

High Country News

For people who care about the West

Making Sense of Malheur

Reflections from inside
the Oregon occupation
By Hal Herring





Rosella Talbot drapes an American flag over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge sign on Jan. 2, the day armed militants occupied the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service buildings. BROOKE WARREN

On the cover

Duane Ehmer carries an American flag as he rides his horse, Hellboy, at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns, Oregon, in mid-January. Ehmer was among the armed occupiers of the refuge. JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES



Complete access to subscriber-only content

HCN's website
hcn.org

Digital edition
hcne.ws/digi-4805

Tablet and mobile apps
hcne.ws/HCNmobile-app

Follow us



@highcountrynews

FEATURE

12 Making Sense of Malheur

Reflections from inside the Oregon occupation By Hal Herring

CURRENTS

5 Why Nevada matters for the rest of the election

Early caucuses highlighted Western issues, but the state will play an even bigger role in November

7 'A smart way' for species? A study refutes claims that the Endangered Species Act squelches development, but the devil is in the details

7 The Latest: WIPP radiation leak

8 The caribou hunter of Arctic Village Photo essay

10 California drought brings opportunity Dry spell provides relief for communities with contaminated drinking water

10 The Latest: Hells Canyon bighorn sheep

DEPARTMENTS

3 HCN.ORG NEWS IN BRIEF

4 LETTERS

11 THE HCN COMMUNITY Research Fund, Dear Friends

20 MARKETPLACE

23 WRITERS ON THE RANGE

Biking in wilderness? Ain't gonna happen. By Tim Lydon

26 BOOKS

The Skull of Pancho Villa and Other Stories by Manuel Ramos.

Reviewed by Michelle Newby Lancaster

Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town by Jon Krakauer.

Reviewed by Annie Dawid

27 ESSAY Seeds in a sandstorm By Natasha Vizcarra

28 HEARD AROUND THE WEST By Betsy Marston

Editor's note

Snapshot of a sad moment

When a band of militants took over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon this winter, we at *High Country News* worked hard to understand not only what was happening day by day, but also why it was happening. What did Ammon Bundy and his supporters actually want? We're still trying to figure it out.



Certainly, the occupation meant something. And while it's easy to cast the Bundyites as foolish malcontents, as many in the media have done, there's more to it than that. The Malheur occupation generated so much interest, I think, because it strikes at core questions at work in the American West today — questions about liberty and power and control.

Over the last eight years, since the election of President Barack Obama, the extreme right has steadily sown discord throughout our democracy. This has created paralysis in the federal government, mistrust among the electorate and a general erosion of civility. In many ways, the Malheur occupation is a product of this campaign, which has also encouraged the rise of Donald Trump. Both the occupation and Trump's candidacy rely on the anxieties of middle- and lower-class white Americans, and I've found it hard lately to think of one without the other.

A recent analysis by the *Washington Post* shows that in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Vermont, Trump won proportionately more votes in the places where the death rate of middle-aged whites was higher than average. The rural West shares many of those states' characteristics, but there is one distinction: Life in the West is, in large part, an experiment in cooperation. Out here, we have learned to work together to make use of our resources, including our public lands, through a democratic, bureaucratic process that is as messy as it is necessary. That cooperation was lost on the occupiers.

Still, I don't think ridiculing them will help. We should seek to understand them, as Montana writer Hal Herring does in this issue's cover essay. Both sympathetic and skeptical, Herring embedded himself in the occupation and had lengthy discussions with the people who found themselves, imperiled and at times bewildered, under Bundy's banner. Herring's sharp eye and honest writing provide an indelible snapshot of a sad moment in Western history.

The occupation is over, with 25 men and women arrested, one man killed, and Bundy and his inner circle facing felony charges. But this won't be the end of the story, I suspect. We are left now to learn from it what we can. A good place to start is Herring's essay, which comes as close as anything I've read to an insider's view of the occupation — the latest sign of our troubled times.

—Brian Calvert, managing editor



A man wears a Bernie Sanders mask during a November rally in Los Angeles calling for action on climate change, just before climate talks in Paris. The Supreme Court’s stay of the Clean Power Plan last month has re-energized environmental groups’ efforts to raise the issue’s profile.

MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Audio

“Sheriffs are the ultimate law enforcement authority. Because they are elected officials, they have more power than anybody in their county, including the president of the United States.”

—Richard Mack’s philosophy, as explained by HCN senior editor Jonathan Thompson in “West Obsessed: What the heck is a Sagebrush Sheriff?” Mack is founder of the Constitutional Sheriff and Peace Officers Association, and author of the book *The County Sheriff: America’s Last Hope*.

MORE: hcne.ws/wo-sagebrushsheriff

1,000

Roughly the number of Yellowstone bison killed in this year’s controversial cull. Biologists say development has ended the animal’s historical migrations; without management, bison could overcrowd the park.

KRISTA LANGLOIS

MORE: hcne.ws/bison-cull

Timeline

Grazing rights over time

Battles over who should be able to graze livestock on the vast stretches of federal land in Western states have raged for over 150 years. Central to these disputes is whether grazing is a “right.” Federal laws treat grazing on public land as a privilege, but permits are often tied to property, and some ranchers consider them their due. TAY WILES

MORE: hcne.ws/grazing-timeline

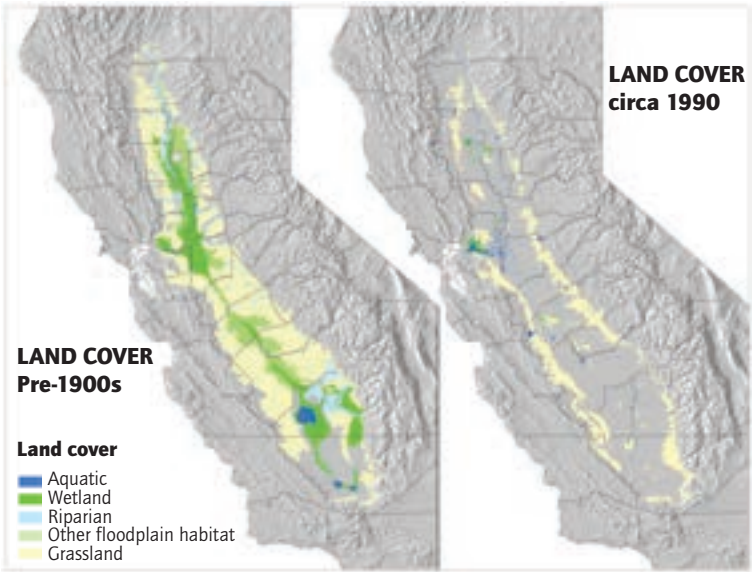


General Land Office surveyors in Oregon, circa 1923. The GLO, called by some the “Gateway to Land Ownership,” because it facilitated settlement, later merged with another agency to become the Bureau of Land Management. BLM

Clean Power stay spurs green action

Environmentalists started the year on a high, after the Obama administration took action on coal leasing on public lands, Keystone XL and carbon emissions. Then last month, the Supreme Court delivered the movement an unexpected defeat by staying the Clean Power Plan. The 5-to-4 decision showed environmentalists just how fragile their victories are – and re-energized their efforts to influence the coming elections and the search for a replacement for Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. Green groups, like the League of Conservation Voters, received an influx of donations following the stay. The Democratic National Committee released a video with members of Congress, most from Western states, talking about the toll climate change will take on their states, a signal of the larger role environmental issues play in this election than in the past. On the line are the hard-won policies of the Obama administration, not least of them the Clean Power Plan. ELIZABETH SHOGREN

MORE: hcne.ws/CPPEnviro



DISAPPEARANCE OF CENTRAL VALLEY WETLANDS. CENTRAL VALLEY HISTORIC MAPPING PROJECT, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO, GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION CENTER

Shrinking wetlands

In the last century, California wetlands have decreased by 90 percent. That trend has continued over the past five years of drought. Birds that once nested in the wetlands are finding their habitual spots dried out, leading to reduced breeding. As

they crowd together on diminishing wet areas, diseases spread, further weakening populations. Conservationists and farmers have tried to slow the slide, but dwindling water allocations have hindered their efforts. PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER

MORE: hcne.ws/CAwetlands

Trending

Think-tank influence

In early March, an Idaho Senate panel passed a bill that would help lay the groundwork for more local control of federal lands. The bill was based on model legislation written by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a conservative think tank whose Western influence has grown. The group has played a role in public-lands debates as far back as the 1995 “Sagebrush Rebellion Act.” During the first half of last year, a third of the public land transfer bills introduced in the West could be traced back to ALEC, and more have appeared already this year. LYNDSEY GILPIN

You say

JE N NAY
“Public-lands policy coming from a place with negligible public lands. Makes sense.”

AMY BRUNVAND
“ ‘Local control’ is always the buzzword, but most of the locals are not actually in favor of handing our quality of life over to corporate and private interests.”

MICHAEL STIEHL
“Why is this a surprise? What baffles me, though, is why the conservation and wilderness organizations don’t use similar tactics by introducing their draft legislation.”

MORE: hcne.ws/land-transfer and [Facebook.com/highcountrysnews](https://www.facebook.com/highcountrysnews)

LETTERS

High Country News

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/PUBLISHER
Paul Larmer

MANAGING EDITOR
Brian Calvert

SENIOR EDITORS
Jodi Peterson
Jonathan Thompson

ART DIRECTOR
Cindy Wehling

ONLINE EDITOR
Tay Wiles

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Kate Schimel

D.C. CORRESPONDENT
Elizabeth Shogren

WRITERS ON THE RANGE
EDITOR Betsy Marston

ASSOCIATE DESIGNER
Brooke Warren

COPY EDITOR
Diane Sylvain

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Cally Carswell
Sarah Gilman
Glenn Nelson
Michelle Nijhuis

CORRESPONDENTS
Ben Goldfarb
Krista Langlois

Sarah Tory
Joshua Zaffos

EDITORIAL FELLOW
Paige Blankenbuehler

INTERNS
Lyndsey Gilpin
Bryce Gray

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Alexis Halbert

DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Alyssa Pinkerton

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT
Christine List

SUBSCRIPTIONS MARKETER
JoAnn Kalenak

WEB DEVELOPER Eric Strebel

DATABASE/IT ADMINISTRATOR
Alan Wells

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Gretchen King

FINANCE MANAGER
Beckie Avera

ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE
Jan Hoffman

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Tammy York

CIRCULATION SYSTEMS ADMIN.
Kathy Martinez

CIRCULATION
Doris Teel, Kati Johnson,
Stephanie Kyle

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
David J. Anderson

ADVERTISING SALES
REPRESENTATIVE

Bob Wedemeyer

GRANTWRITER
Janet Reasoner

editor@hcn.org
circulation@hcn.org

development@hcn.org
advertising@hcn.org

syndication@hcn.org
FOUNDER Tom Bell

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
John Belkin, Colo.

Beth Conover, Colo.
Jay Dean, Calif.

John Echohawk, Colo.
Bob Fulkerson, Nev.

Wayne Hare, Colo.
Laura Helmuth, Md.

John Heyneman, Wyo.
Samaria Jaffe, Calif.

Nicole Lampe, Ore.
Marla Painter, N.M.

Dan Stonington, Wash.
Rick Tallman, Colo.

Luis Torres, N.M.
Andy Wiessner, Colo.

Florence Williams, D.C.



DARYL CAGLE/CAGLEARTOONS.COM

TAXING WATER

The article from Feb. 22, “Growing Heavy” by Sena Christian, does an excellent job of presenting the issue of California’s agricultural water usage. Unfortunately, the article misses the essence of what is exacerbating the effects of California’s drought: bad economics. The market has incorrectly priced water for agriculture, which is subsequently destroying California’s economy and allowing overdraft of water resources. That cheap water is supplied by the enormous amount of infrastructure paid for by taxpayers. This water is artificially priced, meaning that farmers have no incentive to save. Increasing the tax on water would force farmers to use water more efficiently. Farmers would need to invest in equipment or infrastructure that promotes efficient water usage. And they would begin growing crops that did not require as much water, such as cereals like millet, instead of water intensive crops like alfalfa, rice, cotton and almonds. This tax would also bring in much-needed revenue to California, which is currently in debt.

*Sam Holmberg
Los Angeles, California*

SAVE WATER, SKIP THE BURGERS

Sena Christian, in “Growing Heavy,” explains that many of California’s farmers, in order to cope with the ever-decreasing water supply, are putting their resources into their most valuable food crops, which also happen to be the most water-intensive. But many of the state’s most water-intensive field crops are not even destined for human con-

sumption, but rather go to feed a vast expanse of water-guzzling livestock. The lack of mention of livestock in the article left out a significant portion of where agricultural water in California goes. Dairy and beef production use far more water than crop production in the state; thus, changes to the livestock portion of California’s agriculture would make a much larger impact than concentrating efforts on select food crops.

As a former resident of California, I can name dozens of ways my household was told to conserve water. However, we were never told to watch what we ate, even though changing our eating habits would have a much larger impact on conserving water. You can save more water by not eating a hamburger for lunch than by giving up showering for several months.

*Carolyn Koestner
Saratoga Springs, New York*

SHARING FOOD ... AND HISTORY

Thank you for Patricia Limerick’s essay on the complex sociology of the current conflict over oil and gas development (“Fractured,” *HCN*, 2/22/16). Learning from the past has not been one of the West’s strengths. Many Westerners seem as passionately devoted to ignoring or denying history as Ms. Limerick is to bringing history to bear on our current conflicts and challenges.

While Limerick’s quest to get Westerners to pay attention to history may not prove achievable, her other suggestion about the benefits of those on opposite sides sharing food has great promise. The benefits are not limited to

Send letters to editor@hcn.org or
Editor, HCN, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428.

providing time for listening as a result of the necessity of chewing. It is really more basic than that. Going back to the early days of our species, the experience of sharing food calls up our deep desire for human connection. We are subconsciously reminded of our common humanity, and that changes how we treat each other, including our willingness to respectfully listen to the other’s perspective.

Sharing food will not prevent or settle conflicts. But if practiced consistently, it will make those conflicts less bitter. And maybe that will translate into a desire to learn each others’ stories ... and our region’s history.

*Felice Pace
Klamath, California*

GETTING BEYOND YES OR NO

The Feb. 22 article “Fractured” corresponded in several ways with my own experience in dealing with management issues at the Carrizo Plain National Monument in Southern California.

In the course of an oral history project, I interviewed a great many ranchers who were often unhappy about the restrictions placed upon grazing. On a number of occasions I was invited to stay for lunch, and invariably talk turned to schooling, family and grandchildren. After that, we were able to speak as people rather than opponents, and while we might not agree, it had become easier for each of us to admit that the situation was complicated and that we might not know all the answers.

As a volunteer, I also participated in a workshop conducted by the Bureau of the Land Management, intended to facilitate the creation of a resource management plan for the Carrizo Plain Monument. In one of the exercises, we were to address an issue in the plan, but had to formulate the question as: “How can we accomplish X, while still preserving Y?” We could not ask, “Are off-road vehicles to be permitted in the backcountry?” This would only have a “yes” or “no” answer and could only precipitate a struggle. Instead, we debated, “How can backcountry travel be managed while still preserving intrinsic resource values?” My group consisted of a range technician, a wildlife biologist, a cartographer and a recreation planner. We spent an hour looking for solutions instead of arguing. I believe that Patricia Limerick would understand both of these experiences.

*Craig Deutsche
Los Angeles, California*

High
Country
News



High Country News is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) independent media organization that covers the issues that define the American West. Its mission is to inform and inspire people to act on behalf of the region’s diverse natural and human communities.

(ISSN/0191/5657) is published bi-weekly, 22 times a year, by High Country News, 119 Grand Ave., Paonia, CO 81428. Periodicals, postage paid at Paonia, CO, and other post offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to High Country News, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428. All rights to publication of articles in this issue are reserved. See hcn.org for submission guidelines. Subscriptions to HCN are \$37 a year, \$47 for institutions: **800-905-1155 | hcn.org**

Printed on
recycled paper.

Why Nevada matters for the rest of the election

Early caucuses drew attention to Western issues, but the state will play an even bigger role in November

BY PAIGE BLANKENBEUHLER

At a Donald Trump rally in Las Vegas last October, a Colombian emigrant named Myriam Witcher walked out onto the stage, her black ponytail swinging. She clutched a tiny American flag and a copy of *People* magazine with the billionaire Republican front-runner featured on the cover. “I’m Hispanic, and I vote for Mr. Trump!” she cried. “We love you, all the way to the White House!”

Altogether, 45 percent of participating Latino Republicans voted for Trump in the Nevada caucus. But that doesn’t mean he’ll win that electorate’s favor come Nov. 8. Caucuses tend to bring out the most polarized voters, and thus don’t tend to represent the broader electorate.

But if you want an indication of how the West — or even the country — might vote on Election Day, look to Nevada. In the definitive race, the state has been a strong indicator of the preference of the whole.

Nevada moved to the forefront of campaign season in 2008, becoming the first caucus in the West to take place prior to Super Tuesday, largely due to the influence of Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev. He argued that his state provided an important contrast to Iowa and New Hampshire, the predominantly white early nominating-season states. Nevada’s typically low-turnout race saw dramatically increased participation this year (the Republican caucus broke records, with more than 75,000 people in attendance), providing a crucial trial indication of how campaign messages are resonating with Western voters, including Latinos.

Nevada shares many of the nation’s socioeconomic challenges and also embodies a complex sliver of its increasingly diverse and politically discontented population.

Roughly 80 percent of Americans live in urban centers, and Nevada reflects that, with nearly 75 percent of the state’s population concentrated in Clark County, home of Las Vegas. “We have a large city (Vegas) balancing water scarcity with demand, rural communities in Elko and hipster enclaves in Reno,” says Laura Martin, associate director of the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN). (Disclosure: HCN board member Bob Fulkerson is the state director and co-founder of PLAN.) “We look like the future of our country,” Martin says.

And that applies especially to the state’s racial makeup. Among its 2.8 million residents, 9 percent are black, 8 percent are Asian and 28 percent are Hispanic; nationally, 13 percent of the population is black, 5 percent Asian and 17 percent Hispanic, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Across the board, minority groups tilt toward the Democratic Party: Among eligible Hispanic voters, 56 percent are registered Democrats, while 26 percent are Republicans, according to the Pew Research Center.

Nevada’s caucus results could be a barometer for the campaign-season debate over illegal immigration. The West’s early election season has been dominated by the question of how to strengthen border defense while addressing the status of undocumented people already living in the U.S.

The state has 328,000 eligible Hispanic voters, 17 percent of all voters there. According to a caucus exit poll, Latino Democrats voted for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders over former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton by 53 percent to 45 percent. In the Republican caucus, despite his platform’s promise to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico, more Latino voters supported Trump than his rivals, Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Marco Rubio, R-Fla., according to an entrance poll. Both

Sanders and Trump offer an “outside establishment” perspective that appeals to Latino voters, says Dulce Saenz, who was born in Mexico and is Colorado state director of Sanders’ campaign. (Both polls, however, have been criticized for their small sample sizes.)

Not only did the Nevada caucuses provide a testing ground for a more diverse electorate, they also encouraged candidates to address some of the issues that resonate strongly in the West, such as public lands, extractive and renewable energy and immigration reform.

All the candidates who have visited the Silver State have weighed in on the debate over transferring public lands to state and local control, which came to a boil with the occupation of Oregon’s Malheur National Wildlife Refuge earlier this year. Since the federal government owns nearly 85 percent of Nevada’s land, it makes sense that the issue is important to the state’s voters, says David Fott, a professor of political science at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Both Sanders and frontrunner Clinton oppose the transfer of public lands to state control, but Cruz condemned government control of public lands in a television ad that ran in Nevada, and John Kasich, governor of Ohio, echoed his stance in a radio commercial.

Nevada voters debate their candidate choices with an undecided voter at the East Las Vegas Community Center during the Democratic Caucus on Feb. 20.

ZOE MEYERS



Paige Blankenbuehler is an HCN editorial fellow.
@PaigeBlank

Donald Trump supporters wait for the candidate to speak at a rally at South Point Arena in Las Vegas, the evening before the Republican Caucus, on Feb. 22.

ZOE MEYERS



It's been more difficult to get a read on the issue from Trump. In an interview with outdoor magazine *Field & Stream*, in January while campaigning in Nevada, he said public lands should stay under federal control. By the end of the month, however, Trump was criticizing the government's role in his *Reno Gazette-Journal* editorial: "Because the BLM is so reluctant to release land to local disposition in Nevada, the cost of land has skyrocketed and the cost of living has become an impediment to growth." Then, during the state's Republican caucus on Feb. 23, he sidestepped the issue entirely, claiming

ignorance. "Well, it's not a subject I know anything about," he said, according to the *Washington Post*.

Yet when it comes to the presidential election, Nevada's early tally is actually a bit of a red herring. The state's caucus relies on voter discussion, as opposed to the secret ballot of primaries. It's a closed system, which means only registered Democrats and Republicans can participate. By their nature, such races draw only the most vocal and polarized voters in both parties.

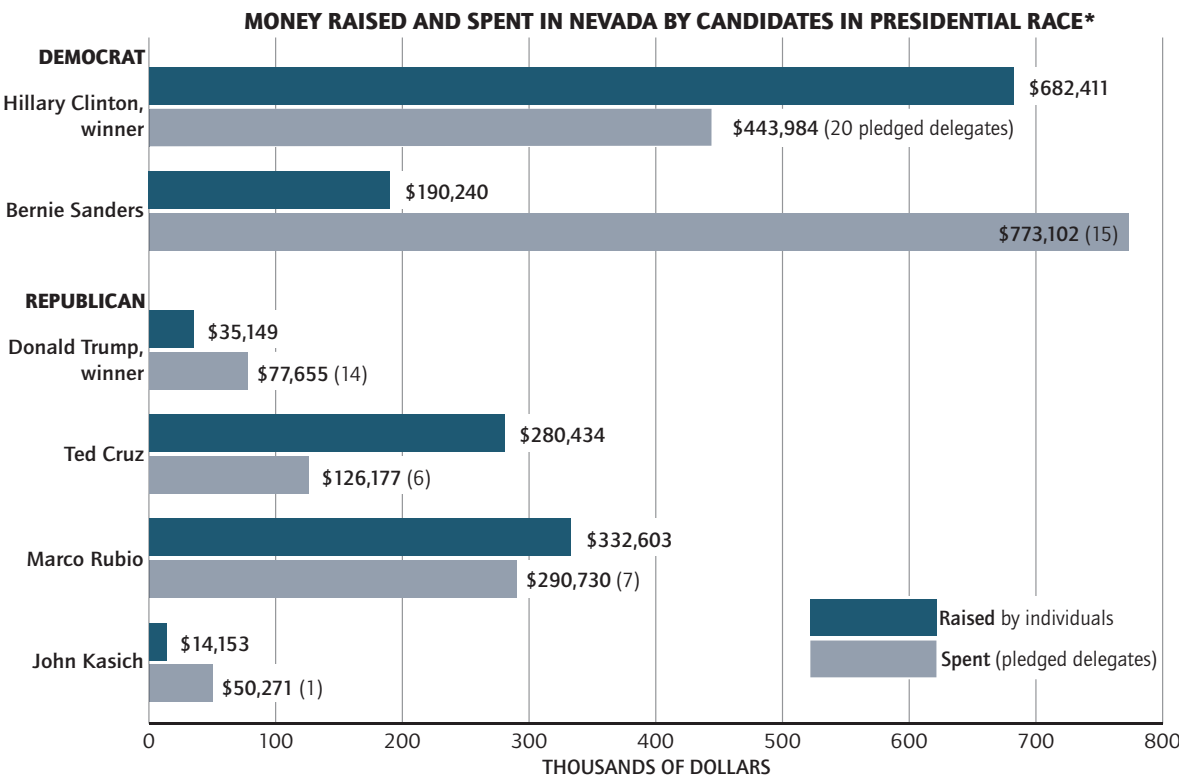
That strong partisanship means that

February's early caucus results aren't necessarily predictive of eventual nominations. And yet, because of its demographics, the state has proven strongly representative of the rest of the nation in the general election. Nevada has picked more presidential victors than any other state, choosing the winning candidate in every general election since 1912, except one. But the state's *caucuses* have swung the other way: The candidates chosen in Nevada's 2008 preliminary — Clinton and Mitt Romney, who also won the state's favor later in 2012 — were both defeated by Barack Obama.

At this year's caucus, Clinton gained a narrow victory in Nevada, but Sanders claimed Colorado on Super Tuesday. Republican frontrunner Trump succeeded in Nevada by a wide margin — more than 20 points over Cruz and Rubio. But in the Idaho Republican primary on March 8, Cruz dominated. Overall, Nevada's results followed the national pattern, with Clinton and Trump winning the most delegates so far.

The preferences of Nevada's Hispanic voters were not echoed in another key early state, Colorado, where Latinos make up 15 percent of eligible voters. On Super Tuesday, Latino Democrats favored Sanders over Clinton. No Republican results were available, since that party opted out of early polling.

"This year, it's a very strange race on both the Republican and Democratic sides," says political science professor Fott. "I'm very interested in seeing what happens." □



*Money "raised" represents donations from individuals of that state, directly to the candidate. Contributions from Super PACs, outside spending groups or political parties are not included. The statistics for money raised and money spent are updated monthly. SOURCE: FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

WESTERN DELEGATES BY STATE RACE		
National Total: D-4,765, R-2,472		
State	Nomination Type	Delegates
Alaska	D-Caucus	20
	R-Caucus	28
Arizona	D-Primary	85
	R-Primary	58
California	D-Primary	548
	R-Primary	172
Colorado	D-Caucus	78
	R-Convention	37
Idaho	D-Caucus	27
	R-Primary	32
Montana	D-Primary	27
	R-Primary	27
Nevada	D-Caucus	43
	R-Caucus	30
New Mexico	D-Primary	43
	R-Primary	24
Oregon	D-Primary	74
	R-Primary	28
Utah	D-Primary	37
	R-Primary	40
Washington	D-Caucus	118
	R-Primary	44
Wyoming	D-Caucus	18
	R-Convention	29



'A smart way' for species?

A new study refutes claims that the Endangered Species Act squelches development, but the devil is in the details

BY CALLY CARSWELL

The snail darter is a miniature fish with feathery fins and inky eyes. When it was discovered in 1973, the species was thought to exist in just one stretch of the Little Tennessee River — a stretch about to be inundated by the Tellico Dam. In 1975, after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the fish under the new Endangered Species Act, dam opponents sued to halt construction, arguing that it would obliterate the species. They won in the U.S. Supreme Court, and the dam was temporarily dead.

At the heart of the case was Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, which has sparked impassioned battles ever since. If the Fish and Wildlife Service finds that a project requiring federal environmental review will jeopardize an endangered species or its critical habitat, it must offer alternatives or modifications through a consultation process with other agencies and the developer. Those alternatives can have economic consequences: To save the snail darter, abandon the dam. To protect the spotted owl, stop old-growth logging. To preserve California's tiny Delta smelt, send farmers less irrigation water at times.

Cases like these rile up the law's critics. After a 2008 Delta smelt "jeopardy finding," California Republicans and farmers accused the government of creating the drought just to save a "stupid little fish." Environmentalists usually dismiss claims

of economic havoc as hyperbole. This fall, they pointed to a new study as proof. It found that out of 6,829 formal consultations from 2008 to 2015, only one determined that a project would harm habitat, while two warned that a listed species would be jeopardized. Study author Ya-Wei Li of Defenders of Wildlife concludes that Section 7 doesn't stop development: "It says, 'Do it in a smart way.'"

Jeopardy findings have been particularly rare recently. Under President Barack Obama, only .03 percent of consultations resulted in them. That's compared to 8.9 percent between 1979 and 1981, and 17.5 percent between 1987 and 1991.

But the decline, however dramatic, is only a rough gauge of Section 7's impact. The 1987 to 1991 period included a few dozen jeopardy findings for Oregon timber sales that threatened spotted owls. Since then, says Fish and Wildlife spokesman Gavin Shire, a more collaborative process has evolved, where the agency works with stakeholders to modify projects before making official findings. So the decline doesn't necessarily indicate an increase in harmful development. It doesn't tell you whether developers built mitigation into proposals, or dropped projects altogether, nor how much conservation measures cost or accomplished, according to Wyoming lawyer Mike Brennan.

The whole point of consultations is to respond to concerns and avoid harming wildlife, adds Barbara Craig, a Portland lawyer who advises private clients

A 2009 march in Fresno, California, organized by the Latino Water Coalition, to protest decreased water deliveries to Central Valley farmers to protect Delta smelt.

MIKE RHODES/FRESNO ALLIANCE

on Endangered Species Act compliance. Over two decades, she's seen the process improve as agencies and developers become more familiar with compliance. The decline in jeopardy calls, she says, is a sign of that progress.

Li thinks that's true, to some extent, but says there are instances where a jeopardy finding seemed warranted. Responding to a draft environmental impact statement in 2012, Fish and Wildlife urged the Bureau of Land Management to reject a Mojave Desert solar plant that would cut off a corridor that connects endangered desert tortoise populations and helps to prevent genetic isolation. Yet in 2014, the agency determined the same project wouldn't jeopardize tortoises. Defenders sued, and litigation is ongoing.

"A lot of environmentalists thought that the Obama administration was going to be a new day for wildlife protection," Li says. But endangered species seem to rank low on its environmental priority list. The president has made statements about clean air and clean water in his State of the Union addresses, Li points out, but never mentioned endangered species. "To make a jeopardy call, you're going to have to be willing to defend it," he says, and that's tough to do without political capital.

The data point to a broader weakening of legal protections in favor of a collaborative, landowner-friendly approach, says Pat Parenteau of the Vermont Law School. Sometimes this approach makes sense, he says. Safe harbor agreements, for example, assure landowners who improve habitat that they won't face future restrictions. On the other hand, voluntary deals to prevent species from getting listed often lack mechanisms to ensure that promises are kept.

Voluntary efforts justified the recent decision not to list the greater sage grouse, a test case for the efficacy of cooperative conservation. But Parenteau remains skeptical. "If it was producing good results, I'd be happy," he says. "But if you look at what's happening to species" — habitat loss, competition from invasive species, climate change — "all the indicators are downward."

Yet jeopardy calls are no guarantee, either. The Tellico Dam was completed after Congress exempted it from the Endangered Species Act. And in a brutal drought, despite some cuts in water pumped from its habitat, Delta smelt numbers reached historic lows. In a February survey to gauge the abundance of adult smelt, biologists found fish at only five of 40 sampling sites. Over four days they netted just six fish. □

THE LATEST

Backstory

In February 2014, fire erupted at New Mexico's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), the country's only permanent nuclear waste repository. Later that month, in an unrelated incident, containers of nuclear bomb debris leaked radioactive particles into the air. In response, the Department of Energy shut down WIPP, leaving the defense industry with nowhere to dispose of radioactive waste like clothing, machinery parts, and sludge ("The leak heard 'round the nuclear industry," HCN, 6/9/14).

Followup

The Energy Department concluded its investigation in late February, finding that Los Alamos National Laboratory workers incorrectly packaged waste shipped to WIPP, leading to the leak and exposing more than 20 workers to radiation. Federal officials issued safety violation citations to two contractors, but no fines. WIPP disposal operations may resume this year, but the cost of re-starting is estimated at nearly a half-billion dollars. In the meantime, waste is backing up at Los Alamos and elsewhere, including sites in Nevada and Idaho.

LYNDSEY GILPIN



DOE

Contributing editor Cally Carswell writes from Santa Fe, New Mexico. @callycarswell

Photo Essay

In Alaska, subsistence hunting keeps a village afloat

The caribou hunter of Arctic Village

Each year, as spring begins, the Porcupine caribou herd sets out on its annual migration. Roughly 200,000 animals winter south of the Brooks Range in Alaska and in the Yukon Territory, and then, starting around March, spend several weeks traveling 400 miles north to the coastal stretches of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, where they calve. When they pass indigenous settlements like Arctic Village, subsistence hunters like Charlie Swaney hunt them for food and hides. “(The caribou) hang out close to town for awhile, resting on the lakes, grazing in the muskeg forests,” says photographer

Nathaniel Wilder, who documented last spring’s migration. Swaney watches them from his house, Wilder says, planning his hunts. “He called the living room window ‘the Outdoor Channel,’ as he could watch patterns of the caribou and wolves approaching the herd.” When he’s not hunting, Swaney cuts down trees for the woodstoves that heat Arctic Village. The work helps both him and his village survive: Jobs are limited here, and cash is hard to come by. Villagers have resisted offers to lease their land to oil and gas companies; subsistence hunting and logging provide enough stability, at least for now. KATE SCHIMEL

Charlie Swaney’s dog, Daazhrai (meaning “white swan”), pulls against a tether as Swaney, a subsistence hunter, heads out in search of caribou. While snow machines are the preferred mode of transport for hunting and gathering wood in Arctic Village, Alaska, on the edge of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, many villagers still keep dogs around, and some even have full sled dog teams.



Caribou from the Porcupine herd scatter after Swaney, 54, fires and kills a female, right. Caribou meat hangs to dry on a log rack near the woodstove in the living room of Charlie and his wife, Marion, far right.



WEB EXTRA See more photos of Arctic Village, Alaska, at hcne.ws/caribouphotos



Swaney prepares to send three boxes of caribou meat from his hunts to his grandson's college graduation celebration in Fairbanks, Alaska. Supplies for the 150 inhabitants of Arctic Village, one of the most remote villages in North America, arrive by plane.



Swaney's driveway is a transfer point for things he has gotten from the land, such as wood for his stove that was gathered six miles out of town and the remains of two caribou he'd hunted earlier that day. Swaney is one of about 10 villagers who sell wood to the rest of the 150 residents in Arctic Village.



The Porcupine caribou herd, which currently numbers over 190,000, lingers on a lake south of Arctic Village as it travels through the area in one of the longest land-mammal migrations in the world. Locals say the caribou came through town a month early in 2015, but no one is sure why.

THE LATEST

Backstory

Ten thousand bighorn sheep once roamed Idaho's Hells Canyon, in the Payette National Forest. But by the 1940s, disease and habitat loss from domestic sheep grazing had decimated the animals. In an effort to restore populations, about 600 bighorns have been transplanted to Hells Canyon since the 1970s. **To protect them, in 2007 the Forest Service banned domestic sheep from large chunks of the Payette, sparking a battle over grazing privileges** ("Sheep v. Sheep," *HCN*, 10/1/07).

Followup

In March, **Idaho courts upheld the 2007 plan, which calls for reducing domestic sheep numbers in the Payette by 70 percent.** Ranchers and industry groups had sued in 2012, claiming the Forest Service didn't follow legal procedures. "(This decision) means the Forest Service is making proactive conservation decisions," says Greta Anderson, deputy director of the nonprofit Western Watersheds Project, which intervened in the lawsuit. **Today, around 1,500 bighorns inhabit the Hells Canyon area.**

LYNDSY GILPIN



PIXABAY



Guillermo Lopez brushes his teeth using bottled water at his home outside Fresno, California, after his well became contaminated and then dried up. Lopez and his neighbors are on track to get hooked up to city water this year, thanks to funds made available due to the California drought. COURTESY SASHA KHOKHA/KQED

California drought brings opportunity

Dry spell provides relief for communities with contaminated drinking water

BY ELIZABETH SHOGREN

Guillermo Lopez knew something was wrong with the well water at the house where he has lived half his life. "It tasted a little funny, so I never drank it," says Lopez, 31, who lives with his mother and brother. But like many people with wells, the family had never had it tested. They drank bottled water but used the well water for cooking and everything else. Then, early last year, due to California's long drought, their well went dry.

The family had to haul water for months — no easy task, because Lopez is disabled. It was a great relief when a huge water tank was delivered to their front yard to get their faucets and toilet working again. But the drought is about to deliver a bigger, unexpected blessing to Lopez and the other residents of Daleville Avenue, a stretch of houses in an agricultural area just outside of Fresno, California. If all goes as planned, within a year their street will be hooked up to reliable, safe drinking water from the city. Unlikely as it seems, the drought has had a silver lining.

The drought played two crucial roles in solving this neighborhood's chronic drinking-water problems. The funding to hook up the 30-odd houses is slated to come from a mixture of state and federal dollars, available only because

of the drought. But perhaps more importantly, as soon as shallow wells started to go dry, neighbors who had resisted giving up those wells began to change their minds. "People started saying, 'Yes, I do want public water.' It sped things up with the funding, too," says Sue Ruiz, community development specialist for Self-Help Enterprises, which works to improve living standards for low-income families in the San Joaquin Valley.

Rural California still has a widespread problem with contaminated drinking water, and so far positive examples like Lopez's neighborhood are few. But a recent ballot initiative will bring a major influx of state dollars, and experts hope it will allow many communities to finally obtain decent water. "I think this is an amazing opportunity we have for the state," says Boykin Witherspoon III, executive director of California State University's Water Resources and Policy Initiatives.

A few years ago, when the drought was still young, Ruiz identified Lopez's neighborhood as a place in need of cleaner drinking water. Decades before, she had worked at an elementary school near the strip of homes outside the city boundary. She sent water samples from several homes to a lab, which found levels of nitrates, uranium and bacteria that exceeded drinking water standards. (Nitrates can cause "blue baby syndrome" and even

kill infants by decreasing the oxygen in their blood, while uranium can lead to kidney problems and increased cancer risks.) But residents, who were accustomed to using as much water as they wanted for their yards and animals without paying for it, were reluctant to trade their wells for water bills.

Lopez met Ruiz shortly after his well went dry in early 2015. He embraced the idea of public drinking water and started going door-to-door to persuade his neighbors. At first, they resisted the idea. Their old wells likely would have to be decommissioned to avoid contaminating the public system, and it wasn't clear how much the new hookups would cost. But the sell got easier, Lopez recalls, as more and more wells went dry. Drilling a deeper private well, which can cost \$20,000 or more, is out of the question for many residents, including the Lopez family. "We're lucky we have the opportunity to have the city come in," he says.

Ruiz has been trying unsuccessfully to hook up another street a little farther from the city, where the contamination levels are even higher. The costs of connecting homes to public water for the first time can be staggering — \$1 million for just the 30 houses on Daleville and a few others on nearby streets. But the U.S. Department of Agriculture has already provided \$500,000, and Ruiz hopes state

Please see Drought's silver lining, page 23

Welcome, Glenn

We're excited to report that Seattle-based journalist **Glenn Nelson** is joining *High Country News* as our newest contributing editor. Glenn's work has broken down barriers for diversity and inclusion in discussions about public lands. He'll be joining fellow contributing editors **Cally Carswell**, **Sarah Gilman** and **Michelle Nijhuis** to bring even more great stories to the magazine and website.

Born in Japan, Glenn is a longtime resident of Seattle who describes his family as "a melting pot simmering with Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Latina ingredients." His background gives him a uniquely nuanced view of the West and its public lands, he says. "Since the communities of color have not been large, they've always mixed, and Seattle has as many or more multiracials, like myself and now my daughters, Sassia and Mika, than anywhere I've been in this country."

As a student, Glenn co-founded the Rainbow Coalition, an organization for minority students, at Seattle University. Later, at Columbia University, where he earned his master's degree in political science, he focused on minority election politics before going on to work at the sports department at *The Seattle Times*. As the Internet grew as a platform for viable media ventures and innovations, Glenn emerged as a leader in digital journalism. He helped shape rivals.com, an online publication that covered college sports, and also co-founded scout.com, which covered recruiting, from high school to the NFL. Then, in 1999, Glenn founded the first iteration of the online media venture *HoopGurlz*, which provides a voice for female athletes. He sold *HoopGurlz* to ESPN in 2008, though he continued to manage it for another four years. During that time, the site won numerous awards from the Society of Professional Journalists, including for Best Specialized Website.

At *HCN*, he will help develop a new cadre of writers, who will focus on covering the modern, diverse West. You can find more about Glenn and his work at trailposse.com. Welcome, Glenn!

Alas, a correction: In our story about farmers dealing with drought ("A dry future weighs heavy on California agriculture," *HCN*, 2/22/16), a photo caption misidentified the type of irrigation pipe pictured in Merced County, California. The pipes pictured were to be used as aboveground sprinklers, not buried for drip irrigation. Another mistake squeaked by in a national park visitation graphic in our special Travel Issue ("Where you go — and where you don't," *HCN*, 3/7/16). Big Hole National Battlefield is located near Wisdom, Montana, not in Idaho. We regret the errors.

—Paige Blankenbuehler for the staff



LOVE THE WEST?
JOIN THE CLUB!

Join the esteemed ranks of the Sustainers' Club and support independent journalism with your monthly donation. It's easy, secure and reliable, and a sensible, thoughtful way to show how much you care about the West!

SIX REASONS TO JOIN THE SUSTAINERS' CLUB:

- 1 Your **subscription to *High Country News* is automatically renewed** at no cost to you*, in exchange for your monthly membership pledge of \$12/month or more. No more annoying renewal notices for you, and *HCN* saves on postage, paper resources and administrative costs! (*The \$37 value of the subscription will be reflected in your year-end tax receipt.)
- 2 Membership is **quick and easy** to set up — just five minutes to get started. Contributions can be set up through your bank account or with a credit card and are processed on the 15th of each month.
- 3 You'll receive three newsletters from Executive Director Paul Larmer each year, giving you an intimate **look behind the scenes at *HCN***.
- 4 You'll be **acknowledged in the pages of *High Country News*** and in our annual report (unless, of course, you wish to remain anonymous).
- 5 **Contributions are tax-deductible**, and you'll receive an annual tax receipt every January.
- 6 You'll be fiercely proud, knowing that your contributions fund our writers and photographers, who work hard to bring you essential news of the West. And we'll send you **a sweet pair of *HCN* "Sole of the West" socks**.

JOIN TODAY!

- Call 1-800-905-1155
- Register online at hcn.org/SustainHCN
- or mail in this coupon below:

☒ **YES! I want to join the Sustainers' Club monthly giving program.**

☐ HERE IS MY MONTHLY GIFT:

☐ \$12 ☐ \$15 ☐ \$20 ☐ \$25 ☐ Other \$ _____

☐ Or my one-time gift of \$ _____

PAYMENT INFO:

☐ Enclosed is my check (Send the first month's gift or a voided check)

☐ Please use this credit card:



I'm a new Sustainers' Club member. Please send me a pair of *HCN* wool socks in this size (check one)

☐ S/M ☐ L/XL

CARD NUMBER

EXPIRES

NAME ON CARD

BILLING ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

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

48:05

RESEARCH FUND

Since 1971, reader contributions to the Research Fund have made it possible for HCN to investigate and report on important issues that are unique to the American West. Your tax-deductible gift directly funds thought-provoking, independent journalism.

Thank you for supporting our hardworking journalists.

- Anonymous (35)
In honor of the fine writers at *HCN*!
In honor of the journalists, interns, clerks and cleaning & maintenance staff at *HCN* for the excellent work that you do. And photographers!
In honor of Sarah Bartelt | Fargo, ND
In honor of Olivia Chastenev | Vancouver, WA
In honor of Mayre Flowers | Kalispell, MT
In honor of Ray Haertel | Bend, OR
In honor of James H. Kirkland | Washington, UT
In honor of Ashley Krest | Paonia, CO
In honor of Ben & Raynelle Kuckel | Colorado Springs, CO
In honor of Betty Mason | Yuma, AZ
In honor of Farley Maxwell | Ashland, OR
In honor of Peggy Lizette Olson | Greenehaven, AZ
In honor of Bob & Julie Phyliky | Rochester, MN
In honor of Jim Proctor | Bellingham, WA
In honor of Cate Ritchie | Mill Valley, CA
In honor of Emil Smith | Sisters, OR
In memory of Dimitris Argyriou
In memory of Ruth Barton
In memory of Dorthey & Stephen Beaver | Westminster, CO
In memory of Frank Berger | Star Valley, AZ
In memory of Ralph Bidwell | Great Falls, MT
In memory of Keeley Bihr | Albuquerque, NM
In memory of Ignacio Bravo | Los Angeles, CA
In memory of Mary Breunig
In memory of Elton M. Britton
In memory of Dan Crawford
In memory of Laurel Dana | Jackson, WY
In memory of Martha Dick
In memory of Judy Carr Easton | Glenwood Springs, CO
In memory of Thomas Groarke | Yankee Hill, CA
In memory of Eric Hare | Amherst, NH
In memory of Woody Hesselbarth | Fort Collins, CO
In memory of H. Lloyd Keith | Arlington, WA
In memory of Roy C. Langford | Manhattan, KS
In memory of Everett W. Matz
In memory of Dave McKee
In memory of MOKA, my beautiful Golden Girl
In memory of Howard Lewis Patterson
In memory of John & Edith Pierpont | Santa Fe, NM
In memory of Joan Reichard-Baxter
In memory of Mary Reynolds | Sandia Park, NM
In memory of my mom, Gladys Richter | Bozeman, MT
In memory of Rattana Ros | Quincy, CA
In memory of Wes Stewart | Abiquiu, NM
In memory of Norman & Mary Taylor | Missoula, MT
In memory of Kenneth Tegtman | Coyote Hill, CO
In memory of Pete & Mike Turner | Tulsa, OK
In memory of Stewart Udall
In memory of Matilda Willis Weber | Colorado Springs, CO
In memory of Betty Wigington | Denver, CO

- In memory of my father and mother, Ernest Wynne & Betty Bunn Tripp Boyden
Russ & Larrine Abolt | Condon, MT
Linda Adams & John Newman | Kernville, CA
Annette & Robert Aguayo | Albuquerque, NM
Kelly Aldridge | Albuquerque, NM
Catherine Allen | Rico, CO
Joanne Allen | Albuquerque, NM
Franz Amador & Dorothy Neville | Seattle, WA
Bruce & JoAnn Amundson | Shoreline, WA
Patrizia Antonicelli | Santa Fe, NM
David Armstrong & Susan Jessup | Loveland, CO
Gordon Ash | Sheridan, MT
Marian Ashe | Sacramento, CA
Dennis & Dana Austin | Hogansville, GA
Margaret & Carter Bacon | Cambridge, MA
John D. Bailey | Corvallis, OR
Jack & Dorothy Baker | Pinetop, AZ
John Baldauf | Sacramento, CA
Bennie H. Baldonado | Albuquerque, NM
Brad T. Barber | Salt Lake City, UT
Thomas Barnes | Yuba City, CA
Carol & Jim Barry | Colfax, CA
Thomas Beach & Barbara Peterson | Kensington, CA
Lee Beatty | Pfafftown, NC
Suzanne Beauchaine | Del Norte, CO
John & Melissa Belkin | Crested Butte, CO
Bob & Toni Bell | Shepherd, MT
Margaret E. Bell | Lyons, CO
Linda Bergstrom | Salt Lake City, UT
Dale L. Berry | Grants, NM
Ruth & Irving Bigio | Chestnut Hill, MA
Alex Blackmer | Loveland, CO
Dave & Sue Blake | Bellingham, WA
David A. Bloom | Cotati, CA
Kathryn Boehnke | Colorado Springs, CO
Sage & Elly Boerke | Rockport, WA
Patricia & Ben Boice | Idaho Falls, ID
Bob Bolin | Tempe, AZ
Linell Bollacker | Spring Creek, NV
Kathryn A. Bollhoefer | Denver, CO
Robert & Barbara Bonner | Northfield, MN
Ryan Botkins & Jenna Borovansky Botkins | Coeur d'Alene, ID
Dawn S. Bowen | Fredericksburg, VA
James & Donna Bowersox | Poway, CA
Maureen & John Bowman | Boring, OR
Reyn Bowman | Durham, NC
Stan & Glenda Bradshaw | Helena, MT
Bryan Brandel | Boise, ID
Raymond Bransfield | Ventura, CA
Richard Briesmeister | Cody, WY
Aaron Brockett & Cherry-Rose Anderson | Boulder, CO
Paul Brockmann | San Francisco, CA
Hans Rohner & Mary Jo Brodzik | Nederland, CO
Diane Brookshire | Denver, CO
Martin D. Brown | Littleton, CO
Todd Brown | Telluride, CO
Ruth Miles Bruns | Goldendale, WA
James Brunt & Mariel Campbell | Albuquerque, NM
Peter Brussard | Reno, NV
Harry G. Bubb | Newport Beach, CA
Caroline Byrd | Bozeman, MT
Deborah Byrd | Boulder, CO
Elnora Cameron | Albany, CA
Corky Capps | Florissant, CO
Harrison Carpenter | Longmont, CO
Duane & Arleta Carr | Grand Junction, CO
Christopher Carroll | Grand Canyon, AZ
David & Cheryl Carrothers | Juneau, AK
Andrew & Nancy Carson | Wilson, WY
Jack Carter & Linda Gohl | Cupertino, CA
Kale & Laura Casey | Lake City, CO
Mark Chambers | Long Beach, CA
Paul Chuljian | Mill Valley, CA
Jim & Vicki Clark | Kuna, ID
Paul & Julie Cleary | Tulsa, OK
Julia Cole & Jonathan Overpeck | Tucson, AZ
Mark & Linda Colville | Golden, CO
Andrea Commaker | State College, PA
Sean Connell | Houston, TX
Gaywynn Cooper | Seattle, WA
Kenneth Cooper | Hendersonville, NC
Heather Copeland | Carlsbad, CA
Robert M. Copeland | Fort Collins, CO
Dave & Char Corkran | Portland, OR
John Cornely | Littleton, CO
Thomas & Gail Cornwall | Bellingham, WA
John W. & Darlene Cotton | Salt Lake City, UT
Bernetha Crawford | Mesa, AZ
Diane Cross | Nevada City, CA
Steve Cross | Omaha, NE
Tom & Katherine Cruse | Dayton, OH
J. H. Cryder | Plainfield, IL
Cal Cumin | Shepherd, MT
Jim Cummings | Santa Fe, NM
Hugh Curtis | Camp Meeker, CA
Douglas & Natalie Danforth | Bisbee, AZ
Tom Pendley & Kathy Darrow | Phoenix, AZ
Grey & Rebekah Davis | Dover, ID
William E. Davis | Walnut Creek, CA
Jan de Leeuw | Portland, OR
Betsy E. de Leiris | Bozeman, MT
Jay Dean & Stefani Bittner | Lafayette, CA
Edward DeFrancia | Moab, UT
Charles DeTar | Bozeman, MT
Jim & Kathy Dice | Borrego Springs, CA
Steve Dike | Montrose, CO
Karen L. Dingle | Duluth, MN
Jean Lown & Bryan Dixon | Logan, UT
Jody & Nate Donovan | Fort Collins, CO
Michael Dotson | Ashland, OR
Frederick R. Dowsett | Lakewood, CO
Ellen Drew | Las Vegas, NM
Patricia Ducey | Joseph, OR
Dick & Cherrie Duncan | Taos, NM
Robert Dye & Donna Koster | Kanab, UT
Richard A. Eastman | San Francisco, CA
Anne E. Egger | Ellensburg, WA
Tracy & Michael Ehlers | Boulder, CO
Richard Engelmann | Boulder, CO
Pat Engrissei | Vashon, WA
Art Evans | Tucson, AZ
Joan Falconer | Iowa City, IA
Mike & Mary Farrell | Surfside, CA
Nancy A. Federspiel | Menlo Park, CA
Donald & Nancy Field | Middleton, WI
Jay & Kathy Finnell | Temecula, CA
Terry Fisk & Julia Fowler | Torrey, UT

- Mark Flower | Longmont, CO
Karen & Dee Fogelquist | Montrose, CO
Lucien E. Forbes | Newport, RI
John & Robin Fortuna | Decatur, GA
Bernard Franklyn | Foster City, CA
Bob Fulkerson | Reno, NV
Carl Gable | Santa Fe, NM
Len Gallagher | Rockville, MD
Steve Garvan | Sandpoint, ID
Marla M. Gault | Sandy, UT
Mark & Ann | Seward, AK
Joe Godleski | Fort Collins, CO
Angus Goodbody & Joy Rothschild | Portland, OR
Jana & Bill Goodman | Kalispell, MT
Jayne Goodwin | Crescent, OR
Catherine Gorman & Philip Hedrick | Winkelman, AZ
Jim Grady & Suzanne Hoest | Grand Junction, CO
Kathy Grassel | Albuquerque, NM
Harry Greene | Ithaca, NY
Beth Grendahl | Kennewick, WA
Jim & Loma Griffith | Tucson, AZ
Bryan Grigsby & Anne Dougherty | Boulder, CO
Peter Groth | Lakewood, CO
Steven Gullette | Monument, CO
Fred & Sue Gunkel | Albuquerque, NM
Karen & Tom Guter | Fort Collins, CO
David W. Hamilton | Las Vegas, NV
Richard & Alice Hammer | Port Angeles, WA
Linda H. Hanes | Santa Rosa, CA
Gary & Judy Hansen | Bountiful, UT
Karla Hansen | Willcox, AZ
Tom Hanton | Cedaredge, CO
David Harden & Pamela Blair | Sonora, CA
Diana Hartel | Phoenixia, NY
Gary W. Hawk | Missoula, MT
Gary & Victoria Hefkin | Cedar Crest, NM
Michael Helling | Victor, MT
Jack Heneghan | Colorado Springs, CO
Bill & Cindy Henk | Livermore, CO
Renita Herrmann | San Francisco, CA
Susan Heyneman | Fishtail, MT
Woody Hickcox | Decatur, GA
Hickman Family | Tacoma, WA
Bill & Wende Hill | Jacobsville, MI
Vernon H. Hill | Grand Junction, CO
Brad & Martha Hinman | Bend, OR
John & Kristen Hinman | Long Beach, CA
Jan Hodder & Mike Graybill | Coos Bay, OR
Martha Hodgkins & Brian Richter | Crozet, VA
John F. Holland | Albuquerque, NM
Lois Horst | Poughkeepsie, NY
Daniel Horton & Rita Kester | Rio Rico, AZ
Laurel Howe | Lakewood, CO
Virginia K. Howle | Lyman, WY
Laura Huenneke | Flagstaff, AZ
William Huggins | Las Vegas, NV
Walter & Sherry Hunner | Electric City, WA
Rita K. Hunter | Redondo Beach, CA
Diane Hurd | Port Townsend, WA
Cheryl Ingersoll | Paulina, OR
James Irving | Shelton, WA
Barbara Iverson | Sedona, AZ
Brantley Jackson | Barstow, CA
Ken Jacobsen | Seattle, WA
Christopher Jannusch | Berkeley, CA
Lawrence Jansen & Lesley Wischmann | Holly Ridge, NC



ILLUSTRATION: ALYSSA PINKERTON, PREVIOUS PAGE: BROOKE WARREN

Your support keeps us covering the West you care about.

Merrill L. Johns | Salt Lake City, UT
Thomas J. Jones | Las Vegas, NV
William Joyce | La Verne, CA
Linda Kahan | Olympia, WA
Van Kane | Redmond, WA
Betsey & Brian Kanes | Olympia, WA
Mary Karner | Longmont, CO
Sheldon Katz | Scottsdale, AZ
David W. Kayser | Carlsbad, NM
Clint Kelley Jr. | Redwood Valley, CA
Susan Kenzie & Ken Lawrence | Austin, TX
Larry Kilborn | Evergreen, CO
Kent L. Kilburn | Porterville, CA
Timothy M. Kingston | Berkeley, CA
Judith & Edward Kinzie | Salida, CO
Vernon & Diane Kliewer | Tucson, AZ
Mary E. Kline | Jefferson Township, PA
Beaudry Kock | San Francisco, CA
Arthur & Angie Kolis | Cora, WY
Michael & Mary Kottke | Estes Park, CO
Yves W. Kraus | Mansfield Center, CT
Lynn Krause | Apache Junction, AZ
Bill & Beth Krumbein Jr. | Santa Rosa, CA
Paul Krusa & Elaine Curry | Longmont, CO
Jeff & Mary Laird | Grand Junction, CO
Rudi Lambrechtse | Tucson, AZ
Nicole Lampe | Portland, OR
Rob Lang & Beverly Lynch | Salt Lake City, UT
R. L. Latterell | Shepherdstown, WV
Marlene Laws-Convery | Oroville, WA
John LeCavalier | Portland, OR
Craig Lee & Sandra Tassel | Bellingham, WA
Gretchen Leland | Boulder, CO
Bonnie Lemons | El Granada, CA
Mike Lenaghan | Boise, ID
Sherrior Taylor & Sid Lewis | Paonia, CO
Theodor Lichtmann | Denver, CO
Susan Linner | Lakewood, CO
Lynn Lipscomb | Corona, CA
Edna Loehman | Longmont, CO
Arthur Luna & Joanne Sharkey-Luna | Boise, ID
Margaret Lyons | El Centro, CA
Steve & Carol Maass | Ontongan, MI
Don Macalady | Golden, CO
Anna Mahorski | Boulder, CO
Richard Mangan | Missoula, MT
Mike Mansfield | Bozeman, MT
Sara Maples | Klamath Falls, OR
Don & Maureen Martin | Coeur d'Alene, ID
Paul W. Martin | Tonasket, WA
Steve Martinek | Tucson, AZ
Marian Martinez | Portland, OR
Mary Ann Matthews | Carmel Valley, CA
Chuck & LeeAnn McAda | Clifton, CO
Virginia McAfee | Boulder, CO
Kevin McCabe & Janet Frigo | Santa Fe, NM
Norma McCallan | Santa Fe, NM
Marilyn McCord | Bayfield, CO
John McDeldowney | Logan, UT
Douglas McIntosh | Fairbanks, AK
Jim & Kathleen McKenna | Leavenworth, WA
Gary A. McNaughton | Flagstaff, AZ
Errol E. Meidinger & Margaret A. Shannon | Buffalo, NY
Andrew & Debra Melnykovych | Louisville, KY
James Melton | Hood River, OR

Cheryl Hilliard Menzies | Lafayette, CO
Evan Metcalf | Denver, CO
Kent M. Micho | Arvada, CO
Richard M. Middleton | Salt Lake City, UT
John C. Miles | Arroyo Seco, NM
Carolyn M. Miller | Breckenridge, CO
James & Marsha Miller | Denver, CO
Joan E. Miller | Seattle, WA
Bill Mitchell | Vashon, WA
Mia Monroe & Steve Meyer | Mill Valley, CA
Tom Moore & Karen Den Braven | Troy, ID
Douglas & Laura Moran | Denver, CO
Paul Moreno | Yuma, AZ
Cathy Morin | Alamosa, CO
Mary Lou & Angus Morrison | Casper, WY
Ray Mosser | Portland, OR
Michael Murphy | San Francisco, CA
Deborah Summer Muth | Red Lodge, MT
Lynn Nebus | San Diego, CA
Robert T. & Mary T. Neher | La Verne, CA
John T. Nelson | The Dalles, OR
Henry & Jay Newburgh | South Lake Tahoe, CA
Mike Newsham & Barbara Micheel | Ridgefield, WA
Jack Nicholl | Malibu, CA
Mitch Noonan | Santa Fe, NM
David & Kay Norris | Boulder, CO
Stuart Nussbaum | Sacramento, CA
Gary M. Olson | Rawlins, WY
Robert Daniel Olson | Cottage Grove, WI
John N. Ong | Fairfield, IA
Molly O'Reilly & Steve Lockwood | Sandpoint, ID
John H. & Barbara Ormiston | Hamilton, MT
David & Vicki Page | Ridgway, CO
Calvin & Helen Pagel | Elizabeth, CO
Claire Palmer | Denver, CO
John J. Parodi & Elizabeth Mota | Sebastopol, CA
Jim Parys | Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
Laura Patterson | Otis Orchards, WA
Hal W. Pattison | Falls Church, VA
Bev Paulan | Eau Claire, WI
William Peabody | Condon, MT
Ron & Dawn Pease | Aztec, NM
Elizabeth Penfield | Savannah, GA
Susan Pennington | Windsor, CO
Helen L. Perry | Colfax, WA
Robert Perry | Boulder City, NV
Marsha Perry-Ellis | Pueblo, CO
Brian & Abbie Peters | Markleeville, CA
Oliver Peters | Laramie, WY
Laura Petersen | Spokane Valley, WA
Thomas Peterson | Fort Collins, CO
Carol Petrovsky | Boise, ID
Lou Petterchak | Denver, CO
Neill Piland | Pocatello, ID
John T. Pitlak | Santa Fe, NM
Cathryn & Martin Pokorny | Socorro, NM
George Ponte | Prineville, OR
Joan Poor | Edmonds, WA
Jim Porter & Sarah Palmer | Tucson, AZ
Jeff & Lisa Portman | Atlanta, GA
Thomas M. Power | Missoula, MT
Dennis Price | Ehrenberg, AZ
Helen Price | Tucson, AZ
Peter Prince | Santa Fe, NM
Carolyn Prinster | Glenwood Springs, CO

Peter B. Pruett | Hotchkiss, CO
Rebecca Quintana | Taos, NM
Rod Reckard | Sheridan, WY
Jack Reed | Paonia, CO
Steven D. Reese | Salida, CO
Paula Reitz | Red Lodge, MT
Dot Rhodes | Elgin, AZ
Malcolm F. Rice | Fresno, CA
Douglas A. Richardson | Albuquerque, NM
Laura & Paul Ricks | Ouray, CO
Joan Ridder | Tucson, AZ
Judy Roach | Arvada, CO
Lynda Roberts | Sausalito, CA
David Robertson | Huntingdon Valley, PA
Thomas Rogers & Betsy Nelson | Ocean Park, WA
Donald Ross | Dolores, CO
Stan Rovira | Hartsel, CO
Fred Royce | Helena, MT
Scott & Kathy Rudge | Boulder, CO
Katrina Running | Pocatello, ID
Tom Ruppenthal & Jenna Marvin | Fish Haven, ID
Terrance & Mary Lynn Ryan | Madison, SD
Joyce Ryba | Port Angeles, WA
Mary Jo Sage | Cincinnati, OH
Buck Sanford | Flagstaff, AZ
Mary Sari | Sterling Forest, NE
Dave Saylor | Albuquerque, NM
Cheryl Scannell | St. Petersburg, FL
Rodger Schmitt | Port Townsend, WA
Frances Schneider Liau | Pasadena, CA
Lucy & John Schott | McCall, ID
Jeff Sconyers & Debra Godfrey | Seattle, WA
John Scott | Lexington, KY
Robert Scott | Corvallis, OR
Robert Sehl | Albany, NY
Richard & Judith Sellars | Santa Fe, NM
Barbara & Bud Shark | Lyons, CO
Karin P. Sheldon & James Thurber | Lafayette, CO
Jeri D. Shepherd | Greeley, CO
Leila Shepherd | Twin Falls, ID
W. Kenneth Sherk | Salt Lake City, UT
Doris & Bob Sherrick | Peculiar, MO
Stephanie Short | New Orleans, LA
Christine & Mike Siddoway | Colorado Springs, CO
Valerie & Scott Simon | Twentynine Palms, CA
Jack & Joanne Sites | Orem, UT
Daniel Slater & Ann Wiemert | Grand Junction, CO
Robert L. Slatten | Sumas, WA
Robert B. Smith | Idyllwild, CA
Scot Smith | Longmont, CO
Florian & Lou Smoczynski | Madison, WI
Mary Lou Soscia | Portland, OR
Sam H. Sperry & Joyce Beckes | Helena, MT
Alicia Springer & Christopher P. Thomas | Chico, CA
Sherman Stephens & Martha Taylor | Flagstaff, AZ
Darlene Marie Steward | Boulder, CO
Jim & Peggy Stewart | Ferndale, WA
James Stickman | Seattle, WA
Rick & Lynne Stinchfield | Pagosa Springs, CO
Marilyn Stone | Paonia, CO
Daniel Stonington | Seattle, WA
David & Miriam Stout | Salida, CO

Louis E. Strausbaugh | Colorado Springs, CO
Bill Strawbridge & Meg Wallhagen | Mill Valley, CA
Laura Stuntz | Fort Collins, CO
Andrea Suhaka | Centennial, CO
Donald Sullivan | Denver, CO
Liz Taintor | Steamboat Springs, CO
Theodore Taylor & Denise Stone | La Grande, OR
Alice Thomassen | Belfair, WA
Russell B. Toal | Santa Fe, NM
Mike Todd | Phoenix, AZ
Janet & Greg Torline | Harrison, ID
Constance L. Trecartin | Tucson, AZ
Dale & RuthAnn Turnipseed | Twin Falls, ID
William Tweed | Three Rivers, CA
Chuck Twichell & Mary K. Stroh-Twichell | Santa Rosa, CA
Bruce Van Haveren | Evergreen, CO
William Vancil | Eloy, AZ
MaryBeth & Mark Vellequette | Boulder, CO
Eve Vogel | Amherst, MA
Chrilo Von Gontard | Bainbridge Island, WA
Kirk & Kris Vyvrberg | Sacramento, CA
Kody Wallace & Gary W. Donaldson | Salt Lake City, UT
Eric Waltari | Brooklyn, NY
Beth Walukas | Lummi Island, WA
Robin Waples & Paula Jenson | Seattle, WA
Vicki Warner-Huggins | Ridgway, CO
John & Paula Warren | Garden City, ID
Cathy & Norman Weeden | Bozeman, MT
Stephen C. Weeg & Nancy Greco | Pocatello, ID
Mary Weisberg | San Mateo, CA
Michael T. Weiss | Longmont, CO
Robert & Jill Welborn | Prineville, OR
Toby Welborn | Carson City, NV
David L. Wells | Grizzly Flats, CA
David Wells | Twin Falls, ID
Miriam Wells | Loveland, CO
Richard & Barbara Wells | Moscow, ID
Peggy & Robert Wenrick | Tucson, AZ
Gordon West | Silver City, NM
Bruce Weydemeyer & Charlotte Kinney | Santa Fe, NM
George Whatley | Spokane, WA
Marilyn Whittaker | Lafayette, CO
Byron Williams | Saguache, CO
Steve Williams | Denver, CO
Bill Wilson | Seattle, WA
George Winters | Darrington, WA
Grant & Barbara Winther | Bainbridge Island, WA
Janet Wise & Paul Michalec | Lakewood, CO
John Wise | Hidden Valley Lake, CA
Liz Wise | Vernon, AZ
Sheldon Wood | Centerville, UT
Greg Woodall | Hurricane, UT
Jack L. Wright | Bremerton, WA
Thomas C. Wylie | Centennial, CO
Ronald Yankey | Boise, ID
Chris Yoder | Baltimore, MD
Dave Yokel & Kathy Taylor Yokel | Fairbanks, AK
Larry Young | Salt Lake City, UT
Marianna Young | Monte Vista, CO
Paul Zarn | Petaluma, CA



Making Sense of Malheur

Reflections from inside the Oregon occupation

What more can be said? I was one of the hundreds of journalists who went to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge during the Ammon Bundy occupation, and I saw the same things that all the rest of them did. If there was any difference between me and the other journalists, maybe it was that I went there looking for kindred spirits.

I am a self-employed, American-born writer with a wife and two teenage children living in a tiny town on the plains of Montana. I'm a reader of the Constitution, one who truly believes that the Second Amendment guarantees the survival of the rest of the Bill of Rights. I came of age reading Edward Abbey's *The Brave Cowboy*, George Orwell's *1984*, and a laundry-list of anarchists from the last two centuries, from Leo Tolstoy and Peter Kropotkin to Mikhail Bakunin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who gave me the maxim that defined my early 20s: "Whoever lays his hand on me to govern me is a usurper and a tyrant: I declare him my enemy." I've read the 18th century philosophers Malthus and Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, and am a skeptic of government power. I was not surprised when I learned of the outrage over the sentencing of Oregon ranchers Dwight and Steve Hammond for arson; federal mandatory

minimum sentencing has been a terrible idea since its inception.

I am gobsmacked by an economy that seems engineered to impoverish anyone who dares to try to make his or her own living, and by a government that seems more and more distant from the people it represents, except when calling up our sons and daughters to attack chaotic peoples that clearly have nothing to do with me or anybody I know. I am isolated by a culture that is as inscrutable to me as any in the mountains of Afghanistan. For loving wilderness and empty lands and birdsong, rather than teeming cities, I risk being called a xenophobe, a noxious nativist. For viewing guns as constitutionally protected, essential tools of self-defense and, if need be, liberation, I'm told that I defend the massacres of innocents in mass shootings. When I came to Montana at age 25, I found in this vast landscape, especially in the public lands where I hunted and camped and worked, the freedom that was evaporating in the South, where I grew up. I got happily lost in the space and the history. For a nature-obsessed, gun-soaked malcontent like me, it was home, and when Ammon Bundy and his men took over the Malheur Refuge, on a cold night in January, I thought I should go visit my neighbors.

Ammon Bundy, center, leader of the armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, talks with local residents, supporters and press in the early days of the standoff in eastern Oregon.

ANDY NELSON/
THE REGISTER-GUARD/
ZUMAPRESS.COM

Timeline of an occupation

Jan. 2, 2016 More than 100 anti-government protesters march through Burns, Oregon, to show support for Harney County ranchers Dwight and Steve Hammond, who were charged with arson in 2012 after setting fires that spread to public lands in 2001 and 2006.

Jan. 2 Ammon Bundy leads a group of armed militants to occupy the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge outside of Burns to protest the Hammonds' arrest and call for state and local control of federal land.

Jan. 4 The Hammonds turn themselves in to serve the remainder of their five-year sentences; both served partial sentences in 2012 after their initial arrest.

Jan. 15 The FBI makes its first arrest in the occupation: 62-year-old Kenneth Medenbach is charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle for driving a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service car to a local supermarket.

Jan. 22 Ammon Bundy unsuccessfully meets with FBI officials to negotiate a resolution. The occupiers convene a so-called "citizens' grand jury" to hold local officials accountable for arresting the Hammonds and failing to turn over control of federal lands, in what occupiers believe were violations of the Constitution.

*Please see **Timeline**, page 18*

At first light on Jan. 12, in the parking lot above the headquarters of the Malheur refuge, I met Neil Wampler, a tall, white-bearded man in his 60s who was standing in the snow, at 12 degrees above zero, wearing a pair of old black running shoes and a green coat over a hooded sweatshirt. He was near the campfire where the occupiers would gather, behind the big white pickup that blocked the road into the refuge headquarters and was emblazoned with signs that said, "Clemency for the Hammonds." Blaine Cooper, whose real name would be revealed as Stanley Blaine Hicks (with felonious history) of Humboldt, Arizona, was sitting in the pickup with the heat blasting. Cooper looked like an urban model — perfectly trimmed and moussed black hair, pale blue eyes, and, oddly, given the place and the weather — 4,100-foot elevation, sagebrush steppe, severe ice fog — a lightweight black Calvin Klein jacket. As I approached the open window of the truck, Cooper said something to me about how the government had to be opposed. I was holding my legal pad and trying to make notes, but then he said something to the effect that "the left" had killed and enslaved people and blown up buildings to create this refuge, and I smiled, nodded, and kept walking. I'd learned from covering wolf reintroduction that the most outlandish quotes, however entertaining, ruin stories. I shook hands with Wampler, who was much calmer than Cooper, didn't seem to be suffering from the cold, and actually looked like he was having a good time.

"I'm just the cook, really," he said. "Been cooking for the crew since Bunkerville." He smiled. "And I can tell you, it's good to be the cook." When he told me that the occupation's goal involved a federal transfer of the refuge lands to the states, I asked him how much he knew about what would happen to the lands if they were successful. He admitted that he didn't know, really. "This is a deep study," he said. "Our previous actions were more protective, to keep the federal government from harming the citizens. This is different, because the states are asserting their 10th Amendment prerogatives. When our founders created the states out of the territories, 95 percent of it was meant to be private land."

I asked him if he knew the history of this place — the range wars, the overgrazing, the plume hunters that led to the establishment of the refuge in 1908. He admitted that he did not, but that he would like to know more. "You really need to meet Ammon, and talk to him about these things," he said. "I'm amenable to other solutions, but we have to rid ourselves of this government. All three branches are out of control. When we were at Bunkerville, the BLM had attack dogs, snipers, tasers. I saw that happening on television in California, and by 10 a.m. that morning, I was packed up and on the road to join up. And we had a great victory there." He brightened,



and the circuit-preacher intensity of his voice was gone. "I'll get off my soapbox now. I'm an old hippie, and this is a high, the most exciting and energizing thing. I'm off my butt, I'm 68 years old, and my friends back home are so jealous. To be an old hippie from San Francisco, and to be in this mix, to be friends with a redneck from Alabama. It's beautiful." Unlike the other occupiers around the fire, Wampler was not conspicuously armed, perhaps because, as other reporters would uncover, he had a 38-year-old conviction for second-degree murder (of his father) in California, a crime for which he long ago served his time but which precluded him from legally owning firearms.

As I write this, the Malheur occupation has come to an end, with Sean and Sandy Anderson, with whom I spent a pleasant hour or so talking politics and smoking cigarettes, surrendering as the last of the holdouts, along with the youthful techie, the seemingly demented Ohioan, David Fry, and Jeff Banta of Elko, Nevada.

The likeable Andersons, in their

late 40s, seemed to me a most unlikely couple to rant for blood and maelstrom. They had only recently moved to Riggins, Idaho, from Wisconsin, and I wondered if they had not misread the West and Idaho and fallen in with militants when they might just as easily have met and joined a band of merry ice fishermen. During our conversation, Sean had to keep reminding Sandy to keep her weapon with her, as she shifted from place to place trying to get warm; they wore cotton fatigues more suited to the jungle than the Great Basin in deepest winter. Sean had some authority; at least, he had a radio, and he politely kept me from going down to the refuge headquarters until he got word that it was all right, and he had his (outdated but effective) Ruger Mini-14 slung or close at hand. I took some ribbing for being unarmed, and when I said I wasn't sure that my Montana concealed carry permit was even reciprocated by Oregon, Sean patted the little pocket Constitution visible in his coat pocket, and said, "This is the only permit you'll ever need."



I am doing my best here to be respectful of people with whom, it turned out, I disagree strongly, even violently.

I could focus upon the essential nuttiness of the occupation, the lack of a plan for an outcome, the exhaustion of being assailed with pocket Constitutions any time one presents an argument that cannot be easily countered. Crackpots are drawn to such an open event like moths to a halogen light (and, no, I do not automatically exempt myself from the category). I wanted to find occupiers who could argue for what they were doing, but what is there to say when people take up arms inspired by, say, a belief that President Barack Obama is the front for an Islamic takeover of the nation, or that the Chinese are already committed to buying the uranium that lies underneath the Hammond ranch?

I went to Malheur to ask questions and to listen, to learn and report. But what can be reported when your source is

convinced of plots and powers that do not exist? When I asked whether the protesters were endangering the Second Amendment by brandishing AR-15s, the answer was that an occupation like this was the entire purpose of the Second Amendment. When I asked whether, since the county was the highest level of government they recognized, the occupiers would stand down if the sheriff asked them to (Harney County Sheriff Dave Ward, of course, already had), they said, no, because Sheriff Ward was a tool of the oppressors. And when I asked whether they would stand down if the Oregon National Guard came and asked them to, they said it was too late for that. And so on.

In the parking lot was a skinny bearded man in denim whose entire car was covered with professionally made ads for doctors who will surgically remove government-installed microchips from your brain. A young woman in a fur-trimmed coat and tall leather fashion boots approached me and one of the occupiers and asked us to guide her around. The occupier, a preternaturally soft-spoken and

friendly man in his 40s, unarmed, asked her what she wanted to see, and she said, “Anything I’m not supposed to see.” He looked at me and shrugged, then dutifully led her through the sagebrush. She was quickly back, asked me for my name, and then sped away into the ice fog in a Prius.

There was the legless man — James — who was carried in his wheelchair across the snow to join us at the fire, an energetic and apocalyptic monologist of almost surreal dullness, who beseeched the Lord for forgiveness each time he cursed and insisted on being lifted from his chair so he could kneel in the cold mud beside the fire pit and pray for us all, whose wheelchair constantly threatened to tip over or roll forward into the flames, despite the blocks of firewood and kindling we jammed under the front wheels. In the seemingly endless quest to haul breakfast or coffee or ammo on a rope up into the 90-foot steel fire lookout that overlooks the parking lot, a trapdoor banged, causing Sean Anderson to flinch (we were, after all, in a heavily armed encampment that was illegally occupying a

Neil Wampler, facing page, who was part of the standoff near Cliven Bundy’s ranch in Nevada in 2014, traveled to eastern Oregon from California. Sandy Anderson, above center, talks with her husband, Sean, left, with a pistol on his hip, and another occupier who gave his name only as Doug.

BROOKE WARREN, FACING;
ROB KERR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES,
ABOVE

Timeline, continued
from page 16

Jan. 26 Ammon Bundy and other armed militants are stopped by law enforcement on Highway 395 north of the refuge. Oregon state troopers shoot and kill Robert “LaVoy” Finicum of Arizona, the occupiers’ spokesman. The eight suspects arrested include: Ammon Bundy, 40, leader of the occupation, Ryan Bundy, 43, of Nevada; Brian Cavalier, 44, of Nevada; Shawna Cox, 59, of Utah; Ryan Payne, 32, of Montana; Joseph O’Shaughnessy, 45, of Arizona; and Peter Santilli, 50, of Ohio. Jon Ritzheimer surrenders in Arizona.

Jan. 28 In the days following Finicum’s death, militants gradually leave the refuge. The FBI makes three more arrests: Duane Ehmer, Jason Patrick and Dylan Anderson.

Feb. 8 Cliven Bundy, on his way to the refuge from Nevada, is arrested at the Portland airport and charged with conspiracy, obstruction of justice and assault on a federal officer in connection with the 2014 standoff with BLM officials on federal land near his Nevada ranch.

Feb. 11 Forty-one days later, the occupation officially ends when the last four militants — Sean and Sandy Anderson, Jeff Banta and David Fry — surrender after a tense standoff with the FBI.



Melissa Cooper and Shawna Cox discuss supplies in the early days of the occupation. BROOKE WARREN

federal wildlife refuge, despite the freshman debate team campout atmosphere), and say, “I thought it was on there for a second.” To which James shouted, “I hope it is! I hope it is! Bring on the fire!” A series of refuge-owned ATVs came up the icy road, ridiculously fast, fishtailing on the trail to the fire tower, and James cheered. “I love everybody here!” he exclaimed.

To focus on the bizarre, to wallow in the cheap pleasures of ridicule, is to sacrifice any chance of finding meaning or instruction here. Jason Patrick, one of the occupiers now in jail, told me that he could not care less what happened to the lands at Malheur, or what the history of the place was. “It says in Article 1, Section 8, Clause 17, that the federal government has no right to own any of these lands. That’s it. If we don’t abide by the Constitution, which limits what the federal government can do, then we have no rule of law, we have no country.” Patrick was 43 years old and wore khaki pants, a dress shirt and a blue blazer, as if ready to address a court rather than stand in the snow, smoke Marlboro Lights, and talk to reporters and other skeptics, which is what he did most of the time I saw him.

One morning, we stood outside the refuge headquarters, a venerable building of rough-cut local stone. Within, Ammon Bundy, Robert “LaVoy” Finicum and the core group were having yet another meeting to prepare for the upcoming press

briefing. The sun came briefly through the fog, and Patrick and I stood smoking and being pelted with bits of rime falling from the old Siberian elms and cottonwoods as the sun heated them. Below us, Duane Ehmer of Irrigon, Oregon (who might have been the only native Oregonian in the occupation), was feeding his cow-horse, Hellboy, from hay stacked by his rusted white horse trailer, both of them taking a break from being the symbol of the occupation, the too-much-photographed man on the horse with the American flag.

In his other life, Ehmer was a welder, rode Hellboy in jousting matches, hunted black bear on horse-packing trips in the national forest. Because he was convinced that the federal government would soon sell off all public lands or close them to the public, he worried about the loss of access to places to ride his horses. He got \$130 a month in disability payments for hearing loss incurred while he was in the military. His weapons were mostly symbolic, a cap-and-ball Colt revolver, and a single-shot 12 gauge shotgun. I suspected that he did not have the ready cash to buy the AR-15s and Trijicon sights, the tactical sniper rifles tricked out with the latest optics, the Glock handguns that are the norm among his colleagues, but it could be that he just had no interest in newfangled lethal gadgetry. He showed me his classic 1859 McClellan cavalry saddle, and told me he was trying to get a relative to bring down his cavalry saber.

(“And they call me a terrorist,” he said, shaking his head.) He is awaiting trial now, too.

Jason Patrick was no cowboy, and didn’t try to be. He wasn’t a physical fitness buff, rugged outdoorsman, or gunner. He might share with Ammon Bundy and the rest of the Mormon contingent of occupiers the belief that the Constitution is divinely inspired, but that wasn’t clear, because he did not talk religion. He revered the Constitution as the ultimate stopgap to a government that, in his view, ruins everything it touches or tries to guide. His disdain for Obama was matched by his fury at George W. Bush. Patrick had a roofing business in Georgia that collapsed with the economic crash of 2008, and he believed, as I do, that the endless wars and crony capitalism of the Bush era destroyed the assets of middle-class America, while “too big to fail” government relief programs further evaporated our money upward and away. Like Sean Anderson, Patrick was tired of a government that sends young people away to die in wars that profit, to an often-obscene degree, the one class whose children will never serve in them. “My father was a Vietnam veteran,” Patrick said, “and we lived on a homestead in Virginia that we cut out of the woods. We were off the grid a long time before that was ever a thing to be.” His father died when Patrick was 12 years old, he says, of cancer related to wartime exposure to Agent Orange. His mother spent years

trying to collect veteran's benefits to support their family.

Our conversation was interrupted by Finicum, who was coming out the door with a harried expression. Finicum and Patrick had a short and slightly heated exchange over who had failed to clean up the refuge woodworking shop. As Patrick headed over to the shop, I was reminded of other groups I've known or been a part of, anarchist, communal, certain families, where hierarchy is rejected, and how the smallest chore takes Herculean effort to address or convince someone else to address. This was my only contact with Finicum beside the circus-like press conferences held in the parking lot. I learned later that, like Patrick, Finicum had his own business failure behind him, a bankruptcy in 2002; he admitted to reporters that his ranch, even before he renounced his federal grazing leases, just covered expenses (which is why his main business was taking in foster children). With a huge family of his own — reports placed the number of Finicum's children at either 11 or 14 — I could not imagine how anyone can survive, much less prosper, in the current U.S. economy, with that many mouths to feed, that many shoes to buy. Even with the comfort of strong religious faith, the stress of meeting the bills every month must have been profound. Watching Finicum walk away, in clean Wranglers with his camouflage gaiters pulled tightly to the knees, a squared-away Westerner at home in the snow and the cold, I could not have guessed that he would be the one to die in this chaotic, seemingly pointless takeover.

It was clear to me, though, that somebody would die. Such certitude as these men and women possess demands blood sacrifice to justify itself. There were too many armed people in, and circling, the occupation, with too many varying levels of sanity and too many varying motivations for being there. Even Neil Wampler, a man whose demons seem like they are mostly in his past, had said, "You can't not give an inch and be assured of a peaceful outcome. If it came down to a violent showdown, we're willing to pay the price." Walking around the refuge parking lot and buildings, I saw a lot of gray beards and "We the People" caps and camo watch caps covering thinning hair or bald pates. The weapons and the tactical vests lent a seriousness to men disappearing into the irrelevance of late middle age. Guns, for as long as we have had them, have given undue impetus to arguments that lack merit or reason, given credence to delusional rants.

The American West has the highest suicide rates in the nation, and has since the frontier days. The current epidemic of suicide among white males in the U.S. is part of the story here — in a recent article at *Salon*, Robert Hennelly wrote, "According to federal morbidity stats in 1999, 9,599 white men killed themselves. By

2010 that number was 14,379. In 2013 the U.S. recorded 41,149 suicides, 70 percent of which were white men, who mostly shot themselves. The most heavily affected demographic is middle-aged white men in the 45 to 64 age cohort. This die-off may serve as a kind of anthropological warning about the pernicious nature of global capitalism and how it treats those its marketplace judges surplus. ..."

Forty-five to 64 was exactly the age bracket that dominated the occupation of the Malheur. Camaraderie and unity of purpose are the strongest antidotes to despair, and despite the conflicting opinions and anarchic individualism of so many in the modern militia movements, unity in fiery opposition to the federal government, especially a federal government headed by a Democrat, remain the universal.

It did no good whatsoever to try to discuss the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, which empowered the Bundy family and many others among the 18,000 or so other public-lands grazers to own small holdings, usually around a water source, and graze their livestock on public lands around those holdings for what may arguably be the lowest grazing fee on the planet. Most of the occupiers had never heard of the Taylor Grazing Act, and those who might have insisted that "grazing rights" on public land were a property right attached to the base private land. No amount of arguing would convince them otherwise, although the Bureau of Land Management plainly states that grazing of BLM lands is not a property right, or a right at all, any more than my neighbor's home and yard is mine if I rent it, or that my renting a home means the owner cannot sell it or rent it to somebody else, or paint it a different color. When presented with that fact, an occupier like Jason Patrick will merely say that the BLM has no right to exist.

No one there seemed interested in the fate of the lands they were claiming in the takeover. None could explain why a mostly Gentile band of militants were now following what was almost entirely a Mormon-led insurrection, with a man named Ammon for the leader of the Nephites, at the head, or a man who calls himself Captain Moroni (*Alma 59:13*: "And it came to pass that Moroni was angry with the government, because of their indifference concerning the freedom of their country") on guard duty, or a spokesman like Finicum, whose ranch in Cane Beds, Arizona, was less than two miles from the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS) enclave of Colorado City. The militants seemed uninterested in how they might fit in to a renewed State of Deseret, even though the language that the Bundy leaders used was almost identical to the 19th-century plans for that kingdom, and the Malheur lies at the very northern expanse of the old State of Deseret claims. They did not see themselves as volunteers in a new version of the Nauvoo Legion from the Utah War of 1857-58

because none of them seemed to know, or be interested in, any of that history.

Finicum must have known the history of his homeland in the Arizona Strip, which in the time of his grandfather was almost denuded by the overstocking of 100,000 head of cattle, and which, in the 1890s, even the hard-as-nails cattleman and visionary pioneer Preston Nutter could not control. A smallholder like Finicum, unless he had his own militia, would not have survived one season in the early settlement years of the Arizona Strip. The battles over water sources and the destruction of the range were such that Preston Nutter, not exactly a big-government kind of businessman, was a leading advocate for the Taylor Grazing Act.

It is tempting to use the philosopher George Santayana's quote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," but it doesn't fit here. Ammon Bundy (I did not meet him during my visit to the refuge) may or may



LaVoy Finicum, a rancher and friend of the Bundys, on patrol Jan. 6. He became the only casualty of the Oregon occupation. RICK BOWMER/AP

Where are they now?

On Feb. 10 and 11, eight occupiers were arrested: **Jason Charles Blomgren**, 41, of North Carolina; **Blaine Cooper**, 36, of Arizona; **Wesley Kjar**, 32, of Utah; **Eric Lee Flores**, 22, of Washington; **Corey Lequieu**, 44, of Nevada; **Darryl William Thorn**, 31, of Washington; **Neil Wampler**, 68, of California; and **Geoffrey Stanek**, 26, of Oregon.

All 25 people were indicted on a federal conspiracy charge of impeding the work of federal officials through threats, intimidation and force. Sixteen of them pleaded not guilty, including **Ammon** and **Ryan Bundy**. The judge set a trial date of April 29, but it seems unlikely that it will happen that soon.

On Feb. 17, a federal grand jury indicted **Cliven**, **Ammon** and **Ryan Bundy**, **Pete Santilli** and **Ryan Payne** on 16 felony charges related to the armed assault against federal officers at the Bundy Ranch in 2014. The judge ordered Cliven back to Nevada, where he will face his six charges; the rest remain in custody in Oregon.

At press time, **Brian Cavalier**, **Jon Ritzheimer**, **Sean Anderson** and **David Fry** are also still detained in Oregon. **Joseph O'Shaughnessy**, **Jeff Banta**, **Shawna Cox**, **Duane Ehmer**, **Geoffrey Stanek** and **Sandy Anderson** were released on bail in February and must remain in their home states until trial.
LYNDESEY GILPIN

Web Extra

For more of *HCN's* extensive coverage on the Malheur occupation and the Sagebrush Rebellion, see hcne.ws/sagebrush-rebel

not know the history of land use in the West, but there will be no repeating the free-grazing era of the late 19th century. Not in the fastest-growing developed nation on Earth, on a planet that will soon play host to 9 or 10 billion human beings. Nothing will be free. What the Malheur militants were asking for was almost exactly what more mainstream political leaders like Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, or the American Lands Council, now headed by Montana state Sen. Jennifer Fielder, say they want, too. The Malheur occupation, with the incessant press coverage in its early weeks, was the soapbox for disseminating payloads of misinformation about America's public lands, about their management, about how and why we have them. Every sound bite was delivered to further the goal of privatization.

The Bundys and the militants who followed and still support them are the agents of their own destruction.

Should these adherents to the land-transfer movement ever succeed and have the public lands given or sold to the states, some version of the State of Deseret will almost certainly flourish. Such a place already exists, of course: the Deseret Ranches, owned by the Church of Latter-day Saints, 235,000 acres in Utah and 678,000 acres in Florida (2 percent of Florida's landmass). The LDS corporation would certainly be prepared to make some very large purchases of what is now public land, but it is highly unlikely that any of the Bundy family, or any of Finicum's many children, would be grazing their cows there. Smaller operators cannot own lands that do not put enough pounds on cows to pay property taxes. It is unlikely that any of the current crop of smallholder ranchers anywhere in the West will be able to bid against the church for productive land; or challenge families like the Wilks of Texas, who have so far bought over 300,000 acres of austere grazing land south of the Missouri Breaks in Montana; or the Koch family, whose ranch holdings comprise about 460,000 acres (including almost a quarter-million acres in Montana); or Ted Turner, who has some 2 million acres across the U.S.; or Stan Kroenke, who two years ago purchased the 165,000-acre Broken O Ranch in Montana and has just bought the 510,000 acre W.T. Waggoner Ranch in Texas.

Buyers, in a world packed and competitive beyond the imaginations of those who set aside these unclaimed and abandoned lands as forest reserves and public grazing lands in the early 1900s, are now everywhere, planet-wide. As Utah state Rep. Ken Ivory, when he was president of the American Lands Council, famously said of privatizing federal lands, "It's like having your hands on the lever of a modern-day Louisiana Purchase."

When that lever is pulled, and it will be, unless a majority of Americans know



A member of the occupying group on the tower that overlooks the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, where armed militants kept watch during the siege.

RICK BOWMER/AP

enough about what is at stake to oppose it, we will see the transformation of our country. Federal water rights that underpin entire agricultural economies, and that are critical to some of the last family farms and ranches in America, will be in play. Few Americans, even those in the cities of the East who know nothing about these lands, will be untouched by the transformation. Once the precedent for divesting federal lands is well set, the Eastern public lands, most of them far more valuable than those in the West, will go on the international auction block. The unique American experiment in balancing the public freedom and good with private interests will be forever shattered, while a new kind of inequality soars, not just inequality of economics and economic opportunity, but of life experience, the chance to experience liberty itself. The understanding that we all share something valuable in common — the vast American landscape, yawning to all horizons and breathtakingly beautiful — will be further broken. These linked notions of liberty and unity and the commons have been obstacles to would-be American oligarchs and plutocrats from the very founding of our nation, which is why they have been systematically attacked since the Gilded Age of the 1890s.

I went to the Malheur looking for kindred spirits. I found the mad, the fervent, the passionately misguided. I found the unknowing pawns of an existential chess game, in which we are, all of us, now caught. Driving home across the snow-packed Malheur Basin, through mile after mile of sage, with towering basalt cliffs in the near distance, herds of mule deer

appearing as gray specks in the tongues of slide rock and wind-exposed yellow grass, I did not wonder what Edward Abbey would have said about all of this, or Kropotkin or the lugubrious monarchist Hobbes. I thought instead of the old C.S. Lewis books of my childhood, and of Lewis' writings on the nature of evil, where evil is never a lie, because lying implies creation, and evil, by its nature, has no creative power. Instead, the nature of evil is to take a truth and twist it, sometimes as much as 180 degrees. Love of country becomes hatred of those we believe don't share our devotion, or don't share it the same way. The natural right of armed self-defense becomes the means to take over a wildlife refuge, to exert tyranny on those who work there, or those who love the place for the nature it preserves in a world replete with man's endeavors. The Constitution, one of the most liberal and empowering documents ever composed, becomes, with just a slight annotation or interpretation, the tool of our own enslavement. □

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

A version of this essay was originally published on our website, hcn.org, on Feb. 12, 2016.



Hal Herring is a contributing editor at *Field and Stream* and wrote his first story for *HCN* in 1998. He covers environment, guns, conservation and public lands issues for a variety of publications.
halherring.com

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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

Publish in Montana — Write/publish part-time, hike, kayak, ski, \$50,000. Full-time, much more. 28-year client base. Interviews: movie stars, governors, Native Americans. Will train. montanapioneer@gmail.com. Click Publish in Paradise: montanapioneer.com.

Highly profitable outfitting business and canoe livery for sale in Montana. Offering fully guided trips as well as operating a very busy canoe and kayak livery in a national monument. The leading outfitter since 1965. Three-bedroom home, 40-by-60-foot warehouse, fleet of vans, trucks, trailers, over 70 canoes and kayaks. Turnkey. 1-877-538-4890.

Home office position — 30-year-old international company, looking for motivated individuals. No boss, no selling, work own hours! Income based on own activity, not MLM! 575-590-1161. www.laecoteam.com.

EMPLOYMENT

Kitchen and cabins manager — Daily upkeep of guest ranch kitchen and cabins from mid-May through September. Assisting domestic operation of the ranch. Opportunity for couple; we're also seeking ranch manager assistant for same period. Email: ruthiebrown@comcast.net.

Director and representative positions at Defenders of Wildlife — Go to www.defenders.org to see position descriptions. Defenders of Wildlife is EOE. 202-772-0215. www.defenders.org.

Communications director wanted — WildEarth Guardians is a nonprofit committed to protecting and restoring the wildlife, wild places, wild rivers and health of the American West. We are looking for a creative person who can serve up big ideas that move the human heart AND get those ideas executed. A balance of designing, writing and producing is required, but your creative THINKING and DOING is what should set you apart. If you combine a scheming sense of communications strategy with a thorough knowledge of environmental issues, campaigns and stakeholders in the American West, we would like to hear from you. Visit about.us>job_opportunities at www.wildearthguardians.org.

Ranch caretaker assistant — May-September assistant to ranch caretaker for maintenance and repair of infrastructure on ranch as well as daily upkeep on property and facilities. Opportunity for couple; we're also seeking kitchen/lodge manager for guest management during same period on the ranch. Couple needs to be self-directed. Email: ruthiebrown@comcast.net.

Land Conservation Loans associate — The Associate will be responsible for marketing the program, sourcing new loans, evaluating and assisting borrowers with their appli-

cations and business plan strategy, providing technical assistance to borrowers, serving as staff support to the LCL Committee, designing and delivering trainings at local, state, regional and national conservation conferences, as well as other duties as assigned. The Associate will be working remotely from a home office. Ideal locations would be near cities with major airports, but all locations within the United States will be considered. Visit our website, www.conservationfund.org. Send résumé/cover letter with salary requirements to: careers@conservationfund.org or fax to: 703-525-4610. The Conservation Fund is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Interpretive biologist guide — Spring/Summer 2016 for educational wildlife and cultural history guide service. Qualifications: advanced studies and knowledge of natural and cultural history with Yellowstone National Park emphasis; identification of plants and wildlife; safe driving, communication, teaching, outdoor leadership skills. www.yellowstonesafari.com. Send cover letter/résumé to: office@yellowstonesafari.com.

Communications manager, northwest region — The Wilderness Society is actively recruiting for a Communications Manager, Northwest region, located in our Boise, Idaho, office. For more information, please visit our website at www.wilderness.org/careers-and-internships. 202-429-2649. julie_shackett@twsw.org.

Citizen science staff — The Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP) does science, education and stewardship of the Rio Grande and its watershed through long-term hands-on student research of ecosystem response to inform public policy. BEMP has several staff openings: In Albuquerque — Stewardship Coordinator and summer college and high school student interns; in Las Cruces — Environmental Educator. Job descriptions at www.bemp.org. 505-898-6388. bemp.job@bosqueschool.org. www.bemp.org.

Staff scientist — At the Center for Biological Diversity, we believe that the welfare of human beings is deeply linked to nature — to the existence in our world of a vast diversity of wild animals and plants. This is a full-time position in our Climate Law Institute and located in Los Angeles, Calif. The Staff Scientist will focus on energy policy and greenhouse gas mitigation. The Center is dedicated to protecting endangered species and wild places through science, policy, education and environmental law. We are an EOE. <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/about/jobs/#cliscentist>.

Community organizer — Join Western Colorado Congress' team! Recruit and work with our members to protect and enhance our quality of life on the Western Slope. Full-time, great benefits, based in Grand Junction. Details at www.wccongress.org. Application deadline March 25, 2016.

Policy and campaign manager at the Gifford Pinchot Task Force will lead campaigns to protect forests, watersheds and wildlife in Washington's South Cascades. www.gptaskforce.org/about/employment-opportunities.

Communications director — SalmonState/Anchorage, Alaska. 907-321-3291 timsalmonstate@gmail.com.

Paralegal — At the Center for Biological Diversity, we believe that the welfare of human beings is deeply linked to nature — to the existence in our world of a vast diversity of wild animals and plants. This is a full-time position in our Strategic Litigation Group and located in Oakland, Calif. We are an EOE. You can view the full posting at <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/about/jobs/#paralegal>.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Enjoy a healthier lifestyle! Experience the LIVING ENERGY of Premium Grade-A Essential Oils. Unadulterated — no pesticides. Organically grown. Proprietary distilling methods. Business opportunity. www.theOilSolution.com.

HOME AND GARDEN

Seeds Trust — Seeds for Cold Country Siberian tomatoes, heirloom vegetables, herbs, native grasses, wildflowers since 1984. 720-335-3436. www.seedstrust.com.

Scythe Supply — European scythes from Maine! Free catalog. 207-853-4750. www.scythesupply.com.

Our idea of wheeled luggage.



TOM BIHN
SINCE 1972 - MADE IN U.S.A.

Colorado Plateau EXPLORER

FREE trail guides, maps & GPS tracks for Grand Canyon, Arches, Zion and more!



coloradoplateauexplorer.org

Silver Mountain Hemp Seed — Know what you grow! Colorado registered and tested. High germination rate, stable and adaptable. 34:1 ratio CBD-A:THC. Propagation and test result data available with purchase. Call for pricing. 970-379-9127. wizard4448@gmail.com.

AGGRAND Natural Liquid Fertilizers Chemical dependent? Grow responsibly, naturally, easily w/proven AGGRAND. 877-486-7645, www.natural-fertilizers.com.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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

Wildland Fire Services — Planning, reviews, litigation, www.blackbull-wildfire.com.

Environmental law/science research and writing — Experienced JD LLM PhD. Providing general overview to detailed analysis (but not legal advice). Holly hvcampbellresearch@gmail.com. 541-740-9716.

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKS

Back of Beyond Books is buying collections/libraries of used Western Americana, Native Americana, Southwest literature and river guides. Call Andy Nettell at Back of Beyond Books, 800-700-2859.

Subscribe to Permaculture Design — Information and Inspiration: natural building, ecovillages, intentional communities, community gardens, appropriate technology, edible landscaping and much, much more! PermacultureDesignMagazine.com.

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

Near Glacier National Park — All-season cabin within two miles of Glacier National Park entrance. The 950-square-foot cabin has one bedroom, loft and composting toilet, and is off the grid with 900 watts of solar power. \$234,000. nelsorp1813@gmail.com. 608-469-4676.

Solar off-grid — 3,960-square-foot log-sided home for sale overlooking Idaho's wild and scenic Salmon River on 13.42 irrigated acres, 40 miles downstream Salmon, Idaho, with 1,344-square-foot barn on horse-friendly property and abundant wildlife viewing. Visit www.offgrididahorealestate.com. Contact Esther: 208-756-1800.

Top lodging business in Wickenburg, Ariz. — Successful lodging business for sale. Bordering 700-plus acres of Nature Conservancy River Preserve. Three hand-crafted guesthouses, plus owner's house. Turnkey. Profitable. Year-round upscale clients. Lovingly maintained. Good well. New septic. Clean, charming town. See website www.RioTierraCasitas.com. \$559,000. 928-684-3037.

Paradise found — Enjoy your mornings on a covered deck overlooking the Upper Wind River Valley outside of Dubois, Wyo. 4,200-square-foot home on 4.5 acres with four bedrooms, two full baths, two half baths, large workshop, attached three-car garage, radiant floor heat, beautiful oak, cherry and pine floors, fireplace, spectacular views. Passive solar design and superior Internet service. \$569,000. Contact margo@wyoming.com.

Small farm in western Colorado — 17.77 acres of prime land planted in organic peaches and alfalfa. Five-bedroom, two-story Victorian home that has been restored. \$469,900. 800-571-7670. www.western-colorado-ranch.com.

Unique farming opportunity — Orchard, vineyard, winery in Western Colorado. Certified organic fruit. Diversified. Ecologically farmed. Turnkey. coloradovineyard@gmail.com.

Diamond in the rough — Fully renovated home for sale on a sunny half-acre adjacent to the Sawtooth National Forest and just five minutes to world-class skiing on Sun Valley's Bald Mountain. Windermere. 208-720-4077. dangorham.withwre.com.

Outstanding recreational property — 321 acres, 4,400 feet lake frontage, 30 minutes to Glacier National Park, native grasslands and aspen forests. \$189,999. ducklake355@gmail.com.

Modest rammed-earth solar home near Tucson in planned conservation community. 20-acre ironwood forest, desert farm, education center. Terms include one-year trial period. beantreefarm@gmail.com.

Custom home on recreational ranch, southern New Mexico. \$445,000. Enjoy spectacular views from this beautiful home on 60 acres. Remote location but not secluded part of an upscale ranch community with 34 custom homes spanning 72,000 acres. 303-885-1214. newmexicoranchcommunity.com.

Lake of the Raven, Mancos, Colo. — 13 acres, custom timber frame home, private trout lake, irrigation, greenhouse, Mesa Verde views. \$525,000. 970-403-2556.

Room to grow a little of everything — With irrigation, great well water, three cabins, a workshop, chicken coop, vineyard, acres, a four-bedroom house with stunning views, this is the place to try ag in the North Fork Valley. One-year lease with option for second year. 970-250-6836. www.pogoshill.weebly.com.

TOURS AND TRAVEL

Expedition Rafting — Five-day Colorado River trips and more. AdventureBoundUSA.com. 800-423-4668.

Luxury Adventure Trips — Passionate about exploring the world? Love kayaking, gentle hiking, climbing, whale watching, safaris or cultural tours? Who you travel with matters: www.luxuryadventuretrips.com, 866-318-5396.

Experience Copper Canyon, Mexico — Ten-day package from Los Mochis Airport. Two nights on the Canyon Rim. Six days of burro-supported hiking from the rim at 8,000 feet to the wild Urique River at 2,400 feet. Includes first-class round-trip on North America's premier rail journey — Chihuahua al Pacifico. \$2,200 per person/four person minimum. Custom itineraries/Luxury amenities upon request. www.coppercanyontrails.org, 520-324-0209.

Tours for nonprofits — Put the fun back in fundraising. Take your supporters on a customized tour. We specialize in bus tours to scenic, cultural and historic locations in Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. 602-944-3286.

Costa Rica beachfront condo — Two-bedroom, two-bath, Playa Junquillal. VRBO #823459. \$145 per night. amyandfritz@hotmail.com.

Rogue Wild and Scenic River Trips — Three-four days in lodges fishing from drift boats or whitewater rafting. 37 years' experience. 877-855-6270 tightlinesfishing.com

Life at bike speed — Lizard Head Cycling Guides — Supported four- to 14-day tours, car-free roads, live music, massage therapy, seamless mileage options and soul-crushing climbs. Our tours ride through some of the wildest, most spectacular and inaccessible areas of the West. Featured in the *New York Times*. CHUBBY BIKES ARE HERE! In 2016, our MTB tours will include three-inch-tired 27.5 wheeled MTBs. See for yourself why these bikes are changing the sport of mountain biking. 970-728-5891. www.lizardheadcyclingguides.com.

Wildlife, birding, bouldering, Icelandic horses, ridge running, wildcrafting, log building, relaxing solitude. Join us at Apricity Alaska; guided, remote, year-round, small-scale. Agricultural Internships available. www.apricityalaska.com.

Guided backpacking in the Escalante Canyons — All gear/food can be provided. Join Escape Goats for a true adventure! escalantecanyonguides.com, 435-826-4652.

Yurt — North Fork of the Gunnison River Yurt with all the amenities, near Paonia, Colo. www.vrbo.com/323752.

Copper City Inn in Bisbee, Ariz. — "Number 1" on TripAdvisor. Reviewed in *Arizona Highways*. See it: coppercityinn.com. 520-432-1418.

Wilderness Volunteers is a nonprofit provider of week-long adventure service projects in cooperation with public land agencies across the United States. From trail work in remote desert canyons to invasive weed removal on sunny beaches, join us in our 19th year and give something back to our nation's wild lands! Wilderness Volunteers, P.O. Box 22292, Flagstaff, AZ, 86001. www.wildernessvolunteers.org, 928-255-1128, hello@wildernessvolunteers.org.

UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOLS

New! Bachelors' in public service degree Fully online program provides the skills and content knowledge to work in the public, private and nonprofit sectors, and the emerging fourth sector. Offered by the top-ranked CU Denver School of Public Affairs. www.bit.ly/SPABAPS.

Colorado-certified public manager program — Designed to offer individuals in the public and nonprofit sectors an opportunity to develop and improve their management and leadership skills. Start classes at any time. Offered by the top-ranked CU Denver School of Public Affairs. www.spa.ucdenver.edu/cpm.

GROW MORELS
MOREL HABITAT KIT
 CREATE A PERENNIAL
 MOREL GARDEN IN YOUR
 OWN BACK YARD
 \$32.95 + \$8.40 S/H

**ORGANIC INDOOR
 MUSHROOM KITS**
 AS EASY AS GROWING A
 POTTED PLANT
 Shiitake, Oyster & Pom Pom

ORGANIC MUSHROOM PLUGS
 LOG & STUMP INOCULATION
 Shiitake, Maitake, Lion's Mane, Ganoderma & Oyster

Credit Card Orders (800) 789-9121
www.gmushrooms.org
GOURMET MUSHROOM PRODUCTS
 P. O. BOX 515 HCNE - GRATON, CA 95444
 Visa - Discover - Master Card - American Express
 Green Gifts - Dried Mushrooms - Books

**10th ANNUAL
 AMAZING
 EARTHVEST**

**May 8 – 14, 2016
 Kanab, Utah**

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

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

www.amazingearthfest.org
 AmazingEarthfest

UTAH REI and other sponsors.

Drought's silver lining, *continued from page 10*

funds will fill in the gap.

Lopez's neighborhood is far from the only place in California where the drought is busting through logjams that have blocked low-income communities from receiving clean water. Scientists have documented widespread groundwater contamination in the San Joaquin Valley from nitrates, uranium and arsenic and other hazards. Agriculture can be a major source of pollutants: A 2012 University of California, Davis, study, for example, estimated that the drinking water of about a quarter-million people across the Tulare Basin and northern Salinas Valley was at risk of nitrate contamination, caused by fertilizers and animal wastes slowly seeping into aquifers.

In 2011, a United Nations official investigated the problem. The U.N. report expressed concern about "racial disparities," citing studies that show disproportionate impacts on Latino households and urging the U.S. government to step in. The report highlighted the small rural Tulare County town of Seville, but even so, county officials there were unable to get funding to upgrade its water system.

In addition to the nitrate contamination, tiny Seville has old, leaky water pipes that let harmful bacteria into the system. Residents are advised to boil water before they use it for drinking or cooking, and the county delivers bottled water to every house. "It pains me a little to talk about it," says Chad Fischer, Tulare district engineer for the California Water Resources Control Board. "I don't like the fact that this is going on in California."

Then in mid-2014, a well that supplied about 90 homes in Seville went dry. Finally, there was a chance to get state funding for a new well for the town. "We were able to secure funding and drill a well in two weeks — and we'd been trying since 2007," recalls Denise England, Tulare County's water resources program manager. Unfortunately, the new well started to go dry because of overuse, particularly by illegal marijuana growers, who were estimated to be using about 2,575 gallons of water per day. But that problem was resolved: The sheriff busted the growers last September, and the county has prohibited residents from using the water outdoors.

The boil-water order remains in effect because Seville still has leaky pipes. The funding to fix them is available, but an environmental review has taken longer than expected; the area is home to the rare tiger salamander, and detailed studies are needed to figure out how to avoid harming it. The long-term plan is to drill another well to augment the existing one and connect Seville with a water system in a nearby community, enabling the two small, economically disadvantaged communities to pool their resources.



Monson, another largely Latino community in Tulare County, also suffers from contaminated well water. The solution has long been obvious: Drill a deeper well and connect the town's 45 homes to a community water system. "But it never got towards the finish line," Fischer says. State funding has finally come through now that the drought has dried up those wells. As in Seville, the fix will take time and will happen in stages — but at least it has begun.

Many rural communities are still in need of safe drinking water. But state and local officials and other experts are optimistic because of a large pulse of funding on the way, thanks to Proposition 1. California voters in 2014 approved spending \$7.5 billion beginning this year to improve the state's water storage and delivery systems.

"This is just a start. We're hoping the Prop. 1 money will help keep up the pace," says England. "We've had our eye on that money since before it went on the ballot."

Tulare County officials are working on a plan to use Proposition 1 dollars to bring public water to East Porterville, a larger rural community near the Sierra Nevada foothills, where many private wells were contaminated with nitrates and about 1,000 of them went dry during the drought.

Many other communities will benefit as well. "Prop. 1 is big enough that it can supply the money and the infrastructure,"

Fischer says. It also can provide technical expertise to help communities learn how to operate these new systems. "That makes me feel pretty optimistic."

Witherspoon has a grand idea for what Proposition 1 can do for California. He envisions recruiting scores of students from the state's universities and community colleges to help places like East Porterville. "They need more boots on the ground; we can fill in the gaps," he says. Students, many from similar communities themselves, would go door-to-door and hold meetings to educate residents and get their consent. Business and finance students would write grant proposals. Chemistry students would test the water, and engineering students could come up with technical solutions and draw up plans. "With the drought and water bond, all the stars have aligned," Witherspoon says. "We have a lot of traction and faith to make this happen."

Ruiz, who understands just how much work these projects take, is happy to hear that reinforcements may be on the way. She still worries that something could happen to hinder the project in Lopez's neighborhood, and she refuses to believe it's a done deal until she sees pipes going into the ground. But she's already started daydreaming about the kind of celebration the community will hold, once the water starts flowing: "A great big water balloon fight." □

Maria Jimenez hugs her grandson, Caleb Guiterrez, 3, outside her home in Monson, California, where water bottles have collected. Monson is one of the communities in line to get funding for water system improvements that became available in response to the California drought.

RENEE C. BYER/SACRAMENTO BEE/
ZUMA WIRE

Biking in wilderness? Ain't gonna happen.



OPINION BY
TIM LYDON

WEB EXTRA

To see all the current Writers on the Range columns, and archives, visit hcn.org

I shouldn't be writing this, and you shouldn't be reading it. Far more pressing issues face our public lands. But a vocal minority is dredging up the long-resolved question of mountain biking in wilderness. They have even drafted a bill for somebody to introduce in Congress — the Human-Powered Wildlands Travel Management Act — that would open wilderness to biking. That means we have to pause and rehash the facts.

First, no legal argument supports biking in wilderness. Unambiguously, the 1964 Wilderness Act states there shall be no “form of mechanical transport” in wilderness areas. The discussion should end there, but a few claim that “mechanical transport” somehow does not include bicycles. They allege that the law unintentionally excluded an activity that emerged after it was enacted. Or they tout an early Forest Service misinterpretation of the law, which initially allowed bicycles in wilderness but was corrected over 30 years ago.

The arguments have no legal merit. Worse, they ignore the historical context and foresight of the Wilderness Act, one of our foundational environmental laws. In doing so, they distract people from

truly understanding our public lands. That's not good for people or the land.

We should remember that the Wilderness Act grew from a half-century of public-lands battles, fought by America's most influential conservation thinkers, including Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, Olaus Murie and the indefatigable Mardy Murie, among others. Theirs was a multigenerational struggle to safeguard a vestige of the nation's public lands from the advances of population and technology.

The technology part is important. The framers of the Wilderness Act knew human ingenuity was not somehow petering out in 1964. In fact, they lived in an era of fantastic invention. Forms of transport being tested at the time included jetpacks, gliders, aerocycles, and various new wagons, boats and bicycles.

That the law anticipated future invention is indisputable, but it benefits us much more to know why it does. The reason was most concisely expressed by the bill's principal author, Howard Zahniser, who in 1956 defined wilderness as a place where we stand without the “mechanisms that make us immediate masters over our environment.”

Zahniser was a Thoreauvian pacifist deeply troubled by the Holocaust and other horrific events during his lifetime. In wilderness, he saw a suite of biophysical and social values that carried the potential to make us better people. But to fulfill its promise in modern times, by offering an opportunity for raw challenge, humility and solitude, wilderness had to remain a place of human restraint. For eight years, Zahniser worked with Congress to ensure that the law enshrined that ideal, with clear limits on acceptable activities in wilderness.

Some of the activists pressing for bikes in wilderness conveniently ignore this central principle. Instead, they focus on issues of trail erosion or impacts to visitors and wildlife, where they front overly rosy claims. In diminishing the purpose of wilderness, they hawk a dumbed-down version of the public estate.

Similarly, it is unhealthy to conflate the ban on bikes with a ban on a certain group of people. That tactic may stir emotion, but it undermines serious public-lands discourse. Nevertheless, some are using the trick, including *Bike*



SUSTAIN INDEPENDENT MEDIA for future generations of people who care about the West with your legacy gift to *High Country News*.

PHOTO BY MARK GÖCKE



PHOTO BY MARK HARVEY

“*High Country News* continues my work and my vision of providing the best information possible about this place we all care so much about. I would like to see it carry on that vision long after I am gone.”

—Tom Bell, founder
High Country News

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM, CONTACT:

Alyssa Pinkerton
e-mail: alyssap@hcn.org
call: 800-905-1155.

Or visit our website,
hcn.org/support/planned-giving

Magazine editor Vernon Felton, whose recent video casts bikes in wilderness as a civil rights issue. That's an affront to anyone who has worked for voting rights, fair housing, protection against hate crimes or other actual civil rights.

Felton and others also oversimplify prohibitions on bikes in wilderness study areas, calling them overreach by conservationists or the feds. But such bans are essential to the purpose of these study areas, which must be carefully managed to preserve their eligibility as wilderness, pending congressional action.

Another claim is that banning bikes turns people against wilderness, or against even broader conservation issues. But I think those misrepresenting the facts are the ones who are driving a wedge. Either way, diminished support for wilderness is not good news. But neither is it new. The historical trajectory toward better land stewardship has always been the fight of the few.

One last thing to consider is the issue's scale. The wilderness system is limited to roughly 53 million acres outside Alaska. Smaller than Colorado, that portion is scattered across 43 states. And

while most of the land is in the West, most of it is also rugged and unbikable. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of acres remain open to biking.

Still, some will demand that bikes be permitted in wilderness. And they will join logging, mining, off-roading, and other interests in whittling away at the boundaries of pending wilderness proposals. At a time when so many more serious issues confront our lands —

climate change, ocean acidification, plastics pollution, sprawl and much more — it seems a misguided use of energy. □

Tim Lydon writes from Girdwood, Alaska.

Writers on the Range is a syndicated service of High Country News, providing three opinion columns each week to more than 200 media outlets around the West. For more information, contact Betsy Marston, betsym@hcn.org, 970-527-4898.



Mountain bikers ride in the Dixie National Forest in Utah, with Ashdown Gorge Wilderness in the background.

GEORGE H.H. HUEY

S O U N D T A B L E

The West and the White House

April 6, 2016, at 6 p.m.

The HCNU classroom program presents **SOUNDTABLE**, a live radio discussion, on the West's relevance in the national presidential race.



Tune into the live discussion at KVNF.org and tweet questions to [@highcountrynews](https://twitter.com/highcountrynews) #HCNU

In this year's presidential race, the stakes seem higher than ever. So what Western issues are coming to the fore as the candidates move through their campaigns? And what issues are getting left behind? Join *High Country News* for an hourlong discussion with experts to understand the West's relevance in the national race.



A retrospective from the Don of Chicano Noir



The Skull of Pancho Villa and Other Stories
Manuel Ramos
181 pages,
softcover: \$17.95.
Arte Público Press, 2015.

The Skull of Pancho Villa and Other Stories is the first collection of short fiction from the Denver-based writer Manuel Ramos, often called the “God-father of Chicano Noir.” Their settings range from El Paso to rural Colorado and the megalopolis of Los Angeles, and from the Mexican Revolution to the 1950s and the present. The mostly Chicano characters include lawyers, veterans and a prostitute, with a guest appearance by Jack Kerouac. Written between 1986 and 2014, the stories reflect the stylistic development of Ramos, author of the Edgar Award-nominated *The Ballad of Rocky Ruiz*, among other acclaimed crime novels.

Standouts include the eponymous “The Skull of Pancho Villa,” in which the skull, nicknamed “Panchito,” that supposedly belonged to the “Robin Hood of Mexico” is stolen in an act of revenge. In “Bad Haircut Day,” an ambitious but heretofore ethical Denver attorney finds himself covering up a murder. A wheelchair-bound former baseball player thwarts a burglar in “Sentimental Value.”

Almost without exception these stories involve crime, law enforcement and desperation. Ramos is a master at creating atmosphere, especially a 1940s private-eye feel, moodily cinematic in black and white and more than 50 gritty



General Pancho Villa leads his troops during the Battle of Ojinaga in 1914, which was filmed for the movie *The Life of General Villa*. The film included scenes of genuine battles from the Mexican Revolution. Villa's skull was stolen from his grave in 1926.

JOHN DAVIDSON WHEELAN / ARCHIVO GENERAL DE LA NACIÓN (MEXICAN GENERAL NATIONAL ARCHIVE)

shades of gray. You can almost hear Bogie growl at the end of “No Hablo Inglés”: “When it snows, my shoulder aches, and I smell copal and marigolds.” And what could be more “Guy Noir” in flavor than the first sentence of “When the Air Conditioner Quit”: “When the air conditioner quit, Torres shot it.”

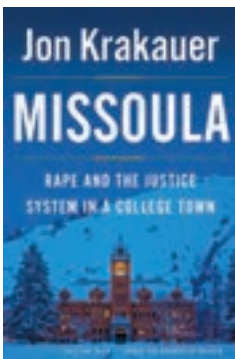
Most of the stories reflect a cynical humor. From “White Devils and Cockroaches”: “Gonzalez made a living representing crazies, weirdos, misfits, losers and plain folks who got taken. ... Each morning he reminded himself he was not

a burned out liberal who took up space on legal aid's payroll. ... He was an ace attorney for the underdog.”

This collection is uneven, but that's not surprising in a literary retrospective that represents a considerable body of work from its beginning through its coming of age as Ramos becomes a master storyteller. He tells the stories of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, their lives often complicated by prejudice, just doing the best they can in *los Estados Unidos*.

BY MICHELLE NEWBY LANCASTER

Missoula, rape and elusive justice



Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town
Jon Krakauer
416 pages,
softcover: \$16.95
Anchor, 2016.

Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town is not intended for readers with delicate sensibilities. Jon Krakauer's newest book investigates, in great detail, several rapes perpetrated between 2008 and 2012 by members of the University of Montana football team, the Grizzlies. In *Missoula*, the “Griz” are hometown heroes, and those who cast aspersions on the celebrated players' reputations had better be prepared to face the consequences.

The rapists and their victims receive equal treatment here, along with prosecutors and defense attorneys, judges and detectives. Krakauer allows all of them to speak for themselves; no one emerges untainted. The “justice” in Krakauer's title remains elusive at best and is tarnished throughout, due to clumsy cops, politicized prosecutors, and a widespread

lack of empathy for the few women willing to confront their attackers — always a minority among rape victims.

Rape, says one prosecutor, “is the only crime in which the victim is presumed to be lying.” A defense attorney exemplifies that attitude in his address to the jury on behalf of his client, the team's star quarterback. “Why would he even think of committing such a reckless act, given his high profile in the community, his sterling reputation, and everything he stood to lose?”

Krakauer fans may be somewhat frustrated by this latest work — not by the investigative reporter's uniformly excellent research, but by the dearth of compelling, admirable characters, flawed but enthralling, who generally populate the writer's best-selling nonfiction, such as *Under the Banner of Heaven* and *Into Thin Air*.

There are no heroes here, but one villain rises above — or sinks below — the rest of the muck: a female prosecutor who is reluctant to prosecute rape without a guarantee of winning, and who, upon leaving public office, immediately begins defending rapists. Kirsten Pabst, having established that the accused is an up-standing young man, “devoted the rest of her opening statement to vilifying his accuser,” Krakauer writes. Such, we learn, is standard defense attorney procedure; the pursuit of justice has little, if any, role. Readers will finish this book with plenty of information but little confidence that the courts punish the guilty. “In Missoula, Grizzly football exists in a realm apart,” Krakauer concludes, and the players and their lawyers “expect, and often receive, special dispensation.”

BY ANNIE DAWID

Seeds in a sandstorm

Las Vegas is a city of transients. Walking down the Strip is like wandering around an international airport. But even on the margins of the city, where residents try to raise their families, many are in various stages of just passing through.

I was stuck there during the limbo between grad school and the rest of my life. I never liked Vegas, but my mother and sister lived there, and I was job hunting. I spent hours in coffee shops sending out applications, a journalist with a graduate degree in environmental education. In the evenings, I bunked with my family and ate all the Filipino food I wanted. I would stay, I told myself, until I found a job or my student visa expired.

“People stop here a while and end up staying a bit longer,” the locals liked to say. That’s what Laura said one day as I helped her and Ellen, another volunteer, prep seeds for propagation at a botanical garden. We were planting delicate seeds in peat pots — tiny, furry things that drifted away at the hint of a hot breeze.

“This is the most common story,” Laura said, as we dug into mounds of potting soil. “I was just passing through, and my car broke down. By the time it got fixed, I had a job.” Kind of my story, too.

Kind of? I waited for her to go on. But she just smiled. The way she rolled her r’s reminded me of a friend from Johannesburg. I itched to ask Laura where she was from, but I felt I shouldn’t pry.

Instead, I learned that she mends

torn upholstery and fixes broken furniture, a curious occupation in a city that prizes the new.

“What brings you here, Ellen?” I asked the tall, quiet woman beside me.

“Just a job,” she said.

“What kind of job?”

“I’m a geologist,” she said. I was about to ask her more about her work when she threw the question back at me.

“Oh, I just finished grad school,” I said, “and I’m here on my way to somewhere else.”

It was the easiest story I could tell, and it seemed right for the moment. It wasn’t the time and place to say that my boyfriend had proposed to me, and then got scared enough to un-propose. Or that I had spent my nest egg on grad school and was broke. Or that I was sleeping on a blanket next to my sister’s bed because my mother became a hoarder after my dad died and there was barely any room in the apartment. Or that I just wanted to land a job and make enough money to restart my life in Manila, where I would probably die a spinster but live surrounded by friends whom I missed and loved. My friends and I could retire to a nice island with our cats, who would eat fresh fish every day. And on some mornings, we would sit by the beach at sunrise to gawk at fishermen pulling their nets to shore, their muscular brown bodies glistening.

The geologist, the mender, and the ex-student. What we chose not to say hung

pregnant in the air. We went through 500 seeds that afternoon. But for every seed we planted, at least two flew away.

Two months into my brief residency in Sin City, I dreamed about my father. I was sitting in the bed of an old pickup truck, which transformed into a wooden cart pulled by a water buffalo. Suddenly, I inhaled a huge amount of sand, and realized that the water buffalo and I were in a monstrous sandstorm. The horizon line disappeared, and I panicked. Then my father was beside me, not the least bit bothered by the sand and the whipping wind. He turned to me, held my shoulders firmly and said, “It’s OK.”

I woke up wondering: It’s OK to what? To perish in a sandstorm? To live and die in the desert?

The day I drove back to Las Vegas from a job interview in Barstow, a sandstorm engulfed parts of the Strip, the old downtown on Fremont Street, and the east and west suburbs. As I got off I-15, a massive, grayish-orange cloud draped itself over the landscape, leaving the Luxor pyramid’s tip sticking out like one of Madonna’s cone boobs. As I entered the city limits, scraps of paper whipped around my car, and dust swirled in the air. I panicked. Was I going to kick the bucket on the Tropicana Avenue exit, driving a crappy rental, overeducated and jobless? “It’s OK,” my dad had said.

I drove on, braced for disaster, but made it home safe and sound. □

Natasha Vizcarra works as a science writer in Boulder, Colorado, where she lives with her husband — who is no longer afraid of marriage — and their four cats.

A storm northwest of the Las Vegas Strip in July 2015. The monsoon storm dropped heavy rain and hail in parts of the valley, causing street flooding and power outages.

ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES





HEARD AROUND THE WEST | BY BETSY MARSTON

WASHINGTON

If the fish in Washington's Puget Sound suffer from migraines or depression or need birth control, they don't need to schedule a doctor's appointment: The water that passes through their gills is already loaded with pharmaceuticals. Each year, 106 wastewater treatment plants around Puget Sound discharge "as much as 97,000 pounds of chemicals," which, according to a study in the journal *Environmental Pollution*, come from drugs like Advil, Benadryl, Prozac and contraceptive pills, says reporter Elaisha Stokes. James Meador, an aquatic toxicologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, found that some chemicals in the fish were at surprisingly high concentrations. "That's the kind of information that raises eyebrows," Meador says, adding that though pesticides in water get monitored, pharmaceuticals, "now ubiquitous in society," do not.

THE WEST

As far as we know, nobody was harmed in the making of *Backpacker* magazine's video, *Survival School: How to Eat Your Hiking Partner*. Still, we're reasonably sure that its tips on butchering will never be palatable to vegetarians — or anybody else with a queasy stomach. Standing somewhere in the backcountry, our instructor uses a schematic drawing of a hapless hiker to explain that the belly is the prime cut because "marbling" adds to the flavor. Legs, however, should be eschewed as they can be stringy. With nary a smile to indicate that he might be kidding, he urges us not to neglect to slice out the "tri-tips" from the back of arms as well as the inviting "rump roast." The brief video, which features the *coup de grâce* of the instructor's unfortunate colleague (who moans, helplessly, "I'm not dead, John!"), shows the gruesome details of butchering and concludes with dinner — all in hideous taste and hilarious. Or maybe not; we suppose it depends on how hungry you are. See www.backpacker.com/view/videos/survival-videos/survival-school-how-to-eat-your-hiking-partner/.



OREGON Bovine rush hour. GAIL HULT

NEVADA

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, or more accurately back on our public land, Cliven Bundy's surviving cattle, some 1,000 animals, are "mean and ornery," says Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles Gorder. The Justice Department calls Bundy's ranching operation "negligent to the point of cruelty in sending half-wild cattle to graze illegally on protected lands without supervision." Unvaccinated and susceptible to illness, "the cattle have little contact with humans, and Bundy often has no idea where they are," reports the *Los Angeles Times*. Ken Mayer, former director of Nevada's Department of Wildlife, adds that trying to round them up is "like hunting cape buffalo. They're nasty, they're smart, and they won't hesitate to charge." Meanwhile, reports *E&E News*, the animals continue to trample sensitive soils, devour native saplings and routinely "bed down" on Native American artifacts. The cattle have also invaded a community garden and golf course, and more notoriously, run off scores of Bureau of Land Management agents. Rob Mrowka, a biologist at the Center for Biological Diversity who has spent decades urging the BLM to remove Bundy's cows, says it will be an expensive proposition when the government finally acts: "I think the price is going to be a lot more when you add the risk." The now-jailed Bundy, who has allowed his

cattle to run unsupervised on public land for 23 years, managed to hold off the government by his family threatening violence and "range war." In 2014, for example, three days before the BLM had scheduled a roundup by Utah contractor 'R' Livestock Connection, Ryan Bundy and others threatened the contractor with "force, violence and economic harm," according to a Department of Justice indictment. That escalated to the standoff between BLM rangers and 400 Bundy sympathizers who brandished "too many guns to count," the Justice Department said. The well-publicized confrontation ended with more than 400 impounded cows released to the wild, there to continue their trashing of the public land.

WYOMING

While no one was paying attention, says columnist Geoff O'Gara in *WyoFile*, "90 legislators in Cheyenne devised ways to spend about \$3 billion a year, fueled by 18 years of revenues from an energy boom." Alas, the boom has withered into a bust, and legislators, who earn a paltry \$150 a day, will need to find new ways to spend their time while now trying to save the state's money. O'Gara has some tongue-in-cheek suggestions, ranging from selling the state Capitol, instead of spending \$3 million to fix it up, to instituting a capital gains tax — Wyoming is one of six states without an income tax. He also recommended designating a state vegetable but realized that a state shrub was already under consideration, and that's "enough heavy lifting for one year in the State Icon department." Finally, given that legislators recently refused \$268 million in federal dollars to extend Medicaid services, on the grounds that the money wasn't guaranteed forever, O'Gara suggests turning down federal school-lunch money, "before our kids get hooked on food."

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

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



High
Country
News

For people who care about the West.

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

“Interior Secretary Sally Jewell ought to be the first person to stand up for these treasures when they come under attack. **Instead, we got complete silence.**”

Matt Jenkins, in his essay, "Sally Jewell, missing in action," from *Writers on the Range*, hcn.org/wotr