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About the Cover: The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta (see story) Spectacular view of Albuquerque from Ham-Let the Flying Pig hot air balloon. Photo by Dave Schemel.

Positive News for a Change!

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Taking Flight!

By Dave Schemel

The 42nd Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta!

I was so impressed with my first visit to this spectacular event in 2012 that I just had to return for the 2013 edition! The title for the event was *Enchanted Sunrise* and they got that right for sure as each morning there seemed magical. It continues to be the largest gathering of balloons and balloonists in



↑Serene scene as we flew above the Rio Grande River cloaked in early morning fog
←Just after lift-off at sunrise!

the world. There were 554 balloons registered this year, including 97 special shape balloons (crazy animals & cartoon characters etc.) and 5 gas balloons. There were entries from 35 states and 18 countries including teams from as far away as Australia, Brazil and Thailand! The estimated attendance was higher than 2012 and totaled over 857,000 guest/visits during the 9-day run from 10/5 - 10/13. This event continues to be the largest annual boost for the economy of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The highlight for me was taking my first hot air balloon ride! I photographed *Ham-let* the world's Largest Flying Pig in 2012 and the photo graced the Highlander Monthly cover last January. Doug Gantt the owner/pilot invited me to fly with him this time around and it was an amazing experience! The big day began by watching 10 *Dawn Patrol* balloons ascend and report weather and flying conditions



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to the launch director. This information is invaluable prior to the launch of hundreds of balloons. The conditions were excellent so it was show time! Our balloon was initially inflated using two powerful gas powered fans followed by blasts of flame from the twin



↑My pilot Doug Gantt fires the twin propane burners during inflation of Ham-Let

←Up - up and away along with Airebelle the Cow

↓The Little Bees prepare to ascend

of a Halloween zebra look! We launched in a wave with a number of other special shape balloons and it looked and felt like we were in a real life cartoon or video game. We gradually ascended to around 2,000 ft. above the balloon park and the

Continued next page.

propane burners. This process heats the air, which raises the balloon into the vertical position prior to lift off as well as boosting the balloon higher during the flight. **Ham-Let** is 110 ft. tall and over 80 ft. wide when fully inflated! The balloon weighs 750 pounds and has 115,000 cubic feet of volume! Members of the ground crew held the balloon down as Doug, along with another team member and I climbed into the basket just before sunrise.

We received our instructions to launch via one of the officials called Zebras. They all looked similar to football officials except they go for more



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In addition to my flight on Friday I attended the final weekend events that included ***Dawn Patrol Shows, Mass Ascensions***, pre-dawn and evening ***Balloon Glows***, music, fireworks and more! Darius Rucker was the music headliner on their main stage. It felt like I was attending two major sporting events twice a day for three days in a row. I would get up at 4am and join the traffic heading into the Balloon Park around 5am. The fast paced morning launch activities would conclude around 8am with most folks returning around 5pm for the evening events. There was a 'state fair like' midway at the park called Main Street. It looked totally surreal in the pre-dawn hours to see folks eating pizza, Navajo tacos...even deep-fried Twinkies and Oreo cookies! OMG! They did have really good breakfast burritos and other food available too. There were booths with southwestern art and beyond and lots of family

←Balloon Glow with the cool 'Wicked the Movie' balloon in the moonlight. ↓Maharani the dragon balloon takes flight piloted by Meg Skelton.



Rio Grande River and drifted slowly to the south. It was so cool to see and photograph several hundred balloons taking over the skies of Albuquerque! It was epic! We were also part of a ***Special Shapes Rodeo*** competition that morning. Doug brought the balloon down within a few feet of the ground and tossed a beanbag within 18 inches of dead center of the target. We thought that he would win but two pilots actually tossed theirs closer so we came in third. We then ascended again and began to plan for landing after about 45 minutes in the air. Doug selected a large field about one mile from the balloon park and radioed to our chase team where it was. We watched their SUV drive into the field as other balloons began to land in the same area. Our chase team extended their hands up and grabbed the basket as we approached the ground. It couldn't have been a smoother landing for our giant pink balloon and us! Doug has been flying at the event for years and said it was one of his best flights ever!

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←*Maharani has landed.*

→*My ride Ham-Let the Flying Pig has landed!*

It was an amazing flight!



friendly carnival type diversions to add to the ballooning experience during the morning and evening sessions.

I also met Meg Skelton who is the pilot of a beautiful new balloon called **Maharani**. The balloon is bright yellow with a cool dragon graphic wrapping around it. It was a real crowd favorite especially with the kids. Meg is from Castle Rock, Colorado and this was her first year piloting at this event. During the final Mass Ascension I watched her launch and fly above and around the balloon park prior to landing only a few hundred yards from where she took off. Many of the other balloons were able to do this too as they took advantage of the predictable wind conditions that day called **The Albuquerque Box**. This weather phenomenon is wonderful for the pilots, passengers, and spectators and is really appreciated by the chase teams.

The long distance America's Challenge Gas Race included 5 balloons all from the United States this year. They use hydrogen gas (yikes!) to launch from the Balloon

Park and fly as far as they can... as fast as they can across the country! The winds carried the winning team all the way into Ontario, Canada this year in 58 hours while covering 1360 miles!

I was included in the group of 1,036 media representatives there from more than 130 different organizations! The event staff did a great job providing food, beverages and support services for us in the media center. Representatives from Nikon were there again with a table where photographers could actually borrow cameras and lenses. Very cool! It is a great marketing idea as this continues to be the most photographed event in the world. This is a link to an amazing time-lapse video of all of the action taken by Joel Schat. I highly recommend viewing it as it really captures the essence of the event. <http://screen.yahoo.com/timelapse-captures-albuquerque-balloon-fiesta-105841504.html> For more information on the upcoming 2014 event with the theme **Spirit of the Winds** visit www.balloonfiesta.com.



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Love All Creation

By Jeff Thompson

Do We Have Enough Compassion to Stop Windy Gap and Moffat?

Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love.

Those words were written by Fyodor Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*. They were probably written in Saint Petersburg, Russia in the nineteenth century, before the Sand Creek and Wounded Knee massacres. I chose them for the sake of contrast, so we can think about where we are and who we are today.

Federal, state and local officials, quite possibly with the complicity of some of our major environmental groups, are poised to commit another massacre against Creation. As with Sand Creek and Wounded Knee, there will be plenty of government lies and deceit involved. I'm talking about the soon-to-be-perpetrated Colorado River Headwaters Massacre.

The massacre will happen this way: In February, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will announce the publication of a Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Moffat Collection System project. At about the same time, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will announce the publication of a substantially revised Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Windy Gap Firming Project. These projects are connected in two crucial ways.

First, under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act, both projects need a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. In deciding whether or not to grant the Section 404 permits, the Army Corps of Engineers must follow guidelines enacted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Under the Environmental Protection Agency's

guidelines, the Army Corps cannot issue the permits if the result would be unacceptable adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystems involved.

Second, both projects reduce the flow of the Colorado River below the Windy Gap Dam. The Moffat project, according to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, would decrease the average annual flow of the Frazier River by about 8,400 acre feet. The confluence of the Frazier River and the Colorado River is just above the Windy Gap Dam.

The Windy Gap Firming Project, according to the (first) Final Environmental Impact Statement, would decrease the average annual flow of the Colorado River below the Windy Gap Dam by about 21,000 acre feet. Most of this combined 29,400 acre foot reduction would take place in May and June when the river needs high flushing flows to clean out vegetation and sediment and maintain the structure of riffles and pools crucial to the natural ecology of the river.

After the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Moffat project and the (first) Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Windy Gap Firming Project were released, important new information relevant to concerns about flushing flows came to light. This information is presented in the Environmental Protection Agency's comment letter to the Bureau of Reclamation on the (first) Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Windy Gap Firming Project.

This comment letter can be found online at [http://yosemite.epa.gov/oeca/webeis.nsf/\(PDFView\)/20110413/\\$file/20110413.PDF?OpenElement](http://yosemite.epa.gov/oeca/webeis.nsf/(PDFView)/20110413/$file/20110413.PDF?OpenElement). I know that's an awfully long Internet address. But, if you care about these issues, I guarantee you it will be worth it. Please give it a try and read the letter and comments.

For example, page 13 of this comment letter, referring to a 2011 Colorado Department of Wildlife study, contains the following: *The DOW report documents significant declines*

in mayfly, stonefly and caddisfly taxa (reduced by 54%, 40% and 62%, respectively) between 1981 and 2010 at sites downstream of the diversion, and the local extirpation of a native fish (mottled sculpin), and attributes these declines to current water withdrawals in the system and the related effects on channel functions. DOW also documents development of sediment beds and associated mats of rooted aquatic vegetation below WGD. In explaining the biotic condition, DOW concludes that "chronic sedimentation and clogging of the interstitial spaces in the cobble-rubble dominated riffles areas of the upper Colorado River below WGD is the overarching problem that has increasingly compromised the biotic integrity and proper function of the river over the past 25 years. The proposed firming projects at Windy Gap and the Moffat Tunnel are only



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going to further exacerbate this situation.

The comment letter suggests that this flushing flow problem can be mitigated by a commitment to in-stream channel reconfiguration below the Windy Gap Dam. The important thing to note is that a mere commitment to channel reconfiguration at a future unspecified date essentially gives the two projects a loophole to avoid a thorough study of the significant environmental effects of channel reconfiguration.

When this channel reconfiguration idea first emerged, I contacted officials at the Environmental Protection Agency and asked them about it. I was told they could not give me a single example of a successful channel reconfiguration project and that they did not know how such a project would be performed.

About a year ago, the Army Corps issued a press release about the Moffat Project which stated that "The Corps, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Water Quality Division, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, and Grand County have worked together to meet Federal requirements for the Final EIS while satisfying state and local concerns."

This statement strongly suggests that the Army Corps and the Environmental Protection Agency have joined forces with Denver Water and the Northern Colorado Water Conservation District, the applicants for the Section 404 permits for the Moffat and Windy Gap projects. This strategy would allow the Section 404 permits to be granted on the basis that a mere commitment to channel

reconfiguration would provide sufficient mitigation for the flushing flow problem.

This strategy would avoid any significant study to determine how channel reconfiguration would be done and the possible adverse effects on the function of the river and its aquatic ecosystem. Such a strategy would essentially repeal the National Environmental Policy Act. That's where we come in.

Now is the time for us to decide if we have the compassion for our planet to file a complaint in federal court. The complaint would simply seek the preparation and circulation for comment of Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements for the Windy Gap Firming and Moffat Collection System projects, which adequately address the subject of channel reconfiguration. If all the environmental groups join together, the cost would probably be minimal to any single group.

The Army Corps will give us an opportunity to comment on the Final Environmental Impact Statements before it issues the permits. But it is under no legal obligation to respond to, or even respect, our comments. If it respects our comments, it will issue Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements and circulate them the way the National Environmental Policy Act requires them to do.

Forcing the Army Corps to carefully evaluate channel reconfiguration before it issues Section 404 permits will kill these projects once and for all. It's just a question of where we are and who we are in the twenty-first century.

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Buffalo Field Campaign

Buffalo Field Campaign is the only group working in the field, in the courts and in the policy arena to protect America's last wild buffalo.

Volunteers Needed! Intense Field Season Expected in Wild Bison Country, A Victory for Wild Bison: Yellowstone Decides Against Remote Vaccination Plan? Montana Board of Livestock Votes "NO" on Year-Round Bison Habitat, Plans Quick Vaccination EA.

Government agencies are planning to capture and kill possibly hundreds of wild bison this season. For the first time since 2008, the Montana Department of Livestock intends to put up the Horse Butte bison trap in mid-February. Near Gardiner, Yellowstone National Park is poised to capture wild buffalo from inside the park and hand them over to tribal officials for direct shipment to tribal slaughter facilities. Yellowstone may also hand over captured wild buffalo to the USDA-Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service for experimental use in a controversial birth control project. Hunting activities have already taken the lives of seventy-nine buffalo, and these numbers will likely increase as hunting will continue through mid-spring. After all of these malicious actions against wild bison, industrial-strength hazing operations will take place during the thrust of calving season.

Buffalo Field Campaign invites you to join us on the front lines, here on the edge of the world's first national park, to help defend America's last wild buffalo. If you can spare a couple of weeks, a month, or stay with us for the rest of the season, we welcome your participation. BFC provides room, board, gear and training, while the wildlife and wild lands will provide incredible inspiration. Please visit our volunteer page to fill out an application, email our volunteer coordinators or call 406-646-0070. Bring your passion and your ideas. See you on the front lines!

BFC patrols in Gardiner saved the life of a bull buffalo recently, when a 15-year old boy came out to shoot one of the few shaggy giants moving in and out of Montana. With the help of accompanying adults, the youth found three bulls about 20 feet off of the Old Yellowstone Trail, a north-south gravel road which follows the Yellowstone

River through the Gardiner Basin. This public road winds through northern portions of Yellowstone National Park, Gallatin National Forest, and Church Universal and Triumphant land. BFC patrols noticed that the hunter had his rifle resting on the truck, aiming at one of the bulls. In Montana, it is illegal to shoot from your vehicle, across a road, or within 150 feet of a road, and it is every hunter's responsibility to know this. BFC patrols informed the hunter of this in time to prevent his shot. The hunt party then attempted to chase the bulls to where he could be shot. They succeeded in chasing him onto private land, where no hunting is allowed, and he lived to see another day.

The party returned the following day and again attempted to chase the bulls into an area where they could shoot one. The bulls took off, running across the Corwin Springs bridge toward the Corwin Springs facility, where bison are being held captive by APHIS for their controversial birth control project. Ironically, a familiar Montana Department of Livestock truck arrived, likely to haze the bulls away from their imprisoned relatives. The bulls saw the DOL's truck and wasted no time heading into Yellowstone National Park, where they are safe from hunters and the DOL. With word out that a handful of buffalo have been emerging into the Gardiner Basin, in and out of huntable areas, hunters are beginning to swarm in. But, as of this writing, there are no wild buffalo in Montana that hunters can kill. We are so grateful to our patrols for being there, determining that an illegal kill was about to be made, and taking action to save the life of this bull, and likely his two companions. This incident demonstrates how critical it is for us to be in the field with the buffalo. Had BFC not been there, the young boy would certainly have made the shot. Thank you all for making it possible for us to be on the front lines with the buffalo - because of you, we were able to save a buffalo's life. Wild is the Way ~ Roam Free!

~Stephany

Buffalo gained another small victory in January. Yellowstone National Park announced their final decision on an Environmental Assessment for remotely vaccinating wild bison with bio-bullets containing the experimental

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livestock brucellosis vaccine, RB51, which has never been approved for use in wild bison. Many of you commented on this EA and we sincerely thank you for your time and effort. Remote vaccination is a costly, ineffective, time-consuming project that would have had significant negative impacts on bison behavior, natural disease resistance and immunity, the visitor experience of bison within Yellowstone National Park, and other negative impacts as outlined in the joint letter from Buffalo Field Campaign and Western Watersheds Project. Your comments influenced the Park's decision, so we hope you'll take a moment to celebrate this good news! Pat yourself on the back with one hand, and with the other, keep pressure applied to prevent Yellowstone from following through with other harmful plans. While bison will be safe from remote vaccination, the Park Service says they will continue to administer RB51 when bison are captured. However, Yellowstone says that this year it is unlikely that any captured bison will be vaccinated, because they will be handed over to tribal interests for direct shipment to slaughter.

Urge the National Park Service Director to Rescind Buffalo Slaughter Contracts and to Pull Out of the Interagency Bison Management Plan.

The Montana Board of Livestock announced that they oppose year-round habitat for wild bison in Montana. The Board was voting on the Environmental Assessment (EA) co-crafted last year by the Montana Departments of Livestock (DOL) and Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), which explores year-round habitat for wild bison in the Hebgen Basin. Nearly 120,000 public comments - thousands of them from you - were submitted on

the EA, overwhelmingly demonstrating strong support for wild, migratory bison. The Board insists that the reason for their unanimous vote was due to unanswered questions they had about population thresholds, but being the overseer of one of the EA's authors, they had ample time and opportunity to explore this. In reality, their vote was clearly a political move responding to Yellowstone's decision rejecting remote vaccination, something the livestock industry has been pushing for. It is unclear what the Board of Livestock's vote will mean for the DOL's and FWP's final decision on the EA, but this could pose a significant setback.

Montana Governor Steve Bullock has the power to influence the Board of Livestock, so we must now apply pressure on him. Hidden at the bottom of a DOL press release announcing this vote, the Board also approved the DOL updating a 2005 Environmental Assessment for vaccinating wild buffalo with RB51, an ineffective brucellosis vaccine intended for use in livestock. This particular EA is supposed to be updated and made available for public comment before the DOL begins capturing and vaccinating bison, which they aim to do once the state bison hunt ends, February 15.

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Membership Requirements

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- Resides within the District
- Has a current, valid Colorado Driver's License
- Has a high school diploma or equivalent
- Is in good physical health (e.g., able to lift and carry up to 100 pounds at waist height)

General Membership Benefits

Free Training: All firefighting, rescue, and emergency medical training is provided. Learn new skills that will benefit you for the rest of your life.

Pension Benefits: Volunteer firefighters with ten or more years of service are eligible to receive a Retirement Pension (the amount is based on length of service).

Leadership Skills: Benefit from the opportunities for advancement and leadership responsibilities on the operational and administrative side of the CCCFPD.

Social Gatherings: Enjoy socializing with the other CCCFPD members at the annual Firefighter's Recognition dinner, the summer barbecue picnic, and potluck holiday party.

And much more: Be active in your community, meet new neighbors and friends, and learn new areas of Coal Creek Canyon.

Call 303-642-3121 for the complete CCCFPD Membership Application Packet.

All applicants must pass a Driving Record and Criminal Background check, a Pre-Service Physical Examination (including a drug screen test) by a physician designated and paid for by the CCCFPD.

Trainee Firefighter Requirements

Trainee firefighters have 24 months (2 years) to complete and pass the following initial training requirements:

- Firefighter I Course and HazMat Operations (approximately 200 hours to complete)
 - First Responder Course (approximately 80 hours to complete)
- Basic Wildland Firefighter S-130/190 Course (approximately 40 hours to complete)
- Ambulance ride-along with a designated ambulance service provider (an 8 to 12-hour shift)
- Qualification on assigned station vehicles and the Ambulance. (This is also ongoing training to verify a member's proficiency in the driving and operation of these vehicles.)

Active Firefighter Requirements

Upon successful completion of the probationary requirements, members then become active firefighters who must meet the following response and training requirements annually in order to retain their active membership:

- Incident Response: Active members must respond to a minimum of 20% of ALL incidents in each calendar year. CCCFPD is summoned to approximately 250 calls a year. About 75% of these calls are medically-related. The average duration of a medical incident is 60 minutes, which includes cleaning, restocking, and refueling the vehicles after each call. Structure and wildland-type fires vary in length.
- Training: All members must have a minimum of 36 fire training hours and 12 medical training hours annually. Fire classes cover structure fire, wildland fire, SCBA, and HazMat training. Medical classes cover basic life support skills, CPR, AED, bloodborne pathogens / contaminants, and ambulance training.

Wildland Team Member Requirements

Wildland team members respond to incidents involving wildfires within the District, as well as mutual aid requests to support wildfire suppression efforts in Jefferson, Boulder, Gilpin, Clear Creek & Larimer Counties. Wildland incidents can be large in scale and complexity, and wildland team members are expected to commit to 12 to 24 hour shifts when responding to an incident.

All Wildland Team Members must meet the following:

- Complete a 40+ hour basic training course (S-130/190)
- Maintain a current American Heart Association (AHA) CPR certification
- Pass an arduous level physical agility test (pack test) annually. The pack test is a three mile walk carrying a 45 pound pack that must be completed in 45 minutes.
 - Attend an 8-hour wildland refresher course (RT-130) annually
- Attend an additional 4 hours of relevant in-district training annually

Ongoing in-house training classes are provided as follows:

- Fire Training is generally held on the first Saturday of the month at 8 a.m. during the winter (November through April) and on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. during the summer (May through October). This training covers a wide range of topics necessary for dealing with structure fires and motor vehicle accidents.
- Station Training is held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. This training helps you become familiar with the trucks, people, and equipment at your assigned station.
- EMS (Emergency Medical Service) Training is held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. This training covers a wide variety of topics necessary for performing basic life support (BLS) skills.
- Wildland Fire Training is held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. This training covers a wide variety of topics necessary for dealing with wildland fires.

**Call 303-642-3121 for a CCCFPD membership application today.
The application period ends February 28, 2014.**

F-A-L-L-I-N-G

By Melissa Johnson

*Black is the color
of my true love's hair
His face is like
A rose so fair
He's got the sweetest face
And the strongest hands
I love the ground
Whereon he stands...*
~ *Black is the Color*
Irish Folk Song (modified for "him")

Ah, Amore! The agony. The joy! The rush of romance, thinking of your beloved each moment of the day, imagining his hands touching every part of your body; anxiously awaiting the next conversation, the next kiss. Falling in love is the easy part—any fool can do it—but staying in love, I think, calls us to fall in love again and again over the lifetime of our togetherness.

I want to remember it all—each time my heart breaks open, softened by the light of what's real and vulnerable and true. Like these five moments that pulled me in a little deeper, reminding me why I fell for my sweetheart; f-a-l-l-i-n-g in love all over again.

1. It's both. When Kevin met my Grandmother I wasn't quite sure what to expect. But there he sat, knee-to-knee with the matriarch of our family, as she fired off question after question in her gentle, southern way. "What do you do for a living?" "How long have you two been courting?" "Who are your people and will we like them?" He answered each question with care, and when she asked, "Is this a real thing or a play thing?" He responded, "It's both!" After explaining that he was serious about our relationship but that we played and had a lot of fun together too, my 80-something-year-old Grandmother took his hands in hers and just laughed and laughed. I. Fell. Madly. Deeply.

2. Bald for a cause. A participant with St. Baldrick's Foundation, Kevin has been collecting donations and shaving his head to raise money for child cancer research for more than seven years. This year he will be named a Knight of the Bald Table for his years of service. I love his philanthropic nature. I've known this about him since we first met while volunteering at Children's Hospital. But last spring as I watched him on stage getting his head shaved before a cheering crowd of friends and supporters, he was glowing. In that moment I understood what my friend meant when described others as being made of "wind and light." He was. It made me love him more.

3. Minding the mundane. We had big snow that day so I worked from home. But he, under the pressure of a big deadline at work, ventured down the

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canyon in the dark of morning where he stayed all day. Yet, after a super long day at work and traveling in hazardous conditions he made time to go to the market for a full shopping trip and he picked up dinner along the way. As he helped me unpack the shopping bags, stocking our fridge with fresh organic produce and such, my heart melted with love and appreciation for the Man who takes such good care of me. He minds the mundane with a patient and glad heart. How did I get so lucky?

4. Spooning the furry. I heard him talking in the bedroom one Saturday morning. I thought he might be on the phone. I had been in the kitchen cleaning up after breakfast and as I started towards the bedroom I saw them together, lying on the floor spooning. He spoke in a low, steady voice. "You're such a good doggie," he said, stroking the furry's head; "We love you so much." I stood there watching them, bathed in sunlight from the open window, just hanging out together, until he saw me in the doorway and gave me a smile. I thought my heart

would break with love.

5. The brightest light. For our first Christmas together as husband and wife, I found a fabulous tree. I had been busy that day decorating and making the house more festive when Kevin took off for town. After a while he returned with excitement. "Look what I found," he said, unpacking his shopping bags and lining the counter with two-dozen soft white LED candles. Then he carefully placed one in each window of the house, even the super high windows close to the top of the cathedral ceiling in the living room, which required a ladder to reach. As I watched him in his enthusiasm for the holiday season and our first married Christmas together, to me he was the brightest light of all.

I couldn't have loved him more.

Or could I?

Day by day, in a thousand ways, still I fall...


*Melissa is a writer, photographer, artist and lawyer.
Read more on her blog at www.HeartLaw.blogspot.com*





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The Sounds Of Silence

By Joe Hinson

I once read about a lock-tender who spent his life accompanied by the sound of rushing water going over the lock's dam. Then, the dam was taken down, ending a lifetime of constant background noise, which, although perhaps a pleasant-enough sound, was still, well, constant. His greatest surprise was finally being able to hear the birds.

I now understand his perspective. A year ago, we moved from Idaho to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the oversized apostrophe of land between the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay. Our decision generated a lot of jaw-dropping, incredulous stares from our friends and endless questions of 'Why?'

As we adjusted to our new home, it became clear that something was missing, but its absence was actually pleasing. Frankly, the West is consumed with noisy fights, mostly over land and resources. Now, we don't hear it anymore. Like that lock-tender, the sound had become a constant context to our lives, and now, away from it, we, too, can finally hear the birds.

Westerners, listen to yourselves! You're each a part of a Tower of Babel — a discordant group arguing about sage

grouse, water, fish, power, wilderness, old growth, bighorn sheep, forest health, wolves, mining, ATVs, wild horses, grazing, energy, Indians - oh the list is endless, the fighting never-ending.

Moreover, Westerners seem born to battle or at least driven to claim a predictable position by their profession or politics. You're born or become a rancher, a logger, wildlife biologist, Democrat, Republican, environmentalist, Indian, miner, recreationist or an agency manager. Each occupation or identity comes with a clear expectation of your behavior and opinions when it comes to any given issue. Your friends and social life are defined accordingly. Public lands may be great, but it seems their current biggest public value is to provide a large, conveniently located arena for a public brawl. At least you're brawling in a pretty place.

During my years in Idaho, I did my share of fighting. Some of the conflicts were productive, like the one that inspired the rewrite of Idaho's implementation of the Clean Water Act, a law that is still on the books and reportedly serving all interests well.

Other fights, in retrospect, were rather ridiculous, fighting over whether roadless land should be available for

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Joe Hinson is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He directed the Idaho Forest Industry Council for 15 years and recently retired as a natural resource consultant. He and his wife, Margaret, a third-generation rancher, now live near Salisbury, Maryland.

logging, for example. Now, there is very little left of the timber industry and an equally small amount of new wilderness designated in forested lands. Seems like kind of a wasted effort at this point. Other disagreements were gut wrenching, as we tried, for example, to find a solution to potential contacts between bighorn and domestic sheep that might carry disease. In the course of that fight, my wife's family lost about half their forested sheep range. The truly hard part was trying to explain 'why' to the newly unemployed Peruvian herders, none of whom had ever even seen a bighorn sheep.

Our new Eastern friends are certainly curious about why we chose Maryland over Idaho, but our explanation seems to strike them as more boring than thought-provoking. To folks here, national forests are often confused with parks like Yellowstone or someplace similar that they've perhaps visited on vacation. Federal land-management agencies are largely unheard of, and locals don't wring their hands over how many sockeye salmon returned to Redfish Lake. They'd rather discuss the Orioles' game or the latest fishing reports. Frankly, Scarlett, they don't give a damn or a dam.

Sure, there are fights. Once, an environmental group sued a farmer here over alleged runoff from a pile of chicken manure; the environmentalists lost miserably. But fights here seem to lack the increasingly mean-spirited tone of some of those currently in the West. In contrast, the liberal state of Maryland was so embarrassed over the manure lawsuit that the Legislature offered to pay the farmer's legal bills, and the University of Maryland set up extension courses to help the agricultural community cope with legal challenges. Imagine the fight that would have caused in the West.

Call me jaded or simply burnt-out; both are probably true. But after 30 years, in which much of my job was fighting for the timber industry while my wife fought to maintain a ranching livelihood, we came to realize that we had become mere gladiators, albeit without the physique for the task. Fighting had become the job. In a perverse sense, we had to leave the open spaces of the West to finally gain some peace and quiet. Besides sharing his first name, I find myself in sympathy with Chief Joseph's poignantly expressed desire: 'From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more, forever.'

So, here we sit on a small arm of the Bay, content to fish and to start contributing to society in a more constructive way. For now, we can hear the silence and the birds — and both are golden.

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*Top Left: Andy with
a 'herd' of cats!*

*Top right:
Cat on a hot tin roof.*

*Bottom Right:
Wild ducks checking
a corral for dropped
grain.*

Readers, please send your favorite photos to see them on these pages - to news@highlandermom.com



Top Left:

Cedar eyes his chair.

Right:

Yes, that's correct -

A HORSE IN THE HOUSE!

*Tay kisses Kelsey for
bringing him inside.*

Bottom Left:

Cooper eating carrots.

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Beyond The Flood

Article and photographs

by Diane Bergstrom

"Leave your drama at home," a local woman was told by her friend whom she was going to visit out-of-state after surviving the flood and needing a break from flood fatigue and the aftermath. She was hoping to get away to push her life-reset button, and this dictate struck her speechless. As I relayed her story to a friend of mine who does healing work using numerous modalities, she was speechless too. As we both regained our ability to speak and process, my healing friend summarized the importance of telling one's story. She believes that in order to heal, you must be able to tell it, to sympathetic ears, and that you can speak about a negative experience without being negative. The facts speak for themselves. She also commented that joy and sorrow are two different sides of

the same coin and the coin flips. Never staying forever on one side or the other.

What struck me about the woman's story was that it wasn't a story yet. A story can become a story when the experience has passed. Until then, it is reality. She was still reeling from bouncing along the bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, finding shelter, food, clothing and water, along with thousands of other Front Range Coloradoans. We can separate out the story when we are no longer living in it. It's important for us not to get stuck in any of our stories. But when it's still your reality, as it is for many Coloradoans, it's not a story. It's your daily to-do list.



A transplanted friend recently returned from D.C., met with old friends in a local bar, and asked everyone about their flood story. He was genuinely interested in hearing them. Out of those stories, people found they shared experiences, right down to some Lyonites recognized me by my Halloween costume in the Lyons parade, which was carrying a large print of mine, "Keep Calm and Carry On." Small copies were handed out and gobbled up like candy. The Salvation Army food truck took several. Thousands of local people now have a shared experience, a story that many outside the area don't understand. But experiences have bridges too.

A man offering samples of granola bars at Costco told me his Montana flood story from 1953. He and his family were stranded for three weeks, river water flooding hundreds of acres up to a skirt of land surrounding their house. It was a short skirt. Deer, skunks, raccoons, and birds took refuge

there. He said if he had opened the front door, they would have walked in. They watched the mother skunk catch, kill and wash fish for her kits. As the flood waters receded, (there were no Costcos to shop at), they survived on thousands of mushrooms that emerged all over the wet lands. Meals consisted of boiled mushrooms, fried mushrooms and cream of mushroom soup. He explained, every home at that time had instant dried milk on the shelf. I pondered how people in that age, who lived closer to the earth, understood how to survive isolated for three weeks. We can learn from others' stories.

Community came to the forefront during the flood, bringing out the best in people. Those stories, big and small,



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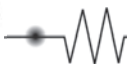


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show humanity at its best. A retired social worker relative told me the three basic inquiries of social work are: How are you? What do you need? How can I help? Locals were doing this instinctively. People checked on each other and shared resources, often the smallest of homes offering the most amount of space for refuge. Fourteen displaced Jamestown residents from multiple devastated homes lived together in one dry house for five days, cooking together, supporting each other, and brainstorming their next options. People evacuated from their homes helped others still in their flooded homes sort through wet belongings. People in South Boulder kept watch for Asterisk, an evacuated Jamestown kitty who had frantically gone walkabout from her temporary housing. (She did return.) The National Guard impressively pitched in to help Lyonites who were stranded or stayed in town, and greatly appreciated the locals' knowledge of occupied and unoccupied homes. Firefighters, after checking every fuse box, celebrated with Lyons when the electricity was restored, which locals referred to as "E Day." The specially trained Weld County Sheriff's mounted posse rescued dozens of horses, cows, goats, longhorn steers, and bucking bulls. Posse member Dan Perusek, as he rode down a Greeley road, lost sight of the borrowed horse he was on as he submerged in water that came up to his chin. The horse emerged swimming toward land, Dan still in the saddle. Semi-annually, Professor Takahiro Ishii brings colleagues from Japan to observe Lois Hickman's therapy farm in Lyons and discuss her groundbreaking techniques using farm life to help children with special needs. When Professor Ishii emailed his visit dates, Lois had to



deny him, explaining that the farm was halfway under water. Her dear friend then said he would still be coming, just to help her. They donned gloves, dug out trees, gave the animals much needed attention, and demonstrated the power of international community. Occupational Therapist

Heather McLaughlin drove the long *Continued next page.*

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Highlander Community

detour from Coal Creek Canyon to demonstrate hippotherapy techniques at Rocky Mountain Riding Therapy for them. Editor Anita Wilks, realizing how many Coal Creek Canyon folks would not be able to travel those detours to get their flu shot, arranged for a nurse to come up to the community. As she said, "We all have to step forward, and pay it forward."

"I hadn't realized how much I missed being happy," reflected Sara Martin, one of the engines driving the grassroots donation exchanges in Boulder and Lyons, "I realize it's a choice. Right now it's about service and we are here to serve each other." In partnership with Conscious Alliance, the center was started for people to donate what they could, and those who had flood loss could take what they needed. Michael, Lynn, Matthew, Sara, and volunteers have helped served thousands. I listened to Sara as she trained a new volunteer, "When people come in with their FEMA number, they are shell-shocked. Gently take them to the back of the room and have them choose a bag or suitcase to fill, and then ask them what they need." In the movie, "Happy," people who focused on what they have to



share, not on what they don't have, were much happier. Sara and I discussed challenges, from loss of community to the loss of rituals and routines. Those are the little daily things that everyone has in place to make their lives flow. Sara mentioned how upsetting it was to lose her favorite hairbrush, the only one she found that works on her hair. Tears were past, now we laughed. Everyone is trying to find a new "normal." Humor helps. A friend in Lyons commented, after months of going through the Sheriff checkpoint to get in and out of Lyons, "Finally! I live in a gated community!" A spontaneous found art flood shrine was erected in Lyons, comprised of items



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dispersed by the river, including a makeshift flood guilt confessional. A woman stood in front of it and confessed, "Please forgive me. I have water and gas." Her friend approached the confessional and prayed, "Please forgive me. I am jealous."

For more information about the flood relief exchange centers, visit 4milestore.org. Or visit the stores in Boulder at 2775 Valmont (one building west on Valmont from 28th Street.) In Lyons, the center is located on Hwy 36, in the strip mall housing the Laundromat and Dairy Barn. They are in need of clothing, household and building donations, rental assistance, and volunteers. May your recovery and healing continue.

(The above is the Japanese sign for HOPE.)

Caregivers - Forests

Dear Readers,

Training Programs for Family Caregivers - Boulder County Area Agency on Aging offers two training programs beginning in February for family caregivers of older adults, one focused on the hands-on skills of caregiving and the other on caregiver self-care.

National Caregiver Training Program is a 21-hour course (meets once a week for 3 hours) that helps family caregivers acquire the skills needed to provide safe, confident home care for older loved ones. Classes, taught by a registered nurse, provide detailed instruction, demonstration, and hands-on practice. Topics include caring for someone on bedrest, providing personal care, using a wheelchair safely, managing medications, taking vital signs, controlling infection, preventing falls, reducing caregiver stress, using local resources, and more. Each caregiver receives Quick Tips for Caregivers, a home reference guide. Wednesdays, Feb. 5 – March 26 (no class on Feb. 19), 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., in Longmont.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a 15-hour course (meets once a week for 2 hours) that gives family caregivers the tools to deal with the emotional challenges of caregiving. Classes, taught by trained leaders, help caregivers learn to reduce stress, improve self-confidence, communicate their feelings, balance their lives, increase their ability to make tough decisions, and locate helpful resources. Each caregiver receives The Caregiver Help-book: Powerful Tools for Caregivers. Tuesdays, Feb. 11 – March 18, 1:30 – 4 p.m., in Boulder.

The courses are open to Boulder County residents providing local or long-distance care for a relative, partner or friend who is 60 or over, or of any age if the person has dementia. There is no charge, but donations are appreciated. Financial assistance for respite care (substitute elder care) during class periods is available.

Pre-registration is required. To register, or for more information, please call 303-678-6116 or email InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org.

Funding Now Available for Forest Restoration Projects through Colorado State Forest Service

Colorado landowners and communities that want to protect forested areas from severe wildfire and other forest health concerns may be eligible for grant funding from the Colorado State Forest Service.

The CSFS is now accepting proposals for the Colorado Forest Restoration Grant Program, which helps fund projects that demonstrate a community-based approach to forest restoration. Proposals are due by March 20, and must address protection of water supplies or related infrastructure, as well as the restoration of forested watersheds.

An interdisciplinary technical advisory panel, convened by the CSFS in partnership with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, will review project applications. The CSFS will notify successful applicants by this summer.

Applications and additional information about the Forest Restoration Grant Program are available at local CSFS district offices or csfs.colostate.edu.

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Megaloads On Roads

By Linwood Laughy

Just west of the Nez Perce Reservation border near Lewiston, Idaho, a 644,000-pound heavy-haul transporter carrying tar sands mining equipment rounded a curve at 1:00 a.m. on August 6th, only to find a human blockade waiting.

Police in a dozen squad cars flipped on flashing lights as over 200 Nez Perce Indians and dozens of their allies swarmed onto Highway 12. Their goal: halting the giant load to protest its transport across the reservation. Over the next hour, the sounds of chanting, drumming and singing echoed from the walls of the canyon.

Then the arrests began, including eight members of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. Another tense hour passed before the mega-transport crept forward toward the Clearwater-Lochsa Wild and Scenic River corridor and the Montana border at Lolo Pass. But the protesters had spoken, and within hours varied media would carry their voices across North America.

My wife, Borg Hendrickson, and I were among that group; for three years, we've been trying to block the effort of international corporations to industrialize U.S. 12 in

Idaho. The companies say they must travel this remote route to send gargantuan mining equipment to northern Alberta's tar sands. We say the corridor is a national treasure, a magnet for tourists and not a safe route for these monster loads.

For 100 miles, Highway 12 hugs the banks of two of America's original Wild and Scenic Rivers. It is the nationally designated Northwest Passage Scenic Byway and one of only 30 All-American Roads. But corporate giants such as ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, General Electric and others, encouraged by Idaho's governor and helped at every turn by the Idaho Transportation Department, saw Highway 12 as theirs to take — from its neighbors, its thousands of annual visitors and from America.

Grassroots opposition has steadily grown, however, and during the last three years, state and federal courts have taken the side of the scenic byway. So far, an ExxonMobil subsidiary has transported only one of 207 proposed megaloads over Highway 12 and seven miles into Montana, where it sat for 13 months before being scrapped. The company has since reported being \$2 billion over budget on

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its Kearl tar sands project, largely because of difficulties getting its equipment through Idaho and Montana.

Last October, a General Electric subsidiary abandoned its Highway 12 megaload plans after a federal judge ordered the U.S. Forest Service to protect the Lochsa-Clearwater Wild and Scenic River Corridor and temporarily close Highway 12 to megaloads. The Nez Perce Tribe, conservation groups and thousands of individual citizens are continuing their effort to make this closure permanent.

Eight miles downstream from the Nez Perce's highway blockade last August, the Port of Lewiston lies on the Clearwater River's north bank near its confluence with the Snake. The port isn't that busy: between 2000-2011, the total tonnage it shipped decreased by 61 percent, including declines in every commodity - grains, lumber, and paper from a nearby mill.

Megaloads were to be the port's salvation. 'If one oil company is successful, many more will follow,' the Lewiston Port proclaimed in its application for federal economic recovery funds to extend a container dock that today ships less than 30 percent of its previous cargo. So far, however, plans for the port to bail out declining lower Snake River barging have foundered.

Which brings us to salmon. Most scientists believe that federal dams may have tipped the scale from recovery to

extinction of Snake River salmon. 'Someone needs to speak for the animals, a Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee member told reporters shortly before the tribe's megaload blockade.

Our fight to preserve the Clearwater-Lochsa corridor we have long called home has led my wife and me through agency offices and courtrooms to the tar sands of northern Alberta, to the decline of commercial navigation on the lower Snake, and now, to the endangered salmon and steelhead trout that swim, in dwindling numbers, past our front door.

Along the way, we've been joined by thousands of fellow citizens who share a love of wild rivers and wild fish. We are all concerned about the growth of corporate power and the consequent bullying of people and disregard for natural places. Like returning salmon, we swim upstream, but our numbers are growing, and our voices persist.

Linwood Laughy is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He and his wife founded FightingGoliath.org, a network of individuals and organizations working to keep Highway 12 from being converted to a heavy haul route for giant industrial equipment.

Editor's Note: Sounds similar to Coal Creek Canyon's efforts to keep Denver Water from turning Hwy 72 into their haul route for a 'not needed' larger Gross Reservoir.

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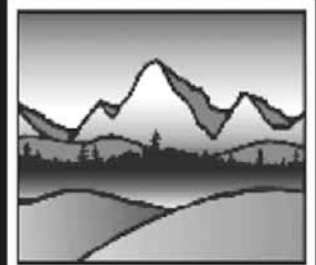
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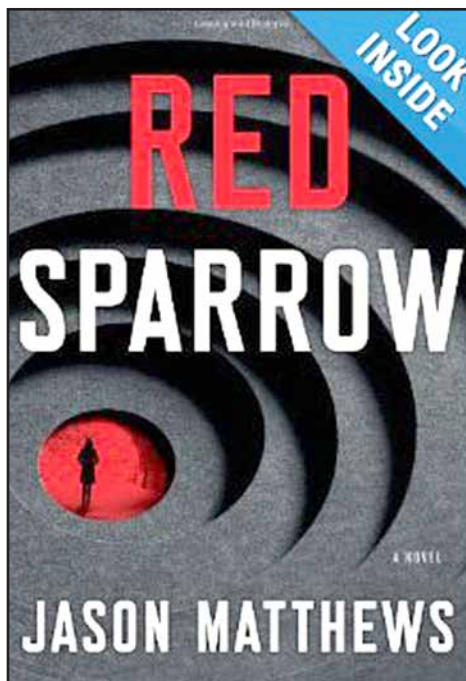


Memoir-Like Spy Novel

By Tracy Reeseigh

Red Sparrow, the debut novel written by Jason Matthews quite simply put is a Russian spy novel. Matthews was a CIA officer for over 30 years, where he “engaged in clandestine collection of national security intelligence, specializing in denied area operations”...He was a spy. Matthews has taken his extensive knowledge of the Russian/American spy game and turned it into a story about a young CIA operative, Nate Nash, and a young Russian intelligence officer named Dominika Egorova. *Red Sparrow* is a modern day spy-game between a Putin led Russia and the United States where the two main players are the young spies.

Nate Nash joined the CIA much to the chagrin of his family. He quickly developed into a scrappy spy, securing the highest-ranking asset in CIA history, MARBLE. Nash would rather die than give up his asset, and when they are nearly discovered during a secret meeting, Nash compromises himself to ensure MARBLE’s identity is



protected. The close call essentially gets Nash demoted to a Helsinki desk. It is in Helsinki however; where Nash is given his biggest assignment, convert Russian intelligence officer Egorova into an asset.

Dominika Egorova was training to be a Russian ballerina. After a career ending injury, she was recruited by her Russian mafia uncle to help trap a Russian mobster who was criticizing Putin. From there, Egorova was trained in the ways of the Russian intelligence, including Sparrow School, where the recruits are trained in the ways of spy seduction. As an official officer, her uncle

assigned her to Helsinki where her biggest assignment was to convert American CIA officer Nate Nash into an asset in order to determine who the high-ranking Putin official is the American’s asset MARBLE.

The rest of the story is a high-speed, globe-trotting story involving crooked politicians, double agents, a modern day Russia and U.S.A still struggling to decide what their relationship should be, and of course a love story. Matthews takes his readers right into the middle of the spy-game and shows them the tradecraft of espionage.

Red Sparrow is a book for spy thriller enthusiasts. The story is fast-paced, unpredictable and smart. The Washington Post’s review puts it perfectly, “it’s a first-rate novel as noteworthy for its superior style as for its gripping depiction of a secretive world.” This book does not read as fiction. I obviously don’t know Jason Matthews, but I bet if he wrote his memoir, the story would not be much different. Published by Scribner, *Red Sparrow* is available in hardback (\$19.15 Barnes & Noble) or e-reader formats (varies).



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America's Great Outdoors Initiative

Dear EarthTalk: What is the Obama administration's America's Great Outdoors initiative and what does it hope to accomplish? — Doug St. James, New York, NY

President Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum in April 2010 establishing the America's Great Outdoors Initiative to promote and support innovative community-level efforts to conserve outdoor spaces and reconnect Americans to the outdoors. The Memorandum calls for collaboration among the Dept's of Interior and Agriculture as well as the Environmental Protection Agency and the White House's own Council on Environmental Quality in leading the initiative. Eight other federal agencies play a supporting role—and literally thousands of other partners from state, local and tribal governments, non-profits and the private sector are involved as well. Getting young people, especially city kids, into the outdoors to experience our country's unique natural heritage is a top priority of America's Great Outdoors.

Before pursuing any specific strategies, initiative leaders solicited feedback from everyday Americans as to what mattered most to them regarding conservation and access to the outdoors. Some 105,000 written comments and many more spoken ones from "listening sessions" held coast to coast streamed in and were crucial to the development of programs. Public feedback continues to shape the initiative's agenda.

Some of the programs that fall under the umbrella of America's Great Outdoors include: the Veterans Fire Corps, which employs veterans in forest fire management; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's program providing technical training and work opportunities for underserved youth in habitat restoration and fisheries monitoring; and the establishment of a new network of "water trails" coast to coast to increase everyone's access to the outdoors.

America's Great Outdoors was in the news recently when Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced the launch of 21st Century Conservation Service Corps as part of the program. "21CSC," as Jewell calls it, aims to be a modern incarnation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) that President Franklin Roosevelt used to help put Americans back to work during the Great Depression. Jewell envisions a 100,000 person strong "CCC 2.0" that will provide opportunities for thousands of young Americans—6.7 million of whom are currently unemployed or not in school—and veterans transitioning back to civilian life to serve their country, feel proud of what they are accomplishing and improve their own

lives and the lives of others around them.

Part of what makes America's Great Outdoors unique is that partners from every sector of American society—not just the federal government—are encouraged to help. 21CSC is partially funded by a \$1 million dollar donation from clothing retailer American Eagle Outfitters, and Jewell is in search of another \$19 million from other private sector partners to turn the program into a potent force for reducing youth and veteran unemployment while giving our endangered lands and waterways some much-needed attention.

Getting unprecedented numbers of Americans involved in conservation projects that protect the nation's treasured natural heritage is a worthy conservation legacy in its own right. The program is sure to positively impact generations of Americans for decades to come.

America's Great Outdoors, www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/; 21CSC, www.doi.gov/21csc/.
earthtalk@emagazine.com.



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Protections For California Bobcats

From Jeremy Miller

Wolves in several Western states entered 2014 in the crosshairs of hunters, but California's bobcats got a reprieve – thanks in large part to one Joshua Tree landowner and conservationist. The Bobcat Protection Act of 2013 (AB 1213), introduced in March by Santa Monica assemblyman Richard Bloom (D), went into effect January 1. It prohibits trapping the wild cats along the boundaries of Joshua Tree National Park and requires the state Dept. of Fish and Wildlife to establish similar no-trapping areas along the boundaries of California's national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges and other designated areas across the state. The new law also bans bobcat trapping on private land without the written consent of the landowner. Demand for U.S. fur has skyrocketed, mostly from increasingly affluent Chinese and Russian consumers. In 2012, according to the California Dept of Fish and Wildlife, 1,607 bobcats were killed in California during the winter hunting and trapping season. (Though the trapping season is more than two months shorter than hunting season, trappers accounted for more than three-quarters of that total.)

While bobcats are not a federally-protected species, some conservationists worry that their populations are poorly understood and that continued trapping, along with destruction and fragmentation of prime habitat, poses serious threats to the long-term viability of the species. If the new law protecting them can be said to have a birthplace, it is on a boulder-strewn hillside on the outskirts of Joshua Tree National Park belonging to local conservationist Tom O'Key. An amateur astronomer and co-founder of the Southern California Desert Video Astronomers, O'Key has been active in a host of local issues, including fighting light pollution and solar farm

proposals in the Morongo Basin.

O'Key has also buying up parcels on the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park with the specific purpose of not developing them. "I buy boulders," he says, making a space between his palms of no more than a few inches. "A crack that big is enough space for a Chuckwalla." His land-buying binge was spurred by a sense of guilt derived from his early days as a reptile trapper. He scoured these very boulder piles for rare snakes and lizards, which he sold to pet shops, museums and collectors in metro Los Angeles and farther afield. "I have no idea how many critters I killed," says O'Key, who later went on to work for a prominent law firm in Los Angeles. "But I know it was a lot."

We drive a rough road in his full-size Toyota pickup and O'Key stops, gesturing to a large outcrop of the region's hallmark pale monzonite boulders heaped up like a massive cluster of grapes. We exit the truck and walk to the spot where last January he found a cage trap on his property. O'Key points out several piles of scat in the small hollow, explaining that the trapper had used a pheromone attractant to lure bobcats. "It's powerful stuff," he said. "He sprayed almost a year ago and it's still pulling the cats in."

Other local residents had noticed the disappearance of cats previously seen wandering the area. "Emails were flying around," says Brendan Cummings, a Joshua Tree-based attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. "When Tom found the trap on his land, we knew we had a culprit."

Certain that the trap tucked into the boulders was the handiwork of a scofflaw, O'Key decided to call the local police to report what he'd found. He was surprised to learn that the trap was perfectly legal. He was even more alarmed when the officer who arrived on the scene advised him to

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return the trap to its owner. Instead of returning the cage directly to the trapper, however, O'Key set something of a trap of his own. He gave it to a reporter at the local newspaper, the Hi-Desert Star. "I thought the paper might be interested in hearing his side of the story," says O'Key.

The Hi-Desert Star reached out and the trapper responded, speaking on condition of anonymity. He told reporter Courtney Vaughn that his pelts could fetch between \$80 and \$1700 on the international market. "He was sticking up for the idea that he had every right to exploit these animals," says O'Key. "Of course that goes against the grain of everything I'm trying to do here."

The article generated interest far outside the Morongo Basin, and Cummings and O'Key became key players in the push for legislation. "We approached Assemblyman Richard Bloom (about a statewide trapping ban) not only because he has been a great defender of wildlife in the state, but because some of the most thorough research on bobcats statewide has been conducted in the Santa Monica Mountains, in his district," says Cummings. "We barely made it through the committees," said O'Key pointing out that all the state

Republicans either voted against the bill or abstained.

Though bobcats are one of very few terrestrial predators thought to remain in significant numbers throughout California, no one is sure how many there are. The



California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife says the state has 72,000 bobcats, but Cummings says that number is outdated, derived from a density study, conducted not in California but Idaho in the 1970s. In signing the bill, Gov. Jerry Brown instructed the legislature to work with the governor's office to secure funding for a new bobcat population survey. In spite of the concessions and unknowns, O'Key sees the law as a decisive step forward in protecting one of the West's most versatile predators. It's also clear he sees it as a form of ecological

atonement. "You can't buy back your past," says O'Key. "The best you can do is try to fix what comes next."

Jeremy Miller is a contributing editor of High Country News. He tweets @JeremyJ_Miller. "Cross-posted from High Country News, hcn.org. The author is solely responsible for the content."

(Photo courtesy of B.Matheson Flickr.)



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Down On The Ground With Winter

By George Sibley

It has been snowing in Crested Butte, Colo., where people pray and dance for snow; the whole winter economy is predicated on snow. Crested Butte's old miners used to call snow 'the only crop that never failed.' They also used to say, 'You can't eat the scenery.' But Crested Butte and most mountain communities have been surviving economically on a diet of commodified scenery for the past several decades. Let the snow come.

But winter looks different from where I live in Gunnison, just 30 miles downvalley; it brings more cold than snow. The town is located in a basin at the confluence of several big valleys, and since cold air, like water, flows downhill,

these valleys all drain cold air down to Gunnison. A classic inversion — a layered lake of cold dense air trapped under the high-pressure areas that often settle over the Colorado Plateau and Southern Rockies for weeks at a time in winter. A cold lake into which we fart bubbles of carbon gases from furnaces working overtime and cars idling to warm up every morning, until the cold lake is befouled enough to be almost visible. Looking up at the low weak winter sun is like looking up from underwater. A high ratio of cold to snow makes for a mean time.

My general enthusiasm for life tends to follow the mercury. But today, there is a lot in the cultural as well as the natural environment that makes winter feel like a metaphor for life in general.

Nationally, most of us are in the sixth year of what is settling out to be a chronic near-recession — call it an 'economic winter.' It's not for everyone, of course: This morning, one of my liberal pinko commie websites talked about the 'Superzip' created by half a dozen contiguous zipcodes in the Washington, D.C., area that together create one of the wealthiest enclaves in the nation. Think of 'the Beltway' as America's biggest gated community, and wonder why anyone would expect those on the inside to give a fig about those of us on the outside.

I confess that not long ago, when someone started railing against the government, I used to reply almost

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automatically: 'But the government is us.' Here in the mean time I no longer believe that. From where I live, down on the ground, the three branches of government all appear to be mostly in service to the denizens of that Beltway gated community. They are not us or ours.

Whatever happens in Washington, the West always seems slightly depressed. Wages are chronically low in the amenities economies; costs are always high. Big economic opportunities are limited by low populations and large distances. Most of us accept this as part of the tradeoff for living where we do.

In the Upper Gunnison, we periodically decide to do something about this eternal economic winter and form a new 'economic development' organization. The discussion always begins with how to diversify the economy, but eventually it comes down to how to get more people to the ski area, or more students for the college, or both. Yet little changes, and just staying flat seems like an achievement.

Another way of looking at this is to acknowledge that we are beginning a forced experiment with a no-growth economy. I wonder how soon the same thing will happen in the mainstream economy, where unemployment remains a serious problem. Earnings outside the gated communities remain nearly flat, and the corporations that now run our society are sitting on their cash rather than investing in growth.

I tend to agree with economists like Paul Krugman, who argue that the nation will not 'recover' from this economic winter, which is not a full-blown recession but more like an ongoing mean time, until the government injects some serious public spending into the equation. Heaven knows we need some serious public spending on everything from bridges to water systems — not to mention climate change.

Launching into all of that could put a lot of people back to work. But even the humane economists like Krugman — the ones who don't worship an abstract market — display a certain vagueness about what recovery would actually look like. That may be the question to be contemplating. In the mean time: Let it snow; keep shoveling; it's winter.

George Sibley is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He writes in the upper Gunnison River Basin at the bottom of a lake of cold air.



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Words To Live By

By Jaime O'Neill

I always get apprehensive at the prospect of a new year stretching out ahead of me, with both opportunities and challenges sure to present themselves, and daunting conundrums of every kind certain to test my character.

I no longer make New Year's resolutions, but I carry a mental and spiritual repair kit wherever I go, a compendium of wisdom containing clichés, aphorisms and truisms to be used as psychic Band-Aids, when needed. Sometimes they work, and sometimes they don't, but I think of this stuff as akin to the medicine bags the Plains Indians used to carry, packed with their personal magic, totems against harm, disorder, confusion and the unexpected. Mountain men who had prolonged exposure to Native Americans took to carrying such bags themselves, filling them with a bright stone, an eagle feather, or maybe a tintype of a woman they knew in St. Louis, far back down the Missouri River.

My personal medicine bag is pretty full now, and some of the things in it have served me well, words against the chaos, and salve to the soul. First among my personal resources is the famous serenity prayer, which goes like

this: 'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.'

It's not easy to practice those words; it can be exceedingly difficult to tell the difference between the things you can change and the things you can't, but learning to accept what cannot be changed is the first building block of sanity.

I also find useful truth in the line from Shakespeare's Hamlet that reads: 'There is nothing either bad nor good but thinking makes it so.' Though there are surely some things so bad that no amount of thinking can make them better, there's also stuff we endure that's really only as bad as we make it out to be. If we rearrange our attitude, we can often reconfigure our own psychic pain.

'Where there's life, there's hope.' I read that in a Tarzan comic book when I was maybe 8 years old. Tarzan had been badly mauled by some fierce critter and had climbed up in a tree to recuperate. His chances of survival seemed poor. 'Where there's life, there's hope' appeared in a thought bubble above Tarzan's bleeding head. There have been more than a few times in my life when things seemed hopeless and those words returned to offer encouragement. And hope.

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Mark Twain provided several nostrums for my medicine bag, but the one that comes up most frequently is his observation that 'worry is interest paid on a debt you may never owe.' I worry less than I once did, but I'm still pretty good at it, and if I should fail to worry enough, my wife will usually remind me of one or two reasons to keep worrying. It's then I recall Twain's sage advice, which I also share, tirelessly, with my two daughters.

One of my own pearls of wisdom also made it into my medicine bag, a thought that came to me when my eldest daughter complained that her then-boyfriend was giving her 'mixed signals.' My reply to her was: 'Mixed signals are clear signals.' It helped her work some things out, and she complimented me on being so smart, but I think I just got lucky when that insight came to mind.

Hardly a day goes by when I'm not reminded of Samuel Johnson's adage that 'patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.' Johnson made that observation during the years when this nation was being forged. Since our inception, we've been plagued by far too many scoundrels who use ersatz love of country to mask narrow self-interest. Rush Limbaugh and a horde of others leap to mind whenever I think of Johnson's famous phrase. Limbaugh paid more than a million bucks for Elton John to perform at his fourth wedding, money that the anti-gay-rights scoundrel had

originally earned by professing love of country while sowing further division, and doing his country so much harm.

I don't know what this year will bring. As scientist Niels Bohr once observed, 'Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future.' With all that uncertainty, I'm just glad I've got so many resources in my medicine bag. So, I'll sign off with the immortal words of Porky Pig, who said so memorably: 'Th-th-that's all folks.'

*Jaime O'Neill is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org).
He writes in Magalia, California.*

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**FEBRUARY
2014**

POWER UPDATE



Important Safety Message from 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 to keep our crews safe by providing a clear and safe pathway to your electric meter.

Look Up, Stay Alert During Outdoor Work & Play

As kids and adults alike head outside to perform winter clean-up and play, be alert for power lines and other electrical hazards. It's the best way to stay safe from electrocution—and even death.

For Kids

- Never fly a kite on a rainy day or anywhere but an open space. A high point in the sky makes a kite a grounding point for lightning, and kites could become tangled in power lines.
- Don't climb trees that are near power lines and poles—evergreens can disguise dangers this time of year; leaves during the spring and summer.
- Stay far away from power lines lying on the ground. You can't tell if electricity is still flowing through them. If there's water nearby, don't go in it. Water is the best conductor of electricity.
- Obey signs that say "danger" and "keep out" around large electrical equipment, like substations. These signs aren't warnings; they're commands to keep you safe.
- Never climb a power pole.

For adults

- If power lines run through your trees, call United Power—tree trimmers with proper protective equipment can trim branches safely.
- Remember that power lines and other utilities run underground, too. Call 811 to have utility lines marked before you start digging.
- Starting that winter cleanup yard work? Sweep dried leaves and debris from outdoor receptacles.
- Upgrade your outdoor receptacles—or any outlets that could come in contact with water—to ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).
- Use only weather-resistant, heavy-duty extension cords marked for outdoor use.
- Don't leave outdoor power tools unattended for curious children or animals to find.

2014 Annual Meeting & Election

Wednesday, April 16

Adam's County Fairgrounds
9755 Henderson Road • Brighton

Dinner, Director Election & Business Meeting
Registration begins at 4:30 p.m.

More information at www.unitedpower.com.



THINKING OF SELLING? YOUR INSTINCTS ARE RIGHT. CALL US FOR A COMPLIMENTARY MARKET ANALYSIS OF YOUR HOME (no obligation, no pressure, just valuable information).



NEW LISTING!

2280 Forest

Warm, welcoming & accomodating!

5 BD/3 BA+ legal 2 BD/1 BA apt. **\$739,000**



NEW LISTING!

10982 Twin Spruce Road

Come See All the Changes!

3 BD/ 3 BA Garage/RV Pk'g **\$324,000**



10653 Twin Spruce

Road improvements complete!

2 BD/ 3 BA 1,896 sq. ft. **\$245,000**



0 Coal Creek Canyon

1.63 Ac Bldg. Site

High End Neighborhood **\$38,500**



NEW PRICE!

102 Black Bear Trail

Privacy in the Pines!

2 BD/ 1 BA 1.39 Ac. **\$203,000**



Coming Soon!

125 Moss Rock Place

VIEWS! VIEWS! VIEWS!

3 BD/ 3 BA 2-Car Garage



33966 Nadm

Private, Backs to National Forest

1.08 Acre **\$75,000**



NEW LISTING!

11578 Ranch Elsie Road

Sunny & Great Location!

3 BD/ 2 BA **\$329,000**



SOLD!

30945 Burland Road

Updated Ranch on 2.3 Ac.

3 BD/ 2 BA 800SF Barn **\$249,500**



11547 Shimley Road

Dramatic City Views 1.15 Ac
in Coal Creek Heights **\$39,000**



30 Wonder Trail

Historic Wondervu Cabin An

Original Get-Away! 1 BD **\$84,000**



Under Contract!

28 Millard

Charming Get-Away!

1 BD/ 1 BA + Shed/Studio **\$144,000**



64 Damascus Road

Beautifully wooded, flat site backs to
Golden Gate St. Pk. 1.87 Ac **\$49,000**



0 Damascus Road

Adj to #64 Damascus Rd. 1.86 Ac site.
Thorn Lake privileges. **\$49,000**



NEW LISTING!

8819 Blue Mountain

Sweeping Views of the Valley!

3 BD/ 4 BA 2-Car 1 Acre **\$529,000**



0 Circle Drive

Gently sloping 1.89 Ac site.
Great Solar Potential **\$39,000**

For additional information and photos:

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