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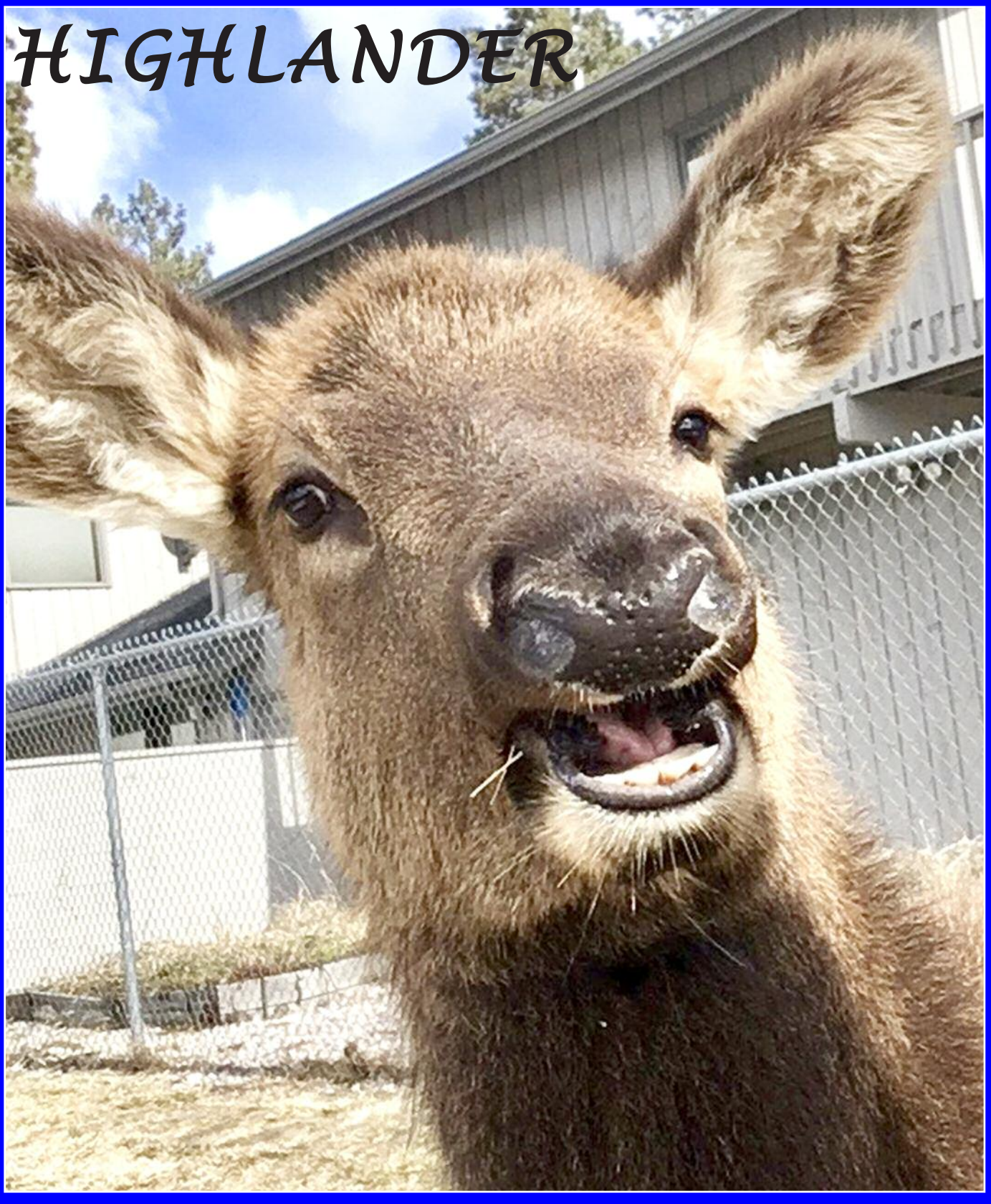

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Game Managers Try To Outsmart Elk

By Eve Byron - High Country News

Craig Jourdonnais spots the elk herd within minutes of driving onto the MPG Ranch in the Bitterroot Valley south of Missoula, Montana. It's a blustery December morning and the fresh-fallen snow on the mountainside provides a stark contrast to the animals' two-tone tawny coats. He pauses to watch the 200-plus herd for a moment, then eases his pickup into gear to get a closer look. Elk are a familiar sight for the wildlife biologist and former game warden; he currently works for the MPG, managing the hunters the landowners allow in, as well as the elk when they're on the 10,000-acre ranch.

Elk are thriving in parts of the West, and many states have areas where the populations surpass wildlife managers' goals. Warmer-than-average winters during the past 30 years, combined with good forage and safe havens, mean that more calves survive to breeding age. In Montana, elk numbers grew from 65,000 in 1990 to 160,000 in 2015, despite the reintroduction of wolves. Hunting is the main tool for keeping elk in check, but as large ranches once open to hunting are sold to people who may prefer watching wildlife to hunting it, this management tool is becoming less effective, while elk numbers continue to grow.

That's frustrating for Montana hunters, most of whom fail to harvest their yearly elk for a variety of reasons. It's also frustrating to longtime ranchers who allow hunting: The elk move to safer havens during the five-week big game rifle season, and then return to nibble ranchers' haystacks for the rest of the winter.

"Elk, more than any other big game animal I have ever managed, are sensitive to predation," Jourdonnais says, a wry grin crossing his tanned face. "They can find refuge from hunters, whether it's security-based, like heavily forested terrain, or on private property that offers safety." To reduce elk numbers, in 2016, Montana wildlife managers instituted the longest and largest hunting season ever offered in the state — "shoulder seasons" running from August 2016 to February 2017, flanking the regular five-week rifle season in October and November, in about one-third of its hunting districts. That will work, though, only if the elk are on property where they can be hunted. During the shoulder season, that's mainly private ranches. "If you have five properties and four are wide-open for hunting and one is limited, the elk will find out where that boundary is," says Jourdonnais.

In the 1600s, an estimated 10 million elk roamed the North American continent. Their numbers plummeted with unregulated hunting, competition for grass from domestic livestock and habitat destruction. By the 1890s, there were fewer than 100,000 elk. Their numbers rebounded through wildlife management efforts, growing to more than one million by 2009.

That rebound is a success story, and yet too many elk can cause problems. In Yellowstone National Park, they damaged river bottoms by stripping away the willows, aspen and cottonwoods, until reintroduced wolves curbed their numbers. In Wyoming, burgeoning herds crowd into artificial winter feeding grounds, spreading diseases like brucellosis and chronic wasting disease.

Elk also eat hay and grass *(Continued next page.)*

intended for cattle. Bill Galt's family-owned 248,000-acre ranch in central Montana makes him one of the state's largest private landowners, and the ranch shelters thousands of elk. He's willing to share the land, but notes that it comes with a price. He fences pastures in a "rest and rotate" manner, grazing cattle on a pasture one year, then fencing it off the next year to give the grass a chance to grow back. But, he says, "the elk do the exact opposite, and fences don't work for elk."

Wildlife managers balance science with the cooperation of ranchers like Galt, along with hunters and the general public, in deciding how many elk should roam the landscape. It's not always easy. Ben Lamb, a longtime hunter and wildlife advocate, describes Montana's situation as "a toxic stew of private land rights, the commercialization of wildlife, public access and climate change."

He ticks off the issues on his fingers. Family ranches are sold to out-of-state corporations, so hunters no longer develop trusting relationships with ranch owners, and fewer hunters are allowed on the land without paying for the privilege. But if private lands are opened only to paying hunters, it puts a monetary value on elk, essentially privatizing the public wildlife.

Meanwhile, hotter, drier summers lead to more intense wildfires, which change forage conditions on public lands, limit food and drive animals to private irrigated fields. And politicians who lack wildlife-management experience institute laws that tie biologists' hands.

One such political action in Montana in 2003 required wildlife managers to meet elk population goals in each hunting district. They tried a variety of tactics, including special hunts, but the population continued to rise. Today, that means the state's elk population needs to be reduced by about 29,000. As in other Western states, says Kelly Proffitt, a biologist and wildlife researcher with Fish, Wildlife and Parks, "hunting is essentially the tool the agency uses to move populations up or down to reach those objective levels."

A herd of elk finds safety in pastures near Stevensville, Montana. The elk have learned to stay near towns or subdivisions where they can't be hunted, and have damaged some fences and haystacks.
Perry Backus/Missoulian

But 85 percent of Montana hunters with elk tags don't fill them; the elk may be on private land where they can't be shot, or the hunters may be using all-terrain vehicles, which tend to spook the animals, rather than hiking into the backcountry. Even in the best situations, getting an elk isn't easy. "Elk are smart. They're an intelligent game animal that knows the country," says John Vore, Montana's game management bureau chief.

In 2015, wildlife managers tried a new "shoulder season" plan in five hunting districts where populations were too high. It was considered a success, with an additional 643 elk taken during the extra season and the dispersal of large

herds. In 2016, wildlife managers increased the number of hunting districts participating to 43 of the state's 138. Montana's shoulder-season hunts are mainly on private property where landowners already have allowed some type of public access during the regular season. Those landowners can set limits on who can hunt on their property and how many elk they can harvest. The rub is that for the shoulder season to work, the elk have to stay on those properties. But landowners can't use artificial means, like salt blocks or fences, to encourage elk to stay. So managers try to trick the elk by hunting in one area but not another, then switching it up. Hunt some days, and not on others; make the elk think the season is over, when it's not. "The best way to hunt elk is with the least amount of pressure," Galt says.

On the MPG, as on many of the state's large ranches, elk wander on and off the unfenced property at will — and they seem to know when hunters are after them, says Jourdonnais. Radio collaring, used in a Fish, Wildlife and Parks study a few years ago, showed that the night before the general big game rifle-hunting season opened, the elk moved from the MPG Ranch to a neighboring one, where little, if any, hunting takes place. Elk experts theorize the increase in humans gearing up for hunting season — scouting game trails, setting up camps, sighting in rifles — alerts the animals to the upcoming danger, prompting their move to safe havens.

Elk, like humans, are incredibly adaptive, and they often respond differently to similar situations; Proffitt says the elk appear to perform a risk analysis. A study in the mid-2000s in south-central Montana's Madison Valley revealed that elk stayed on public lands there during archery season. Yet in the nearby Paradise Valley, archery season triggered the movement of elk to private lands where they can't be pursued. It's hard to make broad generalizations about the reasons behind the different behavior, notes Proffitt. "Some herds don't have refuge areas as an option. Bulls just hole up somewhere and are less tied to forage (than cows with young). Weather is a big driving factor also in elk."

The shoulder season is meant to add a bit of unpredictability. Vore says it's too soon to know the results; the hunters won't be surveyed until after the season ends Feb. 15. Anecdotally, though, he's hearing that this winter's deep snow made it difficult for hunters to reach any elk, and some landowners have not been cooperating. Jourdonnais' assessment in early February is more blunt: The shoulder season was a bust, thanks mainly to bad weather. "We had 50 to 60 elk hunters out in the deep snow at 22 below zero. It was tough to be out there." Plus, most of the elk left the MPG Ranch during the shoulder season; they seemed to have learned that if they move near towns and subdivisions, they won't be shot.

As Jourdonnais descended the mountainside on the MPG Ranch back in early December, he noticed what proved to be an omen — something had spooked the elk herd, which moved like an undulating wave up and over the ridgetop, headed toward someone else's property. He notes that unless elk population issues are addressed at a landscape level — not just ranch by ranch — even the shoulder season won't be enough, because the elk will still figure out safe havens. "The key, to me, in elk management is all about not being predictable. You have to keep them guessing; if you establish a pattern, you're done."

Eve Byron writes from Helena, Montana, and often covers natural resource topics.

Getting Good Data From Snowpack

By Emily Benson - High Country News

In the middle of a clearing, beneath the bright blue bowl of the western Colorado sky, two scientists stood chest-deep in a pit dug into the snow. Crisp morning sunlight glinted off the blocky metal trowel in Andrew Hedrick's hand. Hedrick, a hydrology technician, stuck the instrument into the solid white wall before him, withdrew it — now loaded with snow — and delicately skimmed off the extra flecks. Amid the muffled whine of snowmobiles ferrying researchers and equipment around the field site, he weighed the snow, then emptied his trowel, ready for another sample. Researchers will use the information Hedrick collected to validate new ways to measure snow and calculate the density of the snowpack — which, together with its depth, indicates how much water it contains.

A handful of other scientists, from agencies and universities across the globe, swirled around the clearing and among nearby spruce trees. The researchers measured the snow with poles and rulers, radar and microwave sensors, and even packed a cooler with snow samples destined for micro-CT scanning at a lab in New Hampshire. Overhead, sensors affixed to airplanes made similar measurements throughout the day.

Snow delivers about 60 to 70% of the West's water supply. The snowpack is an icy natural reservoir that swells throughout the winter, then melts during the summer, providing rivers, agricultural fields, and communities with water. But the amount of moisture in snow varies, and keeping track of how wet snow is across an entire landscape — information essential to the resource managers, farmers and scientists who forecast water supplies and flood potential — has proven difficult. To figure out the best way to do it, Hedrick and about a hundred other researchers converged on snowy, flat-topped Grand Mesa, in western Colorado, for an ambitious scientific treasure hunt in February. For three weeks, they took measurements and tested dozens of instruments and methods, looking for the optimum suite of sensors to survey what one scientist calls "the holy grail" of snow-sensing research: the amount of water held within the snow.

Government agencies monitor the Western snowpack at hundreds of locations across the region. But, useful as those point-measurements are, they don't tell the whole story, says Kelly Elder, a research hydrologist with the U.S. Forest Service in Fort Collins, Colorado, and the leader of the team that managed the ground campaign at Grand Mesa. Aerial measurements from a satellite or a plane that cover the entire landscape — not just a series of individual sites — are also necessary. "If we can measure from space, or from the air, then there's hope," Elder says.

Satellites are already doing some of that work: For decades, they have provided information about how much of the globe is covered by wintertime snow. But that's not enough, says hydrologist Jessica Lundquist at the University of Washington in Seattle. "What that doesn't tell you is, OK, do you have a thin little bit of snow, or do you have a really deep pile of snow?" Without corresponding knowledge of how deep and dense the snow is, researchers don't know how much water is stowed within it.

Years of research suggest that there isn't a "silver bullet" sensor that can measure snow's water content on its own from a satellite, says Jeffrey Deems, a scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center in Boulder, Colorado. One goal of the Grand Mesa research — part of a planned five-year project, the first year of which is supported by a $4.5 million NASA grant — is to find the ideal combination of instruments that might someday be launched on a satellite to monitor how much water is in snow worldwide. "We have all of these different techniques," he says. "They all have shortcomings, but they all have advantages as well — and if we can put the right advantages together, we can solve the problem."

The project's aerial sensors include LIDAR, a "really fancy range-finder," Deems says, that uses lasers to measure distances; by comparing scans taken before and after a snow dump, researchers can calculate snow depth. Measurements of the microwave radiation naturally emitted by the Earth are also part of

Andrew Hedrick, hydrology technician at the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture in Boise, cuts wedges of snow from a pit. The wedges will be used to calculate the density of the snow at different levels in the snowpack. Brooke Warren/High Country News

the project: Different densities of snow modify the microwave signal as it moves skyward, so monitoring it from above can give an estimate of snowpack density. Additional airborne sensors measure the temperature of the snow and the albedo, or how much sunlight it reflects — factors that can affect how quickly it melts.

One of the difficulties of measuring snow from planes or satellites is that trees can get in the way. About half of the snow-covered landscape in the Western U.S. is vegetated, so for an aerial sensor to work in the West, it must be able to measure the snow beneath the canopy cover. Grand Mesa, with its 53-square mile flat top and range of forest types — from open shrub-land to dense stands of spruce and fir — is an ideal location to test how well different instruments deal with trees in the absence of other complicating factors, like large changes in topography. To ground-truth the aerial assessments, researchers conducted manual measurements — such as weighing trowels of snow — at about 100 locations across the mesa.

The researchers also visited another area, a steep alpine basin near Silverton, Colorado, to expose their instruments to a different set of conditions. That will help them find a suite of sensors that can work equally well over open Alaskan tundra and a forested Colorado hillside, Deems says. "Can we make the same system work and be resilient to these very different environments?"

And even in the same place, conditions can change, sometimes within just a few hours. As the temperature on Grand Mesa climbed through the early afternoon, scientists shed their gloves and hats, dripping water puddled beneath a snowmobile trailer, and the snow along the footpath from the researchers' basecamp to the nearest field site took on the consistency of a heavy, jacket-soaking snowball. NASA scientist Ludovic Brucker crouched down to scoop loose snow from underneath a surface crust, demonstrating the layers of differing density that often form within a snowpack. When he stood, a white research plane bearing light reflection and temperature sensors and other snow-sensing instruments flew overhead, its faint roar mingling with the chatter of a nearby creek.

Emily Benson is an editorial intern at High Country News.

Why Talk About Hurricane's In Colorado?

Article by Diane Bergstrom

I like weather. I can't imagine living in a location where the climate is consistent year round. Instead of Biology and Chemistry classes in school, I opted for Meteorology and Climatology. Only a few close friends know I have a crush on Mike Nelson, Chief Meteorologist with 7NEWS, KMGH Denver - for years. The devoted family man, dog lover, and Emmy winner from Wisconsin has been forecasting Colorado weather for over twenty-six years. When the Front Range, or even the nation, has been threatened with volatile weather, millions turn on their TVs and tune in for reports with instructions from the calm, cool, collected, attractive and knowledgeable weather expert. While attending one of his public information seminars years ago, I ran into him when I had to leave early. (He's taller in person.) He thanked me and made sure that I had received the free gift, a wonderfully substantial ice scraper. I stammered that I had and thanked him for the job he continues to do. Someone stole that ice scraper while I took a de-icing break when parked in Boulder. Amounting to sacrilege for any former Minnesotan. Still a little peeved about that. On to hurricanes.

On April 12th, Kerry Emanuel, Ph.D., MIT professor of atmospheric science for thirty-one years, spoke at a Conference on World Affairs (CWA) session entitled, "Hurricanes, Climate, and Culture: How We Cope with Natural Disasters." Every April, the CWA assembles speakers from around the world at CU Boulder to present free talks for a week on politics, the environment, business, technology, culture, etc. This talk caught my eye. Why discuss hurricanes in land-locked Colorado? Why not drought, over population, over building, the demands on ground water and the control over the Colorado River? Besides the obvious fact that all Coloradoans who are not Native Americans came here from somewhere else, we travel to the coasts, we know people on the coasts, and we are ultimately affected by what happens on the coasts and the increasing severity due to climate change. Dr. Emanuel's research has focused on tropical meteorology, climate and hurricane physics, and he has written several books aimed at a general audience. Little did I know, move over Mike Nelson, you have competition.

Jim Hurrell, Director of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) based in Boulder, introduced Dr. Emanuel with a quote by Walter Orr Roberts, "It's wonderful to have the opportunity given us by society to do basic research, but in return, we have a very important moral responsibility to apply that research to benefitting humanity." Dr. Emanuel explained how he tries to continue Roberts' break in the barrier in the interest of harnessing science in service to society by coordinating information between physical scientists and social scientists to minimize the influence of natural disasters. Ancient people including the Mayan had deducted the nature of hurricanes without ever seeing an aerial view of the eye and built their cities inland. In the 1800s, murals depicted slave ship operators throwing the captured slaves overboard while boats were tossed by typhoons. The word hurricane is derived from Mayan, Taino, and Caribbean words meaning, "Gods of evil." The most emphatic message Emanuel expressed was, if you hear warnings from reputable sources, GET OUT! He explained the fascinating intricacies of scientific, economic, political, and cultural issues, leading to the human perceptions that complicate public safety. Since the 1970's, the population along the U.S. coast has tripled, while sea level is rising, and the incidence and intensity of tropical cyclones is expected to increase, resulting in increased damages. Developers are making substantial profits for building in coastal areas, per public demand. Since 1971, ten thousand deaths a year are caused first by drowning in fresh water, then salt water, then by wind, and then by tornados.

The Saffir-Simpson scale used by the National Hurricane Center to classify hurricane categories is strictly based on wind speed. More people die from storm water surges than wind so this is a problem, especially when people hear that a storm has been downgraded in category classification,

and therefore downgrade their precautions. This was evidenced during Hurricane Katrina (2005), initially Category 5, which took 1,800 lives and was the most costly natural disaster in U.S. history. According to Emanuel, it was also an exceptionally well-forecast storm including risk indicators. Then politicians got in the way. On August 27, the National Hurricane Center director gave Louisiana governor notice of the severity and trajectory of the hurricane hitting the Bahamas, Florida, and then New Orleans. Neither immediate action nor announcements were made. They contacted the mayor of New Orleans, who suggested a VOLUNTARY evacuation but wanted to consult with his attorneys on his potential personal liability from local businesses. On the 28th, he issued a mandatory evacuation order after the National Weather Service New Orleans issued an apocalyptic statement warning there would be death to outdoor animals, and a loss of water and electricity for weeks. On the 29th, the hurricane made landfall, the mayor abandoned his post for a hotel, which lost power, and two levees were breached. Two hundred police abandoned their posts, probably to save their own families, and were later put on trial. On the 30th, the U.S. Coast Guard and Louisiana Fish and Wildlife stepped up independently to save many lives. FEMA Director Brown went missing for days. Even Cuba and Venezuela offered help. Emanuel summarized this by stating, "Years of planning and excellent forecasts cannot succeed where leadership falls to corruption, cowardice and ignorance." He counteracted wrong interpretations circulating about climate models suggesting they are uncertain, therefore should not be heeded, by simply stating, "Uncertainty does not equal ignorance." The models indicate that Katrina was a 1 in 25 year storm, with velocity increasing. Development-wise, some of the U.S.' more affordable housing is placed in the riskiest areas.

Again, the forecasts for Hurricane Sandy (2012) were excellent, giving five days advance warning. Results were: 233 fatalities: sustained damages in Haiti and Cuba; it was reduced to a Category 2; $75 billion in damages; 1-3 feet of snow fell in West Virginia; 13.88 foot storm surge was recorded at Battery in Manhattan. On Oct. 28th, NYC Mayor Bloomberg explained why he was not ordering evacuations and Director Knabb of the National Hurricane Center bluntly informed him that was the wrong decision. He reversed it. The questioned storm surge hit on the 29th and Sandy made landfall in New Jersey on October 30th. Hurricane Sandy was renamed Super Storm Sandy. The models suggest by the year 2100, Sandy-like storms will be a 1 in 50 year occurrence, with great intensity. Interestingly, some insurers won't pay claims on unnamed storms. More interestingly, Australia names their storms after unpopular politicians, Emanuel reported.

The U.S. sociology of natural disasters is also impacted by how research is funded, the subsidizations by federal and state governments of flood risks, and wealthy coastal land owners' demands for premiums that don't reflect area risks, resulting in altering the original intention of the FAIR Plan Act of 1968. We need to do much better. Emanuel explained the European weather prediction models are more advanced than U.S. models and in April, more money was allocated for extending our forecast research. When the Bhola Cyclone of 1970 hit East Pakistan, 500,000 people were killed and the storm's effect impacted the formation of Bangladesh. Emanuel explained, "The world went to work to save lives, not money." Two thousand-five hundred cyclone concrete shelters were built within walking distance of villages, with funds from the World Bank and non-governmental organizations.

What was my take away after his lecture? I am less inclined to listen to politicians as my go-to disaster representatives and more inclined to go to the source, i.e. the weather scientists. Boulder County is rich in scientific organizations. The National Weather Service is a branch of the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, www.noaa.gov. They are responsible for weather alerts and severe weather warnings and can report county by county according to your zip code. The NOAA weather radio transmits at 1,032 VHF-FM. Also visit www.nws.gov/nwr. Twitter: (@NOAA). I also like Weather Underground owned by the Weather Channel, www.wunderground.com or www.weather.com. And my go-to-guy, Mike Nelson.

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Raptors In Flight

By Maya L. Kapoor -High Country News - hcn.org

Hyla is done for the morning. Amanda, crouching behind a snag, waves at her through the ocotillo and mesquite, but Hyla is not coming over, not in this wind. Not for all the glistening raw rodent flesh in the world. She's down a hill, almost out of sight. She stays there. Gliding near the ground, maneuvering between saguaros, braking precisely — this is difficult for Hyla to do on any day. Ferruginous hawks are the largest soaring hawks, or buteos, in the United States; they stand almost two feet tall, and their wings can reach four feet from tip to tip. Because of their size, buteos are slow to lift off. It takes them several broad flaps to clear grass clumps and junipers and ascend to where thermals can carry their weight for miles, sometimes thousands of feet above the ground. On especially windy days, short demonstration jumps are difficult for Hyla to navigate, and if she gets up a little too high, she soars like a kite. "Wheeeeeeee!" Amanda, Hyla's handler, says by way of explanation. Hyla's handlers don't press her on days when she demurs. On the blustery morning I attend ***Raptor Free Flight*** at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum outside of Tucson, hoping for a glimpse of Hyla on the wing, all I see of her is a distant blur of white and rust-red, hopping once from a human's glove-covered arm to a nearby tree branch and back. Carroll, the docent, a charmer with chin-length gray hair who is mic'ed over a loudspeaker, maintains a calm, engaging monologue about Hyla's species, while making dramatic decapitation motions at Amanda — Should I cut Hyla's part of the show? Amanda, in the creosote, gives a quick nod.

During ***Raptor Free Flight***, birds of prey such as Hyla are handled without jesses or hoods, the leashes and eye-covers falconers use. They are tethered to their handlers by the draw of fresh, uncooked animal protein — rabbit chunks, mouse heads, quail eggs. A crowd of Desert Museum visitors jostles behind metal gates, gasping and shooting video as one bird after another flits up from the shrubs. "Notice the top of your head and the bottom of your feet," Carroll says. "That is your space." Everything else belongs to the birds.

"Are our eyes the top of our heads?" a woman asks tremulously. Corralled with other humans while predators glide just overhead, it's easy to feel like prey. Pick me, I think, envious each time a raptor swoops within inches of another person's head. Hawks, primates: We must be equally inscrutable to one another. And it's so easy to confuse inscrutability with wildness, instincts with secrets. I long for a raptor to fly close enough to ruffle my hair with the movement of its wings, as if proximity would mean that a wild animal chose to collapse that other distance between us, letting me into its world, acknowledging me as one of the wild ones, too. But the birds keep their distance.

In my 20s, ***Raptor Free Flight*** would have upset me. In college, two decades ago, I spent four years learning about the environmental catastrophes my generation faced. Later, I collected biological field data in locations popular with tourists, from San Francisco to Yellowstone National Park. I came to comport myself as a weary insider to environmental heartache, detached from the naiveté of less well-informed visitors. Back then, I would have considered ***Raptor Free Flight's*** treatment of wild animals cartoonish, the birds' lives cynically circumscribed for money. How could birds preening on saguaros matter to tropical deforestation or climate change? *(Continued next page.)*

I stopped feeling snobby about the right way to connect with nature once I realized what nourished my own passion and curiosity about science and the outdoors. What stood out were visceral moments of connection that could happen anywhere — on coastlines, under trees, in creeks, beside microscopes, in classrooms — moments that seemed, in some quiet way, to stop time. Now, with a bit more life experience — and, perhaps, humility — I attend shows like ***Raptor Free Flight*** believing a moment under wing might change a person profoundly, including me.

From below, Hyla glows pale white against the sky. Closer up, she appears to wear a deep reddish cape that hoods her head and cascades across her shoulders and wings, a watered-down tea color staining her chest and muscular legs. It's these rusty markings that give her species the name "ferruginous" — from ferrum, Latin for iron. Hyla's scientific name is ***Buteo regalis***, the regal hawk. Ferruginous hawks resemble eagles, with deeply set eyes under dramatic eye ridges, severely hooked beaks, and legs feathered all the way to their feet. Arthur Cleveland Bent, an early 20th century ornithologist, approved of the name — he may even have nursed some eagle envy. "This latest name, regalis, is a very appropriate one for this splendid hawk, the largest, most powerful, and grandest of our Buteos, a truly regal bird," he writes in the 21-volume ***Life Histories of North American Birds***. "One who knows it in life cannot help being impressed with its close relationship to the golden eagle, which is not much more than a glorified Buteo." Hyla's call is the thin, high note of an eagle: A fluted sound so delicate that it's replaced with the cry of a red-tailed hawk in old Westerns. It's a piercing piccolo I've always found too fragile for an eagle's powerful form, revealing in sound a vulnerability not obvious by sight.

This is all I know about Hyla's history: Twelve years ago, she and her brother tumbled too early from their nest in Montana. A falconer kept the pair alive. Ferruginous hawks nest in sun-struck places — sagebrush and native grassland, generally. In the nest, a chick's body temperature can fluctuate from 104 to 109 degrees Fahrenheit in a few hours. Nestlings huddle under each other for shade while their parents forage. Left alone, they sometimes find relief from the heat by seeking a breeze at the windward side of the nest. In his memoir of studying ferruginous hawks for three years as a graduate student, wildlife biologist Leon Powers describes babies sitting on the edge of the nest, legs sticking out in front of them, feet to the wind, mouths gaping open, catching the breeze on hot prairie afternoons.

Sometimes accidents happen. Even when chicks are safely ensconced within a nest, the nest itself may be unwieldy — less construction project than hormonally driven nest Jenga, a prolonged bonding ritual for the parent ferruginous hawks. The whole thing may topple in a strong wind. I imagine a storm blew baby Hyla and her fuzzy, awkward brother over the rim of their nest, built in a low-growing juniper tree or on a mound of earth. I imagine that a recreationist or rancher found them on the ground, tangled in grass or struggling on sun-beaten soil, and called the falconer because he was an expert in raptor care.

After ***Free Flight***, I say hello to Hyla's handler, Amanda, who has been rewarding the raptors throughout this morning's flights with food. Like the other staff and volunteers I have seen, Amanda wears bland desert colors. Unfolded from her position behind nearby foliage, she is lanky, taller than I'd realized. Her dark hair skims the top of her sunglasses and covers her ears. She holds out her

hand. I grasp it eagerly, realizing belatedly that it's covered in blood. Hyla and the other raptors return to their aviaries in hand-carried animal carriers, which the birds find less stressful than being carried in the open the whole way. Amanda and her coworkers make the carriers by putting perches inside small dog crates and modifying their doors to slide open more smoothly.

Hyla, a ferruginous hawk, swoops low during ***Raptor Free Flight*** *at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Don Sorensen / Courtesy Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum*

Tension pervades the mews *(the home place for the raptors)*, mainly because of Hyla's unsociability. She is still in her carrier while the staff prepares to weigh her. This requires using a treat to entice Hyla to dash from the carrier to the aviary. In the aviary, she will sit on a perch scale for a moment. Then she will dash back to her carrier for another treat, and the staff will remove the scale. Weighing Hyla after every ***Free Flight*** is a way to keep track of how much food she eats during the show so she isn't over-fed later.

Hyla does not want anyone invading her territory. Her neighbor, a prairie falcon named Franklin, is a personable bird amenable to primate friendliness. Hyla is not friendly. She glints and screams. Ferruginous hawks rarely participate in free flight programs because of their behavior. It would be unfair to blame their personalities; that would deny the role of evolution in shaping a ferruginous hawk's temperament, perception of threat, response to other living beings.

After Hyla is back in her carrier, I pop my head into her aviary to look around. A long, clean space, with a few perches and a sandy floor. Lots of light from the mesh wall. "She likes to watch bird TV," Amanda says, meaning, the world. Amanda invites me to open Hyla's carrier so she can settle in her aviary, now that the scale is removed. I stand behind her carrier while doing this, so that if Hyla turns on me, I'll have somewhere to cower.

I reach over the front of the carrier and carefully slide the door open. But I'm not quick enough; Hyla bursts through, bashing her shoulders against the doorframe before she erupts into her aviary. Ohjesuschrist, I exclaim, jumping back. Amanda and her coworkers laugh. We shut the door to the aviary. Hyla is no longer a white-and-brown blur to me; now she is a sound and sensation of power, a bang reverberating through plastic and metal into my hands and up to my shoulders. I had not expected so much force out of a 4-pound bird. Soft feathers and hollow bones are deceptive; it's easy to forget this beast can land hard enough to drive her talons deep into the muscles of a thrashing rabbit and then take off again.

Wild ferruginous hawks live in the open spaces of Western North America: shrublands and native grasslands ranging from Canada to Texas, where a nest just eight feet up in a juniper provides a good view. These plant communities are not as vast as they once were. "How is it possible that something as dominating and widespread as sagebrush in Western North America could be threatened?" Powers asks in the epilogue to his memoir, ***Hawk in the Sun***. "After all, even in our lifetime, we Westerners have all driven through seemingly unending, monotonous stretches of sagebrush. How could all that gray-green vegetation possibly disappear?" Cheatgrass burns intensely, wiping out native grasses and shrubland, erasing ferruginous hawk habitat. Then it's the first plant to grow back once the ashes have settled, *(Continued next page.)*

sucking moisture so quickly from the soil that other plants have nothing to drink.

Paradoxically, in the American Southwest, fire suppression also has whittled away at hawk habitat, letting woodlands grow over native grasslands. "Ferruginous hawks hunt in a catlike manner," hawk expert Joe Schmutz explained. "Very arid grassland is their primary home. Wherever forest encroaches, ferruginous hawks tend to avoid." Ferruginous hawks have been proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act more than once, and rejected each time. Some states list them on their endangered species lists, and Canada has bumped ferruginous hawk status up and down more than once on its version of the Endangered Species Act.

Ferruginous hawks need wide-open spaces, and they eat animals that need wide-open spaces. Best of all, from a ferruginous hawk's perspective, is jackrabbit, and in parts of the West where jackrabbits, well, abound, a ferruginous hawk can capture a good-sized meal in one snatch. In places without jackrabbits, ferruginous hawks eat ground squirrels. Jackrabbits and ground squirrels are not small animals; they attest to the size and strength of these hawks. Like many top predators, ferruginous hawks cycle according to the boom-bust of their prey populations. When those populations have bad years, the hawks do not raise young. When roads divide sagebrush ecosystems, when transmission lines slice through them, when extraction projects fragment them, when fires, invasive species and climate change together eradicate their preferred prey, the hawks leave or simply die out. Ravens and red-tailed hawks — generalists capable of thriving in disturbed habitat and close to urbanized areas — move in.

Artificial nests, such as those created by the BLM, pose a different question than wild animal rehabilitation. This is the dependency — or the salvation — of entire populations, and as now implemented, might not even work. In 2011, researchers in New Mexico walked toward nesting ferruginous hawks and measured how close they could get before the birds flushed — and often attacked. The researchers calculated the buffer distance the hawks needed in order to not abandon their nests, waste energy or expose their young by freaking out: 650 meters, or approximately 2,133 feet. That's seven football fields, almost twice the BLM's currently used quarter-mile buffer. When it came to more intense disturbances, like mining or construction, the researchers recommended a buffer of one kilometer during nesting season. These buffers would protect ferruginous hawks — which are listed as sensitive species by the BLM and the Forest Service — and also, perhaps more to the interest of developers, follow the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which makes killing migratory birds or destroying their nests or eggs illegal. But these larger buffer distances have not been adopted.

Maya L. Kapoor is an associate editor with HCN. She writes about science and the environment in the urbanizing West.

A Cormorant

***By Ingrid Winter* - www.Greenwood Wildlife.org**
Photo by Jenny Bryant

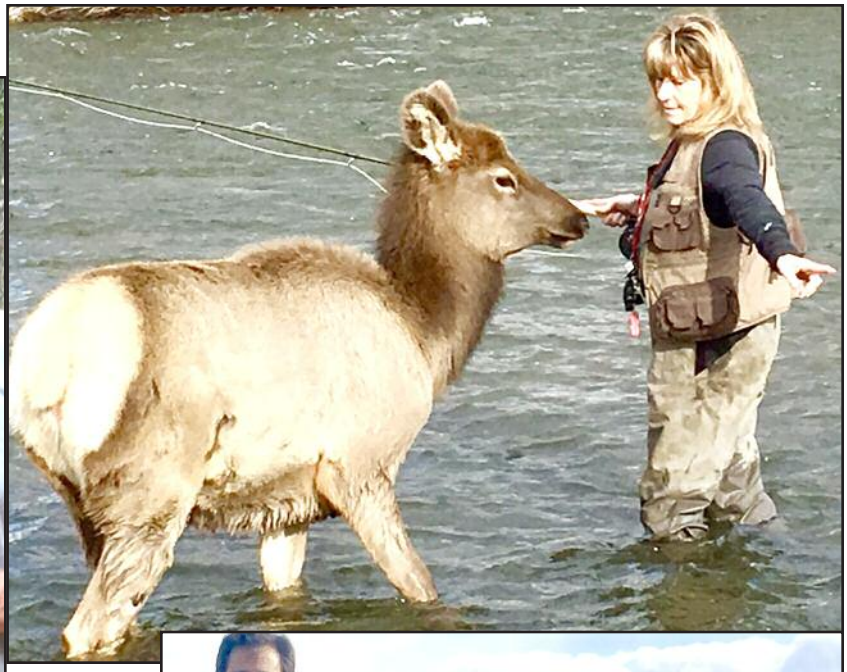
An injured Cormorant arrives at Greenwood
He was found in a field far away from water
unable to fly possibly hit by a car ...

He spends the first few days in an inside cage
lined with soft towels where he thrashes around
using his tail to prop up his body
refusing the fish we offer - a pitiful sight
and a sad life - one might even say
a life not worth living

But then we take him outside
and put him into a cage with a pool and instantly
he becomes a different creature - he slides
into the water and immediately swims and dives
and as I watch his elegant shape under water
his dark, sleek body moving swiftly and gracefully
in his soft watery element
just for a few moments until he reaches the hard
concrete edge of the pool again and again

I smile and feel comforted in knowing
that even in an awful situation when concrete walls
seem to be closing in on us and when despair
seems to be the only possible response
we may be gifted with moments when
the walls give way to space -
moments of joy and freedom moments of grace.

Greenwood is a non-profit organization whose mission is to rehabilitate orphaned, sick, and injured wildlife for release into appropriate habitats. Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (303) 823-8455.



Left: Bob with rescue Zika, a Belgian Malinois.

Top Right: Cover Elk in trouble for wanting to fish.

Bottom: Cover Elk hangin on the deck.

Send in Your photos to
highlandermo60@gmail.com

Top Left: Cover Elk meets Trout.

Top Right: Benny's first haircut.

Bottom:
Chanel and Tjakap.

Preparing A Living Will

From Jim Plane – State Farm Insurance

Having a will or trust is important to estate planning, but do you have a living will? If you're like 70% of the population, you don't. While your end-of-life care may not be first and foremost on your mind, making the tough decisions about life-sustaining medical treatments when you're healthy—and documenting them in a living will—helps to ensure that your health care wishes will be fulfilled when you're unable to speak for yourself.

Living will & health care power of attorney

What is a living will? A living will is a legal document that outlines your health care wishes in the event that you become terminally ill and/or permanently incapacitated or unconscious due to injury, illness, or advanced age. It lets health care providers and your family know which life-sustaining medical treatments you want or don't want. Each state defines the parameters differently, so check your state law. Since a living will cannot anticipate every possible situation, experts recommend combining your living will with a health care power of attorney to create an advance directive, known as advanced healthcare directive.

What is a health care power of attorney? A health care power of attorney, or medical power of attorney, is a legal document that grants power to another person to make health care decisions on your behalf should you become so ill or injured that you can't do it for yourself. This person is called a health care agent, or health care proxy. Make sure your health care agent is someone you trust to advocate for you, to be available for what could be a significant amount of time, and to remain steady during a highly emotional time.

Creating a living will or advance directive

Hire an attorney or do it yourself. An attorney who focuses on estate planning can create an advance directive for you and will know your state's laws. You can also create one on your own, but you must make sure it meets your state's requirements. Resources available to you include legal document creation software; a free living will form provided by your physician, local hospital, local senior center, or state's medical association; and The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

(http://www.caringinfo.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3289) , which allows you to download a state-specific advance directive form.

Research your state's requirements. No matter how you create your advance directive, find out your state's requirements. You must be at least 18 years old and of sound mind at the time you create your living will. Depending on your state, you may also need witnesses and/or notarization.

Determine your end-of-life care. Decide what kind of medical treatments (http://www.mayoclinic.org/living-wills/ART-20046303) you want for yourself, such as artificial respiration, palliative care, or nourishment, when you get to the end of life or become completely incapacitated. Consider researching these health care matters and discuss them with your physician. Once you've made your decisions, write them down along with your rationale and feelings to help your loved ones understand your preferences, especially if it's possible they might disagree.

Reassess your living will as needed. Your advance directive isn't set in stone. Change it as your perspective or situation changes due to age, decline, or a major life event, such as death, divorce, or a diagnosis. Endeavor to choose someone younger, such as a close relative or friend and give them ample time to decide if they can and will make these tough decisions and be there for you when needed.

Share your health care wishes

Tell your health care agent and family. Let your health care proxy and loved ones know of your advance directive and your life-prolonging preferences. This way, your health care agent will know how to act on your behalf and your family will be informed should anything happen.

Keep your advance directive in a safe place. Make sure your living will and health care power of attorney are kept in a safe place that your health care agent can access, if needed.

Make copies of your advance directive. In addition to your health care agent and family, give a copy of your advance directive to your physician to keep on file, as well as to your hospital, if going in for a major procedure. While creating a living will or advance directive may be difficult in the short term, its long-term benefit is peace of mind in knowing that you will be taken care of according to your wishes... and that your loved ones will be relieved from having to make these tough decisions for you during an emotionally stressful time.

Neither State Farm nor its agents provide tax, legal or investment advice. Customers should consult their own legal, tax, or investment advisors regarding their specific circumstances.

So You Got An Easter Bunny? Now What?

By Nancy LaRoche
Manager Colorado House-Rabbit Society

If you got a live Easter bunny this year, chances are that the bunny is very young. Sadly, some won't even have been weaned, and these will almost certainly die. But if they've been weaned, very young rabbits are still fragile and need vigilant care.

Bunnies should have homes of their own, within your home, with a solid floor, and a litter box in one of the back corners. Put a safe litter (paper or aspen) in it and cover it with soft hay **(not alfalfa)**. Cover the floor of the crate with a towel.

Keep the bunny in a warm place **(not hot), and with no drafts**. Put a small "hide-away" in the crate for bunnies to hide in to sleep. A facial tissue box may work for most young bunnies. Put cotton material ***(never synthetics)*** in it for the bunny to arrange for his or her bed.

It is essential for the bunny to have alfalfa hay, alfalfa pellets, and water in a heavy crock low enough for the bunny to drink out of it, and heavy enough that it won't tip over. **(Rabbits don't fully hydrate with water bottles.)** When the rabbit reaches adulthood, you need to switch to grass hay (timothy, orchard grass, etc.) and timothy pellets.

Never give the bunny sugary treats, or human food, with the exception of leafy greens. They will eat almost anything you offer them, but you can cause an early and painful death by giving them popcorn, potato chips, and other human food.

Wait several days before giving the bunny greens of any kind; to be sure his or her digestive system is working well. Then try a single bit of parsley or kale. Give one vegetable each day for three days before introducing another. If the rabbit's droppings become soft or mushy, stop the greens completely, until the bunny recovers.

Rabbits also need daily exercise—at least twice a day, if possible. They need to race around, leap into the air, and wear themselves out. (Of course, you need to rabbit-proof any area where the bunny is allowed out, since bunnies love to chew on just about everything.) Be especially careful to block the rabbit's access to electric cords and houseplants.

You also need to find a good, rabbit-savvy veterinarian, and have your little rabbit given a "well-bunny" check-up.

Veterinarians who are NOT thoroughly schooled in rabbit care must be avoided, if you want your little one to survive. If the vet is not able to examine rabbits' cheek teeth (molars) without anesthetizing them, you should find another vet who can.

Young bunnies will sleep often. Never bother them when they're sleeping. As they grow older, they will sleep from mid-morning through the afternoon, and their most active

times will be in the early morning and in the evening, especially after the dinner hour. They continue to play at night, so a bedroom isn't a very good place for their own homes.

Young bunnies are usually easily handled, but when they hit puberty (around 3-1/2 months), the females may become grumpy with "bunny PMS" which lasts until she is spayed or bred. The males want to "hump" just about anything they can get hold of, and when they do, they use their teeth to hold on. If they happen to want to hump a human, chances are that their teeth will bite into flesh, making them much less pleasant to be around. They also begin spraying! These behaviors continue until the rabbit is neutered. Rabbit spays and neuters can be quite expensive, often running around $300. Happily, there are low-cost spays and neuters available. See, for example, https://spay2day.org/

Never treat the rabbit like a toy, but like a friend. Pay attention to what he wants and accommodate him.

When you want to interact with him, offer a safe treat and pet him gently. (Flavored acidophilus tablets are good for this. They can be broken into small pieces, so many treats rather than just one or two can be given.) Use the treats to coax the rabbit onto your lap, and be sure to give him a treat when he gets there!

A single rabbit is, in my opinion, only half of a whole. Rabbits need rabbit companions, and the most satisfying relationship is between a male and a female ***(both neutered and spayed, of course.)*** However, rabbits can be picky about their mates, and the more into adulthood, the pickier they are. So don't think you can bring just any rabbit home, and expect your rabbit to be thrilled. They may want to kill each other! For more detailed information about rabbit care, see

www.coloradohrs.org and www.rabbit.org

They Called Them Nickel Immigrants

By Valerie Wedel

The following conversation took place recently between two old friends, one living in Coal Creek Canyon and the other in northern Michigan (via the wonders of modern technology). Karen, currently living in Michigan, has neighborhood friends who are originally from Yemen. The patriarch of this family is a PhD student at the University of Michigan, as well as a husband, and father of two children. He was about to travel to spend a semester in London, furthering his doctoral research. When President Trump's travel ban was issued, this family panicked. They were afraid that if their husband/father left the country he would not be allowed back in. Because of the travel ban he canceled his research project overseas. This incident caused us to reminisce about our own grandparents, who immigrated to the United States. This is Karen's story.

Valerie: What is it like being the granddaughter of immigrants? Did you grow up near the border?

Karen: I have Canadian relatives and I remember what it was like to have a genuinely open border. Most of the time we crossed (from Michigan into Ontario) at the Ambassador Bridge. I was taught that you say your name and where you are from, and the guards let you through. We used to go across the border (into Canada) on school field trips, to practice our fledgling French, or sketch in Windsor… Ontario is a very big province. I had an uncle who used to love to go as far north as he could and do the Jack London thing. The whole family used to visit with my grandparents a couple times each summer. After 9/11 that went away. Bird watching at Point Pelee, the most southern part of Canada… my family was there in June, staying at a bed and breakfast inn. At the end of the week we came home and on the American side there were soldiers dressed like commandos, in fatigues with guns, patrolling the border. It was terrifying.

Valerie: What brought your grandparents south of the border?

Karen: My grandparents came to the United States in the very early 1900's, before WW I. My grandfather came to work in the steel industry in Detroit. He came because there was work – so much work! He worked for Henry Ford. He had a British passport because Canada was still considered a colony back then. Grandfather became a foreman in an iron foundry and worked there for 40 years.

Grandfather got established in the States and then went back to Canada and married my grandmother. She was secretary to a minister of Parliament, and very well educated. She was a beautiful redhead, and chose Grandfather over her other beaus! My grandparents bought a house and raised four kids in Michigan. My dad and his brothers and sister were born here and are United States citizens. My dad became a judge, Uncle Joe worked for Walter Thompson (an ad agency) on Ford accounts, and Pop's other brother became an engineer at Ford. Aunt Rose took more of a girl's path, because that was what you did back then. My grandparents lived and died here, with property and bank accounts. Yet they were never United States citizens. Canadians who came south to work back then were called "Nickel Immigrants." *(The back-story is: For most of our history, the U.S. had no restrictions on immigration at all. It was often said that a Canadian-born grandfather was a 'nickel immigrant': He took the five-cent ferry from Windsor, Ontario, north to Detroit roundabout 1896. This situation resulted from America's strong demand for labor, coupled with its weakness at managing its borders. The government could screen and register immigrants arriving at large ports but couldn't patrol thousands of miles of border.)* It would never have occurred to anyone to challenge his or her right to be in this country. The Canadian-United States border was the longest open border in the world. Now it's gone. And I miss it.

Valerie: Do you think we should have an open border with Mexico?

Karen: We talk as if there aren't any safeguards down there, which is ridiculous. There are already barriers and guards. Building a wall (the proposed wall between Mexico and the United States) that wanders over rivers and mountains is not thought through. I can understand we need safeguards. At the same time I think we as a country have to realize how dependent we have become on something we've made illegal… For example agricultural labor. Also some of the best and brightest minds and talents have been drawn here from all over the world because of our university system. We should be honest with ourselves, and try to make immigration work legally without destroying families.

Author's note: Karen is married and a mother, presently living in Michigan not far from the Canadian border. Valerie has lived in Coal Creek Canyon since 2001, and still occasionally pinches herself to make sure she is awake and really living in one of the most beautiful areas of our country.

Local Writer & Local Artist Create A Treasure

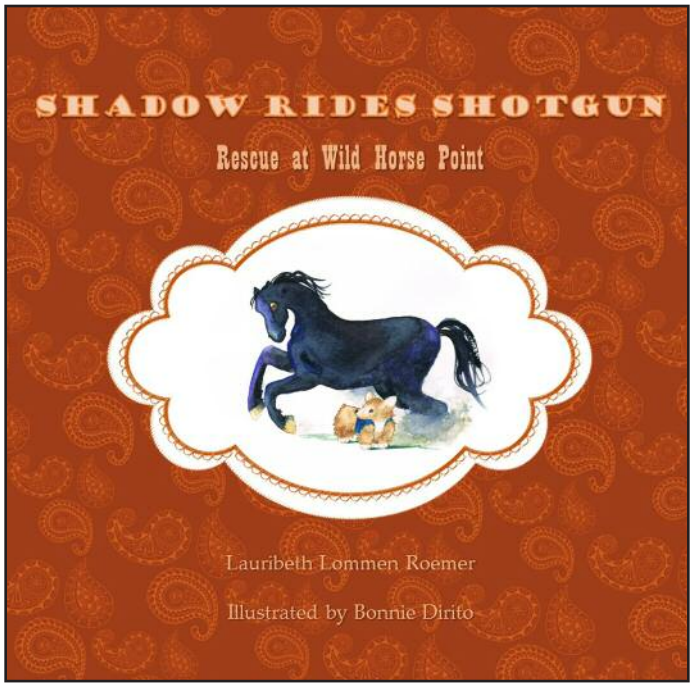
For folks that have animals and children, this book ***Shadow Rides Shotgun*** is a perfect fit. For parents that can't or don't have large animals this book provides that base for a child to get to know that even large animals can be compassionate and while they should be respected for their size, they also can have feelings that children can relate to. The age level starts at three, but many younger children could easily get caught up in this story with beautiful illustrations done by Bonnie Dirito.

It not only shows how animals can have compassion for each other, but that they can understand and want to help in circumstances adults might not even fathom. Our world today often makes us so cynical we have difficulty with the idea of helping each other, much less using problem solving and identifying urgent needs of those less fortunate.

This little book, with big ideas and even larger pictures shows how stepping up to help and using kindness can overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the face of danger or fear. It highlights that small creatures can come to the aid of larger animals in dire circumstances which could empower children to be brave in the face of even everyday problems.

I would think this might be a book any child could benefit from, young or older – it teaches bravery and assertiveness in ways that are usually hidden or thoughtlessly kept unspoken. It has lessons that even adults can learn from, in the guise of using our talents for good in the face of larger problems.

For children that already have canines or access to equines it will resonate because their acceptance of these animals is a given, but for kids without any experience or exposure it will open new doors to understanding what



animals can share and open their world to a whole new window of understanding what animals can give us all. Available now at Amazon.com Author, Lauribeth Lommen Roemer and the illustrator are local women and have both done an incredible job creating this little book with a powerful message through words and art - well done!

By A.M. Wilks

What Will A Zinke Led Interior Dept. Look Like?

By Tay Wiles - High Country News - www.hcn.org

Amid the flurry of Trump administration appointments in recent months, Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke was one of the less controversial. The former Montana congressman says climate change is not a "hoax" and federal lands should not be transferred to states en masse. His January Senate confirmation hearing went fairly smoothly, with none of the major gaffes or arguments that have plagued other appointees' hearings. So far, his stated priorities for Interior have been vague but unsurprising: rebuilding trust between the public and the department, increasing public lands access for sportsmen, and improving outdated infrastructure at national parks. But considering the controversial issues embedded in those priorities he'll soon have to wrangle, the ride won't stay smooth for long.

Perhaps the biggest questions around Zinke's Interior are how he will balance a mining and drilling-friendly agenda with habitat conservation and access to public lands, as well as how he will achieve his priorities if President Donald Trump follows through with major budget cuts.

On March 2, his first day in office, Zinke signed two secretarial orders that swiftly reaffirmed his allegiance to the sportsmen community. One order aims to create more access to public lands for hunters and anglers. Sportsmen's groups like the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership have lauded the gesture at a time when an increasing amount of public land blocked off by private landowners who control access points. "Sportsmen access is a huge issue," says TRCP President Whit Fosburgh, who adds that one of the biggest reasons hunters quit the activity is loss of access.

One way Zinke could increase public land access is to push for more money for the Land and Water Conservation Fund — a repository created by Congress in 1964 to use royalties from offshore oil and gas to protect land and water. "It's the number one access tool we have in this country," says Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Director Land Tawney. "Ninety percent of its funds are used on access." Though Zinke supported permanently reauthorizing the LWCF as a congressman, Congress has kept it chronically underfunded for years.

Zinke's secretarial order also calls for more emphasis on wildlife conservation, though details were slim. While the hook-and-bullet crowd is pleased with the attention to preserving habitat, another one of Zinke's priorities may counteract it: energy development. Zinke has supported oil and gas drilling and mineral extraction on public lands. In his confirmation hearing, he said, "President-elect Trump has declared energy dominance to be a strategic economic and foreign policy goal of the United States and that he intends to unleash America's $50 trillion in untapped shale, oil, and natural gas reserves." Zinke has already opened 73 million offshore acres in the Gulf of Mexico for leasing. In the rural West, accelerated energy development could do irreparable harm to wildlife migration corridors and habitat. "That's what makes us nervous," Tawney says.

Whether Zinke is able to encourage wildlife conservation will also depend on Interior's new budget. The Trump administration reportedly wants to cut 10 percent of Interior's budget for fiscal year 2018. That would mean potentially fewer funds for habitat projects such as restoring streams or clearing invasive species. And at a time when an enormous amount of resources must be dedicated to fighting wildfires, such a budget cut would be devastating. "It's crazy to think you can keep cutting budgets and be good stewards of the land and be the next Theodore Roosevelt," Fosburgh says.

Another priority in Zinke's Interior will be to address the $12.5 billion backlog of needed infrastructure repairs at national parks. The secretary has said he hopes to seek funding through Trump's anticipated federal jobs and infrastructure bill.

One of Zinke's top priorities may be

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke arrived for his first day of work at the Interior Department in Washington, D.C. riding Tonto, an 17-year-old Irish sport horse. Photo courtesy the Interior Department.

one of the most slippery: restoring trust in the Department of Interior among an angry set of Westerners who have deep-seated distrust in federal government. To a large crowd of Interior staffers in DC earlier this month, Zinke portrayed the distrust of his department as a result of managers and rangers lacking the proper tools or authority to make decisions in the field — a problem he vowed to help fix. During his confirmation hearing, Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, asked Zinke how he will protect agency employees "in an era where hostility toward federal lands and federal officials is rampant, particularly in rural areas." Zinke responded: "As someone who has led soldiers in combat, I am committed to the safety of the Department's employees. I am also committed to restoring trust by freeing up our employees to make decisions and to collaborate with local law enforcement if things get difficult."

Other issues the new Interior secretary has commented on in recent weeks include Native American rights. Zinke told the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs last week that "one thing is very clear: sovereignty should mean something." The National Congress of American Indians has commended his attention to Native American issues thus far. The secretary also signed an order reversing an Obama administration ban on lead bullets meant to protect California condors, eagles and other scavengers that can be poisoned by such ammunition.

There's still a lot we don't know about what a Zinke-led Interior will look like. He has been quiet on how he will combat climate change as the head manager of a fifth of the nation's landmass, in contrast to his two predecessors, who created climate research centers and pushed renewable energy. Zinke has also said he will conduct a "bold" restructuring of the Interior Department, though details on that are nil so far.

Tay Wiles is an associate editor of High Country News and is based in Oakland, California. She can be reached at taywiles@hcn.org.

Cowboys With Surfboards

By Don Olsen - High Country News

I live in Hotchkiss, a cowboy town on the Western Slope of Colorado, where I raise hay in the summers and marvel at the mountain-and-desert landscapes that surround our hardscrabble little valley.

Nobody makes much money ranching anymore. We just tell ourselves we do it "for the lifestyle."

But every winter, while my mostly graying cattlemen buddies hunker down over coffee at the Short Stop to tell tall tales and talk politics, my wife and I head off to another hardscrabble little town — Hanalei, on the North Shore of Kauai. How can the North Shore where Julia Roberts recently sold her beach cottage for $16 million and where Mark Zuckerberg owns a $100 million coastal ranch be hardscrabble?

Hanalei is a tiny town, with a population of about 500 and a world-class beach. Instead of the glistening snow-capped Rockies, it is surrounded by the mountains of the Na Pali Coast, with puffs of dragon mist floating through their summits. The scenery is spectacular, but 25 percent of Hanalei's residents live below the poverty level. They get by working part-time at restaurants or landscape companies, maybe selling a little Maui Wowie on the side. Not all that different from rural Colorado: You make ends meet any way you can.

We stay with a working-class Hawaiian family on the west side of town. It's probably the last ungentrified neighborhood on the North Shore, full of laughing and crying children, barking dogs and the clattering sound of dishes being washed after supper. Before doing their homework, kids dart and swoop through the nearby 10-foot turquoise waves as if they were born on surfboards. Brydan, our host, is a small commercial fisherman, and his wife, Jana, works at the nearby school. Brydan comes home with big ice chests full of fish for the Kauai markets. Jana's extended family lives in the neighborhood, a rustic collection of funky old houses with badly corroded tin roofs. When not in school, their kids, Brock and Jordyn, roam the beach or buzz around on their little moped.

They're not much different than the ranch kids back in my valley — just replace the surfboards with .22 rifles and the mopeds with four-wheelers.

Hanalei, like Hotchkiss, is facing lots of problems, both cultural and environmental. This Hawaiian village reminds me of Aspen in the '50s or Telluride in the '70s — rustic mining towns where the locals scraped by before ski resorts and industrial tourism transformed them into the enclaves of the millionaires and billionaires.

What has saved this Hawaiian town so far, I think, is the creaky one-lane wooden bridge that is the only way into the Hanalei Valley. Surrounded by classic Polynesian taro fields where rice was once grown, the bridge prevents big trucks and heavy equipment from invading Hanalei to build Trump Towers and Hilton resorts..

Kauai's south shore has been taken over by vacation homes and golf courses, its western shore by a missile base and large test plots of corn raised by multinational companies experimenting with GMOs and new herbicides.

Monsanto is a dirty word to many locals concerned about their children's health. When the Kauaians attempted to regulate the herbicide industry — much as my own county tried to regulate coalbed methane — the state and the courts swept in to nullify the regulations. So far, only the North Shore and Hanalei have avoided the power of big-money corporations and Honolulu-style tourism.

Can these small-town Hawaiians save their little piece of Jurassic Park paradise from the giant corporate wastelands that James Howard Kunstler so eloquently described in ***The Geography of Nowhere?*** He foresaw the cars, strip malls and fast-food shacks — the endless sprawl of suburbia and commercial tourism — eventually overrunning the working neighborhoods and locally owned businesses of small-town America.

I'm worried about Hanalei. It reminds me a bit of Carbondale, a small mountain town near me once known for its Hereford cattle and annual Potato Festival. Now it's known as the posh Mount Sopris village where the millionaires landed after being pushed out of Aspen by the billionaires.

It's one thing to scrape by on a daily fish catch and occasional landscaping jobs, but when your beach shack is suddenly worth a couple of million dollars, it's hard to resist gentrification. I'm from the New West, and I know what happens to peaceful, friendly little towns with spectacular landscapes.

I finally find some cowboy-style old codgers complete with tall tales on this visit. They're 60-something surfers — the kings of the wild waves back in the '70s and '80s — and they congregate every day at the end of my street to watch the younger surfers and to try to convince a dubious Coloradan that they've conquered 100-foot waves on the Na Pali Coast and survived 50-foot tiger-shark attacks.

The one-lane bridge to Hanalei, Kauai, with its 15-ton capacity, helps keep big development out.
Edmunds Dana/ Getty Images

It's all bluster, I'm sure. But I love these guys, as I love all of America's small Western towns and the magic journeys on which they've embarked. I just hope they can survive the trip.

Don Olsen is a Colorado rancher who spent much of his life as a political reporter, writing about land-use policies that protect farms and ranchlands.

Buffalo Field Campaign-buffalofieldcampaign.org

A buffalo nation is coming! Almost all of the snow is gone now, save for a few shady north-facing slopes and mountain peaks. Hebgen Lake is opening up, turning back into water. Buffalo families continue to migrate through the Hebgen Basin and they dance with no snow to hold them back. Adult females are showing off enormous bellies and the first calf was just spotted by our lucky patrols early this morning! Here they come! The next generation of wild buffalo, and most of them will grow strong peacefully in their new year-round habitat!

We've seen Montana Department of Livestock agents riding around the Basin with more and more frequency as they search for buffalo to bully. So far they have been coming away mostly empty handed. The groups of buffalo we were concerned about

along the south side of the Madison River, where they are not allowed to be, have gone elsewhere. There was, however, an unfortunate incident over the weekend. Buffalo had walked onto the private land of hobby rancher Pat Povah, and one bull was promptly shot and killed. Aside from this unnecessary killing, all is now quiet on the western front.

Have you saved the date? In addition to running daily and nightly patrols, we are also busy gearing up for our **20th Anniversary Party that will take place in West Yellowstone on May 26 and 27.** Everyone is invited! It's going to be a great event with home-cooked food, music, lots of buffalo family from over these many years, a field trip to see the buffalo and their brand new babies on their native habitat, a wolf-watching tour, and presentations on wolves, grizzly bears, bison, and their interrelationships. We will also have a silent auction featuring very special items. If you have any items you would like to donate to our auction, we would be honored to receive them.

Thank you for keeping us in the field with the buffalo for the past twenty years! It is such an honor and privilege to be here with them, even during the most difficult times. Without our presence, things would be so much worse. Thank you for giving us this opportunity. We have made some incredible progress but we have a long way to go. With your help, the next two decades will bring more positive changes to these gentle friends. So call to stop the killing. **Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Dan Wenk 307-344-2002.**

Montana Governor Steve Bullock 406-444-3111

And contact your members of Congress to tell them that this must end once and for all. Congress holds the purse strings and can end the funding for this senseless slaughter.

The coming of spring is beginning to benefit the buffalo, and we are thankful. The Gardiner Basin is swiftly losing all of its snow and the earth is beginning to turn green again. Soon spring migration will begin in earnest, as family groups — hopefully by the hundreds — will make their way to their calving grounds around Horse Butte. BFC patrols will soon shift our focus to the highway, helping to warn motorists as the buffalo move through this important corridor.

Your Life

By Frosty Wooldridge

The energy of life on this planet strives to organize into relationships. As with water, you watch it thrive in many forms such as snow, rain, ice and vapor. It gathers as clouds in the sky, which eventually, falls as rain or snow. It drains into rivers that gather into the oceans. All of these forms create relationships with the processes that allow life to thrive on this globe.

If you look to the universe; stars, planets, moons and galaxies exist in a symbiotic gathering. They co-exist in a mutual dance based on physics and the "Law of Attraction." Their energy via movement flourishes in every sector of the cosmos.

Throughout all of creation, life sprang upon this planet utilizing the "attraction" process. At some point, humanity manifested, which in turn, became "you" as an entity in the process. What will you do with your precious "moment" on this planet? Will you prosper by using your gifts or will you meander into mediocrity? Will you submit to circumstance or strive toward self-fulfillment?

The courage to be you in 21st century America may be one of the bravest acts of your life. Our "cookie-cutter" society educates people into "slots" that maintain the engine of commerce. General options include teaching, medicine, construction, salesperson, truck driver, cashier, janitor, waitress and factory worker.

How do you step outside that process if called toward a different path? First, you must engage the quality of your mind and spirit to stand up in the face of fear. Sure, it's difficult to be different, to take an alternative path, to become a singer, artist or dancer.

The one thing you may expect on your life's trajectory: challenge! If something doesn't challenge you, it won't change you. That one factor becomes the conduit for your creativity and opportunity. Challenges force you toward a chance to move into your highest and best—one step at a time.

If you remember some of the greats of history, their lives began by trudging toward their goal: Ray Kroc started out with one hamburger restaurant that led to an "idea" to create a chain of McDonald's fast food joints. Billy Banks, inventor of Tae Bo fitness tapes, couldn't read very well because of his dyslexia, failed in school and couldn't qualify for many jobs. Instead of giving up, he used his gifts to combine martial arts and kickboxing. Oprah Winfrey began in poverty and abuse, but marshaled her talents for interviewing into a billion dollar company. Ms. J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series, transformed from a food stamp recipient to a $15 billion industry stemming from an idea about a character she wrote on a napkin while eating *(Continued next page.)*

breakfast.

What did those people possess in common?

They learned to strive toward their dreams with endless passion.

They maintained relentless enthusiasm for their ideas.

They stood in the "space" of courage of their convictions.

They stood in the "Eternality of relationship with life" to activate their courage.

In other words, they surrendered to possibilities inherent within them. They used their challenges as outlets to a greater good simmering within their minds. As with the "Law of Attraction," they incorporated others into their network. When you gather two or more, you harness creative power.

Finally, each person, no different than you, no smarter than you, no more privileged than you—maintained effort over time. They dreamed their dreams, then, day-by- day, they took action toward their destinies. By applying these concepts, you too, march toward your dreams—one step at a time.

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POWER UPDATE

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www.unitedpower.com

2017 Annual Meeting ReCap, Director Election Results

Members celebrated the ways United Power is *Building Tomorrow's Coopertive* at the 78th Annual Meeting held on April 18th at the Adams County Fairgrounds. Incumbents Rose, Buczek and Vigesaa retained their directors seats, and Tamra Waltemath won the seat left open by the retirement of Mountain District director Doug Pryce. Director Pryce served in numerous local and national positions while on the cooperative's board for the last 27 years.

Nearly 900 attendees represented 420 registered members at the annual meeting that included dinner, exhibit booths, entertainment, cooperative reports, the election of directors, member forum and a special member question and answer session.

Members visited informational exhibit booths, enjoyed a full barbecue dinner and live entertainment by solo guitarist Dave Connelly in the Waymire Dome.

Complete annual meeting details and full election results can be found online at www.unitedpower.com.

United Power Plans to Purchase Facility in Western Territory

United Power is in the process of closing a deal to purchase a 130,000 square foot facility located on the west side of the cooperative's plains district territory. The new facility is located on the east side of I-25, just south of Highway 119.

"The purchase of this building is a great step toward meeting some of United Power's strategic goals," stated United Power CEO, Darryl Schriver. "As the territory becomes more populated, our ability to respond quickly and efficiently to our members is vital. This west office will allow us to dispatch trucks and personnel to the west and north sides of our territory quickly without the substantial drive time from the headquarters in Brighton."

The new facility will provide a second location for operations crews to respond more quickly to communities in the northwest corridor of the territory and to provide additional back up support to United Power's mountain territory. The facility will eventually offer members a full-service walk-in member services department. Learn more at www.unitedpower.com.

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