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The Hospital With Heart

Interview with Dr. Debora Stump, DVM, PhD of Homeward Bound Animal Hospital at 7521 Indiana Street, Arvada and her staff of doctors.

Question: Can you bring us up to date on the changes at the Hospital this year? Answer from Dr. Stump:

July first I purchased Homeward Bound from Dr. Keri Jones who had renovated this farmhouse to become the Animal Hospital. Since I took over we have updated some of the equipment, removing the older X-ray to digital machine, which improves workflow with vastly better images allowing quicker and more accurate interpretation of the images. We have also recently added a digital dental unit, so now we can get the same digital quality images of teeth.

I have hired Dr. Melissa Trujillo, DVM who has eleven years of experience - a veterinarian in the greater Denver area. I also hired Dr. Liza Pfaff, DVM, who is a new graduate but has a lot of experience because she finished a PhD at CSU which work involved the Animal Cancer Center for five years.

Question: What makes your hospital special or different than others in the area? Answer from Dr. Stump: Besides specializing in geriatric pets and the increase in cancers we still offer the mobile aspect, we have carried on the spirit and function of this from Dr. Jones and all who need and use it



really appreciate us accommodating them two days a week with visits to their homes for appointments. **Answer from Dr. Pfaff:** We have a really homey atmosphere, which makes a lot of patients more comfortable just walking in the building than an average vet hospital. Also, we're not overwhelmed with a living room full of barking dogs so generally any nervous patients are just more comfortable here. We have pretty long appointment times, ranging from an hour to half an hour depending on what's being evaluated and gives us doctors the luxury of being able to communicate with clients and getting to know the patients, which is really nice. **Answer from Dr. Trujillo:** Our whole staff and doctors want to get down and be on the floor with our patients and make them feel as comfortable as possible. I think it makes the

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whole veterinary visit the least stressful we could possibly make it.

Question: What do your philosophies and values bring to the practice of treating animal companions? Answer from Dr. Stump:

It is the patient/pet first. I know that everyone will tell you that, but I see our doctors get down on the floor immediately and we spend longer times in appointments with the pets, getting to know the pets - giving affection and becoming the pet's friend. Then we address the client and their concerns, which we find is refreshing for the

clients. So we all try to focus on both, what the pet needs and the client needs. **Answer from Dr. Pfaff:** It goes for everyone here we all really believe in good medicine and taking care of our patients in the best way that we possibly can. **Answer from Dr. Trujillo:** My biggest philosophy is that it is a team that is part of the whole pet medical care from the receptionists, technicians, assistants, doctors, clients and the patients. So just trying to get a whole team effort to get the best quality of life that we can for each and every patient that walk through the door. Definitely want the clients to be part of all of the decision-making.

Question: What things do you find important for your clients as people in the way of keeping animals healthy and happy? Answer from Dr. Stump: Accurate information, I think that we are a society that is inundated with information. So to feel that someone is listening to you as you talk about what you've learned and then help you to weed through it with accurate and practical information; medications and dosages - whether you can give a medication three times a day if it is called for and if



you can't be there to give it then is it the right medication or should we find something else. Same thing for bandage changes and nutrition or treats, we counsel people and help them understand if they need to be concerned or not about all kinds of issues and current topics. **Answer from Dr. Pfaff:** I think it's really, really important for doctors to have time to communicate with the clients as well as the skills to do so. Both Doctor Trujillo and I who regularly see patients are both pretty darn good at sitting down and going over all the possible options with our

clients so they're not left in the dark about what their options are for their patients. **Answer from Dr. Trujillo:** Education is key, the more you know the easier it is. There is a lot of stuff that comes out on the news, on the Internet, anywhere and sometimes it is misinformation and sometimes it is correct information but education - knowing as much as you can about your pets.

(Dr. Pfaff addressing the areas for the mobile practice.)

We do have mapped out zones, but I will generally go just about anywhere. Out of our areas there is a larger bill associated to the client as it means taking a Technician out of the office for a longer period of time along with travel costs the farther we must go but if someone is in need we will go if we can't get them in.

Dr. Stump has many horses and cats. Dr. Pfaff has a cat and just acquired a new puppy. Dr. Trujillo has a kitty cat and a boxer named Wally, who is quite a character.

Pictured: Staff in front of Hospital, Beth with rabbit, this page, Jacilyn, Diesel & Dr. Trujillo. Photos courtesy of Homeward Bound Animal Hospital. By A.M. Wilks

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Dispatch From Twiggley Island

By Bonnie-Sue Hitchcock

The St. Vrain River is technically a creek. Its south and north branches begin in the canyons above Lyons, Colo., and usually meet, politely, on the plains well south of town. From there, they ramble down to the South Platte River in a civilized fashion.

But this September, after two days of pounding rain, the South St. Vrain carved a path through the front of my house even as the North St. Vrain snuck up on it from behind. The rivers united in the alley between my house and my neighbor's, inundating bridges, roads, cars and entire trailer parks with a torrent that looked more like the Congo than a creek. My ducks, splashing ecstatically in the backyard, were soon the only happy residents in town.

The rivers were no longer civilized, but the people of Lyons were. When the South St. Vrain went ballistic at 2 a.m., our neighbor knocked to tell us that people were evacuating. "I couldn't leave without you guys," he said. He was new to the neighborhood, and I'd only met him twice. Within minutes, our phone was ringing with offers of places to stay. We scrambled four blocks uphill to the house of our friends Dave and Alison, who were smart enough to build on high ground. (Although their emergency preparedness kit included just one bottle of white wine. Well, nobody's perfect.)

That first night felt like a pajama party. Nine-year-old Cassidy busted out a bowl of Life cereal while her brother, Jaiden, hopped around in front of the television wearing a black robe dotted with skulls. Images of rising creeks and

torrential rain in other Colorado counties flashed across the screen; over footage of university students jumping and playing in Boulder Creek, the newscaster dryly intoned, "This behavior is not advisable." We finally went back to bed at 4 a.m., believing the world would be normal again in the morning. Instead, we woke to find that the St. Vrain had rearranged our town, marooning us on six isolated islands.

We called ours "Twiggley Island," after the picture book *Miss Twiggley's Tree*, by Dorothea Warren Fox. It's about a woman who lives in a tree. Everyone thinks she's odd until there's a flood; then the whole town takes refuge in her tree house, and she becomes a hero. *Miss Twiggley's Tree* became required reading, as we lost power and more and more people sought refuge with us. One neighbor arrived wearing only a muumuu, unable to retrieve any other clothes. Her 2-year-old cat, Ruby, freaked out and refused to eat or drink; she had to have water dripped into her mouth every hour. Laurie had lived in Lyons for almost 40 years and never seen anything like this. "I had a brand-new shower that I was going to install in my outbuilding. It was sitting on the porch and it just floated away."

Another neighbor showed up with a cooler of bottled milk, delivered from the Longmont Dairy just two days earlier. The situation wasn't critical, we decided, until the half-and-half ran out.

Isolated and out of touch on Twiggley Island, we didn't know that many of our friends and neighbors were struggling just to survive. We didn't know that a dear

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friend’s father had died in the flood. We didn’t know that many of us had already lost our homes for good. All we knew was that we needed to conserve water and save food before it spoiled. We needed to stockpile camping gear, headlamps, and water purifiers. Someone had half a cow that had to be eaten before it went bad; Twiggley Islanders adhered to the Paleo diet. We planned to stick it out together as long as necessary. But after three days, everyone was told to leave. We were a liability to rescue efforts higher up the canyon, and with our water treatment plant damaged, E-coli or other health risks posed a real possibility.

As I watched my Lyons friends and neighbors evacuate Twiggley Island - one car at a time, over the only usable bridge - I felt incapable of describing what I was seeing. I had always clung to words, using them like life rafts to float around the bends. But that metaphor no longer worked for me.

Two men walked past, each holding a deer head with antlers, reminding me of Tim O’Brien’s book, *The Things They Carried*. I watched each car slowly pull up - loaded down with pillows and cat carriers, blankets and chickens - then make the one-way trip over the bridge. “You cannot come back,” a Lyons volunteer firefighter warned each driver, reminding everyone to register with FEMA. Tom Yulsman, my friend, a journalist and blogger for Discover, called after we’d evacuated and asked me to describe what we’d been through, from start to finish. Since we don’t know how long it will take for Lyons to recover, the story is far from finished. For those who have lost everything, I doubt that it ever will be. Still, I did my best to describe the indescribable, using those little life rafts that no longer felt very reliable.

“The water was rushing through my house like a river,” I told Tom. Then I stopped. We both laughed at my less than eloquent description. “That proves it,” I said then. “I have officially run out of words.”

Bonnie-Sue Hitchcock is a public-radio reporter who has lived in Lyons for three years. This article originally appeared in an issue of High Country News.

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Engagement - Tommyknockers - Colo. Spirit

Dear Readers,

Mr. and Mrs. Brent Heaviland of Golden, CO announce the engagement of their daughter, Lissa Heaviland to Jason Robinet, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Robinet of Hospers, IA. (Pictured here at right.) Lissa graduated from Northern State University in Aberdeen, South Dakota and then earned her Master's degree from the University of Northern Colorado. Jason graduated from the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa. They are both educators in Jefferson County School District. June wedding is planned at Lionsgate Event Center. Pat Heaviland



Dear Readers,

Tommyknocker Legend: In the late 1800's, miners immigrated to Colorado from Cornwall, England to work in the Gold and Silver mines in Gilpin, Jefferson and Clear Creek Counties. They brought tales and superstitions with them of little elf-like creatures who lived in the inner tunnels of the mines. These beings known as Tommyknockers, were often heard singing and working, but were rarely seen.

There were two types of Tommyknockers. The mischievous ones dumped over the miner's lunch pails, blew out their mining candles and lamps, and hid tools. The friendly Tommyknockers knocked on the walls of the mines to show miners where the richest veins of ore might be found. That is the origin of their name. They were described as short in stature, standing only two feet tall, wore colorful shirts, and had kindly wrinkled faces with large heads.

There are many tales of Tommyknockers saving the lives

of miners. One story tells of a miner who was trapped in a pool of water down in a mineshaft. From nowhere, a pair of hands shoved him from behind, up and out of the pool. Seconds later, a gigantic boulder fell exactly where the miner had been trapped.

Miners were never harsh even with the most mischievous Tommyknockers because they believed the creaking timbers, tapping on pipes, falling stones and misplaced equipment were indeed, warning signs from the Tommyknockers of impending danger. Many miners left tidbits of their lunch to encourage good fortune and safety brought about by the little people.

Today the legend continues in Central City's Celebration of Tommyknocker Events held the first weekend each December. A children's parade is held down the Main Street to the City Tree, followed by a party with storytelling, Victorian Santa and refreshments. A community Pot-Luck

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is held to celebrate the Holidays on the first Friday. On the weekend, a two day Victorian Craft Bazaar is held with entertainment and food venues. Historic Downtown businesses have special sales to celebrate the Tommyknocker Events. For more information: Contact Celebrate Central City, 303-582-5919.

From Kayla Stauder - *Colorado Spirit* - The September floods affected many people in the mountain communities. As recovery continues, some might find that they are having a difficult time adjusting to the “new normal” of no clean water, longer commute times, the daily hum of mold removal fans, or an unlivable home. It’s important to remember to take care of oneself during these difficult times - in fact, it’s crucial. When care for oneself is not made a priority, minds become fuzzy and decision-making abilities worsen. The following suggestions (compiled by the new Colorado Spirit Flood Support Teams for Jefferson and Boulder counties) apply not only to those recovering from the recent floods, but also to anyone going through a difficult time. Remember to take care of yourself!

Keep Calm and Carry On; 10 ways to stay strong during hard times - Make Connections. Good relationships with close family members, friends, and others are important. Accept help and support from those who care about you. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems. You can’t change the fact that stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events.

Accept that change is a part of living. Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Work to adjust to a “new normal.”

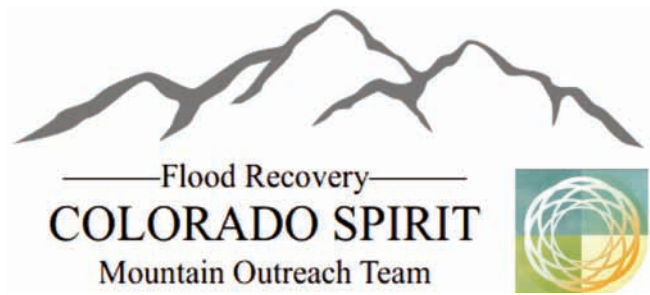
Develop and move toward realistic goals. Get moving. Ask yourself, “What’s one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?” Write it down, and do it.

Take decisive actions. Instead of backing away from problems and stresses, attack them. Don’t let yourself freeze up - keep moving and acting.

Look for the good. Many people who have experienced hardship find that in the end, they had better relationships, more personal strength, and a greater appreciation for life. Try to find the good things that might come out of bad situations.

Be confident. Trust your instincts and have faith in your ability to solve problems. Believe that you are capable and strong, because you probably are.

Keep things in perspective. Even when facing very painful events, try to



consider the situation in a broader context. Don’t blow things out of proportion.

Believe that things will work out. Be optimistic. Visualize what you want, rather than worry about your fears.

Take care of yourself. Do things that you enjoy. Relax. Exercise regularly, get good sleep, and take deep breaths.

Have fun. Taking care of you helps to keep your mind and body strong enough to tackle difficult situations.

For more information and tips about how to overcome and cope with challenges and disasters, contact our team! We are **Colorado Spirit** - a new community outreach team made up of Coloradans, with a goal of assisting local communities (in Jefferson and Boulder counties) with emotional support and assistance in locating resources. We are available 7 days a week, and can meet you anywhere in your community or at your home. If you or someone you know could use help, please call, text, or email us.

We are here for you.

Jefferson County - Phone: (720) 470-0819 Email: flood-support@jcmh.org. Like our page for updates and flood recovery information. www.facebook.com/cospiritflood-support Boulder County- Phone: (720) 498-1759 Email: coloradospirit@mhpcolorado.org.

16th Annual Tommyknocker Holiday Week Festivities in Historic Central City

Thursday Dec. 5th Children’s Parade 1:30 pm

Friday Dec. 6th Tree Lighting & Candle Walk
6:30 pm

with Peak to Peak Chorale Carol Singing
Community Pot Luck 6:45 pm



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Buffalo Field Campaign

SPECIAL ALERT! The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee was considering a bill recently that will have a devastating impact on western public lands, native wildlife and especially wild buffalo.

The **Grazing Improvement Act, S. 258**, is a nightmare for wild buffalo. As many of you already know, one of the primary reasons wild buffalo aren't allowed to migrate beyond Yellowstone's borders is that much of the National Forest land is leased to private ranchers to graze cattle. The ranchers simply don't want competition for the grass on our federal public lands. Wild buffalo have a natural right to migrate and graze, but the welfare ranchers stand in the way. Now, with the so-called **Grazing Improvement Act** they want to keep the public from even being involved in the decisions about how our public lands are managed and to exempt those decisions from environmental review as currently required under the National Environmental Policy Act. As if this wasn't bad enough, the bill would also

extend grazing permits from 10 years to 20 years!

TAKE ACTION: CALL SENATOR WYDEN TODAY! The Committee held a business meeting to consider this legislation in November. Please take the time right now to contact the Committee Chair, Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon, and tell him not to support this destructive bill. Public lands ranchers already have a sweetheart deal. They certainly don't need more special treatment.

Outside of Oregon: Call Senator Wyden at (202) 224-5244 in Washington, DC, or (503) 326-7525 in Portland Oregon. And if your Senator (**Udall**) is on the Committee please also let him know that the public has a right to be involved in how our public lands are managed.

More Helpful Points to Raise: **The Grazing Improvement Act** is a huge giveaway to the livestock industry coming at a time when many of our western public lands are in dire condition. With the impacts of climate change becoming more apparent every year, the situation is only going to worsen at the expense of native wildlife, clean water, and healthy ecosystems. The last thing we need is to further entrench one of the most destructive activities taking place on our public lands.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee needs to hear from you! Please dial the number and have your voice heard for wild lands and wildlife!

WILD IS THE WAY ~ ROAM FREE -

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New Year's Eve – 9 am - 4 pm



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A Chronic National Malady

By Travis Kelly

The error-prone website for the Affordable Care Act website is causing considerable glee to critics who like to believe that the federal government can do nothing right, or at least not as efficiently as the private sector. If fixes are not forthcoming, the rollout glitches and botched assurances might eventually do what the Tea Party's attempt to shut down the federal government didn't - crash the whole Obamacare program. But if that happens, where will we be? I've done a little research, and the numbers show that Americans would be stuck with the industrialized world's most expensive health care.

A Bloomberg study rated the United States as 46th in the world for efficiency, which puts us behind Romania and Iran. And in 2012, the International Federation of Health Plans, a global insurance trade organization representing insurers in 25 countries, compared the costs of various medical procedures in Canada, Spain, Switzerland, South Africa, Argentina, France, Chile and the United States. The results were shocking. Across the board, the graphs look like the "hockey stick" graph that Al Gore used to illustrate global climate change.

In this case, however, every other country's bar looks like

a one-story hut - until you come to the United States. Our bar appears as a skyscraper. For example, the cost of a routine office visit ranges from a low of \$10 in Argentina to \$38 in Chile, but it's a whopping \$176 in this country. An angiogram runs from \$35 in Canada to \$264 in France, but it's up to an astronomical \$2,400 here. The cost for a day in the hospital runs from \$429 in Argentina to \$1,472 in Australia; in the United States it ranges from an average of \$4,287 to \$12,537.

There is a broader range here because of the diversity of different providers and insurers, many of which charge as much they can get away with. The same lesson applies to drugs; we pay far more than other countries. We currently spend 20% of our Gross Domestic Product on health care, about double what most other countries spend. For a time, the explanation for this huge disparity was thought to be that Americans use more health services, but studies have proven that isn't the case.

The truth is that our health care prices are ridiculously inflated, leading to profits in the industry of about 20% — similar to the profits expected in the financial sector. Alone among industrialized countries, we have a for-profit health insurance industry mediating these services and jacking up the prices even more. There are opportunity costs to this extravagance, as a Princeton economist notes: "The money we spend on health care is money we don't spend educating our children, or investing in infrastructure,



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scientific research and defense spending.”

Frank McArdle, a consultant to the Business Roundtable, says that the old system was “cramping our economic growth.” The plan that Gov. Mitt Romney instituted in Massachusetts was based on one originally proposed by President Nixon and supported by the conservative Heritage Foundation. It proposed that all households be required to obtain private insurance as a necessary measure to drive down galloping costs. This was also supported by Newt Gingrich and other Republican luminaries as an alternative to expanding Medicare or creating any kind of government-regulated public option, where the overhead would be 5% (like Medicare) versus the 30% overhead in the private sector.

Now, Tea Party adherents and many Republicans are doing everything possible to oppose what was in essence the conservative, private-sector solution to our health care crisis. So what exactly is their solution? It appears that they really don't have, or even want, a solution, no matter how much of a drain our dysfunctional system is on the rest of the economy, no matter how many Americans die prematurely because they cannot afford preventive care, no matter how disgraceful it is that the health care system of the world's richest nation ranks behind those of Romania and Iran.

Meanwhile, we are slated to spend billions of dollars upgrading our nuclear arsenal, while continuing to account for almost half of the world's total military spending. Yet no one ever accuses the military of being a “socialist” enterprise, even though it is funded 100% by tax dollars. This leads me to a disturbing conclusion about our nation: We will devote any amount of federal effort and treasure to

the purpose of killing people, but the effort to bring the healing of our people up to current world standards is just too cumbersome and oppressive to support.

Travis Kelly is a contributor to Writers on the Range a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He writes from Grand Junction, Colorado.



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Why It Doesn't Matter If Bans Hold Up In Court

From Sarah Gilman

If anything illustrates just how contentious fracking has become on Colorado's urban Front Range, it's the closeness of the vote on a Broomfield ballot measure to ban the practice for five years. When results came in after the Nov. 5 election, it had lost by a mere 13 votes, triggering a mandatory recount. After counters had tallied overseas, military and other outstanding votes, the measure had squeaked ahead by a nose - a mere 17 votes out of 20,683, triggering yet another mandatory recount.

Depending on whether that count verifies the latest results, then, all four of the fracking bans on ballots in Colorado communities succeeded. The liberal college towns of Fort Collins and Boulder also both passed 5-year moratoria on fracking within city limits, while Lafayette banned it in perpetuity, all by much greater margins than Broomfield. But because Broomfield's more centrist political leanings - let's call them DemoPublican - better reflect those of the rest of the state, observers on both sides of the debate have pointed to the election outcome there as a clearer indicator of where public opinion falls on whether fracking should be allowed to take place near where people live, play and work.

Fracking, shorthand for hydraulic fracturing, involves blasting a mix of water, sand and chemicals down a well to stimulate the production of oil or natural gas from layers of rock deep underground. It's become increasingly controversial in Colorado, as drilling has ramped up near suburban and urban areas, stoking worries about air and

water pollution and fueling calls for local and statewide moratoria.

Advocates for the oil and gas industry have dismissed the fracking bans as symbolic, pointing out that, with the exception of Broomfield and Fort Collins, none of the communities to pass them face imminent drilling. But the state's major industry trade group, the Colorado Oil and Gas Association (COGA), took them seriously enough to dump a whopping \$878,120 by Halloween into campaigns opposing the fracking bans, and still lost every fight. In comparison, the Denver Post reports, the nonprofit groups pushing the initiatives had raised just \$26,000 over the same timeframe, as well as volunteer labor and in-kind donations. To be fair, that's not all grass-roots muster: They also got both grants and indirect PR support from outdoor clothing giant Patagonia, which ran a two-page spread in a summer catalog on groups fighting oil and gas development in Colorado, spurring this defensive-sounding rant from oil and gas advocacy group Energy In Depth, as well as angry letters from pro-industry state legislators recently.

It's possible that the four communities will face the same fate as Longmont, the first Colorado town to ban fracking in 2012, which will be in court next August for hearings in a lawsuit brought by COGA and Colorado on the grounds that regulating the industry is a state responsibility, not a local one. A few days before the final vote count for Broomfield, the Independent Petroleum Association of New Mexico and a handful of landowners filed a similar lawsuit against New Mexico's Mora County, reportedly the

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first county in the nation to ban fracking.

While these lawsuits will help determine whether towns and counties can say no to drilling, in some ways their outcome doesn't matter. That's because these communities are already helping change a regulatory landscape that has long favored industry, particularly in Western states, simply by pushing against the status quo and elevating the issue to the national stage.

In Colorado, this wave started with the 2006 election of Democratic Gov. Bill Ritter, who promised and delivered sweeping reforms to the state's oil and gas rules, including adding wildlife and public health representatives to the commission that oversees the industry. But it didn't stop there, as both Joshua Zaffos and I reported this year. As the industry has boomed and nearby landowners have organized movements fueled by complaints of everything from freaky health problems to plummeting land values, Colorado has stepped up with another major overhaul of rules, including stricter setbacks from homes and streams, much better rules for notification of neighboring landowners and before-and-after groundwater monitoring. And recently, Colorado rolled out new proposed rules for curtailing the industry's fugitive emissions of methane - a potent greenhouse gas.

Meanwhile, Wyoming became the second state to sign groundwater monitoring rules that groups like Environmental Defense Fund are lauding as the standard other states should aspire to, undoubtedly a result of Pavillion citizens' debacle with well water contaminated by oil and gas development. "Collecting base-line water quality data prior to drilling and following up with post completion sampling are necessary steps," Richard Garrett, energy policy analyst with the Wyoming Outdoor Council, told EnergyWire. "This rule will help protect everyone: landowners, Wyoming citizens and industry."

Whatever environmentalists' quibbles might be with the particulars of rules in Colorado and Wyoming, the question in all of this, of course, is when the push against fracking will lose its potency as a motivator for tightening oil and gas regulations to better protect air, water, wildlife and people. With the notable exceptions of rule rollbacks in New Mexico, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency backpedaling on fracking pollution investigations, I bet it will be awhile. After all, regulators are responding to public opinion and outrage as much as anything. And as an activist friend once commented to me, as long as kids with mysterious nosebleeds and sick grandmas turn up near drilling pads, those fighting industry will have the upper hand in the battle for hearts and minds.

Sarah Gilman is the associate editor of High Country News. She tweets @Sarah_Gilman "Cross-posted from High Country News, hcn.org. The author is solely responsible for the content."

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Nitrogen Pollution At Critical Levels- Nat'l Parks

From Katie Mast

We've had national parks on the brain a lot lately as we slog through 16 days of federal shutdown. It's been an economic burden to gateway communities and a frustration to tourists. But a depressingly dysfunctional government isn't the only thing plaguing our parks. A new study shows that airborne nitrogen pollution is fundamentally changing the ecosystems of many of our public lands.

Nitrogen is a life-giving nutrient in healthy soils and the most plentiful element in the air we breathe. We add it to plants through fertilizers that can transform a lawn to lush green and help tomato plants grow heavy with fruit. But just like you can love a garden to death with too much fertilizer, excess nitrogen in the environment can kill sensitive plants while promoting growth of nitrogen-loving organisms like algae and certain grasses.

Different ecosystems can handle varying amounts of nitrogen, depending on their elevation, soil composition and the living things that have evolved there. Once the amount of a nutrient reaches a tipping point, or "critical load," it can kill trees, lichens and wildflowers that are sensitive to it. "Some plants love nitrogen and can take in more than others," says Raluca Ellis, lead researcher and

author on the new study published in the science journal, *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*. "But if we keep adding more (nitrogen), we run the risk of changing the ecosystem and setting it up to support more nitrogen-loving species."

In some places, like Rocky Mountain National Park, officials have been aware of increased nitrogen in the air and studying its effects for years. In 2005, scientists had already recorded nitrogen levels at 20 times what they estimated for the pre-industrial era. And just beyond the park's borders on Niwot Ridge, nitrogen-loving grasses were replacing native wildflowers. Researchers worry that the shift in plant communities will mean decreased habitat for animals on the ridge as well. Scientists at Harvard, in collaboration with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, recently determined that a total of 38 national parks already have nitrogen levels that are at or above their critical load levels.

At Yosemite National Park, it's the lichens that have been changing lately. Some 500 species live in Yosemite, but what alarms researchers is the new growth of beautiful yellow lichen known as Candelaria. "If you were to go to a



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place with very little air pollution, then you would not be seeing this many of these Candelaria species,” botanist Mike Hutton told California’s KQED Radio.

Along with lichens, diatoms are among the first parts of an ecosystem to respond to a nitrogen overload. The single-celled organisms found in lakes and streams conduct about a quarter of the world’s photosynthesis, making them critical to oxygen release and carbon capture, and a significant base of the food chain. Once such foundational species of an ecosystem start to change, and more nitrogen-loving diatoms become more prevalent, it can trigger a cascade of larger shifts.

In most of the national parks, “we’re nowhere near killing trees and plants, but we’re beginning to see some of the initial changes,” says Bret Schichtel, a scientist with the National Park Service Air Resources Division. Yosemite officials worry that, if these nitrogen levels remain elevated, more native species will die and invasive plants will move in to fill the void. According to the study, however, the source of Yosemite’s nitrogen could be clearing over the next few decades.

The two biggest sources of nitrogen pollution are both human-caused: On the coasts, where population density is higher, nearby parks are affected mostly by the nitrogen oxides released in fuel combustion from cars and power plants. In the Interior West, ammonia released from commercial fertilizers and manure is the biggest source of nitrogen pollution. A handful of parks in the West are at or above critical nitrogen levels, and models predict that this kind of pollution will increase, as a growing human population will require a larger food supply, and thus, more fertilizers. Parks near the coasts, however, may see a decrease in nitrogen if vehicle and power plant emissions standards become stricter.

“It’s not a surprise to find elevated levels in the national parks closer to population centers,” says Schichtel, “but in the Interior West, in places that we think of as pristine, it is a bit more shocking” to see increasing amounts of human-caused reactive nitrogen. While the new study is focused on parks, communities nearby are likely experiencing similar levels of excess nitrogen, which is a concern for human health as well.

Ellis and Schichtel hope that their research, and similar studies, can find its way into the hands of policy makers and help propel stronger nitrogen regulations. Currently, there are few regulations concerning airborne nitrogen pollution from farms.

Schichtel says that the new science

on nitrogen levels in national parks is an important step to answering the question “Do we need to be concerned with these things and do we need to be concerned with them in the future?” And clearly, the model says “yes.”

Katie Mast is an editorial intern at High Country News.

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*Top Left: Lara letting
Cameo graze.*

Top right:

Kelsey kisses colt.

Bottom Left:

*The Bun tries to keep
up with the Roo!*

Bottom Right:

Rafiki.

*(Two Ridgebacks next
to each other.)*

Animals & Their Companions

Top Left: Ben hugs Roo.

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Bottom: Lil'bit.



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Conspiracy Of Love

Article & Photo by Melissa E. Johnson

*Blessed is the season,
which engages the whole world
in a conspiracy of love.
~Hamilton Wright Mabie*

Can you feel it-the warm fuzzy glow of good cheer building from the first jingle-belled advertisement and beautifully wrapped vision of holiday bliss, and reaching a crescendo as we join our families and friends to celebrate the season? Giddy with the holiday spirit, we're just a little more kind and a little more forgiving to the people around us as we move through the days of December, filled with anticipation of . . .

Of what? What are we looking forward to? What do we expect? What do we really want? Kids seem to know with surprising clarity. "I want an American Girl doll!" "I want a new bike!" "I want chocolate chip cookies!" "I WANT MY MOMMY!" But how many of these wants are truly needs. Do they even recognize the difference? Rarely. In watching them flit from one toy to



the next we see right through their fly-by-night passions, and we forget that adults are not so different.

Except that we use these long, detailed explanations to rationalize our dubious choices, disguising the pretenses of

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our decisions even from ourselves sometimes. We reach for this and long for that then reach for something else. Sometimes we reach for what we think we really want only to get it and later discover that it wasn't so great after all. Maybe things have changed since we began wanting what we want and we find that it's no longer relevant when it arrives. And sometimes when we don't get what we want it makes us want it even more; a smoldering unrequited passion that we can't extinguish. But how much of what we say we want do we truly need?

Perhaps at the root of every desire is a basic longing-to connect, to love, to be at peace, if only for a while; the hunt for comfort and joy. Remember this as you move through the holiday season and look for ways to connect with the root of your longing.

Try these four tips:

1. **Volunteer!** Get out of yourself and give back to your community! As Rumi says, there are a thousand ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

2. **Keep it real!** No holiday is perfect and few celebrations rarely resemble the cozy gatherings depicted in commercials and our favorite programs on television. Don't be afraid to do things a little different each year; get rid of the pressure!

3. **Take some time for yourself!** Give the gift of your presence. You can't be there for others in any real way if you're not there for yourself so slow down, take a nap, read a book, get a massage, spend some time reflecting on where you've been and where you're going.

4. **Remember what's important.** It's easy to lose sight of why we're doing what we're doing when we're so busy baking and buying and wrapping and coming and going. Take some time to connect with the real reason for the

season.

Succumb to the conspiracy of love and you just might find that what you're looking for has been with you all along.

Picture at left: Stained - Kilarney, Ireland.

Melissa is a writer, photographer, artist and lawyer.

Read more on her blog at www.HeartLaw.blogspot.com.

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Protesters Still Take To The Trees

By Robert Leo Heilman

If you think that sitting high up in a tree to block a timber sale is a thing of the past, then you should have come with me recently to what's called the Whitecastle timber sale in

southern Oregon. There's a new generation of protesters up in the trees there, and in many ways they're more sophisticated than the Earth First! radicals I interviewed back in the mid-1980s.

Today's tree-sitters are much more likely to have been involved in other movements, such as Occupy, or in environmental struggles against coal, tar sands and power plants. There are also a lot more women involved. Not surprisingly, the sitters can seem abysmally ignorant about some things; they're young, in their 20s for the most part, and largely raised in cities. Most of them believe that the century-old second-growth forest they're camping in is old growth dating back to Shakespeare's day. But like the folks who blocked roads and chained themselves to logging equipment during the Reagan administration, they are idealists, willing to put their freedom on the line for what they believe in.

Probably the most interesting generational change is that the "old guard" was often elitists, college-educated folks who thought timber workers were too stupid and ignorant to know what was good for them. The kids nowadays want to ally themselves with the workers and take on the bosses alongside them in a fight for both ecological and labor justice. This is not such a far-fetched notion.

When the Reverend Jesse Jackson came to Roseburg, Ore. - which calls itself the timber capital of the nation - at the height of the "Timber Wars" of the early 1990s, he received an ovation from a mixed crowd of timber workers and environmentalists. He brought them to their feet when he said: "This is not about workers against environmentalists; this is about workers and

environmentalists against the greedy and the wasteful." This change of attitude can be traced back to Judi Bari and Gene Lawhorn. She was an Earth First! activist from the redwood country of Northern California, and he was a mill worker employed by the Roseburg Forest Products Co.

After they met in the late 1980s, at the University of Oregon's annual Environmental Law Conference in Eugene, Lawhorn persuaded Bari to renounce tree-spiking and other activities that could harm loggers or mill workers. She, in turn, was able to convince her fellow protesters that their struggle was against the bosses, not against the workers. Endangering workers was both morally reprehensible and stupidly playing into the hands of the very folks who were

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cutting too much timber too fast, even as they cut the wages and benefits for their employees.

Bari went on to become the victim of a bombing attack, surviving that only to die of cancer a few years later. Since her death, she has become something of a saint in leftist radical circles, her name invoked reverently by this new generation. But Gene Lawhorn has been largely forgotten. He had complex views about logging old-growth forests, and he had the courage to voice his opinions. For this he received death threats, beer bottles were smashed in his driveway and the windshield on his pickup was shattered.

After he lost his job with Roseburg Forest Products Co., he couldn't find employment anywhere in Douglas County. Neither could his wife, who found that job offers disappeared as soon as prospective employers heard her last name. When the local daily newspaper finally published an article about the so-called "timber wars" and the death threats circulating around the county, Gene Lawhorn's predicament was exposed right in front of God and everybody. Yet not one leader in Douglas County - no politician, preacher, member of law enforcement or of the court system, and no teacher, mill owner or government agency head - spoke out against neighbors threatening to kill their neighbors.

There was a letter to the editor of the local weekly, but

Highlander Environmental

the writer said that Gene Lawhorn was a traitor who deserved whatever he got. By then, Gene and his wife had already fled to Portland. The tree-sitters I talked with recently had never heard of this former neighbor of mine, a man who reached out to people whom he'd been told were his enemies. Nevertheless, these kids are now making his argument for him.

Robert Leo Heilman is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is an award winning essayist, author and journalist living in Myrtle Creek, Oregon.



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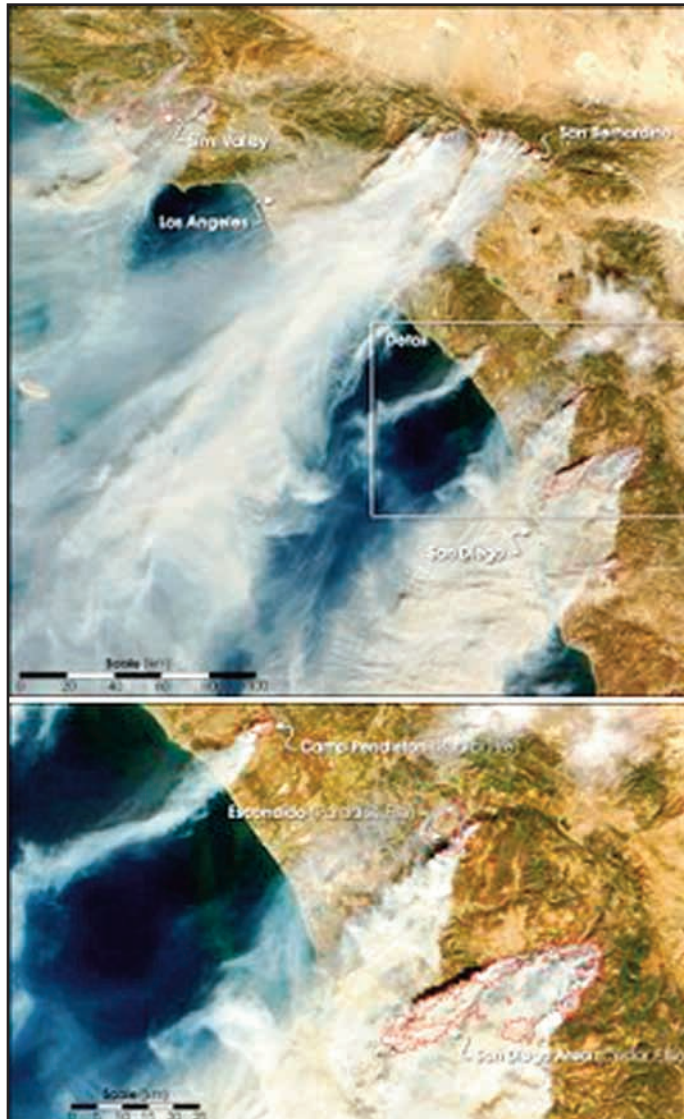
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Satellite To Detect Wildfires An Acre In Size

From Katie Mast

What started as a small blaze in the backcountry of central California this summer became the 250,000-acre Yosemite Rim Fire that forced thousands of nearby residents out of their homes. The tab at the end of the fire fighting efforts tallied over \$100 million, and that's not including lost revenue, damaged structures or the tens of millions that some expect will be needed for restoration efforts.

As outlined recently in *Remote Sensing* journal, researchers at the University of California in Berkeley now hope that new satellite imaging technology could help with early detection of fires like the Rim, giving fire managers a leg up in planning response. Using state-of-the-art infrared sensors, cameras and processing software, the satellite would be able to identify fires before they reach even one acre in size, monitor the fire's movement and detail where the fire is most active during firefighting



efforts. One satellite would be able to monitor the entire western U.S., researchers on the project say. It's not simply a fire suppression tool, the Berkeley team says, but a way to help managers plan and react before fires get out of hand.

If the satellite is built (a process researchers hope will start a year from now) it will be a major breakthrough for wildland firefighting. There have been some advances in fire monitoring during recent years, such as drones that can watch over a fire's growth and movement, first used in 2007. But fire detection hasn't changed much in the West since the Forest Service began employing lookouts in 1910 to sit in remote watchtowers and keep their eyes on the land. Technology in the watchtowers has advanced - they now have phones and Internet - but those watchers, and any eyewitness reports, are still key to detecting

wildfires.

Dr. Carl Pennypacker, an astrophysicist at UC Berkeley, who spent most of his career probing the edges of the universe, recently turned his gaze Earthward to develop the new satellite technology, FUEGO, or Fire Urgency Estimator in Geosynchronous Orbit. After the 1991 Oakland fire burned 3,000 structures, killed 25 people and created \$1.5 billion in damage, Pennypacker began dreaming of a way to prevent future catastrophic blazes. Until recently, though, infrared and computational technology just hasn't been up to snuff. Now, as computing costs have dropped and imaging sensors improve, his dream could become a reality.

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The next step, says Pennypacker, is testing. Teaming up with researchers at the Hopland Field Station near Berkeley, who study ecology and conduct controlled burns, the FUEGO team plans to use their computer and imaging models from across the valley. While the FUEGO computers watch how the prescribed fire moves and map its hottest areas from afar, Hopland researchers will be collecting the same data in the field. By comparing the two groups' datasets later, researchers will be able to evaluate whether FUEGO software works. Pennypacker expects those tests to convince potential funding partners to support building the new satellite.

The FUEGO team hopes the satellite will be a natural fit for collaboration with federal agencies like the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). He says it may also attract the attention of private insurance companies interested in reducing losses from wildfires, or even space aviation operations like Virgin Galactic, which has already sold 600 tickets for private space flight and has expressed interest in advancing satellite technology.

If all goes according to plan, the Berkeley team will see FUEGO built and launched after at year of testing. Pennypacker estimates a price tag of a few hundred million dollars, but says that compared to the \$2 billion Forest Service fire budget in 2012, the satellite could easily pay for itself in a season.

Katie Mast is an Editorial Intern at High Country News. Wildfires in California in 2013- these images were captured by a NASA satellite that has orbited Earth since 1999. The new FUEGO technology would remain focused on one area of the planet, rather than continuously orbit. "Cross-posted from High Country News. The author is solely responsible for the content."




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Movie Holds Up To Book's Fame!

This month you get a two-fer, book review with the movie review. I saw an interview with Harrison Ford and since I've been a fan for a long time - Han Solo days - I decided to read the book and go see the movie. I've also been a fan of the author for many years. Within a few days I read Orson Scott Card's book *Ender's Game* and then went to the Flatirons AMC to view the movie by the same name.

Amazingly Card wrote the book back in 1977 and updated it as late as 1991, the version I read. Ford had said in his interview that it took years for the movie to get funding and when it finally did he decided to become involved. I've always been a science fiction fan, but never a video game player. I loved both the book and the movie and recommend them together or individually.

The story takes place in a future when an alien force has attacked Earth and while we survived the attack to ward off invasion and annihilation all attention is on preventing another attack by going out to the alien world to attack and get rid of them first.

The interesting thing about Card's story is that he

identifies genius children in that time, the future, as being the only hope to destroy the aliens in a space war. So the

leaders create a school where these genius kids can learn space warfare and strategy. The school is in space and provides wonderful visuals in the movie of weightlessness during the war games the kids are forced to play in their effort to learn strategies that will hopefully show which of them would be the candidate to lead the war effort and succeed against the aliens.

There is a surprising twist at the end and the scope of the visuals of the movie on the big screen make it worth trying to see instead of waiting until it comes out for home viewing.

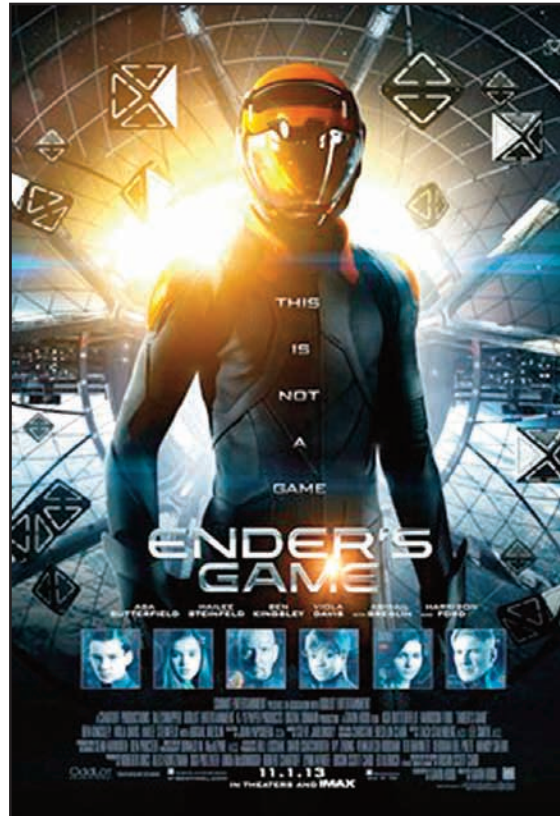
Both the movie and the book deal with bullying, which is a timely subject with social media providing a new way for children and especially teens falling prey to their peers using this new avenue for even more cruelty to each other. Sibling rivalry is also a subject

addressed, more in the book than the movie but touching upon the manner in which it can shape a young child both in good ways and bad.

The film is rated PG-13 and has plenty of action for young viewers. It is a film that would be good for parents to share with their children so that a dialog about bullying could be opened before and after seeing the film to arm kids with how to deal with it in their own lives and a how-not-to behave scenario with room for discussions. The book is a bit more adult in content, but surely relevant for teens who enjoy science fiction. The movie will probably be a bit juvenile for hard-core video game aficionados, but the big screen action with great storytelling and acting can offset that.

If you haven't been to the Flatirons AMC lately you could be pleasantly surprised by the new recliner seats, which are very comfortable. Weekday showings before noon are discounted.

By A.M. Wilks





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New Nationwide Videos For Safety Practices

From CSU

Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Safety Practices Featured in New Nationwide Video

The best agricultural safety practices are described and demonstrated in a new series of free educational videos produced by U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers across the country, including one based at Colorado State University. The videos are available on a YouTube channel launched Nov. 1 at www.youtube.com/USagCenters.

Topics include: respiratory protection, livestock safety, tractor and machinery safety, child development, emergency response, grain safety, pesticide safety, heat-illness prevention, ladder safety, and hearing protection. New videos will be added weekly, with 60 educational videos expected on the site by year's end.

Content will address how to stay safe while working in agriculture, forestry, and fishing. The video project is a joint effort of ten U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Among these is the High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety, based at CSU, with many staff members in the Department of Environmental and Radiological Health Sciences.

"The new YouTube channel is a way to reach millions of people with safety and health information," said project administrator Allison DeVries, of the High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety. Virtually anyone working hands-on in agriculture, forestry, and fishing - or with training responsibilities in these industries - will benefit from the educational videos, said project leader Amanda Wickman, of the Southwest

Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education in Texas.

The videos may be accessed with mobile devices, which allows use in field settings. "The U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers were established to protect more than 5.5 million full- and part-time contract and seasonal workers in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, as well as farm family members," Wickman said. "Many centers have created videos for this purpose, and this project will enhance dissemination to people who can benefit most from them."

Each video on the new YouTube channel has been produced and reviewed by experts on the occupational hazards in agriculture, forestry, and fishing. For more information visit the YouTube channel at

www.youtube.com/USagCenters

or contact Allison DeVries, project administrator, at allison.devries@colostate.edu.



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Not My Weapon Of Choice

By Ari LeVaux

As hunting season approached, I began shooting my rifle a lot at the range, with the goal of hitting the target at 300 yards. But then something surprising happened: I wasn't able to find enough bullets. The gun and hunting stores had bare spots on the shelves where boxes of ammunition used to be stacked, and hunting bullets were among the scarcest. That could make it tough for hunters like me to put meat on the table this year.

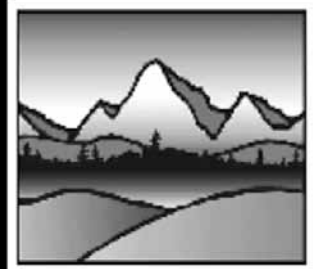
"It's not looking good for hunting season," one wholesale ammunition dealer told me. But bullets for assault rifles, he assured me, were plentiful. According to the Remington website, of the company's six new bullet offerings, three are in AR calibers. Two are for pistols, and only one is for hunting. Remington's new hunting bullet is called the Hog Hammer, and of the seven calibers in which Hog Hammer bullets are available, four are for assault rifles such as the 450 Bushmaster, mentioned in this Hog Hammer blurb: "For whacking and stacking swine, nothing delivers like our new Hog Hammer.(tm) It penetrates even the thickest-skinned pigs with a Barnes TSX(r) Bullet at its heart. With all copper construction for 28% deeper

penetration than standard lead-core bullets, it's the toughest expanding bullet on the market, offering near 100% weight-retention on-hog, while expanding rapidly to deliver devastating wound channels. Hog Hammer utilizes a flash-suppressed propellant for nighttime or low-light hunts..."

The recent push for hunting with assault rifles gives those weapons a more noble purpose than what they're generally known for: war game fantasies or perhaps the occasional killing spree by a deranged individual. Assault rifles are touted as good hunting setups for game as big as buffalo. And if you do plan on hunting at night, an idea that Remington seems to endorse, you would probably want a target as big as a buffalo.

Meanwhile, another new AR ammo goes by the name Zombie, and it comes in a case that appears to have been designed by a comic book artist. It includes the ironic warning, "This is not a toy," and the slogan: "Just in case." The implication is that zombies might really attack, though consumers are free to substitute other enemies - including, perhaps, federal officials. Ask some gun lovers, and they'll tell you that the shortage of ammunition is definitely caused by "the government."

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Lee Matthews, host of the Oklahoma radio show Firearms Fridays, told KFOR, an Oklahoma City television station, "I get a lot of phone calls, a lot of literature, from people thinking it's the government buying all the ammunition and not letting us have any." Matthews, however, isn't buying government conspiracy theories. "(Ammunition) is just being swallowed up for unrealistic reasons," he says, noting that many factories are producing ammunition "24/7." The shortage comes from a fear of government intervention which translates to, "Well, it's getting hard to find so I better stock up as much as I can."

As best as I can tell, hoarding is to blame, such that the bullet shortage has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. At first glance, the shortage doesn't appear to be coming from the supply end. Remington's third-quarter earnings report shows a 30% increase in ammo sales, from \$79.7 million to \$110.6 million. An ammunition specialist at Remington wouldn't comment on the causes of the ammo shortage, but did say that wholesalers determine what the manufacturers produce. He also said that Remington was done making .270 caliber bullets - the kind I need for hunting - for the year. The wholesale dealer I spoke to saw it differently, saying that he gets to sell what the makers supply.

Whoever is at fault, there may be a lot of angry hunters this year. At first glance, hunting might seem like a good use for an assault rifle. If you really want to get something, what better way than mowing it down? Sprayed bullets, of course, would riddle the animal from head to toe. The real

issue is that assault rifles open the door to irresponsible and unethical shooting, such as the unfathomable practice of hunting at night. (I wouldn't want to be in that hunting party.) Even by day, a few hunters accidentally shoot and kill their hunting buddies.

It's sad that ammo makers are tilting the playing field away from meat hunters who want to feed their families, and toward the insane practice of hunting with assault rifles. That, along with market forces driven by fear, turns paranoia into reality.

Ari LeVaux is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He writes about food in New Mexico.



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What Could Take Happy Out Of Your Holiday?

While fun and festive, holiday decorations can pose numerous safety risks to small children. Louie Delaware, the Home Safety Guru(r), points out ten things you can do to deck your own halls safely. For many families, some of the most beloved holiday traditions involve decorations: trees festooned with garlands and ornaments, stockings hung by fireplaces, Hanukkah menorahs or Kwanzaa kinara candleholders placed on tables, lights hung inside and out, and much more. However, if you have young children, holiday decorations aren't simply festive symbols of the season; they're also potential safety concerns. From candles to power cords to small ornaments to wrapping paper, there are a hundred and one hazards that little eyes-and hands and mouths-will be drawn to.

Most concerning of all is the fact that in-home accidents often happen to the children of very responsible parents. In many cases, Mom and Dad have thoroughly childproofed their home-they simply don't realize the dangers that extra seasonal décor can pose until after an accident has occurred.

Give your tree roots, if you'll be putting up a tree-real or artificial-make sure that it's stable. "Children have been known to push, pull, and even climb trees," Delaware points out. "Consider tethering yours to a wall or to the ceiling, or put it in an off-limits room, to help prevent it

from falling over." Trim it sensibly. The sparkling lights and shiny ornaments on trees are fascinating to us adults-so just imagine how tempting they'll be to little hands, in which they can be choking hazards or in danger of breaking!

"I recommend limiting the number of light strands and ornaments that you use, and putting them only on the upper branches of the tree," says Delaware. "Especially if you have a toddler, I recommend **decorating the tree a little higher than you think your child can reach**. It's also a good idea to use only flame-resistant, non-breakable ornaments, just in case. And definitely avoid using real food, like popcorn or dried apples, in garlands, as your child may attempt to eat them."

Pay special attention to electrical cords, as many at-home holiday displays wouldn't be possible without electricity. But if you have small children, easily accessible cords should be a thing of the past. Electrical cords present a risk of strangulation and can also be chewed through, so ensure that they are out of sight and out of reach. Don't forget about lights that allow another strand to be plugged into the first, or extension cords with multiple unprotected outlets.

As well as extension cords, depending on your home's configuration, you may not be able to keep your children away from **all wall outlets**. In case your child does manage to pull a plug out of its outlet, make certain that there is a safety measure to keep him or her from inserting an object or a finger into the now-exposed outlet. It is recommended



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to install tamper-resistant outlets or, even better, sliding safety cover plates, which automatically cover the outlet when a plug is pulled out. In fact, keep these safety-first cover plates on your outlets all year round.

Make sure fireplaces & wood-burning stoves are off-limits. Nothing fosters a sense of holiday cheer like a warm fire burning beneath the mantle-as long as that fire is seen and not touched! If your house has a fireplace or wood burning stove of any type, keep children away from it. The surfaces around the fire can be in excess of 450° F, making them a serious burn hazard.

Give tabletops a clean sweep. My child can't reach the tops of tables, so anything I put there will be safe, you may think. Not so fast. If you're using a tablecloth or runner, anything on the tabletop might be fair game. Children can easily grab tablecloths that hang over the edge of tables and pull the contents onto themselves or the floor. This is especially hazardous if you're decorating with lit candles that can start a fire or small items your child can put into his or her mouth.

Leave nature outside. Certain plants have been part of traditional holiday décor for centuries. Natural elements are best left outdoors if you have small children. Specifically, the berries of mistletoe and holly are poisonous.

Don't leave wrappings lying around. Yes, ripping the paper off of gifts is fun whether you're three years old or ninety years old. But unlike adults, children may get into trouble in the aftermath. Immediately dispose of wrapping and packaging items. Especially be on the lookout for small items that can be choking hazards, such as the twist

ties that keep toys in place.

Watch holiday favorites on a safe screen. Of course you'll want to show your children favorite holiday films-and if you're like many families, you may even be watching them on a brand-new television. Just make sure your screen is anchored securely in place before hitting "play." **Many parents don't realize it, but televisions can easily be pulled over.** To help prevent this type of accident from happening in your home; mount your television on a wall, well out of a child's reach: tether your television to a wall or entertainment center using solid straps. The straps should be securely affixed into wall studs or other mechanical wall fasteners. (Don't use plastic drywall inserts, which can be easily pulled out of your wall!) Again, be sure that all cords and wires are out of reach! You can run them through a wall or hide them behind a wall-mounted cover.

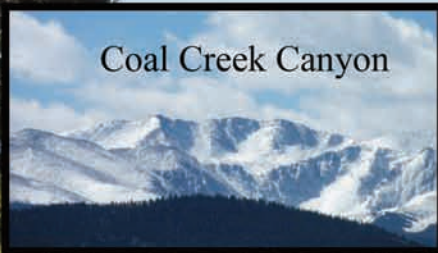
Tour your home with a child's-eye view. After setting out your decorations, walk (or crawl!) through your home, looking at new objects from a child's height. And use your imagination when attempting to spot potential hazards. Especially be aware of small items that can pose choking hazards, like toys and candy. If you have a young child who can crawl, toddle, or walk, it's always best to be safe rather than sorry.

You don't have to avoid holiday decorations altogether, but in some instances cutting back or altering them may be the smartest option. Remember, you want your family's holiday memories to include joy and laughter, not an unfortunate incident that could have been prevented.

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Sugar On The Ballot?

By Allen Best

In my impressionable youth, I believed that there was an “r” in Washington. We “warshed” clothes, and however you might spell it, Colorado was pronounced “Colorada,” which is east of “Hawi-yah.” Growing up in Fort Morgan, Colo., I also remember the treat of having a 7-Up, a Pepsi-Cola or some other kind of “pop.” When I first heard the word “soda,” I wasn’t sure what the person was talking about.

Later, spending my first year of college in “Missoura,” I heard a clamor one night in the dormitory. It was in Jefferson City, the state capital, located midway between the two largest cities, Kansas City and St. Louis. “Pop,” came one yell, from one hallway. “No, it’s soda,” was the answer from the other side. And so the rival chants grew like cheers at a football game. I was reminded of that night recently while reading about a local tax proposal in Telluride, Colo. Voters this November were asked to enact a 1 cent per ounce tax on all sugary drinks, including “soda,” according to the two local newspapers, The Telluride Watch and Daily Planet. (Imagine, a small town having two competing newspapers when Denver can barely

support one daily.)

Supporters argue that a tax is necessary because sugar is a bad thing for human health. Most of us know that both sodas and pops (or whatever you call them) are loaded with sugar, mostly from corn fructose. So are the energy drinks that now crowd grocery aisles. A speaker at a recent forum in Telluride demonstrated this in a dramatic way, displaying a one-quart Mason jar two-thirds full of granulated sugar. That, said Harold Goldstein, of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, is how much sugar you consume if you have a soda (pop) every day of the week.

Another speaker, Jeff Ritterman, a cardiologist in California, noted that the number of overweight children and obese adults in the United States has doubled over the past 30 years. Much of that increase, he said, can be attributed to the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. “When we pour the soda, we pour on the pounds,” he said. Other results: tooth decay and type 2 diabetes.

Tax opponents respond to these arguments by saying that sugar consumption should be a matter of personal choice; the nanny state can keep its sticky fingers to itself. This is a



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difficult argument no matter which side you're on, simply because most of us resist absolutist positions. Remember Prohibition? Everyone agrees it was a gigantic failure. The so-called war on drugs has lasted much longer, and it, too, has been a colossal failure with cruel consequences.

The very first casualty of the 1937 law that made possession and sale of marijuana a federal offense was an unemployed laborer in Denver. He spent several years in federal prison in Kansas for selling one marijuana cigarette. Thousands of others have similarly imprisoned for crimes that, at least in Colorado and Washington, are no longer considered crimes.

How about cocaine, heroin, LSD and methamphetamines? On these drugs, and many others, we still draw a hard line. In the case of methamphetamines, there's a good argument to be made that widespread use has harmful consequences to society. Users tend to get violent. What about heroin? It exacts a terrible individual cost. But what harm does it do to society, save that addicts too often commit crimes to come up with money for their next fix?

If any sugar addicts have busted car windows to steal items that can be sold for their next fix, I haven't heard of it. But it's undeniable that sugar has a serious impact on our total health care costs. Long before Obamacare (a term

I use without disparagement), the costs of sugar-caused sicknesses such as diabetes were socialized because they were borne by society as a whole. To the credit of McDonald's, the fast-food chain now posts the caloric content of its various goods, including soft drinks. I wish other restaurants also shared the calorie count of their food; it would help us make more informed food choices.

If I lived in Telluride, however, I'd probably vote against this "sin" tax, whether they called the sugary drink in question soda or pop. It is certainly true that Americans have a sugar addiction, and like most addictions, it has harmful consequences. But does that mean we need a law against it? Let people decide for themselves.

Allen Best is a contributor to Writers on the Range a service of High Country News.



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DECEMBER
2013

POWER UPDATE



Small Change Has a Big Impact

It's only small change—an average of 50 cents per month—but when you multiply that by the thousands of generous United Power members who participate in Operation Round-Up it makes a BIG difference in your local community.

Operation Round-Up funds don't just go toward utility bills. Round-Up has provided funds for local fire departments, community health clinics, youth programs, food banks, needy families and many other worthwhile causes.

Put your small change to work!

Sign up on your next bill statement, online or by calling 303-637-1300.



Please Take a Moment to Clear Your Meter



United Power meter readers and technicians require occasional access to your yard to read the meter or obtain information from electrical equipment that is owned by United Power. When access to your electric meter is blocked, cluttered, or otherwise restricted, our meter readers' safety is at risk and their accurate and timely reading of your meter is affected. Please help by providing them with a clear and safe pathway to your electric meter. Consider the following when helping to improve the safety of our meter readers:

- **Storage:** Wood, storage cabinets, vehicles, trailers, boats, umbrellas and debris should be kept away from the meter area.
- **Pets:** Consider fencing or other measures that will prevent dogs from accessing the meter area as well as the path to the meter. Even a friendly dog may react unexpectedly to a stranger entering the yard. Please notify United Power if you have a protective dog by calling 303-637-1243.
- **Landscaping:** Plant trees, shrubs, and foliage and other landscaping away from the meter. Landscape and maintain existing vegetation at least three feet away from the meter to maintain clearance to the meter.
- **Snow Removal:** Remove ice and snow from the access way to the meter. When shoveling snow from walks and driveways, avoid covering any meters.

D.C. Youth Tour

Apply now for United Power's 2014 Washington D.C. Youth Tour – it's easy and it's a fun opportunity. The tour is scheduled for June 12-19, 2014. Three students will be selected to represent United Power on this all expense paid trip to our nation's capital. Students must complete an application and submit an essay to be considered. The deadline for applications is January 10, 2014. The tour is open to high school students 16 years of age or older entering 11th or 12th grade, and whose primary residence is in United Power's service territory. Applications and more information can be found online at www.unitedpower.com, through your local high school counselor, or by calling United Power's External Affairs department at 303-659-0551.



Cooperative Youth Tour
Washington, D.C.
June 12-19, 2014

Ho! Ho! Ho! Don't miss Santa @ 10AM on the 14th!



34605 Stanton Drive
Spectacular Custom Home
4 BD/ 4 BA \$549,500



890 Toedtli
Classic Mid-Century Ranch
4 BD/ 3 BA + Bonus Room \$539,000



10653 Twin Spruce
Pastoral Foothill Views!
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5 BD/ 3 BA + Shop \$459,000



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Privacy in the Pines!
2 BD/ 1 BA 1.39 Ac. \$210,000



11883 Lillis Lane
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Great Solar Potential \$164,900



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Beautiful Horse Property. Newly Remodeled!
3 BD/ 3 BA Domestic Well \$349,000



34624 Stanton Drive
Custom Updates Thru-Out!
3 BD/ 2 BA 3-Car \$319,000



30945 Burland Road
Updated Ranch on 2.3 Ac.
3 BD/ 2 BA 800SF Barn \$249,500



1095 Modred Street
Charming Update in Lafayette!
3 BD/ 2 BA \$238,000



30 Wonder Trail
Historic Wondervu Cabin An
Original Get-Away! 1 BD \$84,000



28 Millard
Charming Get-Away!
1 BD/ 1 BA + Shed/Studio \$144,000



129 Debra Ann
Great Building Site
Almost an Acre \$31,000



4658 White Rock
Fab North Boulder Condo
2 BD/ 2 BA \$179,900



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- TBD Circle Dr - \$39,000
- TBD Coal Creek Cyn - \$38,000
- 00 Coal Creek Cyn - \$38,500
- 33966 Nadm Drive - \$75,000
- 11547 Shimley Road - \$39,000

Did you notice a new face? Susan Peterson has joined Kathy Keating as a full time Realtor. The news for you is now when you call or contact us; you'll get both of us working to help you meet your real estate goals. Two full-time, dedicated and dynamic women on your team. We love your referrals, too!

For additional information and photos:

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