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The Original Forest Dwellers

Many wild animals cross over my small mountain foothills property all the time. It serves as one of a few wildlife corridors left in a bedroom community and abuts up to a seasonal stream with a few sections of harsh

terrain that are good for critters and not for humans. This is perfect habitat for fox and at least one (*probably two*) amble through nearly daily. I don't always have the great good fortune to see them, but most often my housecat sounds the alarm that one is nearby because she shoots into the house from her cat door (*her catio – an outdoor dog run type of enclosure with a roof for protection*) with every hair on her body standing straight out.

If I go to a window I can often see the object of her alarm calmly walking down the driveway or hunting for voles near the horse corral. They nearly always check out our sacrificial stump, a tree stump far from the house where we leave dead mice or chipmunk that the housecat has killed but not eaten. I like to imagine the cat and fox have an unspoken agreement to share in any bounty

(Continued on next page.)



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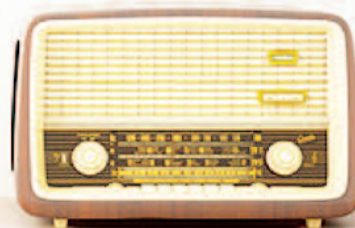
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Highlander Wildlife

since the housecat gets fed regularly and prefers her meat skinned and cooked.

Local fox are usually red fox, similar to the cover canine, but a few times in past years I have seen silver colored fox and knew it was too small and delicate to be a coyote. We have a coyote this year that frequents the neighborhood and its features are definitely not fox. Most fox are more shy, smart and seldom seen. When ignorant residents resort to feeding them people or dog food they change their inherent characteristic behavior and often become aggressive and conditioned to seek food from humans.

It is never okay to feed wildlife as it changes their normal hunting behaviors and puts them in danger of becoming prey to humans for their fur. While they seem cute and we all love watching them we must work to respect and just observe their natural lives without any intervention on our parts. Birds are the only wildlife deemed able to take our handouts without contributing to their demise.

Early this summer a new neighbor bought several young turkeys and put them in an enclosure that didn't get completely surrounded on the ground with rocks to keep the local predators from digging under chain link panels. To his dismay the fox dug a hole in that one spot and removed several of his young turkeys. The next day I was



walking my dog and observed the neighbor with a live trap and a package of raw chicken. Not wishing to be a nosy neighbor I still felt compelled to ask about trapping the fox to relocate it in hope his remaining turkeys might have a better chance of surviving.

It was in fact his goal to remove the offending turkey raider from our neighborhood until I mentioned it might be

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a mother fox with a den of kits. He opted to better defend the young turkeys with more fortifications to their enclosure and a coop in the form of a large dog kennel for them to hide in at night. The remaining turkeys grew up to become full size and well it is that season right? But his decision may have enabled the fox to further populate our neighborhood with her offspring and keep the rodent infestation such as voles more in check.

All too often residents see fox and other wild animals as nuisance wildlife when in fact they were here long before we started using the forest for full time homes. Their presence in all its glory is in keeping with the balance of forest ecology. But sometimes they become predators of what we have brought into their home: our chickens, turkeys, housecats, small dogs, etc. is sad and unfortunate and always our fault.

Whether we choose to see them as natural residents is the key as they have a place and should be respected even when they seem to be a nuisance. To insist they adapt to us without us doing the same is ecology out of balance. We can and must prevent them from becoming nuisance wildlife by taking the steps necessary to keep them wild. When you choose to feed them the next house they visit might have only young turkeys and consider those as human handouts. Don't add trouble to their already challenging lives.

By A.M. Wilks



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Who's Going To Carve The Tofurkey?

By Lael Oman and Diane Bergstrom

Ahhhhh, the holidays are here. With over 80 religious holidays, spiritual holy days and days of observance happening between Thanksgiving and the Gregorian New Year, nearly everyone has the opportunity to smell the stress in the air. It's equal opportunity for Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Pagans, Wiccans, Buddhists, Druids, Islamic followers, Sikhs, Shintoists, Taoists, Zoroastrians, and others. Gatherings dictate you spend time with various groups, including your family of origin, perhaps some who wouldn't make time for you in July and now you'll be facing them in December. No one is immune to holiday pressure. We've sat at the Norman Rockwell-esque table, but apparently the players did not get their scripts. Stress doesn't help us bring our best version of ourselves to the table, whoever is at the table. The nuclear family of origin has changed. Rarely is the isolated unit of two parents and a child the sole attendees. Blended families, single parents, multiple parents, partners in every sense of the word, divorced relatives, single adults without kids, extended family, friends, babies, and pets all redefine "family." New definitions have different versions of stressors. Just how do we introduce Grandpa's new girlfriend and what do the kids call her? (*Ask him.*) Maintaining an open perspective while loosening expectations can improve everyone's experience.

The food craze at this time of year can also increase the blood pressure. Whether cooking for others or arranging a potluck, there are now so many things to consider beyond the symbolic traditional fare. Food restrictions keep expanding. Are any guests allergic, alcoholic or diabetic? Will any require fare that is gluten-free, nut-free, dairy-free, or nightshade-free? Anybody eat strictly organic or strictly raw? And what about vegetarians, vegans, or those who won't eat anything with a face? Ask your host, or your guests, so you can offer options. Within reason. Or cover everything with cheese and be done with it. (*We won't name names.*) Again, stay within reason for your own sanity. Spend a couple minutes Googling possibilities. Think of it as increasing your sensitivity quotient or more simply, know before you go. You don't want to bring bacon-wrapped sausages to a Hanukkah meal, or meatballs to a Ganesha Chaturthi celebration, or baked yams to a raw food potluck. Good luck.

People are gathering, foods are chosen, traditions or non-traditions are rolling out, and you've embraced flexibility and reminded yourself it's only temporary. Travelling raises another level of stress; staying at other people's places, weird places to sleep, weird habits and routines, weird pet protocol (*or none at all*), witnessing hosts' stress fights, meeting other weird guests. Did we mention flexibility? Embrace the weird with an open mind.

Again, Google traditions you will walk into and be curious. If it gets too weird where you've wandered in, you can always wander out. As Lael reminded Diane, "Remember when I faced north for you in Eden Prairie (*Solstice in Minnesota*), barefoot, in 10 below zero?" (*To confirm: Diane did not require Lael to be barefoot, her choice.*) Lael was genuinely interested while it was a bit much for a staunch local Lutheran relative who abandoned her direction and went back inside. Oh well, she tried.

Clarify gifting upfront for stress reduction on all sides. It's stressful when you've shopped for the not-perfect-but-hopefully-liked gift and no one has done that for you. It's also awkward to receive while you didn't give. If invited somewhere, don't show up empty handed. That's just polite. Your host gift could be as simple as a single flower or as complex as gluten-free, dairy-free, nut-free, fair trade ingredients, locally made chocolates. During the highest grossing American retail quarter, people participate in different ways. (*See Editor's entry in Letters.*) Is there an iron clad gift exchange tradition, usually one person's outlined procedure, without the possibility to bend, shake, rattle or roll? You're probably not going to change them. Is a wrap-fest required for a truck bed full of presents where at the halfway mark, wine, beer and a roll of duct tape are necessary to finish the job? Or is it similar to another's tradition of handing someone something, perhaps unwrapped, maybe even in July? You're not going to change them either. Clarify expectations if you can and have no expectations. It's a holiday koan. Remember the gift is time, sharing company in hopes of making good memories. Or at least ones you can write about later. There will always be people who want to spend time with you, even if they're not the ones you had expected. Keep your heart and possibilities open.

Group gatherings, holiday expectations, and simply this time of year can create a petri dish of dynamics. The fact that it's the holidays heightens the impact. People are bound to make good memories and people are bound to mess up. If you do something stupid, you've got to recover. Recovery is a good thing, (*Continued next page.*)



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with your head held high. Others will say and do stupid things that can be horrifying at the time, but ask yourself, “Who says something like that?” This maintains your perspective. Deal with situations with humor, acceptance (*if appropriate*) and let them go. We remind each other that stupid stuff is going to happen and going to be said. When it does, we check it off the family list, making it easier to let it go faster. Otherwise the doghouse could get pretty crowded.

Happy holidays/non-holidays, whichever ones you celebrate/observe! May love, peace, laughter, kindness, and comfort surround you and your loved/liked ones. Be kind to yourself and self-preserving. Be considerate and tolerant with others, and may they be that way with you so post-holiday detoxing isn't your first New Year's resolution. If you're going to be alone on the holidays, read the previous paragraph and carve the tofurkey your own way!



A New Report On A Warming World

By Maya L. Kapoor - HCN

The complexity of climate change means it's hard to trace simple lines from cause to effect in daily life, much less plan for the future. That's one reason the federal government updates its National Climate Assessment every four years — to provide lawmakers, policymakers and citizens with the information they need to plan everything from urban infrastructure, to insurance programs, to disaster readiness. After the third NCA came out in 2014, the world experienced three of the warmest years on record. In the same time the United States, along with 167 other signatories, agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to keep global temperatures below a dangerous tipping point.

But after last December's presidential election, the odds of the U.S. willingly contributing to international climate change solutions dwindled. At this year's United Nations climate conference, the Trump administration — which previously announced plans to withdraw from the international climate agreement — says it will promote fossil fuels and nuclear energy.

All of which makes the fourth NCA seem even more urgent. After all, the U.S. emits more greenhouse gases per person each year than almost every other country in the world. Last week, the government released the first part of its 2018 assessment. Focusing on the science of climate change, the report describes how greenhouse gas emissions are affecting the U.S. already and will continue to do so in the future if we continue on the current trajectory.

Here are the takeaways for the West: The West has warmed by an average of some 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit. While the entire nation has warmed in the past century, the West has warmed faster than almost anywhere else. Only the northern Great Plains region has warmed as fast. What's more, the West is seeing big weather shifts: Both extreme hot and cold temperatures have gotten warmer, and the region has lost about two weeks of cool nights over the past century. Today's extreme hot temperatures are expected to become average temperatures over the next

few decades, so get ready for more broken records in the future. In the Northwest, the warmest day of the year will be about 6 degrees warmer by mid century than it was about a decade ago, for example. Cities in particular are warming more because of the urban heat island effect. Western wildfires have gotten worse, and will continue to do so, because of increasing temperatures and drought. New ecosystems will grow where wildfires burn. The complicating role of diseases and insect outbreaks in wildfires is not fully understood. But both diseases and insect outbreaks have increased because of climate change, and will continue to do so.

Alaska is in trouble. Because of its high latitude, Alaska has its own issues. Its glaciers, snow packs, and sea ice are melting. Its thawing permafrost releases even more of the greenhouse gas methane into the atmosphere, and its coastlines are eroding. Its boreal forests and even its tundra are burning. By the end of the century, the state will warm by more than 12 degrees on average.

The West is getting drier, even as rains come harder. Much of the West relies on declining winter precipitation for water. In the Northwest, decreased snow packs have meant lower streams for decades. By the end of the century, snow packs in the

(Continued next page.)



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southernmost mountains of the West will have virtually disappeared. Less water combined with higher temperatures may lead to more frequent droughts, especially in the Southwest — including chronic, long-term droughts. In places where the amount of precipitation hasn't changed, the way that precipitation falls is changing. The West is seeing more intense storms and less gentle rainy days, which can still lead to drought conditions. In cities, intense storms overwhelm sewage systems, causing flooding and damage.

Mountains in the West are losing their snow packs due to climate change. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

The West Coast is changing in profound ways. The sea is rising, getting warmer and becoming more acidic. Storm waves reach higher, which means more erosion. How much the oceans will rise depends in part on what happens to the Antarctic Ice Sheet: Will it hold, or melt away, raising sea levels still more? A phenomenon called an atmospheric river will cause more flooding along the West Coast, although it's unknown how much different sections of the coastline will flood.

So what do we do? The report points out what we've known for as long as we've known about greenhouse gas emissions: We have choices. To that end, each report section shows what would happen if greenhouse gas emissions continued along the current trajectory and what would happen if we reduced our emissions to meet the standards set by the 2015 U.N. Paris Climate Agreement. After all, everything listed here — from wildfires to ocean acidification to drought — is merely a symptom. Many Westerners are leading the way in managing these symptoms to preserve lives and landscapes. But the root



causes of these symptoms remain societal and personal choices that lead the average American to burn more than twice as much fossil fuel as the global average. As California Gov. Jerry Brown and others have demonstrated, the West also could lead the way in addressing these root causes. Brown, along with representatives from states, tribes, higher education institutions, faith organizations and businesses throughout the West and across of the nation will be representing the U.S. at the U.N.'s 23rd International Climate Summit in Germany, through a coalition named **We Are Still In**. The coalition has a simple message for the world: Americans are already rolling up their sleeves and building climate change solutions, with or without federal leadership.

Maya L. Kapoor is an associate editor for High Country News.

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An Old Journal Entry

By Andrew W. Smith

By design (perhaps) or by chance, the classes I will attend this semester have no windows. The fluorescent, artificial lighting seeps creepily down upon the bland faces of new classmates creating murky shadows and queer blotches as we sit rigid and try not to initiate too much direct eye contact.

All of us are strangers. And, like wild animals, an overlong eye to eye confrontation hints at threat.

As always, under such circumstances, I feel slightly threatened; like a sparrow in a cedar bush as the humans stumble screeching uncomfortably near.

Yet, perhaps these observations are merely subjective and deceiving. Perhaps I am just far too paranoid. I would not put it past me. I will not deny it.

But the windows. Why no windows?

In previous institutions of learning, I have always made a point of arriving to class a smidgen early in order to situate myself window-wise. I like to watch the sparrows flit in midwinter as if they were old friends and familiars. Their feathers, bark-colored, blending with the dead weeds of winter meadows under blustering, low skies the color of wet cement. The cedars of their refuge always that pale, frosty green under a silvery, mercury film. A window to security.

Here, there are just slick walls and desks with orange,

plastic chairs. The grotesque back of a stranger's head. Smell of cheap carpet and shampoo. Inconsiderate students in the hallway trying so desperately to be relevant are shrieking and capering like a troop of excited baboons.

They have spotted a leopard in the long grass down by the river.

A bright window in a classroom of strangers can provide some sense of security; a familiar point of reference to which one might retire, however briefly, to semi-safety.

Early in this life, I learned to find a way to separate myself from the everyday consciousness and enter a different realm. A familiar realm of small birds and trees and clouds and breezes I can visit at will. I recall memories of pleasant days by a cool spring creek in the shade listening to the voices of the water whisper 'all is well... listen to yourself.'

Oh, to one day live entirely in the present and conscious.

In the bright sunlight, walking home from classes, squinting, I try to see as far to the horizon as I can. The sky is blue and clear and sharp. The mountains in the distance are silent companions, waiting. There are sparrows in the cedar bush outside my window when I reach my door.

(Sparrow photo by Alexa Boyes.) Andrew is currently hand building quality bamboo fly fishing rods:

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Response To Oct. Healthcare Article ~ Dear Readers

Letter to the Editor,

I just got around to reading the October issue of Highlander, and I am so pleased to see the new and positive articles in the magazine. The one on health insurance, however, is wildly misleading.

Bowen seems to have a good grasp of American health insurance – focused on profit, though she does downplay that aspect. However, she seems completely ignorant of single-payer health systems, all of which she lumps together as suffering from “govement inefficiency,” asking “Would you like to be on a waiting list for major surgery you need right now?”

I can’t speak for systems in Europe or elsewhere (though I’ve heard nothing but good from friends who have had emergency surgery in France and Germany), but I can speak from my 30 years’ experience living in Canada. While there might be some waits for elective surgery (hip replacement, for example), ANYTHING emergent is dealt with immediately. I can remember a friend suddenly needing heart surgery while living in a small community in the Arctic, where such services were simply not available. He was flown out to Montreal the same day, and had his surgery as soon as he arrived. This is the rule, not the exception.

Given the immense shortcomings in American healthcare, and the state and national movements toward a

single-payer system here, I hate to see this kind of misinformation spread here in Colorado. I would hope you would either publish this letter in your next issue, or issue a correction to that one part of Bowen’s article. Thank you.

Lynn Hirshman

Dear Readers,

Another year and many memories to add in the collection of more than I care to admit, as time seems to go by faster and faster it also brings up an interesting question. Why, as we age and hopefully mature do we understand and accept that we know a lot less than we did as young punks? It begs to determine why younger generations think they know it all (*as we once did*) when in fact they know less the answers to the big questions. I suppose in early adulthood we are focused on careers, relationships and the all too important quest for material possessions.

As we mature some of us realize that being materialistic is often empty of satisfaction or happiness. Few folks come to this understanding early enough to stave off debt and choosing careers that bring them stress and a longing for a feeling of doing something of importance. The almighty dollar is not always the answer to ‘why are we here?’ or ‘how do I achieve satisfaction or happiness?’

Granted, being capable of supporting yourself and your family is an utmost priority – so too is addressing the importance of choosing happiness over a stressful or out of control lifestyle. Our society is rife with messages that don’t lead to good decisions about choices that meet our needs, but instead expose us to consume when we don’t need the things business or industry is selling.

It takes nearly superhuman strength to ignore the culture of consumption – keeping up with the Jones’s mentality – and listen to your own inner voice of what you really want and need. To have your priorities in line with your vision of a life that satisfies you and brings you happiness without unrealistic debt is a goal all too often unachieved by most folks all over the world.

Many factors come together to help the GNP while



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keeping the working class working to pay off unnecessary debt: pre-approved credit cards, student loans, television advertising, Hollywood type hype and even peer pressure. Spending money you don't have on items for loved ones or friends and family during a holiday season often leads to depression and loss of important income by paying interest to credit card companies or corporate giants that prey upon and pressure consumers to spend.

Over these many years I have come to understand this and make a point of giving gifts at odd times, usually not a holiday or birthday. I've been known to actually make things: knitted, crocheted, hand sewn, homemade or baked gives not only the giver but also the receiver a feeling of specialty. Gifts given and received during a holiday or at a birthday can often get lost in the minds of the receiver due to so many and any memory of the giver is forgotten. This is just human nature so not a personal affront.

When you feel pressured by our traditions to make a show of giving it is societal pressure to conform. Try to throw off these cultural mores and think of something authentic and original. You can always give the important and big gifts at another time and I guarantee they will make a bigger impact then. Put something of yourself into each and every gift you give, even if it is only a handmade card or original wrapping by using the newspaper cartoons and a cloth bow.

While trying to help friends and family have a wonderful holiday season, you should be making the effort to make sure you have a good season too. This can be achieved by not spending too much and making the effort to give something personal and well thought out: handmade

coupons for special efforts (*date night for couples or game night for kids*), day at a museum for an aging parent, Saturday spent cleaning the house by teens for a Mother. Use your imagination and it will surely pay off more than any money you could or would have spent on a sweater.

In an attempt to help children experience the world, a donation to authentic organizations such as **WildAid.org** can give by example to animals in danger of becoming extinct. Closer to home might be the **ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)** to keep domestic animals in bad situations or without homes from suffering fates worse than death.

The big pay off will be the smiles and surprise you see on the faces of someone that usually gets house slippers or socks they could have bought. This could become a tradition that can be passed down to your kids, grandkids and siblings to bring new meaning and a powerful message that happiness can't really be bought. Editor

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Past Time To Stand Up For Freedom From Violence

By Greg Luther

Hunters, it's long past time we stood up for gun control.

Hunting isn't under attack, but our freedom from violence is.

It's general deer and elk season in Montana, or open rifle, as it's sometimes called. I spent the weekend miles from cell and internet reception, walking through the mountains in search of deer and elk, a rifle strapped to my shoulder. Part of the appeal of hunting is the idea that you've escaped from civilization, but that notion can be dangerous if you forget you're still part of the world.

I got into town late Sunday night and didn't learn until morning that a man with a rifle had killed 26 people at a church in Texas. And it's been little more than a month since the slaughter in Las Vegas. There was also a mass shooting at a Wal-Mart in the Denver suburb of Thornton, Colorado, and probably others I didn't read about.

As a sportsman, I have to say that it's long past time for us to stand up in support of stricter gun control laws. It's not just about mass slaughter. Here in the West, we suffer from high rates of death by firearm because we live in a so-called "suicide belt," with death by firearm the primary

cause. In the United States, more people kill themselves with guns than by all other intentional methods combined.

Even when you control for factors like mental illness, higher rates of gun ownership mean higher rates of suicide. Let's be frank: Hunters know that high-capacity magazines and semi-automatic rifles are unnecessary for our sport. These guns are weapons of war, designed to kill human beings. You could say the same about handguns. My dad often talks about bringing a sidearm for protection while hunting in serious grizzly bear country, but I tell him not to bother. Studies have shown that bear spray is more effective anyway, and there's a good deal less collateral damage likely to be caused.

The National Rifle Association would have it that gun owners vote in unison. They speak with a single voice and think with a hive mind, all ginned up on fears of home invasions and government overreach. Any threat to the right to bear arms incurs the organization's political wrath, and the career of any weak-kneed legislator who dares support gun control is likely to be brief.

Hunters should not blindly follow party lines or corporate influence when it comes to gun control.

The NRA may be powerful, but it's not invincible. There's a growing body of hunters who live by a different

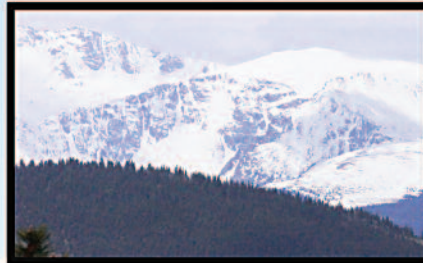
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Let's not, in our silence, allow ourselves to be painted over with the NRA's broad, blood-soaked brush. In doing so, we lend our voices to a lobby that is more interested in protecting its bottom line than in saving innocent lives. The evidence is clear on both of those counts. First, gun control does save lives. In 2016, the Epidemiologic Review undertook a meta-analysis that looked at data from 130 gun control studies. It didn't look at single kinds of restriction but at a variety of measures, including licensing and buyback programs. Its findings were clear: "The simultaneous implementation of laws targeting multiple firearms restrictions is associated with a reduction in firearms deaths." Fewer people, then, will die if we restrict guns.

Second, the NRA, an organization that used to receive the vast majority of its funding from sportsmen, relies more and more on donations from the firearms industry. The estimates vary, but from 2005 to 2011, the firearms industry donated somewhere between \$14.7 and \$38.9 million to the NRA. In exchange, the NRA lobbies, markets and handles much of the public relations for the gun industry, peddling the kind of misinformation that stokes fear and drives gun sales.

Gun control faces many obstacles, whether it's our political paralysis in the face of deep social problems or the influence of the firearms industry and its ability to manipulate us through advertising and misinformation. But we still have our voices, if only we have the courage to find them and speak up. We can't be cowed by party lines or corporate influence.

We hunters pride ourselves on self-sufficiency, so let's work from the ground up. That means looking at the facts, talking about it around the campfire, voting for candidates that aren't in the NRA's pocket, and donating dollars to organizations that help protect the things that actually are under threat — like our public lands.

Despite what the NRA might have us believe, hunting is not under attack, but our freedom from violence is.

Note: the opinions expressed in this column are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of High Country News, its board or staff. If you'd like to share an opinion piece of your own, please write Betsy Marston at betsym@hcn.org.

Greg Luther is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News. He is a freelance writer in Missoula, Montana.

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*This Page Top left: Ayla from Jan.
At right: Chino finally home with Chance.
Bottom: Maddie and Dixie.
Next page: Top left, grey mantle from Judy.
Top right: Scott's Annabelle and the wee bug.
Bottom right: Bailly from Jan.
Bottom left: Yampa & Cody from Jan.*

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How To Be A Good Neighbor In Retirement

From Jim Plane - State Farm Insurance

If you're a Baby Boomer who's thinking about transitioning from full-time to part-time work, or to 100% "free and me" time, consider some of these ways to help your neighborhood and your community benefit from your skills and years of experience:

Share what you know.

Offer to teach a class or workshop at a community center or the public library. This way, others can gain the benefit of your knowledge.

Welcome newcomers.

If your community is the type of place that retirees flock to, help new arrivals feel welcome by sharing insider tips, inviting them for dinner or introducing them to others whose company they might enjoy.

Help with slash removal.

If you're able, there's always a neighbor who could use a helping hand with their property, whether it's the homebound elderly gentleman next door or the single, working mom across the street.

Volunteer.

Find an organization whose cause is close to your heart and dive in.

Join a board.

There are likely lots of nonprofits in your community that could use your professional expertise to help them further their mission.

Become a mentor.

Even if you've left the workforce, you still have a lot of insights to impart to younger professionals in your field.

Tutor kids.

Help a struggling student master academic skills and set them on the path to success.

Get civic.

Are there potholes on your street that need fixing? An intersection that could use a traffic light? Don't wait for others to take the initiative. Approach your local county road and bridge department or town council to get the ball rolling.

Start a club.

If there's an activity you love and you know others who do too, start a club so you can share your passions, such as hiking, politics, bridge or knitting.

Support the schools.

Though your children may be grown, continue to help the schools in your community so the next generation of children can get a quality education. Discover even more ways to extend a hand in your community by volunteering for the causes that matter to you.



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Societies With Draconian Policies Against Women

By Michael Berry - High Country News

A fictional Gilead in the Northwest

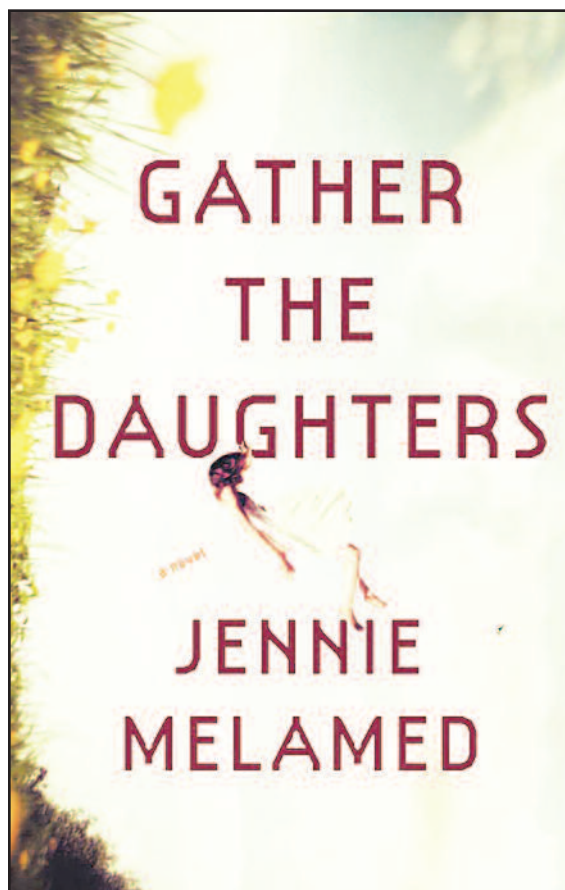
If ever a time were ripe for cautionary tales, it's now. The increase in sales since last November of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is not the only evidence of renewed interest in feminist dystopian literature. Several acclaimed recent novels — witness Lidia Yuknavitch's *The Book of Joan*,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

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

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

The points of view switch between a handful of teenaged characters. Janey starves herself to prevent puberty. Bookish Vanessa loves Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and wonders whether there might be a place where she might stride "through snowy

emptiness with bristling, savage wolves at her side." Pregnant Amanda despairs at the prospect of raising her daughter on the island.



Just as the leaders of Atwood's theocratic autocracy demand that the Handmaids subject themselves to passionless intercourse to continue the species, in *Gather the Daughters* women are valued primarily for their ability to breed. With her debut novel, *Melamed*, a psychiatric nurse practitioner, excels in conveying the deep implications of abusive relationships. In *Gather the Daughters*, sexual intercourse between father and daughter is not only condoned, but required.

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

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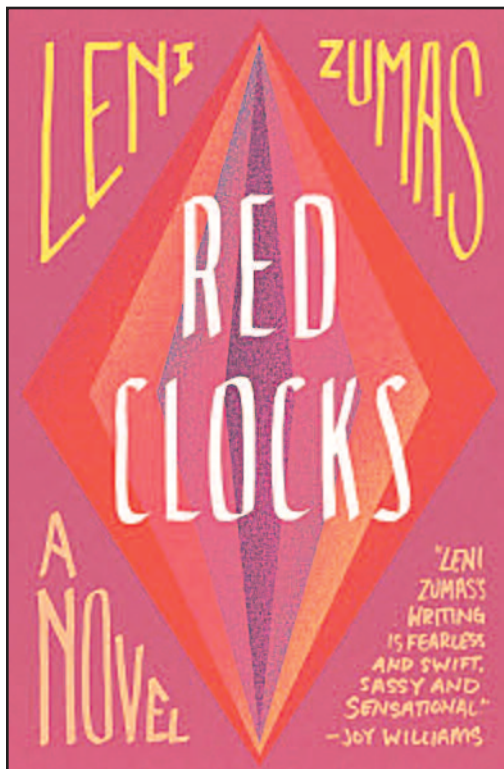
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Highlander Book Review

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

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

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



the States to face murder conspiracy charges.

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

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

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

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

knowing... To see what is. And to see what is possible."

Like Atwood before them, Melamed and Zumas have tapped into a newly resurgent literary tradition, one less prophetic than cautionary. They and many of their fellow writers of speculative fiction convey the need to be alert to injustice — and to be prepared to act against it. As protest placards at the Trump inauguration implored, "Make Margaret Atwood fiction again!"

Gather the Daughters

Jennie Melamed 336 pages, hardcover: \$26. Little, Brown, 2017

Red Clocks

Leni Zumas
368 pages, hardcover: \$26.
Lee Boudreux Books, 2018



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The Wave

By Ingrid Winter

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ten ducklings
lined up
side by side
on a log sleeping
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the image of peace
and harmony
As they all
breathe in unison-
or so I think
until
I take a closer look
and realize-
they don't
for
each
duckling's inbreath
comes a fraction
of a second
later
than that of it's neighbor
such that
their little chests
expand
one by one
and contract
in the same way-
A big wave
is rolling
through these tiny bodies
slowly and
rhythmically
and I find myself joining in



adjusting my own breath
to harmonize
with the wave
that carries
these
little
birds
and you
and me
and
all
that
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A Sip Of Beer From The Ancient World

By Valerie Wedel

“Pleasure – it is beer. Discomfort — it is an expedition” — Mesopotamian proverb, c. 2000 BCE (*Standage, p.24*).

What do we share today with ancient Mesopotamia, Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, Rome? Our ancient European ancestors? BEER!

As our lovely blue marble wheels inexorably through space towards another midwinter holiday season, many of us may celebrate with a toast to friends and family. Or perhaps simply celebrate another year passed... As we toast with each other, perhaps the legal drinking age really ought be 5000+!

Ancient Sumer gives us the oldest written records we can actually read, in the form of cuneiform tablets. Some of these written records go back over 5500+ years. These are clay tablets incised with a stylus thought to have been made of reed. The tablets were stored in libraries in various religious temples. Imagine a non-digital version of your computerized tablet – no wifi needed! Fun fact, invaders destroyed this ancient civilization, burning the temples so none would remember the Goddesses or Gods of that time - those fires preserved the clay tablets stored inside for us to read today.

The Sumerians wrote all sorts of cool things in cuneiform: Shipping tallies and other business records, school books, music notation, hymns, songs, poetry, astronomy, higher mathematics (they gave us the zodiac, a circle divided into 360 degrees, measurement of time in hours and minutes, and the Pythagorean Theorem, roughly 2500 years before Pythagorus was born!) And... beer!

Sumerian beer was served in bowls, and sipped through straws made of reeds. There was typically junk floating about on top of the beer, left over from the fermentation process. Those long, hollow reed straws reached beneath the surface

scum to the tasty lower layers. The bowls were often shared as a sign of hospitality and friendship. Beer was a staple drink and essential food source. Imagine sharing a bowl of local microbrew beer with several straws, and a few of your close friends.

“...Beer was the drink that rejoiced the hearts and lives of both gods and men...” (*translation by Kramer, p110*). In ancient Sumer the Goddess Ninkasi was in charge of beer preparation. Her name means “the lady who fills the mouth.” Among hymns sung to her as “the brewer of the gods,” there is this lovely bit: She is the one who “... pours the fragrant beer in the lahtan-vessel which is like the Tigris and Euphrates joined...” (*Kramer, p111*). A note – ancient Sumer is present day Iraq, and much trade was carried out along the two rivers, whose names have come down to us today. The two rivers meant water and life to the ancient Sumerians. The hymn to Ninkasi literally equated beer with the waters of life.

Ancient Egyptians, children of a civilization a bit younger than Sumer, also loved their beer. It is said to have been their favorite drink (*Budge*). It was probably an essential food also. Here is an excerpt from a moral teaching, regarding honoring one’s mother with gratitude. This is a reference to a mother bringing her son food each day as he studies in school: “...she came to thee... regularly and unfailingly, with breadcakes and beer from her house...” (*Budge, p. 29*).

And from this moral teaching on moderation: “... if having eaten three loaves and drunk two pitchers of beer thy belly is not full, thou must fight against it...” (*Budge, p45*). And this proverb, c. 2000 BCE: “The mouth of a perfectly contented man is filled with beer.” (*Standage, p. 24*)

The wealthy and nobility of ancient Egypt all had their own microbreweries. The poor convened in pubs to buy beer, or as hieroglyphs suggest it was called, “heqt.” Bread and beer were also part of the ritualized offerings to the deceased, to sustain them on their journey throughout the underworld. Even the poorest person was buried with a jar of beer.

At this time in the ancient world, beer was made from sprouted grain and drunk fresh; within a day or two it became very sour. It was never bottled, but simply made fresh and consumed. The main type of beer was probably a bit sour even when fresh. There was also a special beer in Ancient Egypt, referred to as “sweet,” which was sweetened with honey. Budge suggests this may have been similar to mead. Sprouted grains were slightly sweet prior to fermentation, and very nutritious. Both Sumerians and



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Egyptians also used beer medicinally.

According to Travis Rupp, R&D Manager and Beer Archeologist at Avery Brewing Company in Boulder, CO, it does not take much alcohol added to water to kill off harmful bacteria and parasites which might otherwise cause illness and death to people. Drinking beer, watered beer, and watered wine throughout the ancient world and into historical times made good sense. Beer provided both safe hydration and nutrition.

Coming forward a few millenia in time, the ancient Roman legions were issued rations when on march in foreign countries. According to Rupp, the ingredients which were issued regularly to the legionnaires included ingredients one could use to make beer. Dry grain and various other ingredients could be combined in the field, left to ferment for several hours, and then consumed. This would have been both nutritious and safe to drink while on campaign. The ancient Romans were well aware of some of the ways illness could be spread, including unsafe drinking water. Based on some very interesting current research by Rupp, where modern brewers look at history through the lens of their brewing knowledge, it appears the ancient Romans figured out how to provide safe drinking water to soldiers in the field – beer!

We tend to remember the ancient Greeks for their wine, which they exported all over the known world. Greek wine could be bottled (potted, actually), and travel significant distances without going sour immediately. Perhaps this is part of how wine came to be so popular. Rupp uncovered evidence that the ancient Greeks also knew of and brewed beer, if for no other reason than to keep their trading partners travelling far from home happy. Rupp found evidence of breweries in the ancient Greek world, especially along major mediterranean trade routes.

The astute reader will have noticed we just explored very warm parts of the world. “Aha,” you say, “what about colder areas?”

In Finland - very, very far north, very, very cold! - a local beer known as Sahti has been brewed for centuries. Sahti was traditionally a home brewed beer, sometimes also known as juniper sahti because it was (and still is) filtered through juniper twigs. Sahti was brewed in Finland during the middle ages and possibly earlier. Like beers in the ancient world, Sahti was not boiled, so it was not bottled or exported, but instead drunk fresh. Brewing beer must have been highly valued in Finland. The Finnish epic Kalewala included 400 verses dedicated to beer production, and only 200 verses for the creation of the world (Oldworld).

In deference to our beloved, at times quarrelsome Germanic ancestors, we need remember only one word: Oktoberfest.

Amphorae containing traces of very old beer have been found in Germany, dated to c. 800 BC. (See the Hallsstattzeit amphora, found near Kulmbach). By the second century CE, beer was traded commercially. Interestingly, beer was originally women’s work in ancient Germany. This is an interesting echo of the Sumerian goddess presiding over beer. Only later in the Christian middle ages was brewing taken over by Christian monks, and then eventually by German craft brewers in various cities.

As we approach our midwinter holiday season and consider raising a glass or two, perhaps we can remember a few tips from the ancient world. From our Sumerian ancestors, we might remember She who poured the fragrant beer, bringing joy to the hearts of men and gods. Perhaps we could share a bowl of beer with friends... maybe even with straws? And from our cantankerous, ancient Egyptian scribe - moderation! Most of all, as we make our moderate yet very joyful toasts, we get to join a river of life, humanity and culture spanning 5000+ years, from the middle- and near east to Europe and back again... May we do so in peace.

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Buffalo Field Campaign-buffalofieldcampaign.org

Yellowstone's Central buffalo herd has declined by nearly half since last year to just 847 buffalo. This subpopulation of the last continuously wild, migratory buffalo has been in seriously dire straights and is continuing to decline at a rapid pace due to the nefarious actions of the State of Montana and Yellowstone National Park. In a little more than a decade, government capture, slaughter, harassment, and hunting, has reduced the Central Interior herd to less than one-fourth its size.

Park bison biologists are recommending that state and tribal hunting cease in the Hebgen Basin, west of Yellowstone National Park, where the Central herd exclusively migrates. This hunting closure suggestion will likely be met with resistance by hunters and hunt managers, so it is imperative that we raise our voices and be heard for the herd! For the few survivors remaining in the spring, the state of Montana must cease hazing or harassing buffalo and let them roam in peace.

TAKE ACTION! Please use our sample letter at our website, and in your own words tell Montana Governor Steve Bullock and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Director Martha Williams that they must take emergency action to protect what remains of the Central buffalo herd and close all buffalo hunting west of Yellowstone National Park. Emails can be easily deleted and ignored, so please follow-up with phone calls!

Montana Governor Steve Bullock # 406-444-3111 / 855-318-1330 (toll free)

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Director Martha Williams # 406-444-3186

Volunteer with BFC: Come Stand with the Last Wild Buffalo! Come join Buffalo Field Campaign on the front lines. You could be in the field with the country's last wild buffalo, documenting both the good and the horrible that

goes on in their everyday lives, helping us to share with the world what is taking place so that we can stop it.

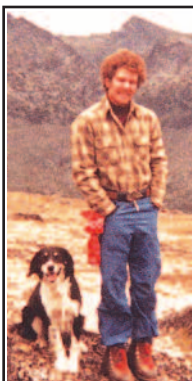
Volunteering your time and energy is both fulfilling and what the buffalo absolutely need. You could be skiing,



snowshoeing, or hiking in the field, or help out in the office at base camp making sure the people on patrol are safe; help out in the kitchen to keep everyone fed and full of energy. Our field season runs from November until June, when the buffalo are migrating into Montana and into a dangerous conflict zone. We run patrols in both the Hebgen Basin and Gardiner Basin, west and north

of Yellowstone National Park. Morning, afternoon, and sometimes evening patrols are conducted in the Hebgen Basin, while we do week-long shifts in the Gardiner Basin, where buffalo are in the most trouble.

We are in the field every day, monitoring the buffalo's migration and documenting all actions made against them. We are armed with two-way FM radios, still and video cameras. What does our documentation do? The videos and photos are used to show the public what is really going on with the bison, what the government is trying to hide. They are also used in court if something illegal happens during the hunt, hazing, trapping, or ship to slaughter. Your video could save the lives of buffalo who so desperately need the help or it could be used to get justice on their behalf. Just your presence in the field shows the Department of Livestock, Yellowstone National Park Service, other agencies, and so many more people that we are watching their every action. Your presence in the field with BFC shows we stand strong on the buffalo's behalf and will be in the government's face every step of the way. The cameras hold the people doing the terrible actions accountable. The Yellowstone herds are the last genetically pure, WILD bison population left in North America.



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Hold The Sky

By Frosty Wooldridge

What You Can Do About Personal Grief

During your journey on Earth, you face incredible moments of joy, challenge and discomfort. You never know where those “moments” may originate or for how long.

In your life, you may face an accident, loss of a loved one, disintegration of a friendship or disease. A famous philosopher said, “Life is a spiritual boot camp. You will be tested. You must make good choices to thrive.”

As a former hospital medical tech, I met a child named Paula in the cancer ward enduring her chemotherapy sessions.

“How does it feel after your chemo treatment?” a family friend asked Paula.

“It feels like an earthquake inside my body,” she said. “It shakes my bones and turns my stomach to vomit.”

“How do you deal with it?” the family member asked. “I hold the sky,” said Paula.

A small child may be better prepared for life’s “boot camp” moments than adults. They don’t think so much about their predicament or feel sorry for themselves. They battle onward with their body, mind and spirit.

They gather around them family and friends. They feel love. They give love. They forgive. They watch the ground, but they look toward the future.

It’s been said that if you’re going to hell, don’t invite me, and remember never to stop for tea. Avoid feeling sorry for yourself.

As you grow into adulthood, you gain the power of consciousness. You grow into understanding of how the world works and how you can choose to work in the world.

Keep your life simple, pure and unobstructed by maintaining positive thoughts, ignoring negative opinions, office chatter and petty politics.

Keep an eye out for elegance such as authentic beauty and natural expression. Sit under a mighty oak tree for peace. Lounge by a gurgling brook. Gaze at the wonder of a sunset. Hold hands with a friend.

Create a renewed perception of life by embracing it, enjoying it and standing in its abundance.

I’m reminded of a man, who, at 65 lamented to his wife, “Back when I was 24, I was broke, lived in a crummy apartment and drove a junker, but I dated a hot chick and rode a motorcycle.”

His wife piped up, “I was that hot chick and you married me.”

“Yes dear, now, I’m living in a \$500,000.00 home, drive a Lexus and ride a Harley,” he said. “But no more hot chick.”

“Dear,” she said. “If you want, (Continued next page.)

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Highlander Inner View

you can date that hot chick again, but I'll make sure you go back to living in a crummy apartment, driving a clunker and riding a bicycle."

Moral of the story: enjoy each moment of your life and celebrate its abundance. It could change on you in ways you never imagined. Your attitude and choices respond to the "Law of Attraction."

One night over a beer, my friend John related his story of a wildly successful life that he gained and lost by his self-destructive actions. He visited a preacher to ask for counseling. He told the preacher that he was about to suffer his third divorce and lose his fourth business.

"How about your relationship with your mom?" asked the preacher.

"Always good," John said.

"What about your dad?" the preacher asked.

"Not so good," said John.

"Tell me," said the preacher.

"Well, my dad used to get drunk and mean," said John.

"He knocked me around, but then, next day, he brought home gifts and apologized to me. Then, he got drunk a few days later and smashed all my gifts. It broke my heart because I couldn't escape his anger. I'd forgive him, but he repeated his vengeance."

John started crying, "Oh my God! I have built up businesses and marriages only to destroy them just like my



(Frosty Wooldridge skiing hut to hut and sumitting 13,209 foot HomeStake Peak in February in raging wind storm.)

dad cycled through his drunkenness, apologizes and gifts...he repeated his mistakes...."

The preacher noticed the weight of an emotional truck fall off John's shoulders. John rewound his life in those few moments. He decided to live by spiritual, intellectual and physical balance. He decided to strive for happiness through conscious living and choices.

In the end, let your goal become a living relationship with yourself. That in turn will attract loving relationships with others. Face the day with joy for being alive. Live in the moment. Breathe it into your being.

Life offers you a dance. Pick your songs. Make your move toward joy. What about little Paula with chemotherapy causing an earthquake in her body?

Today, she holds up the sky as an artist who paints landscapes. Live and paint in your own panoramas. Hold up the sky and inspire others to do the same.



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The Disappearance Of Orcas

By Allegra Abramo/Crosscut

**The disappearance of Washington's orca whales.
The endangered whales are at a 30-year low,
tied to depressed chinook salmon runs.**

Every day this summer, Jeanne Hyde scanned the waters off the west side of San Juan Island, hoping that the killer whales would show up. All night, she streamed the underwater sounds from microphones submerged along the shoreline, waiting for the whales' distinctive trills, chirps and whistles to wake her up.

Too often, she slept through the night.

"Day after day after day, I'd wake up the next morning and I'd check the recording to make sure I didn't miss something," said Hyde, 71, who has watched and listened for the whales every day for 14 years.

"And I'd just put a line through the date and the time: nothing, nothing, nothing. They just weren't here."

This summer was "the worst year on record" for sightings of endangered southern resident killer whales in the Salish Sea, according to Ken Balcomb, a biologist and founder of the Center for Whale Research, who has been monitoring the animals for more than 40 years.

As recently as 2004, the whales were spotted 150 days from May through September, or nearly every day. This year, they showed up on only 40 days in the same period, Balcomb said. Previously, the worst year was 2013, when there were 70 days of sightings.

The southern residents, a small, distinct population of

orcas, historically spent much of the late spring through early fall cruising our inland waters in pursuit of large, fatty chinook salmon, which make up the bulk of their diet. But with this year's record-low chinook runs, the whales had no reason to waste their time in the Salish Sea, Balcomb said.

The southern residents' absence this summer is just one more signal that, without more salmon, the whales' survival is in jeopardy. A new study, to which Balcomb contributed, concludes that the only way to increase the number of whales is to increase the number of chinook, while also addressing other threats to their survival, including noise from ships and boats that can disrupt their feeding.

The deaths of seven whales in the past year, including a calf that appeared emaciated before disappearing in September, dropped the wild population to only 76 animals. That's the lowest number in more than 30 years, and about half as many southern residents as probably existed before dozens were killed or captured for marine parks in the 1960s and 70s.

Orcas are having difficulty reproducing in large part because they don't have enough to eat, with two-thirds of pregnancies ending in miscarriage, a recent University of Washington study found. No calves were born alive and survived this year.

Aerial photographs over the past decade have also shown many whales with shrunken fat deposits on their heads, likely due to inadequate food. In severe cases, these skinny whales have knobby "peanut heads" (Continued next page.)



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and an increased chance of dying.

The southern residents are the proverbial canary in the coal mine, said Joe Gaydos, science director for the SeaDoc Society, a University of California Davis program to preserve the health of the Salish Sea.

“When you have a top predator that is suffering, it just lets you know that everything below that is also not in a good place.”

It’s not just the whales’ absence this summer that concerns scientists and observers. The three sub-groups, or pods, that make up the southern resident population also displayed unusual travel patterns.

“Not only are there now fewer sightings,” Balcomb said, “there are fewer whales in each sighting, and they are spread over dozens of square miles whereas formerly they traveled in enthusiastic and enduring groups — cohesive pods.”



(Photo courtesy Mick Thompson, Flickr.)

This was the first year on record that the whales never turned up all together in the so-called “super-pod.” And the J pod, which tends to be around earlier and more often than the other two, was gone for all of August — another first. Some speculate that last year’s death of “Granny,” the J-pod matriarch who guided the group to the best feeding spots, also may have disrupted the animals’ historic patterns.

While the southern residents were off hunting elsewhere, Bigg’s killer whales, also called transients, were in the Salish Sea twice as often this summer as last, according to the Center for Whale Research. Unlike the fish-munching southern residents, transients prefer a diet of harbor seals, sea lions and other marine mammals, which are abundant. The transients are “fat, they’re robust, their population is growing,” said Gaydos. Yet they live in the same noisy seas as the resident whales, and they accumulate even higher concentrations of contaminants because they are a level up on the food chain. “And so it really makes you realize that that food piece is critical,” Gaydos said.

Food is, indeed, the most critical piece, according to a new comprehensive analysis of the threats to southern residents. In order to recover the population, we’ll need to increase chinook runs by 15 to 30 percent, the paper’s authors conclude. That’s a heavy lift, considering that decades of salmon recovery efforts have yet to yield sustained increases.

If conditions for the whales worsen, the same paper estimates a 70 percent chance the whales will be quasi-extinct in a century, meaning that only 30 individuals —

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too few to sustain the population — will remain. The southern resident killer whale population “has no scope to withstand additional pressures,” the researchers write. Yet additional pressures are likely due to proposed oil and gas developments. Those include Canada’s expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline, which will increase tanker traffic, underwater noise and the risk of ships strikes and oil spills. “Our models of the additional threats expected with a proposed increase in oil shipping show that these threats will push a fragile population into steady decline,” the researchers write.

Scientists and orca advocates speak of a mounting sense of urgency, spurred by the whales’ falling numbers, skinny appearance and dwindling visits to their historic summer feeding grounds.

“We definitely do feel a sense of urgency,” said Lynne Barre, NOAA Fisheries recovery coordinator for the southern residents. “But it’s a small population and not the lowest we have ever seen them. So I still have hope that they can be resilient at their current population levels.” NOAA is developing plans to expand the whales’ critical habitat — the area where federal agencies can’t take actions that would harm the whales, possibly including underwater munitions testing by the Navy. The protected area, which now includes almost 2,600 square miles of the Salish Sea,

could expand to include the whales’ winter foraging grounds in coastal waters between Washington and central California.

Those efforts may come too late for the southern residents, many fear.

Balcomb, of the Center for Whale Research, isn’t hopeful that we can overcome the decades of “poor management and greed” that now put salmon and southern residents at a high risk for extinction.

“We should be concerned because in the big picture we are not only losing the fish and whales and birds,” Balcomb said, “we are losing the natural bounty and sustainability of the Salish Sea ecosystem.” To top it off, he added, we’re spending millions of taxpayer dollars “to accomplish this slow-motion extinction.”

Hyde, the longtime orca tracker, also wants to see less talk and more action.

The whales “can’t fix the lack of salmon; we can,” Hyde said. “We have to fix it, because we broke it.”

Allegra Abramo is a freelance writer whose stories and photos have appeared in ProPublica, NBCNews.com, InvestigateWest, and other local and national outlets. She grew up on the East Coast but loves the mountains and trees of the Pacific Northwest too much to ever go back.

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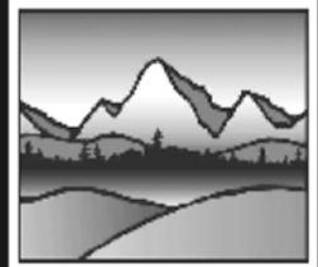
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Let's Drop The Rooftop Solar Myths

By Jessica Herrera

It's undeniable that renewable energy is booming, changing the way we get our power and shifting us away from fossil fuels that damage the environment. Yet in my home town of Tucson, which gets nearly 300 sunny days every year, a lot of plentiful Arizona sunshine is going to waste.

And it isn't just happening in the Copper State. Across the West and throughout the U.S., in the face of this rapidly changing energy market, investor-owned utilities and some energy co-ops are impeding the transition. They're trying to protect their profits and coal-fired power-plant investments at the expense of the wellbeing of people and the planet.

These power companies support lobbying groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council and Edison Electric Institute, which spout myths about renewable energy. In Florida, a Koch brothers-funded consultant encouraged the use of "political jiu-jitsu" to mislead the public and policy makers about solar.

Perhaps one of the most misleading claims is that solar energy customers don't pay their fair share for grid services and that everyone else pays the price. This "cost shift" claim has been repeated over and over again.

What's usually the focus of this argument is net metering, a program that reimburses owners of solar panels for the

excess energy they put back into the grid. When rooftop solar customers generate more energy than they use, the utility either gives them credit on their bill or repays them for the extra energy at a pre-determined rate. Because each solar installation means less power the utility can sell itself, utilities complain that net metering puts the cost of keeping the grid working on others.

This myth has been so successfully disseminated that it led Nevada to halt its net metering program at the end of 2015. The result was a freeze in rooftop solar growth. Large solar companies left the state, and took the good jobs they created with them. Local installers I talked to lost 90 percent of their business and had to downsize and lay off employees during the winter holiday. These losses are only now being reversed as the state walks back its decision and reinstates net metering.

Other states like Arizona and Indiana have also moved to end net metering or tacked on unfair and unnecessary grid access fees, fixed charges and monthly minimums. These tactics often target solar customers, but sometimes they're foisted on everyone.

But here's the thing: This cost-shift argument has been debunked over and over again by independent research and state-funded studies from Mississippi to Maine. That research has actually found that rooftop solar and



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net-metering programs reduce electricity prices for all utility customers, not just those with solar panels.

That savings is possible because rooftop solar installations provide energy exactly when it's needed. That takes pressure off the grid — especially during peak hours — and reduces the need for inefficient and expensive power plants. It also eliminates the need to transport energy over long distances and reduces the costs of maintaining the power grid. There is less wear-and-tear on the power transmission system and less energy loss.

As our energy markets change, jobs in the extraction and maintenance of fossil fuels dry up as well. Meanwhile, the rapid growth of rooftop solar is creating well-paying jobs at a rate that's 17 times faster than the total U.S. economy. Diversifying the way we get our energy also helps to secure American energy interests and provide for greater independence. It puts energy choices in the hands of customers rather than centralized monopolies. Net metering makes going solar affordable for middle-class Americans and supports local sources of power rather than relying on imported fossil fuels.

Finally, there are the immense health and environmental benefits of renewable energy — benefits that are often overlooked when we weigh the costs and merits of our power mix. Reducing air pollution by replacing coal power with solar would reduce respiratory problems and heart disease. That could save an estimated 52,000 lives each year. Solar also helps us fight the worst effects of climate change and protect wildlife and their habitats from the destructive effects of fossil fuel development and use. Rooftop solar doesn't require additional land use because it can be built on existing structures like homes and businesses, making it the most environmentally friendly power source available.

Utility myths like the thoroughly disproven cost-shift argument shouldn't be given airtime. It's time to let the myths fade so that we can focus on the renewable energy future.

Jessica Herrera is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). She writes in New Mexico.

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Peak to Peak Propane ins cov 970.454.4081
Carl's Corner pg 26 303.642.7144

REAL ESTATE

Byers-Sellers Mtn Properties pg 16 303.642.7951
Century 21 Golden West pg 18 720.434.2600
Mock Realty-Kathy Keating -Back cov 303.642.1133
Summit Up Property Mgt. pg 14 303.618.8266

RESTAURANTS

Last Stand Tavern pg 7 303.642.3180
Westfalen Hof - pg 6 CLOSED

RETAIL

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 28 303.258.3132
B & F Mountain Market pg 13 303.258.3105
Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
Mountain Man Store pg 29 303.258.3295
The Silver Horse - pg 17 303.279.6313
The Rustic Moose - pg 17 303.258.3225

REVERSE MORTGAGES

Universal Lending Corp. pg 18 303.791.4786

ROOFING

Independence Roofing pg 3 720.399.0355

SNOW PLOWING

Bill Hutchison pg 3 720.352.9310

STEEL STRUCTURES

Steel Structures America ins cov 970.420.7100

TAXES

Michelle Marciniak, CPA pg 6 303.642.7371

WATER & WELL

Arrow Drilling pg 10 303.421.8766
Colorado Water Wizard pg 21 303.447.0789
Doctor Water Well pg 14 303.438.6669

DECEMBER
2017

POWER UPDATE

Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp

Steamboat Springs, Colo.
July 14-19, 2018

United Power is now accepting applications for the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp to be held July 14-19, 2018 just north of Steamboat Springs, Colo. The primary objective of this camp is to provide an educational experience for young people on the organization and operation of a cooperative. Interested students must complete an application, be 16 years of age or older, and have their primary residence in United Power's service territory.

Applications can be found at www.unitedpower.com under the 'Co-op & Community' tab.

Applications must be postmarked by January 12, 2018.



Board Appoints Alquist to Open Seat



The United Power Board of Directors has appointed Keith Alquist to the board. A Brighton resident for more than 25 years, Alquist was selected from a strong slate of candidates that submitted applications for consideration. Alquist will fill the South District seat vacated by the resignation of Bob Grant in August, and serve the remaining term, just over two years.

"The selection of Keith to fill this board seat is a win for the cooperative members," stated James Vigesaa, Board President. "Keith brings a rich background in cooperative business and an intimate knowledge of the United Power community to this position."

Alquist served as Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer for the American Pride Co-op for more than 20 years, retiring after the co-op merged with Agfinity in 2012. In this position he served cooperative members throughout Brighton, Ft. Lupton, Hudson and Mead. He is a long-term member of the National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives (NSAC) which also serves electrical cooperatives.

Also an active community member, Alquist is a member of the Brighton Rotary club, which spearheads a Read-to-Me project at South Elementary, a dictionary project for third graders, and the distribution of U.S. Constitution booklets to fifth graders.

Prepare Your Home for Winter Storms

Winter storms wreak havoc on your home. By winterizing your living space, you'll be prepared for extreme cold and hazardous conditions. United Power recommends the following tips to help you prepare your home for wintery blasts.

- Remember to maintain and inspect heating equipment and chimneys every year to ensure they're working safely and properly.
- Caulk and weather strip doors and windows to make the most of your heating system.
- Freezing temperatures often cause water pipes to burst. Remember to insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic. Allow faucets to drip during extreme cold to avoid frozen pipes.
- Consider installing storm windows for better insulation, or cover windows with plastic (from the inside) to keep the cold out.



During this Holiday season, our thoughts turn gratefully to those who have made our success possible; all of you. It is in this spirit that we say thank you and best wishes for the Holidays and the New Year!!



941 Indian Peak Road
Fabulous Mtn Retreat w/5 Car Garage
5 BD/ 3 BA 1.09 Acres **\$745,000**



New PRICE
15 Debra Ann
Beautiful-Raised Ranch w/Private Pond
4 BD / 3 BA .08 Acre **\$522,000**



Under Contract
69 Aspen Drive
Nicely Remodeled - Main Floor Living
2 BD/ 1 BA .57 Acre **\$339,000**



Under Contract
10827 Brook Road
Sunny & Bright! Separate Cabin Included!
3 BD/ 2 BA 0.8 Acre **\$379,000**



New PRICE
29373 Spruce Canyon
VIEWS - Remodeled - Over 3 Acres
3 BD / 3 BA **\$564,000**



Under Contract
722 8th Ave., Longmont
Circa 1910 Old Town Charmer!
2 BD/ 2 BA Oversized Garage **\$349,000**



LAND
SOLD!
19 Ronnie Road
Views, Well, Septic, Building plans
included .7 Acre **\$115,000**



New Listing
11536 Coal Creek Heights Drive
Panoramic Divide/City Views!!
3 BD/ 3 BA 3.3 Acres **\$599,900**



New Listing
SOLD!
13371 W. 63rd Place, Arvada
Lovely Home w/Park-Like Yard
4 BD/ 4 BA 3-Car Garage **\$485,000**



SOLD!
144 Wonder Trail, Wondervu
Vintage Cabin - Well Drilled
2 BD **\$90,000**



Under Contract
174 Aspen Meadow
Spectacular Hm, Golden GT ST Park
4 BD / 3 BA 2.5 Acres **\$525,000**



SOLD!
32596 W. Inspiration Road
Complete Remodel w/ Views + Office!
3 BD/ 2 BA 1.18 Acres **\$349,900**



Under Contract
194 Wonder Trail
Charming Cottage w/Super Views!
1 BD / 1 BA **\$249,900**



New Listing
Under Contract
702 Copperdale Lane
Sweet Ranch Style Home w/ Office
2 BD / 2 BA 1.05 Acres **\$349,900**



SOLD!
249 Rudi Lane
Post & Beam Constr. - Passive Solar
2 BD / 3 BA **\$399,900**



BUY OR SELL A HOME
WITH Kathy Keating or
Susan Peterson and **USE**
the moving truck for **FREE**



Kathy Keating,
CRS, ABR, GRI
EcoBroker,
Broker Associate
303.642.1133

For additional information and photos:
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