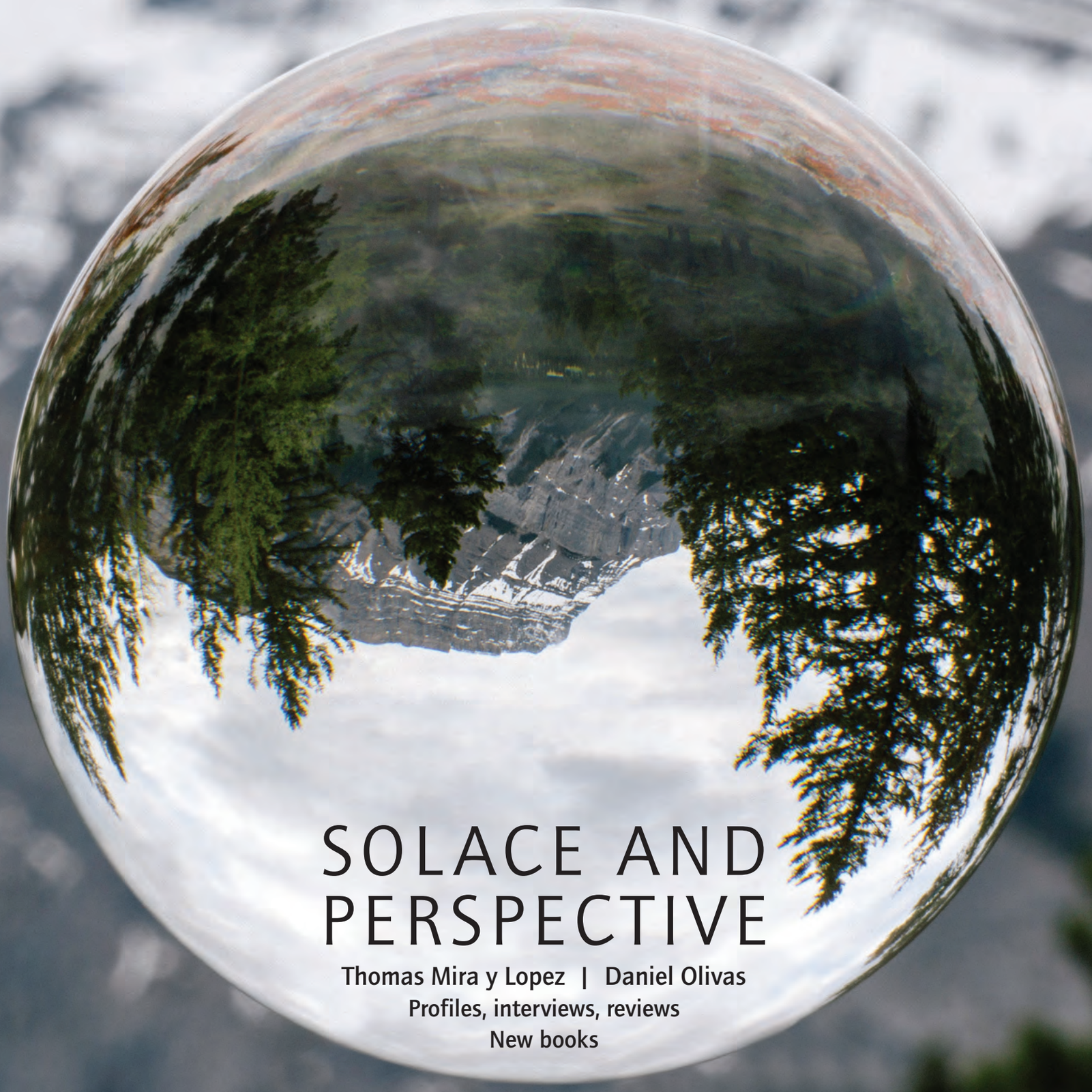
books&authors
SPECIAL ISSUE

High Country News

For people who care about the West



SOLACE AND PERSPECTIVE

Thomas Mira y Lopez | Daniel Olivas

Profiles, interviews, reviews

New books

November 13, 2017 | $5 | Vol. 49 No. 19 | www.hcn.org

CONTENTS

FEATURES

A prehistoric megalodon shark tooth at Tucson Mineral and Gem World. COURTNEY TALAK

INSIDE

DEPARTMENTS

Contributors

Michael Berry is a Berkeley, California-based freelancer who has written about books and authors for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Sierra Magazine* and other publications. Follow @mlberry

Ben Goldfarb is a former *HCN* intern and frequent contributor who is at work on his first book, *Beaverland* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018).

Heather Hansman lives in Seattle. She's currently writing a book about water management and the Green River. Follow @hhansman

Greg Hobbs, a former Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court, co-directs DU Law School's Environment and Natural Resources Program. His published poetry books include *Colorado*, *Mother of Rivers: Water Poems*.

Thomas Mira y Lopez's work has appeared in *The Georgia Review*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *The Normal School* and other publications. He's the 2017-2018 Kenan Visiting Writer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Follow @TMiYL

Nick Neely is the author of *Coast Range: A Collection from the Pacific Edge*. His most recent story for *HCN* was about a newly recognized species of bird in Idaho, the Cassia crossbill. Follow @nsneely

Daniel A. Olivas is the author of nine books, including this year's *The King of Lighting Fixtures: Stories*. He has written for publications including *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Review of Books* and *Los Angeles Times*. Follow @olivasdan

Laura Pritchett is the author of seven books, most recently *Making Friends with Death: A Field Guide to Your Impending Last Breath*. Her work has received the PEN USA Award, the Milkweed National Fiction Prize and more. laurapritchett.com

Eric Siegel recently finished a season working as a field naturalist in Colorado's Elk Mountains. He is a poet and writer based in Denver; this is his first piece for *HCN*.

High Country News

High Country News is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) independent media organization that covers the issues that define the American West. Its mission is to inform and inspire people to act on behalf of the region's diverse natural and human communities. (ISSN/0191/5657) is published bi-weekly, 22 times a year, by High Country News, 119 Grand Ave., Paonia, CO 81428. Periodicals, postage paid at Paonia, CO, and other post offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to High Country News, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428.

Subscriptions to *HCN* are $37 a year, $47 for institutions: **800-905-1155 | hcn.org**

printreleaf CERTIFIED
Printed on recycled paper.

Editor's note

Finding perspective, seeking solace

Wildfires. Hurricanes. Mass shootings. Political threats against all we hold dear. In times like these, we seek perspective where we can find it, trying to make sense of all that's happening. Me, I've been taking long walks on the public lands near *HCN*'s hometown, Paonia, Colorado. On a crystalline October day, I hiked the dusty trails of Mount Jumbo through sagebrush and juniper. A ridged chunk of sandstone caught my eye: a fossilized clam, about the size of a 50-cent piece. John McPhee's *Basin and Range* came to mind: "If geologic time could somehow be seen in the perspective of human time ... sea level would be rising and falling hundreds of feet, ice would come pouring over continents and as quickly go away ... continents would crawl like amoebae, rivers would arrive and disappear like rainstreaks down an umbrella. ..." It was oddly comforting to picture the travails of today as just a ripple in a vast stretch of time, and to imagine these clay hills again submerged beneath a shallow sea.

This special issue of *HCN* might offer a bit of perspective as well: It's our annual break from covering the news of the West, a look at the region through a different lens, that of literature. Thomas Mira y Lopez contributes an essay from *The Book of Resting Places*, a series of meditations on death and grief. Lopez visits places including Monument Valley, a cryogenic center in Arizona, and a Tucson rock shop full of oddities, which prompts him to consider, "What is the right way to treat the relics that do not belong to you, but in some way define you?" Los Angeles writer Daniel Olivas tackles a different sort of hallowed ground: In a short story that turned out to be uncomfortably prescient, he imagines families forcibly separated by a great wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

Author profiles, Q&As and book reviews round out the issue, introducing Francisco Cantú, a former Border Patrol agent turned author, and Tommy Pico, a queer Native American whose poetry juxtaposes his childhood on California's Viejas Reservation with his current life in New York City. Another Native poet and artist, Esther Belin, grapples with how English verse can reflect Navajo existence. Writers Blair Braverman and Emily Ruskovich discuss women writers challenging traditional visions of the West. Essayist Leath Tonino and a handful of other writers consider "wild reading" and how the books we read in the backcountry can provide solace, distraction and a deeper experience. And finally, Laura Pritchett and Ana Maria Spagna ponder a question for these sometimes dark and uncertain times: If we knew we would die today, what would we most want? Faced with that question, I'd find part of my answer in that fossil shell — the knowledge that the Earth will go on, in spite of us, even without us.

—Jodi Peterson, senior editor

Ana Maria Spagna is the author most recently of *The Luckiest Scar on Earth*, a novel about a young snowboarder and her activist father. Follow @amspagna

Katherine E. Standefer's work appears in *The Best American Essays 2016*. She prefers cowboy boots. Follow @girlmakesfire

Leath Tonino is a freelance writer who would rather be outside reading. Recently, he's been sitting with philosopher Martin Heidegger and a moose family at the edge of a thin autumn creek.

Rebecca Worby is an editorial fellow at *HCN*. Her work has appeared in *Pacific Standard* and *Orion*.

Emily Wortman-Wunder writes from south suburban Denver, Colorado. Her work has appeared in *Vela*, *Nimrod*, *Nautilus* and elsewhere.

On the cover

Tunnel Mountain Campground in Banff National Park, Alberta, as seen through a crystal ball.
LILY AVETISYAN, @LILYAVEPHOTOGRAPHY

2017 Bell Prize winner

Brooke Larsen is a writer and climate organizer from Salt Lake City. As a current student in the University of Utah's Environmental Humanities Graduate Program, Brooke explores the role of storytelling in the climate justice movement. She spent the summer of 2017 cycling across the Colorado Plateau, listening to stories from people on the frontlines of climate change and environmental injustice. She works for Torrey House Press and organizes with groups such as Wasatch Rising Tide, Uplift, and SustainUS. Her essay "Eyes of the Young" was recently published in the anthology *Red Rock Stories*. Brooke graduated from Colorado College with a degree in environmental policy and researched land and water issues in the American West with the college's State of the Rockies Project.

A national park fee hike would deter visitors

At 17 "highly visited" national parks, the Trump administration has proposed increasing entrance fees up to $70 a car during peak periods. This proposal would generate $70 million annually, which would barely dent the National Park Service's deferred maintenance backlog of $12 billion. It also erodes equity for visitors. **GLENN NELSON/CROSSCUT**
MORE: hcne.ws/unequal-access

The Roosevelt Arch, at the North Entrance to Yellowstone National Park, is inscribed: "For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People."
YUNNER, CC VIA WIKIPEDIA

You say

CHAD YOUNG: "This is a strategy to get citizens disinterested in national parks and public lands by creating barriers to accessibility. Their ultimate goal is handing over public lands to states and by default to the wealthy."

BRIAN HENCH: "Some parks such as Zion and Yosemite have serious overcrowding problems. Putting limits on visitors is a very unpalatable way of dealing with it. This approach may be a lesser evil that gets infrastructure fixed."

STEVEN ARGUS MCQUINN: "It is designed to get people mad enough to insist that Congress vote to support appropriations for deferred maintenance."

11-18% Drop in typical California household water consumption that a new study attributes to increased media coverage about the drought

California's recent 5-year drought brought water restrictions and intensive media coverage. New research suggests that media attention itself was a substantial driver to get people to use less water, spurring awareness and public engagement. "For future droughts, there's no question that we learned that there is a role for media to play," says Nicole Sandkulla, CEO and general manager of the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency.
EMILY BENSON MORE: hcne.ws/drought-news

Six bills that would weaken endangered species protection

1. Federally Integrated Species Health Act
2. Gray Wolf State Management Act
3. Saving America's Endangered Species Act
4. State, Tribal, and Local Species Transparency and Recovery Act
5. Listing Reform Act
6. Endangered Species Litigation Reasonableness Act

MORE: hcne.ws/less-protection

The weaponized landscape

On the border with author Francisco Cantú

KATHERINE E. STANDEFER

Name Francisco Cantú

Recent Jobs Nonfiction writing teacher; occasional mezcal bartender; pop-up coffee barista.

On traveling to Mexico "Our fear of Mexico has always been greater than what it actually is. You're risking your life far more by getting in a car and driving down here than by crossing the border and spending time here."

On the Border Patrol "You're dealing with other peoples' lives — the lives of the people that are crossing and the lives of the people you're working with. The stakes are high. I was surrounded by people who were very different from me in a lot of ways, but all of a sudden I was finding ways in which we weren't different, finding ways to connect meaningfully."

Current border work Research assistant for the Haury Field Studies in Writing Program, which connects University of Arizona MFA students with high school students working on borderlands restoration projects. "We're giving them the skills they need to recognize and use narratives," Cantú says, "helping them better articulate what the experience means to them."

Dreams of Opening a small bookstore; learning the accordion and starting a *norteño* band.

The *tacos dorados*, Francisco Cantú tells me as we push through the turnstiles into Nogales, Mexico, are some of the best he's ever had. So we beeline through the bustling streets toward the small metal cart in search of the paper-wrapped stacks of crispy chicken tacos dripping spicy red salsa.

Cantú is the author of *The Line Becomes A River,* forthcoming this February from Riverhead Books. The book is a beautiful and brutal chronicle of the four years he spent working as a Border Patrol agent, and the years afterward, in which an immigrant friend, José, is deported to Mexico, and Cantú finds himself navigating border policy from the other end. The book — his first — is already generating buzz; this year Cantú has received a Whiting Award in Nonfiction and a Pushcart Prize, and a section of the book recently aired on *This American Life.*

On this Monday, we've driven the 45 minutes from Tucson to Nogales, leaving my red pickup on the U.S. side, under the shadow of the 30-foot-tall wall that cuts through the city. We eat our tacos in a little city park. Cars stream around us, but the park itself is calm: Big cottonwoods with white-painted trunks arch over us. A few fallen leaves tick around us in the wind, as we talk about what a relief it is to slip into Mexico for the afternoon — feeling the slight shift in the rhythm of life, the tilt of our perspective.

Cantú wears yellow-rimmed glasses and a sizeable mustache, his thick dark hair containing only a few strands of gray. "When I first started coming to Nogales, I was in the MFA program and teaching a class to undergraduates," he says. "I remember thinking how crazy it was that anything south of the border was not a part of their worldview."

For Cantú, the border has always been a presence. Growing up in Prescott, Arizona, he was "close enough to it to have an understanding of it as a complicated place." His own grandfather crossed as a child, just after the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution.

After high school, Cantú went off to American University in Washington, D.C., to major in international relations. He studied abroad in Guanajuato, Mexico, becoming fluent in Spanish. "There was always that tension between what I would read in books and what I would see when I went home or when I traveled to Mexico," Cantú says. "My mind was always trying to connect what I studied with the contours of the place as I understood it."

This tension eventually led him to join the Border Patrol. "I wanted to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and

Francisco Cantú
JUAN SERRANO CORBELLA

real world, on-the-ground realities," he says. But "the work ended up giving me a whole new set of questions, without really answering the ones I came in with."

During his years in the Border Patrol, Cantú found himself increasingly haunted by the border's violence — both of the drug cartels, and of the desert landscape itself. No matter the risks, the crossers kept coming. At night he woke from vivid, terrifying dreams, grinding his teeth. He was working on an intelligence field team out of El Paso when he learned that he'd received a Fulbright Fellowship. So he quit the Border Patrol and spent his fellowship year living in The Netherlands, studying rejected asylum-seekers who chose to live in the shadows after their visas were denied.

But it was his own country's border that pulled at him. He came back to the desert. He applied to get his MFA in creative nonfiction writing in Tucson. "I can't tell you the gift I gave myself in choosing to be a writer and not a government employee or a lawyer or a policymaker," he says. "I don't have to rack my brain any longer for a solution. That's not my job anymore." Instead, he sees his job as deepening people's understanding of the border.

"It's always easier to pose the questions as black-and-white, to think about a person being someone who deserves entry into this country or not. But that doesn't encompass the complexity of what goes on here," Cantú says. The conversation needs to start by acknowledging the aspects of our border policy that are causing humanitarian crisis, he says. According to the United Nations Migration Agency, border deaths jumped 17 percent between 2016 and 2017, despite fewer people attempting the journey. By early August, 96 bodies had been recovered in Pima County, Arizona — where both Cantú and I live — alone. "We need the courage to say, 'That's not acceptable,' " says Cantú. "We shouldn't be weaponizing a vast, inhospitable landscape through our policy. Whether or not that's intentional, it's happening right now.

"It's hard to really grasp the significance of somebody saying: It doesn't matter how hellacious this obstacle is, I will overcome it, for my family, for my work. No matter what version of hell you put at the border, people are going to go through it to the other side. That presents the question: Should we be then trying to make this *more* hellacious and *more* life-threatening?

"We could talk about this forever," he says to me. "But should we get a beer?"

The bar he takes me to is called Kaos, a place he went once with a Mexican friend. Cantú never manned the Nogales border — in his work with the Border Patrol, he patrolled the remote desert west of here and worked out of intelligence centers in Tucson and El Paso — but to walk with Cantú in Nogales is to move with familiarity. "If you want Bacanora," he tells me, referring to a Sonoran mezcal, "I know a guy here who makes the best Bacanora. He's in a shoe shop."

Inside the darkness of Kaos, we pour a fat liter of cold Tecate into two plastic cups, while mariachis noodle on their guitars in the corner. As the man next to him shouts over the music, he apologetically translates for me from time to time — "His friends call him *mofles!* Like Muffler! I don't know why" — and I watch his face, so open and kind, so appreciative of the place. I try to picture him as *la migra,* the border police.

"There are days when I feel I am becoming good at what I do. And then I wonder, what does it mean to be good at this?" writes Cantú in *The Line Becomes A River*. "Of course, what you do depends on … what kind of agent you are. … but it's true that we slash their bottles and drain their water into the dry earth, that we dump their backpacks and pile their food and clothes to be crushed and pissed on and stepped over, strewn across the border and set ablaze."

I am not the first to wonder at the gap between what Cantú writes he has done and his unyielding desire for a system that acknowledges the humanity of those who cross. He will later describe writing the book as a form of exorcism, an act that allowed him to atone, to make sense of his own involvement in what the border has become. It was an act that allowed him to see some of his experiences as complete, as over — even as he came to understand that, in other ways, some things are still ongoing, still a part of him.

Cantú twists back toward me. "*Mofles* says Tecate tastes better on this side!" he says over the music, with a wry smile. And I have to agree that it does.

On our way back to the States, we still have room for tacos. We stop at a *carne asada* stand, where Cantú, laughing with the *cocinero,* gets the recipe. We eat as we walk, and at the last bend before the border, mopping taco juice from our fingers, we buy popsicles, *paletas,* for our wait in the border line: coconut for him, pistachio for me.

But the line is surprisingly empty; we walk right through. We scan our passports, the Border Patrol agent takes a brief glance at them, and just like that, we cross the line into the United States — nonchalant, licking our popsicles, improbably powerful.

Headed north in late afternoon, I ask Cantú if driving through these green hills, across these big spaces, is different now that he's patrolled them. "It's probably the landscape I know more intimately than any other," he says. "I knew the name of every pass and peak out there, every mountain range and mile marker and wash." He pauses. "But because of the work I did, it became impossible to drive through that landscape and think, 'Oh, look how nice it is.' " This land is not wild, he tells me, not in the way we like to think of it, with words like *untouched* and *solace* and *peaceful*. "All of a sudden you have access to the knowledge that, 100 percent, there are groups of people right now that I cannot see walking across the same terrain that I'm looking across. There are scouts on a handful of these mountaintops that I'm looking at, that are watching everything, who are radioing people. There are human remains left undiscovered and unidentified.

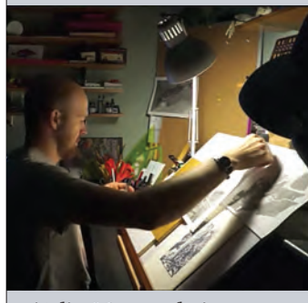
"If you do this, you see the desert as teeming with this sort of human drama. And even if you go camping out there — you can totally still have the wilderness experience, can hike, and you will maybe never encounter anything other than sign of peoples' passage. Because it's so vast. But they're out there." □

INDIE PRESSES IN THE WEST: A SAMPLING

BY REBECCA WORBY

ASTROPHIL PRESS
(2008, University of South Dakota, Vermillion)
astrophilpress.com

Astrophil publishes fiction, poetry and literary criticism, as well as work that defies traditional genres. The press is dedicated to publishing innovative work that is "fertile in imagination and mind," the kind of writing that "actively break(s) boundaries."



Atelier26 cover designer Nathan Shields. ATELIER26

ATELIER26 BOOKS
(2011, Portland, Oregon)
atelier26books.com

Atelier26 "exists to demonstrate the powers and possibilities of literature through beautifully designed and expressive books," viewing literature as "contemplation, conversation, and provocation." A tiny operation headquartered in its founder's spare bedroom, Atelier26 publishes one or two titles per year.

COUNTERPOINT PRESS
(2007, Berkeley, California)
counterpointpress.com

Counterpoint publishes fiction, nonfiction, poetry, graphic novels and anthologies. Subject matter includes politics, the counterculture, memoir, religion and philosophy. The press is "author-driven," devoting "all energy to the fresh, cutting-edge, and literary voices of our authors."

Name Esther Belin

Age 49

Hometowns
Los Angeles, California; Durango, Colorado

Vocation
Poet, writer, artist, teacher, addiction counselor

On picking up inspiration from Berkeley slam poets in the '80s
"It was so brash and in your face. All the poems I was thinking were quieter. I had anger. It wasn't that same kind of anger, but I really liked the sonical quality, and it inspired an idea for the form of poems."

How her poems are like road trips
"Road narratives are typical of Navajo people. We travel so much, especially for work or school. You gain an appreciation for your culture and the land and the landscape as you're driving and telling stories. Natural markers are universal to people; it's connection with a place."

On teaching
"Kids can't necessarily relate to Emily Dickinson, but if you're talking about stuff that's right outside their window, that's an entry point to language."

Esther Belin
PAUL BIKIS

A map of language

Esther Belin is trying to shape a Navajo way of writing

BY HEATHER HANSMAN

Outside her office at the Peaceful Spirit Treatment Center on the Southern Ute Reservation, Navajo poet Esther Belin takes in the thin late-fall sun. Here in the Four Corners of southwestern Colorado, where the Southern Ute, Navajo, Ute Mountain Ute and Jicarilla Apache reservations come together, the landscape is both beautiful and brutal in its spareness, much like Belin's poems. She's also an intake counselor at the addiction center, and she lives and works in that world of intersectionality, where language and identity overlap with the triumphs and failures of addiction.

Her new book, *Of Cartography*, is framed by the four cardinal directions and their symbolism in Navajo history. It digs into the cultural and physical representation of Navajo language, how landscape shapes identity and what it means to be Indian.

Her poems try to capture the rhythm and storytelling intrinsic to the Diné language. "I wanted to investigate whether there was a Navajo meter or diction, and how that voice could come out," she says. "It's not just a collection of poems squeezed together. This was about pairing identity politics with Navajo philosophy, which is all very orderly, and then telling my story through the structure."

That structure shapes the reading experience: Some of the poems are lists, others are questions. Some are wordless grids, X-marked within four quadrants. As a reader, I felt initially uncertain how to read the book, almost queasy. That's deliberate: Belin wants to show Navajo readers that they don't have to conform to English standards while giving outsiders a sense of the complicated poetics of tribal storytelling. "It's for the person who is willing to engage with the pieces," she says. "Which can be difficult, but that's kind of the point."

Belin's first book, *From the Belly of my Beauty*, was published in 1999 after the birth of her second daughter. It was a more linear look at being an Indian woman growing up in a white world, stretched between two landscapes: Southern California, where her parents were placed through the federal Indian relocation program, and the Navajo Reservation, where she's now spent 20 years with her husband and four daughters.

That book, a highly visceral depiction of an off-reservation Indian (Belin says she's comfortable with that word), challenged the stereotypes of Native identity, rebuking the kind of questions she's been asked since kindergarten. It won the 2000 American Book Award.

In the nearly two decades since, she's taught college and high school writing, finished an MFA program, started counseling and settled into the Southwest. *Of Cartography* is a sweeping reflection of all that, showing how tribal language can translate feelings and how poetry can help heal the wounds from a history of marginalization.

Belin twists up her long black hair as we talk, revealing big turquoise earrings. Our conversation skips between critical race theory, road trips, her daughter's college syllabus, and the arcane knot of reservation land-use policy. Her poems braid disparate lines together, too, juxtaposing small-scale details, like evening chores, with the history of Indian relocation policy.

That bundling of ideas draws on Diné language and culture. "The written tradition for us started in boarding school," she says. "Tribal language is not compartmentalized; it's about how you're connected to all these things. Tribal people have a history of trauma from learning that communication form, of reformulating to fit the structure."

Because of that, she says, she started *Of Cartography* with form instead of content. She sought to reflect the fluidity of tribal language, in which there's no single linear way to tell a story. Many of the poems can be read in several directions, and in poems like "Before we Begin," she plays with line breaks and blank space, to show motion and connection.

She has several other poetic projects in the works, including a biography of Olympic gold medalist Jim Thorpe, a member of the Sac and Fox Nation, which looks at Native masculinity, and a book about the history and federal policies of Navajo land. "The easy piece is doing it through poem. Or at least it is for me," she says. "That's my natural voice."

She's also working with three other writers on a Diné reader, an anthology of works from 20 Navajo writers, which she sees as a resource for Navajo students and teachers who come to the reservation without a background in tribal scholarship, a way to bridge the gap between state curriculum and Navajo culture.

Belin says she wants *Of Cartography* to show how structure and language can start to form a tribal canon, and to charge the reader with connecting the dots and understanding the history that shapes Indian life. The last poem, "Assignment 44," holds that directive: *"Analyze the above conversation. Read it aloud. Read it Loudly. Weave / a thread through it."* □

Native restoration

How a Kumeyaay poet merges natural and personal history

BY ERIC SIEGEL

Tommy Pico has just flown in on a red-eye from the West Coast, where he saw Janet Jackson live in Portland. ("Janet is my Beatles," he tells me.) Pico, a queer Native American poet from the Kumeyaay Nation, grew up in rural San Diego County on the Viejas Indian Reservation, a place where "history is stolen like water." Today, however, we're meeting outside a rustic and urbane farm-to-table café in the gentrified North Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, where he lives now. "How do you see the space inside yourself when you're all borderlands?" he asks, looking west as if toward the chaparral and oak-pine forests of his native Cuyamaca Mountains. Pico, 33, wears a pink T-shirt under a slate-gray sleeveless hoodie imprinted with a Native American pattern, white Converse high-tops and black denim cut-offs; tattoos of traditional Kumeyaay basket designs spiral down his forearms. "When markers of identity and markers of definition get taken away, then what are you?"

Pico knows a thing or two about loss of history and identity; his writings obsess over the concepts. Most of his work investigates how identity categories restrict meaning. The moment you define yourself, you risk becoming a stereotype — static rather than dynamic. This is why he critiques nature poetry in *Nature Poem*, his new book. It's not that he dislikes the natural world, despite his flip tone ("I'd slap a tree across the face"); rather, he distrusts what it means to write such poems. "Talking about nature, specifically as a Native American poet, it can become fodder for the Noble Savage narrative. I'd never do that."

Challenging the myth of "the ecological Indian," Pico traffics all parts of himself into his writing, making for a rambunctious romp. "One way to resist categorization," he tells me, "is to be all categories that you can possibly be. My writing tries to be all of itself so it doesn't snag on any one type of definition." He writes without a filter: Everything is game. *Nature Poem* reads like a continual status update, its long, poetic lines manic yet mannered. He tracks seamlessly between the millennial milieu of Brooklyn — where his queer Indigenous identity collides with the conventions of urban, white, gay sexuality — and the arid landscapes of his homeland (the words "drought," "blood" and "water" frequently occur). The poems abruptly shift registers, resisting any overarching style while capturing the complexity of the moment. Natural history and personal history meet: "*Every date feels like the final date bc we always find small ways of being / extremely rude to each other, like mosquito bites or deforestation.*"

That a New York poet — one rooted in the heat of urban life — doubles as a poet of the American West makes sense, given Pico's unique biography. Growing up on the reservation meant "merging and sublimating your own personality to the group," as if there was "only one way of being Kumeyaay." That repelled him. "I had to become an individual before I could come back to the group," he says. Now, after 15 years in New York City, he no longer shies away from writing about his people and the themes and preoccupations that characterize them. "I can say what I need to say and not feel like I'm going to be a stereotype," he explains. "Reclamation" seems like an apt word to describe his *oeuvre*, I say, and he replies, "Yes. Especially of self-identification."

Pico did not study poetry; he studied science at Sarah Lawrence College, initially hoping to become a physician who would solve the public health problems of Native American communities. He wrote poems for a decade but "hadn't really found my thing yet." Then, on Dec. 13, 2013 — his 30th birthday and the day Beyoncé released her self-titled, genre-changing "visual album" — Pico, who has a penchant for popular culture both high and low, suddenly found his form. "Her album was like a long poem. I started to read it like a long poem, and said to myself, 'This is my thing.' "

Pico currently has two books under his belt and two more underway, as well as a commissioned screenplay. "Cultural knowledge was eradicated in my grandmother's generation," he says. "It's problematic that I have to learn my own history in books written by white anthropologists." Pico's recovering that history — another act of reclamation. His books document the progression of his thinking through different poetic forms. *IRL* (2016) takes the form of a Twitter feed; *Nature Poem* (2017) is a work of landscape; *Junk* (forthcoming, 2018) is a break-up poem in couplets; and *Food* (in progress), resembles a recipe. He is reluctant to settle into any single category. "It's my way of asserting that Kumeyaay culture is dynamic," he says. "If I'm continually doing new things, then I'm expanding the definition of what a Kumeyaay person can be." □

Tommy Pico
ADA BANKS

Name Tommy Pico

Age 33

Hometowns Viejas Indian Reservation (near Alpine, California) and New York City (where he's lived since he was 18)

Vocation Poet

On why he writes book-length poems "It's about the ability to maintain an obsession. The world doesn't stop on a page, the world keeps going; to be honest to my poetic instinct, I can't stop either."

On the "nature" of *Nature Poem* "Physically, I wanted to incorporate the features of my ancestral homeland into the book. I was raised in my ancestral landscape, and not many people can say that. ... It would be a disservice to the people who survived long enough to make me if I didn't incorporate that into this book that was called, after all, *Nature Poem*."

Current obsession Collecting and cooking traditional Native American recipes. He is travelling the country cooking these dishes with friends (and strangers) as part of the research for his next book, *Food*, which he's writing "to talk about other ways in which Indigenous populations are subjugated, which is by alienating them from their traditional sources of gathering and cooking foods."

DOCK STREET PRESS
(2012, Seattle, Washington)
dockstreetpress.com

With the philosophy that "extraordinary work should never be determined by a select, deep-pocketed few," Dock Street Press prides itself on publishing risk-taking fiction and narrative nonfiction from up-and-coming writers. "We believe a book is a piece of art," the company's website says.

Dock Street Salon, an event to introduce new authors to readers in Seattle. DOCK STREET PRESS

FOREST AVENUE PRESS
(2012, Portland, Oregon)
forestavenuepress.com

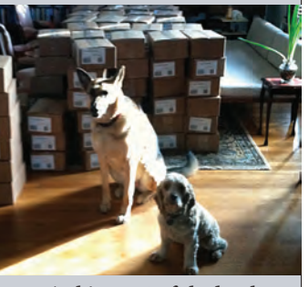
Forest Avenue publishes "page-turning literary fiction" with a "fresh, complex, sometimes nutty, and often-wondrous" approach to storytelling. The press also facilitates the Main Street Writers Movement, whose goal is "amplifying underrepresented voices and supporting regional literary organizations and businesses."

FUTURE TENSE BOOKS
(1990, Portland, Oregon)
futuretensebooks.com

Future Tense, which began with "scrappy Xeroxed chapbooks," publishes memoir, poetry and unusual fiction. It's "dedicated to publishing work by people often thought of as weirdos or outsiders," according to the website. "Their books will make you laugh, sweat, and hallucinate."

HAWTHORNE BOOKS
(2002, Portland, Oregon)
hawthornebooks.com

Hawthorne Books describes itself as having "a national scope and deep regional roots," with a focus in literary fiction and innovative nonfiction. Hawthorne's titles are the result of collaborative editing and "fierce commitment to the dignity of the book and its reader."



A shipment of the book *I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women.* LES FIGUES PRESS

LES FIGUES PRESS
(2005, Los Angeles, California)
lesfigues.com

Les Figues publishes poetry, prose, visual art, conceptual writing and translation. With a feminist editorial vision, its mission is to "create aesthetic conversations between readers, writers, and artists."

MAGIC HELICOPTER PRESS
(2007, Ashland, Oregon; now based in Santa Fe, New Mexico)
magichelicopterpress.com

Magic Helicopter publishes poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction across platforms. Its paper books are "collectible art items," its e-books are "experiences aware of their digital space," and the company also publishes "experimental multimedia projects." "We are literature with a *passiflora caerulea* for a rotor," says the website. "We land on your head."

Rewriting the West

What happens to our view of Western wilderness when the ones telling the stories are women?

EMILY WORTMAN-WUNDER

For years, starry-eyed initiates to the West's backcountry have packed along classics like John Muir's My First Summer in the Sierra*, Edward Abbey's* Desert Solitaire*, and the journals of Lewis and Clark. These writers inspire us, open our eyes to the beauty and the fragility of the rugged West, and give this landscape a mythic resonance.*

However, much of that myth has been written by men. "Here, in the wilderness, a man could be a real man, the rugged individual he was meant to be before civilization sapped his energy and threatened his masculinity," writes environmental historian William Cronon, describing the ethos that's shaped, and misshaped, our understanding of what wilderness is. Even the women writing in this tradition — Mary Austin, Terry Tempest Williams, Leslie Marmon Silko — often write about the struggle to make their way in a world dominated by men.

Recently, though, women have been storming the barricades. From Cheryl Strayed's best-selling memoir of hiking the Pacific Crest Trail to Claire Vaye Watkins' myth-busting fable of a waterless California, many of the exciting new names in the literature of the West are women. If the traditional vision of nature is one of struggle and conquest, of man testing himself against solitude and the elements, what does this shift mean for our collective vision of the wide-open spaces of the West?

HCN *spoke with two rising stars in the literature of the West about what this change means for them. Blair Braverman's dogsledding memoir* Welcome to the Goddamn Ice Cube *(Ecco, 2016) deliberately pushes back against some of the myths of the adventure narrative, while Emily Ruskovich's story of family tragedy in the remote Rocky Mountains,* Idaho *(Random House, 2017), takes up the mantle of novelists of the rural West like Wallace Stegner and Ivan Doig. Braverman spoke with us from her home in the Northwoods of Wisconsin, where she is training for the Iditarod, and Ruskovich spoke with us from Idaho City, Idaho. She has recently joined the creative writing faculty of Boise State University.*

HCN How has your experience with nature and wilderness influenced your writing?

Blair Braverman My writing is very, very informed by nature — I'm always thinking about nature, wildness, the outdoors. But when I was writing *Welcome to the Goddamn Ice Cube*, I wasn't thinking about the landscape so much as the human interactions that this particular landscape made possible. That was a driving question for me: What human interactions can only happen *here,* in this place, and nowhere else? The book is nature writing, Arctic writing, as reflected in the humans — mostly men — who live there.

Emily Ruskovich I grew up in the mountains just above Blanchard, Idaho, on 40 acres on Hoodoo Mountain. There was no electricity, no running water, no well, just badly logged land, strewn with the eerie garbage of the previous owners. We lived there through my adolescence. At first, we lived in tents, until my parents finished building our barn, and then we lived in the barn with all our animals. Every night we would eat whatever we could make on the fire. We would drive to town with empty milk jugs, fill them up with water, and haul them back to the mountain. We would boil that water on our fire, and, after it cooled a little, my mother would pour it over us to get the sticks and bugs out of our hair. That was our shower: We would stand on our picnic table and she would pour stolen water over our heads. Living up there, especially before we had a house, was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. It was an intense, wonderful time.

I couldn't have written *Idaho* without having lived on that mountain. It wasn't simply formative for me; it's actually who I am. I remember it with such clarity, and I ache for it. It's so immediate for me, and I'm always trying to get back there by writing about it. I think of my book — even though it is a very sad story — I think of it as a love letter to my family, and to our lives up there, and to that mountain.

HCN You each have a really distinct vision of wilderness. What was it that caused you to step away from a more traditional way of writing or thinking about wilderness?

BB One of the things I love about dogsledding is how it forces me to engage with nature on a deep level. I think the Leave No Trace ethos is vital, I'm glad it exists, I practice it when I go camping — but I'm also grateful that I came of age as an outdoorsperson in northern Norway, where I was taught to build fires and improvise shelters and otherwise interact with the landscape in slightly messier ways. All of our stories about nature are shaped by the ways in which we encounter it.

Leave No Trace practices teach us to pass through landscapes like ghosts, rather than become a part of those landscapes. We're already so many steps removed from nature, and Leave No Trace is another veil of separation. I wonder how it's going to affect the next generation of nature writers. Maybe it will push the genre in new ways. I'd love to be surprised.

ER Even though where we lived was so far removed from society — it was so far away, and very difficult to access, and very wild — wilderness for us was not untouched by people. Previous occupants of the land were always with us in the form of old garbage or treasures, some from a decade ago, some from a century ago. The most amazing thing that I found was a boot, a woman's or child's boot. It was filled with ants and soil and was decaying, so old that it was made with tiny nails; the lip of the boot curled over and there was lichen growing on it. All of this is to say that people's lives, and the hardship of people's lives, was very much a part of our life. Wilderness is not just the trees and the animals and the flowers and the danger; it was also very much about people. Imagining this other family, homesteaders from very long ago, was a part of our experience.

HCN How is women's writing about nature and the West different from men's writing?

BB Women are already outsiders in the genre, so there's less pressure to fall into established tropes. In the classic tale of Man vs. Nature, either man or nature wins — which means that the other one loses. But that's a narrow framework, and without identifying with the writers of the canon, it's easier for female writers to sidestep the competition entirely.

Take Aldo Leopold vs. Annie Dillard. Dillard is *repelled* by nature. She's horrified by it, and she makes us feel horrified, too. There's a reverence to traditional nature writing that women writers don't adhere to as much. The best women nature writers have leverage to be less sentimental, to tell a more complicated story.

HCN Blair, how does your work push back against the standard male adventure narrative?

BB Outdoor writing falls into all sorts of gendered tropes. Men's coming-of-age stories are about going into the world and battling dragons, so to speak. Women's

coming-of-age stories are about going into the world and discovering that it's dangerous in new ways for them. *Ice Cube*, I think, is both of these, without the tidy conclusions of either.

If you look at traditional stories of wilderness and survival — which is of course an adjacent genre to nature writing — we usually see men responding by taming the wild, making it civil, and women responding by going feral. After all, wild femininity is dangerous — that's where witches come from, right?

HCN Any final thoughts on what Western landscapes mean for your work?

ER These lines from Joan Didion really touch me: "A place belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, renders it, remakes it so radically that he remakes it in his own image." I read that over and over again when I went through a grieving period after my parents had to sell our mountain. Writing my book was a way of loving it obsessively and radically and remaking it in my own image. It's a way of holding onto it forever even though the cable gate is now locked against me. □

Blair Braverman races in the Apostle Island Sled Dog Race in Bayfield, Wisconsin, in February. She lives and writes in northern Wisconsin and is training for the Iditarod. JAMES NETZ

Emily Ruskovich holds her Flemish giant rabbit, Marjorie, while Pip, a lionhead rabbit, sniffs her hat. Ruskovich lives in the state that also serves as the title for her book, *Idaho*. KATHERINE JONES/IDAHO STATESMAN

RED HEN PRESS
(1994, Pasadena, California)
redhen.org

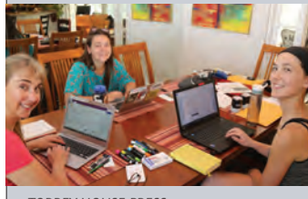
Red Hen includes two imprints: Arktoi Books, focused on work by lesbian writers, and Boreal Books, dedicated to work from Alaska. Red Hen's mission is to publish works of literary excellence — spanning poetry, literary fiction and nonfiction — while supporting diversity and promoting literacy in Los Angeles-area schools.

STALKING HORSE PRESS
(2016, Santa Fe, New Mexico)
stalkinghorsepress.com

The press is "committed to radical voices" in fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Founder James Reich told says the company seeks work that is "spiky, angular, errant." A portion of the proceeds from each book goes to a humanitarian or charitable organization selected by the author.

TIN HOUSE BOOKS
(2002, Portland, Oregon)
tinhouse.com

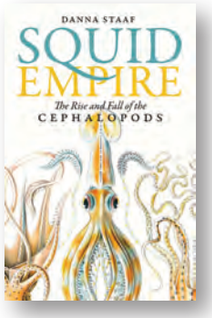
Along with producing *Tin House Magazine*, "the singular lovechild of an eclectic literary journal and a beautiful glossy magazine," Tin House publishes about a dozen books a year. Tin House showcases both established and undiscovered writers.

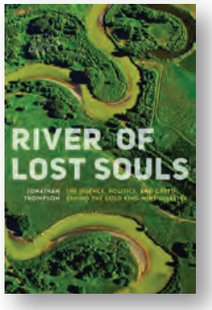


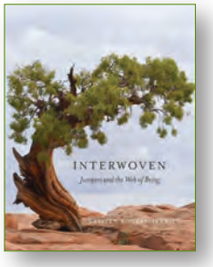
TORREY HOUSE PRESS

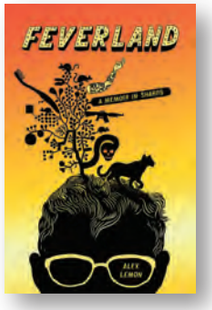
TORREY HOUSE PRESS
(2010, Salt Lake City, Utah)
torreyhouse.org

Torrey House publishes books about the changing American West and the changing planet. Through memoir, environmental writing, narrative nonfiction and literary fiction, they seek to educate and inspire action with the belief that engaging in the "conversation of conservation" contributes to Wallace Stegner's hoped-for "society to match the scenery."









New books for fall reading

Here at *High Country News*, we've combed through hundreds of new titles that strike us as relevant to the American West, mostly from indie presses and other small publishers, to bring you a sampling of the season's best new reads. Listings appear alphabetically by author; if a book is already available, no publication month is given.

—Jodi Peterson

NOVELS & SHORT STORIES

Brave Deeds David Abrams, Grove Press

Black Jesus and Other Superheroes: Stories Venita Blackburn, University of Nebraska Press

Snow Mike Bond, Mandevilla Press

The Relive Box and Other Stories T.C. Boyle, Ecco

Watch Me Disappear: A Novel Janelle Brown, Spiegel & Grau

The Child Finder Rene Denfeld, Harper

In the Distance Hernan Diaz, Coffeehouse Press

Future Home of the Living God: A Novel Louise Erdrich, Harper

The Vengeance of Mothers Jim Fergus, St. Martin's Press

Love and Other Consolation Prizes Jamie Ford, Ballantine Books

Absolutely Golden: A Novel D. Foy, Stalking Horse Press

Gangster Nation: A Novel Tod Goldberg, Counterpoint

Montana Noir James Grady and Keir Graff, eds., Akashic

The Flicker of Old Dreams Susan Henderson, HarperCollins, March 2018

Strange Weather: Four Short Novels Joe Hill, William Morrow

The Largesse of the Sea Maiden: Stories Denis Johnson, Random House, January 2018

The Disintegrations: A Novel Alistair McCartney, University of Wisconsin Press

Blackfish City Sam J. Miller, Ecco, April 2018

Some Hell: A Novel Patrick Nathan, Graywolf Press, February 2018

Savage Country Robert Olmstead, Algonquin

The Dark Net Benjamin Percy, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

The Dead Go To Seattle Vivian Faith Prescott, Red Hen Press

The Overstory: A Novel Richard Powers, W. W. Norton & Company, April 2018

Ash Falls Warren Read, Ig Publishing

Hour Glass Michelle Rene, Amberjack Publishing, February 2018

Fly Me Daniel Riley, Little Brown

Manifest West: Women of the West Caleb Seeling, Sapphire Heien and Sheena Feiler, eds., Western Press Books

Stanton, California: Stories Sam Silvas, Silver Birch Press

The Last Cowboys of San Geronimo Ian Stansel, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Parts per Million Julia Stoops, Forest Avenue Press, April 2018

Lord of California Andrew Valencia, Ig Publishing, January 2018

Wild Bird Wendelin Van Draanen, Knopf

Stony Mesa Sagas Chip Ward, Torrey House Press

The Saints of Rattlesnake Mountain: Stories Don Waters, University of Nevada Press

Muir Woods or Bust Ian Woollen, Coffeetown Press

Buckskin Cocaine Erika T. Wurth, Astrophil Press

NONFICTION, BIOGRAPHY, MEMOIR

You Don't Have to Say You Love Me: A Memoir Sherman Alexie, Little, Brown & Company

American Wolf Nate Blakeslee, Crown

Confidential Source Ninety-Six: A Memoir Roman Caribe and Rob Cea, Hachette

Utopia is Creepy and Other Provocations Nicholas Carr, W. W. Norton & Company

Wonderlandscape: Yellowstone National Park and the Evolution of an American Cultural Icon John Clayton, Pegasus Books

Confessions of a Cartel Hit Man Martin Corona with Tony Rafael, Dutton

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

Stories Find You, Places Know: Yup'ik Narratives of a Sentient World Holly Cusack-McVeigh, University of Utah Press

Crown Jewel Wilderness: Creating North Cascades National Park Lauren Danner, Washington State University Press

The Source: How Rivers Made America and America Remade Its Rivers Martin Doyle, W. W. Norton and Company, February 2018

Dodge City and the Birth of the Wild West Robert R. Dykstra and Jo Ann Manfra, University Press of Kansas

"That's What They Used to Say": Reflections on American Indian Oral Tradition Donald L. Fixico, University of Oklahoma Press

The Great Quake: How the Biggest Earthquake in North America Changed Our Understanding of the Planet Henry Fountain, Crown

Unlikely Alliances: Native Nations and White Communities Join to Defend Rural Lands Zoltán Grossman, University of Washington Press

Way Out There: Adventures of A Wilderness Trekker J. Robert Harris, Mountaineers Books

American Indian History On Trial: Historical Expertise in Tribal Litigation E. Richard Hart, University of Utah Press

Grass Roots: A History of Cannabis in the American West Nick Johnson, Oregon State University Press

The Powell Expedition: New Discoveries About John Wesley Powell's 1869 River Journey Don Lago, University of Nevada Press

Whale in the Door: A Community Unites to Protect BC'S Howe Sound Pauline Le Bel, Caitlin Press

Feverland: A Memoir in Shards Alex Lemon, Milkweed Editions

Nature, Love, Medicine: Essays on Wildness and Wellness Thomas Lowe Fleischner, ed., Torrey House Press

Open Spaces, Open Rebellions: The War over America's Public Lands Michael J. Makley, University of Massachusetts Press, December

Both Sides of the Bullpen: Navajo Trade and Posts Robert S. McPherson, University of Oklahoma Press

Hunting El Chapo Cole Merrell, Harper, April 2018

Grand Canyon for Sale: Public Lands versus Private Interests in the Era of Climate Change Stephen Nash, University of California Press

Windfall: How the New Energy Abundance Upends Global Politics and Strengthens America's Power Meghan L. O'Sullivan, Simon & Schuster

Changing Energy: The Transition to a Sustainable Future John H. Perkins, University of California Press

Wild Horse Country: The History, Myth and Future of the Mustang David Phillips, Norton

Replenish: The Virtuous Cycle of Water and Prosperity Sandra Postel, Island Press

Making Friends with Death: A Field Guide for Your Impending Last Breath Laura Pritchett, Viva Editions

Eat Less Water Florencia Ramirez, Red Hen Press

Yellowstone Migrations: Preserving Freedom to Roam Joe Riis, Mountaineers Books/Braided River

Limits of the Known David Roberts, W. W. Norton & Company, February 2018

Interwoven: Junipers and the Web of Being Kristen Rogers-Iversen, University of Utah Press, January 2018

We Aspired: The Last Innocent Americans Pete Sinclair, University of Utah Press

Wolf Boys: Two American Teenagers and Mexico's Most Dangerous Drug Cartel Dan Slater, Simon & Schuster

Stewart L. Udall: Steward of the Land Thomas G. Smith, University of New Mexico Press

A Temporary Refuge: Fourteen Seasons with Wild Summer Steelhead Lee Spencer, Patagonia

Squid Empire: The Rise and Fall of the Cephalopods Danna Staaf, ForeEdge

Blood Brothers: The Story of the Strange Friendship between Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill Deanne Stillman, Simon & Schuster

Firestorm: How Wildfire Will Shape our Future Edward Struzik, Island Press

Letters to Memory: A Memoir Karen Tei Yamashita, CoffeeHouse Press

River of Lost Souls: The Science, Politics, and Greed Behind the Gold King Mine Disaster Jonathan Thompson, Torrey House Press, February 2018

The Newcomers: Finding Refuge, Friendship, and Hope in an American Classroom Helen Thorpe, Scribner

Bones: Brothers, Horses, Cartels and the Borderland Dream Joe Tone, One World

Red Rock Stories: Three Generations of Writers Speak on Behalf of Utah's Public Lands Stephen Trimble, ed., Torrey House Press

Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet Anna Tsing et al., ed., University of Minnesota Press

The Archaic Southwest: Foragers in an Arid Land Bradley J. Vierra, ed., University of Utah Press, February 2018

The Best Land Under Heaven: The Donner Party in the Age of Manifest Destiny Michael Wallis, Liveright

Floodpath: The Deadliest Man-Made Disaster of 20th-Century America and the Making of Modern Los Angeles Jon Wilkman, Bloomsbury, January 2018

Eat the Apple: A Memoir Matt Young, Bloomsbury, February 2018

The Misfit's Manifesto Lidia Yuknavitch, Simon & Schuster/TED Books

RESEARCH FUND

Thank you, Research Fund donors, for coloring our world

Since 1971, reader contributions have made it possible for *HCN* to report on the American West. Your tax-deductible gift directly funds nonprofit, independent journalism.

Thank you for supporting our hardworking journalists.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA GUARDIAN

Jon Christensen, Donor Advised Fund | Venice, CA
George W. Davis Fund | Los Altos, CA

PUBLISHER'S CIRCLE

Millstream Fund
Tamia & Tom Anderson | Berkeley, CA
Burks B. Lapham, Evergreen II Fund | Washington, DC
Walton Family Foundation | Bentonville, AR
William B. Wiener Jr. | Shreveport, LA

PHILANTHROPIST

Ruth H. Brown Foundation | Crested Butte, CO
Patagonia.com | Ventura, CA

STEWARD

John Molenar | Fort Collins, CO
Joyce D. Olson | Grand Junction, CO
Constance Pope | Hillsboro, OR
Jon & Lisa Stine | Portland, OR
William Voxman & Joanne Reece | Moscow, ID

GUARANTOR

Anonymous (3)
Audrey Benedict, Sawtooth Springs Ranch | Ward, CO
Osvel Hinojosa | San Ysidro, CA
Marla Painter & Mark Rudd | Albuquerque, NM
Pete Sandrock | Portland, OR
Sara Solamanian | Salt Lake City, UT
Peter & Tina Watterberg | Albuquerque, NM

BENEFACTOR

Anonymous (12)
Joe Alcorn & Sylvia Wittels | Bernalillo, NM
Myron Allen & Adele Aldrich | Laramie, WY
Richard & Betsy Armstrong | Boulder, CO
Robert & LouAnn Ball | Dolores, CO
Robert Bricca | Durango, CO
David & Linda Chipping | Los Osos, CA
Beth Conover & Ken Snyder | Denver, CO
Debra & Thomas Corbett | Anchorage, AK
Frank Grundstrom & Cynthia Dickstein | Tucson, AZ
Alan Gourley & Sarah Brown | Steamboat Springs, CO
Myron & Susan Hood | Los Osos, CA
Michael H. Horn | Fullerton, CA
Dan & Tracy Ihnot | Hotchkiss, CO
Lisa Jones & Peter Williams | Boulder, CO
Peter Kozisek | Boise, ID
Kathleen Kritscher | Walnut Creek, CA
Carl May | Montara, CA
Carol Lee Miller | Missoula, MT
Michael Ort & Nancy Riggs | Flagstaff, AZ
John & Rebecca Petrik | Minot, ND
Wayne E. Poulsen | Bolinas, CA
Anna & Nick Reed | Denver, CO
Catherine Rosul Charitable Fund | Albuquerque, NM
George & Norma Ruptier | Placitas, NM
Joyce Schnobrich | Berkeley, CA
Ron Sievers | Long Beach, CA
Tom Sisk | Vancouver, BC CANADA
Chris Stidley & Ed Bedrick | Tucson, NM
Jim & Anne Taylor | Billings, MT
Greg & Kimberly Tieman | Charleston, WV
Tim Welch | Littleton, CO
Stan & Elder Witt Wellborn | Washington, DC

SPONSOR

Anonymous (4)
In honor of Jennifer Bachus
Roger & Suzanne Ames | Tulsa, OK
Bo Baggs | Port Arthur, TX
Paul C. Barringer | Golden, CO
Donald & Ellen Bauder | Salida, CO
Donna Buessing | Clayton, CA
Diane Davidson | Portal, AZ
Raymond Gilkeson | Sequim, WA
G. Alexander Gray | Franklinton, NC
George Griset | Gustine, CA
Lofton R. Henderson | Boulder, CO
Nancy S. Hoffman | Jackson, WY
Martin Hudson | Tigard, OR
Bob & Linda Keiter | Salt Lake City, UT
Elizabeth Kelsey | Garden City, ID
Mark Krause | Phoenix, AZ
Jerry Lidz | Eugene, OR
Nancy N. Melling | Salt Lake City, UT
Anne & Jack Middleton | Mount Vernon, WA
David C. Moir & Ruth J. Tatter | Los Alamos, NM
George I. Ogura | Champaign, IL
Joan Olafson-Smith | Corona del Mar, CA
Sam Perry | Durango, CO
Jack & Rachel Potter | Columbia Falls, MT
William Reffalt | Albuquerque, NM
Virginia M. Schnell | Pima, AZ
Kay Schulz | Trinidad, CA
Virginia Smith & Sandra Postel | Los Lunas, NM
Ralph & Betsy Stephens | Chevy Chase, MD
Adair & Arnie Stifel | Reisterstown, MD
Ken Winkes | Conway, WA
Ralph Wolter | Buhl, ID
Alison Woodworth | Coleville, CA

Yosemite Big Leaf Maple. MOLLY HASHIMOTO

COLORS OF THE WEST

By Molly Hashimoto
192 pages, hardcover: $24.95. Mountaineers Books, 2017.

From the green waters of Diablo Lake in Washington's North Cascades National Park to the orange sandstone of Arches National Park in Utah, Molly Hashimoto captures the beauty of Western ecosystems in *Colors of the West*. The book features her *plein air* watercolors of the wildlife and landscapes she's encountered in the parks, monuments, wilderness areas and refuges scattered across the region.

Hashimoto's observations on natural history and recollections of light, color and specific scenes accompany the images. For readers interested in heading outside with a sketchpad, she includes a short tutorial on painting in natural settings. Tips on technique and short profiles of other artists whose work Hashimoto finds inspiring are sprinkled throughout the book. It's important to observe and record the details of the landscape, she writes, "but even more vitally, to communicate to others the value of these places." **EMILY BENSON**

PATRON

Anonymous (4)
In memory of Tom Bell
In memory of the Paris Agreement | Earth
In memory of Patrick J. Kearns | Denver, CO
Annette & Robert Aguayo | Albuquerque, NM
Eric Almquist | McKinleyville, CA
Adrienne Anderson | Lakewood, CO
Jane Anderson | Berthoud, CO
Susan Baker | Waitsburg, WA
Linda Barthol | Moore, MT
John & Sue Bassett | Kenmore, WA
Joe & Debbie Bishop | Durango, CO
William Bishop | La Grange, TX
George & Susan Boehlert | Redmond, OR
Rebecca Brookhart | Boulder, CO
Luke Caldwell | Fort Collins, CO
Andrew Catford | Fort Collins, CO
Errol Claire | Canyon City, OR
Lew & Enid Cocke | Manhattan, KC
John H. Conley | Port Townsend, WA
Bruce, Judy & Erin Connery | Southwest Harbor, ME
Paul D'Amato & Beth Cashdan | Aspen, CO
Jane & Jack Davis | Danville, AR
Norman Denzin | Urbana, IL
Kathy Dice | Borrego Springs, CA
Art Elser | Denver, CO
Richard Engelmann | Boulder, CO
Audrey Evans | Norco, CA
Patricia Farrell | Newberg, OR
James Fereday & Margaret Ryan | Coos Bay, OR
John Freemuth | Boise, ID
William Friese Jr. & Staci Mayer | Phoenix, AZ
Caroline Gilbert | Indian Hills, CO
Roy Glauthier | Costa Mesa, CA
David & Lisa Goldfarb & Lisa Saiman | Hastings on Hudson, NY
Susan Goldsmith | Phoenix, AZ
Edward Groenendyke | Gardnerville, NV
Carol A. Haller | Corrales, NM
Scott & Claudia Hein | Concord, CA
Thomas & Consuelo Hester | Silver City, NM
Maruta Hiegel | Ryderwood, WA
Milton Hollander | Salt Lake City, UT
Julian & Diane Holt | Sacramento, CA
Jon Horn | Montrose, CO
Alice Winters Irwin | Dubois, WY
Donald Ivy | Coos Bay, OR
Trevor Jones | Vancouver, BC Canada
John Jursa | Manitowish Waters, WI
Martha Ketelle | Albuquerque, NM
Robert Kohut | Ithaca, NY

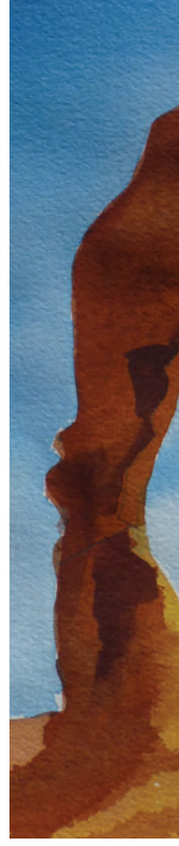
Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

Lawrence & Judy Kolz | Colorado Springs, CO
Elmer Kuball | East Wenatchee, WA
Brian Larsen & Renae Kofford | Boulder, CO
David Larson | El Cerrito, CA
Sally Letchworth Bub | Kinnear, WY
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Maurer | Castro Valley, CA
Doyle McClure | Boulder, CO
Michael McCoy | Imperial Beach, CA
Heather McGregor & Steve Smith | Glenwood Springs, CO
Don & Michelle Meaders | Albuquerque, NM
John K. Moore | Sacramento, CA
Mary Mumford | Santa Fe, NM
Michelle Napoli | Las Vegas, NV
Harriet & James Neal | Placitas, NM
Wendy Beth Oliver | Milwaukie, OR
Ruth & Greg Phillips | Salida, CO
Jane Poss | El Paso, TX
Rob Russell | Quincy, CA
Mark Sabitt | Eugene, OR
Jack F. Salter | Evergreen, CO
Greg Scott | Evergreen, CO
James Shaw | Boulder, CO
Dan Shields & Barb Lynch | Morrison, CO
Jeff Shoemaker & Nancy Birge | Denver, CO
Ann Skartvedt & Mark Burget | Oakland, CA
Peter Slattery | Salinas, CA
Robert E. & Anne T. Sneed Family Foundation
Anthony Soliz | Denver, CO
Bill Sutherland & Judy Gilbert | Crestone, CO
Byron & Anne Thomas | Scotts Valley, CA
Lisa Thomas | Newport, OR
William Tydeman & Leslie R. Dutton | Lubbock, TX
Paul Wack | Morro Bay, CA
Carol B. Weber | Dallas, TX
Nadia White | Missoula, MT
Alison Wiley | Portland, OR
Jamie & Florence Williams | Washington, DC
Patrick T. Williams & Patti Merriner | Carson City, NV
Marc R. Williams | Etna, CA
Jen & Charlie Wilson | Lander, WY
Bob Wolff | Santa Monica, CA
George Wright & Jodie Kavanaugh | Grand Junction, CO
Ann & William Zolin | Corrales, NM
Irene Zsitvay | Tucson, AZ

FRIEND

Anonymous (12)
In honor of ... the hard-working reporters at *HCN*
In memory of ... Planet Earth | Milky Way Galaxy
In memory of George Aiken
In memory of Rudy & Lela Autio | Missoula, MT
In memory of May & Carroll Butler | Redondo Beach, CA
In memory of Raven Hail | Cherokee Nation, OK
In memory of Bob Hopkins
In memory of Kurt Kumli | Chico, CA
In memory of Elizabeth & Carl Paak | Albuquerque, NM
In memory of Mary Suarez | Moab, UT
Judy Alderson & Daryl Miller | Anchorage, AK
Daniel Anderson | Westminster, CO
Julia Anderson | Pardeeville, WI
Linda & Mike Balas | Montrose, CO
Spencer Ballard | Santa Fe, NM
Jane Bardin | Medford, OR
Amanda Barker | Boulder, CO
Lilian & Thomas Beggs | Santa Cruz, CA
Paul Bianchi | Ruidoso, NM
Ilene Bilenky | Littleton, MA
Carol Bogezi | Seattle, WA
Stephen Bomkamp | Seattle, WA
Gordon Bruchner | Anacortes, WA
Ernest Bunce | Aurora, CO
Charles & Shelley Calisher | Fort Collins, CO
Harvey E. & Francine Cantor, Cantor Family Charitable Fund | St. Lewis, MO
Elizabeth Carver | Denver, CO
Gaby Chapman | Durango, CO
Scott Christensen | Kensington, CA
William Christian | Pasadena, CA
Amy Cilimburg | Missoula, MT
Donald W. Cline & Judith L. McNamee | Leesburg, VA
Conrad & Sharon Colby | Boise, ID
Steve Corbato | Portland, OR
Jonathan Davie | Eliot, ME
Tilda De Wolfe | Round Mountain, NV
Michael DeMarco | Bloomsburg, PA
Anne DePrince | Denver, CO
Jeffrey Dial | Wilson, WI
Laura Dixon | Seattle, WA
Joe Donnelly | Los Angeles, CA
The Stewart Family | Hattiesburg, MS
Frank Forsgren | Carson City, NV
Paul Frank & Anne Clare Erickson | Moab, UT
Deb French | Littleton, CO
Elaine & John French | Ketchum, ID
Ilene Good | Denver, CO
Elizabeth Goss | Reno, NV
Steven Grayson | Flagstaff, AZ
Graham Guedon | Redwood City, CA



***Mount Rainier Meadow*, left, and *Delicate Arch*, right.** MOLLY HASHIMOTO

Chris Gutmacher & Andy Stevenson | Port Angeles, WA
Robyn Jan Hahn | Glenwood Springs, CO
Harold & Jacquelyn Hall | Claremont, NH
Sue Halliday | Moab, UT
Martin Hanni | Salem, OR
David & Mary Hanscom | Park City, UT
Molly Hardman | Longmont, CO
Alan Harper & Carol Baird | Oakland, CA
Rod Harris & Jane Slusarski | Fort Collins, CO
Rounscival S. Harrison | San Francisco, CA
Marita Hart | Salt Lake City, UT
Brent Hartree | Puketapu, NPR, New Zealand
David Hawkins | Ellijay, GA
Bernadette Hayes | West Valley City, UT
Annette Heath | Denver, CO
Judith Herrmann | Modesto, CA
Julia Hesse | Astoria, OR
Ron Hill | Batavia, OH
John Hoffman | Sonoita, AZ
Julian & Diane Holt | Sacramento, CA
Holli Hopkins | Superior, MT
John Horner | Boulder, CO
Martha Hut | Tabernash, CO
David Inouye | Crested Butte, CO
Joel Jakabosky & Gwen Berry | Lyle, WA
Robert & Phyllis Jenkins | Cheyenne, WY
Karen & Roger Innes | Bloomington, IN
Liz Elam & Bob Johnson | Bozeman, MT
Ron Jones | Kanab, UT
Mary L. Jost | Grand Junction, CO
Alan R. Kasdan | Washington, DC
David & Jo Kaye | Lakewood, CO
Karen Kerschen & Sandy Sommers | Ojo Caliente, NM
Bob Kiesling | Helena, MT
John Kindel | Elizabeth, CO
Katherine King | Breckenridge, CO
Pete Kinnaman | La Junta, CO
Jim & Georgia Kinninger | Wellington, NV
Nic & Mary Korte | Grand Junction, CO
Jay Krajic | Boise, ID
Deborah Krichels | Albuquerque, NM
Don Kusler | Snohomish, WA
Elizabeth Lathrop | Gig Harbor, WA
Percy V. Laube | Somers, MT
Ellen Leatham | Portland, OR
Harold Lee | Mount Vernon, WA
Jane Levene | Denver, CO
John LeVine | Los Angeles, CA
Karl Libsch | Merced, CA
George Lindsey | Hampton, GA
Chuck & Francie Link | Boise, ID
Carol Linneman | Merced, CA
Tawnia Litwin | San Francisco, CA
George F. Lockeman | Everett, WA
Joseph Lofgren | Minneapolis, MN
Michael Logsdon | Seattle, WA
Gary Luhnow | Denver, CO
Michelle MacKenzie | Menlo Park, CA
Mary C. Mackie | Albuquerque, NM
Stephen A. Macleod | Burlingame, CA
Linda Malm & Donn Young | Taos, NM
Susan Markley | Palmetto Bay, FL
Anne Markward | Durango, CO
Betty Marlow | Grand Junction, CO
Jay Matthews | Corvallis, MT
Janet Winniford & Daniel McCool | Ogden, UT
Scott A. McInnis | Littleton, CO
Bob McKenzie | Eagle, CO
Joseph McMahon | Denver, CO
John Merz | Chico, CA
Ken & Pat Mesec | Littleton, CO
John Metz | Canon City, CO
Karen & Mich Michigian | Three Rivers, CA
Davide C. Migliaccio | Colorado Springs, CO
Malinda Miller | Louisville, CO
Ray Miller | Mckinleyville, CA
Ronald Mizia | Idaho Falls, ID
Chris Moench & Jennifer Hahn | Bellingham, WA
Mark Momberg | Bozeman, MT
Anne Monge | Fair Oaks, CA
Chris Moore | Denver, CO

Nancy Moran & Howard Ochman | Austin, TX
Richard Morehead | Fort Worth, TX
Daniel Mortensen | Mead, WA
Todd Mower | Corinth, VT
John D. Mozer | Aurora, CO
Duncan & Rosalie Neilson | Portland, OR
Louis Nelson | Tucson, AZ
Doug Newbould | Soldotna, AK
Robert Newtson | Marana, AZ
Eunice Nicholson | Denton, TX
Chanae Nielson | Snowflake, AZ
Jenna Nigro | Salt Lake City, UT
Carrie J. Nimmer | Phoenix, AZ
Phil Notz | Fort Collins, CO
Marcus Novacheck | Westlake, TX
Bruce L. Nurse | Clinton, WA
John & Sally Ochsner | Kittredge, CO
Daniel O'Keefe | Vashon, WA
Alan & Janet Olson | Eden Prairie, MN
Karen Olson | Rapid City, SD
Gary & Kathy O'Neal | Portland, OR
Kimberly Orton, CARS, Inc. | Logan, UT
Ashley & Tauno Palomaki | Seattle, WA
Mark Perrin | Bothell, WA
Carol Peterson | Centennial, CO
Norris Peterson | Sedona, AZ
Sandra Phillips | Brecksville, OH
William Philpott | Centennial, CO
Craig Pindell | Cheyenne, WY
David E. Polster | Salt Lake City, UT
Peter Prince | Santa Fe, NM
Deborah Proctor | Gillette, WY
George Raino | Boise, ID
Jerry Ravert | Florence, AZ
Stephen Record | Block Island, RI
Margaret A. Redmond | Roseville, MN
Richard Reinaker | Terrebonne, OR
James Remitz | Coeur d'Alene, ID
Steve Ring | Evergreen, CO
Gerry A. Roberts | Arvada, CO
Marcel Rodriguez | Springdale, UT
Joseph Rohleder | Waldport, OR
Andrew H. Rorick | Baker City, OR
Scott & Wendy Ross | Medora, ND
Nancy Rutherford | Ontario, CA
Robert Sargent | Macon, GA
Sherry Schenk | Grand Junction, CO
Ed Schlegel | Capistrano Beach, CA
William Schmidt | Tucson, AZ
Kim Schnuelle | Seattle, WA
Frank C. Schroeder III & Anne M. Donahoe | Pray, MT
Brian & Kathy Schumacher | Alameda, CA
David Schweppe | Ocala, FL
Kate Segerstrom | Sonora, CA
George Sibley | Gunnison, CO
Joyce Sjogren | Fort Collins, CO
Ellie Slothower | Colorado Springs, CO
Diana Somps | Novato, CA
Larry Spanne | Kanab, UT
Deborah Sparrow | Tempe, AZ
Diane Spencer | Vancouver, WA
Scot Spicer | Boise, ID
Delaine Spilsbury | McGill, NV
Robert Spitz | Santa Fe, NM
John Stansfield | Monument, CO
Martha Taylor & Sherman Stephens | Flagstaff, AZ
Bob Stevens | Salt Lake City, UT
Frank P. Stewart | Denver, CO
Georgia Stigall | Woodside, CA
Bok Summers | Livingston, MT
David Susong & Kelly Milligan | Park City, UT
Sonali Tewatia | Merritt Island, FL
Stephen J. Thomas | Flagstaff, AZ
Robert Thorstensen | Thornton, CO
Joseph Tieger | Tacoma, WA
Paul Tomlinson | Edmonds, WA
Dean Tooley | Edgewood, NM
Cindy Tripp & Gary Stiegler | Fort Collins, CO
Ana Unruh Cohen | Washington, DC
Richard Van Aken | Southampton, PA
James Van Dinter | Boise, ID
Henry VanWyhe | Ridgefield, WA
Beverly Vasten-Wilson | Montrose, CO
Ken Vogler | Boulder, CO
Lewis Wallenmeyer | Las Vegas, NV
Michael Warburton | Berkeley, CA
Wallace T. Ward | Houston, TX
Luann Waters | Wynnewood, OK
Derek Watkins | Portland, OR
Steven Weaver | Jacksonville, OR
Paul Weber | Fort Collins, CO
Waldo Wedel | Boulder, CO
Alfred Weisbecker | Hamilton, MT
Heather Weston | Castro Valley, CA
G.H. Wiegand | Inkom, ID
Penington Wimbush | Dillon, CO
Jeff Winslow | Portland, OR
Kent Winterholler | Park City, UT
John C. Wise | Hidden Valley Lake, CA
Richard Woolley | Longmont, CO
Michael Worster | Evergreen, CO
Judith Wright | Santa Fe, NM
Eileen Yelverton | Lyons, CO
Lou S. Young | Tacoma, WA
Edith Zagona | Boulder, CO
Paul Zarn | Petaluma, CA
Tom Zieber | Gunnison, CO
Eleanor Zoeller | Paonia, CO

Changing seasons and remembering a reader

These last few weeks have brought a flurry of falling leaves, staff birthday celebrations, and family visits to *High Country News*' home in Paonia, Colorado. Both Assistant Editor **Anna V. Smith** and Editorial Fellow **Emily Benson** welcomed their parents to the Western Slope, where they got acquainted with the North Fork Valley and explored our local public lands. The change in seasons provided a perfect time to catch both the last warm days in the desert and the first frosty days in the mountains. Both sets of parents also, of course, visited our office, as did several friends and readers.

Jeff Deiss and **Vila Schwindt** from Oakland, California, came by, part of a ploy by Vila, who grew up on the Western Slope, to convince Jeff that Colorado would be a good place to retire. Jeff, who used to work in rural development for the USDA, now works for the Small Business Administration in export financing; Vila is a freelance editor, currently working for Silicon Valley-based *Content Magazine*. While here, Jeff and Vila picked up an *HCN* subscription.

Patricia Priebe-Swanson and **Brian Swanson** from Teasdale, Utah, stopped in on their way home from Colorado's Great Sand Dunes National Park. Subscribers for 25 years, Patricia and Brian had just met *HCN*'s Fort Collins-based Major Gift Adviser **Alyssa Pinkerton**, who was also vacationing at the sand dunes, and she encouraged them to come to Paonia. Thanks for sending them our way, Alyssa!

On her way to Mesa Verde, **Liz Howell** from Sheridan, Wyoming, came in to say hi to Development Director **Laurie Milford**. Now retired, Liz was executive director of the Wyoming Wilderness Association; she and Laurie worked together through the 2000s to safeguard Wyoming's environment and public lands.

Mike Crabtree from New Athens, Illinois, met three *HCN* staffers on a hike while he was hunting in the West Elk Wilderness. He and **Terry Weil**, from Lebanon, Illinois, came by our office to see what *HCN* was all about before returning to their search for elk. Thanks for the visit, and we hope you had good luck out there.

Finally, we were saddened to hear of the passing of longtime reader and supporter, **Peggy Rosenberry**. Peggy visited our office in Paonia several years ago and kept up a lively correspondence with Executive Director **Paul Larmer**. She also had a great sense of humor: Her son, **Charley**, also a reader and donor, tells us that for years, he and his mother were engaged in a playful competition, gloating whenever one of their names appeared on our Research Fund page. "When I last visited Mom just a week ago, she asked if she'd been mentioned in the column, some joking and some serious," Charley writes. "I kid you not." She got the final gloat, appearing three names from the top in the next issue. Rest in peace, Peggy.

—Rebecca Worby, for the staff

Patricia Priebe-Swanson, Brian Swanson and Liz Howell outside the offices of *High Country News*. BROOKE WARREN/HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

THE ROCK

A house of relics in search of a self

Roger sets his 64-ounce Polar Pop down on a case of Hohokam axes and says he wants to be preserved in amber when he dies. He throws his head back and shivers his limbs out to mimic a fly. His eyes flutter and his neck strains, his expression stuck somewhere between ecstasy and grimace.

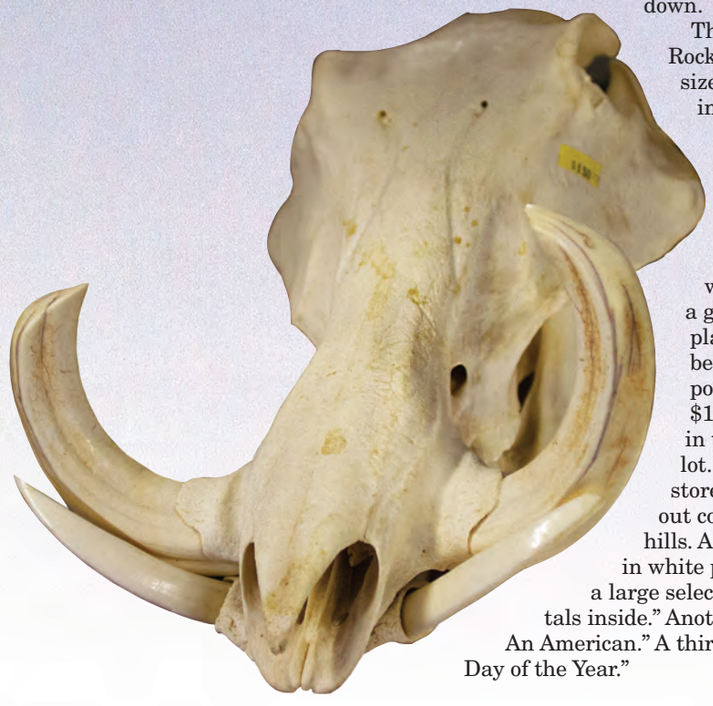
Roger — not his real name — mentions how humans have been preserving each other for centuries. The "tar people," murdered bodies found in bogs, kept in tannic acid. Vampires with stakes stuck through their throats. A frozen iceman in Scandinavia discovered with his penis stolen.

Beads of cola sweat down from the rim of Roger's Styrofoam cup. The ax heads are made of stone, willow branches boiled and wrapped around them for the handle, rawhide strapped around that for the grip. A rancher and his sons found them while grazing their cattle. Roger picks up his Pop and describes the kiva houses where the Hohokam held weddings. He leans in. Elders would take peyote and psilocybin, he whispers, and then ceremonially rape the child-bride.

As for the amber, Roger straightens up. "I decided I wanted to look out on all my belongings forever." He gestures around the room, sips his soda, laughs. "Naked," he adds.

The belongings Roger refers to sit 20 miles outside Tucson on Kinney Road, the lonely two-laner where you gas up before hitting the interstate south to Mexico. Nearby is a rifle and pistol range, a saguaro forest, and Old Tucson, a studio town of saloon doors and replica hitching posts that Hollywood built in the 1950s to film Westerns. A big canvas teepee stands in a gravel lot off Kinney where Geronimo's grandson, or so he claimed, held court, charging tourists a dollar to take his picture until the day he was found in the mountains outside Oracle, slumped over in the van he was forbidden to drive since he was over 100 years old.

Next to this teepee, tucked slightly off the road, you'll find a storefront. Its wood will be weathered the color of root beer, its facade as if built for an Old Tucson shoot and then never taken down.



This is Roger's shop. Rocks of all shapes and sizes fill its yard. Rocks in old wheelbarrows and mine trolleys. Rocks on a foldout table, in baskets and wire mesh cages. Rocks in a shallow ditch with wood trim where a garden was once planned then thought better of. Geodes, $2 a pound. Banded onyx, $1. A green pickup in the gravel parking lot. On the glass of the store windows, stenciled-out cowboys ride over hills. A sign, handwritten in white paint, says, "We have a large selection of quartz crystals inside." Another: "Proud To Be An American." A third: "Open 9-5, Every Day of the Year."

I first entered Roger's shop three years ago, when my mother flew out to visit me in Tucson. I'd driven past the storefront before she landed and thought this just the place to take her, the woman who never stopped reminding me to send copper and quartz crystal back to her in New York.

When we entered Roger's, we noticed two things. The first: This was the most crowded store we'd ever been inside. The second: It was also the emptiest.

When Renaissance noblemen first displayed their cabinets of wonder, the private collections of natural and artificial curiosities meant to show off their wealth and good taste, they must have had in mind something like Roger's shop. And when these cabinets of wonder grew so copious and cluttered they spilled onto anywhere there was an inch of space, they paved the way for Roger.

Here is some of what you will find inside Roger's shop: Glass cases of meteorites and tektites, turquoise and wulfenite. A lizard's tracks in shale. Ram's horn. Apache tears. A Mayan penis-piercing tool ("Ouch!" its description reads). Mummified packrats with gold-plated corpses.

There'll be an Apache hair comb and a freeze-dried rattlesnake's head. A wolf's penis bone like a bleached shepherd's crook, glued to a Styrofoam plinth. "Makes an excellent swizzle stick," reads the paper stapled to it. Crucifix nails used in Spartacus' uprising. A sarcophagus carrying the remains of a 4,500-year-old child. A chest-high filing cabinet of alphabetized minerals: chalcopyrite, coal, coke, conglomerate, copper, copper native.

You will also find Roger's prized possessions sitting in a glass case: the skull of a Roman gladiator missing his jaw; the skull of a Spanish conquistador killed by the Aztecs; and the skull of a soldier dead at the Alamo, a bullet hole through his occipital, the word *Mexican* inked above it. A picture of a smiling 1950s housewife is taped to the glass case with the caption: "Unattended children will be given espresso and a kitten." Before that, a grainy black-and-white photo of a man being lynched and the words: "All shoplifters will be prosecuted."

What you will not find at Roger's is many people. Grit crunched the floor where we walked. A layer of dust covered the shelves. The lights were turned off. You could stroll around, take what you wanted, and walk out. A house of relics, fittingly, had become a relic itself.

It's said that the difference between a collector and a

SHOP

ESSAY BY THOMAS MIRA Y LOPEZ

hoarder is that while a collector takes joy in arranging his accumulations, the hoarder finds none. The collector assembles a museum of the self, but a hoarder still searches for that self. The hoarder holds out an almost perverse hope: the nagging thought that everything, if seen in the right light, contains value.

When he does emerge from his back office, "A Correlated History of the Earth" poster taped to its door, Roger appears in some variation of the following: a blue Route 66 T-shirt, jeans with the cuffs worn away, flip-flops, and a veterans' hat with *U.S.A.* stitched across the brim. A bald eagle perches above the *S*. Its eyes will swivel.

Roger is tall and has a gut. He slouches and his gut sticks out some more. He smells of cigarettes, not necessarily in the sense of someone who's smoked, but of someone who's spent a long time in a house where cigarettes have been smoked. Roger looks telluric. Liver spots pepper his neck and arms and it looks like you could dig a good inch into one of his fingers with a pocketknife and still not draw blood. Burn holes singe his T-shirt. To say his feet are dirty would not broach their condition. They rival

A 12-foot tin *Tyrannosaurus rex* statue stands outside Tucson Mineral and Gem World in Tucson, Arizona. At left, a contemporary warthog skull from Africa is just one of the bone specimens that can be seen at the shop. COURTNEY TALAK

Draped with cobwebs, baby pig and vampire bat skeletons, top, sit on a shelf at the rock shop. Above, shop owner Roger holds what he says is one of the shop's most interesting pieces, a fossilized mosasaur jaw from the late Cretaceous period. COURTNEY TALAK

Jesus' in the wilderness.

But what stands out most about Roger is his face. Simply put, it's kind. It's the face of your favorite old, absentminded professor you run into when he's out of quarters at the coin laundry. Roger smiles when you find something you like — a puddingstone from the Great Lakes, a concretion like flattened cow dung — and explains its geology to you. He exudes that treasured quality of making you feel like a kid again, of letting you know — even if you don't know him at all — that everything is all right. If you protest and offer to pay, he'll say what really matters is not the exchange of money but the exchange of information, that with each item he gives away he also offers up a piece of himself.

At the counter, Roger explained to me and my mother that he and his brother, Rick, also not his real name, inherited the property after their parents died. The brothers were born on Long Island after World War II. Roger studied paleontology at the University of New Mexico, then worked at New York's Museum of Natural History and the Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum, Tucson's nearby open-air wildlife habitat. At one point, in the mid-1990s, he led a team of paleontologists that discovered the bones of a new dinosaur in the nearby desert. They christened it the *Sonorasaurus*.

Rick, Roger's brother, is missing his middle and ring fingers on his right hand. He tells his Boy Scout troops that a bear ate them, but really he lost them in different work accidents. The mummified packrats are his handiwork. He finds them dead in his backyard, hangs them up on a clothesline, then dips them in a barrel of gold paint before spray-painting on a final coat. A framed picture of Roger and Rick from the 1985 Tucson Winter Skeet Shooting League — the brothers nearly identical in trucker hats, mustaches and heft — hangs on the wall next to the back room.

Roger seems to disdain making any profit; instead, he gives what he calls "deals." When my mother and I dumped our haul at the register — copper, quartz, a mummified pack rat, and the cowboy belt buckle given away for free on any purchase over $15 — Roger ambled over, waved a hand, and quoted a price much lower than it should have been. A few years ago, he said, he even gave away most of his stuff. "You did?" my mother asked, taking a look around. "Doesn't look like it." "Oh yeah," Roger said. "I have loads more. I even have a mummy out back." He folded his hands on the table. "You wanna see?"

Roger led us through his backyard — caliche, cacti, little shade — to a low-slung, one-story house. We entered a screened-in porch. Laundry piled in front of the washing machine. Plastic soda bottles and old DVDs carpeted the floor. Empty packs of Marlboro Lights scattered across a glass table.

Roger's living room was a menagerie. A severed elephant's foot, stretched into a bowl, sat on a side table. A green-glazed turtle rested on a buffet. "Oh, I love this," my mother exclaimed and asked how much it cost. Roger told her it was his fifth-grade pottery project. In the corner, a snake hid in a glass terrarium, its skin shed onto wood chips. The hide of a platypus hung on the wall. "It's the only mammal that injects venom," Roger said. He pointed out the fourth toenail that hooked into its victim's flesh. A small statue of Horus, the Egyptian falcon god, stood next to the elephant's foot.

In the far corner of the living room, next to the bedroom hallway, stood an Egyptian mummy. Roger had propped its sarcophagus upright and cut out a square of wood to display the skull. A clip-on reading light attached to the wood. "I only did the one sacrilegious thing," he said by way of explanation. "Otherwise, I think this is as good a home as any."

The mummy, Roger said, belonged to a 16th Dynasty pharaoh. He was missing an arm, lost in battle to the Hittites. Roger speculated a chariot might have lopped it off. "This guy was a brave one. He was probably leading the charge."

Upright, it stood shorter than you might expect. I had never seen one in person, and what I anticipated — first-aid gauze, a solid cast between body and casing — wasn't there. There seemed little telling what was packaging and what skin.

Inherited seems the wrong word, so let's say Roger came into the pharaoh when he worked at the Museum of Natural History. He befriended an old Egyptologist, whose house he visited for tea. When the Egyptologist died, he left Roger the mummy. Roger and Rick hoisted it onto a dolly, wheeled it down the Egyptologist's stairs, and eventually — this explanation of its shipment is elided — ended up with it in Tucson. "I don't focus too much on whether this was legal," Roger said. He named the mummy Heck.

Roger brushed his fingers over the hieroglyphs running down the sarcophagus. "Extrapolating," he said, pointing to the uppermost, "this refers to the pharaoh's name." For the next one, "This is his name in the afterlife." And the third, "This means that if you open the tomb, you're cursed and will die."

I raised my eyebrows. Did he believe any of this? "I think it becomes true if you want it to be true," he said. He had given the same answer when I asked about his descriptions of Sedona vortex rocks. Roger rubbed the mummy's head and asked if I wanted to as well. "Come on, it's for good luck." "Are you nuts?" my mother yelled, to which of us I couldn't tell. I reached toward the head — it seemed, perhaps perversely, the polite thing to do — and gave a hesitant pat. "Tom!" she punched my arm. The skull was smooth and cold. It felt very brown. I looked at my palm to see if any had rubbed off.

Before we left Roger's house, the three of us stopped in the hallway. Roger told us his dad had bought the property to turn it into a working gold mine. Really, Roger said, he thought this was where his father brought his girlfriends. He winked. He and Rick had to take their mother's name because their father's was too well-known.

"What did your father do?" my mother asked.

"He was a film director." My mother scanned the black-and-white photos in the hall. She nudged me to look at one: an older man at a party in a tuxedo, tall, bald, blue-eyed like Roger.

"What was his name?" she asked. "Otto Preminger," Roger said.

I should mention, before proceeding any further, that alongside my affection for Roger and his shop, there creeps a doubt. The cabinet is a bit too curious. It's not every day I walk into a store in the middle of the Sonoran desert selling gladiators' skulls and Indigenous Australian pointing bone necklaces. Nor do I visit many places that so strenuously insist on the legality and "100 percent authenticity" of everything for sale. If you have to try so hard to prove it, I think, then what do you have to hide?

Take, for example, Roger's descriptions. Here's what he writes for the pointing bone necklace: "This artifact has actually killed people. The act of boning someone is always done

> **"I even have a mummy out back. You wanna see?"**
>
> *—Roger, talking with visitors about one of his special artifacts*

Roger reads a letter by a World War II soldier that accompanies a mummified shrunken head, priced at $350, at his Tucson rock shop. COURTNEY TALAK

What could be more interesting than if Roger were faking it all, creating a false self and passing it off as the real thing, "100 percent guaranteed as described"?

in secret, attended by a small number of suitably initiated men, who act as witnesses and support the 'sorcerer' in a low chanted ceremony where the bone is pointed in the direction of the victim and through 'diabological agency' draws a little blood (or life essence through the air) to the bone."

This baffles me. Does Roger expect others to believe this, or is he only fulfilling his journalistic duties? Why use the words "actually killed people" instead of "supposedly"? Given what's written, it's unclear if Roger the collector believes in the power of his collection or if he feels these beliefs are worth naming because they are a part of their objects, however unreal.

Most of all, there's the problem of spelling. Call me fussy, but here is Roger's description of a Roman crucifixion nail:

"$49 100% guaranteed, as described ancient roman iron crucifixion nail c.a. 2,300 years old ound in mass exicution grave, ner Brundisium on the Adriatic coast of Italy on the 'Apian Way' where 6000 crucifixes took place around 312 bc. More below line"

These typos appear everywhere. Wouldn't one expect a paleontologist and historian to have care when spelling "found," "near," "execution," or "Appian?" Why wouldn't the detail used to assert the accuracy and legitimacy of the objects extend to the language used to present them?

Of course, my skepticism in the shop might also be my hope. What could be more interesting than if Roger were faking it all, creating a false self and passing it off as the real thing, "100 percent guaranteed as described"?

Otto Preminger, the famed Austrian American film director responsible for *Laura* and *Anatomy of a Murder*, had, to put it lightly, a notorious streak in Hollywood. Like many directors, his temper created headlines. He was known alternatively as "The Terrible-Tempered Mr. Preminger," "the most hated man in Hollywood," and the caustic "Otto the Sweet." He bucked many of the protocols established by the House Un-American Activities Committee, casting an openly gay actor, Clifton Webb, in 1944's *Laura*, and depicting rape and sexual assault in a manner never before seen in *Anatomy of a Murder*. But Preminger might have been best known for his affairs: Dorothy Dandridge, the African-American actress in *Carmen Jones*, and Gypsy Rose Lee, the burlesque performer who gave birth to Erik Preminger, Otto's illegitimate but eventually acknowledged son.

Whether or not Preminger had other extramarital children, whether any of them were Roger or Rick, or whether this is Roger's own paternal longing — I have no idea. He had a boy and a girl with his third wife, Hope Bryce, but no other children on the record, and when I email Foster Hirsch, Preminger's definitive biographer, he says he ran across no such name as Roger's in his research. Preminger did live some of the time in New York City, close to Roger and Rick's birthplace. And he might very well have been familiar with Old Tucson Studios and the surrounding landscape, putting him in a position to buy the property.

But Pima County records show a Helen and Peter with Roger's last name as the original owners of the land where Tucson Mineral and Gem World now stands and the store as built in 1976 before being willed to Roger and Rick. Helen, who would have been Roger's mother, was born Sept. 26, 1919, in Long Island, New York, and died in December of 2005. Peter died in 2003 and was an editor on a few films. Perhaps Preminger met Helen through Peter. But who else could Peter be but Helen's husband, since he was born only two months after Helen in 1919 and in Connecticut no less?

The results do not substantiate Roger's claims. Nor do they entirely rule them out. The same applies to when Roger mentioned offhandedly, as we shuffled from his house back to his shop, that a few weeks ago he and Richard Gere grabbed breakfast at the diner across the road. The actor and his father, Roger said, had been old friends.

But if this is false or less-than-reliable information, then suspicion must vein through everything else: Roger's deciphering of the mummy's hieroglyphs, the information listed and misspelled, the relics and artifacts, and ultimately Roger himself — his identity, his authenticity, his livelihood, his life. Not to mention, say, his assurance that no such bad luck will befall you if you rub a mummy's head.

A collector displays a self and a hoarder searches for one. Perhaps what matters most, however, isn't which self one is — hoarder or collector, pack rat or curator — but what that self requires of its objects.

Most of Roger's possessions come from people not his own. Many come from civilizations and cultures that Roger or people like Roger and myself have helped to expel from their ancestral home — the American Indian museum Roger stocks up at when it shuts down, the ranchers who find others' relics on their land, the cotton farm Roger buys so he can piece together its Navajo pottery.

If a collection memorializes its collector, then I wonder what comes at the expense of that memory. Ruins and artifacts may cement the id of a collector, but they also preserve the work done by lost civilizations. Heck's reading light, the Mayan penis-piercing tool ("Ouch!"), the wolf penis bone ("an excellent swizzle stick") — what hay should be made of Roger's treating these objects as a joke or, worse yet, trophies? Just what does a curiosity cabinet make curious?

All around us — the stunt teepee where Geronimo's grandson sat; the Old Tucson studios with their cowboy-and-Indian facades; I-10, Nogales, and its wall an hour away — is evidence of the often-violent and always irremediable change wrought upon a land in the creation of a new identity. The evidence of the somewhat surreal lengths people who think they own that land will travel to in order to wrap up and preserve that identity, to dip it in gold and say here it is, shiny and plated, ready to last, and if you spend $15, there's a free tin star and a cowboy belt buckle in it for you.

What is the right way to treat the relics that do not belong to you, but in some way define you? How should we treat our subject matter — what we study and collect and try to piece together — whether we believe its truth or not? I should ask Roger this, but maybe I should also ask myself. □

A Mexican boy looks out from a detention center room in Brownsville, Texas.
EDUARDO PEREZ/ PLANETPIX VIA ZUMA WIRE

THE GREAT WALL

SHORT STORY
BY
DANIEL OLIVAS

Rogelio stood in the long line that snaked from the detention center's barracks to the lookout point at the other end of the compound. He shifted from foot to foot, the heat making him perspire and feel lightheaded. He was a smart boy — one of the best students in Ms. Becerra's fifth-grade class — so he figured that even though the cool winter weather still made San Diego's evenings chilly enough to need a sweater, the lack of circulation combined with the body heat of thousands of children conspired to make the detention center's air heavy and almost suffocating.

The guards strolled slowly up and down the lines in an attempt to keep some order. But the children had become so numb to seeing the green-clad, rifle-bearing men and women that the best the guards could hope for was an organized chaos as the two lines — one for boys, the other girls — inched forward to the dual lookout points. Rogelio could see his older sister, Marisol, directly to his right in the girls' line. She comforted a younger girl, who wept silently into Marisol's shoulder. Rogelio didn't like crying in front of his sister, but right then he wished Marisol had an arm around him, whispering, "Don't worry. It'll be OK. We'll see mama and papa soon."

Above the din of the other children, Rogelio could make out the recurring audio loop of the president's voice blaring over the intercoms that dotted the ceiling like so many menacing dark stars. He could almost recite those words from memory: "I will build a great wall — and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me — and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our Southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words."

Rogelio had never seen the wall except online and on TV. He thought it was ugly even though the president had it decorated with an ornate gold paint that swirled in strange designs along the wall's top and bottom edges. Between the borders of gold paint were bas-relief scenes from the president's life beginning from his childhood, through school, beginning careers in business and television, running for president, the swearing in, and the president signing executive orders.

The children who had already visited the lookout points — which were simply large rooms with the far wall made of bulletproof Plexiglas — said that it would have been easier to set up computer screens to say goodbye to their parents. But instead, the president's executive order explicitly prohibited the expenditure of funds for such "niceties," and, instead, ordered that the families' farewell would be soundless, without the aid of microphones, with children on one side of the Plexiglas, the parents on the other.

Once in the lookout points — one for boys, the other for girls, as decreed by the president — the children would wave to their parents, who would be allowed to wave back. After a "humane" period of 30 seconds, the children would be directed out of the lookout point and back to their barracks to pack up their meager belongings for a new life with a relative or adopted family. Since these children had been born in the country, they were citizens. But their parents had entered the United States without documents, most with the assistance of well-paid coyotes. So, after the silent goodbyes, the parents would be ushered into a large black bus that would whisk them off to one of the reinforced gates in the great wall and back to Mexico, even if they had come from a different Latin American country. Neat, clean, fast and beautiful.

As Rogelio inched closer to the boys' lookout point, his heart began to beat hard in his small chest. He willed himself not to cry, to be strong, to show his parents that he and his sister would be OK living with this aunt in Los Angeles who had become a United States citizen under President Reagan's 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act.

The guard's loud "Next!" broke Rogelio's reverie. He walked into the lookout point and stepped up to the thick, cloudy Plexiglas. Rogelio squinted. About thirty yards of open terrain separated the two detention centers and their respective lookout points. Where were his parents? Oh, there! He could discern his father, who was a hearty, large man, but who now looked so small. His father wiped his eyes with a crumpled white handkerchief and embraced Rogelio's mother with his right arm. Rogelio's sister must have already seen their parents since she had been just a bit farther ahead in the girls' line. He wondered if Marisol had cried. But Rogelio promised himself that he would not. He waved to his parents as he forced a smile that looked more like a pained grimace. His parents waved back, also forcing smiles, but Rogelio could see that their faces were shiny with tears.

Before a guard directed his parents toward the exit, Rogelio let out a sob, his chest shaking without control. He told himself: *Don't cry, don't cry.* But now Rogelio's tears fell freely from his eyes as a guard put a hand on the boy's shoulder and gently guided him away. □

Reprinted with permission from *The King of Lighting Fixtures*, by Daniel Olivas, 2017, University of Arizona Press.

ESSAY BY BROOKE LARSEN
WINNER OF THE 2017 BELL PRIZE

What Are We Fighting For?

JIM PATTERSON

A net bag filled with dried leaves sits in a wooden box on my kitchen table. Buried in the leaves is a piece of oil shale, wrapped in twine. A long wooden rod with hooks on each end, one for the leaves and one for the rock, rests against the wall. Beside it stands a thin wooden board, two feet square, with a question inscribed across its middle: "Rather than against, what are we fighting for?" A year ago I inherited these items from my friend Alisha, and since then I've collected people's responses to them. Neon-yellow, pink and blue post-it notes dot the board with suggestions ranging from "powder days" and "more female athletes on TV" to "the bees, clean air, and each other."

Coming of age in an era of dystopian politics and looming climate chaos, it's easy for me to say what I'm against: fascism, capitalism, racism, sexism. The list of isms goes on and on. Saying "no" to an unjust system creates space for rage and grief, but shouting "yes" to equity and beauty inspires hope and joy. As the title of Naomi Klein's new book says, *No Is Not Enough*.

What are we fighting for? Today, I write "aspen." For the past eight years, I have faithfully returned to the dense aspen grove at Willow Heights in Utah's Wasatch Mountains. When I was 17, I lost my virginity under the aspen alongside Willow Pond. I hiked the trail every time I came home from college. I bring my visiting friends to the aspen grove, and they always take photos on their iPhones. After I broke up with my partner of seven years, I walked up the snow-covered path. Lying down in the knee-deep powder on the side of the trail, I was finally able to sob.

My rituals have always been shaped by land. I didn't grow up with religion; I grew up with wildness. My parents divorced when I was 5. I coped by climbing a ponderosa pine in my grandparents' yard, swinging from each reliable branch. When my grandparents cut down the tree to pave their driveway, I didn't talk to them for a week — my first environmental protest.

This past summer, Bill Anderegg, a young climate scientist, took me to the forest he grew up exploring in southwest Colorado. He told me aspens support more biodiversity than any other forest type in the mountain West. Each tree in a stand of aspens is connected, sprouting from the same lateral roots. But now the aspen are dying and stand no chance of adapting to climate change. During his first year of graduate school, Bill returned to the forest, the backdrop of many family photos, and found a sea of dead stumps. Cause of death? The early 2000s drought, which was 3 degrees Celsius hotter than any drought on record. He said, "Climate change is visible, and it's visceral, and it's during my lifetime."

After writing "aspen" on a blue post-it note, I drive to Willow Heights. Golden-yellow and pale-green leaves litter the ground like the leaves on my kitchen table. My heart beats faster as I walk the steep trail. I stop and feel the stark white bark. A powdery residue like climbing chalk covers my hands. I look around, and hundreds of trees flow into one another, a sheet of white dotted with gray-black knobs from branches shed with age.

How long do these aspen have left?

When I return home, I stare at the box of leaves. Alisha gathered the leaves from a gutter. She said, "A gutter collects a diversity of leaves, a coming together of difference." She acquired the rock from the Bureau of Land Management office in Vernal, Utah. She asked for a map of oil shale deposits, and the person at the front desk walked to a back room, returned, dropped a stone on the counter, and inquired, "You mean this?" Alisha left with the rock. She said later, "I may have been vague as to why I needed it."

She needed it to make art. In the fall of 2016, Alisha brought her project to the Uplift Climate Conference, a gathering for young climate activists. Sitting on a picnic table at a campground outside Durango, Colorado, she instructed us to string strands of leaves together until they were heavy enough to outweigh the piece of oil shale. She hung the rod with the leaves on one end and the shale on the other. The heavy-looking rock now appeared insignificant.

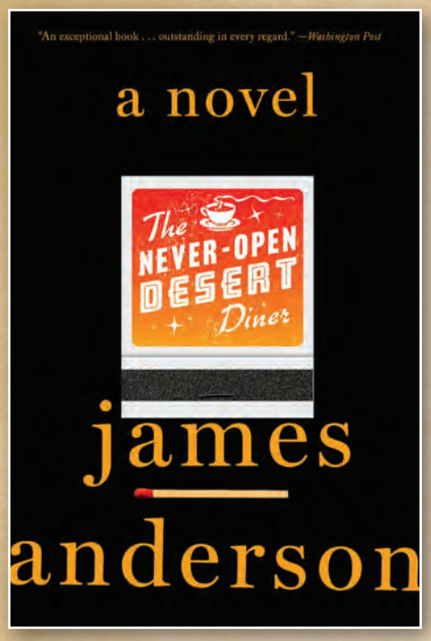
What are we fighting for? Our spirit. I uncover the piece of oil shale and pull out the mesh bag. I tie the rock to one end of the rod and the leaves to the other, and I find a hook above my head and hang them. The oil shale hits the ceiling. □

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.

WEB EXTRA Read the runner-up essay, "Grace is a smell," by Elijah Cetas, at **hcn.org**.

"High, dry and severely beautiful... a wondrously strange novel. Anderson is one fine storyteller."

—The New York Times Book Review



"An exceptional book.... The novel is outstanding in every regard — writing, plot, dialogue, suspense, humor, a vivid sense of place."

—Washington Post Bookworld

"You haven't read a novel like this in a long time, if ever. Once you open its pages you are in for something surprisingly enjoyable."

—The Huffington Post

"A gift in the vein of James Lee Burke." *—Bookreporter*

"A striking novel...lyrical, whimsical, atmospheric and skillfully rendered."

—CJ Box, New York Times Bestselling Author of Badlands

"Brilliant." *—Mystery Journal Magazine*

"Extraordinary." *—Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"Beautifully written.... A novel this good isn't just appreciated, it's restorative."

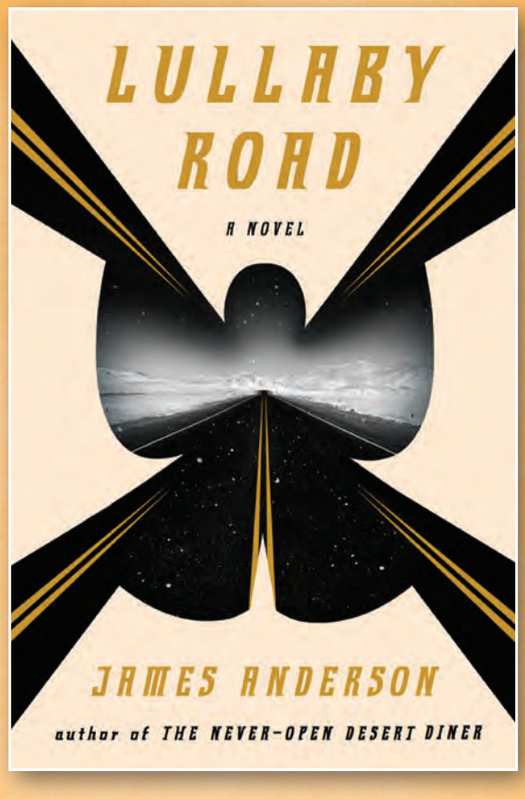
—PopMatters

An old man tends to a long-closed but once famous roadside diner. A lonely truck driver on a desolate highway in Utah discovers a woman playing a rare cello in an abandoned house in the high desert. In this extraordinary and wonderfully strange novel the desert light entwines with strands of tragic personal histories to play out in turns mysterious, haunting, meditative and thrilling.

Forthcoming January 16th

Lullaby Road

James Anderson



"Anderson's lyrical prose brings a forgotten corner of the world to life, and the authentic narrative does the same for Jones. Recommended for fans of William Kent Krueger's *Cork O'Connor* and Craig Johnson's *Walt Longmire*." *—Booklist*

"Atmospheric ... Arresting desert vistas and distinctive characters leave a lasting impression." *—Publishers Weekly*

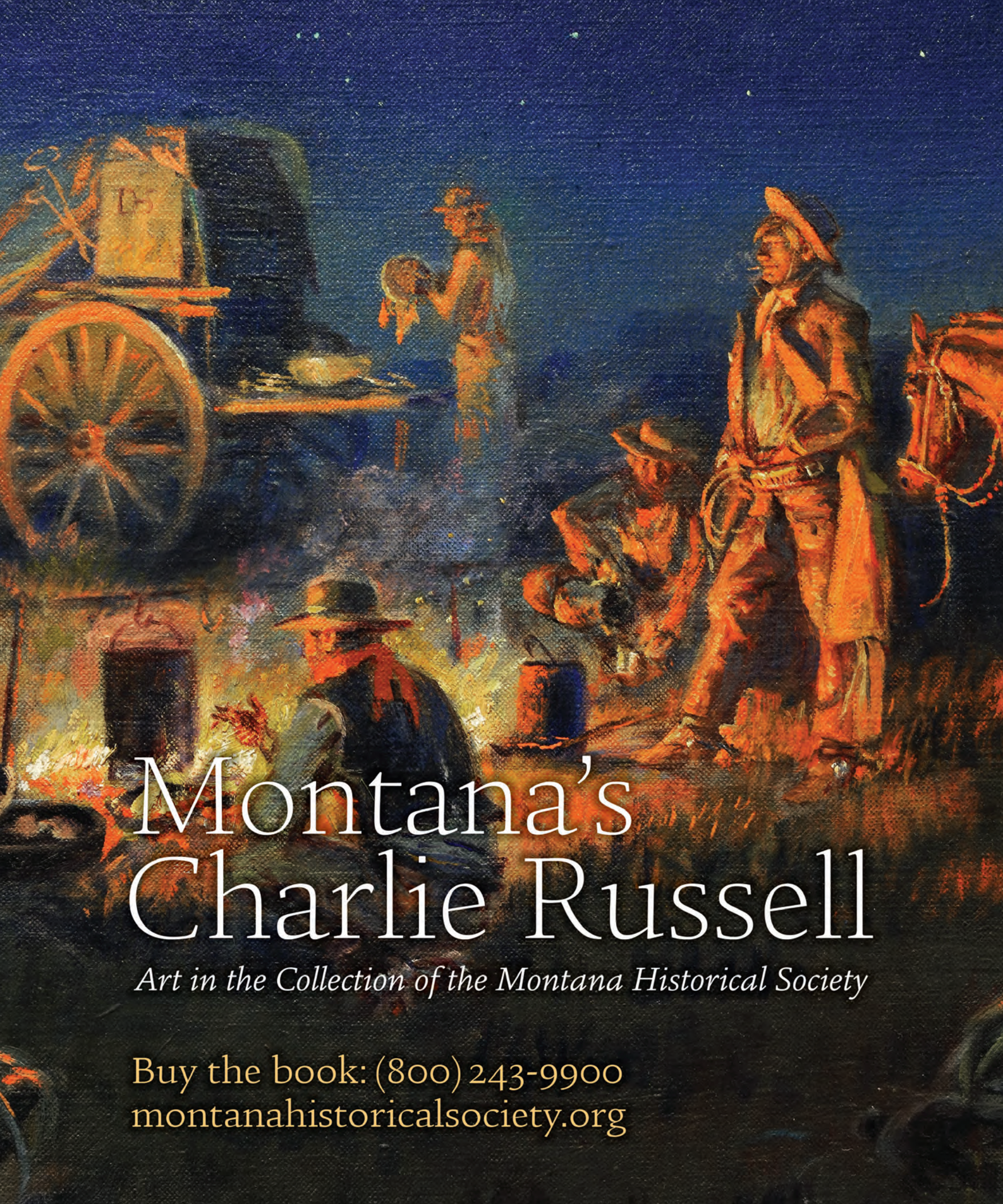
"Ben Jones is on the road again, driving his rig through the mysteries, terrors and enchantments of Utah. I don't know how Anderson does it: he makes you laugh, catch your breath in disbelief, then choke back tears over the fate of his characters." *—Luis Alberto Urrea*

Author of The Devil's Highway *and* The Hummingbird's Daughter

BOOKSTORE APPEARANCE SCHEDULE

January 16th · Bloomsbury Books – Ashland, OR at 7pm
January 23rd · Bookworks Inc. – Albuquerque, NM at 6pm
January 24th · Poisoned Pen – Scottsdale, AZ at 7pm
January 25th · The King's English – Salt Lake City, UT at 7pm

www.jamesandersonauthor.com · *Published by Crown Publishing Group/PenguinRandomHouse: New York*



Montana's Charlie Russell

Art in the Collection of the Montana Historical Society

Buy the book: (800) 243-9900
montanahistoricalsociety.org

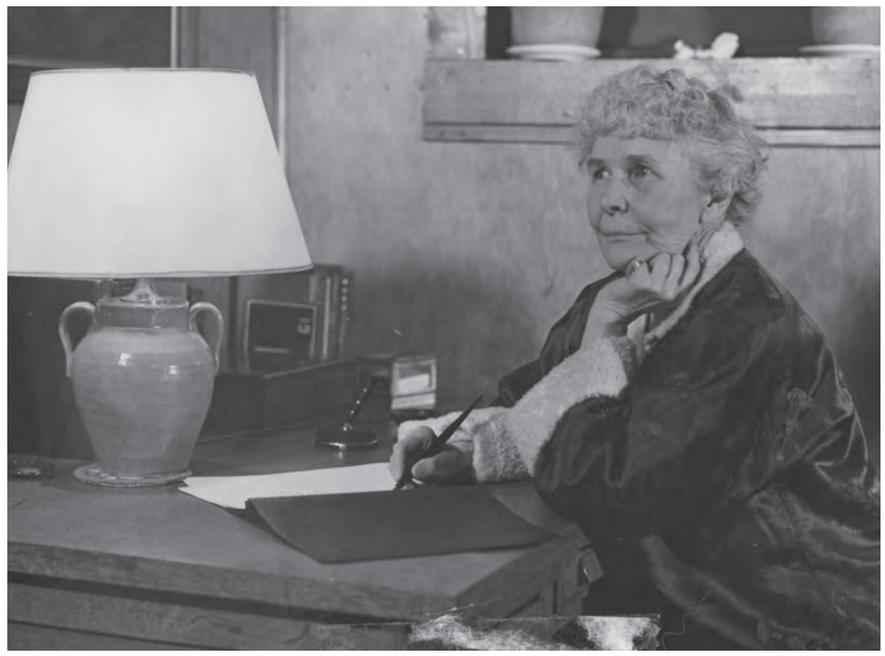
Belle Turnbull, a poet above timberline

Belle Turnbull: On the Life and Work of an American Master
Edited by David J. Rothman and Jeffrey R. Villines
201 pages, softcover: $16. Pleiades Press, 2017

It's hard to imagine Colorado without its 14 million acres of publicly owned forests and mountains and grasslands. Among these protected areas is the White River Reserve, created by executive order by President Benjamin Harrison in 1891. Its 2.3 million acres of stunning vistas stretch from the Flat Top Mountains, up the Fryingpan River, over the Blue River's Tenmile Range and into the former gold-mining town of Breckenridge. The reserve today has eight wilderness areas, 12 ski resorts, four reservoirs and 10 peaks above 14,000 feet — Colorado's coveted "Fourteeners."

To get to know this stretch of mountains, you could hike some of its 2,500 miles of trail, or drive on its 1,900 miles of roads. Or you could ponder its history, which reflects Colorado's settling, when narrow-gauge railroads ran in and out of mining regions in the 19th century, bringing food in and minerals out, while timber-choppers relentlessly sliced through forest cover. Or you might think of this place in terms of its conservation history, part of a vast system of forests established throughout the Progressive Era. But perhaps the best way to know a place like this is to see it through the eyes of a good writer. Thanks to the publication of a new book, *Belle Turnbull: On the Life and Work of an American Master*, we can turn to a nearly forgotten Colorado poet for insight and inspiration.

Born in Hamilton, New York 1881, 10 years before the White River Reserve was created, the Vassar-educated Turnbull taught English at Colorado Springs High School from 1910 to 1936. She and her companion, the novelist Helen Rich, then moved to Frisco for two years and on to Breckenridge, settling into a log cabin with windows that looked out onto the Tenmile Range from 1939 to Belle's death in 1970. No other Colorado writer so authentically lets "the poetry take the poet where it wants, the way mountain weather does," writes George Sibley in one of several outstanding essays this volume includes.



Spread out a map of the White River National Forest when you read Turnbull's poems. Even better, take this edition of the "Unsung Masters Series" with you into the Great Divide country the next time you hit the trail. I like best the gems Turnbull sets within that narrow band of wetland seeps, wildflowers and pygmy forest located just above timberline. This is where "ancient mysteries" govern above and beyond homesteaders, timber-cutters and forest regulators. In her world, *"Magistrate and forester / Exist forlorn in those rude airs / Where dwell the ancient liberties."*

For Turnbull, the vast spaces and tiny, cutting edges of the Rocky Mountains and Continental Divide were places to encounter something transcendent, something beyond the forlorn tenure of land ownership and the edicts of landowners: *"For since a rock's a long, long treasure: / a rock, a root, a south exposure: / the loan of these is our forever."* Tracing the contours of this higher country, the poet borrows from Indigenous trails, tautly notched through mountain passes, before settlers moved in on them. The Great Divide becomes "a full-sprung bow," where *"Stark is the streamhead where the narrow / Careless snowrills stop and go, / Atlantic, Pacific, freeze or flow."* In Turnbull's eyes, a carpet of wildflowers is more than beautiful; it is there to prove you mortal. *"Now at last I have eaten / that dark and pungent honey,"* she writes in "Chant," *"which is distilled / out of blue-black monkshood, / marsh-child of forbidden beauty … / Now at last have I eaten / and am consumed."*

Turnbull was an Easterner, enchanted by the mountains of Colorado, who made a home in the high country. Her work is exact, her imagery vivid. Through it, we find a way into the mountains — and a way home.

BY GREG HOBBS

Belle Turnbull, in her later years, sitting at her desk, above. Below, a holiday postcard shows the log cabin in Breckenridge, Colorado, Turnbull shared with Helen Rich, with its view of Peak Eight and the Tenmile Range.
COURTESY OF THE BRECKENRIDGE HERITAGE ALLIANCE, DR. SANDRA F. PRITCHARD MATHER ARCHIVES/ SHS-P.558 AND SHS-P.2014.30-1

Dialog
Let's step outside in the mountain night, renew
Whole vision of this integer of cells:
This house, in separate amber shining so,
Uniquely seen, as though another self:
Unit in space, now for a time clearly
Walled, roofed, warmed: now for a time ...
How little, how long? Whisper if flawless, dare we?
Shout it, and count the neighbor rays that shine,
Digits of oneness, careless into space ...
Yet if tomorrow, yet if tomorrow shaken,
Lightless, forlorn?
Therefore. Look, while the eyes
Know this for ours, and the amber word still spoken.
Though wood shall rot and light shatter, though
Self dissolve on a breath, this house is now.

Steam erupts from Grand Prismatic Spring, one of the geological features created by the supervolcano that lies below Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. DAVE WALSH

On unstable ground

In 2015, Kathryn Schulz, a writer at *The New Yorker*, published "The Really Big One," a meticulous evocation of the massive oceanic earthquake that will someday drown the Pacific Northwest beneath a cataclysmic tsunami. I lived in Seattle then, and the quake was all anyone talked about: at coffee shops, in elevators, on buses. Many articles, even books, had been written about the coming 9.0, but Schulz's Pulitzer-winning story was the first to grab the slumbering Northwest by the shoulders and shake it awake. Until, that is, the news cycle shifted, people got on with their lives, and earthquakes receded again in society's consciousness.

Earthquakes, writes another Kathryn — Kathryn Miles — in her new book, *Quakeland*, are our most confounding natural disaster. We can watch hurricanes spinning in the Atlantic weeks before they land; we detect the rumbling of volcanoes months pre-eruption. Earthquakes, though, often provide no warning at all. Our grasp of what triggers them is tenuous; we are flying blind when it comes to predicting them. Hence the complacency: Why stress the incomprehensible? "How could we know so little about our planet and the risks it poses to all of us?" Miles asks.

Quakeland is Miles' sprawling, painstaking attempt to answer that question. The author travels the country, from quake-overdue New York City to Yellowstone National Park, whose slumbering caldera, if we're lucky, will hold off on annihilating us for a few more millennia. She is primarily concerned with how various sectors — schools, hospitals, oil tank farms — are preparing, or failing to prepare, for Big Ones in their own backyards. No facility goes untoured: Miles descends into an Idaho silver mine, wanders the bowels of the Hoover Dam, and visits the Berkeley seismology lab where researchers are designing quake warning systems for your phone. It's an epic piece of reporting — as comprehensive as it is discomfiting.

You can't write a book about quakes, of course, without dwelling on California. The San Andreas Fault plays a starring role in *Quakeland*: Miles wanders West Hollywood with an engineer who exposes alarming construction vulnerabilities. (Wood, counter-intuitively, is more resilient than stone or concrete, which "tends to explode.")

But it's the obscure hot spots — the intraplate faults, far from the junctions of colliding tectonic masses — that seem scariest, precisely because we're so ill-prepared for their rupture. Salt Lake City overlays the Wasatch Fault Zone, where a 7.0 would be catastrophic: The region could expect 2,000 deaths, 9,000 injuries and 200,000 rendered homeless. Miles is ruthlessly pragmatic about the attendant logistical nightmares: "How would (building) inspectors get into a city whose highways and runways had crumbled? … How would the city get its dead and injured out?"

We're not just unready for disaster — we're exacerbating the risk. Miles is especially concerned about induced seismicity, earthquakes caused by human industry, particularly the injection of fracking wastewater into the ground. The phenomenon's epicenter is Oklahoma, which went from one of the least seismically active states to the most after a drilling boom. Agencies, beholden to industry, denied the connection until the evidence became irrefutable; other states still skirt the problem. The debate uncannily resembles the conflict over climate change: Fossil fuel interests exploit uncertainty about the magnitude of the problem to justify inaction — never mind the overwhelming scientific consensus about the threat's reality.

Occasionally, Miles' reporting is so thorough it's exhausting: I have no doubt that a Southeastern quake would cause headaches for FedEx's Memphis headquarters, but I'm not sure I needed a chapter to belabor the point. In leaving no seismic stone unturned, though, *Quakeland* discovers alarming Achilles' heels in our infrastructure and emergency systems. That at least 30 faults underpin Nevada's Yucca Mountain does not make me feel more comfortable about someday storing nuclear waste there.

Fortunately, Miles unearths success stories as well as potential apocalypses. Most Northwesterners may have again forgotten that they live in a future flood zone, but disaster managers haven't. Near *Quakeland*'s end, Miles visits a school in Westport, Washington, that constructed a $2 million rooftop tsunami shelter. No grim detail had been overlooked: "Surrounding the platform is a six-foot-high parapet … mostly to protect the kids from witnessing the devastation."

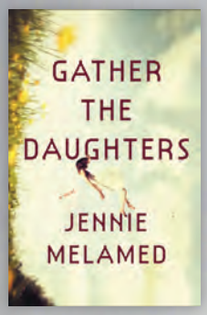
Quake preparedness, Miles makes clear, is partly a matter of personal responsibility: Stock your emergency kit with food, water and warm clothes today. Mostly, though, it's a public policy problem. We must invest in modernizing bridges and developing early warning systems; retrofit our schools and hospitals; advocate for regulations to reduce induced seismicity. Gearing up for inevitable earthquakes won't be easy, and it won't be cheap — but we can't bear the cost of doing nothing.

BY BEN GOLDFARB

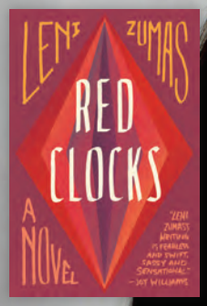
We're not just unready for disaster — we're exacerbating the risk.

Quakeland; On the Road to America's Next Devastating Earthquake
Kathryn Miles
357 pages, hardcover: $28.
Dutton, 2017.

Disturbing visions of the Northwest



Gather the Daughters
Jennie Melamed
336 pages, hardcover: $26
Little, Brown, 2017



Red Clocks
Leni Zumas
368 pages, hardcover: $26
Lee Boudreux Books, 2018

ALEXEY GORBUNOV / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

If ever a time were ripe for cautionary tales, it's now.

The increase in sales since last November of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is not the only evidence of renewed interest in feminist dystopian literature. Several acclaimed recent novels — witness Lidia Yuknavitch's *The Book of Joan*, Claire Vaye Watkins' *Gold Fame Citrus* and Naomi Alderman's *The Power* — present detailed depictions of women responding to the ravages of war, catastrophic climate change and civil unrest.

Two new novels by Northwestern writers — both of them begun before the Trump presidency — gaze into the near future and share disturbing visions of how society might seek to further control women and their bodies. Both have been compared to Atwood's work, but *Gather the Daughters* by Jennie Melamed and *Red Clocks* by Leni Zumas have their own unique takes on sex, religion, family and politics.

Set on an island in what is perhaps Puget Sound, Washington, *Gather the Daughters* concentrates on teen girls living in isolation, ruled by their ancestor-worshiping fathers. Each summer, the children run wild on the island, fighting each other for food and shelter. Pubescent girls later spend a "summer of fruition," in which they are steered toward future husbands who will have complete authority over their lives.

The points of view switch between a handful of teenaged characters. Janey starves herself to prevent puberty. Bookish Vanessa loves Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and wonders whether there might be a place where she might stride "through snowy emptiness with bristling, savage wolves at her side." Pregnant Amanda despairs at the prospect of raising her daughter on the island.

Just as the leaders of Atwood's theocratic autocracy demand that the Handmaids subject themselves to passionless intercourse to continue the species, in *Gather the Daughters* women are valued primarily for their ability to breed.

With her debut novel, Melamed, a psychiatric nurse practitioner, excels in conveying the deep implications of abusive relationships. In *Gather the Daughters*, sexual intercourse between father and daughter is not only condoned, but required.

Eventually, the girls rebel, hiding in the forest and living on the beach. They are forcibly dragged home and beaten, but they continue their protests nevertheless. "We're small and they can force us to do anything they want," Vanessa says. To which Janey replies, "But they can't stop us from thinking."

The cost of resistance is high, though. When circumstances worsen, Janey says, "I'm not sure of anything. But we need to stop believing everything we've been told. And I don't just mean us."

Set in a small fishing town on the Oregon coast, *Red Clocks* is the second novel by Zumas, a professor of creative writing at Portland State University. Although much lighter in tone than *Gather the Daughters*, *Red Clocks* shares with Melamed's book a sense of the Pacific Northwest's natural lushness and its darker, more mysterious side.

In Zumas' future, the Personhood Amendment has passed, abortion is illegal in the U.S., in vitro fertilization has been banned and every embryo has been granted the right to life, liberty and property. Women once traveled to Canada to terminate their pregnancies, but now border agents return them to the States to face murder conspiracy charges.

The points of view in *Red Clocks* rotate through a half-dozen characters, but the protagonist seems to be a 40-ish teacher, Ro, who spends a fortune on dubious fertility treatments while writing the biography of an obscure female polar explorer.

Meanwhile, one of her best students, Mattie, discovers she is pregnant and has no idea what to do. Ro muses, "She couldn't believe the Personhood Amendment had become real with all these citizens so against it. Which (the disbelief) was stupid. She knew — it was her job as a teacher of history to know — how many horrors are legitimated in public daylight, against the will of the people."

The men who make the rules are mainly off-stage, running — and ruining — the lives of others from a distance. But Zumas's female characters are resourceful in the ways they resist. Although it has a serious message about how women are valued by society, *Red Clocks* is essentially a comedy, using humor to highlight the absurdities of authoritarianism and to celebrate self-determination.

At the end of the book, Ro makes a list of things she wants. It reads in part:
"To go to the protest in May.
To do more than go to a protest.
To be okay with not knowing...
To see what is.
And to see what is possible."

Like Atwood before them, Melamed and Zumas have tapped into a newly resurgent literary tradition, one less prophetic than cautionary. They and many of their fellow writers of speculative fiction convey the need to be alert to injustice — and to be prepared to act against it.

As protest placards at the Trump inauguration implored, "Make Margaret Atwood fiction again!"

BY MICHAEL BERRY

Reefnetting in Puget Sound, off Lummi Island, Washington, September 2009.
EDMUND LOWE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The heart of Salmon Country

It's hard to know where to begin in the "mythopoeic" journey that is *Upstream: Searching for Wild Salmon, From River to Table*, but the spotting tower of a reef-net barge in Puget Sound might be the place. Reef-netting is an ancient Pacific Northwest technique that, as author Langdon Cook explains, is now the world's rarest — and most sustainable — form of salmon fishing. Just offshore, sunken cables with plastic flagging shape a long funnel that converges over an underwater net strung between two barges. "Sometimes a school looks like an overhead cloud," a fisher tells Cook, "like a shadow moving across the ripples." Sometimes the fish are plainly visible, "a perfect line or a V, like a flock of geese." When they swim over the net, the spotter calls out, the winches are tripped, and instantly the net rises with salmon in its fold "like a bunch of kids bouncing on a trampoline."

In *Upstream*, Cook is that proverbial spotter, high above the Northwest, but he's also boots on the ground and waders in the water. The book is an ambitious exploration of salmon country and the daunting physical and political challenges facing these totemic fish. Admiring freshly caught salmon at Seattle's Pike's Place Market, where the book begins, Cook reflects, "I understood that great runs of salmon had shaped this landscape as much as the glaciers and volcanoes and waves of new immigrants." He sets out to see the extent to which salmon still shape the Northwest even as we shape them, making a pilgrimage into mismanagement and recovery efforts, past and present.

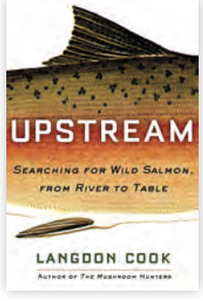
Cook searches widely for answers. Though a fly-fisher, he deigns to troll a reservoir on the Columbia River, once "the greatest nursery on the planet" but now home to a place called the "Toilet Bowl," where boats turn sad circles hoping for a hatchery chinook that's topped Bonneville Dam. He attends a Native salmon ceremony in Cascade Locks and plies an unidentified river on the Oregon Coast with the director of the Wild Salmon Center, Guido Rahr, who believes that lonely, undisturbed streams in second-growth forests offer today's best conservation opportunities. But, as Cook notes, "Money tends to follow the problems, not the opportunities." Though $15 billion has been spent in the Columbia Basin since 1978, none of its wild strains of salmon have been removed from the endangered species list.

Salmon, of course, extend far beyond Washington. In a patched-up wetsuit, Cook dives into California's Yuba River to see adult salmon holding on their nests, called redds. He describes one fish: "In just a foot of water, its pectoral fins (were) working like frayed Chinese fans to keep it upright, the delicate lavender color turned a jaundice yellow." Following "the magnetic pull of Alaska," Cook rides with a gillnetter down the Copper River to haul in silver, or coho, salmon on flats "aquamarine as far as the eye can see."

Upstream is first-rate literary journalism, a deep dive into surprisingly disparate milieus united by a passion for the king of fish. Cook pivots easily from place to place, and aficionado to aficionado. The characters he renders are both salty and refined, and the connections between fishers, farmers and conservationists are drawn taut, with real tension at times. *Upstream* is also a classic commodity narrative, à la John McPhee's *Oranges*. We learn how Pacific salmon ultimately migrate to a fine restaurant or home kitchen, and we even learn the secret to preparing them: slowly, at 220 degrees.

Much Pacific salmon habitat is beyond "restoration," as Cook and his guides point out, painfully — there is no going back to pristine river systems — but "reconciliation" is still possible with creative thinking. "The best we can do to heal old wounds is to reconcile the land with new uses that help to bring it into some sort of harmony," Cook says. In California's drained Central Valley, that might mean managing the surprisingly wild Yolo Bypass — which receives spillover from the Sacramento River — so that adult salmon can survive in it, or flooding rice paddies so that fingerlings can capitalize on this shallow, solar-fed soup of algae and phytoplankton. On the Oregon coast, balance might mean bolstering hatchery programs on a river or two while barring them from the rest, so that they remain "strongholds" for wild genes. But the major takeaway from *Upstream* is that gut-level knowledge is required for real change. We need to get outside, as Cook does, and see these fish and their rivers. "You feel that?" Rene Henry, the lead scientist for Trout Unlimited in California, asks as he and Cook watch a salmon swim up the muddy, mostly dewatered San Joaquin River. "That's your heart."

BY NICK NEELY



Upstream: Searching for Wild Salmon, From River to Table
Langdon Cook
336 pages, hardcover; $27
Ballantine Books, 2017.

Notice to our advertisers: You can place classified ads with our online classified system. Visit hcn.org/classifieds. Nov. 10 is the deadline to place your print ad in the Nov. 27 issue. Call 800-311-5852, or e-mail advertising@hcn.org for help or information. For more information about our current rates and display ad options, visit hcn.org/advertising.

Advertising Policy: We accept advertising because it helps pay the costs of publishing a high-quality, full-color magazine, where topics are well-researched and reported in an in-depth manner. The percentage of the magazine's income that is derived from advertising is modest, and the number of advertising pages will not exceed one-third of our printed pages annually.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Conservationist? Irrigable land? Stellar seed-saving NGO is available to serious partner. Package must include financial support. Details: http://seeds.ojaidigital.net.

Advertising is a great way to support *High Country News* and get your word out — Consider a classified ad in *HCN* when you have a conservation or green technology job to fill, a conference or event coming up, or a house to sell. Visit http://classifieds.hcn.org or call 800-311-5852.

EMPLOYMENT

WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY Wyss Fellow — Associate Project Manager — Join WRC's lands team working to protect outstanding Western rivers through land acquisition. Visit www.westernrivers.org for details.

Wyoming Public Lands and Energy Associate — The Wilderness Society is leading efforts to protect our public lands and ensure a balanced approach to energy development. Working with our Wyoming Representative, other staff, and diverse partners, the Wyoming Associate will provide support and leadership in engaging in agency planning, federal policy efforts, and efforts to defend wildlands against inappropriate development and rollbacks of conservation laws. Open until filled, located in southwest Wyoming (or Laramie), this full time position includes benefits. Full job description and to apply: http://wilderness.org/careers-and-internships.

Blackfoot Challenge seeks Executive Director for organization management. Apply by Nov. 17. Details: www.blackfootchallenge.org.

HOME AND GARDEN

Aquabot High Pressure Water Bottles Mist, shower and jet. Clean off, cool off, hydrate and have fun. www.lunatecgear.com.

Western Native Seed – Specializing in native seeds and seed mixes for Western states. 719-942-3935.

Enduring Performance in wide-ranging applications with environmentally friendly, extended drain AMSOIL synthetic lubricants. Wholesale accounts encouraged. 877-486-7645. www.PerformanceOils.US/index/html.

Expert land steward — Available now for site conservator, property manager. View résumé at: http://skills.ojaidigital.net.

Apprentice on regenerative ranches and Farms! Learn to raise grassfed beef and lamb, heirloom trees and organic grain. Apply now for a New Agrarian apprenticeship in New Mexico, Colorado, California, Montana. http://quiviracoalition.org/newagrarian.

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKS

Back of Beyond Books buys rare and collectible books, maps and manuscripts of the American West. Call Andy Nettell at Back of Beyond Books, 1-800-700-2859, or email: andy@backofbeyondbooks.com.

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

Event land wanted — Apogaea, an art and cultural gathering, is looking for land from 200 to 2,000 acres within four hours' drive of Denver. Contact land@apogaea.com if interested.

WANTING TO RENT long-term, small cabin, quiet for writing. Off-grid OK. Retired Forest Service geologist. Northern U.S. References. Call Jo: 207-890-2692 or redtail47@gmail.com.

Writer's escape, Castle Valley Utah Peace and tranquility. https://www.sabbaticalhomes.com/OfferedDetails.aspx?id=115652.

Historical abode in Saguache, Colo. Two-bedroom, one-bath historical adobe home. New kitchen, two blocks to town. Internet. $600/month. srcridgewood@gmail.com.

Charming Taos adobe for rent — Two bedrooms, king/double, fireplaces, one block to Harwood Museum, two blocks to Taos Plaza, $900/week, $350/weekends. srcridgewood@gmail.com.

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

200 acres with clean water — Orangeburg, S.C. Artesian wells, springs; running streams. Ten-acre pond; natural ecosystem. Protected from major storms year-round. Unlimited possibilities: solar power income potential, equestrian sports; specialty farming; retreat; winery; fishing and hunting. Utilities available. Close to major cities, horse and golf events. Seven miles to nearest airport. Contact Janet Loder, 425-922-5959. janetloder@cablespeed.com.

Ranch with huge organic/sustainability potential for sale! Spruce Point Tree Farm has 42,000 spruce trees and sequesters 2.1 million pounds of carbon each year. It has potential for a major organic manufacturing interest or continued use as a tree farm (or both). The ranch includes its own airport (airnav.com/airport/5CO1), high-end irrigation system, major water rights, buildings (including a 1909 ranch house), ponds, equipment and staff. Current owner looking to retire. sprucepointtreefarm.com.

Off the grid and under the radar! Total solar, contemporary steel, artist live/work home, great well, 70 acres, peace, privacy. deerhaven@mac.com.

A dream home awaits – Beautifully appointed log home on 35 acres, private. mls#15-118. 719-989-0999. Jerry@lavetarealty.com.

Colorado organic farm, $679,000, 3/2 house, 8.9 Acres – Patti Kaech, Broker-Needlerock Realty 970-261-6267. PattiKaech.com.

Freedom on 32 acres in Colorado Rockies – Borders national forest, 20 miles north of Steamboat. Yurt. $414,000. No covenants. 970-846-0457.

Taos, N.M., Home for Sale – La Loma Plaza. Two-bedroom/one-bath, dining, kitchen, living, fireplaces, fenced/adobe. Backyard/courtyard. Private, charming, historical. Two blocks to Taos Plaza. $490,00. srcridgewood@gmail.com.

New Mexico Rio Grande Gorge home 3,700 square-foot, two-bedroom/bath, studio, guest house, one acre, 100 feet on Rio Grande, across from national forest. Horse corral, two stalls. Fenced, adobe courtyards. Needs some work. srcridgewood@gmail.com.

TOURS AND TRAVEL

COPPER CANYON, MEXICO, TREKKING Ten-day tour, from Los Mochis airport, two nights El Fuerte, train, two nights canyon rim hotel, five nights trek-style camping. $2,000 pp/do www.coppercanyontrails.org. 520-324-0209.

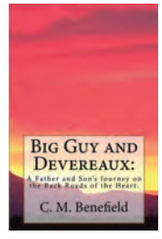
Coming to Tucson? Popular vacation house, everything furnished. Rent by day, week, month. Two-bedroom, one bath. Large enclosed yards. Dog-friendly. Contact Lee at cloler@cox.net or 520-791-9246.

AdventureBoundUSA – Five-day Colorado River trips and more. Since 1963. 970-245-5428. AdventureBoundUSA.com.

Bisbee, Ariz. / Copper City Inn / "Deeelightful!" – Three rooms, balcony, five years #1 on TripAdvisor. 520-432-1418. coppercityinn.com.

Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center – The landscape of Ghost Ranch in northern New Mexico encompasses 21,000 acres of towering rock walls, vivid colors and vast skies. Join us for Georgia O'Keeffe landscape tours and trail rides, archaeology and paleontology museums and tours, hiking trails, lodging and camping. 505-685-1000. www.GhostRanch.org.

Big Guy and Devereaux: A Father and Son's Journey on the Back Roads of the Heart. This book chronicles the relationship between Devereaux Meehan, a cantankerous construction worker and his youngest son, nicknamed Big Guy. The Meehan family gets swept up in the turbulent times of the 1960s, and after a clash with his children and the death of one son, Devereaux and his other son, Big Guy, grow close as they explore an immense landscape that serves to bridge two very different generations, on the back roads of the American West. 541-419-7418 pleasantviewpublishing@gmail.com. https://www.createspace.com/6785353.



Give a gift that matters

That time of year is fast approaching when we celebrate the important things in our lives. It's also a time when many of us give gifts to the folks we care about.

This holiday season, we encourage you to give a gift that matters: a subscription to *High Country News*, the magazine that celebrates the soul of the American West through in-depth, independent journalism dedicated to covering a region of unrivaled character and beauty.

This holiday season, *HCN* staff asks you to support independent journalism with a gift subscription to *High Country News*. Pictured from left to right: Paul Larmer, Rebecca Worby, Laura Dixon, Christie Cantrell, Laurie Milford, JoAnn Kalenak, Diane Sylvain, Christine List, Erica Howard, Kathy Martinez, Alan Wells, Jan Hoffman, Brooke Warren, Tammy York, Paige Blankenbuehler, Emily Benson, Cindy Wehling and Pam Peterson. Not pictured, but operating out of headquarters in Paonia, Colorado: Anna V. Smith, Betsy Marston, Brian Calvert, Eric Strebel, Gretchen King, Jodi Peterson and Kate Schimel. BROOKE WARREN

You can make a real difference by giving one of the most important gifts a friend of the West can receive: a subscription to *High Country News*. Fill out and mail the form below, or go to **hcn.org/gift-17** and give a gift that matters.

Give a gift that matters. Give High Country News.

Yes! I know someone who loves the West. Please send my gift to:

GIFT TO:

RECIPIENT'S NAME (please print)

Address

City State Zip

Email (Required for digital gifts.) Phone

❑ **FULL SUBSCRIPTION** ❑ **DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION** (check one)

Please use a separate sheet of paper for additional subscriptions.

Full Subscription (one year)
- 22 print issues
- Full access to hcn.org
- PDF digital edition

1st gift $29.95 (reg. $37)
Additional gifts $24.95

Digital Subscription (one year)
- Full access to hcn.org
- PDF digital edition

1st gift $21.95 (reg. $25)
Additional gifts $19.95

GIFT FROM:

MY NAME (please print)

Address

City State Zip

Email Phone

HCN staff will send a gift card to each recipient. Subscriptions will begin with the first issue in 2018.

QTY.	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	TOTAL
_____	1st Full Subscription	$29.95	$29.95
_____	Additional Full Subscription(s)	$24.95 each	_____
_____	1st Digital Subscription	$21.95	$21.95
_____	Additional Digital Subscription(s)	$19.95 each	_____
		Grand total	_____

❑ Payment enclosed ❑ Please bill me

Please charge my: ❑ Visa ❑ MasterCard ❑ Discover ❑ AMEX

Card number _____

Expires _____ G090A000

Mail to: HCN Holiday Gift, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428
Subscribe online at hcn.org/gift-17 or call 800-905-1155.

Wild reading

How bringing books into the backcountry deepens the experience

ESSAY BY LEATH TONINO

On April 26, 1336, the poet-scholar Francesco Petrarch climbed Mont Ventoux, in Provence, for "harmless pleasure." Upon reaching the summit, he didn't wrap himself in a warm cloak and gobble some crusty bread, as one might expect. Rather, he cracked a copy of St. Augustine's *Confessions* and filled his mind with text. The hike may have been the birth of modern alpinism, but it was also an early instance of another outdoorsy pastime.

For years, I've been intrigued by wilderness reading, asking myself the *meaning* of lugging literature into the backcountry. What was going on there atop Mont Ventoux, and also each time a Kindle sneaks into the kit today? Do we deepen our engagement with place, or distract ourselves from it? Sleeping bag, stove, iodine tablets, Swiss Army knife, extra socks — sure, these items are useful on a backpacking trip. But books?

I first contemplated this subject at 19, while hiking solo from Denver to Durango on the Colorado Trail. New to the West and disturbed by its arid vastness, I decided to encounter my strange habitat with as little mediation as possible. I equipped myself with the barest essentials: bivy sack in lieu of a tent, scavenged-twig chopsticks instead of a metal spoon. Needless to say, Emily Dickinson and Plato stayed home.

The forests were oddly unpeopled that August, and I regularly found myself in the company of solemn spruce and brooks that failed to babble. Without any human voices to offer conversation and comfort, I grew lonely, edgy. A cute blond bibliophile carrying a rucksack of Melville, Snickers, Twain and Doritos would have proved that wishes can indeed come true, but a gruff miner-dude with an 80-word lexicon and a case of cheap beer would have been agreeable, too.

And then, as I crossed a dirt road beneath drizzly morning skies, what should appear but a rusty pickup? The truck slowed at the sight of my raised thumb and I hopped in. *Please, sir, drop me at the nearest supermarket. Is there a used bookshop in town?*

That evening, having gorged on junk food and, more importantly, acquired a tattered paperback for 50 cents, I returned to the cold rainy moutains. My

Continued on next page

LARS SCHNEIDER/GETTY

The question of wild reading is an open book — and that's a delight. Here are some reflections on the subject from five authors who have been roaming texts and landscapes for decades.

KATHLEEN DEAN MOORE

On backpacking trips, my husband and I share one paperback book. When I've read a couple of pages, I tear them out and hand them to my husband. He reads them, sets them aside for fire-starter, and on we go through the book. Some of my writer friends are horrified, but I think this ritual is wildly respectful, returning the book to its origins — carbon tangled in tree roots and feral words set free again. But it does mean that I have to replace a lot of books — books that bring alive the places we have camped. *Desert Solitaire*. *Gathering Moss*. *Roughing It*. *Fish Camp*.

Because I often write about planetary emergencies, I have tried reading up on them in wild places. But I've abandoned that plan. It's unbearable to read *The Sixth Extinction* while listening to a feeble frog chorus, or to read *The Bridge at the Edge of the World* while watching a nesting loon; it's like reading the pathology report in front of a friend who doesn't yet know she's dying.

STEPHEN TRIMBLE

I look for the one great recent book that will not only give me a window into the place I'm in but thrill me with the quality of writing. I was in Vietnam this spring, and Andrew Pham's *The Eaves of Heaven* worked pretty darn well. I'm headed down the Colorado River in Grand Canyon soon, and Kevin Fedarko's *The Emerald Mile* is the perfect companion. You need a narrative voice that you want to hang out with, a writer who does her homework and gets all the facts right, a lyrical storyteller who will transport you when you realize you've decided to camp on a lively anthill, an insider who will guide you into a deeply felt exploration of the spirit of the place and the flavor of the culture.

Sometimes the match is perfect, sometimes the contrast is so huge that it's just as memorable. I finished Kim MacQuarrie's *The Last of the Incas* in a bar in Cuzco, blocks from the battles he was bringing to life in the book. I read Wade Davis' *One River* while visiting the Ecuadorian rain forest, and his description of his ethnobotany mentor's expeditions helped me to make sense of all that impenetrable greenery. I finished Walter van Tilburg Clark's great novel of western Nevada, *The City of Trembling Leaves*, while camping in the book's locales, Mount Rose and the Black Rock Desert. My own experiences amplified the images in the book.

Years ago, I tried actually reading a book while driving — lost in *Lonesome Dove* while I drove the straight-as-an-arrow interstates across the Texas high plains. It was clearly dangerous, and I abandoned the experiment for books-on-tape. A lot of my "reading" in the "wilderness" is listening — to audio books while driving long distances. Sometimes I have to pull over to the side of the road and stare at the horizon when books accelerate toward their endings. I remember doing so with Andrea Barrett's *The Voyage of the Narwhal* as I drove in the shadow of Ute Mountain on a stormy day near Cortez, Colorado.

Continued from previous page

headlamp's beam locked onto a biography of Mozart — and refused to let go. Here was the Sawatch Range enfolded in storm, and here, too, was bustling Vienna, *Eine Kleine Nachtmusic*, the life and times of Wolfgang Amadeus.

Never before had I devoured a book with such a ferocious appetite. Six hours and 12 chapters later, eyes burning, I passed out, only to rise at dawn, hoist my pack, and hit the trail. The spring in my step made it clear that literature can serve as a kind of fuel, at least for the solitary walker. No less than instant coffee and oatmeal, it gave me the strength to push on.

This urge towards language is surely integral to our identity as *Homo sapiens* — "the animal who possesses speech," as Aristotle put it. Beyond that, it's tough to generalize about wild reading. Books lead us toward an enriched sense of our environs, yes, but they also help us escape the elemental present. They function in countless ways, providing botanical detail, local lore, critiques of the status quo, visions of the future, entertainment when you're socked in by storms, arcane wisdom, random trivia about wigged fellows tinkling pianos in Vienna. Bundled in a dirty fleece jacket, they even make for a decent, albeit firm, pillow.

If you'll excuse the pun, the question of wild reading is itself an open book, an invitation to speculate and, better yet, to experiment.

My experiments of late are less concerned with how literature shapes appreciation of places than with the inverse: how *places* shape appreciation of *literature*. On Sunday afternoons I browse ancient Chinese landscape poetry in the tangled woods bordering my rural home. According to certain critics, the vivid imagery of a Wang Wei poem — light falling on a bed of jade-green moss, a crimson leaf floating circles in a river's eddy — *enacts* the movement of nature. That is, instead of just describing the ceaseless burgeoning forth of organic reality, the poem literally recreates that dynamic, lines lifting from the white space, expanding in the mind, disappearing into silence.

Reading on a shadow-dappled log, my attention flickers between warblers and words, and I notice a parallel motion. These intricate markings on the page … they're flying? These letters … they're birds to read? Language seems earthly, of a piece with the environment.

At such moments I feel a surging unity, as if the animal who possesses speech belongs here among the wild energies of wild country. Reading poetry in a dim study — dusty shelves, leather chairs, windows closed — just isn't the same. Wrong habitat. Almost like reading in a zoo. □

ROBERTO WESTBROOK

MICHAEL BRANCH

I take a very positive view of this odd habit of packing books into the backcountry. My hero in this regard is John Muir, who in 1867 walked a thousand miles from Indianapolis to the Gulf of Mexico, carrying with him the *New Testament*, *Paradise Lost* and the poems of Robert Burns. Not only do I rarely take a hike without also taking a book, I often read as I hike, a doubly odd habit that is made yet more idiosyncratic by the fact that I sometimes read aloud, even though I'm by myself. I love the way reading in the wild simplifies my encounter with the text; I find that a temporary deliverance from the incessant noise of TV, radio, phone and social media brings the language of literature back into focus for me. I wrote about all this at greater length in the chapter "In Defense of Bibliopedestrianism," from my new book *Rants from the Hill*.

I used to coordinate my reading with the landscape I was covering: Ellen Meloy or Ed Abbey in the red rock country of southern Utah, Rick Bass or Norman Maclean up in the wet high country of Montana, Steinbeck in Monterey or down on the Sea of Cortez, Robert Laxalt or Mark Twain here in the western Great Basin Desert. For years now I've enjoyed doing precisely the opposite. When I'm snowshoeing after a fresh blizzard, I like to read W.S. Merwin's beautiful Hawaii poems, or Peter Matthiessen's lush prose about the Florida Everglades.

My most indelible memory of reading in the backcountry is considerably less pleasant. Thirty years ago, while bumming around the West, I decided to hit the peaks up in Jasper and Banff. Unfortunately, I had contracted giardia while packing in the Wind River Range in Wyoming, and by the time I arrived in Banff I was mighty sick. Knowing I would need serious recovery time, and that I had no decent way to pass it, I staggered into the Lake Louise visitor center and bought the thickest book they had. I then drove my pickup up to a remote trailhead, where I lay beneath my camper shell for four full days, alternating between suffering the worst diarrhea of my life and reading all 1,072 pages of *Don Quixote*, a book that has meant a great deal to me ever since.

EMMA MARRIS

When I was a kid, I read in a lot of strange places, like on top of the grape arbor and under bed-sheet tents in the backyard. I was constantly trying to read in trees, which is more logistically difficult than it sounds. Finding a position in which one remains comfortable for an hour of page flipping is really tough. We had this weird bungee-cord web with maybe six or 10 hooks on it that we used to strap things to the roof of our Volvo station wagon. I hooked this on various branches of the apple tree in the backyard and plopped in the middle with a pillow. I think I was reading *Emily of New Moon* by Lucy Maud Montgomery. All was paradise for a few minutes, and then one of the branches snapped, dumping me to the ground in a tangle of bungee cords. After this mild trauma, I gave up tree reading for a while. But I am considering taking it up again. I have one of those nylon hammocks and I bet it could work in my current apple tree.

I have sometimes decided which book to take to the woods on the basis of weight, which means that I am disproportionately likely to bring poetry. Luckily, poetry is possibly the best thing to read in the woods or on a mountain. Poetry requires a certain freshness of perspective, a mind primed to be receptive to complex, contradictory stimulus. And being outside in "nature" puts our minds in precisely this state. Whether it is biophilia at work or simply the novelty of not being enclosed by walls, I don't know, but I do know that my mind is more willing to romp to strange places when I'm outside. I pay attention better. And poems that seem like hard work at home ring like glass bells when I read them prone on a log, to the sound of flowing water.

SETH KANTNER

Here in northern Alaska my home is the Brooks Range, very much alone and disconnected from the world, and I read with my old black rocking chair drawn up as close to the barrel stove as I can get it. Occasionally I lower my book to talk to a shrew running across the floorboards or glance out at the weather. I don't need to go camping to be out in the wild — the wind drifts my door, and moose and bears, foxes and marten cross the roof of my sod house without realizing what lives below.

Under my windows, along the south side, eight-foot spruce planks are lined with moldy books: Louise Erdrich, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (who I've never made it through) Steinbeck, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Eye of the Needle*, Nick Jans' *The Last Light Breaking*, and even a copy of my own novel and memoir.

My most memorable reading experience was camping here in the mountains, with a dog team, in April: windy, 10 degrees below zero, cold as a nice winter day but the big brown bears already out and roaming.

The north wind blows here, dangerous, and that night it picked up steadily until it was roaring in the spruce, lifting the canvas wall tent into the air, sifting snow into my girlfriend's and my sleeping bags and hissing on our tiny homemade stove. In the worst gusts, I could see in all directions out into the spring dusk — the willows and snow, the dark trees nearby, my chained dogs barking into the night.

I knew I needed to lash the tent down, and check the dogs, and get my rifle out of the scabbard on the sled — but I was on the last section of *The Hunt For The Red October*. I just had to read one more page. Just one more paragraph. The wind kept rising, billowing the tent into the air like a loose sail. Still, I couldn't put the book down.

Finally I turned the last page, read the last word, and then clambered into my cold snowpants and parka and beaver hat, and happily went into the storming night to reassure the dogs, and cut saplings to anchor the bottom of the tent down, and tighten the ties, and bring in my gun. Afterward, finally, I lay back down in my sleeping bag, staring at glowing dots in the darkness, listening to the wind and picturing the dark world down under the ocean in that Russian submarine. □

Books lead us toward an enriched sense of our environs, yes, but they also help us escape the elemental present.

Thoughts on the end

"What would you do if you knew the world was ending, and you had 24 hours to live?" I put that question recently to Ana Maria Spagna, friend and fellow writer, with a blush — it seems like a drinking-game question, after all, nearly trite in its grandness. But I meant it, because it seems to have burbled suddenly into my zeitgeist — tropical storms and earthquakes and raging wildfires as regular news, methane burps and Yellowstone rumbles as potential threats, and my major childhood fear of imminent death from Russian nuclear weapons now revived from North Korea. "Oh," she said, gazing out at the waters of Puget Sound from the cabin where we were staying on Whidbey Island. "Well. …"

We both looked at the evening blue expanse. We were on the island teaching a class called "writing for change" — I'd joked we could have added "before it's too late." The students had just departed, tired and happy, and Ana Maria and I had a quiet evening, so I posed the question I'd just been journaling about.

If I had one day and knew it, I told her, I'd indulge. Assuming I could get to all this stuff and people, I'd satisfy my senses: gin-and-tonics, French fries, kissing, holding, and being outside listening to oceans or mountains or birds. My other priority would be to hug my teenage kids and try to serve them in whatever way I could, though my guess is that they, too, would want sensory experience — to get tipsy or into the arms of another, perhaps — and indeed, I'd encourage them to go forth and do so.

Laura's question caught me off guard. I'd just returned from a walk, or an almost-walk. High tide had claimed most of the beach, leaving me to clamber over driftwood, under low-hanging madrona limbs, through scratchy patches of salal to a small dry cubbyhole, where I sat on round rocks and breathed in the sea's unfamiliar fecundity: rot, fish, salt. Across the water, I could see the mountains of my home, some 80 miles east, silhouetted in the late daylight. I felt the satisfying exhaustion of work well done. We'd led an intense three-day workshop, connecting with other writers, good people striving to make meaning of our world. What would I want if this world were ending? To be in those distant mountains, with Laurie — the love of my life — and some good whiskey. I'd want to be outside. Maybe I'd want music: Van Morrison, perhaps, and Nick Drake. What else? I pondered as Laura sat by the fireplace, wine glass in hand, and we watched bald eagles circle and land in the fir trees on the shore.

So we quickly agreed on the basics, at least when it came to physical activities. But then I wondered about my inner world. Could I control my fear, knowing, as I do, that accepting the simple fact of my mortality, or anyone's mortality, has been the challenge of my life? Particularly if we were talking the mortality of the whole damn planet! I decided I'd want to seek some sort of chin-up equanimity and face death with a bit of curiosity. So I'd meditate on gratitude, likely — thanking all the authors who have taught me and kept me company, the environmentalists who worked hard, the politicians who tried to make it right, all the good souls who engaged. I'd call a few people and tell them what they meant to me, although I think they already know, and I'd think of all who had already faced this mysterious unknown. Then, at the very last moment, I'd try to settle into a place of curious calm, lift my face to the sun, or the moon, and breathe in and say, "It's nature. *Debitum Naturae*. My debt to nature is to die."

Nature, yes. A few years back, someone asked me what I'd write about if I knew I was going to die. The beauty of nature, I said. The answer surprised me. I've written about many subjects: civil rights, community, politics, relationships. But in the end, it's the beauty, the holiness, as Northwest writer Brian Doyle would have said, of sunshine, rain, river, trees, birds, fish, sky, and humans, too, as part of it. That's what matters most to me. The irony is: In order to write, I spend my days alone, typing on a computer, indoors. I love my work. But this is not how I'd spend my last hours. Just: Laurie, whiskey, music. Sex, maybe. Gratitude, plenty. It's funny, I rarely listen to Van Morrison now; it's more rollicking fare, louder, cynical. But my day-to-day music, like my day-to-day work, is not what I'd want in the end.

How true that is! What I want to spend my life doing is wildly different than how I'd spend that last day. I want to spend my life writing, adding to a conversation geared toward a better way of being human and living on the planet. That normally entails skipping the gin and tonics and fries. Instead, it consists of long stretches of being alone, at a computer, or attending meetings, or digging my fingers into my scalp while a politician speaks. It struck me as odd: Despite the world's potential destruction, in which my work would be destroyed as well — that existential why bother? question again — I still honor that human need to leave a mark, a tangible record. As I watched some faraway seabirds settle into the water and dusk descend, I considered: Maybe, after all, I'd hug the books, too.

I laughed at the image, a last snuggle with our paperbacks. When wildfires recently threatened our home, at the last minute I cleared a couple dusty shelves of small literary journals, my earliest publications, hard-won. I stuffed them in a rolling suitcase too heavy to lift. I probably wouldn't take it when the time came, but the act of gathering them felt ridiculously right.

Silence fell; too far to hear the water on the rocks. I poured myself a glass of wine.

As I gazed at the mountains, I asked Laura another, harder question: "What if we couldn't make it home? What if we couldn't even call our loved ones? Would you want to be alone?"

I wouldn't. I've protected my solitude fiercely my whole life, but no, no. If it was just us and the writers in our weekend work-

ESSAY BY ANA MARIA SPAGNA AND LAURA PRITCHETT

ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH GILMAN

shop? I'd want to be together. Wrap our arms around one another. No substitute for Laurie or family. But to be connected.

Yes, even in the arms of near-strangers — that death would be preferable, as long as they were making an effort toward calm, toward peace.

Though it might depend, I told Ana Maria, on how we were dying. There had been news that day of violence. Of course.

"I really want to die by nature," I told her. "The methane burp or Yellowstone rockin' the world." I realize human-caused and nature overlap a bit, I told her — the methane burp being exacerbated by climate change and all. "But there wasn't intentionality there. Stupidity in how we treated the environment, yes. But not intentionality. I can't stand the idea of a mass die-off caused by a purposeful, human-caused event — a nuclear blast, for example. Or a shooter. I'd just die so angry. I'd need to be alone, to stomp and to scream and to wail. I'd spend my last hours cursing the fate of those who caused it, cursing the fact we hadn't done better. It would be just so much, much easier if it's my mother Earth and her wily ways."

I agreed. Sort of. I wouldn't want a violent death. I wouldn't want to look another human in the eye and see evil, or have to think too long, in those final Astral Weeks*-soaked hours, about evil. But I've long since given up wishing for a grizzly or a cougar, either. A few years back, a cat we loved died a long, painful natural death. When the next cat arrived, we swore often that we hoped he'd go in a blink to a predator instead. When he did, we wept inconsolably, hoping he didn't suffer, knowing he did. A natural disaster would give us the benefit of not worrying about who we'd leave grieving, or even what we'd be missing, like a kid who can't sleep while the party's still going strong. The truth is: I don't know how I want to die. But that doesn't mean I don't need to think about it. As Laura and I gave in, at last, to weariness and wine, I headed to bed with an odd feeling of peace, even given this most discomfiting of conversations. Maybe because of it.*

The next morning, we went kayaking, and we spoke of the eagle and the coastline nature and sky. We both agreed on the wisdom of having an End of the World Whiskey Bottle hidden somewhere in our homes. We agreed how crucial it is to talk about all this, and we shared, in brief, stories of good deaths and bad deaths we've known and witnessed. And we agreed that although we've dedicated our lives to writing, and we'd both struggled to put it first, and indeed, have plotted the course of our lives for the sake of writing, in the end, our books wouldn't matter that much. At the end, we don't want words. We want to be held by a loved one, and by our planet. □

How true that is! What I want to spend my life doing is wildly different than how I'd spend that last day.

U.S. $5 | Canada $6

46

7 25274 57365 3

HEARD AROUND THE WEST | BY BETSY MARSTON

MONTANA

It sounds far-fetched, but some deer are so habituated to people that they have been seen jumping over children on the playground at Missoula, Montana's Rattlesnake Elementary School. Still, a recent encounter shocked school employee Jenn Jencso: A deer crashed through the passenger-side window of her car, breaking the glass and landing inside the vehicle, hooves flailing. A 5-year-old eyewitness described what happened next: "The lady … jumped out, and when she turned around, the deer was driving her car away. It hit a mailbox … so she got back in and she told the deer, 'Get out now.' It got out and ran away." That account is slightly dramatized, but Jencso said she did have to "push the deer back over" in order to halt her moving car. Finally, it "fell out of the car and ran away." Jencso told the *Missoulian* that she likes deer, but they're getting out of hand. "It's so dangerous how many deer we have. They're like feral cats." Though even feral cats don't go in for carjacking.

THE WEST

If a river could speak, what would it say? Perhaps that it's horrified by the industrial and household waste dumped into it every day, and that it wishes it could demolish the dams that keep it from flowing freely to the ocean? Jason Flores-Williams, a Denver lawyer and advocate for the homeless, believes rivers need to speak out, and that if a corporation can be found to have the same rights as a person, then so can an ancient waterway. This September, he filed suit in federal district court on behalf of the Colorado River ecosystem, charging that the state of Colorado and Gov. John Hickenlooper, D, violate the river's right "to exist, flourish, regenerate, be restored, and naturally evolve." Because "the river cannot appear in court," as *The New York Times* observed, an environmental group called Deep Green Resistance is filing the suit "as an ally, or so-called next friend, of the waterway." Though Reed Benson, chairman of the environmental law program at the University of New Mexico, said the lawsuit may be a "long shot in more ways than one," he added, "I don't think it's laughable."

COLORADO **Who's gonna get to the lift first?** JAY FETCHER

WEB EXTRA This was among the entries in the *HCN* photo contest. See a gallery with more of our favorites at **hcne.ws/photos-17**.

UTAH

"Sweetheart, this doesn't sound right," said Helena Byler, 78, as her husband, Gerald, kept driving their rental sedan down an increasingly rocky dirt road. The Texas couple, who were visiting Kanab, Utah, had gone out Sept. 26 just for a day trip to Lake Powell. Her husband pooh-poohed her worries: "No, it's OK," he reassured his wife; he was following the directions from a GPS-mapping app. But it was far from OK, reports the *Denver Post*: The road deteriorated and eventually a tire popped, leaving the couple stranded. They attempted to walk out, but Gerald's leg hurt too much, and so Helena went on alone. A rancher spotted her six days later, lying on the road, and search-and-rescue found her husband. Both were dehydrated and in need of hospitalization; they'd gone almost entirely without food, and the only water they drank came from muddy puddles. "It's an amazing story," said Kane County Chief Deputy Allan Alldredge, but Helena Byler had the last word: "See, us women know better."

THE WEST

Consider the praying mantis, the helpful insect that eats harmful bugs. It is also the only insect that can stare back at us, swiveling its triangular, alien-looking head to scrutinize us with unnerving awareness. Its 3-D vision helps the mantis focus and also "to jump as unerringly as a cat," reports *The New York Times*. But the insects display a chilling predilection: They kill birds. James V. Remsen of the Museum of Natural Science at Louisiana State University and his colleagues have documented 147 cases of mantises killing birds in 13 countries — warblers, sunbirds, honeyeaters, flycatchers, vireos and European robins. Hummingbirds are their favorite, though, and they regard our outdoor sugar-water feeders as self-service restaurants. Tom Vaughan, a photographer living in southern Colorado's Mancos Valley, couldn't believe his eyes when he spotted a black-chinned hummingbird at his feeder, being dangled upside-down by a three-inch-long praying mantis: "The mantis was clinging with its back legs to the rim of the feeder, holding its feathered catch in its powerful, seemingly reverent front legs, and methodically chewing through the hummingbird's skull to get at the nutritious brain tissue within." All the while it fed, Vaughan added, the mantis "was staring at me." Bird-eating mantises are almost always females, and the most voracious like to multitask: feasting on a hummer while copulating with a male. These dinner dates can last several hours and sometimes conclude with the male becoming dessert. That the insects have learned to hang out near hummingbird feeders signifies "another step in cognition," said Remsen. "We're lucky praying mantises aren't our size."

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.

"Are we no longer allowed to look like slobs when we're on the trail? Must everything weigh next to nothing? **When did form trump function as a buying preference,** and who can afford all of this?"

Russ Hanbey, in his essay, "Why has fashion trumped utility on the trail?" from Writers on the Range, hcn.org/wotr