

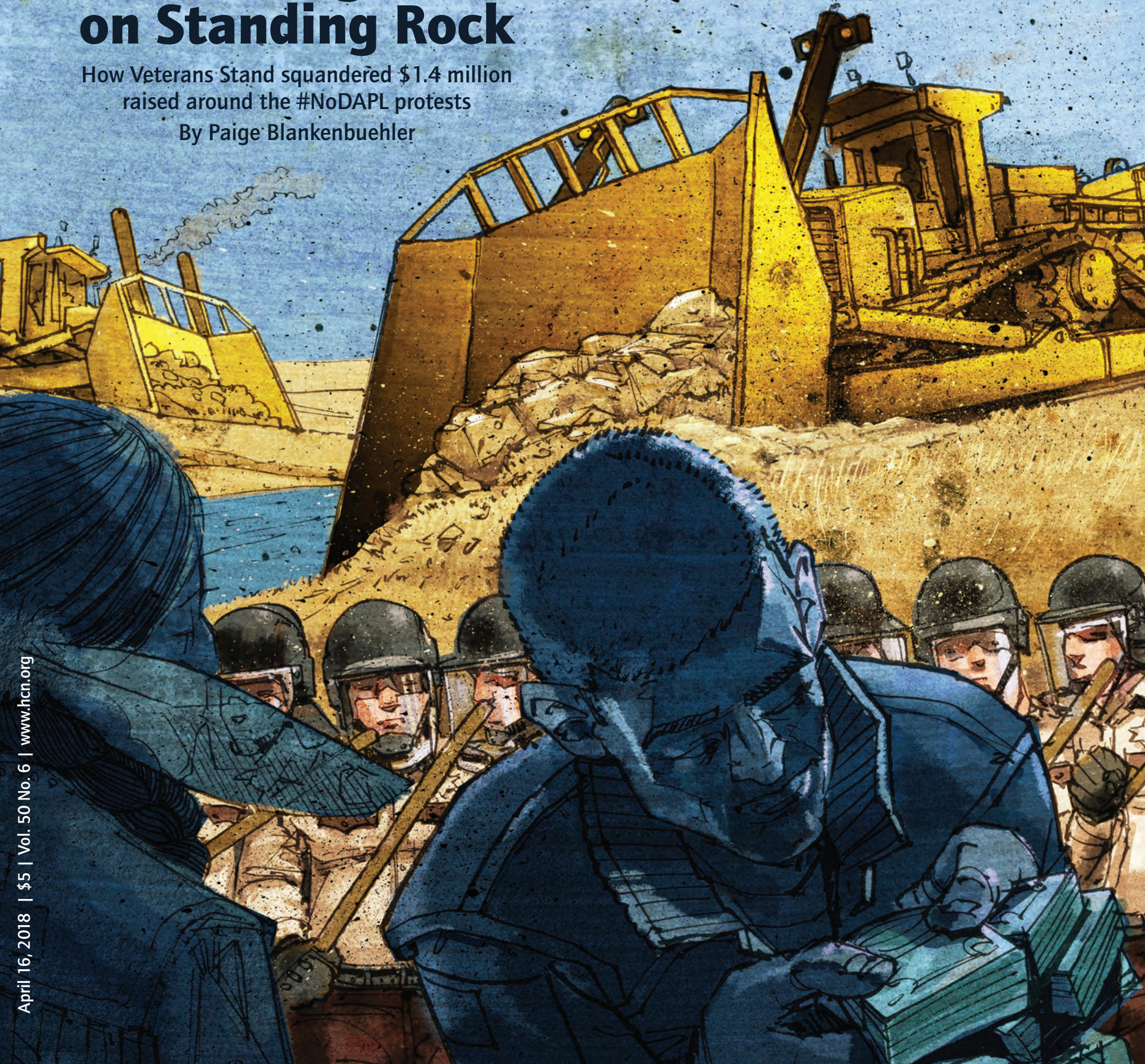
High Country News

For people who care about the West

Cashing In on Standing Rock

How Veterans Stand squandered \$1.4 million
raised around the #NoDAPL protests

By Paige Blankenbuehler





Original illustration by Graham Smith.

FEATURE

- 12 **Cashing in on Standing Rock**
How Veterans Stand squandered \$1.4 million raised around the #NoDAPL protests By Paige Blankenbuehler

CURRENTS

- 5 **Winter's winners and losers** New studies detail how temperature, humidity and dust can affect snowpack
- 5 **The Latest: Toxic-tinged Rocky Flats opens for visitors**
- 6 **Harassment pervades Indian Affairs** One of the Department of Interior's oldest agencies has some of its worst harassment problems
- 6 **Snapshot: Harassment in Interior**
- 8 **Operation desert storm**
'BioBlitz' records the biodiversity of the Borderlands
- 9 **Range anxiety** Charging corridors will make an interior West road trip by electric car increasingly possible
- 9 **The Latest: Washington state bans fish farms**

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 FROM OUR WEBSITE: HCN.ORG
- 4 LETTERS
- 10 THE HCN COMMUNITY Research Fund, Dear Friends
- 21 MARKETPLACE
- 25 ESSAY
A Dreamer dreams of running for office By Juan Gallegos
- 26 BOOKS
American Wolf: A True Story of Survival and Obsession in the West
By Nate Blakeslee Reviewed by Sarah Gilman
- 27 ESSAY
Frackin' on Heaven's Door By David Gilbert
- 28 HEARD AROUND THE WEST By Betsy Marston

On the cover

Original illustration
by Graham Smith



Complete access
to subscriber-only
content

HCN's website
hcn.org

Digital edition
hcne.ws/digi-5006

Follow us



Editor's note

Standing Rock
and accountability

Two years ago this month, protests over the Dakota Access Pipeline began. As with so many important things, this movement started small, with people slowly trickling toward the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation on the Northern Great Plains. That trickle eventually became a torrent of protesters who stood together against the pipeline company, its private security and a contingent of militarized police. Many protesters were members of tribal nations from around the world. Others were not, and this issue's cover story focuses on one such group.



It is not a happy story. It is a cautionary tale, deeply rooted in American conquest. As U.S. colonizers expanded westward, they erased the Indigenous people they encountered along the way, destroying entire towns, mutilating and murdering men, women and children, banning languages and customs, taking land. These now-United States, ever reaching for the horizon, were built this way, from the Ohio River Valley to the Pacific Ocean. This is a fact, and each of us who lives in this country, Native or non-, bears the psychic scars.

No wonder, then, that the protests at Standing Rock drew so much support. The standoff echoed the violence of the past and awoke in many people a desire for atonement. Among them was a group called Veterans Stand. This hastily assembled advocacy group was made up of well-intentioned military veterans, who came together to push back against the aggression faced by the Standing Rock Sioux and their supporters. In a particularly iconic moment, the group staged a formal apology to tribal leaders for the past crimes of the U.S. military against Indigenous people. Veterans Stand raised \$1.4 million — and then spectacularly imploded.

What happened to all of that money? Assistant Editor Paige Blankenbuehler and Contributing Editor Tristan Ahtone, a citizen of the Kiowa Tribe, spent the last nine months trying to account not just for the funds that went toward the group but for the millions and millions of dollars that were poured into the #NoDapl movement as a whole. What they learned was that people have a much greater capacity for charity than they do for accountability. A lot of money has gone missing. Some of it went to good causes, but plenty was wasted. HCN's investigation focuses on just one group, but we could have written a similar story about many others.

Ultimately, the protests failed to stop the pipeline, but their legacy will endure far into the future. Standing Rock reignited this magazine's desire to tell better stories from Indian Country; we now have a desk dedicated to tribal affairs and more stories told through Native writers and editors. Good, bad and ugly, we all live in the West together, and it is my hope that the stories we tell can help us learn from our mistakes and be more accountable for our actions.

—Brian Calvert, editor-in-chief



A helicopter drops retardant on a fire in the Klamath National Forest in 2014. A new budget deal provides more money for fighting fires, but it comes with compromises. KARI GREER/U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Fire-funding fix comes with environmental rollbacks

In March, Congress accomplished something unprecedented: It passed a bipartisan solution to wildfire funding as part of the \$1.3 trillion federal spending package that was signed into law by President Donald Trump. Starting in 2020, the Forest Service will be able to access over \$2 billion per year outside of its regular fire suppression budget to fight forest fires.

Conservation groups largely lauded the fix, but several noted that it came with two riders that could undermine environmental protections for forests and wildlife. The first allows logging projects less than 3,000 acres in size to move forward with little environmental review. “It’s just a green light for abuse,” says Brett Hartl, governmental affairs director of the Center for Biological Diversity.

A second provision could delay habitat protections for newly listed threatened and endangered species. It allows the Forest Service to postpone reviewing whether existing forest management plans harm newly listed species. Such reviews can now wait until a management plan undergoes an official revision, which happens every 15 years in the best-case scenario. JESSICA KUTZ

Read more online: hcne.ws/fire-funds

Trending Sovereignty to protect, not discriminate

Among the 567 federally recognized tribal nations in the United States, only 35 recognize same-sex marriage, according to the nonprofit Diné Equality. Alray Nelson, a member of the Navajo Nation who works with the group, says tribes generally accepted LGBTQ people in the past. That began to change, however, as Christianity eclipsed traditional cultures. Today, tribal nations that refuse to recognize marriage equality find themselves increasingly at odds with both law and popular opinion, which could present a danger to tribal sovereignty. As civil rights protections erode under the Trump administration, Nelson argues that tribes should assert their authority by defending instead of discriminating against LGBTQ individuals. “Use our sovereignty as a way to protect our people,” he says. GRAHAM LEE BREWER

Photos



California’s Mono Lake is saltier and more alkaline than the ocean, but alkali flies thrive in its caustic waters. The insects trap a bubble of air around their bodies like a scuba tank, giving them access to underwater egg-laying areas and food. The nutrient-rich flies sustain the millions of birds that pit-stop at the lake. FLORIS VAN BREUGEL/BIOGRAPHIC

See more online: hcne.ws/scuba-flies

“(The oil companies) did not simply produce fossil fuels. They engaged in large-scale, sophisticated advertising and public relations campaigns to promote pervasive fossil fuel usage and to portray fossil fuels as environmentally responsible and essential to human well-being.”

—From the complaint filed by the California cities of San Francisco and Oakland, in their lawsuit against five of the world’s biggest oil companies — ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, ConocoPhillips and Shell. The cities filed complaints in September, requesting that the corporations be forced to pay for infrastructure for the cities to adapt to impacts such as sea-level rise.

TAY WILES Read more online: hcne.ws/climate-battle

Industrial threats to birds ... and how many bird deaths (estimated) they cause each year

Threat	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Electrical line crash	8 million	57 million	32.5 million
Communications tower crash	Data not available		6.6 million
Electrocution	900,000	11.6 million	6.3 million
Oil pit	500,000	1 million	750,000
Wind turbine crash	21,000	679,000	350,000

SOURCE: U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



An American coot, slicked with oil, on an oilfield evaporation pond, 2006. PEDRO RAMIREZ JR./USFWS

Interior Department weakens bird protections

Since the 1970s, federal officials have used the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to prosecute and fine companies that accidentally kill birds due to industrial hazards like oil waste pits. But in December, a legal decision by the Interior Department revoked that ability. The decision came after extensive lobbying by more than a dozen industry groups, according to investigations by Reveal and other organizations.

Wildlife officials predict deadly consequences for migratory birds. Raptors, ducks and songbirds trapped in oil ponds, for example, can starve,

suffocate, die of exposure or absorb deadly poisons.

Gary Mowad, a retired special agent for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, compared the new interpretation of bird protections to doing away with speed limits. “If there weren’t a speed limit, would you drive 70?” he asked. “That’s the tragedy here. We just lost the federal law to use as a deterrent to get these guys to keep their pits cleaned.” ELIZABETH SHOGREN/REVEAL

Read more online: hcne.ws/killed-birds

You say TOM TILLEY: “This is a basic civil rights question. In this case, ‘sovereignty’ is simply being used to hide a refusal to extend civil rights.”

MIKE BASHAY: “Tribal government does not always reflect the will of its people.”

STEPHEN STAPLETON: “The Constitution is the highest law of the land, and if it says, as the U.S. Supreme Court has held it does, that governments may not discriminate based on the gender of the individuals in the marriage, then Congress cannot do so by granting such a power to the tribal governments.”

Read more online: hcne.ws/tribes-LGBTQ and [Facebook.com/highcountrynews](https://facebook.com/highcountrynews)

High Country News

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/PUBLISHER

Paul Larmer

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Brian Calvert

ART DIRECTOR

Cindy Wehling

DEPUTY EDITOR, DIGITAL

Kate Schimel

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Tay Wiles

Maya L. Kapoor

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Paige Blankenbuehler

Anna V. Smith

Emily Benson

WRITERS ON THE RANGE

EDITOR Betsy Marston

ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR

Brooke Warren

COPY EDITOR

Diane Sylvain

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Tristan Ahtone, Graham

Brewer, Cally Carswell,

Sarah Gilman, Ruxandra

Guidi, Michelle Nijhuis,

Jodi Peterson,

Jonathan Thompson

CORRESPONDENTS

Krista Langlois, Sarah

Tory, Joshua Zaffos

EDITORIAL INTERNS

Carl Segerstrom

Jessica Kutz

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Laurie Milford

PHILANTHROPY ADVISOR

Alyssa Pinkerton

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT

Christine List

DIGITAL MARKETER

Chris King

EVENTS & BUSINESS PARTNER

COORDINATOR Laura Dixon

WEB APPLICATION DEVELOPER

Eric Strebel

IT MANAGER

Alan Wells

DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT

Gretchen King

ACCOUNTANT

Erica Howard

ACCOUNTS ASSISTANT

Mary Zachman

CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER

Christie Cantrell

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Kathy Martinez (Circ.

Systems Administrator),

Lisa Delaney, Pam Peters,

Doris Teel, Tammy York

GRANTWRITER Janet Reasoner

editor@hcn.org

circulation@hcn.org

development@hcn.org

advertising@hcn.org

syndication@hcn.org

FOUNDER Tom Bell

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Belkin, Colo.

Beth Conover, Colo.

Jay Dean, Calif.

Bob Fulkerson, Nev.

Anastasia Greene, Wash.

Wayne Hare, Colo.

Laura Helmuth, Md.

John Heyneman, Wyo.

Osvel Hinojosa, Mexico

Samaria Jaffe, Calif.

Nicole Lampe, Ore.

Marla Painter, N.M.

Bryan Pollard, Ark.

Raynelle Rino, Calif.

Estee Rivera Murdock, Colo.

Dan Stonington, Wash.

Rick Tallman, Colo.

Luis Torres, N.M.

Andy Wiessner, Colo.

Florence Williams, D.C.

IMMIGRATION: AN UPHILL BATTLE

Nature, space and human communities exist on a continuous plane — you can't slice through it without significant collateral damage ("Desert, Divided," *HCN*, 3/19/18). Unfortunately, a large number of Americans seem quite happy to accept those consequences (from a comfortable distance), believing that the result will be communities with fewer brown people or "foreigners."

My ancestors were incredibly lucky when they emigrated to the United States. Essentially, all you had to do was arrive on Ellis Island and not be obviously suffering from some contagious disease. They did it "legally" because it was incredibly easy to do so. Today's legal immigrants face an almost insurmountable uphill battle, and potentially decades of back-and-forth paper pushing. That is a luxury not everyone has. America benefits from immigration, and the Borderlands benefit from ease of travel. It's a shame that reality has been lost in xenophobia.

Jessica Neuwerth

Rawlins, Wyoming

HUMANIZING THE BORDERLANDS

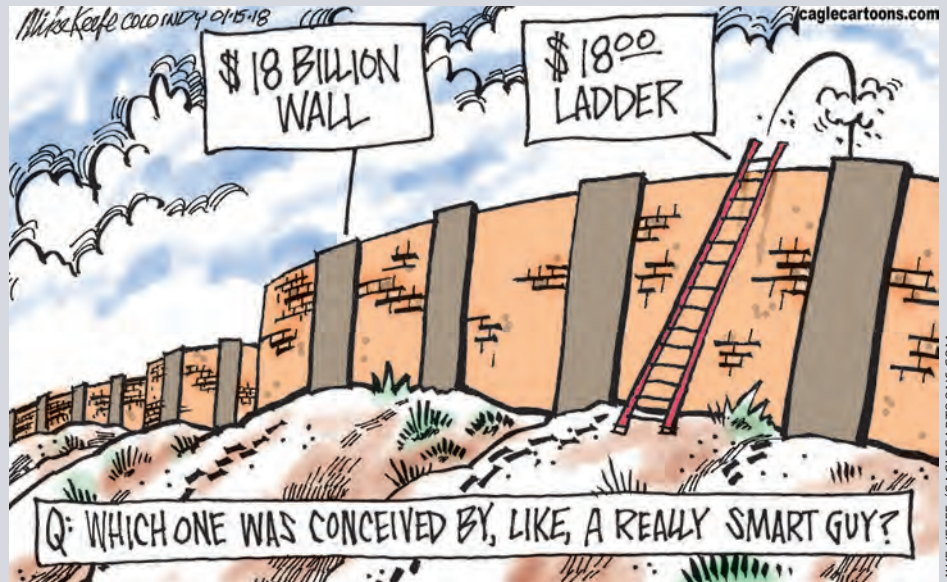
With the publication of "Desert, Divided" and "One nation, divisible" (*HCN*, 3/19/18), *HCN* demonstrated a commitment to tell the stories of the borderlands and to embrace the region as part of the West. The correspondents and photographers humanized the daily struggles of life there, sketching portraits of communities that reveal the complexity of the border. I appreciated especially Chelsey Luger's detailed report on the impact of "the wall" on the Tohono O'odham people. Maya L. Kapoor's amazing overview included the voices of political representatives, business people, conservationists and — in a singularly moving encounter — an undocumented man named Cosme. I look forward to reading more about the border.

Meg Scherch-Peterson

Embudo, New Mexico

WALLS ARE NOT THE ANSWER

This piece reflects my own experiences living in Mexico and visiting both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. You uncover what is undoubtedly an uncomfortable reality for many to face: A wall is not going to stop human migration. It is an imaginative piece of "security theater," but a wall doesn't address the root causes of why people are migrating in the first place: economic desperation and



the flight from violence. Our centuries-long exploitative, abusive foreign policy and economic relationship with Mexico and Central America has produced the crisis, and now we propose to meet the human tragedy we have ignited with a ludicrous, ineffective and morally (and perhaps literally) bankrupt wall?

As a Christian, I can't imagine a more profoundly misguided reaction. Walls are not the answer. More jails, more walls and more deportations are Band-Aids on a compound fracture for which we (the U.S.) are largely responsible. We must see our neighbors for who they are — fellow humans — and act from the premise that we are in this situation together, and it won't be resolved unless we work together in love and mutual understanding.

Peter Severson

Westminster, Colorado

THE BORDER WALL'S SILVER LINING

I have owned a ranch property in Arizona a stone's throw from Mexico for nearly 40 years. I was slack-jawed reading Brian Calvert's latest dark editor's note ("The great divider," *HCN*, 3/19/18), this time regarding the illusion of a borderland with no border. Perhaps Mr. Calvert should visit more of what he wants to unite because I can assure you it is only because an actual fenced border exists that so much of southern Arizona is still largely environmentally intact.

This constant negative perspective is getting old — the world is not coming to an end and the election of Donald Trump has woken up people on both sides of the issues. Every cloud has a silver lining! I have one of those new surveillance integrated fixed towers

overlooking my place — I couldn't be more pleased. The largely remote ranchlands along the border are dangerous places. I have been working on and supporting environmental issues my whole life, and solutions can and will be found for most concerns. Back in the day, we believed a positive perspective produced results. Please, Mr. Calvert, lighten up!

Greg McKennis

Glenwood Springs, Colorado

THE STATE OF JEFFERSON IS ALIVE AND WELL

A letter to the editor by Piers Strailey ("State of Dysfunction," *HCN*, 3/5/18) was packed with errors about the state of Jefferson. As the co-chairman of the Plumas County State of Jefferson Committee, I will correct the record. Mark Baird never pressured the board of supervisors, as Strailey claims. Baird was asked by residents of Plumas County to address the board of supervisors detailing plans for the state of Jefferson, drawing overflow crowds of 200 plus Jefferson supporters.

Strailey claims the sparsely populated northern counties of California are subsidized by taxpayers for a wide array of governmental services. In fact, while Plumas County is definitely a poor county, it mostly funds itself. Strailey also claims that the U.S. District Court of California dismissed a suit filed by the state of Jefferson. In fact, on Feb. 1, the judge asked attorneys to make some changes to the lawsuit and gave us until March 18 to re-file. The suit has been re-filed.

Howard Thomas

Portola, California

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. All rights to publication of articles in this issue are reserved. See hcn.org for submission guidelines. Subscriptions to *HCN* are \$37 a year, \$47 for institutions: **800-905-1155 | hcn.org**



Printed on recycled paper.

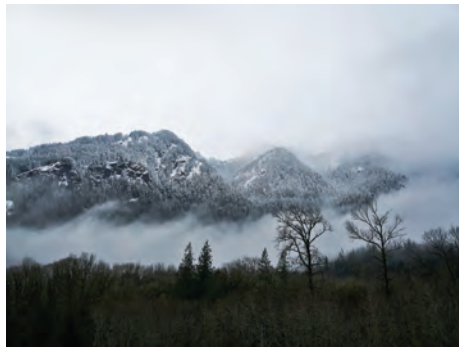
Winter's winners and losers

New studies detail how temperature, humidity and dust can affect snowpack

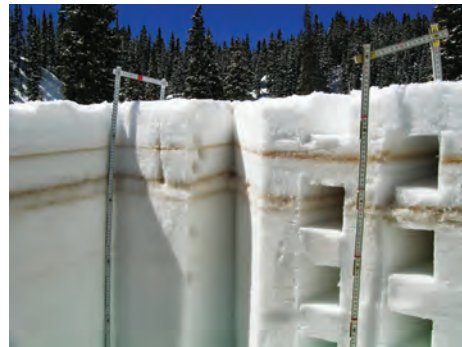
BY EMILY BENSON



RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP PHOTO



BROOKE WARREN



CENTER FOR SNOW AND AVALANCHE STUDIES

THE STUDY “Exploring the origins of snow droughts in the Northern Sierra Nevada, California,” *Earth Interactions*, December 2017.

THE TAKEAWAY Not all droughts are dry. A “snow drought” can occur even when there’s plenty of precipitation, if it’s so warm that it falls as rain instead of snow.

WHAT IT MEANS Scientists from the Desert Research Institute in Reno, Nevada, analyzed decades of monthly snow measurements from the northern Sierra Nevada, near Lake Tahoe. They identified several snow droughts caused by a variety of factors, including dry periods, warm weather, and rain falling on snow and melting it.

The researchers found that some weather patterns have inconsistent impacts: For example, atmospheric river storms, bands of water-soaked air that can drench the West Coast, might initiate a snow drought if they bring mostly rain, or end one if they deliver snow.

While snow droughts aren’t a new phenomenon — the scientists found evidence for one in 1951, the earliest year they studied — it appears that they’re becoming more common. “We’re seeing them stack up a little bit more now,” says Benjamin Hatchett, one of the study’s co-authors. That trend will likely continue as the climate warms, stressing both ecosystems and economies that depend on snow and the water it holds.

Emily Benson is an assistant editor at *High Country News*. [@erbenson1](#)

THE STUDY “Humidity determines snowpack ablation under a warming climate,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, January 2018.

THE TAKEAWAY The amount of moisture in the air drives wintertime dips in the snowpack. There’s more midwinter snowmelt in humid corners of the West than arid ones.

WHAT IT MEANS Scientists from the University of Nevada, Reno and the University of Utah scrutinized decades of weather and snow records from 462 sites across the West to understand why water in the snowpack sometimes dwindles during the wintertime.

They found that relatively wet places experienced more wintertime melting. During humid weather — a stretch of foggy days, for example — water vapor in the air condenses on the snowpack, releasing energy and heating the snow. Clouds and moist air also prevent nighttime cooling, pushing the snowpack closer toward thawing, sometimes well before spring. “If (snow) is melting and not sticking around to the times later in the year when we need and expect that water, that’s a real problem,” says Adrian Harpold, a hydrologist at the University of Nevada Reno and co-author of the study.

Harpold says parts of the West could be hit hard by amplified humidity in the future. Because a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture, places near the ocean or another source of water will likely experience more humidity — and more melting.

THE STUDY “Variation in rising limb of Colorado River snowmelt runoff hydrograph controlled by dust radiative forcing in snow,” *Geophysical Research Letters*, December 2017.

THE TAKEAWAY Snow covered in dust melts faster than clean snow, because it absorbs more energy from the sun. In some areas, dust influences the speed of spring snowmelt more than air temperature.

WHAT IT MEANS Dust blown in from the Great Basin and the Colorado Plateau periodically darkens alpine slopes in southwest Colorado’s San Juan Mountains. A team of scientists examined air temperature, dust deposition and how quickly a handful of rivers in the area rose in the spring between 2005 and 2014. Dust was the dominant factor: Spring runoff happened more quickly in years with more dust, regardless of whether the air was warm or cool.

Understanding how dust affects snowmelt and spring runoff is crucial for water management, says Tom Painter, an author of the study and a snow hydrologist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory. A bigger, faster pulse of water could stress infrastructure and increase the risk of flooding.

That doesn’t mean air temperature is completely irrelevant. After all, that’s what determines how much precipitation falls as snow rather than rain. “That is an enormous impact on the water resources as well,” Painter says. □

THE LATEST

Backstory

Starting in 1952, the Rocky Flats plant, northwest of Denver, produced plutonium triggers for nuclear weapons. **In the early '90s, the highly contaminated facility was designated a Superfund site, and 5,000 acres were later set aside as a wildlife refuge** for elk, bobcats, prairie falcons, Preble’s jumping mice, badgers and more. Cleanup was completed in 2006, but the refuge remained closed to the public due to concerns about lingering plutonium and other pollutants (“The Half-life of Memory,” *HCN*, 2/17/09).

Followup

In late March, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that **this summer, Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge will open to the public for the first time.** Several advocacy groups had fought to keep it closed, citing contamination fears, but their lawsuit was dismissed last fall. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy and the state’s Department of Public Health and Environment say the refuge — one of the planet’s largest undisturbed areas of tallgrass prairie — is safe for visitors.

JODI PETERSON

Harassment pervades Indian Affairs

One of the oldest agencies in the Department of Interior appears to have some of its worst harassment problems

BY ANNA V. SMITH

Since Parton first began working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1976, as a teacher at the Albuquerque Indian School, one of the few remaining BIA boarding schools at that time. Parton, a member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, had been around the agency most of her life; her father was a lifelong employee. But she gained a new perspective in 2008, as she became more involved with the Federation of Indian Service Employees, the union that represents employees of the four Interior Department agencies that serve Native Americans.

“One of the things that shocked me was the intimidation factor,” says Parton, now president of the union. “A lot of people had complaints that they were being treated unfairly and harassed, but were intimidated — didn’t want to speak up or didn’t want their name out there for fear of retaliation. That has been in existence for a long time.”

Federal agencies have been coming under increased scrutiny for their failure to address harassment. In early May, the chief of the Forest Service resigned after

allegations of sexual misconduct surfaced. At the Interior Department, much of Secretary Ryan Zinke and Congress’ attention has gone to harassment claims within the National Park Service. The Interior Department, which commissioned workplace surveys for each of its agencies, released the Park Service results in October 2017, along with an immediate action plan for remediation. Since then, the other agencies’ survey results have become public, showing that harassment is not just a Park Service issue.

In fact, according to the surveys, employees with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an agency staffed mostly by American Indians, experience more harassment than other Interior agencies. The problem is acute across the BIA, an underfunded agency whose employees are scattered across 12 different regional offices in Indian Country. The bureau has a long, complicated history with Indigenous people; it was first established under the War Department in 1824, with the explicit purpose of assimilating Native Americans into non-Native culture. The survey’s findings raise big questions: How can the agency fulfill its stated mission — empow-

ering tribal governments — when it is so rife with harassment? Recent investigations show that little meaningful action has been taken to prevent such harassment, or address it when it is reported.

“The Department of Interior is committed to ending harassment and takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously,” BIA spokesperson Nedra Darling said in an email to *High Country News*. “Allegations of misconduct, such as sexual harassment, are investigated thoroughly.”

Jana Walker, a senior attorney at the Indian Law Resource Center, has a different perspective. “Within the BIA, there are high rates of harassment — particularly racial and sexual harassment — and poor investigation of those crimes and policy violations,” Walker, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and Delaware Tribe of Indians, wrote in an email. “This appears to be another reflection of our federal government’s values and priorities.”

The survey offers a window into a troubled agency: Overall, 40 percent of BIA employees surveyed said they had been harassed in the previous 12 months, and rates of racial and sexual harassment and assault were generally higher than those at other Interior agencies. And given that respondents often underreport their experiences, these numbers add up to a conservative estimate. The majority of those surveyed say they did not report their harassment.

As is often the case in federal agencies, the majority of victims of sexual harassment and assault were young women. The survey also shows tensions between non-Natives and Native Americans. Twenty per-

Anna V. Smith is an assistant editor for *High Country News*. [@annavtoriasmith](#)

Snapshot

Harassment in Interior

Findings from the department’s survey

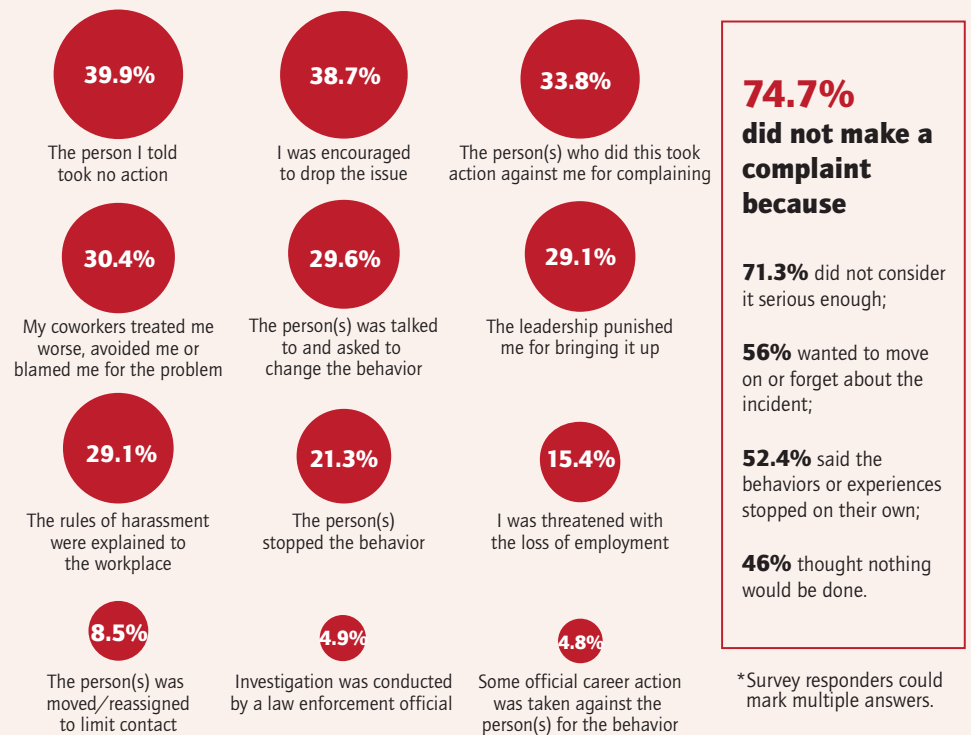
The Department of the Interior commissioned a survey last year to document the prevalence of harassment within its agencies, prompted by the intense scrutiny it received after the Office of Inspector General found employees, especially women, were marginalized and regularly harassed with little or no action taken by managers. Forty-five percent of DOI employees responded to the survey, which looked at incidents that occurred in 2016.

Secretary Ryan Zinke has promised a hard-line approach to tackle issues of harassment, which were first highlighted in earnest during former Secretary Sally Jewell’s tenure. In the fall of 2017, after the results of the survey were released, Zinke fired four senior managers, promising he’d “remove 400 more” if necessary. Some agencies within the department are still waiting for a formal action plan to address their harassment problem.

ANNA V. SMITH

TIPS *High Country News* is conducting an ongoing investigation into instances of harassment, discrimination and sexual assault in Indian affairs agencies. If you are a current or former employee of a federal Indian affairs agency who has experienced harassment, please consider contacting us at hcne.ws/tribal-affairs-harassment.

Results of making a harassment complaint in Interior



cent of employees, mostly white or Hispanic, felt they had been racially harassed in the last 12 months. The only agency with higher racial harassment rate was the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, which also had the highest sexual harassment rate of all Interior Department agencies.

“There’s a lot of good people working for the BIA,” Parton says. “But in order for us to do those jobs, we need to have a healthy working environment to carry forth our mission that our agency has for Native people.”

BIA employees are vulnerable partly because of the agency’s structure. Workplaces are isolated and decentralized, and gender disparities in positions of authority favor men. The survey found that most harassers were older males, either a coworker or a supervisor, as is true across other agencies. In an agency culture where most people do not report harassment, respondents said they were often discouraged from doing so. Those who did report generally spoke to their supervisor. If they pressed the issue, they said, many experienced retaliation from their coworkers, as well as the harasser.

Parton says it can be difficult to change the behavior of people in rural, isolated places, especially when authority figures have held their positions for a long time. That, coupled with inadequate funding from Congress for Native programs and staffing, makes for low morale. And in communities with few employment opportunities, fear of retaliation runs high. “It makes an environment that’s easy for employees to be harassed, because there is so much toxicity in their workplace — they’re in fear of speaking out,” Parton says.

There is also a lack of understanding of what constitutes harassment. Sixty percent of respondents said they did not report incidents, often because they didn’t think they were serious enough to report. That issue extends to tribal governments and communities. Brandi Liberty, who works as a consultant with tribal governments to address sexual harassment, says many of her clients aren’t clear on what activities they should report, or how to do so. “People, especially in Indian Country, aren’t familiar with what (the definition of) harassment is,” says Liberty, a member of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska. “From working in Indian Country and being a Native individual, we don’t report a lot. There’s a lot that we put up with.”

A May 2017 investigation by Interior’s Office of the Inspector General exemplifies the problem. According to a summary of the report, which was not publicly released, BIA managers and human resource officers made little or no effort to address or substantiate claims that a BIA employee was harassing employees and members of the Colorado River Indian Tribes. Though two people were concerned enough for their safety to file injunctions against the man, the BIA continued to employ him, despite the sexually explicit notes, texts and Facebook messages he sent to women for two years. This episode, the OIG concluded, “damaged the BIA’s reputation, undermined the trust of local tribal members, and negatively affected (the employee’s) coworkers.” Once the allegations were substantiated, the man resigned. “There already is a big lack of trust in tribal communities with federal agencies because of

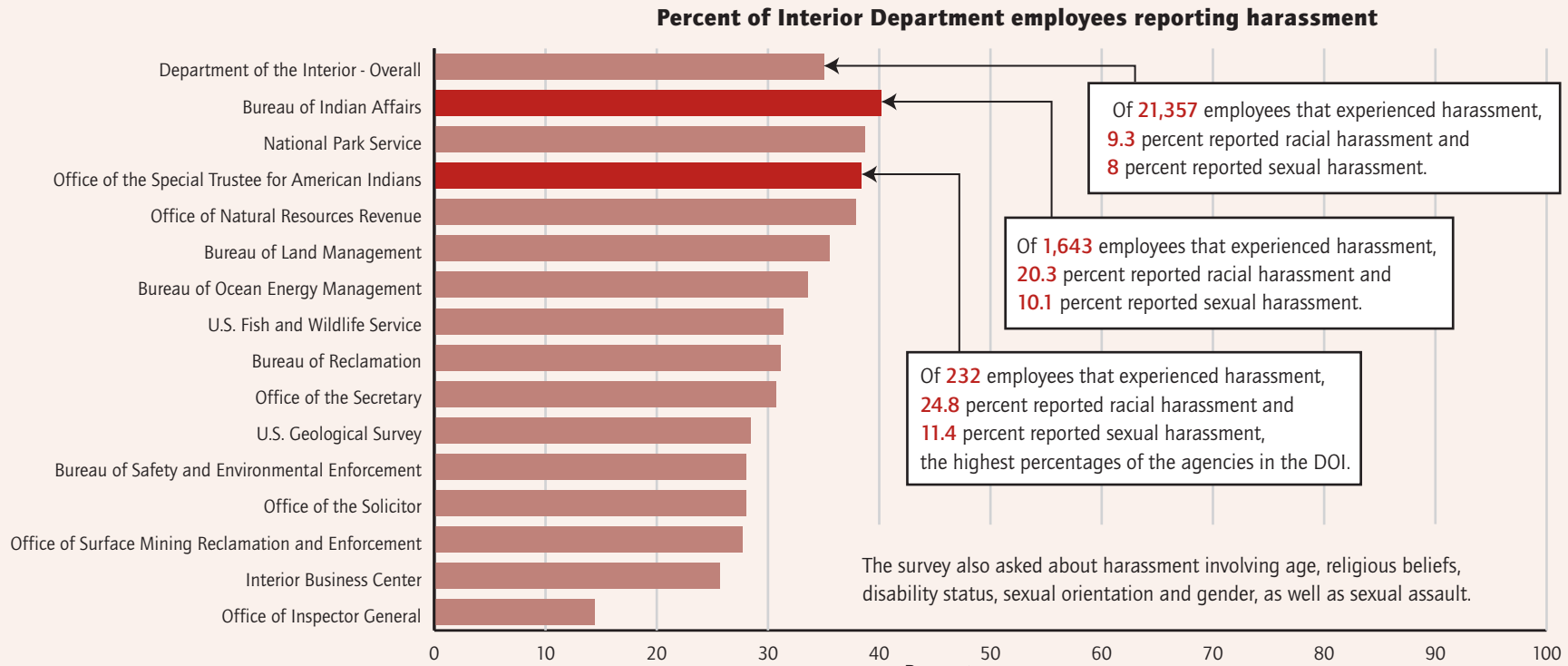


the historic relationships we’ve had with these agencies,” says Liberty.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has submitted a formal action plan to address the survey findings, though Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift says there is no confirmed release date. The BIA did not provide additional comment on the action plan. Walker, of the Indian Law Resource Center, said she hopes the survey will be used to put resources into protecting Native and non-Native women, inside the agency and out: “Perhaps changing the internal environment within these federal agencies will also lead to some positive outcomes on their external policy decisions on ending violence against Indigenous women as well.” □

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, left, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs John Tahsuda on #rockyourmocs day. Although Zinke has publicly addressed harassment in the National Park Service, harassment in the Bureau of Indian Affairs has not received as much attention.

OFFICE OF SECRETARY
RYAN ZINKE/DEPARTMENT
OF THE INTERIOR



SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR 2017 WORK ENVIRONMENT SURVEY | VISUALIZATION: BROOKE WARREN/HIGH COUNTRY NEWS



Operation desert storm

'BioBlitz' records the biodiversity of the Borderlands

BY MAYA L. KAPOOR

Herpetologist Taylor Edwards uses the iNaturalist app to identify a plant species along the Arizona Trail during the Border BioBlitz on March 3.

NORMA JEAN GARGASZ

One early March morning in southern Arizona's Coronado National Memorial, an uneven line of scientists and amateur naturalists in floppy hats and hiking pants crept up a steep hillside through yellowed grasses and dark shrubs. Plant names — scientific and common — flitted through the cool air, as the group covered the terrain, moving at the pace of lichen.

The dry winter had suppressed plant growth, making for challenging botanizing. "Any ideas on this little guy here?" one participant asked, pointing to what appeared to be a leaf emerging from parched soil.

"I just put, 'It's green?'" his companion replied.

The group was there to spend the day cataloging the plants and animals along approximately four miles of undulating desert grassland. Nine other teams were doing the same thing on either side of some 500 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border, from Baja California to western New Mexico, along with one team in Texas's Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge. It was the first Border BioBlitz organized by N-Gen, a professional network of Sonoran Desert researchers. More rigorous and thorough field studies would be needed, but this was a necessary first step to-

ward a baseline, said Myles Traphagen, a biogeographer at the nonprofit Wildlands Network, who organized the BioBlitz. If border wall construction goes forward, these experts can watch and record what that means for the ecosystems being bisected.

"We are getting an idea of what is here," Traphagen said. "Once you do that, then you can start to monitor over time what changes occur."

Southeastern Arizona — at the intersection of the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Madre, the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts — is one of the country's most biodiverse places. Since Coronado's creation in 1941, biologists have found more than 900 species of plants and vertebrates in these seven square miles alone.

That richness is part of what first drew herpetologist Taylor Edwards to the region. In the late 1990s, Edwards helped survey all of the park's reptiles and amphibians. He and others documented 22 species not previously recorded in the park, including a western hognose snake, a 2-foot-long splotchy serpent that digs through the soil for toads, using its upturned nose, and fakes dying when threatened. "It went through its whole death throes, like, 'Blaaargh! Aaaaargh!'" he recalled, twisting his body like a noodle in imitation. "We were like, 'Hey, little guy, it's all right. Chill!'"

Edwards didn't expect to find any "herps" on this cool day. Instead, he

wanted to see how the park has changed since his last survey. Back then, Edwards could walk up to a barbed wire fence and gaze into Mexico. Now, approximately half of that three-and-a-half mile international border is blocked by pedestrian fencing, with vertical metal bars that are more than 17 feet high and too close together for humans to slip through. Still, Edwards saw the day as a celebration of "the biodiversity of that really remarkable part of both of our countries" and a chance to have fun, which for this group meant photographing hoverflies and poking through coyote poo.

The BioBlitz had just been given more urgency: In February, a U.S. district judge ruled that the Trump administration could waive federal regulations and fast-track construction without environmental analyses, leaving no record of the ecological trade-offs being made for a border barrier. The federal spending bill, passed a few weeks after the BioBlitz, may force some environmental review, but in the end, studies like this may provide the only documentation of what was here before the wall.

On a rocky hillside trimmed with cacti, the group found a small cave. Inside were what appeared to be the tracks of a young javelina traveling alone — strange, because javelinas generally live in family groups. "Maybe it was hiding from Border Patrol," Traphagen remarked to a few volunteers, who laughed.

N-Gen has not taken an official position on immigration policy, much to Edwards' disappointment. He argues that poor immigration policy harms the Borderlands environment, and that scientists have an obligation to get involved. But other board members worried about the impacts of advocacy on federal employees and citizens of different nations. After months of discussion, N-Gen decided to keep its work science-oriented and let the BioBlitz serve as its response to the politicization of the border.

All the BioBlitz participants are desert devotees, but not all are professional scientists. Amateur birder Robert Weissler confided to me that he was drawn here from California 17 years ago by the bird diversity: Southern Arizona is "the hummingbird capital of the United States," he said. More than twice as many species visit the region than can be found in most other places in the West.

At the top of a rise, the group paused beneath the burned husk of a massive, 20-foot-tall alligator juniper and listened to the clear, high notes of a bird. "Rock wren," Elaine Nakash, an employee of the U.S. Geological Survey's bird-banding laboratory, said.

"Canyon wren," Weissler suggested, noting a discordant buzz in the wren's sweet call, which lingered in the clear desert air long after the group moved on. □

Associate Editor Maya L. Kapoor writes from Tucson. [@Kapoor_ML](#)

Range anxiety

Charging corridors will make an interior West road trip by electric car increasingly possible

BY JESSICA KUTZ

Gerald Espinosa vividly remembers his anxiety-riddled drive up Colorado's McClure Pass in May 2015, watching the charge on his fully electric Fiat 500e plummet as he inched toward the 8,755-foot summit. He was in the final stretch of what normally would have been a four-hour jaunt from Denver to Paonia, in the western part of the state. With charging stops, it ended up being a two-day trip. His car packed with bikes and clothing, he had spent the last few hours charging the battery in his electric vehicle, or EV, in Carbondale. As he climbed, the remaining range on his charge dropped from 70 miles to 40 to 30. "I was just panicking," Espinosa recalled.

When he reached the top, he had just

can be hundreds of miles apart. This is a serious obstacle, since electric cars have the potential to improve air quality, meet clean energy goals and promote tourism.

That's why Western states are determined to follow the West Coast's example and build the infrastructure needed to attract more converts. In October, governors from Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming signed an agreement to add high-speed charging stations to every major interstate in the region. Christian Williss, director of transportation fuels and technology at the Colorado Energy Office, said his state aims to make charging "as quick and convenient" as gassing up.



A Nissan Leaf sits charging at the electric charging station at Solar Energy International in Paonia, Colorado. The owner, Jack Ferrell, seldom drives far from home, since his car only has an 85-mile range. BROOKE WARREN

16 miles of charge left — and 33 miles to go. Fortunately, it was all downhill to Paonia, and his battery recharged every time he hit the brakes. He arrived with 72 miles left.

The fear Espinosa experienced that day has a name: "range anxiety." And it has hindered EV adoption in the interior West, where cities and charging stations

Jessica Kutz is an editorial intern at *High Country News*. [@jktutzie](#)

It's up to each state to figure out its individual infrastructure plans. Colorado released its own plans in January, which include installing signage so that both EV and non-EV drivers become familiar with charging locations, and building out fast-charging corridors. In the initial phase of development, 30 to 35 fast-charging stations will be built out, spaced approximately 50 miles apart along the state's major interstates and highways. "We want to give people the confidence that if they

buy an electric vehicle, they can go anywhere they want to," Williss said.

For charging deserts like Wyoming and Montana — which lack fast public stations — the agreement represents their first major push to create electric corridors. Tesla does have "superchargers" in both states, but they're proprietary; only Tesla drivers can use them. And without other public stations handy, even Tesla owners can suffer range anxiety on the mountain states' wide-open highways.

Patrick and Nora Ivers of Laramie, Wyoming, experienced this firsthand when they ventured to Casper last fall in their Tesla S, which can travel up to 350 miles on a single charge. The 151-mile drive to Casper ate up 52 percent of their charge, leaving the Ivers to juice the battery back up at what's called a "destination station," a port that gives EV drivers between two and five percent of extra charge per hour. Several hours later, the battery had reached 62 percent; they made it home with just 11 percent to spare. Nora called it a "real nail-biting trip."

In Montana, where EV adoption has been slower, infrastructure is seen as necessary for tourists. Chris Calwell, an EV driver from Durango, Colorado, said taking his Tesla on road trips sometimes dictated where he could and could not go, and forced him to take long layovers to recharge. By adding charging stations, Montana hopes to encourage more drivers like him to visit. "A lot of our tourism does come from those neighboring states," says Laura Anderson, who heads Montana's Energy Office. "And so in Montana, the push (is) to become compatible with the region and keep tourism within the state."

In some places, though, rural communities are already filling the gaps in the charging landscape. They've figured out that getting EV drivers to stop to recharge can be good for the local economy, luring travelers into shops and restaurants while they wait. "If you look at the list of places that have EV charging stations, it is not all the super-liberal enclaves of Montana," says Skye Borden, state director for Environment Montana, an advocacy group. "It is just a lot of communities that decided it was a good business decision." Lima, Montana, with a population of just over 200, has eight Tesla stations, for instance. Situated between Glacier National Park and Salt Lake City, it's a convenient waypoint for travelers.

Calwell thinks that in a few years, all this hubbub about charging stations and electric car adoption will be a distant memory. "As we get to see bigger and bigger batteries, and more and more charging stations, people will kind of laugh about the early days," he speculates. "We'll reach a point in the future when younger people will be asking, 'So, what was a gas station like?'" □



Cooke Aquaculture's collapsed fish-farm pen in Puget Sound. WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

THE LATEST

Backstory

In August 2017, a fish-farm pen run by Cooke Aquaculture collapsed, and tens of thousands of non-native Atlantic salmon escaped into Puget Sound. Coastal tribes, especially the Lummi, scrambled to capture them, fearing they would imperil the native salmon the tribes rely on. Gov. Jay Inslee, D, put a moratorium on new net-pen leases, and the state's Department of Natural Resources began a review of Cooke's operations ("When Atlantic salmon escape in the Pacific, who cleans up?" *HCN*, 1/22/18).

Followup

Washington has now banned the practice altogether, ending three decades of Atlantic salmon farming in the state's waters. Inslee signed the bill in mid-March, saying, "These (net-pens) present a risk to our wild salmon runs that we cannot tolerate." He also vetoed a provision allowing lawmakers to reconsider the ban if new research becomes available. The leases of the remaining fish farms, which are all owned by Cooke, expire in 2022.

JODI PETERSON

RESEARCH FUND

Thank you, Research Fund donors, for helping us weather each season

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

Kit Miller, Orchard House Foundation | Washoe Valley, NV
Jan & Dave

PUBLISHER'S CIRCLE

Anonymous
Alpenglow Foundation & John Hobby Catto Family | Aspen, CO
Carl & Judy Ferenbach | Boston, MA
Lynda M. Goldstein | Denver, CO
Barrett Toan & Paula O'Brien, Toan-O'Brien Foundation | Santa Fe, NM

PHILANTHROPIST

Ed Curley | Tucson, AZ
Gwen & John Nixon | Anacortes, WA

STEWARD

Anonymous
In loving memory of Peggy Rosenberry
In memory of Lorie Lindsey, from George Lindsey | Hampton, GA
Pat Boyle & Tracy Fuentes | Seattle, WA
Eli Diamant | New York, NY
The Engel Fund at the San Diego Foundation | San Diego, CA
Joe & Mary Gifford | Denver, CO
Valerie Gordon-Johnson | New York, NY
Tim S. Hallinan | Sacramento, CA
William Hamann | Grand Junction, CO
Ed & Trudy Healy | Taos, NM
Paul Hudnut through New Belgium Family Foundation | Loveland, CO

Joel Hurd | West Linn, OR
Steve & Kathie Jenkins | Reno, NV
Sarah Layer | Carson City, NV
Evan Metcalf | Denver, CO
Marcie & Robert Musser Advised Fund, A Donor Advised Fund at the Aspen Community Foundation | Aspen, CO
On behalf of Margaret Norman & Geoff Holton, The Normandy Foundation | Boston, MA
Devin Odell & Maria Fernandez-Gimenez | Fort Collins, CO
Audra Oliver | Prineville, OR
Joyce & Brian Olson | Grand Junction, CO
Lollie Benz Plank | Banner, WY
Kathleen Sullivan & James Terrell | Kensington, CA
B. Wahle | Livermore, CO
Tommy Williams & Cielette Karn | Riverton, WY

GUARANTOR

In honor of John R. Bailey | Dillon, CO
In memory of Bill Mitchell | Vashon, WA
Birgit Loewenstein | Sedona, AZ
Matt Mattison & LaVonne Hammelman | Oroville, WA
Jan Mulder & Greg Bedinger | Tucson, AZ
Rick & Mary Lee Reese | Bozeman, MT
Bruce & Jill Sanchez | Seattle, WA
Daryl Scherkenbach | Cazadero, CA
Mary Wahl | Portland, OR
Ann Werner | Portland, OR
Kelly White | Seattle, WA
Wren Wirth, The Winslow Foundation | Washington, DC

BENEFACTOR

In memory of Jack & Eddy Mercer | Hermosa Beach, CA
Donna Carlson, Murray Hill Station | New York, NY
Jan Carlson | Medford, OR
Sandra & Sterling Clarren | Seattle, WA
Kristine Cloud | Chicago, IL



Bonnie Cohn | Hermosa Beach, CA
Bonnie Colby | Tucson, AZ
Scott Cornelius | Pullman, WA
Buz & Quincee Cotton | Steamboat Springs, CO
Bill & Gretchen Cutts | Colorado Springs, CO
Paul DeMorgan | North Logan, UT
Sandy & Dave Doubleday | Fountain Hills, AZ
Dianne & Gary Eschman | Santa Fe, NM
Naomi Franklin | Salt Lake City, UT
Michael H. Gadsden | Denver, CO
Lynn & John Garberson | Potomac, MT
Thomas Gerstenberger | Denver, CO
C.J. Gorman & P.W. Hedrick | Winkelman, AZ
Grand Circle Field School | Albuquerque, NM
Kathryn Grandison | Cedar City, UT
Leslie Gura | Chapel Hill, NC
Joan & Bruce Hamilton | Berkeley, CA
Timothy & Helen Heisler | Glendale, AZ
Richard Herrmann M.D. | Golden, CO
Elwood Hill PhD | Gardnerville, NV
Richard & Linda Howe | San Antonio, TX
Pamela Hyde | Green Valley, AZ
Tom & Helen Juris | Bickleton, WA
Tamara Killion | Dickerson, MD
Peter Krier | Seattle, WA

SPONSOR

Anonymous (7)
In honor of John McCain
In honor of Edwin P. Phil Pister | Bishop, CA
In memory of William H. Ashley | Jackson, WY
In memory of Ivan Doig | Seattle, WA
In memory of Clara Mason & Wendy Spurr
In memory of Wallace Stegner
Lindsey & Rosa Ashby | Georgetown, CO
Scott C. Atthowe & Patricia Thomas | Point Reyes Station, CA
Randolph & Kathy August | Las Vegas, NV
Randall Backe | Wausau, WI
Bo Baggs | Port Arthur, TX
Bruce & Kathryn Baker | Snowmass Village, CO
Brian & Sally Barker | Gig Harbor, WA
Gary Bedell | Fortuna, CA
Diane Brookshire | Denver, CO
Bill & Catherine Camp | Montgomery Creek, CA
Tom Colton & Ellen Simms | Berkeley, CA
Stephen Connolly | Tucson, AZ
Carol Cooke | Reno, NV

Hal Corbett & Katie Curtiss | Sheridan, WY
Linda Dahl | Evergreen, CO
Jeffrey S. Dean | Tucson, AZ
Jim Doilney | Park City, UT
Don & Ellen Dollar Trust | San Luis Obispo, CA
John Ellerbeck | Logan, UT
Steve Ellis | Issaquah, WA
Mary & John Ellis | Crested Butte, CO

PATRON

In honor of Cycle Farm | Spearfish, SD
Luther Allen | Everson, WA
Stuart & Margaret Black | Denver, CO
Larry & Katie Dwyer | Reno, NV
John & Maryann McGee | Cody, WY
Jim Ogg | Los Angeles, CO
Dean Ostenaar | Dillon, CO
Andrew Rauch | Denver, CO
Barbara Schmaltz | Highlands Ranch, CO
Douglas Schneider | Olympia, WA
Brian Schumacher | Alameda, CA
Kathleen Sheehan Dugan | Bigfork, MT
JoAnn Silverstein | Boulder, CO
Doug & Catherine Thayer | Santa Fe, NM
R. Kyle Winning | Little Rock, AR

FRIEND

Anonymous (11)
In honor of natural resource public employees
In honor of Dorthey & Stephen Beaver | Westminster, CO
In honor of Jim Burchfield & Melissa MacKenzie Missoula, MT
In memory of Camille Butler Bond | Austin, TX
In memory of Vicki Caldwell | Ouray, CO
In memory of Bryon Edson | Brisbane, NSW
In memory of Nelda Holden | Belmont, VT
In memory of Emily Jackson, deceased former *HCN* intern
In memory of Nancy Jean Ring
In memory of Russell Towle | Dutch Flat, CA
Richard Hunt | Keyser, WV
Marvin Jensen | Henefer, UT
Fred Johnson | Driggs, ID
Michael Johnson | Portland, OR
Rebecca Katz & Eric Wanless | Leadville, CO
Mark & JoAnne Kemper | Tustin, CA
Robert & Karen Kennedy | Concord, MA
Frank Kinder | Colorado Springs, CO

☒ YES! I care about the West!

☐ \$35 Friend	Amount of gift \$ _____	☐ Make this amount recurring
☐ \$75 Patron	☐ Here's my check (or voided check/1st month's gift for recurring gifts)	
☐ \$150 Sponsor	☐ Charge my credit card	\$15/month minimum
☐ \$250 Benefactor	Card # _____	Exp. date _____
☐ \$500 Guarantor	Name on card _____	
☐ \$1,000 Steward	Billing Address _____	
☐ \$2,500 Philanthropist	City/State/ZIP _____	
☐ \$5,000 Publisher's Circle		
☐ \$10,000 & up Independent Media Guardian		

High Country News | P.O. Box 1090 | Paonia, CO 81428 | 800-905-1155 | hcn.org D016A010

GATES OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL PARK:
TWELVE YEARS OF WILDERNESS EXPLORATION

By Joe Wilkins. 309 pages, hardcover: \$39.95. Brown Books Publishing Group, 2018.

Joe Wilkins, an avid climber and backpacker, has spent decades exploring remote regions of northern Alaska by foot, plane and raft. In *Gates of the Arctic National Park: Twelve Years of Wilderness Exploration*, Wilkins recounts his adventures in America's second-largest national park. His exploits read like a conversation with a well-adventured friend, equal parts memoir and informative guide.

From encounters with charging bears to witnessing the seasonal caribou migration, Wilkins gives readers a sense of what it's like to be immersed in a remote wilderness. Insider knowledge and logistics are sprinkled throughout, giving a sense of the preparation needed to survive adventures like his. Wilkins' accompanying photographs capture the park's unique glacier-carved valleys and scenic rivers. "Few people have invested so much time and effort in exploring and getting to know this area," Zak Richter, a retired ranger at Gates of the Arctic National Park, observed. "(Wilkins') descriptions of the region are accurate, current and authentic."

JESSICA KUTZ

Musk oxen, left, have wool that provides at least eight times the warmth of sheep's wool. Though the population was almost entirely eliminated from North America by 1990, 34 animals were imported from Russia in the 1930s and now their population numbers about 4,000 throughout Alaska, where they venture into the northern portions of Gates of the Arctic National Park. JOE WILKINS

Jon Klingel | Santa Fe, NM
Raymon Kranches | Spokane, WA
Laurel Ladwig | Albuquerque, NM
Melinda Laituri | Fort Collins, CO
Mark Langner & Lynn Inouye | Coleville, CA
Dave Lattimore | Idaho City, ID
John Lawrence | Moscow, ID
Catherine Ann Leslie | Thornton, CO
Susan Localio | Port Townsend, WA
Michael Madden | Montara, CA
Charles & Sally Magneson | Ballico, CA
Marla Mahoney | Stevensville, MT
Kay Maples | Moxee, WA
Bernard Mares | Centennial, CO
Laurie Mastrella | Haines, AK
Mike S. Mayer | Bend, OR
Pat McCabe | Bend, OR
Teresa McGrew | Albuquerque, NM
Michael & Blakely Mechau | Palisade, CO
Jeremiah Mew | Amherst, MA
Jody Miller | Loveland, CO
Nancy Milton | Redding, CA
Mel Mooers | Victor, MT
Daniel D. Morgan | Beaverton, OR
David Morris | Missoula, MT
Kathryn Morse | Middlebury, VT
Robert Mugno | Loveland, CO
Sue Mullins | Loveland, CO
Alex Muro | Durham, CT
Amy Nagler | Laramie, WY
Sam M. Newman | Oakland, CA
Thomas & Corinne Nyquist | New Paltz, NY
William Oliver | Redding, CA
Taylor & Sally Orr | Stevensville, MT
Deborah J. Overton | Laporte, MN
Lee Overton | Paonia, CO
Vernon Page | Clifton, AZ
Susan B. Peterson | Salt Lake City, UT
Reola Phelps | Denver, CO
Ralph & Darcy Phillips | Reno, NV
Linda & Ken Pierce | Bozeman, MT
Roger W. Pierce | Anderson, CA
Rodger Pollesch | Hartland, MI
Steve Ponder & Kathy Campbell | Sisters, OR
Frank & Deborah Popper | Highland Park, NJ
Dennis Porter | Boise, ID
Michael Price | Hotchkiss, CO
Relf Price | Los Alamos, NM

George & Tami Raffensperger | Longmont, CO
Steve & Annette Raines | Jefferson City, MO
Pat Rathmann | Moscow, ID
John Ratts & Elizabeth Stanek | Mosier, OR
Chris Read & Jeannie Wallace | Denver, CO
Glena & John Records | Paonia, CO
Gabriele Reil | Albuquerque, NM
Carol Reilly & Bob Shively | Laporte, CO
Kathryn Rettkowski | Spokane, WA
Lee A. Reynis | Alameda, NM
Kenneth Rice | Durango, CO
Mark & Carol Rickman | Pueblo, CO
Nicole & Ron Rickman | Anchorage, AK
Kimberly Ries | Highland Ranch, CO
Renee Rivera | Burlingame, CA
Dave Rosmis | Greeley, CO
Liz Ryan | Santa Cruz, CA
Marge & Dan Schlitt | Lincoln, NE
G.A. Seiffert | Scottsbluff, NE
Marcia Semenoff | Woodside, CA
Joseph Shannon | Flagstaff, AZ
Jake Shinnery | Saginaw, MI
Daniel Silver | Los Angeles, CA
Diana Six | Missoula, MT
E.A. Smaha | Anchorage, AK
Benjamin Smith & Kathleen Smith | Aiken, SC
David R. Smith | Ravensdale, WA
Robert Smith | Thornton, CO
Gayla & Gerry Snyder | Manhattan, KS
David Stanley | Salt Lake City, UT
Amy Stasch | Ajo, AZ
Baz Stevens | Freeland, WA
Sheila Strachan | Portland, OR
Robert Sutter | Savannah, GA
Judy & Rob Tate | Denver, CO
Marcus Taylor | Central Valley, UT
Jean Thomas | Windsor, CO
Andrew Thompson | Fort Collins, CO
Larry Tracey | Petaluma, CA
Lydia Trinca & William Masslich | Nibley, UT
Sophie R. Turon | Bozeman, MT
Gary Underwood | Descanso, CA
James F. Unger | East Brady, PA
Derek Van Hoorn | El Cerrito, CA
Ann & Ermanno Vanino | Pinon Hills, CA
Theresa Vaughn | Denver, CO
Thomas T. Veblen | Boulder, CO
Tom Viola | Berkeley, CA

New adventures, more new staff

Spring is here, the crocuses are blooming, and the days are getting longer with each passing sunset. We're looking forward to new adventures, even as some of us have just returned from outings.

In mid-February, editorial fellow **Emily Benson** embarked on a 28-day rafting trip with her spouse, **Erika Rader**, and 11 others in the Grand Canyon. Their crew (which included plenty of *HCN* friends) experienced "the full gamut of weather," Emily said, including "snow, hail, rain, wind, blowing sand, and of course plenty of sun." Emily has accepted the job of assistant editor. At *HCN*, she'll continue reporting on water and other issues while learning the fine art of web editing, photo research and other essential tasks. Congratulations, Emily!

In early April, we welcomed **Chris King** as our new digital marketer. Originally from Prescott, Arizona, Chris moved to Paonia in 2013, drawn by the area's untouched beauty, he said. He'll be helping us with digital outreach and data analysis. When he's not working, he likes to play the drums, tinker with his 1967 VW beetle, mountain bike and hang out with his wife, **Olivia King**, who owns Sugar Fix, our local home-made doughnut operation.

Also in April, longtime *HCN* contributor **Eric Wagner** published a new book, *Penguins in the Desert*. In 2008, Wagner spent six months with conservation biologist **Dee Boersma** and her team in Punta Tombo, Argentina, where Boersma has spent three decades studying

one of the world's largest penguin colonies. The book is as much about life in the field as it is about the impacts of climate change and development on the bird's dwindling population.

A few visitors stopped by in March, including **Marshall Swearingen**, who interned in 2013 and is famous for planting a resilient peach tree in the backyard of the intern house. Marshall is largely responsible for creating *HCN's* online archive. (If you haven't visited it, it's worth a look.) He's living in Livingston, Montana, and works for Montana State University in Bozeman, where he writes for the university's news service.

Other visitors included **Cameron Riley**, a school bus driver and photographer in Fort Collins, and **Greg Krush**, who runs a wholesale landscaping tree farm. They stopped by on a spring break road trip around the Southwest. The two, both subscribers and donors, commented on the dry conditions: "It's scary, dry, dusty," Krush said. They also picked up tips on handling donors in their volunteer work at KRFC, Fort Collins' community radio station.

We'd like to thank local photographer **David Keegan**, who donated a photo of the Butte Pasture Yak Ranch in Crawford for our April fundraising campaign.

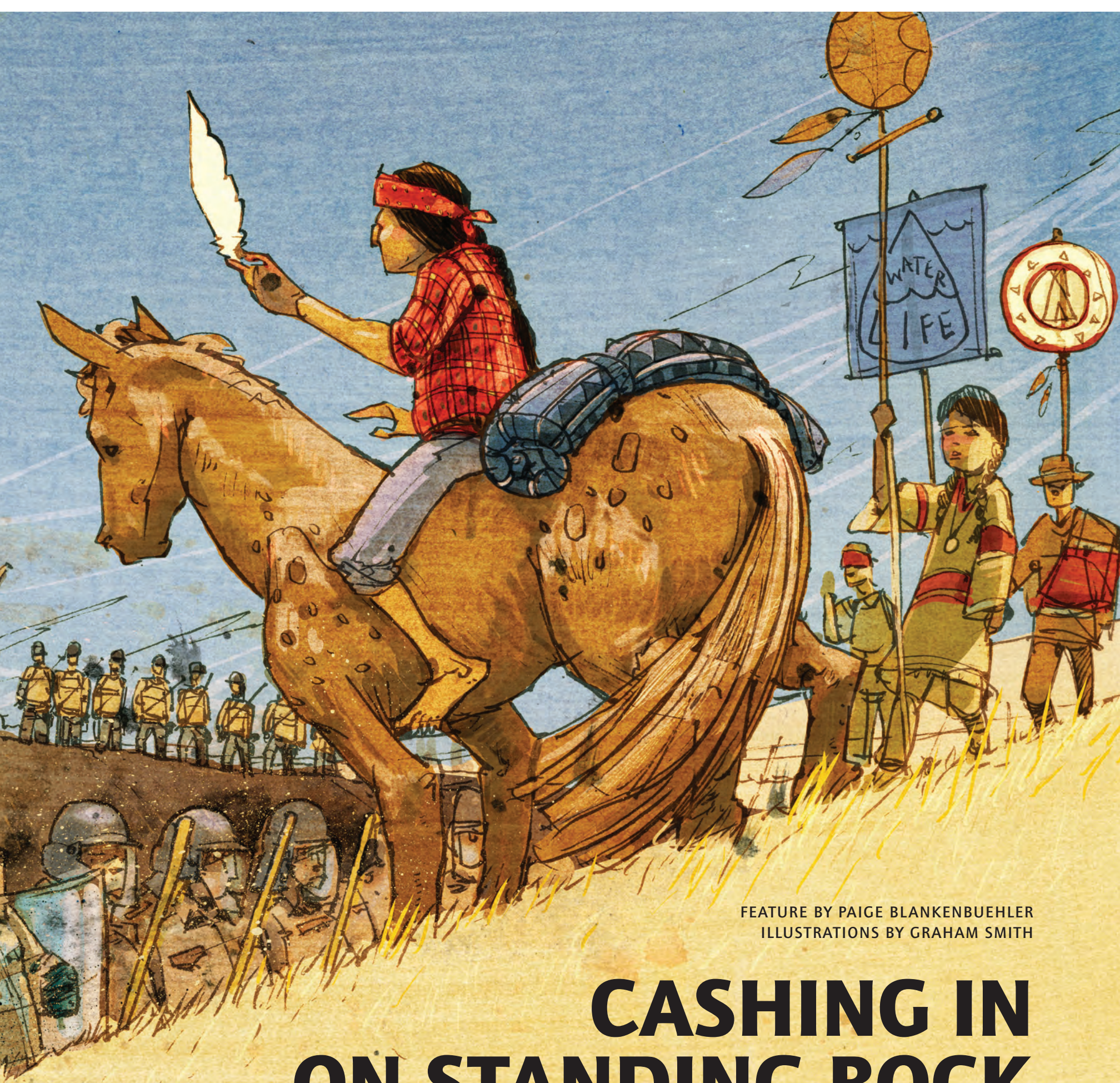
Finally, we have a correction: In "The primordial sea, and me" (*HCN*, 3/19/18) we incorrectly stated the water composition of an adult male human. It's 60 percent water.

—Jessica Kutz, for the staff



Chris King is *HCN's* new digital marketer. BROOKE WARREN





FEATURE BY PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GRAHAM SMITH

CASHING IN ON STANDING ROCK

*How Veterans Stand squandered \$1.4 million
raised around the #NoDAPL protests*

“The only way I’ll talk is if you sign over the rights to the interviews,”

said Michael Wood. The 38-year-old activist slid a contract across the coffee shop table, complete with his aggressive, looping signature across the bottom of the page.

It was just a few days before Christmas in Playa Vista, California. Wood wore gray sweatpants with one leg hiked up to his knee, exposing a muscular, almost hairless leg and ankle-high socks in black Nike slides. He wore his dirty-blond hair high and tight.

A fireplace flickered, and a light breeze sent palm trees swaying.

Wood, who is originally from the suburbs of Baltimore, worked as a cop for 11 years and became known for speaking out against police brutality on Twitter. He was frequently quoted by the media, describing systemic problems in policing, particularly inside the Baltimore Police Department, his former employer. Today, Wood is perhaps better known for co-founding Veterans Stand for Standing Rock, a self-described “peaceful, unarmed militia” organized in 2016 to support Indigenous opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

At the time, he said, it seemed like a good idea. He never thought that his pilgrimage to the wintry plains of North Dakota would ultimately derail his life and leave him at the center of an ethical controversy. Within one year, Wood helped create Veterans Stand and raise more than \$1.4 million in online donations. But that money remains largely unaccounted for — and the organization has since collapsed.

It’s highly irregular for a journalist’s source to demand exclusive rights to an interview. Wood already had been accused of mispending some of the money he raised and misleading donors in his work at Standing Rock. So that day, we agreed to talk off the record.

The next morning, I sat down with Wood again to revisit his ultimatum. “We’re not going to do that,” I told him. Wood just shrugged and agreed to talk: “All right, fuck it.”

In the course of a nine-month investigation, *High Country News* compiled publicly available data from GoFundMe and examined nearly 250 campaigns, each of which raised at least \$3,000 for causes

related to the Dakota Access Pipeline. Altogether, more than 138,000 people donated nearly \$8 million. Many of those campaigns accepted money without necessarily offering accountability, either to their donors or to the causes they claimed to represent.

In the case of Veterans Stand, chaos and disarray become the hallmarks of a campaign that initially galvanized thousands of veterans and inspired more than 26,000 people from around the world to donate. That money was, at best, squandered and at worst, egregiously misspent.

WESLEY CLARK JR., a 49-year-old Army vet with short dark hair and wide-set eyes, makes a lot of his friends on Twitter. His page bears a red-and-yellow sigil as his profile photo, strikingly similar to the Ferrari logo. Underneath it, in white all-capital letters, is the word **VAMOS**, Spanish for “let’s go.” He began following Michael Wood, intrigued by his police reform efforts, and then, in October 2016, met him in person on the California set of *The Young Turks*, a left-leaning video blog. Both vets cared about social justice issues, and they stayed in touch.

A month later, Phyllis Young, an elder of the Standing Rock Sioux, asked Clark if he could use his connections with veterans to raise awareness of the struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline. “It lit a fire in my heart,” Clark said. “This seemed like a chance to do a whole lot of good. But also, I was just shocked. As the summer wound on and I was following what was going on out there, I saw these people clearly being abused. And it wouldn’t have happened if they were white.” Clark’s first call was to Wood, who answered it sitting in his suburban Philadelphia basement.

The #NoDAPL movement had begun earlier that year, in response to the proposed construction of a controversial oil pipeline near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. Even as the tribe and its allies fought the pipeline in court, a grassroots movement erupted on social media and drew a powerful response from across the country. Protesters converged on the area, and numerous groups and individuals began fundraising, ostensibly to support the “water protectors” on the ground. Veterans Stand

was one of the hundreds of campaigns that started GoFundMe pages.

Both Wood and Clark felt an urgent desire to get to Standing Rock as soon as possible, so they agreed to deploy on Dec. 3, just a short month away. Wood told me that his expectations were initially low, but his interest was piqued. And he was hopeful, too: With his social media status and Clark’s reputation, he believed they could mobilize veterans for Standing Rock. He believed the partnership could work. “So we got to work scheduling media and things out here and ended up with this chaotic schedule,” Wood said. “I can’t tell you how much media I did — it was just bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, media. ... I was doing emails, making phone calls — pulling all of the connections that I had.”

But there were signs of trouble from the beginning. Clark, according to Wood and other Veterans Stand volunteers, did not take naturally to a leadership role, so Wood stepped in. But their duties were never clearly delineated. Wood still acted as if Clark were in charge of the mission, while Clark followed his lead and assumed Wood was taking care of crucial planning. Responsibilities fell through the cracks, from communicating changes in plans to volunteers to arranging to get supplies delivered to the #NoDAPL camps. They needed a place to communicate with volunteers, but Clark didn’t know how to create events on Facebook. So that job that fell to Wood. When Clark didn’t answer his phone, which happened frequently, according to Wood, volunteers would call Wood instead.

“When you look in retrospect, you’re like, ‘Oh, yeah, that was a red flag,’ but like at the time I guess I would clearly have to say no, because I kept going forward, right?” Wood said. If anything had struck him as obviously wrong, he added, “I would have backed out. In retrospect, I think I could probably pick out like 30 things if I sit there and think about them.”

By Nov. 10, 2016, Wood and Clark had recruited a handful of volunteers. At Veterans Stand’s peak, some 20 volunteers were helping with general planning, logistics, safety, communication and money handling. Thousands of well-intentioned veterans made the journey to North Dakota. But throughout the organization’s rise and fall, only a small group — just five people — remained in crucial roles.

Dispatching from her funky studio apartment in Santa Monica, California, Sedef Buyukataman was one of them. A tall and lean woman of Turkish descent with short curly brown hair, she was brought on board by Clark. She considered him a close friend, even though they

had only met on Twitter a few months prior. She offered to help with social media and, because she had a background in corporate human resources, assist Wood and Clark with general planning. Chris Duessing, a tall, tired-looking man whose shaggy blond hair had long since outgrown his former military crew cut, handled travel logistics.

Clark told me he felt uncomfortable linking his bank account to a GoFundMe page to raise money, so Wood set up the campaign's page. But Clark's name carried considerable clout; his father was a retired U.S. Army general who was active in politics, wrote several books, and campaigned unsuccessfully for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004. The junior Clark's face therefore initially appeared as the campaign organizer on the public donation page. The GoFundMe page went live on Nov. 11, with a \$100,000 goal. As the fledgling campaign's message began to spread, money trickled into Wood's personal bank account.

In North Dakota that November, as Veterans Stand was gaining momentum, thousands of protesters flocked to the demonstration. On Nov. 2, 2016, President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was re-evaluating the pipeline plans to see whether it was possible to reroute it. "We're going to let it play out for several more weeks and determine whether or not this can be resolved in a way that I think is properly attentive to the traditions of the first Americans," Obama said.

Meanwhile, Buyukataman and Duessing created a public Google spreadsheet that served as the roster for veterans interested in joining the demonstration. By Nov. 18, just a few days after the Veterans Stand campaign went live on GoFundMe, a few hundred supporters had signed on. At that point, the GoFundMe page had raised nearly \$14,000 from 360 donors. Just five days later, it had raised nearly \$114,000. The money was supposed to go toward food, transportation and supplies for any veterans who went to Standing Rock.

Then the protests took a dramatic turn. On Nov. 21, the Morton County Police Department clashed with the self-proclaimed water protectors at Backwater Bridge near the pipeline. Three hundred people were hospitalized with injuries, ranging from hypothermia — the police sprayed demonstrators with water cannons in freezing temperatures — to seizures, loss of consciousness and impaired vision from the impact of rubber bullets. One activist, New Yorker Sophia Wilansky, was injured by a concussion grenade. Not since the American Indian

Movement's stand at Wounded Knee in 1973 had government hostility toward Indigenous people been so overt, and so violent. On Nov. 28, Wood increased the GoFundMe campaign goal to \$750,000.

"Everything exploded after that," Buyukataman recalled.

The roster rapidly filled. Hundreds of volunteers became a thousand, and many had questions that neither Wood nor the other organizers knew how to answer. Would food be provided? Was a ride-share arranged? How would donations cover costs? Wood and Buyukataman fielded hundreds of messages on Facebook, Twitter and the GoFundMe page. Wood, Clark, Buyukataman and Duessing scrambled to organize the thousands of volunteers, but between frantic phone calls, videoconferences and uncoordinated messaging, plans changed with the whims of whoever took charge that day. Despite the growing chaos, Wood was pleased; according to Buyukataman and other volunteers, he seemed to view the deluge of support as the only important barometer of success.

The GoFundMe account was receiving donations at a terrifying speed. By Nov. 30, just four days before Veterans Stand's planned deployment to Standing

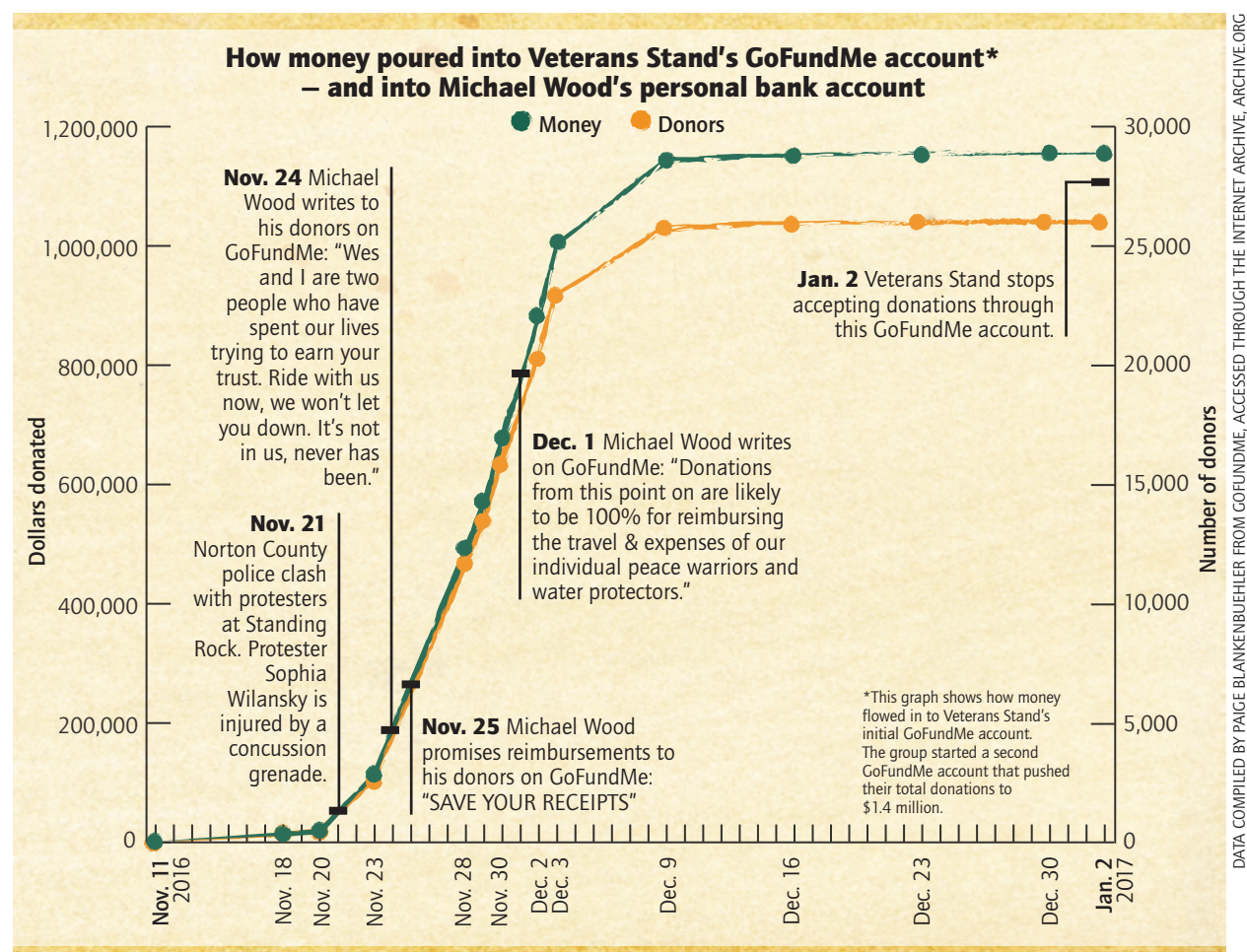
Rock, the group's online donation page had raised \$678,000. In response, Wood increased the campaign's campaign goal from \$750,000 to \$1 million.

"We were all very surprised by how everything took off so quickly," Buyukataman said. "When we hit the 2,000 mark on the signup roster, both Chris (Duessing) and I sounded the alarm: 'We need to shut this down; it's too many people, we don't have the capacity to manage this.' ... Both (Clark and Wood) really were very high on the response that they received — they were reluctant to let us even cap the number. They were very much enjoying the attention that they were getting. Unfortunately, I think their egos got a lot bigger, and they attributed the reason for people signing up to be the draw of their own personal charisma or name-brand recognition."

On Dec. 4, 2016, Wood left Baltimore for Bismarck. Already, more than 2,500 veterans had left for Standing Rock. They were scattered across the country. Even as money poured into Wood's account, the logistical problems were compounded: Buses were stranded, drivers unpaid, veterans needed cash for gas. Volunteers ran late, and Clark could not be reached.

As Wood's plane pulled up to the gate,

The GoFundMe page went live on Nov. 11, with a \$100,000 goal. As the fledgling campaign's message began to spread, money trickled into Michael Wood's personal bank account.



the GoFundMe campaign hit \$1 million. By 10 a.m., he was at cruising altitude, hurtling toward North Dakota.

FAR FROM STANDING ROCK — through computers, cellphones and tablets — countless people donated to the #NoDAPL protests. Hidden among the idealists, however, were opportunists and con artists, eager to cash in on this explosion of benevolence.

Crowd-funding sites like GoFundMe are a relatively new phenomenon. There are few regulations safeguarding people who give money to causes, however dubious. In fact, the site advises donors to “only donate to people you personally know and trust” — meaning that the donors themselves are considered accountable. While the platform allows people to report suspicious and possibly fraudulent campaigns, little public evidence exists that GoFundMe actively polices complaints. GoFundMe did not respond to HCN’s request for an interview.

The data HCN uncovered in its investigation revealed a wide spectrum of efforts. Eleven GoFundMe campaigns, for example — all created to build yurts

at Standing Rock — raised a total of nearly \$70,000, from more than 1,200 donors. One plea for support came from a California-based chiropractor eager to offer his services to “the warriors” fighting the pipeline. He ended up raising more than \$5,400. “The conditions are far too cold to set up my own clinic,” the chiropractor wrote on GoFundMe. “I wanted to just let you know that we donated a tipi a wood stove and a half cord of firewood to a gentleman who grew up at Standing Rock.” Thousands of dollars were donated to the “Bunk Bus” — a service known in music festival circles for providing kits to test the authenticity and quality of illicit substances. While some campaigns provided receipts and accounted for how much money they spent on their GoFundMe pages, the majority did not. That makes it particularly challenging to track exactly how — and whether — donations were used to support Standing Rock. (Full disclosure: *High Country News* issued an email on Nov. 29, 2016, asking readers to help us “Send an HCN Reporter to Standing Rock.” The magazine received \$13,683 as a direct result, allowing us to send a reporter, hire a photographer, and commission dispatches and analyses on the protests. See hcne.ws/standing-rock.)

Some campaigns continued raising money well after the #NoDAPL camps were disbanded. Red Warrior Camp, which was ordered to decamp in early 2017 by the Standing Rock Sioux tribal council, continued to collect money. For seven months, the campaign collected funds to the tune of nearly \$300,000, with the most recent donation given in July 2017. The campaign’s organizer, Tara Houska, the national campaigns director for the Indigenous-led environmental organization Honor the Earth, did not respond to multiple requests to be interviewed for this story.

“It’s startling,” said Michael Johnson, assistant director of development for the Native American Rights Fund. The annual budget at his organization is about \$10 million a year, with which the nonprofit maintains a legal fund to defend the rights of tribal nations and organizations. Donations to Veterans Stand, he said, represented “serious money that was generated to support the community and the protest actions that were happening at Standing Rock. And at the end of the day, these protesters left, and the community is left holding the bag — and the same underlying issues remain.” The Standing Rock Sioux did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

WHEN MICHAEL WOOD ARRIVED at the Bismarck airport, the reality hit him. He saw large groups of veterans in their old uniforms and badges: Desert Storm, Vietnam, Afghanistan. They were everywhere, searching for outlets to charge cellphones, asking where the buses for Standing Rock were. There was camaraderie and a growing excitement as they discussed their shared mission. Wood, not in uniform, slid past unnoticed, toward the baggage claim.

“I wasn’t aware of really how many people were coming. When I landed and saw all of these fucking vets,” Wood recalled, laughing incredulously, “I was like, ‘Oh no, we’re in trouble. This is a problem! This is going to be a problem. It’s coming. There wasn’t a shuttle going back and forth from the airport to Standing Rock. ... So people showed up at the airport, and you need to have signs and shuttles. But no one was there with signs or information or doing shuttles or anything like that.’”

Once he retrieved his bag, Wood climbed into a rental car driven by Anthony Diggs, a homeless former Marine and volunteer from San Diego. Diggs, an olive-skinned 26-year-old with curly brown hair, talks quickly and at times incoherently. I spoke with Diggs recently, and he recalled running down the list of problems waiting for Wood: Veterans were not meeting at the designated check-in point in Eagle Butte, while volunteers were scattered from the Oceti Sakowin camp to the Prairie Knights Casino in Cannon Ball. There was a lot of miscommunication. People were stranded on the side of the road outside Bismarck, where yet another bus had broken down. Thousands of dollars worth of supplies had not been delivered to the post office box that, according to Wood, Clark failed to set up. On top of that, a blizzard was expected that night.

“I remember Diggs just saying, ‘Man, there’s no cell service here either,’ and we had a (satellite) phone that somehow never made it there from California,” Wood told me. “It was a mess.”

The inside of the Prairie Knights Casino was a disorienting sight. In stark contrast to the blinking and bleeping of slot machines, the floors of the hotel and gaming area looked like a makeshift emergency shelter. As the weather became increasingly sinister and local law enforcement grew more aggressive, protesters fled the Oceti Sakowin camps and crowded in. Sleeping bags and canteens were piled in corners. Every available outlet was plugged with chargers.

Wood hoped to find Clark and other volunteers for Veterans Stand. Instead, he met a new cast of opportunists and



idealists rising through the ranks of his topsy-turvy outfit. Loreal Black Shawl, a 38-year-old woman of Oglala Lakota and Northern Arapaho descent, was recruited from the casino floor to be a spokeswoman for the group. A young, outgoing veteran herself, Black Shawl often wore square-framed glasses and a black ball cap with a feather and the words “Native Veteran” across the front. She joined at a particularly chaotic time. When Wood arrived, he found thousands of water protectors seeking shelter from the imminent blizzard and more than 2,500 veterans, who were ready for marching orders that hadn’t come. In the chaos, Wood managed to reconnect with Duessing. Buyukataman, however, was still en route to the casino with a busload of veterans. Wood abruptly decided to put Buyukataman, whom he knew as kind, calm and collected, in charge of handling all the reimbursements.

“There was no plan, and suddenly this dropped into my lap,” Buyukataman later told me. “(Wood and Clark) hadn’t done any leading, so everything was very last-minute. I was hurriedly putting together a reimbursement form from my bus seat on the way to North Dakota. And there were already hundreds of vets there. ... It was just a recipe for disaster.”

In the meantime, Wood stationed himself by a payphone and began reimbursing veterans with what cash he was able to withdraw from his bank account. He was having problems accessing the GoFundMe money, and with nowhere to sleep, he curled up in the corner with a blanket, using his bag as a pillow.

When Buyukataman arrived at the casino the morning of Dec. 5, she was shocked. Hundreds of veterans were demanding reimbursement by cash or check, handing receipts to “whoever looked important,” she recalled. When Buyukataman finally located Wood, he passed her a haphazard collection of receipts or scraps of paper with names, phone numbers and addresses scribbled on the back. “There were envelopes all over the place, and no one was really accountable for them,” she said. “I started grabbing them, but a good portion of (original receipts) got outright lost.”

Buyukataman realized that no one had been using the roster to keep track of or reimburse the nearly 3,000 veterans who had signed up. Hundreds of people were unaccounted for, and Veterans Stand was supposed to be responsible for them. Meanwhile, Duessing and Pate Hutson, a Navy veteran from Upper Arlington, Ohio, struggled to bring order to the camps.

“No one knew where to go or what to do. The supplies that had supposedly

been ordered were nowhere to be found,” Duessing said. “You had this group of individuals who all had a different impression of what was happening. Some came for a fight; some came for a peaceful war of some sort. There were a lot of vets who suffer from issues like PTSD and traumatic brain injuries, and they were getting triggered. Thousands of people were sleeping all over the place, without the supplies that had been promised and without their medications — or money to get home.”

Then the blizzard hit.

Temperatures hovered around 3 degrees Fahrenheit. Wind gusts hit 50 mph. Propane fuel gelled up in the cold, and an estimated 4,000 veterans organized by Veterans Stand were stranded, scattered across the plains, on the reservation and at the casino.

On Dec. 5, just hours after she arrived, Buyukataman was frantically stuffing thousands of receipts into envelopes, many with unintelligible names and addresses scribbled on them. Suddenly, uproarious cheering broke out: The Obama administration had denied a crucial easement for the pipeline. The Army Corps would have to halt construction and issue an environmental impact statement with “full public input and analysis” before it approved the river crossing at Lake Oahe. The water protectors had won a crucial battle.

“At that point, Michael said, ‘Well, everybody, we won! Let’s go home!’ ” Buyukataman said. “Chris (Duessing) and I just looked at each other, shocked, like, ‘What the fuck is going to happen now?’ ”

Buyukataman wondered how everyone would get home. How could they possibly keep track of reimbursements now? She was troubled to see a wave of disappointment ripple through the veterans; some had clearly come for a fight, and now they weren’t going to get one. Meanwhile, Clark finally emerged from his curious absence, appearing at a “healing ceremony” in the pavilion of the casino. The casino auditorium was filled with a mix of Standing Rock Sioux elders and tribal members, veterans and water protectors. The dozens of journalists who sat on the floor in the front row wielded cellphones and cameras as Clark spoke slowly into a microphone. “We stole minerals from your sacred hills,” Clark said as he knelt in front of a small group of Sioux spiritual leaders. “We didn’t respect you. We polluted your Earth; we’ve hurt you in so many ways. ... We’ve come to say we’re sorry.” Wood and Buyukataman felt uncomfortable. They felt like Clark was drawing attention away from the moment, from the Standing Rock Sioux, and focusing it on himself.

Later that day, Tribal Chairman Dave

Archambault II ordered an estimated 14,000 protesters to go home. Clark left on a private jet while Wood, Duessing and Buyukataman tried to figure out what would happen next. “At this point, it basically became a FEMA mission,” Wood told me. “How do we get everyone out of here alive?”

There were still hundreds of veterans unaccounted for, and the remaining campaign organizers scrambled to figure out how to get home. The deployment, they agreed, was crazy — far beyond anything that anybody had expected. But Veterans Stand had raised more than \$1 million, and with that money, Wood, Buyukataman and Duessing believed they could turn the organization into something that could truly make a difference. When they got home, they planned to use the GoFundMe money to seed a nonprofit organization. Wood announced that he would be president, and Buyukataman readily signed on. “At that point, I wanted to make sure that everyone got the reimbursements that they were promised,” she told me.

IN FEBRUARY 2017, Buyukataman was still combing through the thousands of receipts left over from the December deployment. “I had processed all of the receipts — I had more than 1,700 receipts to contend with — and came up to about \$7,000 that needed to be reimbursed,” Buyukataman said. “At that point, we really could have just finished it in a way that was right.” Clark had by then severed his connection with the campaign, but Wood continued to oversee the organization’s mission, along with Buyukataman, Duessing, Diggs and Michelle Panzironi, a volunteer based in New York.

However, Buyukataman had begun to have serious reservations: There was no transparency, she felt, and there had been questionable uses of the money. Wood sent thousands of dollars to Loreal Black Shawl — who helped in December but then discontinued her service — without consulting the rest of the group. “He would just handle certain reimbursements without telling me, and it would be for a lot of money, without any accounting of what he was paying for,” Buyukataman said. She couldn’t keep track of the decisions made by the fledgling board of Veterans Stand, she said, and she often disagreed with the direction that Wood wanted to go. Despite his status as president, however, Wood maintains that he was merely a volunteer who never made key decisions.

At one point, according to Buyukataman, Wood suggested they use part of the GoFundMe donations to set up a home office in Southern California, where he

“I wasn’t aware of really how many people were coming. When I landed and saw all of these fucking vets, I was like, ‘Oh no, we’re in trouble.’ ”

—Michael Wood, speaking about his arrival at the #NoDAPL site

could live while running media operations. “We all just went along with it,” Buyukataman said. “Like, ‘Um, OK?’ We didn’t have much of a choice, really. If you disagreed with Michael, he would get upset and then just do whatever he wanted anyway.” Wood had taken on Diggs, who was then homeless in the LA area, as his personal protégé. Diggs could live in the condo, he said, and do important organization tasks. Wood said he hoped that Diggs would, in time, take his place as president of Veterans Stand.

Veterans Stand had raised more than \$1 million, but it is unclear how much of that was spent on actual organizational activities. Wood attempted to reassure his donors on GoFundMe in January 2017: “Rest assured, your donations have been put to good use. We’ve bought countless supplies, winter gear, hotel rooms, trains, planes, automobile rentals and much more to help the vets make the journey and stay safe. I say ‘countless’ because we are still actively buying these things as we speak.” Still, he never gave a complete picture of how the money was spent.

By February 2017, Veterans Stand had cobbled together bylaws for its board of directors and submitted nonprofit organization registration paperwork to the California attorney general’s office. With the chaos of Standing Rock behind it, Veterans Stand felt like its true mission was forming. On March 10, Wood and Diggs travelled to Washington, D.C., for a demonstration urging the public to support the water protectors and divest from

banks that helped finance the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Buyukataman and Duessing, who travelled to the demonstration separately, told me that Wood and Diggs spent most of their time in a hotel room munching marijuana edibles — an allegation the two deny — before chaining themselves to the SunTrust Bank as part of the protest.

Wood updated the organization’s GoFundMe page, stating that he had begun steps to operate the group as a registered 501(c)3. He created a website describing Veterans Stand as a “fully compliant 501(c)3” — a banner prominently displayed on the webpage. That winter, Wood created a second GoFundMe page, where an additional \$280,000 was raised. My interviews with Wood, Diggs and other organization members left me uncertain about whether the group was, in fact, a 501(c)3 or a 501(c)4. In a formal information request to the Internal Revenue Service, however, I found out that it was neither: The organization never completed the registration paperwork. In fact, the group never responded to a follow-up request from the California attorney general for more information.

Wood and Diggs promised the public an audit, but never followed through. “There hasn’t been public disclosure yet, because, while we were working at auditing December, we were called back into action when Trump signed the memorandum which cleared the way for the continuation of the Dakota Access Pipeline,” Diggs said. “With limited manpower, and literally thousands of receipts and expenses to account for, the audit had to be delayed, out of necessity.”

Veterans Stand has not yet released an audit — and is unlikely to ever do so.

“I don’t think (an audit) is a valid use of money,” Wood told me. “(Donations) were donated to me to do what I wanted with the thing. ... We were looking at \$20,000 to \$30,000 for someone to come in and do a forensic audit to come in and trace it, but at no point in time did anyone think that was a good idea. It’s a board. They voted not to. If you have evidence that we have misused funds, then go tell the damn IRS and file a complaint.”

In April 2017, Wood moved into a condo in Playa Vista, California, along with his wife, his 13-year-old daughter, and Anthony Diggs. Wood told me that the rest of the organization was in favor of the move. He claimed Buyukataman and Diggs selected the property, but they both deny this. On numerous occasions, in interviews for this story, other members expressed discomfort with the arrangement. Veterans Stand paid 14 months’

rent upfront, \$4,200 a month — a total of nearly \$60,000, including rent, fees and moving expenses — all using donation money. “I was uprooting my family,” Wood said. “I needed security.”

People inside the organization began asking questions. Who had access to the organization’s credit cards? Why didn’t they have a tax identification number? How much was still owed in reimbursements? How should they respond to people on Twitter? Few of the central leaders could even remember who sat on the board. Meanwhile, Veterans Stand was drifting away from its original GoFundMe mandate. Wood and Diggs wanted to concentrate on outreach to veterans, but others wanted to continue direct action with the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux, who were still fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline. With little leadership or direction, Duessing and Pate Hutson continued work on the Standing Rock Reservation. They returned to North Dakota in March, putting their personal money on the line, using their own credit and debit cards. Hutson told me that he spent more than \$3,000, which he pulled from his wedding fund. Because he was never reimbursed, he claims, he and his fiancée had to delay their wedding. Duessing wanted a tax-exempt number for supplies, but neither Wood nor anyone else in the organization was able to provide it. Wood also claimed that spending limits on the organizational credit cards — which neither Duessing nor Hutson had access to — had been reached. (Wood told me that Hutson and Duessing were acting as “rogue agents” and never had approval to go back to North Dakota.) “Things were getting really fishy,” Duessing said. “It was like, ‘OK, we agreed to dispatch on this mission, but there’s no money to execute it?’ It didn’t make any sense.”

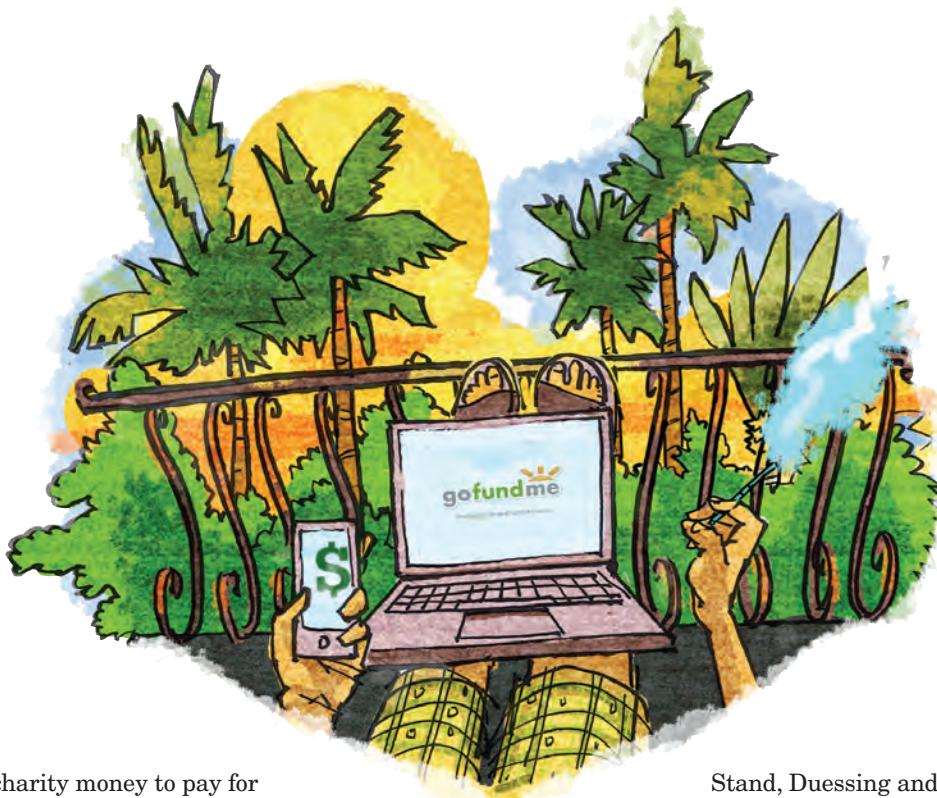
The organization, which by then had raised just over \$1.4 million, began to buckle.

IN JUNE OF 2017, TENSIONS FINALLY

ERUPTED during a videoconference call between Wood, Diggs and other volunteers. Buyukataman, Duessing and Hutson no longer trusted the organization’s leadership. Despite Wood’s promises, he had never submitted an application to turn Veterans Stand into a registered nonprofit. “They were lying,” Hutson said of Wood and Diggs. “I honest to God don’t think it was malfeasance at that point, it was people that didn’t know what to do. ... They were in way over their head(s) and didn’t know it and were just trying to cover their asses.”

One Twitter user, @jennylove203030, tweeted Wood in July 2017: “Using





charity money to pay for where you and your family live is illegal. You will be found out and arrested.” On Reddit, a user called Whiplash011, a veteran who had volunteered for the December deployment, asked about the money: “4 Bands is still standing in cannball, ND (sic) and you have pulled your funding, where is that \$275k going now if not for this effort? As was indicated on the gofundme page. And by what authority are you keeping money that was donated for a specific cause to be used another way?”

Despite the increasingly vocal criticism, Wood remained defiant. He responded to his critics on Twitter: “None of this was charity money, it was all a personal donation. Legally, I could have done anything I wanted.” He threaded several messages on his account, including: “Let’s be clear. The (GoFundMe) fundraiser was not a charity. Legally it was all personal donation to me, to do as I pleased,” Wood wrote. “Then I turned around and donated 100% of that money to create Veterans Stand, which did not exist until months later.” When I spoke with Wood, he was unrepentant. “I could have taken money — given myself a salary,” he shrugged. “But I didn’t.”

By August 2017, Duessing, Hutson, Panzironi and Buyukataman had left Veterans Stand. Panzironi, a demure woman, had dealt with most of the deployment’s bus nightmare in December by phone from New York. She is still trying to make sense of what happened to Veterans Stand. “It’s been a year and the accusations have not stopped, and they continue to grow and get louder,” Panzironi told me. “I was just trying to do a good thing, and now I feel that I was part of something that was nefarious and probably illegal. I am now of the belief that something was not right about the entire situation.”

Despite the tumult of Veterans

Stand, Duessing and Buyukataman sparked a romantic relationship and started their own organization: Vets Action Network (not to be confused with the Veterans Action Network), tasked with volunteering with the Cheyenne River Sioux. Duessing and Buyukataman pledged that their new organization would “protect and defend peaceful water protectors standing for their sacred land, civil liberties and clean water.” (Buyukataman recently resigned from the Vets Action Network.) According to Duessing, the new organization got no financial help from Veterans Stand. Hutson, who also returned home, got married and occasionally got involved with Duessing’s new venture. Michael Wood and Anthony Diggs were the last two volunteers remaining with Veterans Stand. They abandoned their original mission — helping the Standing Rock Sioux fight the Dakota Access Pipeline — and turned to broader activism for recovering veterans.

To do that, Wood and Diggs spent \$65,000 of the organization’s money to go on the Vans Warped Tour, a popular punk-rock summer festival that tours the country. They paid \$15,000 for tour personnel time and services; \$20,000 for “custom content” and another \$30,000 for WorldViz Virtual Reality Services. They set up a Veterans Stand booth promoting a virtual reality technology that was supposed to help returning war veterans cope with civilian life and the effects of PTSD.

“I was just like, ‘What does this have to do with Standing Rock at all?’” Buyukataman said. “I don’t know in all honesty at that point what they thought they were doing, but they did nothing with that money to benefit the Standing Rock cause.” Members of Veterans Stand provided HCN with internal financial documents that reveal a range of questionable spending — including a number of transfers from the Veterans Stand

account to personal bank accounts and a receipt for more than \$500 to Ducati, an Italian motorcycle company. Wood claimed he “may have bought a helmet and forgot” and that additional bank statements were “stolen” by members of the group. The remaining receipts, he told me, don’t provide an accurate picture of the organization’s spending.

But the ghosts of Standing Rock were beginning to catch up with Diggs and Wood. Brandon Boucher, a veteran from New Hampshire who participated in the December 2016 protests, complained that he never received his promised reimbursement. “Where is the audit that Michael Woods (sic) promised us back in February about how your ‘charity’ spend (sic) our donations?” Boucher asked Diggs on a Reddit thread. “I donated to help rideshare for people wanting to get out there and for supplies for the camps, of which there is still one out there, legally standing, still, with no support from your organization, as you promised.” “I didn’t donate so that these guys could go on the Warped Tour,” Boucher told me. “It was just unbelievable.”

As part of the Warped Tour, the two Veterans Stand members went to Albuquerque; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Salt Lake City and Nashville. When they got to Kansas City, Wood’s relationship with Diggs began to dissolve. One disagreement led to another: Wood said Diggs hadn’t taken care of all the logistics needed to deal with the tour staff, and their virtual reality technology wasn’t making the splash they hoped for. So Wood abandoned the tour. “Dude is a sociopath,” Diggs said of his former friend.

By August 2017, Anthony Diggs had also walked away — from the condo he shared with Wood, from their friendship, and from the organization and what he had seen as its potential to help veterans like him. “I had just gotten used to him leaving unannounced, and I thought this was like any of those other times,” Wood said. “But he never came back.” In a text message to another volunteer, Wood announced that Diggs would be his “last attempt at a human relationship.”

Diggs returned to the streets of Southern California, where he had been homeless before and would be homeless again.

Veterans Stand faded from view, too. In August 2017, without fanfare, the organization’s Twitter account, Facebook page and website were all taken down, and Wood deleted his Twitter account. Neither Wood nor Diggs will say who erased Veterans Stand from the internet. Clark told me recently that he’s spent the past year recovering from a “mental breakdown” from his time in Standing Rock. “I’m glad that I got out when I did.”

“None of this was charity money, it was all a personal donation.”

—Michael Wood, responding to critics who accused him of misusing donations to the Veterans Stand GoFundMe campaign



Paige Blankenbuehler is an assistant editor for HCN.
@PaigeBlank

There is no way to know how much money Veterans Stand still has in its coffers; GoFundMe doesn't release information about campaign funds, the funds were diverted into Wood's bank account, and the organization never released an audit to the public or its many donors. Wood has claimed that he reimbursed 4,500 veterans — far more volunteers than ever signed onto the official roster — giving them \$245 each. He also claims that 8 percent of the money went to various banking, money transfer and GoFundMe fees. Of course, neither the \$60,000 for his condo and the \$65,000 spent for the Vans Warped Tour were listed on the GoFundMe page, and for 10 months after Standing Rock, the organization masqueraded as a nonprofit despite failing to complete the necessary registration. Since Veteran Stand's implosion, Buyukataman told me she's filed complaints with both the IRS and the California attorney general's office.

"The really unfortunate thing about this is that there is a lot of good stuff that happens on GoFundMe," the Native American Rights Fund's Michael John-

son said. "Outside of the damage done to the tribe, my heart really goes out to these veterans who wanted to go out and do this good thing and made their plans and their trip on a certain set of expectations and idea of support. They got left out high and dry by one of their own."

There is no clear explanation of what happened to the \$1.4 million that Veterans Stand raised, or who should be held responsible for how it was spent. Even though Wood was the organization's president, controlled the funding, and was the only one who remained from start to finish, others were involved in the effort: Buyukataman, Duessing and Diggs. And even though it was clear to most of them that Veterans Stand was falling apart, they clearly outstayed their welcome — and did so on the tab of their unwitting donors. And they were far from the only crowd-funded "charities" that have failed to account for all the funds they received and spent. For this investigation, HCN dove into an \$8-million sea of dodgy charities. Veterans Stand was just one of them.

"I took fucking zero," Wood said. "If

I wanted to write myself a \$100,000 salary, I could have easily done that and it would have been justifiable. The most you can do is catch me in a misremembrance."

In March 2017, U.S. District Judge James Boasberg denied a motion by the Standing Rock Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes for a preliminary injunction against Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. — the company responsible for building the Dakota Access Pipeline. In his decision, Boasberg explained that the tribes would be unlikely to prevail in their lawsuit and denied their request to halt construction of the pipeline, or to stop oil from flowing through it once construction was completed.

Today, Bakken oil flows through the pipeline, and Wood lives in a condo flanked by palm trees and luxury vehicles, financed by donations meant to help veterans and the Standing Rock Sioux. □

This coverage is supported by contributors to the High Country News Enterprise Journalism Fund.

"How refreshing to find reporting that simply lays out the facts and explains the effects. Your unemotional, intelligent, and just plain, common-sense writing has earned you a new fan."

— Jeff Sprague, Colfax, California

Nurture the West.

Donate online at hcn.org/1804ad,
call our office toll free at 1-800-905-1155 or
mail a check to P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428.

High Country News

For people who care about the West.



Photo: David Keegan, Keegan Art Photography

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Conservationist? Irrigable land?

Stellar seed-saving NGO is available to serious partner. Package must include financial support. Details: <http://seeds.ojaidigital.net>.

EMPLOYMENT

Executive Director, Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC), Twisp, Wash.

Advocating for the Methow Valley's natural environment and rural character since 1976. Job description and application instructions at <http://bit.ly/mvccshiring>. Position open until filled.

Seed-Grower Manager — Restoration Seeds is seeking a part-time manager to build our seed-grower network and help cultivate our seed collection. www.restorationseeds.com/blogs/inside-restoration-seeds/careers-and-job-openings.

Executive Director, Community Radio Project — Community Radio Project, Cortez, Colo. (KSJD & the Sunflower Theatre). Visit ksjd.org and click on the Executive Director search link. CRP is an EOE. edsearch@ksjd.org.

Staff attorney — Friends of the San Juans is looking for a Staff Attorney to join our team. sanjuans.org/staffattorney/.

Accounting Clerk — Our director is seeking to employ the services of an Accounting Clerk to assist with various accounting and administrative tasks. This

is a great opportunity to get your foot in the door with a well-known and reputable construction company that appreciates its staff and offers special perks! 224-255-7517. contacts@whiteowlconstructioncompany.com whiteowlconstructioncompany.com.

MS Access Database Programmer -

Looking for an access programmer. Contract position. Send résumé with references and rates to: sunny@prospace.biz. www.prospace.biz.

Research Station Cook/Host — The University of California, White Mountain Research Center (WMRC) is seeking a full-time, seasonal cook to prepare meals for visiting researchers and educational groups. Live and work at Crooked Creek Research Station, located within the ancient bristlecone pine forest of the White Mountains. Full-time (40 hours/week), Monday-Thursday (four days on, three days off), seasonal (June-Sept). For more information, visit www.wmrc.edu, email jeremiah33@ucla.edu.

Executive Director — The Clearwater Resource Council of Seeley Lake, Mont., seeks an Executive Director. Go to www.crcmt.org for a full description of the position and how to apply.

Vice President of Retail Operations

The Vice President of Retail Operations will provide overall leadership and accountability for purchasing, product development, merchandising planning, visual

merchandising, retail operational excellence, oversight and governance, warehouse operation, shipping and receiving, training, and operations support for all retail locations, including online stores. 406-848-2400 astrong@yellowstone.org. www.yellowstone.org/jobs.

Associate Director — Grand Staircase Escalante Partners seeks an experienced fundraiser with excellent communication and organizational skills. gsenm.org.

Regional Director of Development-Northwest, Northern Rockies and Alaskan Regions -

The focus of this Regional Director of Development is to lead our major donor fundraising efforts in the

Northwest, Northern Rockies, and Alaska regions. Reporting to the Vice President for Development, this position is responsible for growing the revenue within the portfolio a minimum of 12 percent annually with expectations for significant growth over the next three to five years. Please visit our website for a full job description. www.npca.org/about/careers.

Program Manager position in Phoenix with the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy. www.lincolinst.edu/program-manager.

MERCHANDISE

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

WE ARE THE PUBLIC IN PUBLIC LANDS



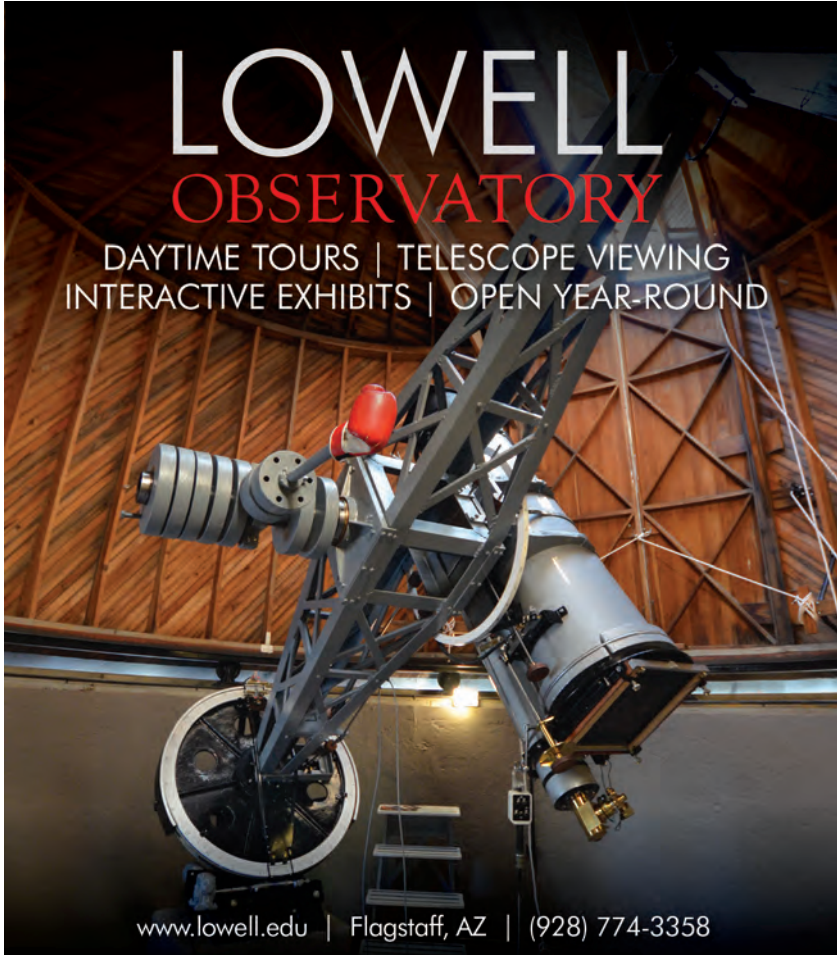
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Get Into the Wild

WE'RE GREAT OLD BROADS FOR WILDERNESS

BE BOLD, BE BRAVE, BE A BROAD • WWW.GREATOLDBROADS.ORG

LOWELL
OBSERVATORY

DAYTIME TOURS | TELESCOPE VIEWING
INTERACTIVE EXHIBITS | OPEN YEAR-ROUND



www.lowell.edu | Flagstaff, AZ | (928) 774-3358

TOM BIHN

SINCE 1972 - MADE IN U.S.A.





**CANYONLANDS
FIELD INSTITUTE**

**Nature • Rivers
Rock Art • Culture
Archaeology
Geology • History**

Unique Trips, Tours, and Seminars on
the Colorado Plateau for
Adults, Families, and Schools

CFI is an outdoor education, nonprofit
organization in Moab, Utah since 1984. Trip fees
help support school and youth programs.

800-860-5262 • cfimoab.org

Hey!! Looking for a good deal?



**10 acre lot,
all utilities,
great view,
Boulder, Utah**

www.blackbouldermesa.com

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.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKS

Clovis — The most relevant environmental novel of 2018, with the most unlikely heroine you will never forget. 406-446-1277 clovissite@gmail.com. jackclinton.com.

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

North Tucson foothills — 11.63 acres of lush desert foothills on Tucson's near north side, secluded, secure, no HOA. Ten-minute walk to Waldorf and Montessori schools, regional bike trail. Sale by owner. \$700,000. jluepke49@gmail.com.

A 160-acre hidden paradise in northern Washington — Surrounded by Idaho Panhandle National Forest. Handcrafted home, barns, shop, garage, fruit trees, gardens, greenhouse, hay, pasture, wetlands, at headwaters of year-round creek. \$865,000. For details, contact 208-448-1776 or begolf014@gmail.com.

Roads End Cabin near Yellowstone Vaulted ceilings, two fireplaces, two bedrooms, loft, jetted tub, Wi-Fi. Forest, mountain views, wildlife. wapitiwild@gmail.com.

New Castle, Colo. — 3,500 square feet, four bedroom/four bath, three-car garage, sun-room/deck, hot tub, evaporative cooling, solar and thermal PV, views, fireplace. By appointment, 970-274-3251 or fischerdedog@sopris.net. Visit hcn.org/castle.

Jackson Hole — 34-acre conservation property abuts public land; three-bedroom/two bath, views of two ranges. wildlifebiologist@wyoming.com.

2.28 acres in Torrey, Utah — Valley, mountain and red rock views. City water and electricity at lot line. Five miles from Capitol Reef National Park 775-345-5613. jimsue.ashby@gmail.com.

Glacier National Park views — 321 acres, 4,500 feet waterfront on Duck Lake, lakeshore campsite, septic in place, aspen, meadows and wildflowers, five miles from park boundary. ducklake355@gmail.com.

Custom Mountain Valley Home — Home/horse property on 22.8 acres, pasture and ponderosa pines, near Mora, N.M. Views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Near fishing, skiing, backcountry hiking. Taos MLS 100971, 435-881-3741. johnj.taosnm@gmail.com.

Salmon River, Idaho — 1,800 square feet, off-grid home, quarter acre, well, fruit trees, large organic garden. gymnogyps@gmail.com. jzrebski.wixsite.com/salmonriverhome.

Historic ranch home with 20 acres — Historic 1893 ranch headquarters. Four-bedroom, 3.5 bath, 4,000 square feet. Remodeled 2002. Includes two studio apts, stables, arena, workshop, five RV hookups. Chirachua and Peloncillo Mountain views. Photos at www.darkskynewmexico.com. 505-227-9725. Nmhokie1@gmail.com. www.darkskynewmexico.com.

Endless Trails horse property, Rollins, Mont. — 20 acres in two adjacent 10-acre tracts, views of Flathead Lake, borders Weyerhaeuser timber land with countless available adventures. 28gpm well with spigots, electric already to property. 406-794-9942. Richard.Dews@KW.com. www.biglodgelane.com.

TOURS AND TRAVEL

Grand Staircase-Escalante, Utah The Old Bailey Place is where to hang your hat when visiting Grand Staircase. www.theoldbaileyplace.com.

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.

Learning Adventures on the Colorado Plateau — Small group, active, adult field seminars with guest experts, plus private custom trip options for your family or group. Canyonlands Field Institute, Moab, Utah. 800-860-5262. www.cfimoab.org.

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



**12th ANNUAL
AMAZING EARTHFEST**

**May 13-19, 2018
Kanab, Utah**

**Celebrate And Explore America's
National Parks, Forests, Monuments
& Public Lands**

**Southern Utah's Premier 7-Day Festival
of Discovery, Arts & Adventure!**

www.amazingearthfest.org
AmazingEarthfest





**Colorado Plateau
EXPLORER**

**FREE trail guides and
maps for Grand Canyon,
Arches, Zion and more!**

grandcanyontrust.org/hikes

The Mammoth Site Excavation and Preservation Program



- Learn excavation techniques • Dig in the Bonebed
- Sort, clean & preserve the bones of extinct bison, sloth and Ice Age vertebrates
- Make a meaningful contribution to ongoing research at the Mammoth Site
- 3 sessions — space is limited!

Reserve Your Spot Today!

- First Session – Arrive May 27 - Depart June 10, 2018
- Second Session – Arrive June 17 - Depart July 1, 2018
- Third Session – Arrive July 8 - Depart July 22, 2018

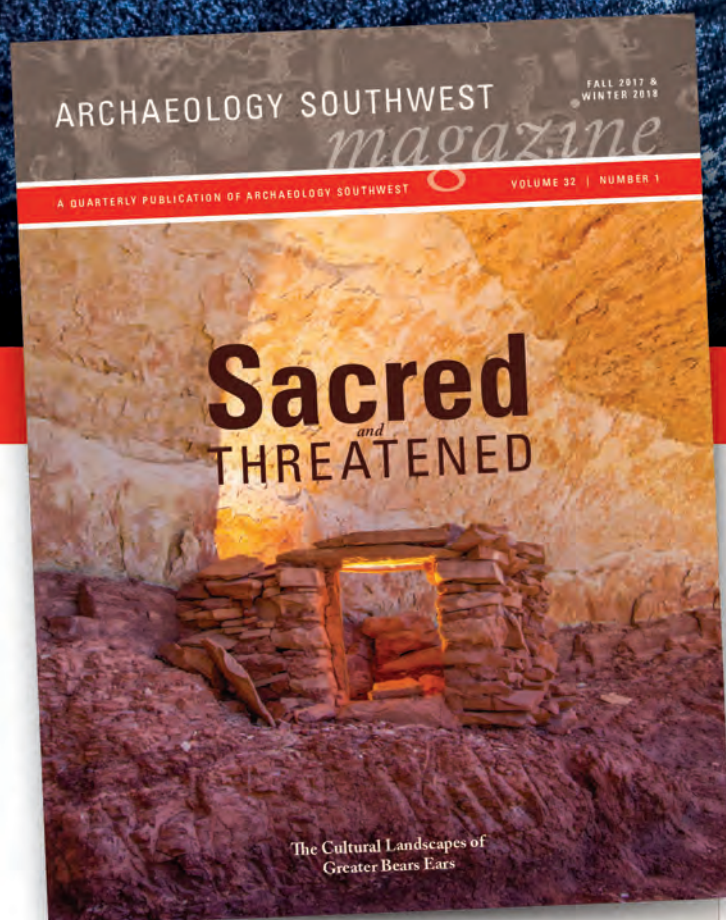
Call 605-745-6017 or visit Mammothsite.org



We Dig Big!

The Mammoth Site
1800 US 18 Bypass • Hot Springs, SD 57747

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



**Sacred and Threatened:
The Cultural Landscapes of Greater Bears Ears**

Archaeology Southwest Magazine
(Volume 31, No. 4, and Volume 32, No. 1)

Issue editors:
R. E. Burrillo and Benjamin A. Bellorado

64 pages, full color

Published by Archaeology Southwest
March, 2018

Sacred & Threatened

THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF GREATER BEARS EARS

This special edition of *Archaeology Southwest Magazine* features authors who share their strong personal, spiritual, cultural, professional, and intellectual connections to the Bears Ears region. Like you, they are all committed to respectful preservation of the natural and cultural landscapes of Bears Ears.

H C N READERS *special offer*

Purchase your copy of "Sacred and Threatened" before **September 1, 2018** for:

\$10.00 | as a single issue
Offer includes free shipping

\$25.00 | as part of a yearlong subscription
Normally \$35.00. Enjoy \$10.00 in savings!



Archaeology Southwest (520) 882-6946 | www.archaeologysouthwest.org

Order yours today

www.archaeologysouthwest.org/hcn-special

KNOW *why*
this place is sacred

KNOW *who*
values this place

KNOW *what*
should be protected

KNOW *how*
to visit with respect

When? NOW.

A Dreamer dreams of running for office

Over a year into the Trump presidency, reflections from a young immigrant

I have always preferred to keep quiet about my nightmares, some of which have come true, like Donald Trump's presidency, or the fact that my dad is in deportation proceedings, or that my mom has a heart condition we cannot afford to cure. So I focus on my dreams instead, keeping my parents on my mind and in my heart as I advocate for a more just immigration system, and for better treatment for immigrants in general.

Few things comfort me more than traveling down Denver's Speer Boulevard, crossing the bluish-green bridges that span the highway, the river and the train tracks, looking down at the city I've called home since 2012. I look at the buildings downtown, and I feel free. They remind me of the first time I saw them, when I was 14 years old and had never seen a skyscraper except in the movies. The tallest structure I had ever encountered was only about six stories high. My family had come to Denver to take my grandmother to the bus station; where we lived, in rural Nebraska, there were no buses that could take her all the way back to Mexico.

Today, as I drive down the boulevard, I spot a few bumper stickers that read, simply, "TRUMP" or "NATIVE." They remind me that some people boast a stronger claim to this land than I do. Still, Denver is home to at least 55,000 other undocumented immigrants, and sometimes that knowledge feels like the only thing centering my life at a moment when thousands are being deported — or under threat of it.

Thanks to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), in 2013 I was able to get a two-year reprieve, and I have since renewed my status twice. For the past five years, I have been able to work lawfully under my real name — a dream scenario for anyone who arrived in this country illegally.

I'm proud of the life I have built since I got a Social Security card; proud of my education at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and the work I now do, helping immigrants to apply for citizenship and register to vote. Even though some people — including my president — may not want me here, I am thriving: I am living the American dream, and dedicating my life to public service through my job at a nonprofit organization.

Through my work at the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition and the CIRC Action Fund, I've been able to help more than 3,000 people apply for naturaliza-

tion. I often hope that the folks I've been able to assist with immigration paperwork will remember that I was there for them when they needed it, and that they will, in turn, vote for candidates who will help people like me become citizens, too. And then, when I am finally able to get in line and apply for citizenship, I hope to take the next step: to run for office and continue a life of public service, in a whole new way.

I came to this country with very little: a backpack full of clothes and a head full

Even though some people — including my president — may not want me here ... I am living the American dream, and dedicating my life to public service.

of American dreams. As a 12-year-old, my first mission was to learn the English language and American culture; my second, to catch up with the rest of my peers when it came to schoolwork. After less than a year in the U.S., I got an A+ in math, so I was placed in pre-algebra; I also asked to be taken out of the English

as a second language class and placed in a science class instead. I felt like I was "making it." So, less than a year into my new life, despite my still-limited English skills, I decided to run for student body vice president at Hastings Middle School. I didn't win, but I put up a good fight.

One day, I will run for state office in Colorado. My friends and I joke that by the time I'm in my mid-40s, I'll be a U.S. senator. But in order for that to happen, I'll need to be able to apply for citizenship by the time I am 37. My prospects are grim: Right now, the only way for me to obtain lawful immigration status is to marry a U.S. citizen, but I haven't yet fallen in love with the right person. The Dream Act proposal that's currently in Congress would — if it passed tomorrow — allow me to obtain citizenship in 12 years' time. But that bill has been debated over and over, without success, ever since it was first introduced in 2001 — the same year I came to this country.

This March, I'll turn 29. I have a whole life ahead of me, and yet, so much of it remains uncertain. □

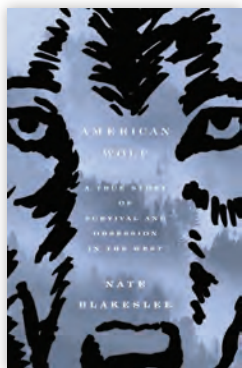
Juan Gallegos works for the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition in Denver. This is his first essay for High Country News.

Juan Gallegos, left, holds hands with a chain of Dreamers during a press conference on the possible repeal of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals in 2017.

KEVIN J. BEATY/DENVERITE



The Saga of O-Six



American Wolf: A True Story of Survival and Obsession in the West
Nate Blakeslee
300 pages,
hardcover: \$28.
Crown, 2017.

On Dec. 8, 2012, *The New York Times* ran a story titled “‘Famous’ wolf is killed outside Yellowstone.” A radio-collared female, beloved by park wolf-watchers, had been shot in Wyoming’s first legal hunt after the federal government lifted Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in the state.

Until then, the wolves that had begun to flourish in the Northern Rockies were abstractions to most people, if they knew about them at all. We tend to think of wild animals as collectives, playing their role in ecosystems or on the fringes of human communities, interchangeable units of a larger whole.

Here, though, was an individual, with a recognizable cream-and-gray face that gave her species the weight of identity, and her killing raised an outcry from around the country. For beyond the brief news of her death was a life, as singular in its details, perhaps, as each of our own. *American Wolf*, Nate Blakeslee’s second nonfiction book, is an engrossing, cinematic account of that life — and through it, the sweeping tale of wolves’ return to a more tolerant but far less wild West.

Scientists called the famous wolf 832F. Wolf-watchers knew her as O-Six, for the year of her birth. She stole their hearts in 2010, when she single-handedly took down the alpha female of another wolf pack, securing some of the park’s best territory for her own, and then, in the next beat, hurled herself in solitary chase after a bull elk.

Relying on thousands of pages of field notes and direct observations from veteran wolf-watchers Laurie Lyman and Rick McIntyre, Blakeslee paints O-Six as an initially improbable protagonist. She spends her first three years roving alone, vulnerable to attacks by her own kind. When she finally does start a pack in her middle age, it’s with a pair of much younger brothers that some watchers nickname “Dumb and Dumber” for their bumbling early attempts at hunting and terror of empty blacktop.

Yet O-Six becomes a benevolent matriarch and attentive mother. Larger than most females, she is also an especially skilled hunter — taking down prey on her own, rare for a species that relies on cooperative hunting.

As Blakeslee follows O-Six’s ascension, *American Wolf* becomes a pair of love stories, braided together with the surprisingly relatable tale of O-Six’s eventual killer, a reasonable man who embodies the anti-wolf animus of rural Westerners unwilling to share either the land where they struggle to raise livestock, or the elk they also hunt.

The first of these love stories is between the wolves and their watchers.

Chief among them is McIntyre, a full-time employee in Yellowstone’s biol-

ogy department who is so enamored of the canines that he braves blizzards and backburners romantic relationships to keep an eye on the packs, tallying over 85,000 wolf sightings in the park over the course of his career.

The second is between O-Six and her alpha male, 755 — tracking his own development into a skilled leader, and following their offspring out into the world. It is impossible to read about the animals’ lives — the uncle who keeps a careful eye on the shyest pup in the litter; a green afternoon spent romping for the apparent joy of it; the heartrending moment when O-Six’s pack gathers to stand vigil over her body after she’s shot — and not be convinced that wolves have complex emotional and intellectual lives.

In this, O-Six’s story becomes the promontory from which to glimpse a whole society of wolves. There is the alpha who, instead of killing the pups of her in-pack rival, raises them alongside her own. There is a pack that learns to specialize in bison — wolves no heavier than a man bringing down a creature the size of a hatchback — and then fractures into a gang of marauding wolf-killers after losing its alphas.

Theirs is a society, at once alien and

unsettlingly familiar, that paralleled and occasionally touched our own for thousands of years, before increasingly settled agricultural and urban cultures routed it from their midst. Once, Blakeslee writes, wolves were the most widespread large land mammals on Earth. Now, humans are, and wolves live in pockets outside the vast, mostly unpeopled wilds of places like Alaska and northern Canada only by our grace and will.

Like Barry Lopez’s foundational 1978 *Of Wolves and Men* and much of the rest of the *Canis lupus* canon, *American Wolf* attempts to show us, truthfully, a creature that Western civilization has long vilified, and only recently come to admire. Blakeslee’s timing couldn’t be better. Today, from their cradle in the Northern Rockies, wolves have returned to Washington, Oregon and California, and occasionally trickle into Utah and Colorado. In New Mexico and Arizona, another reintroduced population clings to life. Now that we have opened up a tenuous place for wolves again, we need to reacquire ourselves with the ones that run among us. *American Wolf* can help us see: Who are they? What have we forgotten about them?

BY SARAH GILMAN



Yellowstone’s O-Six after making her first known solo elk kill, an impressive feat for any wolf, male or female. JIMMY JONES



An oil well pad, storage tanks, and the lights of distant wind turbines glowing at night near the Pawnee Buttes in the Pawnee National Grassland in Colorado.

MILEHIGHTTRAVELER/GETTY

Frackin' on Heaven's Door

On a blustery day last winter, I dodged a parade of semi trucks to pay my final respects to the Pawnee Buttes.

The Buttes are a pair of sandstone-and-clay ramparts that rise out of the vast, choppy sea of shortgrass prairie in northeastern Colorado's Pawnee National Grassland. I fell in love with them back in the early 2000s, when the most recent Front Range housing boom was still in its early stages. I had a brand-new driver's license, and heading out to explore the still-wild landscape of the Buttes felt like entering Outer Mongolia.

Spring days were the best: Bumblebees wrestled lazily with wildflower blossoms, and lark buntings floated on a light breeze. Summer brought the great thunderheads, explosive with fury, ripped open by the stratosphere. Lizards entwined themselves in the sagebrush, and smug prairie rattlers lay on the soft white sand. The Buttes loomed over the plains, immense as a double Uluru, the great red rock of the Australian outback.

I can't count how many times I pitched my tent along a nearby escarpment, or woke to a Pawnee sunrise, an arpeggio of blue to pink to orange. I can't count how many miles I hiked, beers I drank, cans I shot at. I remember lying on my back, watching sparks flit skyward to join the constellations, a friend's gentle guitar chords fading away with them. Tracking a racing cumulonimbus as it roiled with lightning. Grinning at nobody as my girlfriend and I snuggled closer

under a midnight moonbow.

In the spring of 2015, I made another visit, only to discover that the Buttes had been sacrificed, their eternal grandeur swapped for the oil and gas beneath them. Methane flares burned at their bases. Tank farms and evaporation ponds littered the prairie. The empty roads I once flew along had become muddy ruts clogged with oilfield traffic.

The Buttes were no longer secret gems adored by a handful of birdwatchers and me; they had become an industrial worksite. That year, the Bureau of Land Management, which has the final say over oil and gas activity on Forest Service lands, including Pawnee National Grassland, held a few more rounds of leasing auctions. The lease sales were met by citizen protests, which were swiftly brushed aside, and an additional hundred thousand acres were leased for drilling.

How many people over the centuries have loved the Pawnee Buttes, only to see them ravaged? I wonder. After all, the landscape is named for its former inhabitants, Indigenous people decimated by genocide only a few generations ago. Their sorrow must have been incalculable. The cowboys who followed them surely ached inside as homesteaders unrolled barbed wire. Not long after, God punished the homesteaders' hubris by devouring their topsoil and leaving them adrift in a wasteland of dust.

It was this seeming wasteland I fell in love with, a land that had frustrated

so many enterprises that it was left to recover until someone developed another way to extract commodities from it. I was blessed to enjoy the waning years of this interlude — though of course my own access to the Buttes, my roaring old pickup, was only possible thanks to the defilement of someone else's desert.

On my recent visit, I watched the sun set over the grasslands, the evening redness in the west backlighting a bank of pump jacks, bowing to kiss the prairie. I came across a shard of a bottle I shot more than a decade ago. I have left my own filth here.

Down the road, I pulled into the Pawnee Station Café. In the old days, the place was always dead, just me and a bored waitress. This time, oil company drivers shuffled in and out, buying Gatorades and cigarettes. The café has an expanded dining room and bar now. Coffee has doubled in price, from a quarter a cup to 50 cents. The cash register didn't stop ringing.

Over my table was a picture of the Buttes in springtime, the prairie green with life. You couldn't take that picture today — the background would be full of derricks, tanks and trucks.

Someday, the wells will run dry. Depending on what remains of our government by that time, the pump jacks and tank farms may be removed, or left to rust in place. If they remain, they will join the arrowheads and homesteads in the immense reliquary of the Great Plains. □

David Gilbert is a freelance journalist, forklift operator and occasional hitchhiker. He reports on growth and development for Colorado Community Media and writes from Englewood, Colorado.



HEARD AROUND THE WEST | BY BETSY MARSTON

THE WEST

It's not the bees' fault if they're falling down on the job of pollinating an estimated 1,000 species of plants grown for food, beverages, fibers, spices and medicines. Any blame for a drop in performance should be heaped on the variety of insults the fuzzy critters face, including colony collapse disorder, which caused mass die-offs; infestations like mites; poisonous chemicals sprayed on fields; and our compulsive paving of their habitat, reports *USA Today*. But now, Walmart says it has a technological fix. The corporation believes that — just as human workers are being replaced more and more by automation — the routine jobs that bees do can be turned over to “unmanned aerial vehicles,” otherwise known as drones. In its application to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Walmart claimed that drones would be even more versatile than bees: Besides pollinating plants, they could fly over fields to check for pest damage, spray specific plants with pesticides, and in a truly novel exercise, “simply shoo off birds, acting as a next-generation of ‘scarecrows or shiny devices.’” Plus, the motorized bees would “use sensors to verify” that pollen was being successfully transmitted from one plant to another. According to *Ecowatch*, Walmart's application for six patents noted that drone technology was another way “to get food from farms to store shelves faster and more cheaply to compete with Amazon.com Inc. ...” This is not the first time anyone's tried to automate bee behavior; last year, Japanese researchers successfully demonstrated how a tiny, remote-controlled drone could pollinate flowers.

ARIZONA

When a black-and-white cat climbed a 30-foot pole and then remained there for a couple of days — too scared to come down — “people in Phoenix lost their minds,” reported *Phoenix New Times*. A half-million people breathlessly watched the cat's predicament in real time, as ABC15 live-streamed the show in dramatic style: “Occasionally, (the cat) let a paw dangle off the edge while testing its weight on the wire (and) viewer reactions ran the whole gamut ... panic, fury,



COLORADO **There's no emergency like a snowmergency!** BROOKE WARREN

annoyance, desperation.” So many people called 911 to report the imperiled cat that the fire department was overwhelmed. One viewer on Facebook described “literally having an anxiety attack over this,” while 911 dispatchers fielded at least 100 calls demanding a rescue unit, including frantic callers from New Jersey, Florida and Ohio. Finally, the cat, named Gypsy, was rescued by a neighbor with a kind heart, a ladder and a lot of chutzpah. Owners Jenny Hardin and Ash Morgan, sounding slightly blasé, said they hadn't realized their pet was stuck on the pole that long, though, given the contrary nature of cats, it was possible: “She comes and goes.” Just two days later, a different Phoenix feline, Princess Poppy, got herself rescued from a different pole. Apparently, all the kitties now want their 15 minutes of fame.

CALIFORNIA

Regulators can be excruciatingly slow when it comes to protecting California's most essential but fragile asset — its water. After a 20-month investigation, the state determined that each year, for 71 years now, the water-bottling company Nestlé Waters North America has been getting away with illegally pumping 62 million gallons of water from the San Bernardino National Forest. *Forest News*, the publication of Forest Service Employees for Environmen-

tal Ethics, reports that the state water board's investigation found that the company “may only have a right to extract about 8.5 million gallons each year.” Nestlé, which was ordered to immediately cease its “unauthorized diversions,” has been given 60 days to come up with a compliance plan.

UTAH

Southern Utah News, which covers the surprisingly diverse southern Utah town of Kanab, recently ran one of its livelier “Letters to the Editor” pages. Four of the eight writers fulminated against Republican state Rep. Mike Noel's ill-fated proposal to name a national parks highway after President Donald Trump. One writer noted that the Kanab city council was considering a name change for the road to the local landfill, so he recommended calling it “the Donald J. Trump Memorial Landfill Parkway.” Another resident's suggestion: the “Trump Dump Non-Scenic Road.”

ARIZONA

Rangers patrolling the perimeter of Saguaro National Park in Arizona occasionally come across a big hole in the ground, signifying that, once again, a thief has excavated and carted off a giant saguaro. Vandalism is such a serious problem that park staffers recently spent \$3,000 implanting microchips in 1,000 specimens of the iconic, long-lived cacti along the most accessible edges of the park. Sadly, the chips lack tracking devices and don't broadcast a signal, so the only way to find out if a particular saguaro was nicked from the park is to scan it using a specialized reader, reports *Cronkite News*. Still, said chief ranger Ray O'Neil, “it's a deterrent.” It would be definitely embarrassing if a park ranger stopped by your front yard, scanned your saguaro and loudly announced: “Gotcha! Get a backhoe, this saguaro is moving back home!”

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.



High
Country
News

For people who care about the West.

High Country News covers the important issues and stories that are unique to the American West with a magazine, a weekly column service, books and a website, hcn.org. For editorial comments or questions, write *High Country News*, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428 or editor@hcn.org, or call 970-527-4898.

“Women are often seen as intruders, as tokens who were only hired to meet some kind of quota. We are treated as pariahs in our professional fields, regarded as little more than sexual-harassment cases waiting to happen.”

Lorena Williams, in her essay, “Firefighters, it's time we led the way on ending harassment,” from *Writers on the Range*, hcn.org/wotr