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High Country News

For people who care about the West

Nature Retreat

Can an entire town move back from the sea?

By Ruxandra Guidi



High seas in March 2014 reached the iconic surfer statue at the end of Palm Avenue in Imperial Beach, California. SERGE DEDINA

On the cover

Imperial Beach, California, framed by a wave. The sea level is expected to flood the area consistently by 2050.

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Editor's note

On covering the myriad Wests

In this issue of the magazine, we honor the life and work of Ed Marston, the longtime publisher of *High Country News*, who died in August from complications of West Nile virus. Needless to say, this has been a reflective few weeks for all of us. Ed, who retired from the magazine in 2002, had a powerful vision for the rural West, one that included both conservation and compromise, especially over the shared natural resources of the public lands.



Over the years, *HCN* has remained true to that vision — in part. But the magazine has also pushed into other facets of the West to tell its ongoing story. We, the editors and writers, have deliberately brought more voices into the conversation, especially from communities typically excluded from it. (Not everyone agrees with this approach, and this issue includes a letter from a reader who will no longer subscribe to *HCN*.)

The truth is, the West is more than ranchers and loggers and miners. It is more than recreationists and environmentalists — whatever that word means. It is a complicated, contradictory place, where militiamen prowl the southern borders and a grieving orca carries the corpse of her dead calf for 17 days. It is a rapidly urbanizing region of widening inequality, where real estate deals sever the poor from the natural world, even as red-tailed hawks circle the sky over elk, bear and the occasional hunter. The West produced people like Ursula K. Le Guin, a writer whose ecological warnings were woven into fantasy, science fiction and poetry. But it also produced the white supremacists indicted recently for their part in Charlottesville's violent "Unite the Right" protests last year.

Meanwhile, the entire West is in jeopardy. Amid political and cultural tumult, the climate is changing, bringing a new reality we are unprepared for. This issue's feature story, by Contributing Editor Ruxandra Guidi, describes a coastal town in Southern California that is asking whether it can, or should, retreat inland from the rising seas. The residents of Imperial Beach are not grappling with hypothetical abstraction; the tides are rising, the shores eroding. Also in this issue is an analysis of Trump administration rollbacks of policies meant to slow greenhouse gas emissions, and a story on the Navajo Nation's attempts to rebuild a police force that honors tribal sovereignty.

These stories should be read together, holistically, bound by the idea that the ecological crises are inseparable from the problem of human domination — of the land and of each other. Ed Marston was right: The West deserves a vibrant rural landscape. But it deserves much more than that. We are honored to build, from Ed's legacy, the vision of a thriving, inclusive American West, one equal to the challenges of our time.

—Brian Calvert, editor-in-chief

The boarding school era's missing Indigenous children



Carlisle Industrial Indian School student body is pictured in 1892. Students were relocated from nearly every Indigenous nation within U.S. borders. JOHN N. CHOATE/CARLISLE INDIAN SCHOOL DIGITAL RESOURCE CENTER

During the boarding school era of the 19th and 20th centuries, an unknown number of Indigenous students at Carlisle Industrial Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, disappeared. Now, a coalition of Indigenous organizations — including the National Congress of American Indians, which represents 250 Indigenous nations, the International Indian Treaty Council, the Native American Rights Fund and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition — has turned to the United Nations to demand answers regarding what happened to loved ones, “whose fate and whereabouts remain unknown.” The tribes’ efforts are beginning to bring about some closure. In June, after about a decade of back-and-forth with the U.S. Army, which owns the Carlisle property, Yufna Soldier Wolf stood present as Little Plume, the last of three Northern Arapaho children buried there, was exhumed and sent

back to the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. The remains of two others, 14-year-old Horse and 15-year-old Little Chief, Soldier Wolf’s great uncle, had been returned the previous August. Several Indigenous children went missing from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, which opened in 1879 and closed its doors 100 years ago. It was the United States’ most notorious Indian boarding school and the starting point for more than a century of child-removal policies that continue to tear apart Indigenous families today. Carlisle, and hundreds of federally funded boarding schools like it, were key to the U.S. government’s project of destroying Indigenous nations and indoctrinating children with military discipline and U.S. patriotism.

Note: This article was produced in collaboration with The Intercept.
NICK ESTES and ALLEEN BROWN
Read more online:

hcne.ws/boardingschools-missing

8 out of 10

Americans who live in suburbs, up from about half and half in 1920.

2 out of 3 trillion

Proportion of miles people travel by car in urban and suburban areas versus rural areas, although rural areas have three times as many miles.

3 Percent of land in the U.S. occupied by cities

90 Percent of the nation’s \$16.8 trillion gross domestic product produced by metropolitan areas.

According to a recent article by Christopher Boone for *The Conversation*, in the West and across the country, more people now live in suburban developments as cities decline. Census figures from earlier this year show that the suburbs of warm climate “Sun Belt” cities in the West continue to grow, while cities in the cold climate “Snow Belt” of the Midwest and Northeast have declined. Smaller metropolitan areas with fewer than 500,000 people have also grown, related to an improving economy and job creation in smaller urban centers. This ongoing shift toward the suburbs has significant environmental repercussions, writes Boone, a professor of sustainability at Arizona State University: “Rising suburbanization undermines some of the energy efficiency gained by high density living in urban cores.” But, he concludes, the trend toward suburban life could soon come to an end. Millennials — the generation born between 1981 and 1997 — appear to prefer urban life.

CHRISTOPHER BOONE

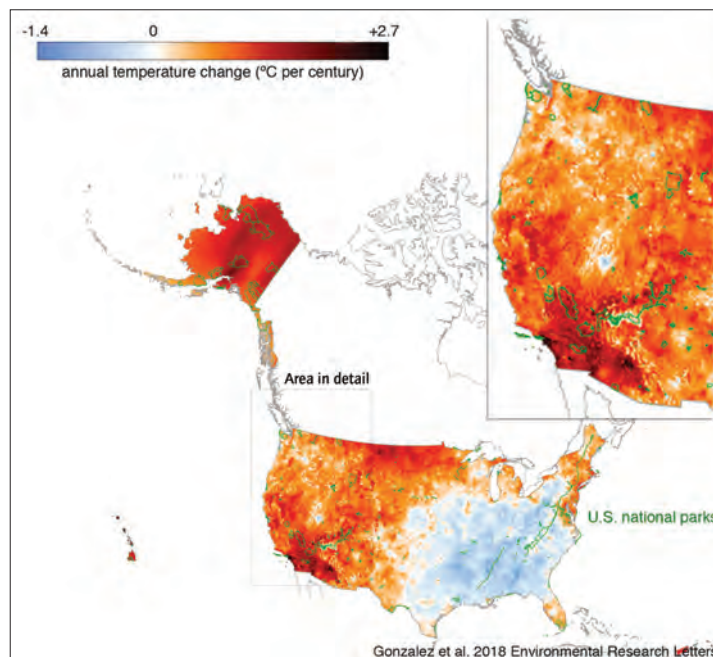
Read more online: hcne.ws/burgeoning-burbs

National parks are warming twice as fast as the U.S. overall

According to new research released this month, scientists concluded that national park sites warmed at twice the rate of the United States overall between 1895 and 2010. Temperatures rose by about 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit per century in the parks, compared to less than 1 degree across the nation. The scientists attribute the lopsided trend to the fact that a large amount of National Park Service land is at high elevations or in the Arctic, where human-caused warming is accelerated. Indeed, the highest temperature hikes were in Alaska. Gates of the Arctic and Denali national parks, for example, both saw spikes of about 7 degrees Fahrenheit per century. The study, published in *Environmental Research Letters*, was the first comprehensive look at shifts in climate at all 417 sites managed by the National Park Service. It also projects how the climate might further transform parks by the end of this century.

EMILY BENSON Read more online:

hcne.ws/warming-warning



Judge to USFWS: Don't 'cherry-pick' science

In September, U.S. District Judge William Alsup ordered the the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reconsider its decision not to federally protect Pacific fishers, rare animals long threatened by widespread logging in their home range. Alsup ruled that the agency “cherry-picked” scientific evidence to downplay evidence of poisonings, while also ignoring signs that poisonings are increasing. Alsup questioned why the agency — which says that not enough evidence exists to know whether poisoning by illegal marijuana-growing operations threatens fishers with extinction — didn’t study the issue more. Fish and Wildlife must issue a new decision on whether to protect Pacific fishers by March 2019. MAYA L. KAPOOR Read more online: hcne.ws/listing-redux



Pacific fishers may get listed. BETHANY WEEKS/USFWS PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

“The right distrusts any deal involving the federal government, and the left holds a lot of distrust about the state being able to confront scarcity over climate change.”

—Chuck Coughlin, longtime Arizona GOP consultant, discussing why the appointment of Jon Kyl, a former water attorney and former congressman, to the deceased Sen. John McCain’s seat is the pragmatic choice.

PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER

Read more online: hcne.ws/why-kyl

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'WELCOME TO HELL'

Of our 46 summers in this part of southern Arizona, this one has been the worst ("What are we doing here?" *HCN*, 8/6/18). Gone are the rare days when the temperature hit 100 degrees Fahrenheit; now it's seemingly endless weeks of 101, 103, even 106 degrees. Gone are the almost daily afternoon thunderstorms that left a quarter to a half-inch of rain. Now we have sudden, violent storms with high winds that pound us with an inch or more of precipitation, and then days of no rain at all. The humidity remains high, and our swamp cooler groans, apologizes and pumps wet air.

The flora and fauna have changed. With warmer winters, invasive species such as buffelgrass creep in. Bird species such as cactus wrens, poorwills, nighthawks and others have moved on, and I can't remember the last time I heard a spadefoot toad. Here, the aquifer is still good, so that is not yet a problem. Awareness and regulations have cut water use in some cities such as Tucson, which continues to grow in population. But climate change is here. Welcome to Hell.

Nicholas J. Bleser
Tumacacori, Arizona

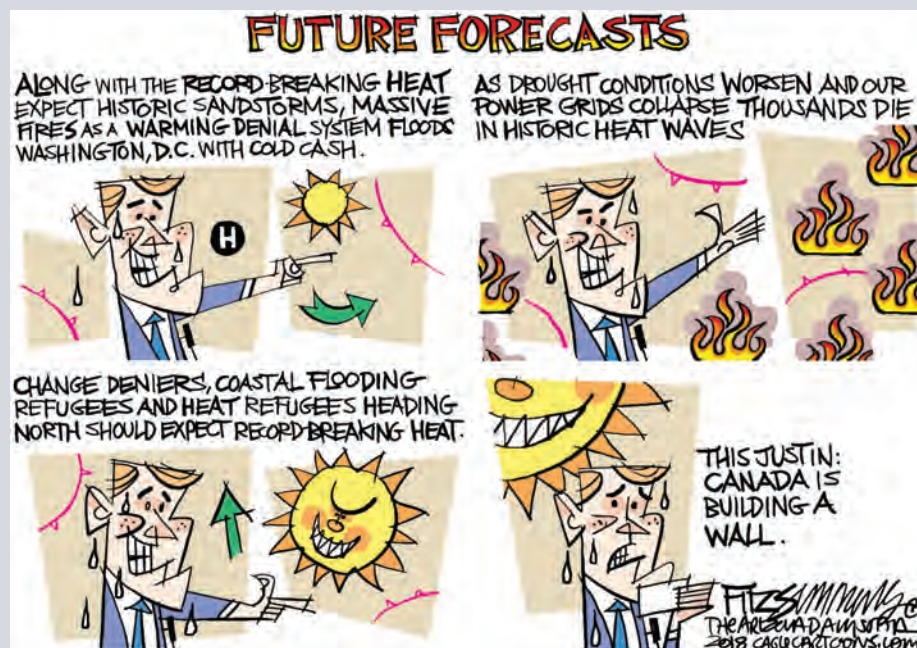
RESONANT RUMINATIONS

I write in appreciation of Cally Carswell. She relates, with uncanny precision and brittle clarity, what it is to be a Westerner confronting the transformation of a beloved landscape. Her moving rumination, personal and profound, resonates on many levels. What a writer.

Pat Cassen
Miramonte, California

EROSIVE GROOVES

Daniel Greenstadt's article, "Mountain bikes shouldn't be banned from wild landscapes" (*Writers on the Range*, 8/7/18), covered all the complaints of the wannabe wilderness bike riders without addressing the reason for their exclusion. Bikes, like all other wheeled vehicles, create a continuous groove in soft earth that serves to channel running water from rain or snowmelt and erode the trail. Given the extreme



DAVID FITZSIMMONS, THE ARIZONA STAR/CAGLECARTOONS.COM

physical labor needed to produce user-acceptable trails in the wilderness, the 1964 Wilderness Act was prudent in its decision to ban wheeled vehicles.

Walt Briggs
Missoula, Montana

MISGUIDED NEW DIRECTION

After 30-plus years of constant reading, I have read my final issue of *HCN* (8/20/18). Brian Calvert's recent editor's notes and many of your more recent essays and writers' opinions have left me saddened that what was once the finest journal on the issues affecting the Intermountain West seems to have become just another "woke" partisan magazine. As our country slowly descends into tribalism, your embrace of the identity politics that poisons our union is especially disheartening. I know that I'm far from alone in leaving

the fold and can only hope that your new stance has attracted more subscribers, donors and advertisers to help make up for the losses. I sincerely wish you all the best, but I can't help wondering what my old friend Tom Bell would have made of your profoundly misguided evolution.

John Mumaw
Cortez, Colorado

POIGNANT AND HEARTWARMING

The last two feature stories ("What Are We Doing Here?" *HCN*, 8/6/18; "Where the West Is Moving — and Why," *HCN*, 8/20/18) were especially objective, well-researched, poignant and heartwarming. I'm a somewhat elderly dude who has spent much of my life working with and enriched by a wide variety of diverse folks. Also, my church is the sacred outdoors. Both of these main articles richly embodied these paramount

themes (nature, immigration and culture). I'm glad to continue my longtime subscription to your magazine, together with several members of my family, continuing the tradition of our deceased mother, Gloria, who fought to keep Tom Bell's noble dream alive when it was struggling.

Jim Barron
Gunnison, Colorado



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Prisoners turn to strikes

Inmates renew protests against solitary confinement and racially biased sentencing

BY SARAH TORY

Jose Villarreal is not a religious man, but if he were, the 10 years he spent in solitary confinement in a windowless 7-by-11-foot cell inside California's Pelican Bay State Prison would have qualified as hell. He remembers the strip searches, the beatings and the outdoor telephone booth cages where guards would lock prisoners in 30-degree weather, wearing only their boxers, as a form of punishment.

"Every type of psychological blow — they would deal us," Villarreal said, of conditions inside the "Secure Housing Unit" (or simply "the SHU"). "The goal was to make it so horrible that people would do anything to get out."

Those types of abuses would eventually spur the nation's largest-ever prison hunger strike, in 2013, when an estimated 30,000 prisoners across California refused food.

The California strike eventually led to the release of more than 1,000 prisoners from the Pelican Bay SHU, but as a whole, the U.S. criminal justice system remained largely unchanged. On Aug. 21, prisoners in at least 20 prisons across the country tried to pick up where those efforts left off with a series of work stoppages, hunger strikes, and boycotts of prison commissaries to protest many of the same conditions that Villarreal experienced. Officially, the latest strike ended Sept. 9, but prisoners at several facilities have continued their actions.

Their demands echo across a region where prisoners fight deadly wildfires, private detention centers profit from locking up undocumented immigrants, and the business of incarceration has become a form of economic development for struggling rural towns. For Villarreal and the millions of others who have spent time behind bars, this landscape of imprisonment is as much a part of their West as its mountains, forests and deserts.

Using contraband cellphones and help from outside activists, organizers with Jailhouse Lawyers Speak and the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), a labor union for prisoners, spread word of the strike on social media. Their list of demands calls for improving living conditions inside America's prisons, ending racially biased sentencing and parole decisions, raising pay for those who work and increasing access to rehabilitation.

It's difficult to know the full scope of the strikes given the culture of secrecy in America's prisons and the threat of

retaliation from prison officials. But in the West, there are confirmed reports of strike activity at facilities in Washington, California and New Mexico.

According to IWOC Denver organizer Clayton Dewey, the strikes are a symptom of how the U.S. incarceration boom has failed people — particularly those in rural communities and people of color. Throughout the '80s and '90s, the U.S. underwent a prison-building spree concentrated in rural areas, which coincided with tough-on-crime laws that targeted minorities for petty drug and gang-related offenses. Today, throughout the West, people of color are incarcerated at much higher rates than whites, breaking up families and exacerbating economic and social inequality.

Meanwhile, as the region endures one of its driest, hottest years on record, prisoner labor for firefighting is becoming common: Between 30 and 40 percent of those battling California's deadly flames this summer were incarcerated. They were paid just \$1 an hour plus \$2 per day, thanks to an exemption in the U.S. Constitution's 13th Amendment, which abolished chattel slavery but allows involuntary servitude as part of a punishment for a crime.

"It's a huge part of the regional economy that's not talked about," said Erik Loomis, the author of four books on U.S. labor and environmental history. Nationwide, roughly a third of the 2.3 million people incarcerated have prison jobs. Still, the problem, Loomis says, is less about the work itself — which many prisoners are not opposed to — than about the paltry wages and lack of protections they receive,

creating yet more incentives to keep locking people up.

Like other prisoners held in solitary confinement, Villarreal never had the opportunity to work, but he shared his family's long history of incarceration: His grandparents, parents and siblings have all spent time behind bars. He was 10 when he had his first encounter with a police officer, who suspected him of being a gang member, and 12 when he was arrested for vandalism and sent to a juvenile detention center. From that point on, Villarreal would be incarcerated or on probation for the next 32 years of his life.

The current strikes, he says, are the only way prisoners can fight "to be treated as human beings and free from torture."

It's not clear yet how big an impact the current strike will have on the criminal justice system. The 2013 California hunger strike led to a successful lawsuit that drastically reduced the use of indefinite solitary confinement throughout the state's prison system, but other strikes have been less successful.

Last year, Rick Raemisch, executive director of the Colorado Department of Corrections, announced that he was ending long-term solitary confinement and restrictive housing. "The data was overwhelming," he said. "We were manufacturing problems through the overuse of solitary."

Still, solitary confinement continues to be a common response to disturbances inside Colorado prisons. Last month, a group of prisoners at the Sterling Correctional Facility began a hunger strike, demanding, among other things, an end to the continued use of isolation as a form of punishment.

This is our final hope at some sort of relief," one of the prisoners wrote, announcing they would refuse to eat until their demands were met. □

THE LATEST

Backstory

Wildfire smoke is creating a public health crisis. Last year, nearly every county in Montana was declared a disaster area. As wildfires raged, respiratory-related visits to emergency rooms spiked ("Montana's tough summer," *HCN*, 12/11/17). In Lolo, Montana, officials installed new air filters in schools to improve air quality. **But without dedicated government programs to combat smoke, Western communities could be taxed by the impacts of future fire seasons, which are projected to worsen with climate change.**

Followup

This year, scientists from Colorado State University and other institutions analyzed the situation and made a grim prediction. A study published in August in the journal *GeoHealth* estimates that **the number of deaths related to wildfire smoke in the United States could be as high as 44,000 per year by 2100 — more than double the current rate of about 17,000 deaths per year.** Even as humanity reins in air pollution from industry and car emissions, climate change will further boost wildfires' deadly smoke.

CARL SEGERSTROM



A correctional officer is seen in a 2011 photo of one of the housing units at Pelican Bay State Prison near Crescent City, California. RICH PEDRONCELLI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sarah Tory is a correspondent for *High Country News*. [@tory_sarah](https://twitter.com/tory_sarah)

Conspiracy theories



BY TAY WILES
PHOTOS BY ANDREW CULLEN

On May 31, a strange story aired on the nightly news in Tucson, Arizona. KOLD News 13 reporter Kevin Adger told viewers that a local veterans' rights activist named Lewis Arthur had made a horrific discovery in the bushes beside a frontage road: a bunker used as a stopover by child sex traffickers. The reporter pointed out children's clothes, an old toilet seat and a septic tank, where Arthur claimed kids had been held against their will.

Arthur had stumbled across the camp while canvassing the area for homeless vets. He posted an outraged rant on Facebook and started getting comments — a lot of them. When he posted videos arguing that there were probably bodies buried at the camp and that it was part of a network of Arizona sex trafficking sites, he topped 680,000 views in days.

There was just one problem with Arthur's story: It wasn't true. Tucson police and sheriff's deputies both investigated the site and found nothing more than a former homeless camp — no evidence of sex trafficking. Arthur then claimed he and two friends *had* found proof: a child's skull. Officers sent the skull to the Pima County medical examiner, who concluded that it had belonged to an adult and been found miles away from the homeless camp.

The Arizona Daily Star and other local news outlets published stories debunking the claims. In a pre-internet world, the whole thing might have ended there, without any more newspaper ink or the

and vigilante justice



Lewis Arthur stands outside a Veterans on Patrol camp, which he started in early June in an effort to fight what he believes is the trafficking of migrant women and children for sex in the Tucson area.

◀ A white plastic bottle sits on top of a metal pole near the Veterans on Patrol camp. Volunteers said that a series of similar poles with jugs were a navigational guide for migrants crossing through the desert.

involvement of the FBI. But in 2018 — at a time when social media, a conspiracy-minded president, and the erosion of trust in public institutions are providing fertile ground for wild-eyed theories — the story kept gaining life.

From as far away as Australia, believers travelled to the Tucson desert to deliver vigilante justice to the sex traffickers. Their stories became more elaborate: The skull became a partial corpse. One person told me it was so fresh when it was found, they saw it “dripping.” The camp became evidence of a massive pedophile ring implicating Cemex, the Mexican cement company that owns the property. Some of Arthur’s followers found more bones and suggested they came from people who had died terrible deaths. But the medical examiner analyzed them, too, and concluded they were animal remains. At least one was from a deer.

I first heard of Lewis Arthur in early June, when JJ MacNab, an expert on anti-government movements, tweeted about Arthur’s “one-sided standoff.” It caught my eye because Arthur had connections to the Bundy family, the Nevada ranchers at the center of two recent armed confrontations with federal land managers. Arthur had traveled to Bunkerville, Nevada, in 2014 to help prevent the Bureau of Land Management from removing the cows Cliven Bundy had illegally grazed for decades. Two years later, he showed up at the armed occupation of Oregon’s Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which was led by Cliven’s sons.

But even in those far-right circles, Arthur is considered a fringe character, known as “Screwy Louie.” At Bundy Ranch, he reportedly called police to the protest site, and in Oregon, he tried to “help” an acquaintance, militiaman Ryan Payne, and “women and children” by rescuing them from the refuge, the occupation of which Arthur believed was misguided. Bundyites kicked him out of both events.

Arthur, 39, is 6 foot 2, with red hair, freckles and hazel eyes. His full name is Michael Lewis Arthur Meyer, but “Michael Meyer,” he said, is an entirely different man. The personal story he tells is one of victimhood and redemption. On a walk through the desert this summer, he told me that he’s originally from Ohio, was sexually abused as a kid, and later fell into selling drugs. He now lives in Tucson, where his wife works in the pharmaceutical industry, supporting him and his daughter.

Arthur, who is not a veteran, started the group Veterans on Patrol (VOP) in 2015, to provide temporary shelter to homeless vets in Mesa, Prescott, Nogales and Tucson. Helping vets was a worthy cause, but Arthur seemed to be searching



for something more. In recent years, he also started climbing towers wielding upside-down American flags to draw attention to homelessness and suicide among veterans. In 2015, he perched atop an 80-foot-tall light pole in Surprise, Arizona, for four hours. This July, he occupied a tower on the Cemex property for nine days, demanding officials investigate child sex trafficking.

After he announced his discovery of the sex camp, Arthur started gaining the attention he seemed to seek. Within 24 hours, he gained 55,000 Facebook followers, which grew to 77,000 in July. “For him, this is a religious mission,” tied to his Christian faith, said MacNab, who has followed Arthur’s activities for several years. “He has a huge heart. But he’s got this other side that is desperate for drama and attention.”

And what about his followers, I wondered? What compelled them to sprint to the scorching desert to join one man’s fantastical crusade? And what does it mean for communities when the unreality of the internet so easily crosses the threshold into real life?

It was 105 degrees on the June afternoon I arrived at Camp Pulaski, the base Arthur set up near Picture Rocks, a Tucson suburb, from which to launch his new mission: intercepting sex traffickers coming from the southern border. In the early mornings and after nightfall, the camp’s residents patrol on foot and in ATVs, trucks and jeeps. “If they want to come into our backyard,” Arthur declared via livestream, “we’ll give them a fight.”

Camp Pulaski consisted of a couple of large tarp structures and five or six camping tents clustered almost a mile off of a county road. A large map of the Sonoran Desert hung in one tent, with push pins marking the locations of additional camps Arthur said he’d established. That afternoon, I did what everyone else was doing: I sat in a folding chair, drank water and asked people why they’d come.

I sat next to a 70-year-old woman from Colorado Springs, who wore peach lipstick and cowboy boots. In between bites of Starkist tuna, she told me she’d heard about the mission on Facebook and

Please see *Conspiracy*, page 22

▲ Veterans on Patrol volunteers David Armstrong, Tim and Quoin (the only names they would share) crawl under a barbed-wire fence during a hike through the desert. During the search exercise, members of the group crossed private property.

▲ Veterans on Patrol volunteers David Armstrong and Nick Patterson look at maps on a smartphone while planning a scouting mission at the group’s camp in the desert. Both men had come from Melbourne, Australia, to help VOP fight against alleged child and sex trafficking.

THE LATEST

Backstory

Each year, up to 1 million migratory birds perish in oilfield wastewater pits. Others fly into transmission lines or windmills, get entangled in fishing equipment or hit communications towers. Previously, such deaths were punishable under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which motivated industries to develop bird-friendlier practices. **But last year, the Interior Department announced that only intentional killings, such as poaching, are illegal without a permit.**

Critics now worry that industries no longer have an incentive to protect birds ("Interior cancels decades-old protections for migratory birds," *HCN*, 1/26/18).

Followup

In September, eight states, including California, Oregon and New Mexico, sued the Interior Department. They cited the many benefits states gain from migratory birds, including the millions of dollars each year that birdwatchers and bird-hunting licenses bring to their economies, as well as birds' cultural and ecological value. They also noted that because the federal government is no longer collecting information about bird deaths, officials are deprived of essential information for managing migratory bird populations.

MAYA L. KAPOOR



The rough-legged hawk migrates between the Northern U.S. and the Arctic tundra.



The 52nd Navajo Police Training Academy class celebrates graduation in Chinle this June. NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

A revival for the Navajo Nation's police force

Despite continuous underfunding, a new academy is training cadets to protect the nation on its own terms

BY ELENA SAAVEDRA BUCKLEY

In her second month as a police officer, 40-year-old Marinda Singer drove a Navajo Police Department SUV out to Asaayi Lake, an hour north of Window Rock, Arizona, in search of a black Chevy pickup stuck in mud.

Elroy Naswood, her field training officer and former elementary school classmate, rode in the passenger's seat. Two open Coke cans sat between them, sizzling in their cup holders. The road Singer followed, flush with the New Mexico-Arizona border, cut through great patches of yellow wildflowers.

Dispatch in Window Rock said the pickup driver sounded intoxicated. The situation seemed tame, but Singer still felt on edge.

"The call could be totally something other than what we're given," she said, looking out at the one-lane road from under the brim of a black department cap. Singer generally keeps her expectations loose. On her first day, she pursued a reckless driver, followed the car into a ditch, and drew her weapon, her mind racing through the training she finished only a week before.

In late June, Singer was one of 12 officers, including five other women, in Class 52, the first graduating class of the newly reopened Navajo Police Training Academy. Out of the more than 200 tribal police forces in the United States, the Navajo Nation's is the largest, and it's the

only one that trains its own officers.

For nearly a decade, though, there was no academy. After the last police chief stepped down in 2008, the old facility dwindled and closed. The department began sending occasional recruits to train in Phoenix or Tucson, but many dropped out, and those who did graduate came back without training in Navajo law.

But after the department hired a new police chief in 2016, it pooled funds to open the new academy: two doublewide trailers surrounded by chain-link fence in the shadow of a correctional facility in Chinle, Arizona. The new cadets shore up the 199 officers who currently patrol the reservation, where each officer monitors more than 100 square miles.

Class 52 will help the Navajo Police Department cover its vast territory. Already, the academy staff is training its next class and recruiting another. If Singer, her fellow cadets and future officers stick with it, the department will be able to serve — and protect — the Navajo Nation on its own terms.

But that's only if officers can find who calls them. After Singer drove an hour and a half to Asaayi Lake and patrolled its edges, there was no sign of the stranded truck. Naswood clicked his tongue, and Singer was disappointed.

"We should have brought our fishing poles," she said.

In Chief Phillip Francisco's office in Window Rock, maps of the Navajo Nation hang on the walls. The police

department's seven districts jigsaw across a territory larger than West Virginia. Officers have to master some of the most complicated jurisdiction details of any force in the nation: Along with Navajo law, they must know Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and federal laws. On another wall, there's a to-do list — 36 items in red Sharpie on a giant easel pad. No matter where he sits, Francisco is reminded of unpatrolled areas and unfinished tasks.

Francisco knew about the Navajo Police Department's problems while he worked at different departments in San Juan County, New Mexico, which overlaps with the reservation. In 2005, the Navajo Police Department had over 350 employees, bringing it close to national averages for police-population ratios — about one police officer for every 418 people, according to FBI data. But after the previous chief stepped down, the department lost structure. The department couldn't afford a competitive salary for a replacement, and candidates stopped applying. The old academy in Toyey, Arizona, eventually shuttered. Captains rotated through the role of acting police chief, and a number of officers left for other agencies near the reservation. Reopening the academy took a back seat to simply keeping the department running.

"For a long time, I think, we were the black eye," Francisco said. He started work in August 2016, and re-opening the academy was one of the first items on the to-do list, followed by purchasing body

Please see Navajo Police, page 24

Elena Saavedra Buckley is an editorial intern at *High Country News*. @elenasb

Photo contest winners

Show us your solace

These are complicated times, with news and headlines that can feel overwhelming. That's why we dedicated this year's photo contest to the people, places and animals of the West that help you find solace. Readers submitted more than 160 photos filled with light, solitude, creatures and vistas, providing a much-needed respite. To see more reader and editor favorites, visit: hcne.ws/2018photos

◀ **Reader's Choice: Heart's Home**

The photographer captures a scene while packing into the Lizard Head Wilderness in Colorado. SARA GOODNICK

▼ **Editor's Choice: Lewis Lakes**

Jess Reilly and Mark Howe hiking in Bridal Veil Basin in the Lewis Lakes area, Telluride, Colorado.

WHIT RICHARDSON



▲ **Runner Up: Canyon church light**

The photographer hikes down the Paria River on a BLM trip near Kanab, Utah, with Ursula Hermasinski. MICHAEL BYE



◀ **Runner Up: Lake McDonald**

The photographer traveled to Glacier National Park, Montana, to capture the northern lights. Though she didn't see any aurora that night, she did capture this photo of the rental row boats docked for the night.

DEBBIE SCHWARTZNAU



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◀ ◀ The Smith is California's largest undammed river and its sole remaining salmon stronghold. Here, the Middle Fork rips through Oregon Hole Gorge, exposing the complex geology of the once-undersea Franciscan Formation.

◀ The Rio Grande begins in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and, after a nearly total diversion, enters New Mexico, where nourishing spring flows resupply the wild and scenic section. One of the more remarkable road-accessible canyon views in America is seen here from the Highway 64 bridge over the Taos Box. TIM PALMER

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS: AN AMERICAN LEGACY

Tim Palmer.

256 pages, hardcover: \$45

Oregon State University Press, 2017.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act — a historic decision to preserve rivers of special recreational, scenic and cultural value. Through this law, over 13,000 miles of rivers and streams have been protected. In *Wild and Scenic Rivers: An American Legacy*, author and photographer Tim Palmer makes the case for protecting yet more sections of the nation's approximately 2.9 million miles of natural waterways.

Palmer's photography and prose provide a timely look at rivers and ecosystems that have been preserved over the years, reminding readers of what can be accomplished when a country makes a shared commitment to protect its natural heritage. Former President Jimmy Carter, who was involved in the program's creation, lauds Palmer's book as a great contribution to America. He writes, "I'm grateful that the legacy of all who have worked to protect these rivers will be known and appreciated."

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Ushering in fall

The leaves are changing color in Colorado, the air is crisp, and — overnight, it seems — fall has arrived. For a lot of folks in the mountain West, this is leaf-peeping season, with the aspen and scrub oak in full yellow and red regalia. For *High Country News*, this fall meant a board meeting in Gunnison, Colorado, where we approved our biggest budget ever and began planning for a huge celebration in 2020, when *HCN* turns 50. Though everyone tells us we still look good for our age. ...

To celebrate the September equinox, *High Country News* staffers — Assistant Editor **Paige Blankenbuehler**; Associate Photo Editor **Luna Anna Archey**, Editorial Fellow **Jessica Kutz** and Editorial Intern **Elena Saavedra Buckley** — made flower crowns and danced in the streets of Crested Butte, Colorado, to the beat of the Vinotok Fall Harvest Festival.

Meanwhile, Paonia, Colorado, where our headquarters are located, enjoyed its own Harvest Fest. Executive Director **Paul Larmer** took one of his many side talents into the open, exhibiting his photographs of the nearby Adobe Hills, the dune-like land formations he has been photographing for years. And copy editor **Diane Sylvain** had to copy-edit herself, in order to read an essay at the annual "Harvest of Voices."

The staff has been busy sprucing up the Paonia office with new paint and carpet, while holding a bittersweet party for the retirement of **Christine List**, our outstanding

development assistant. We'll miss you, Chris!

Our Los Angeles-based contributing editor, **Ruxandra Guidi**, has produced a podcast titled *South of Fletcher*. This six-part series follows the transformation of an old railroad yard in Los Angeles into California's next urban state park. Rux delves into all the challenges that come with bringing a park into an urban space, including gentrification, urban change, homelessness and land use. Listen to it wherever you get your podcasts. You can also catch Rux moderating a live panel, "A New Home, The Effects of Migration," on Oct. 18 at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles.

Associate Editor **Maya Kapoor** traveled to Austin, Texas, in September to hone her science editing skills at a workshop hosted by the Kavli and Knight foundations. Maya received instruction from our own board member, **Laura Helmuth**, who talked about finding and editing science stories.

In the midst of this bustle, we've also had some visitors. **Molly and Antonio Manzanares** came by the Paonia office, recalling that they were featured in an *HCN* in 1995, in a story called "In the heart of the New West, the sheep win one." **Mark and Linda Giesecke**, from Carbondale, Colorado, stopped by while touring local vineyards. **Laura Fowler and Gregory Nelson**, who both work for Coconino County, Arizona, took a tour (and some photos) of our offices while they were in town.

—*Jessica Kutz for the staff*



Split Orchard: where the wild meets the temporarily tamed. Taken just outside Paonia, Colorado. PAUL LARMER/HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

N A T U R E

Can an entire town move back from the sea?

At the start of each year, Southern California gets a glimpse into a future of rising seas, through an annual event called the king tide. On that day, the sun, moon and Earth align to create a heavy gravitational pull, leading to the highest tides of the year. If “king tide” sounds ominous, that’s because it is, particularly for a city like Imperial Beach, a small coastal town near the Mexican border surrounded by water on three sides: San Diego Bay to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Tijuana River Delta to the south.

In 2010, a powerful El Niño storm hurled the king tide over Imperial Beach’s sand berms and onto Seacoast Drive, where the city’s higher-priced condos are located. In 2015, another El Niño year, the king tide raised the surf from 3 to 7 feet, tearing sand away from the beach and flooding the city with salt water that soaked the streets for days.

Currently an anomaly, the king tide is a portent of things to come. Researchers warn that, due to myriad factors including the Earth’s rotation, California will deal with even higher sea-level rise than other locations, as the atmosphere and oceans warm. The oceans are now rising at a faster rate than any time since the last Ice Age, about half an inch or more per decade. While much of this is understood by researchers and informed readers, very little has been done by coastal cities to confront this slow-moving catastrophe. That is what makes Imperial Beach so interesting. Here, at the southernmost beach town in California, in an obscure corner of the United States, one small city is asking: What if we just got out of nature’s way?

IMPERIAL BEACH WAS FOUNDED IN 1887, as a summertime haven of cooler weather for California farmers, laborers and landowners. Today, it has more than 26,000 people, about half of them Latinos, living on a postage stamp of 4.5 square miles. In winter, it’s a surfer town, where wave-riders take advantage of Pacific swells that push against a long stretch of uncrowded beach and produce long, unfurling right- and left-hand breaks.

On a chilly, windy morning last January, after the night’s fog had lifted, I visited Imperial Beach, joining about 20 people for a tour of the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve at the southern edge of town. It was king tide, and I wanted to see for myself what rising seas might bring to California 50 years from now. Like many pockets of nature on California’s coast, the reserve was a respite from freeways, traffic and high-rises. A dirt path snaked through wild buckwheat and broom baccharis along a salt marsh, where two great egrets flew gracefully to their nests. About 350 different bird species live or pass through the estuary, where the Tijuana River meets the Pacific.

Our walk ended at the edge of the estuary, on Seacoast Drive. Up and down the street, condominiums were posted for sale, with prices ranging from \$600,000 to well above \$1 million. At the end of the street, however, where the rising tide was starting to flood by a few inches, the prices had been reduced. (In 30 to 50 years, about 90 percent of Seacoast Drive will be under water.) By 9 a.m., the tide had risen to about 8.5 inches, covering the desert saltgrass to its tips; the year before, it had risen a foot, swallowing the estuary path. A public works employee appeared and began sweeping the pooling water down the street to a culvert.



RETREAT

A few minutes later, the mayor arrived. At almost 6-and-a-half-feet tall, 54-year-old Serge Dedina cut an unconventional figure for a small-town public official: His hair was bleached blond by the sun, and he sported a casual pair of jeans and sneakers. He shook my hand, wishing me a happy new year before switching gears to talk about flooding.

"Fortunately, this year is not as bad as the last one," he told me, staring at the puddles of encroaching seawater. He scrolled through his smartphone, producing a photo of a very flooded Seacoast Drive, taken the year before and from the same perspective. "And definitely, it's not as bad now as when we had El Niño."

A former lifeguard and lifelong surfer, Dedina has been concerned about climate change since the 1980s, when he first heard the term in graduate school, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As a teenager, Dedina led a homegrown group of surfers to campaign against a breakwater that would have drastically changed the coast along Imperial Beach. Soon after, he joined the effort to keep this very estuary from becoming a marina — a fight for an open natural ecosystem that would prove crucial to the future of the city.

Before becoming mayor in 2014, Dedina led a local nonprofit called Wildcoast, of which he remains the executive director. Wildcoast is a bi-national organization that helps establish and manage protected areas in the U.S. and Mexico. In Imperial Beach, Dedina is renowned for his targeted activism, as well as for building successful partnerships across the two countries to pressure the Mexican government to protect the San Lorenzo Marine Archipelago National Park and the San Ignacio

Lagoon, a gray whale breeding zone. But Dedina was facing a completely different challenge now. He wanted the people of Imperial Beach to confront the reality of sea-level rise head-on.

He had only been in office a year the last time El Niño hit, in 2015, but, sensing an opportunity to get locals engaged in climate change and its impacts, he called for a public meeting. His office circulated a flier, encouraging people to "take a leadership role by helping your community address coastal flooding issues." Around 400 residents, including city staff, attended the meeting inside the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. People wanted to know how their city was preparing for the next El Niño, and, more importantly, what they could do in the event of even bigger waves and rising seas. They knew from king tides past what rising waters can do, but they were in for a harsh lesson. Depending on how well humanity does at slowing global warming, researchers predict sea levels will rise between 1.6 feet and 6.5 feet globally over the next century. By the time they left the meeting, residents had learned that about a third of Imperial Beach could be underwater in as little as 50 years.

"It was a wake-up call," Dedina told me. "The reality is, it's not easy to get people to think about what's going to happen in 100 years. But we did learn that the way to frame that discussion is through coastal flooding, because it's less abstract and there are practical things you can do to address it."

Broadly speaking, though, those practical things are limited. According to the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association, or SPUR, a city can undertake one of several strategies: Build a barrier, armor the coast with levees

A day before the January 2018 king tide, waves break in front of condos along Imperial Beach's shoreline. Imperial Beach is one of the very few California coastal communities that is considering a managed retreat to address rising sea levels.



▲ During the January 2018 king tide, a city employee uses a broom to push water towards the drain at the end of Imperial Beach's Seacoast Drive. Flanked by the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Tijuana River Estuary on the other, this section of the street typically sees some of the worst flooding in the city during high tide events.

► Imperial Beach Mayor Serge Dedina watches the waves during the last light of the day on a cool evening in December 2017. As a lifelong resident, surfer and environmentalist, Mayor Dedina is intimately connected to this part of Southern California and acutely aware of how climate change is already impacting it.



and seawalls, elevate land, create “living shorelines” to absorb flooding and slow erosion, or retreat. This last strategy, “managed retreat,” SPUR warns, “is a political quagmire. It involves tremendous legal and equity issues, because not all property owners are willing sellers. And in many places, shoreline communities are already disadvantaged and lack the adaptive capacity to relocate.”

It is into this quagmire that Dedina has decided to wade.

OTHER CITIES HAVE PROVEN UNWILLING to take on the idea of managed retreat, mostly because the very mention of it can tank real estate prices. Besides, there are alternatives. A favorite in California is sand replenishment, where sand is added to a beach as a buffer against rising tides, erosion and other natural forces. Six years ago, Imperial Beach added 300,000 cubic yards of large-grain sand across four miles of beachfront. But the practice has many critics: Waves, tides and currents can wash the sand away, and what remains can damage or destroy ecosystems. Surfers hate it because it alters breaks — and, indeed, Imperial Beach has seen fewer surfers since it added sand. “Sand replenishment is lame,” a surfer named Brian Valdez told me when I caught up with him after a morning session. “But I bet it’ll be impossible to find a

Please see Imperial Beach, page 19

Ed Marston's fierce love transformed the West

It wasn't until late in his 1995 fellowship that Rick Keister summoned the courage to step into Ed Marston's office. Keister, a former Interior Department staffer, chafed at the headline the longtime publisher of *High Country News* had attached to his story on the Newt Gingrich-led House of Representatives. "U.S. House to the Environment: Drop Dead" was too harsh, he thought, but he hesitated at the door.

"I finally went in with my arms crossed," Keister recalled recently, "and Ed walked over to me and uncrossed them. Then, after listening to me, he said, 'You need to stand up for what you think.' " Ed changed the headline to "U.S. Congress to the Environment: Die."

"I felt strangely as if I had achieved something," Keister said.

Keister's experience was not unusual for anyone who worked with Ed Marston, who died in August. Just spending time around Ed left people feeling strangely affected by his probing, infinitely curious mind. The former physics professor — who moved from New York City to western Colorado with his wife, Betsy, in the early 1970s and became publisher of *HCN* (with Betsy as editor) in 1983 — loved to test his ideas against all comers and see whatever shook out. He was a great counter-puncher, ducking under hooks to deliver unexpected body blows.

And, no doubt, he was a headline wizard. In 1997, Ed sent me to southern Utah to cover the brand-new Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, created by President Bill Clinton. I returned with dozens of bitter quotes from the small, largely Mormon communities around the 1.8 million-acre monument (which President Donald Trump is trying to reduce by almost half). Yet I lacked a clear understanding of the story. Then Ed came up with the headline: "Beauty and the Beast: The president's new monument forces southern Utah to face its tourism future." Of course! That was it all along.

When Ed started running *High Country News*, he had no intention of creating an institution. On numerous occasions, he said, "I just wanted to write." But even more than that, he yearned to do intellectual battle with the other people and institutions shaping the modern-day West. His writings, a selection of which we've reprinted on page 18, still bristle with contentious eloquence.

And he did create an institution, despite himself. Former board member Mike Clark remembered, "In his first board meeting, he showed up with ... only one piece of paper — a crumpled sheet that contained his draft budget for the next year. He hoarded that single page of financial data and only reluctantly surrendered its details and implications." The board was outraged, Clarks wrote in *Mountain Journal*, "but Ed ... was a quick study and by the next board meeting he met our needs with ample plans, budgets and papers. We began a mutual exploration of what a small regional print newspaper could do in covering communities across the vastness of the West."

Over the next two decades, Ed and Betsy and a small team of employees built *HCN* from a shaky operation with 3,000 subscribers, to a solid organization with 20,000 subscribers, and a website and syndication service reaching hundreds of thousands more. What drove the growth were the stories — investigations of the West's overused river systems, its hamstrung and ineffective land agencies, the beleaguered rural communities still reeling from the demise of extractive industries or the invasion of



MICHAEL BRANDS

wealthy recreationists. *HCN* won national awards, and, in 1990, Ed and Betsy were profiled in *Rolling Stone*, *People* magazine and a dozen other national, regional and local outlets. The nerds from New York were suddenly New West chic!

Because the Marstons were not card-carrying environmentalists, *HCN* published stories the conservation community might not have wanted but needed to hear — stories about its own arrogance and occasional over-reach. Ed's late-career dive into progressive ranching raised the hackles of some activists. But it also made them realize the need to reach out to unlikely allies to achieve lasting reform. That's an insight needed more than ever today.

When I took on Ed's job in 2002, I did not attempt to fill his shoes. Who could? But I did try to retain the DNA he and Betsy infused into *HCN* — a commitment to deep thinking, surprising storytelling and unwavering service to the readers who fund this whole shebang. Ed was a gracious publisher emeritus, giving me, and a new generation of journalists, the space to create anew, even as we occasionally fell on our faces. He stayed in Paonia, and Betsy continued to work. But over the last couple of years, our coffee meetings veered away from *HCN* and issues to more personal topics — the importance of friends and family, and the amazing, often humbling things we learn about ourselves and the world as time goes by.

I've struggled to come up with a headline right for Ed. Former Editor Lisa Jones came close when she wrote around Ed's retirement in 2002: "Ed Marston to the West: Grow up!" Two of my favorites are attached to essays laced with his sardonic humor: "If politics is a baseball game, I don't even own a bat," and "In the New West, we are all tourists."

You were never just a tourist, Ed, and your fierce love imbued your bat, borrowed or not, with extraordinary power. Thank you.

—Paul Larmer, executive director and publisher

Ed Marston remembered

Edwin "Ed" Marston, a physicist turned environmental journalist and political organizer, died Aug. 31 in Grand Junction, Colorado, of complications of West Nile virus. He was 78 years old. He is survived by his wife and working partner, Betsy Marston, of Paonia, Colorado, two children and three grandchildren.

Ed became publisher of *High Country News* in 1983, and during his 19 years with the publication, he wrote and published pieces that helped define not only the American West, but also shaped many journalists, Western residents and others who encountered him. Some of their remembrances are here. Read more at hcne.ws/ed-marston.

Ed grew up in a New York City immigrant household that was so short of money, for years he and his sister and his father and mother slept in the same bedroom. In such a crowded home, he developed a love for conversation, spoken and written. He continued to enjoy conversation with everybody he met. He understood that all of us are sharing a single room, and we better get along as best we can.

—Ray Ring, author and former *HCN* senior editor

I knew Ed during his years at Ramapo College, New Jersey. He was an outstanding teacher, and he helped develop our physics major. He was respected by his faculty colleagues and his students for his deep interest in environmental issues.

—Edward Saiff, dean, School of Theoretical and Applied Science, Ramapo College of New Jersey

I had heard a lot about Ed Marston prior to arriving on the job as forest supervisor for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. Many branded him as an unrelenting critic of the Forest Service. What I discovered, however, was a man who, above all, loved tall mountains, clear rivers, scenic vistas, a good hike, and the complex ecosystems that are our national forests. We debated often — and without filters — about how the Forest Service could better provide natural resource protection while remaining a

vital partner in the social and economic fabric of Colorado's Western Slope. While we never came to total agreement on how to implement the agency's complex mission, we definitely had fun trying! As agencies continue to adapt to the many competing demands on our wild lands, we can only hope that others will follow in the footsteps of Ed Marston.

—Charlie Richmond, national director of rangeland management and vegetation ecology, U.S. Forest Service

I was cleaning condos in Snowmass, Colorado, driving to work every day over McClure Pass, when Ed Marston offered me a job. We met at Paonia's coffee shop. He entered the place eyebrows first and glided over to me with his characteristic light-footed gait. "Have Western land grants evolved with the times?" he asked. "Are they living up to their mandate to protect rural Western communities even as the frontier has disappeared and fewer and fewer Westerners work the land?" He'd written his ideas down in a one-page letter to the Ford Foundation, and they'd given him a grant to investigate the matter. It was two and a half years of work, Ed said. Health insurance. Bye-bye condos. I jumped in. Some land grant universities may have fallen down on sustaining the communities they were mandated to help. But not Betsy. Not Ed.

—Lisa Jones, author and former *HCN* reporter

What Ed and Betsy built at *HCN* has changed the way people think about and report on the West. I see his spirit of deeper interest in the complexity of the region in stories in *Outside*, *Sierra* and even sometimes *The New York Times*.

—Sean Patrick Farrell, former *HCN* intern and staff video producer for *WIRED*

Ed taught me that perhaps the most important quality of all, for a journalist, is compassion. I remember a talking-to he gave me when I disparaged a local farmer: "Do you know how much a farmer has to understand about business, about the land, about markets?" We always said that Ed saw the West from 20,000 feet, but his vision was grounded in the stories of countless individuals. "It's a ballgame," Ed told me once. "Every day, you go out there and you play your heart out. You do the very best that you can. And sometimes you win. Often you don't. But either way, tomorrow there's going to be another game." Without the kind of journalism that the Marstons taught us to practice, we would not understand ourselves, our communities, or the places we love. We would lack the kind of vision that Ed knew we needed to function as a society and a democracy, the kind of vision you can only get by talking to people — and listening.

—Greg Hanscom, former *HCN* editor and executive editor of *Crosscut* and KCTS 9 public television

Ed was a towering figure in the West. We are all far better people for having known him. And the lands, waters, communities and people of the West are far better for Ed's passion and wisdom.

He will be sorely missed, even as he continues to inspire our work.

—Liz Storer and Luther Propst, conservationists and former board member (Luther)

I loved Ed like a brother — with all the uncomfortable implications. We worked some things out through passionate discourse, to put it a little euphemistically. But he left me — and all of us who think on it — with a lot of articulation and some forward action on three great challenges for the 21st century: (1) Make our energy lives renewable and sustainable; (2) fix the mistakes of the 20th century (in land and water restoration); and (3) work from the ground up. Don't wait for the feds to do it.

—George Sibley, writer and teacher

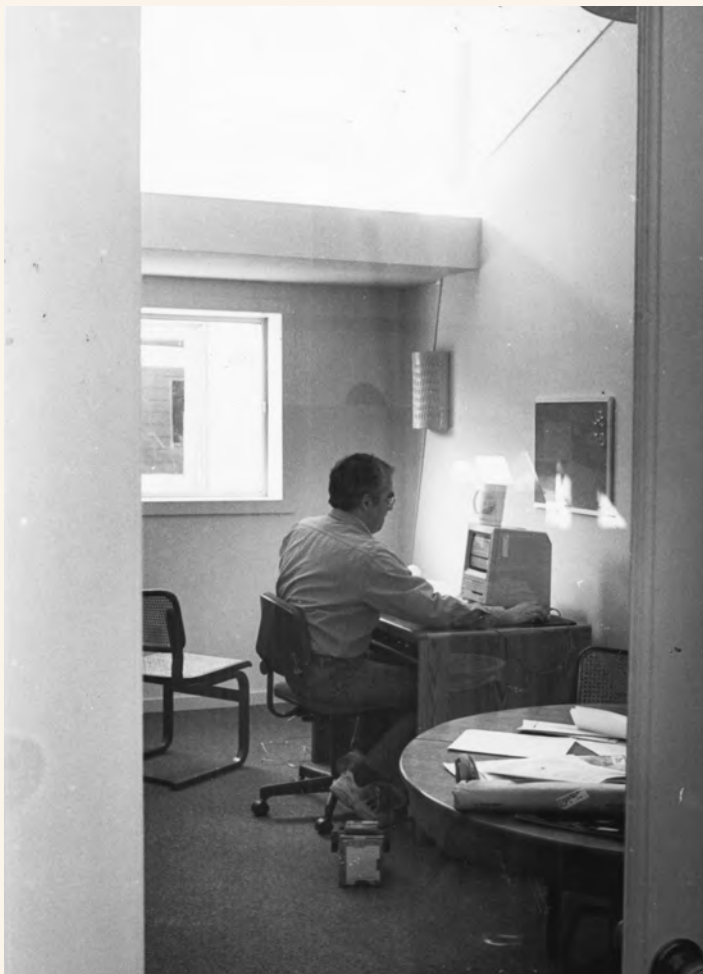
We invited Ed to be the inspirational speaker at the Citizen Alert board retreat in Baker, Nevada, in 1988. I still remember him talking about how we must stop romanticizing the rural West. He said it was one of the most dangerous places in the country, and cited statistics on accidental deaths, suicide, drug abuse and domestic violence. He told us to have a more accurate and honest conversation about it, and to cease thinking about the West as an idyllic place or playground. The last time I saw Ed was a very chance encounter when I was hiking outside Paonia, and came upon him and Betsy alongside the trail. I had lost my water bottle. Ed offered me his.

—Bob Fulkerson, *HCN* board member and executive director, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

In 2003 or 2004, my wife, Stephanie, was in Washington, D.C., for a meeting. She was waiting for an airport shuttle when she looked up and saw turkey vultures soaring overhead. She pointed them out to the man next to her, who introduced himself as Ed Marston. When she came home, she told me about meeting Ed, and I was as excited as if she had met Edward Abbey.

—Daniel Gossett, biologist, National Wildlife Research Center

I often still think about Ed Marston's reply to the first story that I pitched to him as a freelance writer in the late 1980s. I had visited an armed encampment in Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico, where Amador Flores and his supporters had occupied land they claimed was rightfully theirs under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Ed wrote back to tell me he wasn't interested in "dead-end standoffs." He asked if there was anything else going on that might reveal what was happening in the community and on the land. And, indeed, there was. The focus of my story shifted to Ganados del Valle, a nonprofit dedicated to revitalizing sheep-herding and wool-weaving traditions to create viable business opportunities for Hispanic communities in northern New Mexico, and, in the process, re-establish a livelihood based on the surrounding public lands. In a land full of regular, re-occurring, dead-end standoffs, I never forgot Ed's interest in learning what else was happening that might help us better understand



CINDY WEHLING

Ed in his office after moving into the new building in 1992.

how people, families, communities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, advocates, rabblers, government and the environment were all changing around each other in our own lifetimes in the American West.

—Jon Christensen, former *HCN* editor and now with the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability

Ed represented the best of old-fashioned journalism. He always did his homework, and avoided the extreme slashing-and-bashing hyperbole of outfits like Fox News and MSNBC. And his dialogue was always thoughtfully reasoned. That did not prevent him, however, from occasionally producing a thundering "Ed"itorial, where he took people or issues to task when it was called for. Ed, they don't make them like you anymore. Give 'em hell up there ... or at least teach courses in responsible, tempered journalism.

—Andy Wiessner, *HCN* board member

Together, Betsy and Ed turned *HCN* into a force for making the West a better place. I think what often goes unappreciated is how much they both did to create a generation of topnotch journalists and thinkers who work not only in the West but far beyond. Just off the top of my head, I can think of *HCN* alumni who are doing great work at the *Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Outside*, the *L.A. Times* and the *Salt Lake Tribune*, to say nothing of lots of local publications. In a world where good journalism is truly imperiled, that by itself counts as a solid lifetime achievement.

—Matt Jenkins, former *HCN* editor and senior editor, The Nature Conservancy

When we first met Ed and Betsy decades ago, they asked us if we knew the name of that strange animal they'd seen in Wyoming's Red Desert. It was a pronghorn, and we wondered if *High Country News* was in the right hands with these Eastern dudes. But they proved themselves more than up to the task and the right ones for the job in so many ways, growing the circulation and racking up well-deserved awards, friends, and critics. The West has lost a true champion.

—Bruce and Joan Hamilton, former *HCN* editors

Ed chortled and exhorted me to bring assertiveness and authority to my writing. Tell me something we don't know, he'd say. Why does this story matter? At my wedding, Ed made a toast: "My name is Ed Marston, and I work for Florence." In fact, Ed worked for all of us. He worked on our behalf. He worked to make us better writers, and more rigorous thinkers, to make us less ideological and more humane, to care about communities and people and not just iconic landscapes. He taught us to think about institutions and social structures and the future of civility. I don't think we — or the West — always lived up to his expectations, but he never got bitter. He just got more thoughtful, and he inspired us to be that way, too.

—Florence Williams, *HCN* board member and author



Pictured from top: *HCN* gets its first Macintosh computers, c. 1989; staffers Florence Williams, Steve Hinchman and Lisa Jones, 1991; Greg Hanscom and JT Thomas hang a new *HCN* sign, 1998; An early 1990s mail crew included Charles Wilkinson, far left, Paul Larmer and Ray Ring, center, and Ed, among other *HCN* staffers and interns. HCN FILES

Jon Christensen unloads a stack of the Great Basin special issue he edited in 1995.



ED KOSMICKI

Betsy and Ed Marston, partners in work and in life, pictured with stacks of back issues of *High Country News* for a 1999 *Denver Post* profile.

Ed Marston's American West

Yes, we need the rural West

BY ED MARSTON | April 24, 2000

Hal Rothman is normally a very cool guy — a history professor fascinated by the culture and economy of his hometown of Las Vegas. But he recently went to a conference about the rural Northern Rockies, and after sitting through a stream of talks about the wonders of living in the place, he wrote an essay which said in part:

"I always cringe when people from the rural West tell the rest of us how to live ... (as if) the 95 percent of us who live in Western cities somehow don't matter."

In truth, he said, it's the rural people who don't matter. We're welfare crybabies, soaking up subsidies

to keep our toy economies — ranching, mining, logging — going. He offered to pay ranchers an annual subsidy so "they can pretend to ranch and farm ... but no water will come out." Water won't come out because it will be in Las Vegas, where Rothman says it can do some economic good.

He's right about the arrogance. Those of us who moved to small towns in the West from cities (I came from New York in 1974) can be insufferable about our good fortune. We moved just when small Western towns were in transition from a stultifying rural past, which had caused most rural children to flee to cities, to an urban future.

And for this small moment in time, we have it pretty good, even as we shudder at what might be coming.

He's also right that the Old West was subsidized. If he were an environmentalist, he could add that the Old West was especially subsidized by nature, which gave up its soil, its rivers, its salmon, and its forests.

But he is wrong to now consign the West to the trash heap of history, or to think Las Vegas can buy us off. He tells us that Las Vegas is a thriving, creative place, with a population that is attempting to build a strong society behind the glitzy, garish face it presents to us gullible visitors. But he doesn't understand that we are doing the same thing behind the slow-moving, rural-hick face we present to visitors.

Everyone here knows that our traditional economies and customs and cultures are over. Some of us don't admit what we know, so this is an angry, divided place at the moment, but that will pass. We also all know that we need new economic engines and new ways of relating to the land and its wildlife. Because without the land and

its wildlife, the rural West is nothing.

High Country News prints its share of obituaries about the Old West: how Plum Creek slaughters forests; how W.R. Grace slaughtered miners at its vermiculite mine in Libby, Mont.; and how dams slaughter salmon in the Columbia River.

Obituaries used to dominate the paper. But today it's mostly birth announcements. The first one we printed was in 1992, about a group of ranchers in central Oregon that was learning to produce healthy organic beef off healthy public and private grasslands. Today, this group is thriving economically and ecologically, providing food to upscale organic markets and restaurants in the Bay Area and the Pacific Northwest.

More recently, we wrote about California's Mono Lake, and how inner city people from LA worked to conserve so that water could be left in Mono Lake. We wrote about the devastated ponderosa pine forest around Flagstaff, Arizona. The forest was originally made up of a dozen or so immense trees per acre. After those trees were cut and milled, millions of sickly, crowded trees grew up, presenting a fire hazard to Flagstaff. So urban and rural people are working together to thin the trees so that a large, healthy, fireproof forest will come back.

I could go on because the main force in the rural West today is restoration. But restoring a healthy landscape requires a healthy, creative and prosperous rural society. So in addition to missing the fact that the rural land and rivers are alive and must be tended, Rothman also misses the struggle we are in to transform rural society so it will be capable of recovering the land.

It is here that we need urban help. It is no accident that all the examples I listed are about urban-rural cooperation. The Oregon ranchers need urban markets. Mono Lake needs water conservation in LA. The forest around Flagstaff needs the impetus of urban concern over fire dangers.

Here's a final example that should be near and dear to Rothman. Utah and the federal government have come together to move a mountain of radioactive mine tailings away from the Colorado River, just outside of the small town of Moab. Rothman and Las Vegas sit downstream of Moab, drinking water that is now polluted by that radioactive waste.

If he cares about Las Vegas, then he must also care about rural Utah, for his health and that of the city he promotes depend on the ability of the Moabs of the West to restore what is now a plundered land. ■



Ed Marston went head-to-head with historian Hal Rothman in *High Country News*' April 24, 2000, edition.



Some of the issues — including the first one produced by the Marstons in Paonia, top (HCN, 9/5/83) — featuring Ed Marston's writings. See more at hcne.ws/ed-marston-articles.



A group of surfers checks out the swell before deciding to grab their boards for a late afternoon session last fall.

Imperial Beach, continued from page 14

California beach without it in the future.”

Dedina does not see a future in sand. His city, he believes, will have to do what was once unthinkable: It will have to retreat. Managed retreat represents a planned move away from the coast, allowing the beach to erode for the forces of nature to take over. This, of course, is a gargantuan task. How does a city take all the homes and businesses along its coast and relocate them inland? It has never been done in the Western U.S. before, certainly not on the scale that would be needed — even for a city as small as Imperial Beach.

“This is all new to us,” Dedina said, as we chatted one day in his office. He showed me what a retreat looked like on a map: a ribbon of color, one to three city blocks deep, that covered Imperial Beach’s entire coast. “Cities are inherently very conservative places, but we decided that it would be unwise to be conservative in this situation,” he said. “Our only future lies in being innovative and taking risks, because the risk of not taking a risk is very great.”

When Dedina came into office, he sought foundation and state money to pay for Imperial Beach’s climate action plan. With help from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, Dedina was able to identify how managed retreat might play out: Seashore developments would need to relocate three blocks inland, while the city as a whole would need to create more density or rebuild some structures, roads and larger infrastructure, including storm-drain basins and schools.

Imperial Beach’s current coastal plan doesn’t take into account findings from a 2016 study that projects how much the sea will rise over time. The city is hoping to update its coastal plan, with input from the community.

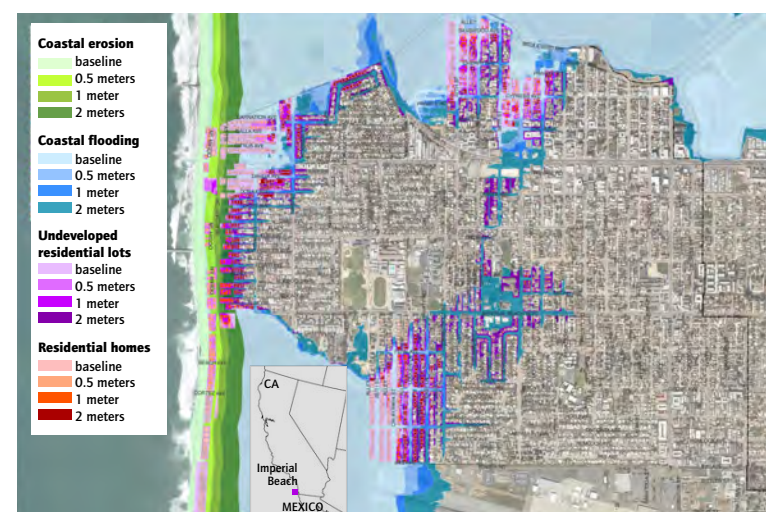
The adaptation measure isn’t solely Dedina’s idea. Over the past decade, it’s become an important statewide initiative, championed by the California Coastal Commission and the Surfrider Foundation, which have been proposing state laws and coastal development policies designed to make owning and maintaining vulnerable oceanfront properties cost-prohibitive. Some of those new policies ban all new development within 80 or 90 feet of a bluff’s edge, waive a city’s right to build seawalls, and allow public access to open beaches over private coastal property.

What comes next, however, is still something of a mystery. With a city budget of \$19 million, Imperial Beach simply can’t afford to move. A retreat of three blocks would cost upwards of \$150 million. Still, Dedina’s decision is straight-up revolutionary. It goes directly against the American principle of preserving private property at all costs, especially along the beachfront, where homes can be worth twice as much as their landlocked counterparts. It also represents an unusually humble response to the forces of nature, one that admits that we need to deal with the impacts of climate change, to quit fighting the surging waves that we ourselves unleashed.

IMPERIAL BEACH IS UNUSUAL for California, and not just because of its conservationist-surfer mayor. It lacks the typical tourist traps, the piers with carnival rides and fancy beachfront

restaurants. The properties facing its beaches are nowhere near as glitzy as wealthy beachfront communities like Malibu or Pacific Grove, which have invested heavily in expensive seawalls and offshore breakwaters. Seventy-one percent of Imperial Beach residents are renters, and one out of every five locals lives in poverty, even along the coast. The city lacks the estimated \$100 million in taxpayer dollars that it would cost to try to prevent coastal erosion with the help of more berms and sand replenishment projects.

By facing the prospect of retreat, Imperial Beach is not just setting itself apart from other California seaside communities — it is challenging them. In May, Del Mar, 30 miles to the north, voted to adopt a sea-level rise adaptation plan.



Residential land impacts forecast for various levels of sea-level rise, from the 2016 City of Imperial Beach Sea Level Rise Assessment.

SOURCE: CITY OF IMPERIAL BEACH, REVEAL COASTAL, TIJUANA RIVER AND SEA GRANT



With talk of sea-level rise and the possibility of a managed retreat, many beachfront property owners in Imperial Beach are deciding to sell.

But it did so only as long as the words “managed retreat” were stricken from the document — a caveat demanded by local homeowners. Managed retreat there would allow the rising seas to reclaim the land and some 600 homes on it. “If we implemented management (sic) retreat and required those seawalls that exist today to come out and removed the front row of houses, the ocean would inundate all the way back to the railroad,” Del Mar’s mayor, Dwight Worden, said after the city council vote. “We’d lose the beach; we’d lose those homes.” Del Mar, he warned, would become “a lagoon.” The city decided on more sand replenishment.

“I can’t believe they’re doing that,” Dedina told me, soon after the vote. “They’re just sticking their head in the sand.”

AND YET WHO CAN BLAME THEM? The prospect of a warmer future is one that humanity has failed to properly imagine — let alone address. Even in Imperial Beach, where the city has a plan, current residents seem disconnected from the impending future.

Katy’s Café is a favorite among Imperial Beach’s lifeguards and surfers. Its interior is covered in beach-themed memorabilia, and a sign by the entrance promises: “By the beach all your worries wash away.”

Katy Fallon, a petite blonde in her early 60s who has owned the café for 12 years, still sneaks out the back to surf two or three times a week. The shore, she told me, was a much more manageable place when she started surfing here more than three decades ago. Now the king tides flood her block each year, and sewage spills from Tijuana force the city to close the beaches on a regular basis. “I

don’t feel I can truly do anything about sea-level rise or beach pollution,” Fallon told me, echoing other conversations I’d had here. “But fortunately, we now have a mayor fit for this town.”

Fallon was encouraged when Dedina took office and made the city’s first climate adaptation plan a priority. At first, she attended as many public meetings as she could. But then she got busy and stopped going. “I hate to say this, but when it comes to sea-level rise, I know I won’t be alive for the worst of it,” she told me, with an apologetic frown. “But it’s very scary.”

Under a managed retreat, in 30 or 50 or even 75 years, the two-level strip mall that houses Katy’s Café would face persistent flooding and would have to be moved between one and three blocks inland. But before that happens, Fallon’s landlord’s flood insurance premium would likely rise sharply, and so would his cleanup costs. In an ideal world, his flood insurance would kick in and pay for the move, but it’s more likely that the property would decline in value with each passing year, and that the insurance company would find a way to avoid reimbursing the property owner for such a massive move.

Two blocks south on Seacoast Drive, the owners of a six-story building are determined to stay put. The Pier South Resort, which was completed in 2013 under the previous mayor, cost \$34 million, a fifth of which was invested by the city. It is Imperial Beach’s first fancy hotel, bringing in about a half-million dollars in revenue each year. It’s also the first building to include subterranean structural columns that create a sea wall. It’s unclear whether the hotel will set a precedent for other new — and expensive

— beachfront developments, or, in a managed retreat future, become an island.

Of course, some still hope to safeguard their city. People like Dedina, and the McCoys. Patricia and Mike McCoy, now in their 80s, own a humble two-bedroom cottage on the northern edge of town, in a low-lying area a couple of blocks from the ocean. I sought them out because they were some of Imperial Beach’s first environmental stewards, instrumental in the preservation of the city’s first managed retreat site: the Tijuana River Estuary. They were a living testament to how difficult — and dangerous — managed retreat can be. On the sleepy, foggy day I met them, they sat side-by-side on a couch, their backs to a library full of books about nature and human civilization.

“What can I say? Humans are a brinksmanship type of species,” Patricia told me, recalling the years she and Mike worked to protect the largest estuarine system left in Southern California — one that had not yet been destroyed by freeways, railroads, power lines or sewers.

Back in the 1970s, developers had already been planning for decades to dredge the estuary, build a concrete channel and create an upscale marina. By the spring of 1974, plans for the marina were in full force. Imperial Beach’s mayor, Brian Bilbray, announced his proposal for a 1.5-mile breakwater over the estuary and a \$200 million project that would house up to 7,000 people, a yacht club and commercial development.

“And then the developers realized we wanted to save the estuary, and they started to come after us,” Mike said.

The McCoys met with local, state and federal public officials and went door-to-door across Imperial Beach, organizing residents against the project, among them a teenage surfer named Serge Dedina. They settled on a strategy: They would convince the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take over the property.

In January of 1980, at the height of king tide season, the Tijuana River flooded, killing at least 10 people on the other side of the border and destroying much of the estuary on the U.S. side. One day not long after that, the McCoys and their friend, Richard Raymond, a fellow activist, were taking a break at the local fire station after a cleanup event at the estuary, when four men walked into the building with guns. One of them shot Raymond in the face. The men took off in a car (none of them were ever identified or arrested) as Mike McCoy struggled to stabilize his friend. Raymond was rushed to the hospital in an ambulance and ultimately survived. Later that week, when the McCoys turned onto the freeway, they realized the lug nuts on their car tires had been loosened. At home, they fielded death threats over the phone, warning them to “quit doing what you are doing.”

That year, Imperial Beach voted in favor of the marina project. Soon after, however, Fish and Wildlife unexpectedly

announced it was purchasing 500 acres of the estuary from the marina developer. The state of California joined the effort, and in early 1981 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chose to make the site a national sanctuary, thereby preserving that last stretch of coast and marsh.

The estuary represents an old-fashioned example of a kind of managed retreat, albeit retreat from a proposed development, not the movement of an entire edge of a city. Still, four decades after their fight began, the McCoyes are fully aware that by saving their local estuary they set an important precedent for the city.

THE LATEST PROJECTION by the Union of Concerned Scientists lays out a scary scenario, particularly for homeowners: Persistent flooding will lower property prices in some areas, while flood insurance premiums will rise. If insurers refuse to cover risky properties, the state will have to become an insurer of last resort. At least 100,000 beachfront homeowners across California face the risk of chronic flooding or worse by the end of this century. As its real estate values decrease, a city's property tax base, which funds infrastructure, schools and climate-adaptation measures, will also shrink.

Given this, managed retreat makes a lot of sense. Yet I had a hard time finding locals who would fully endorse Dedina's plan. I contacted six realtors and homeowners along Seacoast Drive, where Imperial Beach's most expensive, and at-risk, properties are. Most refused to discuss the likelihood of a flooded future, fearful of saying anything that would jeopardize property values. But sea-level rise was on the minds of the five Imperial Beach residents I spoke to off the record, people who'd witnessed persistent flooding in their properties and who were either trying to sell or at least considering it.

This spring, I attended a "Resilient Imperial Beach" meeting, organized to engage residents and homeowners on Dedina's coastal management plan. We were presented with various climate-adaptation options, including managed retreat and further sand replenishment. We were asked to fill out a form, answering questions like "What is the most important challenge facing the City?" and "What does preserving Imperial Beach's small beach town character mean to you?" Then we were told to drop those forms off at a box by the back of the room. City council members stood around, ready to answer questions. The meeting was poorly attended; altogether, fewer than a dozen locals came.

Mike McCoy was there, though, along with his acquaintance, Joe Ellis, a tall and tan man who looked much younger than his 63 years. Ellis had worked for years with the Army Corps of Engineers on sand replenishment projects in Southern California. But he has come

to see those efforts as mere stopgaps. "Once upon a time, after college, I also wanted to live by the beach," he joked, when I told him no beachfront homeowners would agree to chat with me about managed retreat. "Unfortunately, climate change is political," he added. "And a lot of the people who live by the coast are older, and they're leaving these decisions to the next generation."

As I left the meeting, I saw a large map of Imperial Beach mounted on an easel against the back wall. It showed

lawsuit as a last resort to help pay for his city's managed retreat plan. "It's a way to highlight the very unfair nature of how climate change is going to play out around the world, whether it's in Micronesia or Mexico or Imperial Beach. This lawsuit is a vehicle to demonstrate our leadership, but also to identify those who caused it and make them pay up."

Earlier this summer, U.S. District Judge William Alsup dismissed the lawsuit, arguing that climate change impacts deserve a solution "on a more vast scale

▼ Patricia and Mike McCoy are well-known Imperial Beach environmental activists who played a key role in saving the Tijuana River Estuary in the 1970s, when developers had plans to drain it to build a yacht club.



about a third of the city awash in a bright royal blue — a blob of color that began at its contours, including Seacoast Drive, and expanded towards the middle. It showed the parts of town that will be underwater someday, including areas more than 10 blocks away from the coast today that house two of the city's elementary schools and most of its working-class neighborhoods. As the sea level rises, flooding in Imperial Beach will affect more than the wealthier residents along the coast; it will touch everyone, regardless of location and class.

LIKE THE MCCOYS BACK IN THE 1970S, Dedina is waging a huge environmental fight of his own, looking beyond Imperial Beach for possible answers and financial support. Last year, he took his fight to the courts, joining five other California cities and counties in a lawsuit against 37 oil and coal companies, including ExxonMobil, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips, arguing that they should be held responsible for the coastal flooding that will cause hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage.

"I don't see any other way to address this," he said, when I asked about the

than can be supplied by a district judge or jury." When I spoke to Dedina, he told me he hadn't lost hope. The lawsuit had forced a public court proceeding on climate science and, at the very least, recognized that it is real and valid. Meanwhile, the city is moving ahead with its planned retreat, though on a considerably smaller scale: by identifying the best future stormwater drains and mitigation basins.

"First, we're going for the low-hanging fruit," Dedina said. "We have new stormwater regulations, so we want to upgrade them for the future." But there are no solid plans yet for an eventual move inland. The money is not there. And city officials haven't had a lot of conversations about this with homeowners yet.

"It's very clear, in the long term, there really isn't any other strategy that will work," Dedina told me. "That's something that people in the future are going to deal with, but we're going to have to set the framework for that now." We stood a block away from the shore, on a breezy, low-tide evening. Families strolled along the beach, and cars drove up and down Seacoast Drive. Along the pier, men were fishing, casting their lines into the peaceful, unrelenting, rising sea. □



Contributing editor Ruxandra Guidi writes from Los Angeles, California.

✉ @homelandsprod

This story was funded with reader donations to the High Country News Research Fund.

After a couple of days at Camp Pulaski, it started to seem as if its denizens were living in a dark version of the smartphone game Pokémon Go, in which fictional creatures populate the physical landscape players move through.

Conspiracy *continued from page 7*

felt a personal connection. “I had been in an abused situation with my mother,” she said. “It makes me want to be able to do something to those people.” Several people I talked to were driven by curiosity; they saw strange stories on Facebook and wanted to find the truth. There were longtime friends of Arthur’s who had found a home at his shelters or helped with Veterans on Patrol. And there were also hardcore conspiracy theorists, who believed the “sex camp” was part of a global pedophile ring run by rich elites.

Pedophile rings allegedly involving high-profile Democrats are central to some of the conspiracy theories that have metastasized for years in right-wing online forums and social media. And the Tucson gathering wasn’t the first time this online chatter had real-world consequences. The infamous 2016 incident known as “Pizzagate” — where a fantasy about Hillary Clinton sexually abusing minors in a Washington, D.C., pizza joint prompted a man to barge into the restaurant and fire an AR-15 while looking for victims — was the fruit of the same poisonous tree.

And new branches keep growing. Some of Arthur’s acolytes were also followers of “Q,” or QAnon, a shadowy figure purporting to be a high-level government agent and leaker. The information Q posts online supports anti-Hillary Clinton, pro-Donald Trump conspiracies that often involve sex crimes against children. And while sex trafficking is a real problem in the U.S., there is as little evidence for the salacious particulars popular in these fringe forums as there was at the camp Arthur “discovered.”

After a couple of days at Camp Pulaski, it started to seem as if its denizens were living in a dark version of the smartphone game Pokémon Go, in which fictional creatures populate the physical landscape players move through. A group of patrollers saw a business sign showing a human eye and believed it was the mark of a secret society. When they saw white crosses painted or laid down in the desert sand — signs experts say are used in aerial mapping — they interpreted them as the insignia of sex traffickers. One day, a man named Frank gave me a ride from Camp Pulaski to the main road, and talked about how many kids go missing every year where he’s from in West Virginia. (Most people I met at Camp Pulaski spoke on the condition that their last names or full names not be revealed.) Then he told me that Anthony Bourdain, the famous chef who had committed suicide days earlier in France, had actually been murdered. Authorities, he claimed, had covered it up. As I hopped out of his jeep, I wondered what Bourdain and missing kids in West Virginia had to do with sex traffickers in the Sonoran Desert. “If you’re really looking for the truth, I will

stay here another day and will pull up as much information as I can for you,” Frank said.

Believers see these imaginary global webs of malfeasance as huge and intangible problems, like climate change. For Frank and others I met at Camp Pulaski, Arthur’s call to arms offered a direct answer, one five-hour desert patrol at a time.

In some ways, their activities are just a twist on the long-standing vigilante tradition in which white men take up arms to try to keep migrants from crossing the border. Such contemporary volunteer “militias,” including the Minutemen, Arizona Border Recon, the Arizona State Militia, and their precursors, have operated in the Borderlands since the 1990s. Most people I spoke with at Camp Pulaski had never been part of a militia. But a similar, racially charged hostility toward immigrants permeates Arthur’s rhetoric, which is unmistakably Trumpian. The then-candidate’s 2015 statement that Mexicans are “rapists” and drug dealers echoes through VOP livestreams. Arthur says he’s not only helping ranchers keep “illegals” off their land, he’s also trying to save migrant “women and children” from Mexican coyotes.

And like many things Trumpian, Arthur’s crusade has unleashed a novel sort of chaos.

It was sweltering when I pulled into a suburb a few miles from Camp Pulaski. The houses sat in neat rows with sandy driveways and minimal landscaping, and it was a relief to walk into Rachel Krause’s cool home. An American flag was folded in a triangle displayed in the kitchen, and her laptop slept quietly on a desk near the front door.

Krause is among a couple dozen individuals in Tucson and across the country who have taken it upon themselves to monitor Arthur, debunk his claims, and provide facts and commentary online. They are vigilantes in their own right, seeing themselves not as enforcers of the law but of the truth.

Krause, 42, has brown hair and a tattoo of a snowflake on her shoulder. She is a former accountant whose husband works in the military and in local law enforcement. “I’m a liberal,” she told me. “He’s the Boy Scout, the Republican.” In early June, she and another woman started a Facebook page called “Citizens Against VOP.” Krause couldn’t stand seeing people get duped into sending gift cards and supplies to support Arthur, and she was angry that her community was the staging ground.

Within days, 300 people had liked the group. “We had no idea that the responses would be just so vast,” Krause said. She installed the Facebook page manager app on her smartphone to help her keep up, but deleted it a couple days later because

she got so many notifications from commenters. She’d skipped lunch the day I visited because things were so busy online.

“It’s better than television,” Tucson resident Sherry Peterman told me later by phone. “It’s a real-life drama.” When Peterman first heard about the sex camp on local TV, she believed Arthur’s claims. But then she started following Krause’s Facebook page and researching Veterans on Patrol, and she decided Arthur was misleading people. By then, she couldn’t look away.

Despite the entertainment and sense of purpose that Peterman and Krause have found in debunking Arthur’s claims, it’s also been an unnerving experience. Krause has received threatening messages from his supporters, and online trolls have warned her to watch her back and posted screenshots of her house. Peterman, a senior citizen who lives alone, says she locked herself in her house after watching a particularly angry livestream. Arthur spoke of unleashing “demons” on his opposition, something that Peterman took as a threat of physical violence. “It was enough to say, ‘Hey, lock your windows, watch your car, and goodness, don’t answer your door until you know who’s on the other side,’ ” Peterman told me. She notified the police, but they said the threat was too vague to act on.

The police did, however, take action after Arthur and several associates trespassed on private property. In June, Arthur livestreamed them walking through a ranch house, pointing out evidence of alleged criminal activity: A chair facing the window was a trafficker’s lookout, a child’s bedroom proof of abuse.

Kyle Cuttrell, who runs cattle from the property in question, told me the claims were absurd. “It’s just an unoccupied ranch house,” another rancher who manages the property, told Arthur in a July phone call that was recorded and posted online, apparently without the rancher’s permission. “I don’t want to be slandered and called a goddamn pedophile,” he said. The harder the rancher tried to reason with Arthur, the clearer it became that nothing would change his mind about what he thought he saw. On July 8, Tucson authorities arrested Arthur on a charge of trespassing, and he spent one night in jail. (He was arrested again on July 22 for the Cemex tower occupation and an unrelated assault charge.)

Overall, though, it’s been challenging for local law enforcement to figure out how to respond to Veterans on Patrol. Sgt. Tiffany Hogate of the Pima County Sheriff’s Department told me in July that she was inundated with reports of weird happenings, some of which turned out to be too vague or unsubstantiated to address. The complaints ranged from online threats to suspicious foot traffic on

private land. She was tasked with monitoring VOP's activities and had put one detective on it full-time; another deputy was helping out part-time.

Hogate and the detective spent hours some days monitoring Arthur's livestreams, where local officials were also coming under attack. Arthur publicly called out Tucson's mayor and sheriff on Facebook, arguing that because they don't support his cause, they must be complicit in sex trafficking. In mid-July, he publicly thanked the secretive hacker group Anonymous for posting names, addresses and passwords for certain law enforcement employees online. That month, one of Arthur's supporters threatened on Facebook to slit the mayor's throat, line up local police officials "in front of a firing squad," and put them in a wood chipper. According to local sources, the FBI began monitoring Arthur and VOP this summer. As of July, Hogate was hoping to create a joint task force of local agencies to more efficiently monitor VOP. She had submitted a request for the FBI to conduct a threat assessment, but hadn't heard back yet.

To add to the chaos, around the time of the break in, a contingent of the Oath Keepers, a national militia group, launched "Operation Child Shield," and came to town to look for more sex trafficking sites. "They're looking for a cause," MacNab explained. They offered advice to Arthur's followers on handling crime scene evidence, then also met with Cuttrell and other ranchers, suggesting the militia could protect their properties. "I was real nervous about meeting with those guys," Cuttrell told me. "But they're legit."

As of early September, Veterans on Patrol continues to work from Camp Pulaski; Arthur says they'll stay for three years. They have now traveled as far south as the Mexican border, placing American flags atop hills believed to be lookouts used by migrants and cartels. The fringe group that gathered in the desert never seemed to grow to more than a few dozen, and most in Tucson never knew of its existence.

Still, it's worth paying attention to what's happening here. It appears to be an extreme expression of broader trends, such as the eroding trust in traditional institutions like government, science and journalism, and the increasing reliance — by people across the political spectrum — on alternative news sources and social media for information. The Rand Corporation, a global policy think tank, called this phenomenon, along with an increasing disagreement about basic facts, "truth decay" in a report earlier this year.

"I think individuals are finding only a very few people they trust, distilling into smaller communities," said Rutgers University media studies associate professor Jack Bratich, describing a pattern that seemed evident in how Arthur's followers



and his opposition organized into factions online. "I don't think it's just filter bubbles, where you get only the news you want, but clusters of information communities."

This social splintering, along with "truth decay," increasingly pervades American life. Donald Trump rode baseless claims that President Barack Obama was not born in the U.S. all the way to the White House. In his first year and a half in office, the *Washington Post* calculated that Trump made 4,229 false or misleading claims, with some taking root in the public imagination: A *Washington Post*-ABC News poll last year found 48 percent of Americans believed in a "deep state," or a conspiracy of "military, intelligence and government officials who try to secretly manipulate government policy." This normalization of conspiratorial thinking raises questions about whether ideas incubating in fringe circles like Arthur's may find pathways to wider audiences.

"We're in a perfect storm right now because we have a conspiracy theory president," said University of Miami political scientist Joseph Uscinski, adding that, "the media has to constantly cover his conspiracy rhetoric and the actions people are taking based on his rhetoric."

Here in the desert, it seemed fortuitous that the consequences had not yet included violence. Boise State University associate professor Seth Ashley, who recently co-authored research on news literacy and conspiracy theories, pointed out that Dylann Roof, the white supremacist who killed nine black parishioners in a South Carolina church in 2015, similarly projected misinformation he found online onto the world around him. "(Roof) Googled black-on-white crime and got all these links about the prevalence of black people killing white people," Ashley said. "It's totally false." And yet it shaped his worldview and his actions, and nine people died. "The content and the behavior is all connected," Ashley explained. "It's great that we can all voice our opinions and do



our own research and find our own information. But that also makes it harder than ever to sort truth from fiction."

One summer evening at dusk, I visited the notorious Cemex lot, finding it empty except for an unmarked cruiser. Long shadows yawned over the dirt and asphalt. The former homeless camp was tucked into a brambly slope, invisible from the road. Nearby, a casino's billboard promised fast cash: "Your shot at \$1,000,000!" A dilapidated blue children's pool full of gravel and old chunks of cement sat next to the locked fence. It was hard to imagine this place had provoked such distracting drama.

"They're out there chasing ghosts," Scott Cutright, a veteran who spent a few weeks in one of Arthur's shelters this year, had told me. "That's the term you use in the military. You hear things go bump in the night, you think it's the enemy, but in reality it's your imagination, because you're scared or you're amped up. You think there's something out there, you pour resources into (it). But in reality, it's ghosts." □

▲ A Veterans on Patrol volunteer named Tim shows a phone picture of graffiti he found in a drainage tunnel to David Armstrong. Armstrong, who runs a group called Aussies for Child Rescue, came from Melbourne, Australia, to volunteer with the group.

▲ ▲ Tim peers at a residential yard through binoculars.

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"We are from this community. We understand the language, the personalities, the puns that we have. We understand our own people better than anyone who would come in."

—Lucy Dan, senior officer at the Navajo Police Training Academy

Navajo Police *continued from page 8*

cameras and new weapons. He is slowly crossing items off.

In 1868, after a brutal 300-mile deportation at the hands of the U.S. Government, the Navajo returned to what is now the Four Corners area. When surrounding white settlers began complaining about stolen livestock, Navajo and federal representatives agreed to begin an experiment: Manuelito, a Navajo leader, assumed the role of police chief and amassed a tribal police force.

Franklin Sage, the director of the Diné Policy Institute at Diné College, sees this early police activity as a tool for enforcing the reservation system. It was less about livestock, he said, and more "a way of protecting settlers, and to try to control and keep the Navajo within a certain area." Though tribal members made up the force, they represented a foreign system of power. Even today, if Navajo officers apprehend a non-Native offender, they often can't do much without other departments' assistance.

As federally managed law enforcement developed in most reservations by the end of the 19th century, it opened a fissure for control. Under Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) direction, tribal police were expected to cut their hair, wear settler clothing and assist in removing children to send to American Indian boarding schools. These tactics transformed tribal police into "an agent of civilization," Eileen Luna-Firebaugh, a tribal law enforcement scholar, wrote. "That regimentation became a symbol of law enforcement, and it came over to Indian Country in the same

ways the (boarding) schools did," she said.

In the 1980s, the Navajo Nation entered into a contract with the BIA to manage reservation law enforcement itself. While Navajo law enforcement began as an instrument of colonial control, Francisco views it today as a crucial part of self-determination.

"It gives us the ability to police our people and to know the needs of our own community rather than the federal government just doing what they feel is right," Francisco said. "They wouldn't have the same input and love for our community that we have." Part of sovereignty, he added, is the tribe teaching and enforcing its own laws.

But the department is still financially tethered to the U.S. government. According to the National Congress of American Indians, funding for tribal law enforcement meets only 42 percent of the need nationally. And with his budget partially dependent on the federal government and federal grants, Francisco can only hire 41 more officers, bringing the force up to 240. At least 100 more are needed, he said, but with each officer costing around \$76,000 in salary and equipment, that's more than \$7 million that he doesn't have.

The Navajo Police Training Academy's newest class arrived during the first week of September. Behind the academy trailers sits an empty plot of land where the permanent academy will eventually be built. Right now, there's not enough funding to break ground. "If you know anyone who has a lot of money," Sgt. Stanley

Ashley told me, "send them out here, and we'll tell them where to put their building."

After their Friday afternoon lesson on crime prevention, the cadets sat in the classroom, wearing black ties and white collared shirts, Navajo Police Department pens clipped into the pockets.

"I thought it would be a little easier than this," said Joshua Martinez, a 24-year-old recruit. The day before, cadets' bedrooms were trashed by staff after a shoe was left turned the wrong way. Earlier, the recruits underwent relentless physical tests — "getting smoked," as the sergeants called it.

The new class is nearly twice the size of Singer's. Most are young, and some have military experience. Shawna Watchman, the oldest at 42, lived near the old academy as a girl. She remembers hearing the cadets march at night.

Lucy Dan, a senior officer at the academy, said that these cadets mean more to the reservation than just extra force. "We are from this community," she said. "We understand the language, the personalities, the puns that we have. We understand our own people better than anyone who would come in."

In the United States, community policing — a broad concept that seeks to build relationships between officers and the neighborhoods they patrol — is gaining traction. In segregated areas, its impact is debated. But on the Navajo Nation, Sgt. Ervin Garcia said, the idea has "always been here."

"The whole idea is to have policing be more adaptable to the community, to have fewer demands of absolute conformance," Luna-Firebaugh said. In Indian Country, she said, "it's not that different."

It will take time to strengthen the philosophy. But in the process of building it, the academy is a good foundation.

Thirteen years ago, Singer entered the original police academy, but she dropped out halfway through. She had gone through a difficult divorce, and she missed her kids, who were living with their grandmother. But she's glad she returned. "I feel like I made the right decision," she said. "It took me 13 years, but it was the right one."

In mid-October, Singer begins shifts on her own, without training officers like Naswood to assist. So far, she's only driven the vehicle by herself a few times. Recently, she and Naswood arrested a woman at a fenced-in flea market. Singer put her in the back of the cruiser and drove off while Naswood lingered. "That was the only time I was on my own," she said, "but he was watching me on the other side of the fence. That sounds funny, doesn't it?"

The moment only lasted for a minute or two, but it struck her. "It felt good," she said. "This is going to happen." □



Officer Marinda Singer first thought about joining the police force when, in high school, she sat in the cruiser of a friend's father. ELENA SAAVEDRA BUCKLEY/HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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The Lilac Fire, Jeff Hall/Cal Fire

Unknown land, unknown creatures

About two-thirds of the way into Carys Davies' folkloric novel *West*, the widowed farmer John Cyrus Bellman recalls a riverboat encounter with a Dutch land agent and his wife. The unpolished farmer had offered them a pithy description of his westward journey: "I am seeking a creature entirely unknown, an animal incognitum." That declaration is a worthy summary of Davies' novel, which follows Bellman in search of "gigantic monsters" west of the Mississippi River during the early 19th century.

Inspired by a newspaper clipping about "monstrous bones" and "prodigious tusks" unearthed in Kentucky — likely in what is now Big Bone Lick State Park — *West* follows Bellman as he turns his back on his Pennsylvania farm, leaving his daughter, Bess, in the care of his sister. The novel alternates between Bellman's westward journey and Bess' lonely life at home, where, like her father before her, she finds solace in reading about faraway lands at the local library.

Through an arrangement with an entrepreneurial fur trader, Bellman is joined on his journey by a 17-year-old Native American boy, Old Woman From a Distance, whose unnamed tribe has been forced westward through a one-sided agreement with the U.S. government. Though neither speaks the other's language, the two make for suitable companions, as Bellman barter off his material possessions in exchange for Old Woman's aid in traversing the landscape. Much like Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's expedition about a dozen years prior — and whose journey is a direct model for Bellman's quest — Bellman and Old Woman make their way by pirogue and by foot on a steady march into the vast expanse of the American West. If the quixotic Bellman is a dressed-down version of Lewis, then Old Woman is akin to Clark, the able-bodied frontiersman. He is a guide and silent interlocutor to Bellman's restless wandering.

When Bellman leaves the Dutch couple and their St. Louis-bound boat, the land agent's wife gently mocks his foolhardy quest — "she'd called after him to say she hoped he'd reached Cognitum before nightfall" — and presumably his use of the Latinate expression. Though it appears but a few times in this slim novel, Davies' novel alludes to the storied genealogy of the animal incognitum in American history. Long before he became president and purchased the Louisiana

Territory, Thomas Jefferson — who is sometimes called the founding father of American paleontology — cultivated an obsession with fossils, particularly those of the American mastodon. For Jefferson, the "animal incognitum," or mastodon, bore the allure of an untamed and unknown American species. In a letter to French naturalist Bernard Lacépède, Jefferson explained that one of the goals of the Lewis and Clark expedition was to learn about the "Mammoth, & of the Megatherium also" — and, ideally, to find a living specimen.

Bellman has no interest in glory, but he shares a similar pull towards the unknown mysteries and strange creatures of the West: "Now he wondered if it was because it seemed possible that, through the giant animals, a door into the mystery of the world would somehow be opened." In *West*, with its frequent references to the Lewis and Clark expedition, Davies reminds us that the search for this particularly elusive species partly inspired the exploration of and scientific excavation of the American frontier.

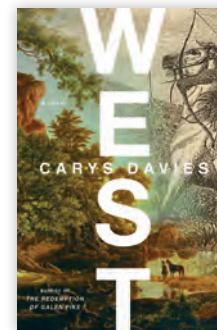
If there's a parable of American expansionism in *West*, its themes are extinction and displacement. In different ways, Bellman and Old Woman have suffered loss (Bellman lost his wife; Old Woman's sister was killed by American settlers) and displacement. Bellman emigrated with his family from England in search of a better life, while Old Woman's tribe made a one-sided trade with the federal government to move westward. When we first encounter Old Woman, he sadly recalls "his sister, and everything else they'd left behind in the east — their rivers and their forests and their neat gardens of beans and corn." Bellman, too, suffers doubts about his decision to leave England with his wife.

Though their circumstances and psychologies are only roughly sketched out, a shared sense of sorrow and loneliness is palpable in the two wanderers. Fortunately, *West* refuses to indulge in expansionist nostalgia, offering in-

stead a melancholy foray into an ancient American landscape that inspired both exploration and genocide.

Davies herself is Welsh, though she has previously lived in New York and Chicago and worked on this novel as a Cullman Fellow at the New York Public Library. Her work is frequently peripatetic, as in her second collection of short stories, *The Redemption of Galen Pike*, which wandered from the foothills of Colorado to rural Australia. Here, her writing is less rooted in any specific locale — even as it follows part of the route taken by Lewis and Clark — than it is born of the perennial myth of the Western landscape and the creatures it holds, or in this case, once held. "These strange and unfamiliar creatures," she writes, "gave Bellman hope and he pressed on."

Even if its ending is too neat and its mythic overtones a little heavy-handed, *West* is a compelling document of migration and extinction and a reminder of the complicated history of the American West. **BY JAMISON PFEIFER**



West: A Novel
Carys Davies
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ILLUSTRATION
BY EMILY POOLE

Can hunting keep us human?

Does hunting make us human? In the New Machine Age, we are all cyborgs — hybrids of flesh and technology, glowing with artificial enlightenment. So perhaps the better question is this: Does hunting keep us human?

In this country, hunting is both admired and despised. Anachronistic, it is a protest against the civilizing process, a process that combines neurotic desires with economic excess. The goal of civilization? Utopia. Soon, the civilizing narrative affirms, technology will surmount the pathos of the human condition and overcome the horror that is reality. Already, every trivial experience — vacationing at Disneyworld, snorkeling in the Seychelles — gets documented and flung into cyberspace, to be admired by virtual friends who don't realize that these ersatz novelties were scripted by someone else.

Sadly, there is no such thing as the purely “wild” any more (if indeed there ever was), just as the unmodified human is extinct in wealthy habitats. The basic well-off human model gets contact lenses, braces, dental fillings and daily vitamin pills, for starters, then nose jobs, artificial knees, replacement hearts, silicone implants, hair plugs and so forth. But insofar as “wild” refers to a wilderness that civilization has mostly left alone, there hunters hunt, and in so doing protect a living reality from becoming one more ersatz, purchased experience.

To protect the living is a quintessentially human act. It may seem like sophistry to argue that hunting protects wildlife, but the act of hunting encompasses far more than shooting a wild animal, and it neither starts nor ends with a death. Entire seasons can pass without the quarry being spotted. And yet, without ever having taken a shot, the hunter has still hunted. Tracking, scenting, looking for signs, searching for scrapes,

following paths, learning trails — this is all part of understanding the patterns of a particular landscape that both hunter and quarry call home. The hunt itself is part of a much larger continuum.

From a storytelling perspective, this continuum is boring. No drama, no conflict, no violence. Just watching, waiting, listening and learning. It is possible to equate the hunt with the fatal shot, but to do so reduces the quarry to a future mount over the fireplace. To anti-hunters, that head is a relic of a bizarre and morbid ritual. To the hunter, it is a reminder and a warning. The reminder is this: To hunt means taking from a land to which you will be giving back a life: yours. The warning? The land exists prior to both humans and animals, and it supports both without playing favorites.

Thus hunters refer to “taking a deer” from the land. The land is giving them a gift, but whatever is taken must eventually be returned. The idea of giving back is built in.

The traditional attachment of hunters to a family clan and a specific locale places hunting inside a “gift” economy, the traits of which are especially evident in the United States, where wild venison (as opposed to farmed venison) is illegal to sell. The implications of this system go beyond hunting itself. As anthropologist Marcel Mauss showed in his famous study, *The Gift* (1966), the gift of the wild holds a kind of magic in Indigenous societies. In Maori culture, gifts hold a “spiritual power” that is particularly strong in things from the forest, and in forest game most of all, infused with an energy that is, Mauss writes, “often personified, and strives to bring to its original clan and its homeland some equivalent to take its place.”

Many hunters invest hunting with spiritual significance, for it is difficult to ignore the feeling that taking a wild life

and serving it for supper are symbolically weighty acts that have nothing in common with going to a restaurant and ordering a steak. The legacy of the gift explains why.

In a gift economy, the act of giving compels the person who receives the gift to reciprocate. A gift can be refused, but that refusal has consequences. So does the failure to give back. If the original gift is the freedom to hunt the land, then hunters are obliged to return the gift by bringing an “equivalent”: a life to take its place. Hence, ethical hunters reciprocate by protecting the wilderness, giving of themselves to ensure that the forest stays the forest, instead of being turned into a Rainforest Café. That act of caretaking, which is also conservation, likewise conserves a relationship between humans and nature that accepts mortality as truth. A commodity system, by contrast, cannot survive without the fantasy that displaces value onto symbols and calls it transcendence, even while working extremely hard to perpetuate the myth that cyborgs are immortal.

Fantasies are fun, but they can't last. Sooner or later, profits fall, reality intrudes, pills get popped, and everybody's depressed. When the land demands its due from those who take without acknowledging the “nature” in natural resources, the fantasy will collapse. As some clever cyborgs chase utopia, still other humans insist on living with nature. As long as a few hybrids hunt, something of that human nature will survive, too. □

*Paula Young Lee is a cultural historian, food writer and backwoods cook. She is the author of the award-winning book *Deer Hunting in Paris: A Memoir of God, Guns, and Game Meat*. This essay first appeared as a contribution to the *Center for Humans and Nature*.*

The land is giving them a gift, but that which is taken must eventually be returned. The idea of giving back is built in.

Trump is burning the natural gas bridge

Without emissions regulations, natural gas is as dirty as coal



COMMENTARY
BY JONATHAN
THOMPSON

This summer's statistics on electricity use and generation included a significant gem: Over the last 12 months, power generation from coal has dropped to a three-decade low. That was party-worthy news for the climate, for air quality, for folks who live near power plants and for the natural gas industry, which is partly responsible for coal's decline. Just days later, however, the Trump administration crashed the shindig, causing a major buzzkill.

No, the president's attempts to revive coal have not succeeded. But on Sept. 18, the Interior Department snuffed out new rules aimed at lowering the oil and gas industry's methane emissions, just days after the Environmental Protection Agency started the process of euthanizing its own methane regulations. This is a bummer not only for the planet, but also for the natural gas industry's efforts to portray its product as the clean fossil fuel.

Coal began its climb to dominate the electricity mix in the 1960s, peaking in the mid-2000s, when power plants burned about 1 billion tons per year, generating about half of the nation's electricity — and an ongoing disaster. Donald Trump likes to talk about “clean, beautiful coal.” It's anything but. The smokestacks that loom over coal power plants kick out millions of tons of planet-warming carbon dioxide annually, along with mercury, sulfur dioxide, arsenic and particulates, all of which wreak havoc on human health. What's left over ends up as toxic (sometimes radioactive) piles of ash, clinkers and scrubber sludge.

When natural gas is burned to produce power, however, it emits only about half the carbon dioxide of coal, and virtually none of the other pollutants associated with burning coal. So during the 2008 election season — when climate politics were less polarized than now — both parties pushed natural gas in different ways, with Republicans chanting, “Drill, baby, drill,” and Democrats calling natural gas a “bridge” to greater reliance on renewable energy sources. At the same time, advances in drilling were unlocking vast stores of oil and gas from shale formations, driving down the price of the commodity and making it more desirable to utilities.

As a result, natural gas gobbled up a growing share of the nation's electricity mix, while coal's portion withered. In 2008, natural gas generated 21 percent of the electricity in the United States; now, its share is 33 percent. Coal use, meanwhile, plummeted from 48 percent to 29 percent over the same period. In consequence, the electric power sector's total carbon dioxide emissions have dropped by 700 million metric tons over the last decade, with an attendant decrease in other harmful pollutants. Every megawatt-hour of coal-fired electricity that is replaced by gas-fired electricity is a net win for the planet — and the humans who live on it.

Except when it's not. Natural gas has an Achilles' heel: When it is sucked from the earth and processed

and moved around, leaks occur. The main ingredient in natural gas is methane, a greenhouse gas with 86 times the short-term warming potential of carbon dioxide. Every punctured pipeline, leaky valve and sloppy gas-well completion eats away at any climate benefits. And if methane's leaking, so too are other harmful pollutants, including benzene, ethane and hydrogen sulfide. And so the fuel's green credentials, and one of the industry's main marketing tools, end up wafting into thin air.

When the Obama administration proposed rules that would make the oil and gas industry clamp down on methane emissions, it was a gift, not a punishment. Not only would people and the climate benefit; the natural gas industry would be able to sell itself as a clean fuel and a bridge to the future.

The Obama-era rules are similar to those passed in Colorado in 2014, with the industry's support. Far from being onerous, they simply require companies to regularly look for and repair leaks and to replace faulty equipment. Some companies already do this on their own; the Obama rules would simply mandate this responsible behavior across the board. That's why the Republican-controlled Congress ultimately decided not to kill the rules. That, however, did not discourage Trump.

Trump is not being “business-friendly” by ending the rules. Rather, he is once again indulging his own obsession with Obama and with destroying his predecessor's legacy, regardless of the cost to human health and the environment. Trump's own EPA estimates that its rule rollback will result in the emission of an additional 484,000 tons of methane, volatile organic compounds and other hazardous pollutants over the next five years. Meanwhile, the death of Interior's methane rule on Tuesday will add another half-million tons of pollutants to the air. In the process, it will erode the pillars of the once-vaunted natural gas bridge.

Then again, maybe the time has come to let that bridge burn. We get 70 times more electricity from solar sources now than we did in 2008, and renewables hold 11 percent of the total share of power generation. Perhaps just as significant is a less-noticed fact: Electricity consumption in the U.S. has held steady for the last decade, even dropping during some years, despite a growing population, a burgeoning economy, harder-working air conditioners and more electric devices. That means we're becoming more efficient and smarter about how we use energy. If we keep this up, we'll be able to cross that fossil fuel chasm, no matter how many bridges Trump burns down. □

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Jonathan Thompson is a contributing editor at *High Country News*. He is the author of *River of Lost Souls: The Science, Politics and Greed Behind the Gold King Mine Disaster*.

WEB EXTRA

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Timber framer Bodie Johansson chisels out floor joist housings in the Handcrafted Log & Timber yard in Ridgway, Colorado. **BLAKE GORDON** © 2018 Patagonia, Inc.



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Men's
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IDAHO

Skiers, hikers and other recreationists flock to Sandpoint, Idaho, population 7,900, because it's close to Lake Pend Oreille and the Cabinet and Selkirk mountains. Sometimes, though, a beautiful place can harbor an ugly side. In September, a robocaller left threatening messages on local answering machines, calling local journalist Ben Olson "a cancer on wholesome North Idaho, and cancer must be burned out." Olson has published a free alternative weekly, the *Sandpoint Reader*, since 2012. According to the *Bonner County Daily Bee*, similar calls in August smeared the *Reader* and other news publications while promoting the visit of a neo-Nazi. Olson says he won't be deterred by threats on his life and on what the robocaller labeled his "tiny leftist cabal." The calls "will not affect the way the *Reader* reports the news at all," the journalist said in a statement. "Furthermore, we appreciate all the free advertising." The slurs were just part of an ongoing trend, Olson said, to "impugn people who stand up to racism and intolerance in North Idaho." And there's been an unexpected upside, he added, citing an "outpouring of kindness from the community after these calls. Love will always win over hate."

COLORADO

Speaking of love, we wish we'd met Thurman Earl "Tex" Keeney, 77, who died this summer in Grand Junction, Colorado. According to his obituary in the *Daily Sentinel*, he served in the military, owned a bar and construction business, and in his younger years "ran moonshine" with the help of his Ford Courier, "faster than any cop car in the county. They could never catch him. He was too fast!" He also cherished his little dog, played guitar and sang, and made works of art in wood. "Tex was a strong, fearless man full of love and adventure," the obituary said. "With all his being, he loved his woman, Mable. He was always grateful, humble and full of compassion. He was a real man."

NORTHERN ROCKIES

Several hundred tourists in Yellowstone National Park were dismayed this September when



COLORADO Hanging out at the Elks Club. JERRY ALLISON

a man walked off the boardwalk and onto the lip of Old Faithful Geyser, where he appeared to urinate over the edge of the bubbling brew. His bad behavior was caught on video by Ashley Lemanski of Harbor Beach, Michigan, who said, "A bunch of the crowd thought he was going to jump. We didn't know what was going to happen." Park rangers repeatedly yelled at the trespasser to get back on the boardwalk, but he ignored them, even lying down next to the "gurgling hole" before walking away, the Associated Press reports. The man, whose name wasn't revealed, was ticketed by rangers. If the interloper at Old Faithful relieved himself on the geyser, he wasn't the first. Two seasonal park workers were fired in 2009 after being caught on a webcam urinating into the geyser.

ALASKA

Trace Baker of Boulder, Colorado, reports an encounter with another tourist who'd been on the same hike in Denali National Park. During the bus trip back, the other hiker asked why Baker and his wife wore red canisters on their belts. Hearing that the cans were pepper spray for warding off attacking bears, the man said, "Well, I prefer lead-based sprays myself." We assume he meant guns, though he could have been praising old-fashioned lead-based house paint.

COLORADO

Drive-by shootings make news in urban areas, but senseless attacks from moving vehicles also happen in rural settings. Outside Delta recently, in rural Western Colorado, a local farmer's hog was shot dead from the road early one morning. The loss was deeply felt, for according to the police report, the man said his hog was "sweet as could be." The *Delta County Independent* reported that "a neighbor advised he'd seen a white truck headed down the road and had heard what he believed were two gunshots." An investigation is underway.

UTAH

Former San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman is a busy bee these days. He's running for the

Utah House of Representatives seat vacated by Mike Noel, warning voters that "rural Utah is under attack." He's also a developer, promoting the building of a \$9 million hotel on the edge of Blanding, Utah. Yet Lyman, who spent 10 days in jail for leading an illegal ATV ride through Recapture Canyon to protest road restrictions, has long opposed Bears Ears National Monument, which is close to Blanding. So we wonder: Who would be staying in what Lyman calls his "flagship hotel?" Would they be tourists wanting to explore the new monument? Because if so, they might not stay for long, since the monument been drastically reduced in size by the Trump administration. Lyman has a checkered past, reports the *Salt Lake Tribune*. In a long-running investigation, the Utah attorney general looked into charges that Lyman used his position as a county commissioner to benefit himself and his clients at hearings of property tax appeals. The state closed the case without taking action.

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](https://www.instagram.com/heardaroundthewest) on Instagram.



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