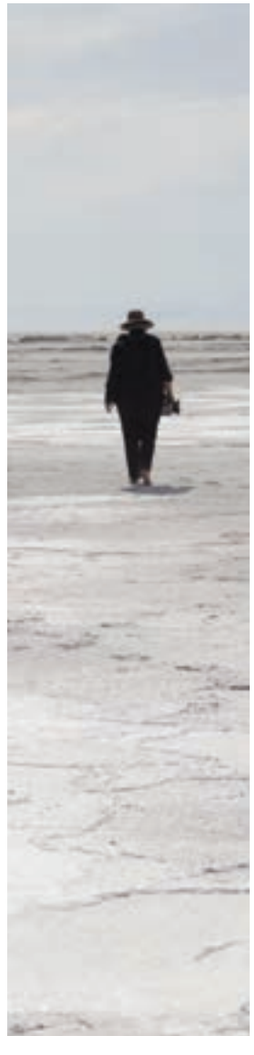
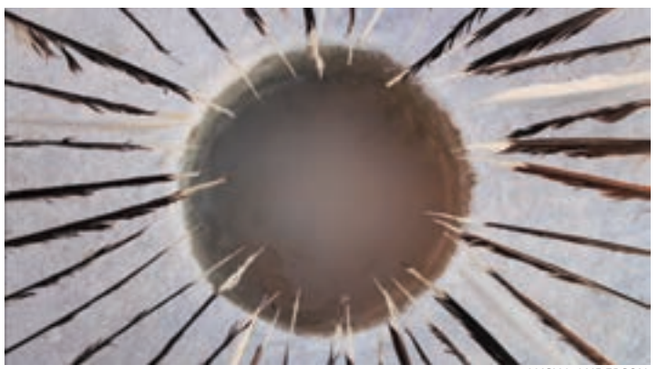


TEARS

Alisha tells me that water from Great Salt Lake is heavier than regular water, especially the water from the North Arm near Gunnison Island, where it is 27 percent to 28 percent salt. "I know, because I had to carry it," she says. Several gallons of lake water slosh in glass bottles in the backseat of her car, an essential element of her next artistic ritual. Gilbert Bay on the South Arm of the lake closest to Salt Lake City is 13 to 15 percent salt. It's on the other side of the railroad causeway that splits Great Salt Lake in half.

We, too, are vessels of salt water. Our tears viewed under a microscope are crystallized salt. Wet tears are composed of proteins, enzymes, oils and antibodies suspended in salt water. They lubricate and protect our eyes, even as they flood our system with chemicals that release our emotional pain and stress. Rose-Lynn Fisher photographed more than 100 tears through an optical microscope for her work, *The Topography of Tears*. She says that tears of sorrow and tears of joy have different molecular structures and chemical compositions: "Like a drop of ocean water, each tiny tear drop carries a microcosm of human experience."



ALISHA ANDERSON

"... Sculpt a basin in the earth. An area of land marked by the rise of mountains and the fall of valleys. An area where water drains in, not out ..."

—Alisha Anderson creating a land art sculpture at the Great Salt Lake, as seen in her video *lacustrine: relating to a lake.* See the video at hcne.ws/long-view

Throughout the years of my mother's dying, I felt as though I was drowning in salt water, from my own tears and a rising inland sea. I now see Great Salt Lake not as a landscape of grief, but as a place of exposure, an amplification of our own state of mind. Henry David Thoreau called Walden Pond "Earth's eye," a mirror of our own nature. "How deep is Walden Pond?" he asked, and he answered, "As deep as we are. … Some people say it is bottomless." I feel the same way about this lake of salt and brine and floating islands.

What is water and what is mirage in times of drought?

Three white birds walk the lakebed ahead of us. At first glance, I think they are storks, but storks don't live here. I look again. Pelicans, though they don't look right. Their bills and gular sacs are white and salt-encrusted, lacking the vibrant orange of mating season. Their pot bellies, usually padded with honeycomb spaces of air that allow them to remain buoyant in the water, are gone. They appear to be suffering from starvation and exposure. They appear to be walking toward death.

Alisha and I wonder if the they have stopped here because they don't have enough energy to fly to their colony on Gunnison Island. Later, friends at the Division of Wildlife Resources tell us that 25 percent of the pelicans born on the island this year have died. Coyotes are a new threat, walking on drought-exposed lakebed to the island. They eat the eggs and kill some of the young, scaring others off the nest prematurely, into the water or into the air for a short downward flight to Promontory, where there is no fresh water. The pelicans we watch today are refugees of the drought, unable to fly back to Gunnison Island or fly east to reach the fresh water where their parents feed.

The young pelicans seem conscious of their predicament. Beyond them, dotting the salt flats from the *Spiral Jetty* to the water's edge, at least a half a mile away, we encounter their future: the scattered piles of feathers of dozens and dozens of dead pelicans, their juvenile wings splayed across the sand like crucifixes, their chests hollowed out by ravens.

There is a sentence from *Refuge* that haunts me still: "*If I can learn to love death then I can begin to find refuge in change*." I have not learned to love my mother's death or my grandmother's death or my brother's death or the deaths of places that have been fouled by oil and gas development and greed. I will not learn to love death until, perhaps, it is my own, and, like a pelican, I find final relief in a desert of pain. But I have learned to honor death and not fear it. I have learned to trust the process of death and the growth rings that follow each passing. And the certainty of death has opened me to the inevitability of change, which is now, ironically, the only fixed point on my emotional map. I can learn to love change.

The surging life that still flocks to Great Salt Lake is a stay against death. For millennia, millions of birds and hundreds of species have returned to this remnant of Lake Bonneville. This year is no exception: Drought, in fact, has been a boon for some species. Last fall, Alisha went out with biologist John Luft of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to survey the brine shrimp harvest and to count eared grebes on the lake. The result of their aerial survey: 5 million birds in migration. The elegant grebes, with a swatch of gold on their cheeks, give up their feathers in a grand molt. While they wait for their feathers to grow back, they feast on Great Salt Lake brine shrimp and flies. The shrinking lake increases the concentration of birds and brine. It's a feeding frenzy. And then, in a moment of collective recognition and urgency, millions of eared grebes rise in the middle of a November night and continue on their journey south.

Tears of joy. Tears of sorrow. Tears of timeless reunion. All of these tears have been examined, photographed and named by scientists. But, even as flocks of turgid grebes pulse through the night sky, a band of desiccated white pelicans walk like pale monks in the desert, unable to shed tears.

THE SEA

The American West is on fire. Smoke obscures the edges of Great Salt Lake. A surreal landscape is now a dreamscape. Alisha and I separate, each seeking our own solitude. We walk away from the *Spiral Jetty* with space between us in the

direction of the white pelicans toward the sea of salt. We walk the lakebed for what seems like hours in the bald heat of the afternoon; I feel my age. Diaphanous clouds sweeping across the sky create a veil of shadows on the pastel landscape of mountain ranges and floating islands and pink water in a bloom of algae. How still this place.

In 1987, I could never have imagined walking this lakebed for a mile until I could reach Great Salt Lake's edge, or following pelicans on land. I had only seen them bobbing on the surface of the waters of the Bear River Bird Refuge, scooping up minnows in their great pouches and throwing back their heads to swallow.

Now, I take off my shoes and walk behind them, as they stoically place one webbed foot in front of the other, leaving tracks like braids on the cracked salt beds. The surface is hard with glinting quartz crystals that jut like razors. I squint to see. I step around another pelican carcass, this one with its head pulled apart from its body. Someone has scratched "S O S" in the salt bed.

I am desperate to get to the lake. Salt puddles spaced every three feet or so now warm my feet. I sink to my ankles, and then, pulling out, find my feet once more on hardpan. Up ahead, the lakebed has peeled back like old paint, brittle to the touch. Farther out, the surface reveals squiggly lines that look like sutures on skulls, until the sutures morph into cobwebs, and the white network of salt becomes lace. Now, close to the lake's edge, I enter a conflict zone of something equivalent to tectonic plates, some rearing up like miniature mountain ranges. And then, finally, Great Salt Lake appears on the horizon, no longer a mirage but an immense mirror. Shards of salt crystals break down to the consistency of sugar snow under my feet until a shin-deep line of sea foam forms a gateway to silky pink waters. I shed my clothes and enter.

The warm water deepens gradually, until, maybe a half mile out, it touches my chin. I lean forward and surrender, allowing myself to be held. I float on my back, looking up at the sky. My body and the body of this lake are still one. I am of this place. So little has changed in this octave of time between flood and drought. Except for this: The years that once held my grief have dissolved. I have surpassed my mother's age when she died. And I am approaching my grandmother's age when she mentored me with birds.

Without thinking, I decide to baptize myself, by the authority invested in me — not by a god, not by the patriarchy, but by my own seasoned spirit, with the lake as my witness. I disappear underwater, total immersion. And when I rise, I laugh out loud at my stupidity. I have just violated the first rule of swimming in Great Salt Lake: Keep your head above water. The salt burns my eyes. I cannot see, nor can I rinse out the salt with freshwater. I turn toward what I think is the direction of the shore and walk blind. It is my own ceremony in the name of trust. Slowly, the burning subsides and my vision returns.

Alisha is walking toward me, and she is beautiful. For her, the lake is not a vanishing presence, but a guidepost for what is to come. She has been photographing the circle of posts she left as an offering in the salt bed last fall. One now leans forward in the gesture of a bow. Alisha's work is ephemeral by design. And as a woman comfortable in her Mormon faith, yet uncomfortable with the cultural expectations placed on her as a woman, she seeks both isolation and connection in this enigmatic landscape. "What if the question is not how we own a place," she says, "but how does a place own us?"

Alisha bends down to touch the salt crystals and the light on her face is dazzling. Her hands cradle the crystals, and then she returns them to their place. She is not my mother or my grandmother, but she offers me the refuge and courage of women who dare to live by their own authority, trusting their instincts and following their calling to create beauty in the midst of despair for another generation.

What I didn't know when I was writing *Refuge* and what I continue to try to understand now is that we will survive our own personal losses; they are ultimately what give us our voice. I know they gave me mine. But the losses of the larger world, call it the pain of a grieving Earth, threaten our sanity and survival. These losses of species and landscapes, we must face

The warm water deepens gradually, until, maybe a half mile out, it touches my chin. I lean forward and surrender, allowing myself to be held.

together with an open heart. *Grief dares us to love once more*. Attention is our prayer. Engagement is our vow. The only way I know how to proceed at this moment in time is to walk with the pelicans and not fear where they are leading us. And to follow the spirit of a young woman who scatters sandstone powder on snow in remembrance and restitution of our place in the world, ephemeral as it is. Alisha is my guide now, the artist, the alchemist, the believer in ceremony who is calling a different future into being. □

FEATURE BY AARON A. ABEYTA | PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE IMMEL

Wilderness in Four Parts,

or, Why We Cannot Mention My Great-Grandfather's Name

Victor "Cuba" Hernandez tends Abeyta family sheep in snow squall on the Taos Plateau, en route back to Mogote, Colorado.

I.

The snow came early in 1949. It seems a miracle that my father, then just a boy, would be allowed to ride 17 miles, through a blizzard, so that he and my *abuelito* might rescue the herd. There is no magic to the way sheep die in a blizzard. It is not from the cold. They huddle together for warmth, their bodies like pills in a bottle, and the snow falls and the sheep do not move. They suffocate beneath a slow avalanche of accumulated snow. Even when the snow is at their eyes, the sheep remain motionless as windows, witness to their own demise but patient, a primal faith that their shepherd will save them.

Even at 12 years old, you take note of death around you. If you live on a ranch for any period of time, you will learn the ways things die; a calf dies near a pile of concrete at a fence line in the middle of a June prairie, bitten by a rattlesnake. As a grown man, you will still hear the mama cow cry into a bright, cloudless day — loss' eternal echo. You will inherit a racehorse named Master Bars from a family friend and marvel at the animal's height and elegance, but you will struggle to understand why, come winter, despite the snow everywhere, the animal refuses to eat the same hay as the other animals. The most beautiful animal we'd ever seen died on a January night. He was not beautiful in death, a frozen emaciated corpse, 18 touchable ribs arching into the January day. The lambs abandoned or sat upon by their mothers will be placed in a collective memory. The lambs that survive jump and play in the March mornings to heal those watching. You will remember all the calves born into snow banks, their bodies frozen within minutes, so motionless you might swear they were made of wood or of ice. There will be Suffolk rams bloated and green at the edge of alfalfa fields; a saddle horse mistaken for a bear; a semi tractor-trailer that didn't slow down as the herd of sheep crossed the road to water; a vandalized stock tank releasing 35,000 gallons, turning the earth around the trough to a mud so deep and thick that seven cows and one calf would die there — their still-living eyes being eaten by crows. You will remember how your father fell to his knees in the very same mud and gave the calf CPR, and you will feel shame for feeling relief when he finally gives up.

In the regular world, it wouldn't make sense to send a 12-year-old, on horseback, into a blizzard, for a 17-mile ride to the high country, but to all of us who know death so well, it does. It is our job — thankless and necessary — to keep death at bay. This is why my father and his father saddled up in the 4 a.m. dark of a late September, the moon a vapid pearl behind the storm clouds, and they rode off toward the west, toward a herd of sheep that would all suffocate to death if they did not do so.

My Great-Grandfather's Name

My *bisabuelo* abandoned a wife and four children. The oldest boy — an 8-year-old — was my *abuelito*, Amos. He tells of how cold the house was. He recounts the trains that passed on their journey north, bellies of coal brimming black as burnt-out suns, the trucks of the gondolas rocking along the standard-gauge line, the slow and heavy clatter of a passing train, a noise receding in a drawn-out minor key. There, the boy hunted for fallen coal in the gray ballast that was the track bed. I imagine how each piece of found coal was equal parts joy and resentment. The older man I knew would not have come home until the bag was full. That black bituminous load upon his shoulder was a burden that even time did not lift. My grandfather was made of stone, and my awe of him was only tempered by a greater fear. There is some speculation that, perhaps, I have inherited his shoulders.

My great-grandfather was named Serafin — a name treated as sin. Fragments of words and stories of him have fallen to the floor and been collected in a dustpan of partial stories, memories and impossible clues that were set to flame by anger. He abandoned his family so completely that my grandfather, whose middle name was Serafin, chose an absolute deletion of his father as vengeance.

II

the elk calf

i am looking for scattered sheep in the wilderness
the herder has fallen ill i am on foot the horse
is in the wind the horse is smoke the horse is pollen
the horse is ghost and the dogs have no loyalty to me

i am walking the meadows of rincon bonito
the old men call the spruce at the meadow's edge
los brazos translated the name means arms but
the ancient meaning is shadow and silence

i must enter the spruce my abuelito's
voice tells me i must get the count we must
know how many have died how many will not
return to the llanos south of home we must
know how much of our winter work
has been lost here in this late june

i will not find every sheep
it has been too long the herder
sick for five days i am only eleven
but i know what death is i have
seen the violence of what
dogs can do the neck wounds that
only coyotes make

i imagine the calf female
weigh her with my eyes
forty pounds i tell myself
the clearing is small no grass
small bits of bark twigs dark as morning dark
spruce needles the gold of dying things
cling to the still wet animal her amniotic sac
a yellow shawl on her shoulders ears wet
the placenta and cord at her nose

i pray to God silently
that i am allowed to witness this
pray that the cow elk
is only at the spruce edge of the forest
her large and sleek body somehow brought
into the safety of a shadow
human eyes cannot penetrate
i pray because that is what my abuelita
has taught me to do
pray that my being here this accident
will not mean the death of this animal

i dare not touch what
my touch will doom for having touched

as a man i carry this anger it is
untraceable yet i know my father taught it to me
with his blood with his stories he loved
all of us enough to teach us not to trust
even so his eyes have in them the dark well of mercy
this vine of flower is watered by fire and it is my life

beyond the newborn elk calf
the spruce drop down a slight slope
light enters in razors of dust pillars of gold

at the edge of the clearing there are
six sheep buried in the duff their bodies
bloated bellies green and blue
necks broken

Sheepherders have an undefinable profound faith; they trust that even in the darkest moment that deliverance will find them.

i am eleven the horse is
in the wind and the dogs
have no loyalty there are
two ravens at the edge
of the trees the invisible
magpies are crying into the day

i look back toward the elk calf
i do not know what to do i
am alone i pray because that
is what i have been taught to do

i pray for myself i pray
for the count and perhaps i
pray that too much death will
not enter into my life *i must*
have prayed for something like that

o dear and brutal day
do not seep into my young heart

dear Lord and dear Saint Francis
look over the newborn elk calf
may her mother hear her chirp
may her mother lift her head and
run toward the sound and may
all living things that have not
yet done so dear Lord
may they suckle

o dear and brutal day
whose light is pillars through dark
arms of spruce may the horse
return to camp and may the dogs
always be loyal

o dear and brutal day
here where i stand at the edge of
death and birth protect me

o small voice that was me
a thousand years ago tell me
which way the bear has gone and
lead me away toward safety
and living sheep small voice
that was me so long ago let me
sing later let me not know too
much anger let me sing forgiveness

remind me o small voice
that my father has sent me here alone
because he loves me and understands
that men must know their fear
if they are ever to love

dear and brutal day
heal the herder and lead
the horse home lead too
the mother elk to her calf
lead her to lick the newborn clean
lead her to eat placenta and cord
lead her to swallow the danger
the scent of these things brings

my abuelita has taught me to pray
she tells me our faith is made of
three pillars prayer penance
and action that there are eight
types of literature in the bible
this is one of them she has
taught me to pray

i would give away most anything
to hear her voice again i would
give away words and anger
i would give away fear and joy
i would give away this abyss between
life and death i would
give away this spruce and
every wilderness to
have her lead me in prayer
just one more time

i am just a boy
she died the winter before

i ask her to ask God to
save the elk calf i did
not dare touch i ask her
to walk me back to the
open meadow and i ask
that the count not grow
too high or too heavy
for my young body to bear

III.

When the snow began that September, the herd was near Rivera's, a place the herders would go for wine, whiskey, and stories of bears, coyotes and hand-caught brook trout.

Sometime after sun-up, my *abuelito* and my father reached the Los Pinos River, 11 miles from home. From there, the horses would have to climb six miles to the northern end of a great meadow, where the sheep were trapped by still-falling snow.

The herder, Fidelito, knew the snow was racing the flock he was paid to tend. He saddled the animals and packed the camp in a rush, covering nothing. He pushed across the meadow, moving north toward a crest of great pink-and-green rocks and a small stand of aspen — the only windbreak. The herd would not travel any further. He worked the herd between two house-size rocks and let them rest among the aspen where the snow wasn't as deep, to wait for the snow to stop or help to arrive. Sheepherders have an undefinable profound faith; they trust that even in the darkest moment that deliverance will find them. Two feet of snow had fallen, the sky still winter chalk, but Fidelito knew that my grandfather had already crossed the black ribbon of Los Pinos River water and that the horse would carry him to this promontory at the edge of a great meadow in the center of a greater wilderness in the midst of an even greater storm, and that somehow they would prevail.

My Great-Grandfather's Name

Before he took the title from Jess Willard in 1919, Jack Dempsey was known as Kid Blackie. He'd make his money fighting in

Andrew Abeyta, son of Alfonzo, holds an orphan lamb after a 2015 snow storm that left 26 ewes dead.

saloons, in makeshift rings or on warehouse platforms. The legend known as the Manassa Mauler was born just a few miles from my hometown. Even before he was champion of the world, people knew he was not to be quarreled with. To fight him was a stupidity reserved for unfortunates unaware of Dempsey or his reputation. Locals knew to steer clear of his taunts and bravado — bait to separate men from their paychecks.

Sometime after my *abuelito* passed away, I received a call from a distant relative who was working on a family tree. He'd come to the portion of the tree that forced forgetting had carved out: my grandpa Amos.

I told him that my grandpa was a five-term sheriff of Conejos County, who'd been shot twice by a man made mad by *brujas* — the first shot grazing the center of my *abuelito*'s skull just above the bridge of his nose; the second entering below the sternum, following the curve of a rib and exiting at the spine. I told him how, afterward, my *abuelito*'s right leg was never right, how I tended to stare at the jagged, pale, soft pink flowered scar in the middle of his back as he shaved over a kitchen sink overlooking the ranch he'd built from hard work, anger and resentment. I said he was the toughest man I have and will ever know.

Not surprised, the man asked if I knew how the rest of the family thought my great-grandfather a hero of sorts. He recounted stories his father had told to him; the admiration in his voice was audible. He told me of the time my *bisabuelo* fought Dempsey in a potato cellar one late August day in the voice of someone who'd been there.

Saw him fight once. That's why that man hired him, because he was stronger than hell. It sure was hot that day, humid too. End of August and all the people down at the cellar had just been paid. Big thick clouds were over the mountains. Far-off lightning and thunder like it was coming toward the end of the world. I suppose it was right around evening. Most of those men had been loading hundred-pound sacks of potatoes all day, the loading docks were stacked with them, like a fortress of burlap, roots and dark earth. Stanley Barr said he was worth two men, the way he could work. Your great-grandpa was younger then, stronger too.

He paused, the phone was humming slightly. There was a great distance in that silence. I remembered it from my youth and knew it to be inherited and then taught. Then he resumed.

Everyone knew Jack before he was world champ. He'd left Manassa a few years before, but he'd come around every now and then. He was like us, poor as worn-out shoes. He made his money in the bars and potato cellars. We all knew that's why he was there that evening. He said he couldn't sing or nothing like that, but he'd knock the tar out of any man who put

Alfonzo Abeyta, son of Amos, during shearing, above. Above right, Andrew Abeyta and grandson Adrick during shearing in 2015.

up a few dollars. Jack was meaner than hell. He punched like a mule kicks. No one was stupid enough to take him up on his offer. We'd all seen what he could do. Everyone just laughed and shook their heads. No fool would fight Jack. That sort of stupidity was reserved for miners and prospectors. Jack went on for a few minutes and most of the men had stopped working.

Your great-grandpa was stacking hundred-pound sacks near the top of the cellar; he had no patience for men who didn't know how to work.

Everyone was just standing around taking a break as Jack was talking away the last of the light. It went silent as a funeral after your great-grandpa finally spoke up, something along the lines of you talk too damn much. Shut the hell up so we can get to work.

He wasn't a miner or a prospector and he knew Dempsey. I guess his cup just filled up.

Jack would've fought him for free, he was so mad. Your great-grandpa came down from up top, a few dim bulbs, a setting sun and some far-off lightning were all we had to see by. He was dark with the dirt of potato fields with boots so beat down the heel was nearly gone. He must've been 20 pounds lighter than Jack.

I never saw Dempsey fight Tunney or Willard, but I saw him fight your great-grandpa. Jack walked across that platform like a storm and Serafin just stood there, his dirty hands balled up at his waist like he was too tired to lift them. I'll never forget the way Jack shook his head after your great-grandpa hit him the first time, like maybe he knew maybe it wasn't going to be so easy.

IV.

My father remembers this, perhaps above all things about those two days and the 65 years since. His father laid him down beneath a spruce, covered him with a canvas tarp stuffed with duff and spruce needles and surrounded him with three saddles to break the wind. Then he walked into the onyx night, into the wind that replaced the snow, and dug through the night to save the herd. My father doesn't mention sleep, nor being cold, in his retelling of the story. He has sincere admiration — perhaps older than written words — in his voice.

Perhaps those two needed that wilderness. I cannot remember them getting along, not really. My father could never please my grandpa. I remember disliking the way he treated my dad. But I loved my *abuelito.* He was what we all wanted to become.

What drew my great-grandfather down from those potato sacks? Did he really fight Jack Dempsey until both men were too tired to continue? Did he abandon his family? Or is another story truer — that he'd had an affair with his boss' wife, who then framed him for stealing? Was his leaving a story they told the children to protect them from knowing he was sent to jail? Can you spend your entire life forgetting the man who is your blessing and your curse?

Which is the greatest foe: the future heavyweight champion of the world; the arduous task of purposely forgetting; the blizzard that could have buried an entire herd alive; the blood of a father traced in the fists of his son; a wilderness of great meadows, house-sized rocks, wind and spruce; a 17-mile ride through a blizzard; shoveling for 12 hours straight; walking the empty sides of train tracks looking for coal; knowing that your oldest son wishes to never speak with you again; accepting a lie as truth; murdering away reconciliation; the daily task of never being satisfied? How do we come to know the thing that is most like us? I wonder if similar questions arise in places without mountains, rivers and trees made of shadow and silence. Surely, this is the work of the stormy and fierce heart of every human.

Dawn broke, the wind finally stopped, and faith was rewarded. My father rose from his bed of spruce needles to the sound of axe against timber, the constant thump of it as two small trees were felled. The trees were tied to my grandfather's horse. Only the heads of the sheep were visible, but he rode the horse around the herd several times, clearing a path with the wake of the trees. Then he pointed the horse north, downhill, toward the river and home. Fidelito and my father urged and pushed a sheep onto the broken path. One by one, the sheep broke free and walked after their savior toward lower ground. By noon they'd crossed the river. By nightfall they'd all reached home, alive.

All of my grandfathers are gone now. On occasion I drive the road up from the river, and I recall the camps, the good meals, the horses that went missing, the several herders, the animals we lost. Eventually, you reach a place where the road ends and there is a snow- and wind-battered sign that reads "Wilderness. Closed to motorized vehicles and motorized equipment." It is known as the Toltec Unit, a cruel place with little water and a loneliness difficult to comprehend. So many stories begin for me there. The men in my life are always associated with places — both wild and on the side of a well-traveled highway — and stories. I will never know my great-grandfather. I know the story where he is a hero and another where he leaves. The stories of my *abuelito* and my father are more numerous and more complimentary. There is a grace in knowing I understand them.

I reach the rocks and aspen trees where the herd was nearly buried. The natural world is intact, as it's been for centuries. The human side has faded in the proper order of things. The place is made sacred by my memories, strength and the brief kindnesses displayed there so long ago. There are names carved upon the trees, but there is no need to read them; I know all they have to say. □

Excerpted from *Wildness: Relations of People and Place*, coming April 2017 from University of Chicago Press. Edited by Gavin Van Horn and John Hausdoerrfer.

High Country News

books & authors

For people who care about the West

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The Amazing Journey of Solomon the Sockeye Salmon Children's picture book

EDUCATION AND TEACHING

Ancient Fire, Modern Fire: Understanding and Living With Our Friend & Foe by Einar Jensen, www.PixyJackPress.com.

ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORTATION

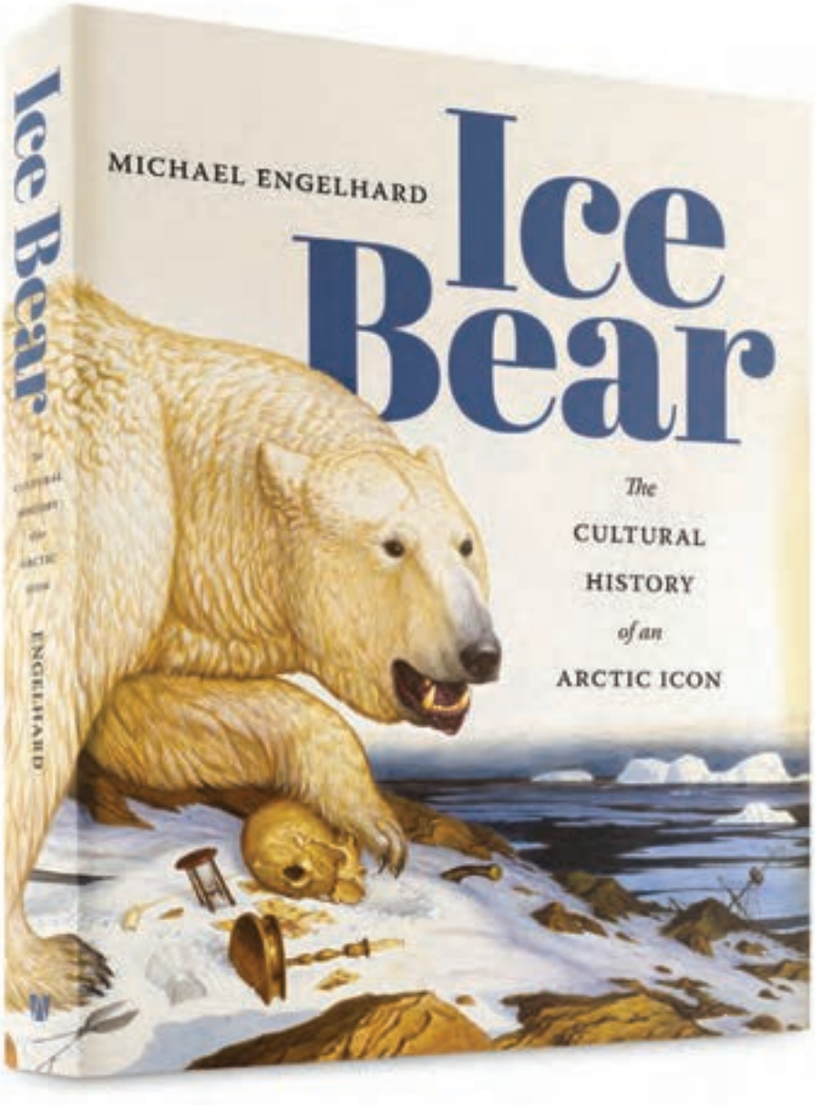
Geo Power: Stay Warm, Keep Cool and Save Money with Geothermal Heating & Cooling by Don Lloyd, www.PixyJackPress.com.

HISTORY

Defending Giants: The Redwood Wars and the Transformation of American Environmental Politics by Darren Speece – Giant redwoods are symbols of conflict and negotiation, remnants of environmental battles over the limits of industrialization, profiteering, and globalization. In *Defending Giants*, Darren Speece explores the long history of the Redwood Wars and their transformation of American environmental politics. University of Washington Press. Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books.

Through Early Yellowstone: Adventuring by Bicycle, Covered Wagon, Foot, Horseback, and Skis – *Yellowstone Treasures* author Janet Chapple regales you with adventure stories by travelers to Yellowstone, from the explorers of 1871 through the tourists of 1916, when cars were allowed. The authors include round-the-world cyclist Frank D. Lenz and artist Anne Bosworth Greene. The 304-page book features original engravings and photos, along with a gallery of beautiful watercolors from 1884 by Welshman Thomas H. Thomas. Visit YellowstoneTreasures.com or call IPG at 1-800-888-4741. ISBN: 9780985818265.

Inferno by Committee – A gripping account of the 2000 escaped prescribed burn that incinerated 250 homes in Los Alamos, New Mexico and changed the course of fire fighting in the West. Written by a wildland fire manager and natural historian. On Amazon.



ICE BEAR

The Cultural History of an Arctic Icon

BY MICHAEL ENGELHARD

170 ILLUS., $29.95 PB

"Engelhard weaves together the disparate pieces of our eclectic social and cultural fascination with polar bears. His tapestry of images further reveals our complex attachment to this Arctic icon."

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—PHILIP HOARE, AUTHOR OF *THE SEA INSIDE*

"Engelhard's thought-provoking iconography explores in depth the multitude of cultural roles played by the polar bear."

—ANCHORAGE PRESS

"Engelhard's writing has the sort of calm authority that reminds me often of Barry Lopez."

—EARTHLINES

ALSO OF INTEREST

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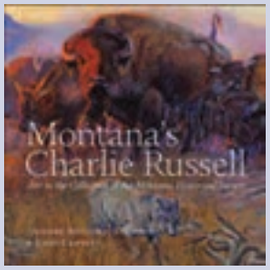


LITERATURE AND FICTION

Bright Moon Wandering: Environmental Love Poetry – Explore the wonder of our dazzling world; enter earth's wild heart; share the blessing of loved ones and the pleasure of haiku; contemplate the joy and foolishness of birds – and humans, too. All in poetry by Monica Glickman. Available on Amazon.

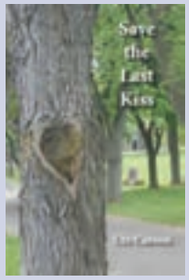
Buckskin Larch and Bedrock – Poems for reflection: wilderness, backcountry and lookouts. Drop this book in your backpack or wrap it up for Christmas. Available on Amazon.

Mister Moffat's Road – First of a series, this historical novel ends when the rails run up to but not over the continental divide. Mistermoffatsroad.com.

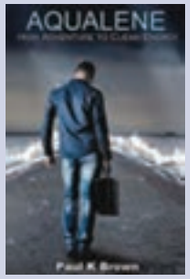
Winds of Purgatory – Twenty years after biological sabotage brings an end to oil, a radical religious sect is ready to bring it back and gain world domination, unless a band of mountain rebels from Purgatory can stop them. WindsOfPurgatory.com.

The Land: Our Gift and Wild Hope by poet and essayist Rae Marie Taylor stirs valuable conversation with its compelling and well-researched essays on the beauty and dilemmas of people, land and water in the Southwest. Available on Amazon.

Save the Last Kiss – Clinging to a romantic attachment from the past risks crippling the capacity to love in the present. utecarson.com.



AQUALENE by Paul Brown – Can a Seattle man get his secret to NASA before Big Oil gets to him? Kindle & softcover at Amazon.



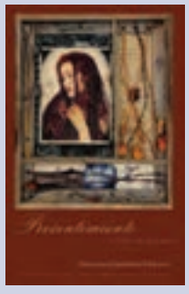
MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Yellowstone Has Teeth – A memoir of living year-round in the world's first national park. Available on Amazon.

A Week in Yellowstone's Thorofare: A Journey Through the Remotest Place – by Michael J. Yochim.

Reflections from Yellowstone and Beyond: 43 Years as a Seasonal Ranger Stories of work and adventure in Yellowstone!

Presentimiento: A Life in Dreams by Harrison Candelaria Fletcher. Elegant prose and enchanting imagery on every page – revealing a grace-filled world where miracles are as real as sage sparrows and mysteries reside behind every rock and piñon tree. –Dinty W. Moore, author of *Between Panic and Desire*



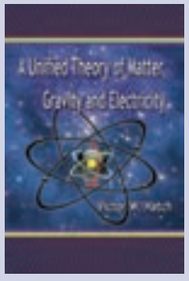
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Environmentalists: An Eyewitness Account from the Heart of America – www.stevendpaulson.com for more info.

SCIENCE AND MATH

Living With Bears Handbook is the 'bear bible' for bear managers, homeowners, HOAs, volunteers, hikers. www.LivingWithBears.com.

A Unified Theory of Matter, Gravity and Electricity unifies the forces that holds the atom, molecules, objects, planets, moons, suns, and galaxies together. Also the force that drives, thunderstorms, tornadoes and hurricanes. Available at https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/647285.



SPORTS AND OUTDOORS

Lookin' at Lava: Poems Inspired by Rafting the Grand Canyon of the Colorado – From *The Act and The Art of Descending*: A theme of this canyon for me has been the act and the art of descending. The many forms have struck me: Going down, cutting through. Flowing, falling, dropping. From *Lookin' at Lava*: At the mouth of Prospect Canyon sits the Lava Rapid Fall. Its reputation preceded it; over our group it cast its pall. Not even explanations of debris flows historic and new could distract us from thoughts of water and whether we'd make it through. https://www.createspace.com/5473650.

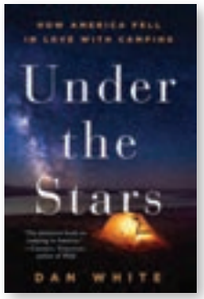
TRAVEL

Costa Rica Set: Monkeys Are Made of Chocolate; Where Tapirs & Jaguars Once Roamed by Jack Ewing. PixyJackPress.com.

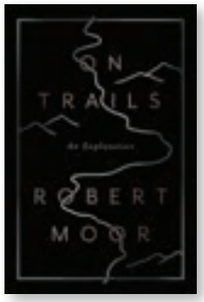
Convergence: A Voyage Through French Polynesia – *Convergence* is a personal story of one woman's adventure – her lifelong passion for the ocean, and her struggle to face her fears as she learns to surrender to nature. Along the way, she comes to realize that passages are not just about getting from one place to another. Journeys like this one go to the heart of who you are when you start out and who you have become when you get to the other end. All proceeds are donated to marine conservation. Purchase at westmarine.com.

Paths in the woods

Tracing the meaning of trails



Under the Stars
Dan White
401 pages, hardcover: $28.
Henry Holt and Company, 2016.



On Trails
Robert Moor
341 pages, hardcover: $25.
Simon & Schuster, 2016.

Trail literature is a well-worn American genre, whose roots are often traced to the 19th century lyrical musings of Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. Recent examples of the genre — Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, for example, or Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* — typically use the trail as both a physical plotline and a scenic backdrop against which to explore inner conflict and personal transformation. Two new books, *On Trails* by Rob Moor and Dan White's *Under the Stars*, continue the tradition. Both writers are enthusiastic walkers and deft storytellers, though they are less concerned with adrenaline-stirring adventure or the psychological landscape of backpacking than with the trail itself. Their methods of exploration vary greatly: White keeps his feet firmly on established routes, taking a winding and humorous path through the history of outdoor recreation, while Moor ventures onto craggier scientific and philosophical terrain, tracing the origins and meanings of trails.

In *Under the Stars*, White seeks to understand where our collective love of hiking, backpacking and camping — our primary means of experiencing the "great outdoors" — comes from. White, who lives in Santa Cruz, is not satisfied with simply name-checking the high priests of the American wild — the Thoreaus, Roosevelts and Muirs. He offers fascinating sketches of lesser-known figures, such as Wallace Hume Carothers, inventor of nylon, and William H. Murray, a charismatic and controversial Boston minister whose 1869 bestseller *Adventures in Wilderness* was one of the first to advocate the healing power of nature. Murray "promised that a week in the Adirondack woods would cure every physical and mental ailment" — and thereby touched off a camping rush in New York. And at a time when outdoor pursuits were considered a manly undertaking, he encouraged women and children to revel in the glory of nature.

In charting the evolution of modern outdoor recreation, White interweaves biographical sketches with whimsical personal anecdotes. One chapter, for instance, recounts his climb of California's Mount Whitney. White's ultimate goal, however, is not to reach the summit but to pick up as much human feces as he can along the way, using a device he built from heavy PVC pipe and dubbed "The Immaculator." Elsewhere, he describes the guilty pleasure of rolling through Arizona in a five-and-a-half-ton RV covered in bright decals depicting jaw-dropping mountain scenery and "stoked Caucasian folks ... doing things that didn't have squat to do with being in a motorhome."

A man and his dog follow a trail into an aspen grove on Mount Lamborn in Colorado. BROOKE WARREN

White's humor and keen sense of the absurd mask a sense of loss. "I hope you've cinched up your Gore-Tex boots, slathered yourself with SPF 100 sunscreen, and updated your life insurance policy," he writes dryly. "It's time to go camping." He laments the way mass media and marketing have polluted our concept of the so-called "great outdoors." But underneath the snark is an old-fashioned wanderer, one seeking a place where he might find "a sense of erasure, a complete whiteout, the kind I experienced with my father all those years ago on the slopes of the Eastern Sierra."

Rob Moor's *On Trails* is concerned with more fundamental questions: What are trails? How do they arise? Moor, a resident of British Columbia and a recipient of the Middlebury Fellowship in Environmental Journalism, starts his investigation at the ostensible beginning, seeking out the planet's original trails, fossilized paths left behind by the first multicellular organisms. Moor is a curious and patient ambler, working upward from basic principles, applying his growing knowledge to the logic of increasingly complex networks. "An ant does not leave a strong pheromone trail unless it has found food. … The same rule applies to humans — we generally don't make trails unless there is something on the other end worth reaching," he writes. "It's only once an initial best guess is made, and others follow, that a trace begins to evolve into a trail."

Moor is at his best when he uses his wanderings to chart his way into headier philosophical terrain. In one section, he describes a volunteer stint as a shepherd on the Navajo Nation. He writes of struggling to lead his flock across broken terrain to a watering trough. Suddenly, a coyote emerges and the sheep scatter. All, Moor fears, are lost, and he feels "queasy with guilt" at the prospect of telling his Navajo hosts. But later that day, he finds all the sheep at the water tank, not a single animal missing. Without a shepherd, they found their own way, via some deeply ingrained mental trail map. "When I was younger," Moor writes, "I used to see the earth as a fundamentally stable and serene place, possessed of a delicate, nearly divine balance, which humans had somehow managed to upset. … I now see the earth as the collaborative artwork of trillions of sculptors, large and small. Sheep, humans, elephants, ants: each of us alters the world in our passage."

BY JEREMY MILLER

How does a corporation decide to poison kids?

A new book chronicles the mining industry's lead poisoning of Silver Valley, Idaho

How is it possible that ordinary people can be willing, as a matter of corporate policy, to contaminate workers and poison children, kill rivers, destroy entire forests, and then walk away from the ruin and the shame? This is a question that goes to the heart of the past — and the future — of the American West.

A new book by Michael C. Mix tackles the issue head-on. *Leaded: The Poisoning of Idaho's Silver Valley* meticulously reconstructs the story of how — and why — the Bunker Hill Mining Company released enormous quantities of lead over decades in northern Idaho, creating, with little moral or legal constraint, the nation's worst-ever lead-poisoning epidemic and a dead zone that extended for miles.

Leaded is a profoundly important book about the place of radically extractive industries in the American West and the responsibility of government to protect human and ecological health. Published as it is at a hinge point in history, it is likely to become a crucial case study of environmental injustice — a classic of environmental and cultural history.

An expert in pollutant contamination of shellfish, Mix taught biology for decades at Oregon State University. No surprise, then, that he sorts evidence with the integrity and openness of a scientist and follows leads with the tenacity of a detective, narrating this complex story with the skill of an experienced teacher. Because he loves the ruined valley close to his childhood home, he could be forgiven some white-hot anger at its destruction. But Mix carefully avoids polemics, offering instead something much better — a true and well-told story.

And the story is chilling. In 1843, a pioneer botanist described the Silver Valley as "sublime … as complete a picture of pristine nature as can be held under a northern sky." Forty years later, mines producing lead, zinc, silver, copper and gold had begun disgorging wastes into the rivers and spewing toxins into the air. By 1903, farmers were suing to stop industry from poisoning their horses, cattle, dogs and chickens. They lost, Mix writes, because of an "ancient legal premise dating back to Roman times: mining exploration and development took preference over all other uses of the land because they represent the 'highest economic use.' " Over the years, the smelters' smokestacks released tons of lead that were trapped in deadly inversions until the valley "look(ed) like a caricature of a graveyard … a poisoned, dead, or dying landscape," and people began to fall sick.

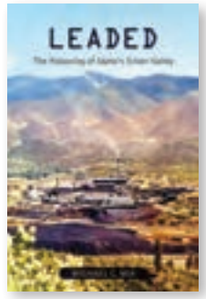
After a 1974 fire destroyed the major pollution-control system of the Bunker Hill smelter, the company hired public-relations consultants and began to release its deadly smoke only at night. Children in a downwind elementary school showed high, sometimes catastrophic, levels of lead in their blood. In response, Bunker Hill accused their mothers of being slovenly housekeepers. And so the story goes — carefully told, fully documented, and devastating.

The lead-poisoning epidemic in children, the dead mountainsides and rivers weren't the unforeseen result of unusual circumstances, or of the failure of moral judgment in some rogue CEO. Instead, Mix concludes, the Bunker Hill catastrophe should be seen as part of the legacy of Westward expansion, when the goal of government was to empower corporations to extract the riches of the West.

The strategies were unremarkable — and familiar. Create towns where every person depends on the industry for a job; make sure that the state depends on income from the industry, too. Overwork and under-protect workers; destroy unions. Sell out to a distant corporation, a cash-starved parent company that requires managers to bring in profits no matter what. Stonewall and/or lie to fledgling federal agencies that might restrict corporate freedom to pollute. Hire scientists to perform bogus studies "which invariably produced results favorable to the industry," as Mix shows. Insist that pollution controls would bankrupt the company; at any interference, threaten to close up shop. Blame the workers and families for their health problems. Extract billions of dollars. Repeat endlessly.

But is it structurally inevitable that the Bunker Hill story will play itself out, again and again? The citizenry of the West has to decide that question, and soon. *Leaded* raises hard questions for our time: How much are we willing to pay, in the currency of our health and the health of our communities and ecosystems, for the products of violent and dirty extractive industries — once lead smelting, and now fracking, offshore oil drilling, coal and uranium mining? Is there a limit to the costs we can justly impose on others, present and future? As we struggle to find ways to use the land without wrecking it, this book will provide historical perspective, cogent thinking, a clear warning, and maybe even the courage to take a stand.

BY KATHLEEN DEAN MOORE

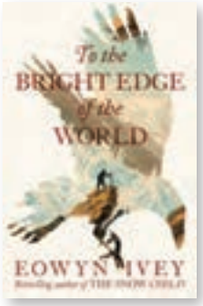


Leaded: The Poisoning of Idaho's Silver Valley
Michael C. Mix
280 pages, paperback: $29.95.
Oregon State University Press, 2016.

Spectators watch as three of four lead smelting smokestacks are demolished at the Bunker Hill Superfund Site near Kellogg, Idaho, in 1996. RON SWORDS/AP PHOTO

Journeys into the last frontier

Two Alaska novels feature atypical explorers



To The Bright Edge of the World
Eowyn Ivey
417 pages,
hardcover: $26.
Little Brown: 2016.

Heroes of the Frontier
Dave Eggers
385 pages,
hardcover: $28.95.
Alfred A. Knopf: 2016.

As its nickname suggests, no part of the West remained unknown to non-Native Americans longer than the "Last Frontier." Alaska is still the most sparsely populated state, its huge tracts of wild land offering both adventure and the chance for a fresh start. Two splendid new novels set in Alaska feature intrepid explorers: *To the Bright Edge of the World*, Eowyn Ivey's historical tale modeled on Lt. Henry T. Allen's 1885 journey into the state's interior, and Dave Eggers' *Heroes of the Frontier*, about a modern-day dentist who heads north with her children to escape midlife pressures in Ohio.

Ivey's novel is told in part through the journal entries of the fictional Col. Allen Forrester, who leads an expedition up the Wolverine River into unexplored territory. Ivey weaves in the journal Forrester's wife, Sophie, keeps while he's away, along with their letters and a selection of photos, comical period postcards and excerpts from Victorian medical books. Some of these artifacts are historical, others invented, but all add to the sense of the book being a true archive of human lives.

While Allen's entries are written in the matter-of-fact style typical of Victorian travel journals, Sophie is more lyrical and reflective: "When we are young, we consume the world in great gulps, and it consumes us, and everything is mysterious and alive and fills us with desire and wonder, fear, and guilt," she writes. "With the passing of the years, however, those memories become distant and malleable, and we shape them into the stories of who we are."

Eowyn Ivey was a bookseller in Alaska when her debut *The Snow Child* became a Pulitzer Prize finalist. Fans of that novel will be glad to see her continue to develop her own variety of Alaskan magical realism. A trapper believes his wife is the mountain fog in human form, shape-shifting geese women appear, and a trickster figure, an old man in a top hat and vest, toys with the explorers. Ivey expertly straddles the line between realism and fantasy — if you were starved, frozen and travel-weary, surrounded by nature at its most majestic and uncanny, you might see such visions, too.

Although Sophie is stuck at the Vancouver Barracks, her adventures are equally engaging, from when she discovers she's pregnant and submits to Victorian medical practices to her reinvention of herself as a pioneering nature photographer.

Like Sophie, Josie is also a seeker. She's the protagonist of acclaimed California novelist Eggers' hilarious, weird, probing and joyful *Heroes of the Frontier*, which opens as Josie is preparing to drive from Ohio to Alaska in a rented motorhome. The weak, unemployed father of her children has left her; a malpractice lawsuit has destroyed her dental practice; she's mourning the loss of a young friend in Afghanistan; and she's still trying to make sense of her own disordered childhood. She's accompanied by her children, Paul, age 8, "a gentle, slow-moving boy who was far more reasonable and kind and wise than his mother," and Ana, her wild 5-year-old, who is "a constant threat to the social contract."

Why has Josie chosen Alaska? Eggers writes, "Alaska was at once the same country but another country, was almost Russia, was almost oblivion, and if Josie left her phone and used only cash — she'd brought three thousand dollars in the kind of velvet bag meant to hold gold coins or magic beans — she was untraceable, untrackable."

Josie has vague plans to visit a woman in Homer she considers a sister, but largely follows picaresque whims: The family gets invited to a cruise ship's magic show, encounters a friendly clan of gun enthusiasts, outruns enormous forest fires and squats in an empty cabin or two.

Along the way, Josie offers penetrating and hysterical insights into contemporary life, from the pressure to be a perfect parent ("No one seemed to work; everyone … found time to be at every one of the three or four hundred yearly events at school"), to modern technology ("The easiest way to witness the stupidity and misplaced hopes of all humanity is to watch, for twenty minutes, a human using a leaf blower") and how Americans struggle to live peaceably among others armed to the teeth: "Somehow she had to trust that they would use their bullets on targets, not on her family, that nonsensical trust seeming to be the core of life in America."

Though these novels share an Alaskan setting, they couldn't be more different in terms of structure, style, tone and time period. But it's clear their authors are motivated by a similar insight: how a confrontation with a big, wild, mysterious place can free people from old patterns, prove them to be stronger than they ever imagined, and set them on a course toward a more honest and fulfilling life.

BY JENNY SHANK

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Most people tumble through their lives with different and odd ocean-blue color,

This is not a normal library job.

The fellow who held this gig before me once stopped for a herd of tarantulas inching across Lake Mary Road. A woman who preceded him suffered a painful scorpion bite. Another predecessor quit to get married, and the next departed because of divorce.

▲ The Flagstaff Bookmobile parked at the Leupp Road stop. JOHN FREEMAN

▶ From top: Chester bicycles to the bookmobile in the Navajo Nation near Bitter Springs, not far from the Colorado River; Andy, an ardent reader and music devotee, boards at Marble Canyon; a ranger takes time out from work at Wupatki National Monument to check out the bookmobile's DVD collection; Nate and Ian, a horn-player for Flagstaff's The Blenders band, board at the LOU Corp. in Flagstaff. R. KELLEY

Me? I've driven past a bull elk standing frozen as a tree stump along the highway shoulder, so motionless that I initially thought he was a big carved totem of some kind. One day, a bald eagle haughtily glared down from an overhanging limb, never budging as I *whooshed* past beneath it. On another occasion, I watched a coyote scavenge hunks of some hapless dead thing, bright red blood splattered in the snow. Every month, I skirt the buffalo herd that lives an hour or so south of Jacob Lake. These encounters are all, I imagine, surely the pages of something, shelved in a breathing Dewey Decimal System.

No, this is not a normal library job. Driving the City of Flagstaff-Coconino County Public Library Bookmobile around the second-largest county in America — through sparse deserts, blue volcanic mountains, and forests, towns and villages — is emphatically peculiar. My monthly summer route, which traces looping figure eights and wobbly ovals, would, if pulled straight, stretch from Flagstaff to Louisiana. There are around 900 bookmobiles still mobile in modern America, but I doubt that any match the geographic and imaginative range of the Flagstaff Special.

Once, as I cut through an open meadow, I glimpsed an alignment of clouds and contrails that I swear was a floating petroglyph. I've seen its approximate likeness in archaeology books. It hung in the sky like a balloon, a stick-figured person staring blankly down across the centuries, alive for only a minute or so before the wind returned it to ambiguous swirls.

I'm no New Age groupie or Wiccan witch or Harry Potter wizard type. Far from it; I merely drive the bookmobile. But I have no doubt that strands of magic are woven through my route. For isn't magic the doorway, the bedrock, of any library, whether bound by firm brick walls or by swaying evergreens and dust devils?

The bookmobile visits schools, nursing homes, national parks and monuments — including the Grand Canyon — a Navajo "bead stop" along Highway 89, and small towns both within and without the Navajo Nation. A patron at the Bitter Springs stop claims she once saw Bigfoot lumbering in the brush along the road. A young man from Diablo Canyon declares that 15 years ago, he discovered a conquistador sword in a small cave nearby. Another regular bookmobile patron — a retired detective from a major urban center — swears he once inadvertently picked up a ghost who had been pushing a bicycle along the lonely desert road to Winslow. ("Will you swear on a stack of library books that this is true?" "I do.")

I routinely implore all these people to pen their own volumes or articles. "Written your book yet?" is a standard greeting. I always promise to be the first in line to buy it. But no one has seized the suggestion.

One of the magnetic attractions of my job is its antiquated — almost mythic — "Andy of Mayberry" small-town character. Many people make a monthly habit of visiting the bookmobile, so I actually get to know some of them: their likes, their dislikes, their hopes, their dreams, their troubles, their pains. Indeed, the bookmobile driver wears many hats, including transient therapist, reference librarian, janitor, wheelchair assistant, fill-in hunting buddy and *Dear Abby* substitute.

The bookmobile anchors an unusual kind of community. Folks come to chat with neighbors they rarely see, or inquire about the euchre game tomorrow night, or complain about outrages real and

priorities and, despite the vehicle's considerable girth never notice the great Culture Ferry as it roars past.

imagined. ("My next door neighbor stole my ladder! I'm sure he did." "You saw him do this?" "No, but I'm sure he did it.") Once, at a stop on the Navajo Reservation, two ranchers introduced themselves to each other in front of me, and proceeded to make plans to sell sheep. A county supervisor once burst in to ask if the vehicle had a restroom. (It does not, thank God.)

Of course, not everyone within reach of the bookmobile cares to visit it, or even knows that it exists. Most people tumble through their lives with different priorities and, despite the vehicle's considerable girth and odd ocean-blue color, never notice the great Culture Ferry as it roars past. Some of the people who visit me love novels or audiobooks, or have simply loved libraries since they were tots. Some are hopeless dreamers, and some live in one of many kinds of wildernesses and clutch at the bookmobile like a lifeline to the literate world. Some are bored or lonely. A few are drunk, and some are lost. Some need help taking the GED test.

For little kids in the middle of nowhere, the bookmobile can be as exciting as a circus coming to town. Like midget mountaineers, they climb the steps to stacks and layers of creativity, bound, categorized and shelved. I routinely ask one 10-year-old — a bright only child who lives with his parents at a remote forest ranger station — if he has captured any giant squid lately. Not yet, he told me one day, but he did find a very large crayfish.

The bookmobile rumbles through all seasons, including birth and death. Alexis, who lives at one of the national monuments, gave birth to a baby last month. Another regular visitor — a retired man nicknamed "Mud" for the years he spent in concrete construction — was trapped in his car when it caught fire and burned to death on a lonely dirt road outside of Valle. Yet another — Dan, a good-natured Navajo who was always waiting for me in order to check out a laptop — collapsed and died of a heart attack in front of a local school. When I pulled up to the stop, his father told me the sad news. The 50-year-old man had been struggling to save $300 — a colossal sum for a seasonal shepherd — to buy his own computer. Four bookmobile patrons have passed away during my four-and-a-half-year tenure.

I catch up on local gossip. Babs is going in for stomach surgery. Larry's test for bone cancer was, thankfully, negative. Ally and Bob both had cataract surgery. (Ally's results were poor, but Bob now has vision like an 18-year-old.) One of Valerie's four ex-pound dogs is wrapped up in a blanket on her couch, still ill. A middle-aged woman, living alone in a desert trailer a half-hour south of the Grand Canyon, tells me that the bookmobile's visit is the thing she most looks forward to each month. I hear from her neighbor that she — through no choice of her own — shares her battered trailer with a large wild snake that slithers in and out of holes in the walls.

Tourists have boarded the library bus from Colombia, Israel, Algeria, the Netherlands, France, Saudi Arabia — one woman was so heavily veiled that only her dark eyes caught any sun — Iran, Mexico, and many other places (even Florida). Four inebriated fellows once

staggered aboard the bookmobile at the same time. That many drunks in small quarters can be quite an obstacle course. But rarely is anyone hostile. The bookmobile driver is like Santa Claus or the UPS guy, and usually receives a similar welcome.

One day, an older Navajo man boarded the Magic Bus in Leupp. I pulled out a box of books about his people, and on top lay *Time Among the Navajo*, whose cover features a black-and-white photograph of a woman standing in front of a hogan. "That's my mother!" he exclaimed with astonishment.

I keep a copy of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* on the shelves. Even if no one checks it out, my personal bias is that it must remain there, a guiding intellectual spirit. I've fulfilled requests from patrons for books ranging from the sexuality of Jesus to the Chilton's manual for 1977 Chevy pickups. Desert anarchist Edward Abbey is almost as popular as James Patterson's thrillers. *The Vampire Diaries*, Edgar Allen Poe, *Walter the Farting Dog*, how to tame horses, Japanese netsuke … you name it, my patrons have asked for it.

The bookmobile world is not without its problems. Black volcanic dust covers the white shelves, sometimes almost deep and rich enough to grow a plot of sweet potatoes. Though I'm active with a broom, whatever is out there occasionally makes its way in here: odd-colored dusts and bees and wasps and red mud and strange plant strings that the last boot or sneaker dragged in.

Driving the 90-mile stretch of road from the Page-Tuba City junction to Bitter Springs feels like bouncing on a cheap trampoline. The bookmobile's 40-foot hulk catches every obscure nuance of the highway's geography. Unsecured books become flying squirrels. Once, on the way back from Leupp, a hysterical dust devil raced across the desert so quickly that there was really no way to avoid it. Crazed winds blasted into the long flat side of the vehicle, and I felt its backbone shudder. My knuckles white, I arm-wrestled the steering wheel. But the trusty old library plowed through, bending the mini-hurricane back as if the sheer gravity of important cultural freight was enough to cower Nature's most obstinate obstacles and arguments.

For my trouble, I'm richly rewarded. Grateful patrons have offered me homemade cookies, pastries, nut bread, iced tea, breakfast, Navajo fry bread, purple socks, a gift certificate to Denny's, unsolicited advice and other small gifts in appreciation of the library service. One Navajo shepherd even offered me — as a Christmas present — a prehistoric ax-head, one of five or six he says that he found on his property while herding sheep. In turn, I've bought stone and wood sculpture from Navajo and Apache artisans, given $5 to a 6-year-old birthday girl, passed an occasional $20 to folks down on their luck, loaned gas money, and driven patrons from remote, surreal environments to and from the economic hub of Flagstaff — in my own truck, and on my own time.

Perhaps my greatest accomplishment so far as a reference librarian has been to reconnect a regular bookmobile visitor with his two children, whom he hadn't seen in 22 years. The last time he saw his little girl, amid the tornado of a nasty divorce, she was 9 years old and he was a hopeless drinker. Today, he lives off the grid in a remote desert tourist village, has a steady job, shoots hoops against a cactus backdrop, and doesn't drink anything harder than chocolate milk. But he doesn't own a telephone or computer, and doesn't know how to negotiate the internet. I offered to try and find his long-lost kids, who, he supposed, still lived on the other side of the country. He was excited about the prospect, so I did some quick online research, discovered where his son worked, phoned the young man and introduced myself. I asked him to think for a couple of days about what I was about to say, and to contact me if he'd like to reconnect with his father. A few days later, both he and his sister were peppering me with questions via speakerphone about their estranged dad. I took their contact information with me on my next visit to their father — along with a biography of Frank Zappa per an earlier request.

The bookmobile sails across its own sort of sea with an extraordinary cargo — books and movies and music, great thoughts, tiny thoughts, classics and fads. I think of the endless waterfall of truckers along America's transcontinental arteries hauling refrigerators, spare car parts, electric toothbrushes, sheep for slaughter, and, yes, I know that I am the lucky one. Hauling dreams for public distribution: That is the best freight. □

The author would like to thank Heidi Holland, the director of the Flagstaff Library and the REAL heart and prime supporter of the bookmobile.

We Are West

ESSAY BY MADELINE FRIEND
WINNER OF THE 2016 BELL PRIZE

The author, who lives in Flagstaff, Arizona, rows Vinegar Rapid on the Main Salmon River in Idaho, left, and examines a puddle while studying aquatic insects in the Grand Canyon, above.
THOMAS GOTCHY, LEFT; MADELINE JANE PEACE, ABOVE

Water chops against my face, and suddenly I am 17 again, clinging to straps and leaning into each whitecap. We crest the final wave of Hermit, one of the Grand Canyon's most enjoyable rapids, and I realize I am smiling. Smiling ear-to-ear, crinkly eyes. *Smiling.* A real smile, after two years of fake grins and forced cheeriness. What is happening? There's an upwelling in my soul, and the pithy hum of river enchantment overcomes me.

We reach camp that night, and I sit quietly in the July heat haze, scratching my sunburn and prickling at the noisiest silence I have ever heard. As the sun drops, I stuff back tears: tears I am not yet ready to acknowledge, tears I desperately want to pound like the holy water from Deer Creek — to descend transcendentally as if from the font at Elves Chasm.

I sit silently and pick at my blisters, the ones I never mention.

Conservation rhetoric has long touted the value of the important places. From venerable alpine peaks to inscrutable desert chasms, the West is the bastion of preservation, the linchpin in our federal land system. We rely on these spaces for food and goods; comfort and respite; awe and notoriety. We bolster our nation's reputation, touting our parks as "America's Best Idea."

Each time I release my body into one of these protected spaces — a national park unit, a wild and scenic river, a multiuse national forest — I am buoyed by their immense capacity to heal. These places face seemingly insurmountable desecration, parallel to the vitriol heaped upon any out-group, anyone who feels the hollow pangs of un-belonging.

Acknowledging the power of place to reconcile human hurts creates a new paradigm for preservation. Valleys, canyons, oceans, vistas: Each can whittle their way into shattered hearts, inviting us to come as we are. They provide refuge and solace. They have been paramount in my life. My mountaintop moment was not upon a peak, but instead in the silty depths of the West's most famous canyon.

As a teenager, I came to the river grudgingly. Like far too many of my peers, I carried the unspoken weight of sexual assault: endless rapes that hardened my soul, made me believe the places that enlivened my childhood would no longer serve me. I was unworthy.

The river carried me through a heft of pain and chunks of meanness, unbridling my pent-up sorrow and paying the penance. Healing at the brink has little to do with meager offerings. Embattled in a silent hell, the only sound I released from my steel soul was "NO."

The river told me "YES."

I urge you: Find your park. Step on hallowed ground and revel in grace. The West's great mantra is one of reinvention. If we refuse to recognize our wild spaces as vital to our humanity, we will slowly tick away — a civilization that fake-smiles at sunsets while our hearts remain locked in concrete cages. These emotional journeys are anything but trite: They are the very spirit, the very soul, the very reason why we are West. □

The Bell Prize for young essayists honors the spirit of our founder, Tom Bell. At a time when there was little coverage of environmental issues in the American West, Bell founded *HCN* in 1970 and was a strong voice for conservation. The Bell Prize is awarded to emerging writers, aged 18 to 25, who can carry on that legacy.

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HEARD AROUND THE WEST | BY BETSY MARSTON

THE WEST

Where, oh where, has Lyle Jeffs gone? He's the brother of Warren Jeffs, the autocratic guru of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who is serving a life term in federal prison for sexually assaulting his "child brides." When Lyle Jeffs disappeared from a home near the Salt Lake City courthouse, he was awaiting trial on charges that he masterminded the theft of $12 million in food stamps from the federal government. Police found Jeffs' ankle monitor on the floor, apparently slipped off with the help of a generous dollop of olive oil. But his public defender, Kathy Nester, believes otherwise: When asked by the court how her client came to be, in the lawyer's words, "currently not available," Nester theorized that while Jeffs might have shed his ankle bracelet and skipped town, it was also possible that kidnappers were hiding him somewhere. And there was yet another intriguing possibility: "Whether he experienced the miracle of Rapture is unknown to counsel." However, if Jeffs were transported — alone — on a fast flight to heaven, that would appear to break the promise he made to the 10,000 residents of Colorado City, Arizona, and Hildale, Utah: He told them they would all be swept up to paradise together if they stayed faithful, abided by a rigid dress code, and never questioned the authority of his church. But "none of those residents disappeared along with Lyle Jeffs," reports the *Los Angeles Times*. Eric Barnhart, special agent in charge of the FBI's Salt Lake City office, said the Jeffs brothers might be at odds, indicating that they've experienced a rupture, rather than the Rapture. Texas prison officials said they heard Warren Jeffs — who still seems to be leading his flock — tell an unnamed person that Lyle Jeffs needed to be "sent away." The FBI is offering a $50,000 reward for information leading to Jeffs' capture, adding that he is considered "armed and dangerous."

WYOMING **What does the fox say now?** ANGELA BOHLKE / BARCROFT IMAGES

THE WEST

Back in the 1970s, writes George Sibley in *Colorado Central Magazine*, the best job 25-year-old guys ever got during the summer was fighting fires for the federal government. After a hot week or so on a fire line that featured 12-hour days of "adrenalizing circumstances," he recalled, these dropouts from the real world could earn enough to pay landlords, bar tabs and grocery stores. Sibley joined the Crested Butte Hotshots in 1973, and he found the experience wonderful — though he recalls that one fire in Idaho sent him running for his life, "while getting soaked by an aerial bombardment of pink slurry." He left that band of brothers three years later, but followed the careers of the Hotshots as they began to rack up a reputation for working hard and playing harder. " 'We didn't start it' became a Hotshot mantra," he recalls. The group also made history in the late '70s by becoming the first crew in Colorado to accept women. At a recent reunion, Jim Cazer summed up his experience this way: "We were good, and we were lucky." Some credited the crew's famous willfulness for everybody's survival: Squad leaders would sometimes refuse to follow bosses who wanted to send firefighters into extremely dangerous places. As it turned out, those refusals "proved prescient as they watched fires rage over where they might have been."

ARIZONA

In its more than 125 years of publishing, the *Arizona Republic* had never once endorsed a Democrat for president. Then came this year's nasty presidential election, and Mi-Ai Parrish, president of the paper and of Republic Media, announced that the paper had decided to break ranks with tradition, endorsing Hillary Clinton and choosing "patriotism over party." Immediately, threats of violence poured in from some of the state's residents: "You should be put in front of a firing squad as a traitor," wrote one, and "Watch your back. You're dead," said another. Parrish, a Korean-American, decided that the *Arizona Republic* needed to speak publicly about the threats. Her defense of free speech and the First Amendment was eloquent. After an anonymous caller threatened to blow up reporters, reminding staffers that *Republic* reporter Don Bolles was murdered by a car bomb 40 years ago, Parrish described the calm courage of the young woman who took that call. She "prayed for you," Parrish told the caller. "Prayed for patience, for forgiveness. Kimberly knows free speech requires compassion." Parrish also mentioned callers who disparaged immigrants or who suggested she burn in Hell: "I give you my pastor grandfather," she told them. "He was imprisoned and tortured for being a Christian, and suffered the murder of his best friend for also refusing to deny Christ. He taught all that freedom of religion is a fragile and precious thing. Much as my grandfather taught, I also know there are a lot of things worth standing up for."

WEB EXTRA For more from Heard around the West, see **hcn.org**.

Tips and photos of Western oddities are appreciated and often shared in this column. Write betsym@hcn.org or tag photos #heardaroundthewest on Instagram.

"It's likely only a matter of time before the 'No Trespassing' signs and fences go up, and (Joseph) Hunt **proceeds to do with the land pretty much whatever he likes.**"

Contributing editor Jonathan Thompson, in his essay "Biggest loser at Comb Ridge? The public." From Writers on the Range, hcn.org/wotr