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**About the Cover:
Steller's Jay by
Steve 'Grizz' Adams.**

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The Steller's Jay

A large, dark jay of evergreen forests in the mountainous West. Steller's Jays are common in forest wildernesses but are also fixtures of campgrounds, parklands, and backyards, where they are quick to spy bird feeders as well as unattended picnic items. When patrolling the woods, Steller's Jays stick to the high canopy, but you'll hear their harsh, scolding calls if they're nearby. Graceful and almost lazy in flight, they fly with long swoops on their broad, rounded wings.

Steller's Jays are large songbirds with large heads, chunky bodies, rounded wings, and a long, full tail. The bill is long, straight, and powerful, with a slight hook. Steller's Jays have a prominent triangular crest that often stands nearly straight up from their head.

Like other jays, Steller's Jays are bold, inquisitive, intelligent, and noisy. Steller's Jays spend much of their time exploring the forest canopy, flying with patient wingbeats. They come to the forest floor to investigate visitors and look for food, moving with decisive hops of their long legs.

Look for Steller's Jays in evergreen forests of western North America, at elevations of 3,000-10,000 feet (lower along the Pacific coast).

At a distance, Steller's Jays are very dark jays, lacking the white underparts of most other species. The head is charcoal black and the body is all blue (lightest, almost sparkling, on the wings). White markings above the eye are fairly

inconspicuous.

Scientists have described 16 subspecies of the Steller's Jay in North and Central America, showing varying combinations of black and blue on the crest, head, and body. The Queen Charlotte Islands off British Columbia are home to the largest and darkest race. In mainland North

America, you can notice differences between darker Pacific forms, with blue streaks over the eye, and lighter Rocky Mountain forms with white streaks and a partial white eyering.

To attract Steller's Jays to your feeders, put out peanuts or other large seeds and nuts as well as suet. If you see jays hogging your feeders and taking large numbers of seeds, they may be carrying some away to store in a cache to help them get through the winter.

Description - female: same as male, though slightly smaller.
Description - young: Nestlings are born featherless. Three weeks after hatching, they have the same coloring as the parents.
Feeding: The Steller's Jay feeds on insects, other birds' eggs and nestlings, nuts, seeds, acorns and berries. Find out more about what this bird likes to eat and what feeder is best by using the Project Feeder Watch at allaboutbirds.org



Steller's Jays are generally considered resident, but some migration does occur in the fall and spring. A number of birds wander into higher altitudes *(Continued on next page.)*

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in the fall, and in winter, higher-elevation birds often move down-slope.

Steller's jays breed in monogamous pairs. The clutch is usually incubated entirely by the female for about 16 days. The male feeds the female during this time. Though they are known to be loud both day and night, during nesting they are quiet in order to not attract attention.

The nest is usually in a conifer, but is sometimes built in a hollow in a tree or beneath the awning of a house or other structure. Similar in construction to the blue jay's nest, it tends to be a bit larger (9.8 to 16.9 inches), using a number of natural materials or scavenged trash, often mixed with mud. Between two and six eggs are laid during breeding season. The eggs are oval in shape with a somewhat glossy surface. The background colour of the egg shell tends to be pale variations of greenish-blue with brown- or olive-coloured speckles.

Steller's and Blue jays are the only North American jays with crests. The Blue Jay is expanding its range westward. Where they meet, the two species occasionally interbreed and produce hybrids.

Steller's Jays have the dubious honor of being one of the most frequently misspelled names in all of bird watching. Up close, the bird's dazzling mix of azure and blue is certainly stellar, but that's not how you spell their name.

Steller's Jays were discovered on an Alaskan island in 1741 by Georg Steller, a naturalist on a Russian explorer's ship. When a scientist officially described the species, in 1788, they named it after him – along with other discoveries including the Steller's sea lion and Steller's Sea-Eagle.

The Steller's Jay and the Blue Jay are the only New World jays that use mud to build their nests.

The Steller's Jay shows a great deal of variation in appearance throughout its range, with some populations featuring black crests and backs, and others blue. One black-crested form in southern Mexico is surrounded by eight other blue-crested forms.

Steller's Jays are habitual nest-robbers, like many other jay species. They've occasionally been seen attacking and killing small adult birds including a Pygmy Nuthatch and a Dark-eyed Junco.

An excellent mimic with a large repertoire, the Steller's Jay can imitate birds, squirrels, cats, dogs, chickens, and some mechanical objects.

The oldest recorded Steller's Jay was a male, and at least 16 years 1 month old when he was found in Alaska in 1987. He had been banded in the same state in 1972.

Cover photo courtesy of Steve 'Grizz' Adams.

Photo previous page: Noel Reynolds/ Flickr

Sources: The Cornell Lab, All About Birds & Wikipedia

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Foods That Help Reduce Anxiety

By Brianna Elliott, RD

Anxiety is a common problem for many people. It's a disorder characterized by constant worry and nervousness, and is sometimes related to poor brain health. Medication is often required as treatment. Aside from medication, there are several strategies you can use to help reduce anxiety symptoms, from exercising to deep breathing. Additionally, there are some foods you can eat that may help lower the severity of your symptoms, mostly due to their brain-boosting properties.

Here are six science-backed foods and beverages that may provide anxiety relief.

Salmon may be beneficial for reducing anxiety.

It contains nutrients that promote brain health, including vitamin D and the omega-3 fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). EPA and DHA may help regulate the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin, which can have calming and relaxing properties. Additionally, studies show these fatty acids can reduce inflammation and prevent brain cell dysfunction that leads to the development of mental disorders like anxiety. Consuming adequate amounts of EPA and DHA may also promote your brain's ability to adapt to changes, allowing you to better handle stressors that trigger anxiety symptoms.

Vitamin D has also been studied for the positive effects it may have on improving levels of calming neurotransmitters. Even a few servings of salmon a week may be enough to promote anxiety relief. In one study, men who ate Atlantic salmon three times per week for five

months reported less anxiety than those who ate chicken, pork or beef. Moreover, they had improved anxiety-related symptoms, such as heart rate and heart rate variability.

Summary: Salmon is high in omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D, which may assist in anxiety relief by promoting brain health.

Chamomile is an herb that may help reduce anxiety.

It contains high amounts of antioxidants proven to reduce inflammation, which might decrease the risk of anxiety. Several studies have examined the association between chamomile and anxiety relief. They've found that those diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) experienced a significantly greater reduction in symptoms after consuming chamomile extract, compared to those who did not. Another study found similar results, as those who consumed chamomile extract for eight weeks saw reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety.

While these results are promising, most studies have been conducted on chamomile extract. More research is necessary to evaluate the anti-anxiety effects of chamomile tea, which is most commonly consumed. Summary: Chamomile has been shown to help with anxiety reduction due to antioxidant content and anti-inflammatory effects.

Turmeric is a spice that contains curcumin, a compound studied for its role in promoting brain health and preventing anxiety disorders. Animal and test-tube studies suggest that curcumin may boost the omega-3 fatty acid DHA in the brain by helping your body synthesize it more efficiently. In one study, 20 mg/kg of curcumin produced significant anti-anxiety *(Continued on next page.)*

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Highlander Health

effects in stressed mice compared to those given a lower dose. Curcumin also has powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that have been shown to prevent damage to brain cells.

These effects are partly due to curcumin's ability to reduce inflammatory markers, such as cytokines, which are often linked with anxiety development.

Additionally, curcumin consumption has been shown to increase blood antioxidant levels, which tend to be low in individuals with anxiety.

More human research is needed to confirm all of these effects, but if you suffer from anxiety, incorporating turmeric into your diet is certainly worth a try. Summary: Turmeric contains curcumin, a compound with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that may alleviate anxiety symptoms.

Incorporating some **dark chocolate** into your diet may also be helpful for easing anxiety. Dark chocolate contains flavonols, which are antioxidants that may benefit brain function. They do this by improving blood flow to the brain and promoting its ability to adapt to stressful situations. These effects may allow you to adjust better to the stressful situations that can lead to anxiety and other mood disorders. Some researchers also suggest that dark chocolate's role in brain health may simply be due to its taste, which can be comforting for those with mood disorders.

In one study, individuals who consumed 74% dark chocolate twice daily for two weeks had improved levels of stress hormones commonly associated with anxiety, such as catecholamines and cortisol. Eating dark chocolate has also been shown to increase levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which may help reduce the stress that leads to anxiety.

For example, in a study of highly stressed individuals, participants reported significantly lower levels of stress after consuming 40 grams of dark chocolate every day over a two-week period. However, dark chocolate is best consumed in moderation, as it is high in calories and easy to overeat. 1–1.5 ounces is a reasonable serving size. Summary: Dark chocolate may be helpful for improving

anxiety due to its stress-reducing antioxidants and ability to increase serotonin levels.

If you suffer from anxiety, **yogurt is a great food to include in your diet.** The probiotics, or healthy bacteria, found in some types of yogurt can improve several aspects of your well-being, including mental health. Studies have shown that probiotic foods like yogurt may promote mental health and brain function by inhibiting free radicals and neurotoxins, which can damage nerve tissue in the brain and lead to anxiety. In one study, anxious individuals who consumed probiotic yogurt daily were better able to cope with stress than those who consumed yogurt without probiotics. Another study found that women who consumed 4.4 ounces (125 grams) of yogurt twice daily for four weeks had better functioning of the brain regions that control emotion and sensation, which may be associated with lower anxiety levels. These findings are promising, but more human research is necessary to confirm the beneficial effects that yogurt may have on anxiety reduction. It is also important to note that not all yogurt contains probiotics. For the benefits of probiotics, choose a yogurt that has live active cultures listed as an ingredient. Summary: Yogurt contains probiotics, which may have a positive effect on brain health and anxiety levels.

Green tea contains L-theanine, an amino acid that has been studied for the positive effects it may have on brain health and anxiety reduction. In one small study, people who consumed L-theanine experienced a reduction in psychological stress responses that are commonly associated with anxiety, such as increased heart rate. Another study found that those who drank a beverage that contained L-theanine had decreased levels of cortisol, a stress hormone linked with anxiety. These effects may be due to L-theanine's potential to prevent nerves from becoming overexcited. Additionally, L-theanine may increase GABA, dopamine and serotonin, neurotransmitters that have been shown to have anti-anxiety effects. Moreover, green tea contains epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), an antioxidant suggested to promote brain health. It may play a role in reducing certain symptoms by also increasing GABA in the brain. One mouse study found that EGCG produced anti-anxiety effects similar to those of common anxiety medications.

The beneficial properties of L-theanine and EGCG may be a major reason why drinking several cups of green tea daily is associated with less psychological distress. While all of these findings are promising, it is worth mentioning that most of the research on green tea and anxiety has been conducted in animals and test tubes. More human research is needed to confirm its anti-anxiety effects. Summary: Green tea contains L-theanine and EGCG. Turkey, bananas and oats: These are good sources of the amino acid tryptophan, which is converted to serotonin in the body and may promote relaxation and anxiety relief.



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Spay/Neuter

By ASPCA

By spaying or neutering your pet, you'll help control the pet homelessness crisis, which results in millions of healthy dogs and cats being euthanized in the United States each year simply because there aren't enough homes to go around. There are also medical and behavioral benefits to spaying (female pets) and neutering (male pets) your animals.

Here are some of the medical benefits:

Your female pet will live a longer, healthier life. Spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast tumors, which are malignant or cancerous in about 50 percent of dogs and 90 percent of cats. Spaying your pet before her first heat offers the best protection from these diseases.

Neutering your male companion prevents testicular cancer and some prostate problems.

And behavioral benefits:

Your spayed female pet won't go into heat. While cycles can vary, female felines usually go into heat four to five days every three weeks during breeding season. In an effort to advertise for mates, they'll yowl and urinate more frequently—sometimes all over the house!

Your male dog will be less likely to roam away from home. An intact male will do just about anything to find a mate, including finding creative ways escape from the house. Once he's free to roam, he risks injury in traffic and fights with other male animals.

Your neutered male may be better behaved. Unneutered dogs and cats are more likely to mark their territory by spraying strong-smelling urine all over the house. Your dog might be less likely to mount other dogs, people and inanimate objects after he's neutered. Some aggression problems may be avoided by early neutering.

Spaying/neutering your pets is also highly cost-effective.

The cost of your pet's spay/neuter surgery is far less than the cost of having and caring for a litter.

Debunking Spay/Neuter Myths and Misconceptions

Spaying or neutering will not cause your pet to become overweight. Lack of exercise and overfeeding will cause your pet to pack on the extra pounds—not neutering. Your pet will remain fit and trim as long as you continue to provide exercise and monitor their food intake.

Neutering is not a quick fix for all behavior problems. Although neutering your pet often reduces undesirable behaviors caused by a higher level of testosterone, there's no guarantee that your dog's behavior will change after he's neutered. Although the surgery will reduce the amount of testosterone in your dog's system, it won't eliminate the hormone completely. Neutering will also not reduce behaviors that your pet has learned or that have become habitual. The effects of neutering are largely dependent on your dog's individual personality, physiology and history.

When to Spay or Neuter Your Pet

For dogs: While the traditional *(Continued on next page.)*

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Highlander Animal Health

age for neutering is six to nine months, puppies as young as eight weeks old can be neutered as long as they're healthy. Dogs can be neutered as adults as well, although there's a slightly higher risk of post-operative complications in older dogs, dogs that are overweight or dogs that have health problems.

For cats: It is generally considered safe for kittens as young as eight weeks old to be spayed or neutered. In animal shelters, surgery is often performed at this time so that kittens can be sterilized prior to adoption. In an effort to avoid the start of urine spraying and eliminate the chance for pregnancy, it's advisable to schedule the surgery before your own cat reaches five months of age. It's possible to spay a female cat while she's in heat. Talk to your veterinarian to determine the best time to spay or neuter your pet.



Helping Your Pet Before and After Surgery

Your veterinary clinic will provide pre-surgical advice that you should follow. In general, avoid giving your cat any food after midnight the night before surgery. A puppy or kitten, however, needs adequate nutrition, and your veterinarian may advise that food not be withheld.

Your veterinarian can also provide post-operative instructions for you to follow. Although your pet may experience some discomfort after surgery, your veterinarian can take various measures to control pain. Depending on the procedure performed, medication for pain may be sent home with your pet.

Here are tips for a safe and comfortable recovery:

Provide your pet with a quiet place to recover indoors and away from other animals.

Prevent your pet from running and jumping for up to two weeks following surgery, or as long as your veterinarian recommends.

Prevent your pet from licking the incision site, which may cause infection, by distracting your pet with treats or by using an Elizabethan collar. (Your old T-shirt or running shorts can also be used to keep an animal from licking the surgery site & doll clothes can work on cats.)

Avoid bathing your pet for at least ten days after surgery.

Check the incision site daily to confirm proper healing. If you notice any redness, swelling or discharge at the surgery site, or if the incision is open, please contact your veterinarian. Also call your veterinarian if your pet is lethargic, has a decreased appetite, is vomiting or has diarrhea or any other concerns following surgery.



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Help Pine Siskins By Safe Bird Feeding

By Stephanie Herman, Wildlife Care Center Manager
Audubon Portland

To prevent feeders from becoming point-sources of disease in the first place, it is important to clean and bleach

As many have noticed, Pine Siskins are everywhere this year, bringing larger numbers of these delightful birds to our yards and feeders. Right now, these birds do need our help. Our Wildlife Care Center is seeing increased admissions of flocking birds, primarily Pine Siskins. Although we are still waiting on definitive results from the OSU lab, most of the birds' symptoms are consistent with



salmonella. It's been going on at various levels since November, and it seems to be getting worse, as we're seeing further increases in admissions recently.

We do tend to see these types of outbreaks every winter, as birds change behavior and begin flocking and visiting feeders which concentrates the birds. Salmonella has a high mortality rate once birds become symptomatic enough to catch, so though we do our best with those admitted to care, it's far better to try to prevent and curtail its spread.

The best advice if you observe sick birds is to take down feeders to help the birds "social distance." By taking feeders down for 14 days, we help the birds disperse and limit their exposure to concentrated feeding. Remember that the very best way to support birds in our yards and neighborhoods is with native plants and leaving leaf litter alone because natural foraging behavior doesn't create the same high disease transmission risk that bird feeders do.

them at least once a week (clean with soap and water, rinse, soak or spray with 10% bleach solution, rinse after that sits for 10 minutes). We also recommend only feeding limited amounts of seed—just enough for the day. Finally we also recommend steering clear of platform feeders, at least during high-risk periods, because birds stand on them and tend to defecate where the food is, increasing the chances of spread.

Also, please be sure to wash your hands after handling the feeders, as salmonella can affect people and pets as well. It's also a great time to keep your cats indoors so it doesn't catch a sick bird.

Thank you all for caring about birds, and helping Pine Siskins and other flocking birds!

Two Pine Siskins cling to the side of a birdfeeder, photo by Emily Carter Mitchell.

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Change Is The Only Constant

A New Year is always a great time to implement change. This month's cover represents a change in direction by the beautiful Stellar's Jay wingspread. I myself don't like change and in fact become anxious when it happens or is forced upon me - like during this pandemic, but I have come to accept it is the only constant in our lives. This may or may not make it easier and I still struggle with some change that is foisted upon me. Since change is constant it can be either positive or negative and often there is little we can do about that. Since resistance is often futile and negative and we can't control other people - we can control how we accept change - how we react to it in our life.

I'm also not a person that makes resolutions in the New Year, but I often decide to change something in my life at this time just as a marker for the passing of time. It gives me a way to gauge success or failure. Since perfection is an unrealistic goal I also give myself the option to not completely succeed. Accepting my human frailties can manage stress about not achieving all my goals and also give me hope to do better in future or present endeavors.

Last year (and probably most of this one too) provided changes we hope to never have to experience again and yet with the overpopulation of our planet it is likely. Health, economic, lifestyle and loss are a lot of changes to manage



all at once without much notice. Hopefully many folks learned to save for a rainy day and have had a cushion to ride out this destructive contagion. We cannot allow ourselves to become weary and let down our guards until the threat has lessened to a much greater degree. I have friends and family that don't think of it as a threat and friends and family I have lost. It is my hope everyone stays safe and healthy and I look forward to the new normal.

Since I've always been interested in politics from the day I was of age to vote, I've never been quite satisfied with our outdated two party system. I think our country has outgrown the practice and yet no third party has risen to a viable status. Probably due to infighting amongst the parties that have some popularity but fail to have the numbers of members to give the GOP or Democrats any sort of competition. So I have never really been behind any of our Executive Branch leaders and while I have hope some of them will make good changes and lead with good intentions - they mostly are lacking in getting things done that will help the majority of the people or our economy.

With any change in power we can hope for positive and effective changes in policy and follow through, but too much polarization in our two party politics has its negative side. Already I see the head of Monsanto (big GMO maker)


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get appointed to the FDA as a real negative due to his terrible history of selling sterile seeds to farmers that count on planting their own seeds the next year instead of having to buy more seeds. This being just one of many examples of his lack of ethics and reliance on just the science. We need forward thinking leaders, not greedy corporate giants lacking in real integrity in positions of making decisions that affect our collective health.

If this new administration can help the middle class re-emerge from poverty and revitalize the American Dream as they work to control a pandemic it will be a truly amazing win for all hard working average citizens. I'd really love to see the 1% pay more than their fair share so we might see the deficit come back into better figures (eliminating subsidies to entities that don't need them i.e. Big Oil). Change would be a welcome thing for so many aspects of our country, especially if the Supreme Court could find it possible to overturn Citizens United:

In Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission (FEC), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2010 that political spending is a form of free speech that's protected under the First Amendment. The controversial 5-4 decision effectively opened the door for corporations and unions to spend unlimited amounts of money to support their chosen political candidates, provided they were technically independent of the campaigns themselves.

While I believe many good things about both Republican and Democratic ideals - it is the divisiveness of obstructionists on both sides that hold up good change or any change for that matter. I'd like to see our elected officials do the jobs we sent them to D.C. to do, instead of infighting and disagreeing just to be disagreeable. We can't wait until all the old farts die off before real change happens and can be implemented.

Living in a Republic isn't easy, it requires work on the part of voters to stay informed of the issues and dig for the truth about them. Since corporate America and even foreign interests now own much of our media - we can't trust many of them to disseminate independently factual information. So it is up to us to sort out and find the truth about important issues, political candidates, recent events and even international politics. Common sense is required and fortunately the Internet can be used for fact checking instead of just social media fake news sources and destructive radical thinking.

We are living in changing times and it takes work to keep up with the changes while you make change first within yourself by not believing uneducated or misinformed sources and corporate interests driven by profits. Due diligence in staying accurately informed about issues important to you or your community is up to each person. If you are not there yet, well a New Year is a great time to start those efforts. *By A.M. Wilks*

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Toward Unlearning Manifest Destiny

By Alex Carr Johnson Aug. 31, 2020 High Country News

I inherited the keys to the kingdom on the day I was born into my white and male American body. Every day since then, my success as a man has been determined by how well I've grown into my power. Prowess in sports and recreation, check. Titles and letters, check. Ownership of land and property, possession of another through marriage, accumulation of wealth, check. This process felt like work to me, but never impossible.

Before I was a man, I was a boy learning how to be one in St. Louis, Missouri. One of my earliest sacred places was the Gateway Arch, that glorious neo-futurist national monument to Thomas Jefferson's dream of Westward Expansion. I was drawn to its shining spectacle, its enormity and promise. I begged my parents to return as often as we could.

I loved everything about our trips to the Arch, including the Mississippi River at its base, where we boarded the moored Mississippi paddlewheels, ships that had brought goods and people here from all over the world on their way to the West. I loved the cavernous underground museum with its herds of stuffed bison and wax figures of stereotypical cowboys and Indians. I learned all about the

exciting and beautiful parts of the world that lay to the West, where always the sky was blue, the grass green, the sunsets golden. I learned, too, of the brave (white) people, each with their own romantic story of passage through this gateway into a better, Western future.

Here I was, lucky, ready to walk through that grand gateway, too. The apex of those trips to the Arch, literally and emotionally, was climbing out of the cramped elevator and running to the highest window, trying to make sense of my place in the world from high up, surveying the city below, craning my neck toward the green horizon. I was a prince, and here was my inheritance. I saw in the Arch exactly what I was supposed to see: a monument to conquest and power. The Arch created in me an unquenchable desire to fulfill my destiny — something the "American West" would provide me.

As soon as I could, I went West. I traveled, worked and explored much of this mythical country throughout my 20s. I fished for salmon, ran upon grizzlies, climbed peaks and paddled wild rivers from the high Rockies of Montana to the high desert of New Mexico, the Western Slope of Colorado, the Southern Sierra, Point Reyes, Mount Rainier, all over and then again. Launched westward through the Gateway Arch, I learned how to wear my mantle as a man of the American West.

I'M WRITING THESE WORDS from my current home in Anchorage, Alaska, approaching middle age, at the tattered edge of ongoing American colonization. Maybe with age comes humility. I hope that's the case, because I am beginning to understand just how much I am going to need. I'm embarrassed by how long it's taken me to learn other versions of the American story. As an educated, progressive white person, I intellectually understood the violence of America's creation. But for years, I couldn't articulate the unfurling personal injustices that the country had enacted. I had failed to understand or care to know who had suffered and who continued to suffer from the great American project. I carried out my role in the project so earnestly that it was impossible for me to see, let alone



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understand, my own complicity in those injustices.

“I am learning, very slowly to see the people I was taught not to see, to hear stories I was taught not to learn.” As I write, I’m looking out at a Western scene from my childhood dreams: snow-capped mountains rising above the sweep of the ocean. It looks like a damned oil painting. I was taught to call the nearest mountain Susitna, and this part of the ocean Cook Inlet. But I am learning to see this place as someone else’s home, even today. The Dena’ina have been here for over 10,000 years, with their names, languages and knowledge still alive on these lands and waters. Beneath the mountains are two of their towns, Beluga and Tyonek. The Dena’ina also call Susitna Dghelishla, Little Mountain. The river beneath Dghelishla is Susitna, Big Sandy River. The wide sweep of ocean is called Tikahtnu, Big Water River.

I am learning, very slowly, to see the people I was taught not to see, to hear stories I was taught not to hear. I first practiced this, I realize, by listening to the thumping of my own heart, a heart that taught me that as a gay man in America, I was born into a nation that seeks to ignore, erase and destroy people like me. Such an understanding comes slowly, but once it comes, it is passage through another kind of gateway. Once I understood my true place here, I could no longer trust the stories I had been told about my nation, my inheritance, or my God, all of these woven into the banner that led me West. The American West is a national myth, part of a collection of myths that actively erase innumerable people and their stories — mine included.

In our mid-20s, my now-husband and I went about canoeing the full 1,800-mile length of the Yukon River. The idea had been romantic, to follow in the footsteps of the Klondike gold rush pioneers. For two months, we paddled down a mud-and-silt-thick river that was at times a mile wide. The river was, indeed, spectacularly beautiful, and the gold rush history fascinating, but day by day, we also learned the stories of a land and its peoples — the Southern and Northern Tutchone, Han, Tanana, Koyukon, Holikachuk, Deg Hit’an and Yupik — who were still

healing from the trauma inflicted by the rapacious men who once sought their own kingdoms, or at least their fortunes, along the banks of the Yukon River. Many gold-rushers lost their lives, though a few did become quite rich. But I began to realize that neither the tragedy nor glory of that land were theirs to claim.

Just a dozen miles from the Bering Sea, a big storm rolled in that forced us to end our trip in the Yupik village of Emmonak. When we arrived at the small airfield, the local ticket agent asked us if we had made it to the sea. We told him we hadn’t; he said we’d failed in our journey. I still think about him often. He was right: We had sought to conquer the river, and we had failed. Day by day, mile by mile, the beauty of the Yukon gave way to the truth that I was an interloper, a colonizer, re-enacting the grand lie of the West, just as so many other men had before me. The names of the land were not lost; colonizers and governments destroyed them.

The American West was never an empty land of solitude and vistas, there for the taking by gold rush heroes and the Marlboro Man. It was only explained as such by settlers who benefited from that story.

The multitudes of Indigenous societies of the West were not somehow rightfully subdued; people who called themselves Americans erased them, or attempted to. To passively accept the stories of the West as I inherited them is to be complicit with the ongoing erasure of living cultures, languages, ways of knowing — even bodies themselves. As I’ve learned all too well, such erasure is a violent and impassive act.

The West was indeed my inheritance, but it was ill-gotten through war, enslavement, forced labor, genocide and conquest. Every American must learn this, must find their own gateway to collective liberation, if we are to someday exist as part of a peaceful nation: Our inheritance is not great wealth, but a terrible debt.

Alex Carr Johnson is a writer and national park advocate in Anchorage, Alaska.



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Great American Outdoors Act

By Jessica Kutz Nov. 23, 2020 High Country News

Last August, when the last President signed into passage the Great American Outdoors Act, Democrats warned that he was only doing so as a political favor for Colorado’s Cory Gardner and Montana’s Steve Daines, two vulnerable Western Republican senators who co-sponsored it in an attempt to keep their seats in the November election. (Gardner lost his bid for re-election.)

Whatever his motives, the bipartisan bill was a huge victory for conservation, permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million annually and creating a separate pot of money, up to \$9.5 billion, to be used for maintenance at national parks and other public lands over five years. Still it was a surprising shift for the that administration: Prior to announcing their support, his administration had previously recommended cutting the LWCF’s budget by 97% in the 2021 fiscal year.

But now that his term has ended, the law’s implementation is coming into focus after Interior Secretary David Bernhardt issued an order last November laying out how the Land and Water Conservation Fund will be managed. The fund has two separate objectives: One is to provide funding to states for their own recreation and conservation priorities, and the other is to enable public-lands agencies to make land acquisitions, among other things.

In a significant departure from the way the fund has been allocated in the past, states and municipalities will now be required to sign off on these federal land transfers, which could make it difficult for agencies like the National Park Service or Bureau of Land Management to acquire land from private parties. For example, if the federal government wanted to use LWCF funds to buy land from a property owner with parcels in a national forest, a state governor or county board could conceivably block the transaction, said Randi Spivak, public-lands program director for the Center for Biological Diversity.

Many environmental groups, including the Center for Biological Diversity and the Mountain Pact, a coalition focused on resilience in intermountain communities, viewed the move as being anti-public lands and unfaithful to the spirit of the law that was passed. In an Interior Dept. statement, however, Bernhardt defended the changes as a way to give states more authority over the purchase of federal land. “These actions ensure

land acquisitions will increase recreation opportunities, enhance conservation benefits and provide flexibility to our partners in states and local communities to ensure this investment is managed and allocated in the best possible manner.”

This strategy of working around existing environmental laws by simply providing new guidance over their implementation has been tried before. Back in January 2020 the last administration used the same tactic to influence the scope and breadth of a bedrock environmental law — the National Environmental Policy Act — by changing how it will be implemented in the future.

But all of this recent drama around NEPA and the Land and Water Conservation Fund could amount to nothing after all, since a Joseph R. Biden administration will have the power to reverse course, either through similar executive (or secretarial) orders, or by rewriting the regulations. Since Democrats picked up the majority in the Senate Congress also could play a role through the Congressional Review Act, which allows it to overturn rules made by federal agencies.

Still, even as they go forward to the changing of the guard, environmental groups are calling on Bernhardt in the last administration to stick to the framework laid out in the initial legislation. Tracy Stone-Manning of the National Wildlife Federation told E&E News that her organization “looks forward to working with a new secretary of the Interior to fix this order so the conservation program can reach its full potential.”

Jessica Kutz is an assistant editor for High Country News.

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Previous page top left: *Gypsy Creek Aussie.*

Top right: *Riley & Mooch.*

Bottom left: *Julie on Lincoln.*

Right: *Marmite from Laura.*

This page top Left:

Colossus & Cesar from Cindy.

Top right: *Rescue dog from Pam.*

Bottom left: *Rufus.*

Middle right: *Pam's critters.*

Basic Winter Driving

From Jim Plane – State Farm Insurance

Learn how to navigate snow, heavy fog, ice and more.

Even if you don't experience winter storms often, it's still important to know how to drive in any season's conditions. How should you handle it when your drive time intersects with winter weather? You should first prepare your car for winter and then learn from these scenarios. The safest option is to avoid driving during inclement weather if you are able to do so.

Dense fog

Heavy fog makes it harder for you to see your surroundings and for others to see you. If you find yourself in heavy fog, here are some steps to keep you safe.

Use your fog lights if your vehicle has them. Fog lights help illuminate the road and make you more visible to other drivers. Some vehicles have rear fog lights, which help those behind you see your vehicle from farther away.

Keep headlights on low beam (high-beams just reflect off the fog and don't illuminate the road ahead).

Hug the right edge of the road.

If you need to pull over, move far away from traffic and turn off your lights: Other drivers might see taillights and think you're in the traffic lane, which can lead to them going off the road.

Icy conditions

When the roads are icy you need to avoid making sharp turns or corrections, and avoid slamming on the brakes, which could cause skidding. When approaching a hill, wait until the vehicle in front of you has reached the top before you start up. Drive steadily up the hill but avoid going too fast; that could cause you to swerve.

Snowy weather or on snow-covered roads

When the streets have snow on them, you won't be able to stop or maneuver as quickly. When you see snow on the roads here are some steps to take.

Don't pass snowplows or sanding trucks - they are likely trying to clear the road ahead.

Approach intersections slowly, and brake gently to avoid skidding. If you slide, turn your steering wheel in the direction your vehicle is sliding.

Avoid using cruise control.

Drive slower than usual, and double the usual distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you to five vehicle lengths and decrease your speed by five to ten miles per hour.

Avoid the impulse to firmly push the brake pedal. Instead, ease off the accelerator, slowly tap the brakes to slow momentum and eventually come to a complete stop.

Black ice

When snow melts during a warm winter day but freezes again overnight, something termed black ice can form. It's not actually black - just a very thin, shiny-looking sheet of ice that's often difficult to detect. When you think there may be black ice, you should, if possible, delay driving until temperatures warm. Otherwise, drive at slower-than-posted speeds and increase your following distance.

Gusty winds

As cold fronts move in, winds often pick up speed. High winds or strong gusts can affect how your vehicle handles, even if you're driving at normal speeds. Especially after a snowfall, blustery conditions can result in fallen branches, poor visibility, and downed power lines. In gusty conditions, you should slow down so it's easier to brake and handle your car. In addition, choose parking spots away from potential hazards.

Nearby drivers losing control

If you observe nearby drivers losing control of their vehicles, there is a good chance you could, too. Two actions will help. First, slow down and put as much distance as possible between your vehicle and other vehicles, in case you spin out or someone else loses control. If your vehicle begins to skid, do not overcorrect. Instead, keep your foot



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Highlander Tips

drivers' tracks. If possible, pull over safely or exit, turn your hazards on and wait to resume your drive until the wind and snow decrease. Make sure you have a well-stocked emergency kit that's easily accessible.

Stay smart

In any bad weather situation, if you feel that you can't safely drive any further, pull off the road out of traffic. Contact the local authorities for

off the brake and steer into the direction of the skid until you regain control of the vehicle. More important, if you can, pull off to a rest stop or other parking area until you can make a better judgment about the condition of the roads.

Icy windshields

Before you hit the road this winter, be sure your defrost system is fully functional. If you find that it is having a hard time keeping up in icy conditions, find a safe spot out of traffic to pull over. While your vehicle is parked but running, manually scrape the ice from your windshield; repeat as necessary. Once you've arrived at your destination, consult your mechanic to ensure that the defrost system is fully functional and that your wiper fluid includes a de-icing ingredient.

Drifting snow

When you encounter drifting snow, getting off the road until conditions improve should be your first goal. Until you can do that, turn your headlights on low, which will increase your visibility to others, and try to follow in other

help getting the weather forecast, deciding on alternate routes or getting to a safe place until weather conditions improve. If the forecast shows no signs of improving, try to find a spot to stay put for an hour or two. In addition, when choosing alternate routes, try to avoid bridges and highway overpasses, which tend to accumulate ice more quickly.

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Imbolc & Feile Brighde

Article & Artwork by Valerie Wedel

Celebrating Poetry, Song, New Life and New Beginnings - On February 1st and 2nd, we have a lovely holiday to celebrate. Perhaps not known as well in the United States, this is an ancient holiday from our Celtic ancestors. Welcome, Imbolc!

Imbolc marks Feile Brighde. This is a festival of poetry, song, story telling. Fires are lit to celebrate the days growing longer, and to celebrate the first stirrings of new life after winter. For those who are *Highlander* fans, this may be the original “quickenning” – Feile Brighde, the quickening of the year (1).

Still at this time in North America, we are locked in the coldest and sometimes snowiest days of winter. Midwinter festivities have passed. It can seem like a very long, dark, cold time until summer returns. Enter Imbolc!

Imbolc in it’s older meaning, literally means “ewe’s milk.” At this time of year in the old Celtic lands, the ewes who were pregnant just beginning to give milk. Later on, Imbolc evolved to be translated as “in the belly,” also referring to pregnant ewes (2). In the broader sense, we get to

celebrate all the first stirrings of new life.

Imbolc is both the ancient Goddess Bridget, and St. Bridget’s, festival. In pre-Christian times in Europe, the Goddess Bridget was worshiped as goddess of fire, healing, music, poetry, song, and the sun, among other things. It is said that where she walked, flowers grew. Imbolc celebrates and welcomes Bridgett back to the land, in hopes of abundant new growth and a healthy harvest season to come. And, St Bridget is celebrated on this day also.

Symbols associated with Imbolc include animals, fire, water, and crosses. Of the animals, the swan is an ancient companion to this holiday. At this time of year, swans actually pass over Ireland, migrating north to the arctic. Our ancient ancestors were sky watchers!

From ancient times, swans were believed to carry one’s spirit on sacred flights to meet the divine. Such legends are not limited to Imbolc, but appear all over Europe, linked to sun goddesses. Our ancient European ancestors believed the sun was feminine and moon masculine (3). And that is another story for another day! Where these ancient stories still persist, swans are closely associated with the sun goddesses.

Some say the Goddess Bridget was so beloved of Celtic peoples that when they became Christian, the church discovered St Bridget, and Imbolc continued more or less uninterrupted. Now known variously as Candlemas and St. Bridget’s Day, Imbolc goes back thousands of years. Some believe this festival goes all the way back to the last ice age! There may also be a link to Groundhog Day, since Imbolc could also be a time for weather divination.

Now-a-days, we have super computers that can tell us where constellations were thousands of years ago. A fascinating link between swans, Bridget and Imbolc - many thousand years ago, the pole star was actually Cygnus the swan. The (currently) oldest known building structures relate to the then-pole star Cygnus. This and other correspondences have led some scholars to believe that

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Imbolc and swan associations go all the way back to the last ice age, c. 15000 years ago, in Europe (4).

Here are some ways to celebrate Imbolc this year: You can make a cross out of grasses that have survived the winter. Weave your cross using only grass stems. A quick google search will give you a traditional way of weaving your cross. You can then hang this in your home, as a blessing and protection for your family and home.

Candles: You might choose to prepare a candle light dinner of special foods.

Song and Poetry: We are still in the time of long nights, and so songs, music, poetry and story telling by the fire are great ways to celebrate Imbolc.

This is a celebration also that involves purifying one's spirit. Water and wells are closely associated. Consider blessing and giving thanks for the wells our water comes from.

Or perhaps you are ready to begin spring cleaning. Is there



Highlander Celebration

something in your life to let go of, to make room for the new?

Whether you celebrate St. Bridget, or the Goddess Bridget, Happy Imbolc!

May our coming year be one of abundance and health.

Welcome to new life and welcome Feile Brighde!

References and additional reading:

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Finding Your Horse People

By Diane Bergstrom

“They’re getting them out,” I realized as I watched four trailers filled with horses roll by the Lyons Farm Fresh Produce stand at the corner of 4th and Broadway in Lyons. In a rush of relief, my throat tightened a bit and my heart expanded. The proprietor chatted with me as I dropped off doughnuts for the wildland firefighters. He described the evacuating traffic flow he’d watched for days that included many trailers carrying large animals away from the approaching fires. As the trailers rolled out, rescue stories rolled in. Stories we can learn from, and embrace the human qualities that rose when immediate support was desperately needed.

We see the best in people when they respond to the needs of others in a crisis. During Colorado’s unprecedented wildfires of 2020, people offered rooms in their homes to strangers, RVs for shelter, trailers for transport, kennels and yards for pets, and pastures for large animals. Donations of money, household goods, clothing, and food flowed into receiving tributaries, for displaced evacuees and thousands of firefighters trying to save the environments of people and wildlife. Neighboring communities came to the aid of their known and unknown neighbors.

Some of the aid that received the most media coverage embraced beloved symbols of the west—horses and cattle. The evacuation aid needed was also more challenging, complex, and dependent on like-minded, like-valued, and like-skilled community. Needs were broadcast by word of

mouth, social media, clubs, organizations, and simple old-fashioned phone calls. Facebook enabled needs to be expressed and suppliers to be identified. Pleas went out for volunteers, roundups, transport and landing spots. A woman in Ft. Collins connected with wide front range groups to state she was standing by with her trailer and truck ready to transport any animals at any time. Dozens of volunteers reported to the C Lazy U Ranch in Granby as the East Troublesome fire raged. Over 200 horses were rounded up from pastures under heavy smoke and intense wind, then trailered and transported to a ranch in Evergreen. Boulder County and Larimer County put out the call for hay and feed as animals were arriving for emergency shelter; over 500 animals filled Boulder Fairgrounds within days and temporary pens were hastily assembled. Volunteers and owners followed animals to do physical and emotional care. Many horses screamed while donkeys brayed continuously. Alan Gionet, CBS4, reported it was chaotic but there was a sense of competency. Shari Baker, Equusential Education founder, after moving her horses away from the CalWood Fire, told him, “All the horses are screaming and stressed and upset and it was so well handled and everybody was incredibly wonderful and helpful.”

Another example of the power of (horse) community in action happened for the Colorado Horse Rescue when the CalWood Fire jumped Hwy 36 and was within a few miles of their Longmont property. Boulder County Animal Control told them to evacuate immediately. With only two

trailers, they could transport nine horses at a time. They put out a call to the community and volunteers. Grace Degnam, CHR Marketing Assistant, told Kelsey Hammon of the Longmont Times-Call, they had tears in their eyes as dozens of people lined up with trailers, trucks and halters within an hour. All 60 horses, whose training includes trailering, were loaded and moved to fairgrounds, private barns and pastures. The community helped return the horses as soon as the area was cleared because fairground space was needed for the new animal evacuees arriving from the Lefthand Canyon Fire area. A Facebook post from the Center stated that all the horses were secure back in their familiar pastures but, “They’d be even happier if they were in a home of their own.” www.chr.org

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While discussing the common values of ranchers with respected elder Vera Evenson, I asked for her insights. She's an expert mycologist with deep ranching roots. Her extended family has been ranching in western Montana for four generations. She left years ago to make her family home in the front range mountains. She said the mutual helpfulness originated with the pioneers who had a practical understanding between neighbors, "If I don't help you, you might die." She also added that political differences and beliefs didn't matter, nor if someone was a curmudgeon. They were still helped. She emphasized that trust was an important issue too, especially when it came to trusting others to kindly care for your animals if needed.

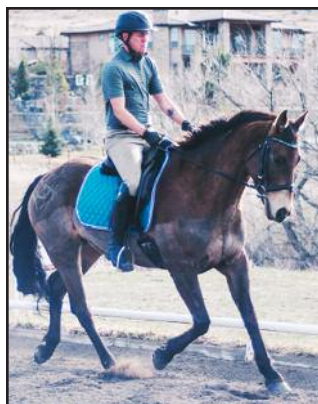
I also asked Mindy Bower for her insights. Years ago, her Dad told me why he encouraged his daughters to learn to ride, "If a girl can handle a horse, she can handle anything." And Mindy has. She and her partner, Kevin Hall, run Uh Oh Ranch (www.uhohranch.com) on the high prairies of Elbert County and offer grass fed beef and lamb, farrier services, horse and rider training, horse boarding, hosting stock dog trials, and sponsoring Buck Brannaman clinics. She wrote, "I know that most people with livestock know that their neighbors are always willing to jump in and help whether it is branding, gathering, shipping or tagging lambs, etc. For instance, our friend Tom Harrington manages a ranch for the Anschutz (family). It is up by Carbondale. They have a lot of cattle and they were in the path of the fire this summer. They had to move a lot of cattle fast and it was all consuming. Immediately, they had help from neighbors and friends who rode long days to move the cattle to safety. I think it is just a given that you can count on your neighbors when it comes to helping each other."

This past year the pandemic weakened our sense of community in many isolating ways. Individual and community responses to the fires strengthened our sense of commitment to each other, our animals and the land. With more drought challenges ahead, and living through unprecedented times, we all could spend some time identifying our "horse" people, with or without horses. Who would drop everything to help you if needed? Who would you drop everything to help? What are your passions and the groups that share them? How can you support each other? What do you value? To identify current values, look at where you spend your time, attention, and resources. Do they match what you believe are your chosen values? Where you put your energy and love creates

authentic space for connection. Do you have a network of people with shared values who will show up to protect what you all value?

My cousin Laura, a retired social worker, taught me the basics of helping others by asking three simple questions. How are you? What do you need? How can I help? Figure out how you would answer those questions if asked. Who is in your neighborhood or community and how can you connect with them? How are needs relayed and fulfilled? Throw your net wide when asking for help or determining where you could be of help. Immediate needs urge creativity. We can come up with more solutions collectively than alone. Think outside the box, or pasture. Often help and assistance come from unknown or unexpected sources. Our job is to ask, ask, ask when we need help. And give when and how we can. My friend Cheryl wisely says, "The answer is always no unless you ask." So put your needs out there and stay tuned to the needs of people, animals, and nature around you. Giving and receiving help is an ocean tide that goes in and out and keeps us from being stuck. We all thrive when supported, and in these challenging times, community, caring, and connection are continuing to build and thrive. Remember, 85% of life is showing up. (WA)

I dedicate this article to my Aunt Lorraine, my "Biggest Fan" (writing) and I thank you for your curiosity, consistent support and continual interest in my articles!



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Update: BuffaloFieldCampaign.org

Montana Legislature in Session

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We apologize for our recent confusing message about our Legislator Educator Initiative. We don't know yet if a bill will be introduced in the Montana legislature to REPEAL MCA 81-2-120. We do know bills affecting wild buffalo will be heard – for good or bad – until the session ends in April 2021! We are currently tracking 4 draft bills. On our Legislator Educator Initiative page you can identify your legislators, find out how to contact Montana's new Governor Greg Gianforte, get info about MCA 81-2-120, and track bills that may be introduced affecting wild buffalo. It will take more than one session to persuade Montana's elected officials MCA 81-2-120 has gotta go. We will be calling upon Montanans to take action soon!



What single most important action will save the wild buffalo? Repealing Montana Code Annotated § 81-2-120 (MCA 81-2-120). Because without MCA 81-2-120 on the books:

The spigot of taxpayer dollars would stop flowing to Dept. of Livestock operations removing wild buffalo in Montana.

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Many thanks to all of you who have been granting our wish! During the cold field season, there is nothing more comforting than kicking the day off with a cup of hot coffee or cocoa and ending it with a sweet treat. Help keep our volunteers energized and happy by donating coffee, hot chocolate, and chocolate today!

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CO Classic Cancels This Year To Return In 2022

The Colorado Classic® presented by VF Corporation, America’s premier women’s only racing event, recently announced its plans to return to racing in 2022 and not hold an event in 2021. Following an overwhelming success in its debut as a women’s standalone event in 2019, racing worldwide came to a halt at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite their fierce commitment to creating an innovative and safe live racing model, organizers behind the event had to cancel the 2020 edition due to ongoing health concerns. Now, with the 2021 race season looming, the pandemic situation remains uncertain at best. As such, organizers decided to not push forward with a 2021 event.

“In 2020, we spent months working tirelessly in conjunction with State, County and City organizations, health authorities, and the sports governing bodies to come up with a COVID mitigation plan that would ensure the health and safety for everyone. In the end, the most prudent decision was still to cancel the event. With the current situation being just as uncertain as it was last year, we don’t think it makes sense — financial or otherwise — to organize a 2021 event and risk another cancellation,” said Ken Gart, Chairman of RPM Events Group, the organizers of the Colorado Classic. “This is not an easy decision to

make. We know that this race holds an important place on both the domestic and international race calendars, and we remain committed to our goal of being the best women’s race in the world. RPM Events Group shook the cycling world in 2019 when they announced that the Colorado Classic® presented by VF Corporation cycling race would continue as a women’s-only event — foregoing a men’s race in favor of raising the bar for women’s cycling with unprecedented financial support, an innovative live streaming and international exposure package, and longer, more challenging routes. When the COVID pandemic brought competition to a halt in 2020, the organizers didn’t let the momentum from the previous year go flat. “Let me assure you that our commitment to women’s cycling is as strong as ever. We continue to believe that the Colorado Classic can evolve into one of the most powerful platforms in women’s sports and we will work on achieving that goal as we set our sights on 2022,” said Gart. To learn more about Colorado Classic’s initiatives and mission, please visit <https://www.coloradoclassic.com/>. Also find the Colorado Classic at @coloradoclassicpro on Instagram, @CoClassicPro on Twitter or @ColoradoClassicPro on Facebook.

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Endangered Martens Living On The Edge

By Julia Rosen Nov. 18, 2020 High Country News

Images credit: Photo by Mark Linnell/USDA Forest Serv.

This story was originally published by Hakai magazine and is republished here by permission.

Skye looks official in her orange vest. She takes in her surroundings, gathering details that would escape most observers. With bright eyes and ramrod posture, she's ready to work. But first she has to pee. She squats on her haunches, then trots off down a sandy track. Suzie Marlow jogs after her. Marlow and Skye both work for Rogue Detection Teams, a company based in Washington State that enlists dogs to track wildlife for conservation research. Today, the pair will search for Humboldt martens.

Martens belong to the weasel family and look a bit like squirrels that have been stretched out and trained for battle: cute, but ferocious. They have long bodies and short, toothy snouts, with oversized ears that protrude above piercing black eyes. Their lush brown fur brightens to gold on their chests, and their powerful limbs end in bouquets of razor-thin claws. Most Pacific martens live in the mountains, but Humboldt martens — a rare subspecies — make their home along the coast. They once ranged from Northern California to the Oregon-Washington border, filling the ancient, towering forests that fringed the Pacific shore. Now, they've all but disappeared, and recently gained formal protection under the Endangered Species Act. To everyone's surprise, however, scientists discovered

one of the few remaining populations here, on a strip of overgrown sand dunes 75 kilometers long and half a kilometer wide. This stand of moss-cloaked shore pine and punishing shrubs in the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area — where I now trail Skye, Marlow, and Marlow's colleague Jennifer Hartman at a COVID-safe distance — looks nothing like the majestic old-growth forests of yore. But the martens don't seem to mind. Indeed, this is the densest population anywhere on Earth.

It's also one of the most imperiled. The martens face threats from cars, development, and worst of all, isolation. More than 100 kilometers of fragmented forests and roads separates them from their nearest neighbors and the genetic diversity they could bring to a population living under involuntary quarantine. Researchers hope that by understanding how these animals have hung on despite such pressures, they will glean clues about what Humboldt martens in general need to survive and, perhaps, someday thrive.

After a few minutes of walking, Skye bolts into the brush. Marlow follows, forcing her way through a wall of vegetation with no obvious human-sized openings. As we bushwhack after them, Hartman jokes that this is what you might call "crapitat." I had already seen the evidence: Hartman's purple backpack, which looks as if it has been mauled by a bear. "This," she'd said, "is what Humboldt marten hiking does."

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FOR DECADES, scientists feared that Humboldt martens had gone extinct. Then, in 1996, researchers spotted telltale prints on a track plate left in the woods of Northern California. In the years following, they found more signs of the animals. Perhaps the marten's resurrection shouldn't come as a shock. The animals have scrappy, bold personalities. "Think, like, a 17- or 18-year-old teenager," says Katie Moriarty, a wildlife ecologist at the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement, a research institute established by the forest products industry. "They will do whatever they want." Humboldt martens are fiercely territorial. They constantly patrol the borders of their home range, traveling an average of six kilometers a day. "You have an animal that's the size of a kitten," Moriarty says. Yet "they are moving almost as much or more than a mountain lion on a daily basis."



than 100 adults. *A trail camera captures a marten making off with a chicken drumstick left by scientists as bait. Photo by Mark Linnell/USDA Forest Service*

To maintain such an active lifestyle, a marten must eat up to a quarter of its body weight every day, in the form of chipmunks and songbirds, berries and insects. Martens enjoy other foods, too, including bacon and strawberry jam, which Moriarty uses to bait and feed her research subjects when she captures them. "You want to basically give them a bed and breakfast in the trap," she says.

Martens themselves make tasty snacks for predators like bobcats and owls, so they stick to forests with plenty of shrubs and downed trees where they can hide. They raise their young in the protected cavities of trees and snags. But these strategies haven't shielded them from the greatest threat of all: humans. By the time the naturalist Joseph Grinnell identified Humboldt martens as a distinct

One resides just east of Redwood National and State Parks in Northern California. One straddles the California - Oregon border, and another hugs the southern Oregon coast near the Rogue River. In these three, most marten sightings have occurred in large patches of old-growth forest. But the population on the Oregon dunes, which Moriarty and her colleagues first documented in 2015, is by far the most intriguing. "That's kind of changed everyone's thinking about Humboldt martens," Moriarty says.

SKYE HITS ON HER FIRST marten scat in a grassy clearing. She waits eagerly for her reward, her large black ears quivering above her brindled brow. Hartman logs the find, noting its location and appearance. Then she picks up the scat using two reeds of dry grass as chopsticks to avoid contaminating it with her DNA. She catches a whiff of its sweet, musty aroma — a hallmark of the weasel family — then stuffs it into a Manila envelope to dehydrate later. Given the animals' tenuous *(Continued next page.)*

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Highlander Wildlife

situation, scientists try to limit handling live martens as much as possible and to exploit noninvasive techniques like studying their poop. Later, Moriarty and her coworkers will analyze the genetics of the scat to help determine how many martens live here and what they're eating. Meanwhile, Marlow pulls a yellow ball from a leg harness she wears for quick access and tosses it to Skye. For the next several minutes, they play a game of fetch that is more theoretical than literal: Marlow lunges at Skye as if to



take the toy and the delighted dog chuffs, rolls and bows over her prize. Skye is a stout, midsize mutt. And like the other Rogue dogs, she's a rescue — a misfit of sorts. She came from a shelter in New Mexico, where it became clear that she wasn't cut out for the leisurely life of a family pet. But she's well-suited to her new vocation, which has involved searching for endangered pangolins in Nepal and surveying wind farms for bird and bat casualties. "We're actually trying to change the conception of what a bad dog is," says Hartman. Far from problem cases, the Rogue dogs "are wildlife heroes."

Like Skye and her ilk, the dune martens haven't always fit in. Their existence challenged the long-held belief that



martens primarily live in old-growth forests of redwood or Douglas fir. The short, gnarled trees here are no bigger than a fir branch, and the forest itself is young and somewhat artificial. Rolling dunes used to cover the area, but in the early 1900s, government agencies and private landowners planted beach grass to stop sand from blowing onto coastal roads. The grass stabilized the ground enough for shrubs to root,

including invasive Scotch broom.

Researchers trapped a marten and gave it a lighter, smaller collar. Photo by Mark Linnell/USDA Forest Service

Trees eventually followed, and by the middle of the century, a scrubby forest had sprouted. Moriarty's discovery of martens in these woods stunned everyone. The animals had occasionally turned up flattened on Highway 101, which separates the dunes from the rugged mountains to the east, but most scientists assumed the animals died while venturing toward the ocean. In reality, it was the other way around.

Research by Moriarty and her team has revealed that the shore pine forest makes a good home for martens because

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of its dense understory and abundant food. In fact, the 70-odd martens here have the smallest home range of any in the world. “They’re as packed in as they can get,” Moriarty says. She’s come to suspect that the martens’ presence in this strange environment is actually a window into their past. Similar stands may have grown along flat, sandy stretches of the Oregon coast before towns and housing developments replaced them. And martens likely used that habitat until it vanished. The real question, then, isn’t why the martens are here. It’s why there are so few of them in the vast inland forests that once formed the stronghold of their range.



changed their operations to benefit the animals. Under an agreement with the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, the Green Diamond Resource Company has been sparing trees with large cavities and active dens. And they’re leaving logging debris on the ground to provide cover, says Keith Hamm, conservation planning manager for the company’s California timberlands. “I’m not saying that everything’s well and good,” he says. Still, “the more we look, the more [martens] we find.”

A marten—likely a female—prowls the dune forest.

BEFORE SCIENTISTS STARTED looking for Humboldt martens in Oregon, they figured they would find plenty in the sea of conifers that washes over the western edge of the state like a green tide. “We didn’t really have any reason to believe that martens weren’t there,” says Sue Livingston, a biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. That rationale factored into the agency’s decision not to protect the animals in 2015, prompting environmental groups to sue. But as researchers ramped up survey efforts in the state over the next few years, they didn’t find many martens at all. In fact, Moriarty hasn’t detected a single one in the Douglas fir forests across Highway 101 from the dunes. No one knows exactly what’s holding them back in Oregon — and in California, for that matter. It appears as though pockets of suitable habitat still exist, Livingston says, but they are separated and surrounded by previously logged forests where martens encounter threats like predation. Bobcats, in particular, may thrive in young, fragmented forests. In one study, they killed roughly half of the radio-collared martens that scientists were tracking in a heavily logged forest in Northern California. On the dunes, by contrast, researchers rarely spot bobcats. A lack of shrubs probably also hurts martens in plantation and second-growth forests, since understory plants struggle to grow beneath the closely spaced trees, says Taal Levi, a wildlife ecologist at Oregon State University. Alternatively, martens may have just taken too big of a hit to bounce back, Livingston says. Roaring rivers, busy roads, and sprawling clearcuts stand between existing populations and other possible habitat, presenting formidable barriers to natural dispersal.

The last remaining martens have it hard enough. Without newcomers, the chances of inbreeding go up among these isolated groups, bringing heightened susceptibility to disease and other stresses. Martens also face threats from rodenticides and wildfires, which have recently consumed substantial chunks of their habitat in both Oregon and California. “Sorting out the importance of these factors could have significant practical implications for marten conservation. “They are extremely imperiled,” Levi says. But right now, “it’s not at all clear what one should do.” Levi did take one obvious step: he helped pressure Oregon officials to ban trapping on the dunes and in most of western Oregon in 2019.

Some private timber companies, which own much of the land in coastal Oregon and Northern California, have

But these efforts don’t go far enough, says Tierra Curry, a scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity, a national environmental organization that has sued repeatedly to secure federal protection for Humboldt martens. But listing can also bring challenges, especially if efforts to save a species pit certain industry or advocacy groups against each other. To restore marten populations across their historical range, everyone will need to work together, Moriarty says. Walking back to the car at the end of the day, Hartman and Marlow confess that searching for Humboldt martens demands more — both physically and mentally — than the other animals they study. “If we could pick, no one wants to do this one,” Hartman says. “But I think it actually might be one of our more valuable projects.”

Julia Rosen is a freelance journalist based in Portland, Oregon. Her work has appeared in Science, Nautilus, and the Los Angeles Times, among other publications.



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Call Of The Wild

By Frosty Wooldridge

Mountaineering skiing in the Rocky Mountains, January 2020, cold, clear, clean, pristine. There's a certain kind of *Call of the Wild* by Jack London that beckons free spirits into the wilderness.

Most Americans enjoy a Smart Phone that locks them into electronic cyberspace. It reduces them to an emotionally mindless tapping on the screen. Last week, I watched seven friends at a table for lunch from skiing, six boys and one girl as they ate lunch, totally absorbed by their Smart Phones, and not talking to one another for thirty minutes while they stared into their phones or tapped out messages. The one very pretty girl among them didn't carry a phone and no one talked to her as she stared across the room.

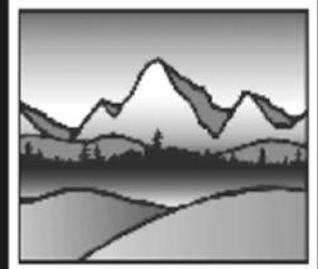
We Americans enjoy everything instantly, perfectly and without effort. We touch the thermostat for the perfect temperature. We click a link and Taylor Swift sings us one of her jilted boyfriend songs. We drive up to a window for an instant meal. Too much comfort creates an indolent mind, heart, spirit and ennui.

It's the exact opposite in the wilderness. You must carry your breakfast, lunch and dinner. You must muscle that 45 pound pack. You must punch through 20 inches of fresh powder, and then let your friends punch through it for awhile. You must share and you must talk in order to survive. You must stick together for success of the group. No one will come save you if you should meet with fate—save your friends.

At the same time, the energy of the wilderness soaks into your cells. It speeds through your bloodstream. It carries you to extraordinary feelings both mentally and spiritually. To many Americans, the wilderness is little more than a retreat from the tension of civilization. To others, it is a testing place—a vanishing frontier where men and women can rediscover their basic values. And to me, the wilderness is a holy source for self-renewal.

But for every man, woman and child, the lesson that the wilderness teaches is simply this: humanity's fate is linked inextricably to the world at large. And, to all other creatures that live upon it. I swear in 2020 and beyond, I am going to do everything to make human beings more responsible to

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This is my pledge to Nature and the Natural World in 2020 and beyond.

Frosty Wooldridge, mountaineer and world bicycle traveler who cares about the future of our species and our children. January 2020, Mt. Holy

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The Rustic Moose - pg 30 303.258.3225

COMPUTER SERVICE & REPAIR

Wondervu Consulting Serv. pg 32 303.642.0433

DRIVEWAYS/ GRADING SERVICES

Benchmark Land Care pg 21 303.485.1001
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 17 720.583.4555

ELECTRIC

United Power - Inside back Cover 303.642.7921

ENTERTAINMENT

KGNU Radio pg 30 303.449.4885
Jaime Mezo Scuba Diving Cozumel pg 21

ENVIRONMENTAL

TEG - tegcolorado.org

FARRIER

Forbes Farrier Service pg 26 303.642.7437

FIREWOOD & FOREST MANAGEMENT

High Timber Mtn Tree Serv. pg 7 303.258.7942
Lumber Jacks - pg 15 720.212.1875
Pruins Pruning/Tree Care pg 29 303.653.7967
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 17 720.583.4555

GIFTS

The Silver Horse - pg 30 303.279.6313
The Rustic Moose - pg 30 303.258.3225
Nature Photography Notecards pg 22

GROCERIES

B & F Mountain Market pg 24 303.258.3105
5280 Meat Processing pg 28 303.650.7471
Golden Poultry & Meats pg 6 720.697.0508

HEALTH & FITNESS

Hands, Hoofs & Paws pg 23 303.503.6068
Clarity Water Services pg 5 303.717.9110

HEATING

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HOME IMPROVEMENT

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 9 303.258.3132
Benchmark Land Care pg 21 303.485.1001
Caribou Painting pg 7 303.641.7964
Grate Contracting pg 16 303.579.9519
Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
Mountain Home CO pg 14 303.618.9619
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Redpoint Construction pg 11 303.642.3691
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 17 720.583.4555

HORSE BOARDING

Rudolph Ranch, Inc. pg 9 303.582.5230

HORSE TRAINING

Timberline Sporthorses pg 25 720.999.7235

INSURANCE

Jim Plane-State Farm- pg 20 720.890.5916

LIQUOR

Foss Company pg 27 303.963.5693
Mid-County Liquors pg 23 303.642.7686
Underground Liquor pg 29 303.582.6034

MUSIC LESSONS

Piano & Harp in CCC pg 10 303.642.8423

PROPANE

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Carl's Corner pg 26 303.642.7144

REAL ESTATE

Byers-Sellers Mtn Properties pg 12 303.642.7951
Mock Realty-Kathy Keating -Back cov 303.642.1133
Mountain Home CO pg 29 303.618.9619

RETAIL

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B & F Mountain Market pg 24 303.258.3105
Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
The Silver Horse - pg 30 303.279.6313
The Rustic Moose - pg 30 303.258.3225

REVERSE MORTGAGES

Universal Lending Corp. pg 15 303.791.4786

ROOFING

Independence Roofing pg 3 720.399.0355

STEEL STRUCTURES

Steel Structures America ins cov 970.420.7100

TAXES

Karen Schwimmer, CPA pg 8 303.642.0628

WATER & WELL

Arrow Drilling pg 13 303.421.8766
Clarity Water Services pg 5 303.717.9110

Power Update

February
2021

Annual Director Election

Four Board Seats Up for Election

Four positions on United Power's eleven-member board are up for election at the **2021 Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for Wednesday, April 14, 2021**. The cooperative plans to livestream the meeting, and, if conditions allow, will invite members to join us for an in-person meeting at the Riverdale Regional Park. One seat in the East, West, South and Mountain districts will be up for a three-year term.

To be eligible to become or remain a director, a person must be a United Power member and receive electric service from the cooperative at the member's primary residence in the district he or she represents. United Power's bylaws (available at www.unitedpower.com, any of our office locations or through mail) provide in-depth information on director districts, qualifications, terms, elections, meeting and officers.

Each member's district is printed on their United Power statement. Nominations by written petition must state nominee's name and district,



be signed by 15 or more United Power members and be filed with the Board no less than 60 days prior to the Annual Meeting.

The deadline for nominations by petition is 4 p.m. on Friday, February 12, 2021. Petitions are available at United Power's headquarters office in Brighton at 500 Cooperative Way. Additional information can be obtained by calling United Power's executive department at 303-659-0551 or by visiting our website at www.unitedpower.com.



2021 Annual Meeting & Director Election

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

Virtual Meeting
(Join by phone or livestream online)

*If conditions allow, an in-person meeting will also be held at **Riverdale Regional Park & Fairgrounds** (9755 Henderson Road, Brighton, CO 80601)*

The Annual Meeting & Director Election is a special opportunity for members to celebrate United Power's successes over the past year.

Event Schedule:

12:00 p.m. | Mail-in ballots must arrive at P.O. Box

6:30 p.m. | Virtual Meeting Begins

Balloting in the 2021 Director Election will be conducted via MAIL-IN VOTE ONLY.

More information available at www.unitedpower.com/annual-meeting.

Candidate Forums



United Power will host the following Meet the Candidate Forums where members can learn more about each of the candidates vying to serve on the Board of Directors. The following events are free to members. Light refreshments will be served. RSVPs are not required.

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021 | 6:30 p.m.
Riverdale Regional Park, Rendezvous Room
9755 Henderson Road
Brighton, CO 80601

FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 2021 | 7:30 a.m.
Coal Creek Canyon Community Center
3158 Highway 72
Golden, CO 80403

MONDAY, MARCH 29, 2021 | 6:30 p.m.
Carbon Valley Service Center
9586 E. I-25 Frontage Road
Longmont, CO 80504

TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 2021 | 7:30 a.m.
Fort Lupton Recreation Center
203 S. Harrison Avenue
Ft. Lupton, CO 80621

**Dates and locations may be subject to change or cancellation.*



Member Services: 303-637-1300

Coal Creek Office: 303-642-7921

www.unitedpower.com

Valentine's Day

Sat. Feb. 13, 7-11am

Drive-Thru Style

Pancake Breakfast

CCCIA Hall 31528 Hwy 72



NEW LISTING
29319 Spruce Canyon Drive
Amazing Mountain Home
3 BD/ 3 BA 2,744 sq.ft. 1.55 Acres



6 Car Garage
Coal Creek Canyon
Gorgeous Updated Log Home - 1.82 Acres
4 BD/ 4 BA 3,817 sq.ft. **\$1,100,000**



Under Contract
206 Lone Ponderosa
Remodeled Throughout 1 Acre
2 BD/ 1 BA 1,175 sq.ft. **\$429,000**



NEW LISTING
723 Boxwood, Longmont
Light and Bright
3 BD/ 2 BA 1,508 sq.ft.. **\$419,000**



SOLD!
92 Black Bear Trail
Continental Divide View!
3 BD/ 2 BA 2,088 sq.ft. **\$520,000**



Under Contract
Coal Creek Canyon
Fabulous Luxury Home, Views
4 BD/ 4 BA 4,697 sq.ft. **\$950,000**



A Must See
3497 Coal Creek Canyon #18
Adorable Summer Cabin
3 BD/ 1 BA 1,184 sq.ft. **\$249,000**



SOLD!
11470 Ranch Elsie Road
Horse Property! 3.8 Acres
2 BD/ 1 BA 1,948 sq.ft. **\$455,000**



SOLD!
198 Range Road
Solar Powered & Secluded "Treehouse"
2 BD/ 2 BA 1,652 sq.ft. 2.7 Ac **\$569,900**



SOLD!
34226 Gap Road
Amazing Mtn Home, Backs to Conservation
Land 4 BD/ 2 BA 2,750 sq.ft. 1.14 Acre



SOLD!
1257 / 1316 Chute Road
Secluded 5+ acres, Divide, City,
and Gross Dam Views **\$139,000**



SOLD!
11440 Inspiration Road
Amazing Views at Road's End
3 BD/2 BA 2,341 sq.ft. 1.5 Ac. **\$540,000**



SOLD!
Coal Creek Canyon
Luxury Mountain Living 59.4 Acres
4 BD/ 5 BA 3,661 sq.ft. **\$1,744,750**



SOLD!
Coal Creek Canyon
Custom Log Home - 4.2 Acres
3 BD/ 4 BA 3,300 sq.ft. **\$900,000**



SOLD!
85 Valley View Drive
Breathtaking Divide & Lake Views
4 BD/ 4 BA 3623 sq.ft. 1+Ac. **\$775,000**



**BUY OR SELL A HOME with
Kathy or Janet & USE
the moving truck for FREE**



Kathy Keating
CRS, ABR, GRI
EcoBroker
Broker Associate
303.642.1133

For additional information & photos:
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kathykeating@mockrealty.com
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Janet Ingvaldsen
Broker Associate
Realtor
720.600.9006

