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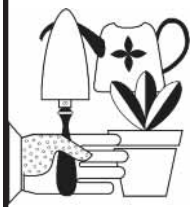

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Elk Letter To The Editor

Dear Editor,

Would you kindly share this with your elk and nature-loving fans? I want them to know what's happening in my neck of the woods, specifically Rocky Mountain National Park. Most appreciated! The aspen leaves are turning, the temperatures area cooling, and our repopulating rituals are commencing, AKA The Rut. My fellow bulls who have been my buddies all year are now my adversaries, along with anything that gets in the way of my single minded pursuit of mating which, unfortunately this season, has

included a few people who got a little too close, some cars that were in the way or had engines running, and horses who just looked like weird competition. Sorry about that, but seriously when you're amped up on testosterone, discerning judgment leaves the meadow. Again, I have one thing on my mind, mating, and everything in my way is a challenge to my quest. The future of the population rests heavily on my shoulders.

The cow elk are doing double duty now too, watching their young and choosing their mates. Yes, most think we choose them but really, they choose us. We do our best to appear big, smelly, loud, and aggressive to threats in order to attract cows. If we look like good providers and can ward off other bulls from the best feeding grounds, they give us a second look. I spend a lot of time "trying" to herd them together while keeping other bulls away, running the perimeter of the harem. Sometimes it's like nailing Jello to a wall. It's enough exercise to lose up to one third of my body weight during the rut, which can put me at great risk of starving during the winter if I don't get to regain some before the snow falls. So if you see me finally getting to graze or even lie down to chew my cud, please leave me in peace. I've been on my feet for two weeks and am badly in need of nourishment. Imagine waiting in line for two weeks at your favorite restaurant and someone comes too close to take your picture, bullying you from your table before you get your meal. I know you want that perfect picture but if I have to look up or move, you've ended my meager meal.

(Continued on next page.)

The park people are informing visitors to give us at least 75 feet, or two big bus lengths. Please, please do this. If you see me at a run, back off even further, because whatever my target is, I promise I won't see you if you're in the way. Survival of the species, as I said before. And those barking dogs in cars? Best to leave your buddies at home. We see them as threatening wolves or coyotes and all of us parents will go after anything that looks like it's going to eat our young. You know how it is. You would too.

As you're driving through the park in the afternoon or dusk, when we're at our busiest, pay attention to the meadow closure signs. They're our "Do Not Disturb" signs. The park people dressed in grey and green (employees) or brown and tan (volunteers) are helping with traffic, both your kind and mine. You have the yellow blinking crossing area signs to cross the road; we have them. They wield some awesome power to stop traffic for us and we appreciate it. Please drive slowly and don't stop right next to us if we're near the road. The cars scare the cows and calves. We don't understand human rules of the road;

it all looks like tundra to us.

Speaking of those uniformed park people, if you have any elk questions, ask them. They seem to know a great deal about us, and they have more time to answer, because, you know, we're getting busy.

Thanks for your consideration! And thanks to Diane Bergstrom for taking pictures because I don't have a camera, and for typing this, because I have hooves.

Sincerely,

A Bull Elk

End Of Season

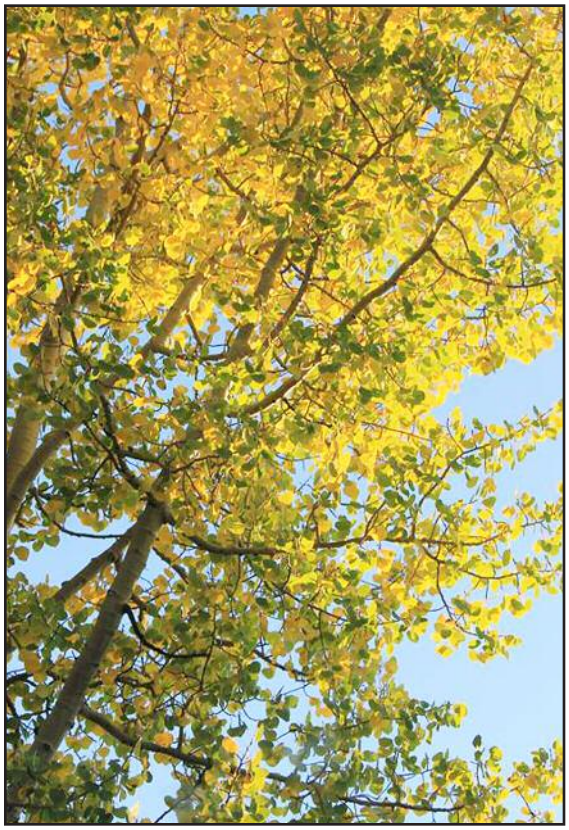
The end of the season
The last of the remaining flowers
Sang to me today
They told me stories
as their petals flew away

The end of a season
Marks the start of another
One leaves, to make room-
Like old and new lovers

But hope remains
As I watch the Autumn fire burn
And patiently hope
For its return

Trees go bare
Leaves wither
The chill in the air
More and more bitter

The mountain air
Crisper than I remember



Finding comfort with the spark
Of ever ember

The colors changed
As quickly as they bloomed
Ripping my heart away
Leaving me unglued

Alone, again
Watching the wind generate
Visions in my mind
That I alone cannot create

Seasons change
As most things often do
But life goes on
And skies remain blue

The petals sang
As they flew by
Whispering stories
And waving goodbye…
By Omayra Acevedo

Focused On The Future

By Maya L. Kapoor – High Country News

Carianne Campbell remembers the exact moment she fell in love with the Sonoran Desert. As a botany major in college, she joined a class field trip to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument on the southern border of Arizona, arriving and setting up camp in the dark. Emerging from her tent the next morning, Campbell, who grew up on the East Coast, caught her first glimpse of enormous saguaros, clustered organ pipes and bright desert wildflowers. She knew immediately that she wanted to work in this kind of landscape.

Today, Campbell is the restoration director for Sky Island Alliance, a nonprofit conservation organization based in Tucson, Arizona. She leads efforts to re-establish native plant communities in "sky islands" — isolated, ecologically rich mountain ranges that dot southeastern Arizona and New Mexico and northern Sonora, Mexico, and serve as home to some 7,000 species of plants and animals. Under Campbell's guidance, Sky Island Alliance restores riparian habitat that's been overrun by invasive species, such as fountaingrass, which crowds out local species and transforms the desert into fire-prone grassland.

The point of Campbell's job used to be relatively straightforward: She attempted to conserve local biodiversity by re-establishing the wild spaces where native plant and animal species once lived. But given the planet's rapid climate shifts, the connections between wild organisms and their ecosystems are fraying, forcing restoration biologists, including Campbell, to rethink the purpose of their work. It no longer helps to remember what a site looked like 20 years ago. "We need to be thinking about what it's going to be like 20 years into the future," she said.

In the early 1980s, ecological restoration was much like cleaning up after a rowdy house party: trying to return a degraded habitat to its former pristine condition. Project managers focused on returning the right numbers and species of plants — and by extension, animals — to places that had been logged, mined, invaded by nonnative species or otherwise altered by people. "I've always been taught that restoration is about taking a degraded site and restoring it back to what it was before the disturbance," Campbell said. But increasingly, scientists who study ecosystems, as well as land managers who do restoration work, are questioning that model of ecological restoration, which relies on the idea of a stable "climax community," even though many ecosystems are always changing.

The West's forests, for one, are much more dynamic than many people realize. Notwithstanding individual tree outliers, such as millennia-old redwoods and bristlecone pines, most North American forest ecosystems are, at most, 400 or 500 years old, according to Don Falk, a forest ecologist at the University of Arizona. Reasons vary, from a severe drought in the late 1500s, to 1800s tree harvesting by Euro-Americans. Today, forests continue to undergo constant change. "Many of the forests we look at are in post-fire recovery, we just don't see it," Falk said. Outbreaks of insects such as bark beetles, which can decimate forests, add to the constant change. "We want to think of the primeval old-growth forest as having this stable characteristic, until we come along and introduce disturbance … but the idea of forests in equilibrium is probably wrong." Indeed, events ranging from volcanic eruptions to the Pleistocene ice age have left their mark on the West's forests.

But with climate change, landscape-level transformations are happening faster and becoming more extreme. As the West becomes warmer and drier, the idea of "recovery" becomes increasingly unrealistic. Instead, ecosystems transform, such as in northern New Mexico, where Gambel oaks may replace pine forest after a fire. "This is really a vexing problem for the field of restoration ecology, because our first instinct — and it's not wrong — is always to want to put it back to the way it was before we screwed things up," Falk said.

Restoration ecologists, in other words, no longer know how to define success. "The dilemma for the field of restoration is, it's almost damned if you do, damned if you don't," Falk said. "If you try to go back to 1850, it's just going to be a nonstarter, because the climate has moved on,

and lots of other things have moved on. But if you're not restoring to a reference condition, then are you just sort of playing God and inventing new landscapes?"

This identity crisis is global: This year, at conferences from Iceland to Washington state, the Society for Ecological Restoration is grappling with the question of restoration during climate change. Instead of trying to re-establish a checklist of plants and animals, as they might have in the past, some restoration practitioners are now focusing on ecosystem functions. For Campbell, that means worrying about pollinators, including birds, bats and insects, in the sky islands. Across the West, spring is thawing earlier and broiling into summer faster, and the region is getting hotter and drier overall, creating a mismatch between periods when pollinators need flowers and the times and places where those flowers are available. "How can I use various plant species in ways to ease that?" Campbell said. Campbell keeps climate change and pollinators in mind when she's selecting native vegetation to plant. A low-elevation site might have red, tubular flowers in the spring, for example, and then again in September, but none during the hottest summer months. "I could plug in a species like desert honeysuckle, which would be blooming in that interim time, and providing a more constant source of nectar," she said. Research on the timing of flowers and pollinator arrivals supports Campbell's concerns, although scientists don't yet know the consequences of these mismatches.

Photo this page: Volunteer removes buffelgrass, a nonnative invasive species, from Saguaro National Park East. Norma Jean Gargasz/Alamy Stock Photo

Nicole Rafferty, a University of California, Riverside ecologist, studied the flowering schedule of manzanita, a mountain shrub with wine-red stems and glossy leaves, in the sky islands. The timing of the winter rains determines the appearance of manzanita blossoms, which are among the first mountain flowers each spring. But with winter rains arriving later, manzanitas *(Continued on next page.)*

are not flowering in time to feed the earliest native bees. Those later-flowering manzanitas also end up growing less fruit, which mule deer, black bears and other animals eat. Most plants have a wide enough variety of pollinators so that they won't disappear entirely, Rafferty said, but the fate of those pollinators is harder to predict.

Overall, Campbell's goal is still to conserve as much biodiversity as possible in the sky islands, where each mountain range has its own unique combination of plants and animals. But she knows she can't simply reassemble historic plant communities. "Certainly now, we (take) a forward view," Campbell said. "How is this (species) going to be durable into an uncertain future, where there's going to be larger, more intense wildfires, and more erosion, flooding, drought, all of those things?"

She's had to adapt how she uses native species, because of the changing rainfall patterns. For many years, Sky Island Alliance planted native vegetation in the spring, following the winter rains. But two years ago, Campbell noticed that most of the plants died. With spring arriving earlier and becoming hotter, "there's not enough time for those new plants to become established, and then be able to go dormant to make it through to monsoon season, and become good members of their vegetation society," Campbell said. She has stopped spring planting altogether at restoration sites, waiting instead until after the summer monsoon rains.

The new focus of ecological restoration is "less about identifying the particular species, and more about the traits," Elise Gornish, a cooperative extension specialist at the University of Arizona, said. Gornish surveyed almost 200 California managers, including master gardeners, ranchers, nonprofits, federal employees and others, about nonnative species. Close to half of her respondents, including most of the federal employees she interviewed, already used nonnative plants in restoration projects, often for erosion control. But almost 40% of the managers also contemplated using nonnatives because of climate change. "It's clear that folks are really, really concerned about climate change and restoration," she said. "A lot of folks wouldn't use the term 'climate change' to describe their challenges; they would say things like 'drought,' 'changing environmental conditions.' " But the bottom line is the same: "Practices people have been using historically, and probably pretty successfully, and things that are now policies among the federal agencies … are not successful anymore," she said.

Some plant populations, for example, are responding to climate change by moving up in elevation and in latitude. "What this suggests is that if you're in your site that needs restoration, the plants from that area are probably no longer well-adapted to the new conditions of that area," Gornish said. This raises prickly questions about whether or not to start using plants from farther south and lower elevations, or even from entirely different regions. "People get extremely nervous, and with good reason, when you start talking about moving plants around," Gornish said. The U.S. has not had a good track record with introduced species. "Some of our most noxious invasives, like tamarisk or buffelgrass, are things we planted 80 years ago," she said.

Not that long ago, the inclusion of nonnative plants species in restoration projects "was heretical," Falk agreed. Now, however, those species may be the best-adapted flora for a region's changing climate. But for Falk, managing for functions more than for species is still ecological restoration. It's always been true that, ultimately, "you're trying to maintain the ability of a system to adapt," he said. For her part, Campbell is learning to reconsider the role of exotic species on the landscape. For example, she sometimes spares bird-of-paradise, an evergreen shrub in the pea family that is native to Uruguay and Argentina, in her restoration planning. A fast-growing ornamental with feathery leaves and bright red and orange flowers, bird-of-paradise thrives in the Southwest's disturbed landscapes, where it can crowd out native species. But removing the plant now may actually rob hummingbirds and other pollinators of meals. "It flowers opportunistically with rain," Campbell said, "so in summer months, it can be the only flowers available."

Maya L. Kapoor is an associate editor at High Country News. Follow @Kapoor_ML

A Man For All Bluebirds

By Crista Worthy

Each of us holds one or two central truths — bedrock beliefs that influence how we perceive the world. One of mine is that humans have been the scourge of life on Earth.

It started at age 6, with my sympathy for Bambi. Later, I learned how early humans wiped out giant Pleistocene animals and then went to work killing moas, dodos, passenger pigeons, Carolina parakeets — the list goes on. Since I'm a human, of course, I share the blame of my ancestors.

If I have heroes, they are the people who buck this murderous tide. Biologists like George Schaller, Alan Rabinowitz and Jane Goodall helped save pandas, tigers, jaguars, Tibetan antelope, chimpanzees and more, along with large swaths of critical habitat. Their work has been recognized worldwide. But I have a special regard for someone who's unknown to most people: Al Larson, known to his admirers as "The Bluebird Man."

Alfred Larson saw his first bluebird in the place where he grew up, southwest Idaho's sage-and-juniper desert. Bluebirds are secondary nesters that rely on cavities hollowed out by other birds. When introduced starlings and sparrows started spreading across the continent, they kicked bluebirds out of their nests. Bluebird numbers plummeted, and Larson, an avid birder and member of Idaho's Golden Eagle Audubon Society, noticed.

In 1978, a group of concerned scientists and bluebird lovers established the North American Bluebird Society, and Larson was one of the first "citizen scientists" to answer their call. At age 60, when most people start seriously thinking about retirement, Larson started building bluebird boxes.

Now 96 years old, he says, "I never really retired." Instead, he jokes, "I just changed jobs and went to work for me." Larson built over 300 boxes in southwest Idaho, setting them up along five different "bluebird trails." He initially located the boxes well off on remote dirt roads, to make them less visible. Now he places them as close to the roads as he deems safe, and every nesting season, he travels over 5,000 miles to visit the

(Continued on next page.)

boxes. His goal is to visit each of them weekly once nesting begins toward the end of April.

Larson records the number of eggs in each box and estimates when they will hatch. Later, he measures each chick from the wing chord to the first joint, thereby obtaining an accurate age. His busiest time of year is usually the second week of June, when the majority of chicks, eight to 14 days old, are old enough to band. One day this year he banded 140 birds, although 10 to 50 is the normal daily amount. Bluebirds fledge at 18 to 21 days, and once they leave the nest, they don't go back. Larson then cleans out each nest box so it's ready to go next year.

Over the 36 years he's donated to this job, Larson has kept meticulous records, so he knows he's banded more than 30,000 western and mountain bluebirds. He currently maintains 331 boxes, replacing any lost to vandalism, fires or juniper removal. Western and mountain bluebirds once were of "high concern" in this area, but due, in large part, to Larson's diligent work, they are now doing well.

Self-reliant and frugal, Larson lives alone in his forest home about an hour northeast of Boise. His beloved wife, Hilda, passed away in 2014, but he doesn't lack for company; Larson's yard is always filled with birds.

Larson stopped driving a couple of years ago, so now one of his good friends, Boyd Steele, generally helps out. Otherwise, former Golden Eagle Audubon Society President Pam Conley is Larson's "bluebird dispatcher," arranging drivers. Current president Liz Urban says the group is committed to seeing the bluebird trails maintained into the future: "We offer to reimburse any volunteers for their gas expenses while working on the project." She adds that Chris McClure, a member of the board, has gotten Larson's giant dataset entered into a single database, so researchers can analyze population trends and other data into the future.

For now, Larson loves making his bluebird rounds. As he says in the short film ***Bluebird Man***, "I enjoy the sounds, the wind in the trees. I've had a curiosity, a passion for wildlife. That's sort of been a religion for me; it's just what I believe in, what I want to be part of."

Al Larson is an inspiration. He makes me want to discard my misanthropy and be part of a solution. If bluebirds could speak, they'd thank him, too.

Crista Worthy is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). She lives in Idaho and writes about travel, aviation and birds. To learn more about bluebirds, visit BluebirdMan.com and GoldenEagleAudubon.org. Learn how to build your own bluebird boxes at NABluebirdSociety.org.

What Is Green Building?

By Valerie Wedel

Us two-legged people have lived here in North america for 50,000+ years – maybe even longer. All of these long millenia, we have needed fire, food, shelter – and each other. Sitting by a crackling fire, watching the Star Road blaze in the night sky above, our ancestors told stories and dreamed dreams, jusy as we still do today.

Our distant ancestor's young people may have stayed up late, then as now, drumming, dancing and singing. The rest of us may have retired to our homes a little earlier perhaps, for a night's sleep. What did these ancient homes look like?

For most of the history of human beings here in North America, sustainable building was simply how it was done. We know this because one of the meanings of "sustainable" and "green building" is walking lightly on the earth, including building in a way that causes no lasting harm. The proof of our distant ancestor's sustainable, green building was this: When our European ancestors first arrived here, this country was filled with life and beauty in a way that today is hard to imagine.

A few centuries ago, one lay down and drank from any stream. Fish filled rivers and lakes, birds filled the skies. The air was sweet and clear – with one or two exceptions, including present day Los Angeles, which was referred to by the then locals as 'the smoky valley.'

Buffalo filled the plains, darkening the land from horizon to horizon. Pronghorn 'antelope' filled half the Western United States, from present day Canada to Mexico. This abundance is what happens when people live and build sustainably.

Clearly we of European descent have not done so well in recent centuries. Happily there is a new-old movement today: Green Building. What is this? What does it look like? Some of us green builders are inspired by ancient housing types. To see why, let's explore an ancient, sustainable housing type: Tipis. Tipis were created by high plains drifters – our nomadic ancestors - who lived following migrating buffalo herds. People who lived by following herds needed portable, rugged shelter. So the women of these people figured out how to build tipis. Peeled saplings formed ribs. Buffalo hides formed the walls. The doors faced east, to the rising sun. Walls faced west and north to block winds.

Tipis were actually egg-shaped in plan, so fierce high plains winds rolled around them instead of knocking them over. The opening at the top allowed smoke from indoor fires to excape. As the smoke went up it continued tanning the hide by the smoke hole in a special way, and rendered the hide incredibly soft and pliable. When the tipi wore out, this top smoke hole area was saved and used as diaper covers for babies.

But what about rain and snow falling inside and right onto the fire? The poles of the ribs were peeled smooth. This meant they caused rain to stick to them and roll down into the ground via capillary action. The interior and fire pit stayed dry. The hide by the smoke hole could also be adjusted based on wind and weather.

The subzero cold of high plains winters caused a problem. Tipis were originally designed and built with removable floor liners that went part way up the walls. In the summer, no liner was needed. Walls were rolled part way up to catch breezes. In the winter, a liner was used with dry grass stuffed between the layers, to insulate the interior and protect the people within. This amazing housing type was widely used by plains nomads for millenia.

If you ever have a chance to visit a real tipi and spend time in it, do. Being inside a tipi is entirely different that one of our modern, typical, rigid houses. In a tipi, one lives inside a halo of glowing light. The poles create a radial shadow pattern, within luminous, glowing light. Beautiful. Completely unlike our square, rigid houses.

(Continued on next page.)

Many years ago a scientific team was in the Black Hills with state of the art tents. Their intention was to camp out and collect scientific data on geology and weather. The wind was so ferocious it blew away the hi-tech tents the team had brought. Until the team switched to tipis. This ancient, sustainable building design stood without difficulty!

Tipis were owned and built by women. A couple women could put up a tipi in less than an afternoon. They were portable, recyclable, valuable.

Of the indigenous sustainable housing types of the Americas, the tipi is probably one of the most recognizable. There were several other types, equally effective for their locations and the needs of the people who built them. Pueblos, igloos, wigwams, and hogans are some other types.

What can we do today to move back towards green building and sustainability?

Some of us are experimenting with a return to ancient prototypes. Others of us are experimenting with modifying existing modern rigid box buildings.

Conventional modern houses can adopt a variety of modifications to become healthier for our earth and people. Solar panels for electricity and solar hot water heat are two possibilities. Doing construction as much as possible of local materials both saves a lot of energy, and stimulates the local economy. Using interior and exterior finishes that are minimum toxic is fabulous for our health and our planet.

Minimum toxic means that things like formaldehyde, a preservative in building materials, is not present. Formaldyhe is a known carcinogen, banned in the European Union because of this, but still in use in the U.S. We can build without it. This means no toxic exposure for manufacturers, builders, homeowners, or fish in streams!

You can be inspired by green building ideas. Right here in the front range and down in town, many of us are working with these ideas in creative and sometimes surprisingly simple ways. The upcoming **Tour of Solar and Sustainable Homes in Golden** is a perfect opportunity to visit some homes and see what today's home owners and green builders are up to.

Tour Information:

Tour of Solar and Sustainable Homes
Saturday, October 6, 2018 ticket price = $10
Tour starts at Jefferson Unitarian Church, 14350 W. 32Nd Avenue, Golden, CO 80401.
This is a self guided tour, from 9 am – 4 pm.
There will be a Reception and Green Expo after the tour, including food and local drink, and exhibits of renewable energy and sustainable living.
Tickets are on sale now via the website:
www.newenergycolorado.com/home-tour

(Photo this page: a home on their website.)

A Lifeline For Struggling Ag Communities?

By Jessica Kutz – High Country News

In May of 2014, the longest landslide in Colorado's recorded history killed three people and nearly buried Collbran, a small agricultural community in the western part of the state. From the urban Front Range, Margaret MacKenzie placed frantic calls to her 69-year-old mother, whose ranch, she feared, was directly in the path of the rocks and debris racing downhill. Fortunately, the slide stopped four miles away from the ranch. Still, for MacKenzie, the close call made two things clear: Her elderly mother couldn't continue to manage the 200-acre property alone. And the family's chances of selling the land — something they'd tried to do for years — had gone from slim to none.

So MacKenzie moved her own family to the ranch, where bills had been piling up. The property required constant labor, from baling hay to irrigating the fields, and tax and insurance payments were coming due. MacKenzie evaluated her options for turning a profit and arrived at a relatively novel solution: growing hemp. For decades, the law had lumped the crop in with marijuana, treating it as a drug even though it contains minute levels of THC, the psychoactive chemical that gets pot smokers high. That meant that growing hemp — which harbors valuable oils, fibers that can be processed into textiles, and nutritious seeds — was a federal crime. Then, in 2014, the farm bill removed some barriers to hemp cultivation, allowing states to authorize it under certain circumstances, even though, under federal law, it remained a controlled substance.

In conservative Mesa County, where Collbran is located, county commissioners recognized an opportunity. They excluded industrial hemp from an ordinance that banned marijuana cultivation and sales in the county, passed in 2013 after Coloradans voted to legalize marijuana. When MacKenzie planted her first crop in 2015, curious neighbors made their way up her dirt road to peer at the plants, which look exactly like marijuana. "We had more conversations on the fence line that year than work that got done in the field," she recalled.

Now, that curiosity has blossomed into a growing enthusiasm for hemp in conservative communities and political circles. Just a decade ago, such a stance was considered "political kryptonite" among politicians, according to Elisa Addlesperger, author of a 2015 article on hemp that ran in the ***Journal of Agriculture and Food Information***; too many voters were likely to confuse support for hemp with support for marijuana. But today, with a better understanding of what the crop is — and more importantly, what it isn't — conservative politicians from Oregon to Alaska are increasingly championing it as a potential lifeline for struggling rural communities.

Colorado leads the country in hemp production, with over 25,000 acres licensed for production in 2018. (The acreage actually planted could be less.) At least 41 states have passed laws to make it easier to grow hemp, according to the National Conference of State Legislators. And Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has become a booster, pushing to legalize the plant on a federal level with the 2018 farm bill, which shapes the nation's food and agricultural policy. Hemp has thus become one of the few things Democrats and Republicans can agree on. "If you think about it, it is a really Republican issue," said Zev Paiss, founding executive director of the National Hemp Association. "It is about jobs, and it's about economic development."

In Colorado, state Sen. Don Coram, a Republican who represents the southwestern part of the state, started growing hemp last year in four plots in Montrose County, including the former uranium-mining town, Naturita. "I've always been very interested in it, because going back to my younger days in rodeo, all the ropes were made out of hemp," Coram said. He now has 29 acres, with 1,500 plants per acre, and he's growing it for its highly valuable Cannabidiol, commonly called CBD oil. The oil, which is found in both hemp and marijuana, is used for treating everything from seizures to arthritic pain, and its surging popularity is the reason farmers are getting into hemp. There are 19 registered growers in Montrose County, and the interest just keeps building. Nucla, a town that neighbors Naturita, is considering the possibility of converting its shuttered elementary school into a hemp-processing facility for CBD oil. And Sandy Head, executive director of the Montrose Economic Development Corporation, said her organization has been hosting information sessions for interested farmers. Head has gone even further, planting test acres.

"I really felt that in order to be able to talk to the agriculture community about what it was, I should have some experience," she said. Her husband gives her a hard time about it, joking that her father "would roll over in his grave if he knew you were *(Continued on page 17.)*

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The San Juan Mountains loom through a haze of wildfire smoke during sunset at one of Coram's hemp fields. Luna Anna Archey/High Country News

growing weed." But the times, they are a changin'. "It is just a matter of conversation," Head said, and educating people that hemp is not a drug.

Area farmers are beginning to get that message. MacKenzie, who invited curious neighbors to an open house on her farm, has become one of the Western Slope's go-to hemp experts. What started as a basic presentation in her barn in 2015 has morphed into a 500-plus person event called **Hemp on the Slope**, complete with a farm-to-table dinner, equipment demonstrations, educational seminars and booths extolling the benefits of hemp products.

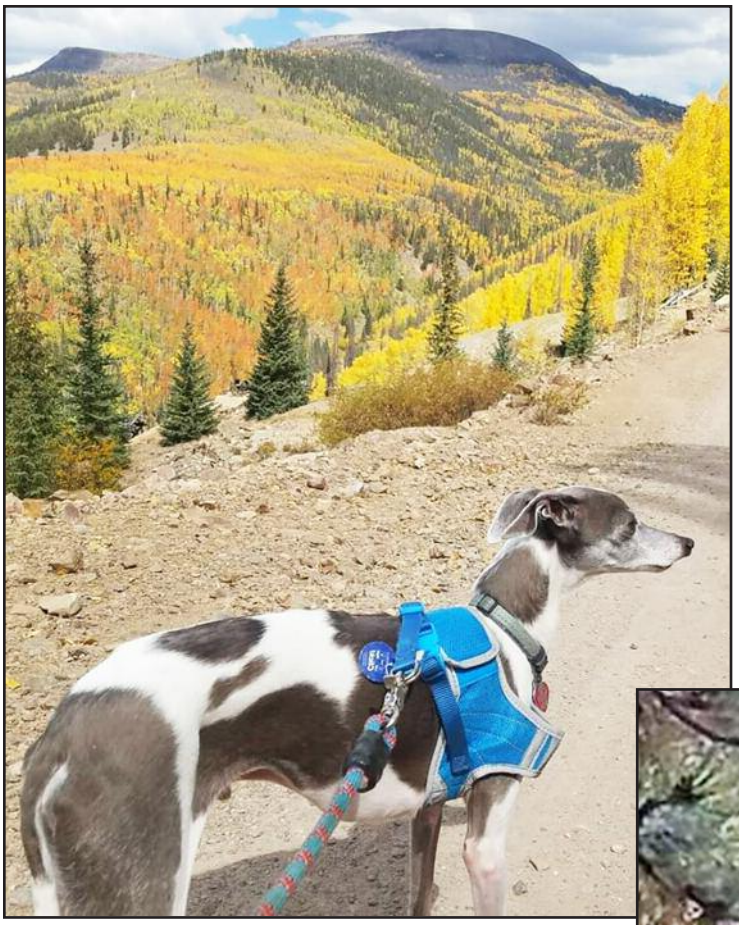
And events like it are sprouting like weeds. In nearby Paonia, Colorado — where HCN's headquarters are located — a panel discussion in March titled, "What's the Deal with Hemp?" took place in the local movie theater. And in August, a two-day **Hemp and Hops** convention took place at the Montrose County Fairgrounds.

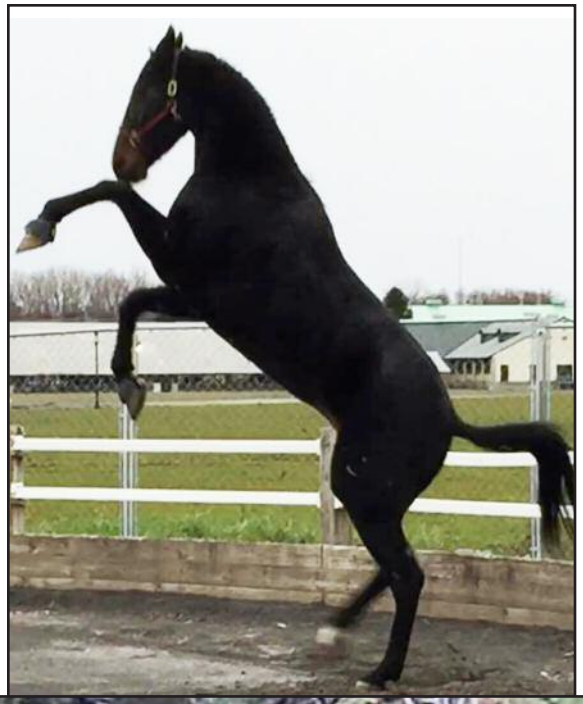
MacKenzie has noticed a change in the events' demographic. At first, it was mostly young entrepreneurial types who had moved to the Western Slope from somewhere else, and maybe dabbled in marijuana production. Now, there are more people from the local farming community, "people who had farms and were maybe growing hay or some other crop," she said.

Hemp fans often tout the crop as a miracle plant. At the **NoCo Hemp Expo** in Loveland, Colorado, in April, speakers pumped up the crowd with talk of hemp-based plastic, clothing, concrete, houses and animal feed, among another 25,000 possible uses. But it could be years before any of these products are commercially viable in the U.S. There are still significant legal barriers, for one. At the federal level, hemp remains classified as a Schedule One controlled substance, alongside drugs like heroin. That means that banks can't loan money to hemp-based businesses or hold money earned from growing or selling hemp products. Farmers also can't get crop insurance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to cover potential losses to drought or disease. And so hemp farmers are taking on unusually high levels of risk, Head said. Farmers often ask her: "If the government is not going to touch it and the bank is not going to touch it, (then) why should I go there?" In some cases, the federal Bureau of Reclamation gets involved, denying farmers water to irrigate hemp fields.

"If you legalize it at the federal level, those concerns are eliminated," said Colorado U.S. Sen. Cory Gardner, a Republican. "And all of a sudden it is another commodity. (Legalizing) it would really make hemp mainstream." Until then, there's little incentive to invest in highly specialized harvesting machines or the facilities that transform the plant's versatile fibers into products like textiles. "The amount of processing that is required to go from the plant to a T-shirt is huge, and we don't have very much of that infrastructure in the country at all," Paiss said. Nevertheless, the potential is clear to people like Head. "It is going to offer a high-return crop for some of the ag people," she said, as well as new business opportunities for non-farmers. In Montrose County, there are already start-up companies making CBD lotions and tinctures. "It's a whole new industry, not just of growing but the consuming of the product and the goods and services," Head said. Montrose County received a grant this year from the state, and is partnering with the Montrose Economic Development Corporation to do a feasibility study to grow hemp seed as a livestock grain. And a CBD-oil processing company recently purchased the old Louisiana-Pacific building, which once housed a timber mill.

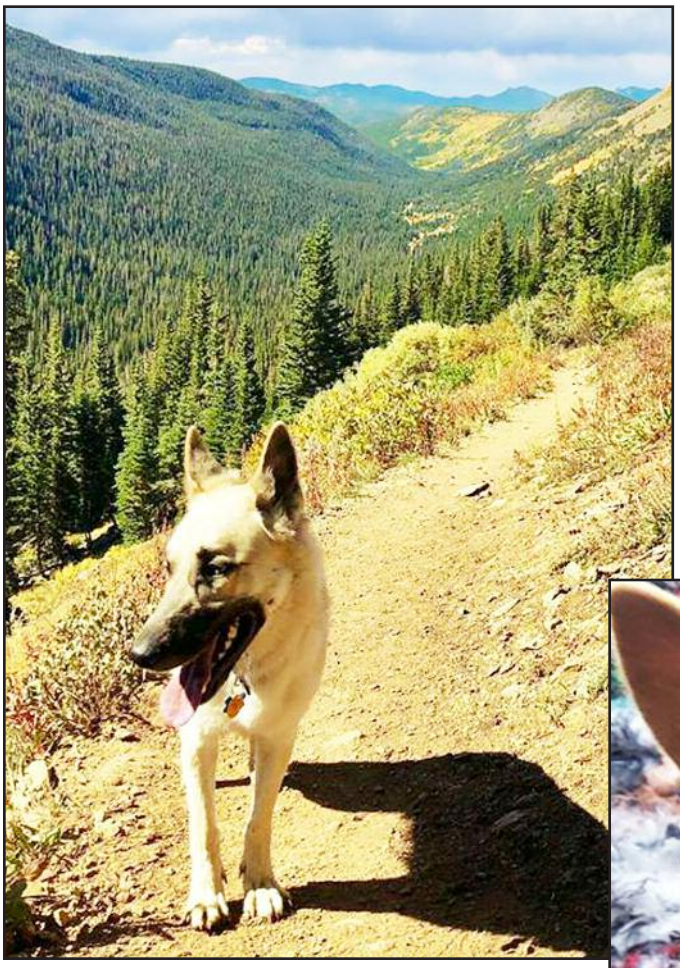
Jessica Kutz is an Editorial Fellow at High Country News.

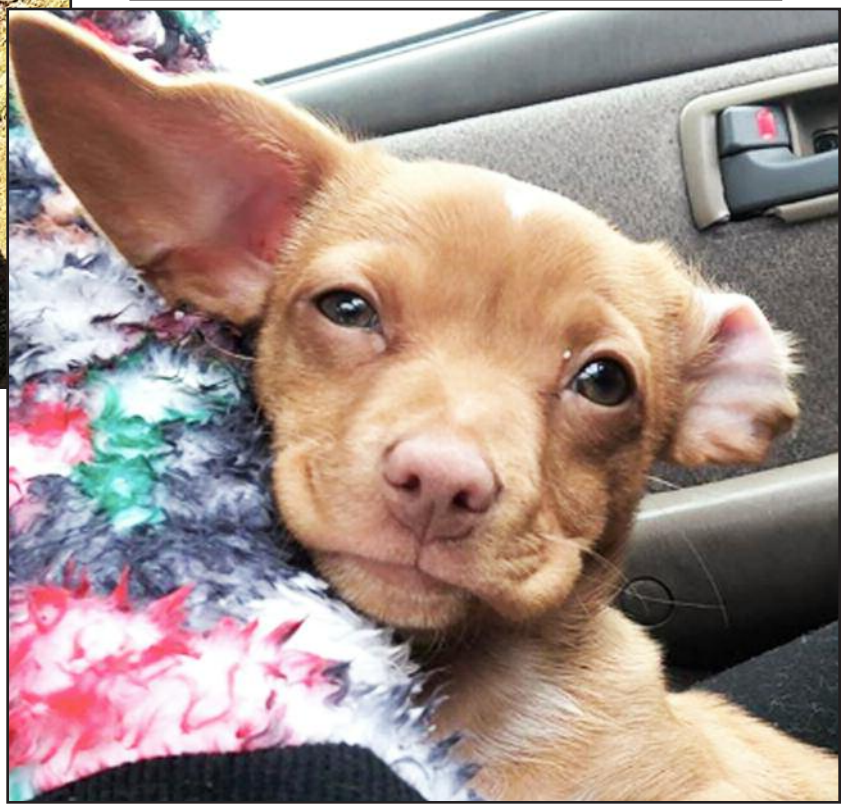




This Page, above - Franklin enjoys the turning leaves.
Right: Standardbred rears up.
Bottom: Buck visits Julie's yard.

Next Page Left: Strider at Arapahoe Pass.
Right: Long-haired tabby cat.
Bottom: Puppy enjoys car ride.





Send in Your photos to
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How To Drive Safe While Pregnant

From Jim Plane - State Farm Insurance

According to a study from the University of Michigan, pregnant women are involved in almost 170,000 car crashes every year. Also, research conducted by the ***American Journal of Preventive Medicine*** indicates that car crashes can increase the risk of preterm labor and other dangerous complications.

Safety belt tips

If you're expecting, protect yourself and your precious passenger by wearing your safety belt correctly. Here's how:

Travel in vehicles equipped with three-point restraints. This system consists of a lap and shoulder belt.

Place the shoulder belt between your breasts and to the side of your belly. The belt should fall across the center of your shoulder and chest, away from your neck.

Do not wear the shoulder belt under your arm or behind your back.

Secure the lap belt under your belly so it sits low on your hips.

Never let the lap belt lie across or above your stomach

Adjust the belt's fit so it's snug but comfortable. If you travel during cold weather, warm up your vehicle before you get in so you can shed a heavy coat that might cause the belt to not fit properly.

Additional precautions

Wearing your belt properly is just one safety measure to take in the car. Keep these pointers in mind:

If you feel extra tired, nauseated, or dizzy, don't drive. If these symptoms come on suddenly, pull over safely and rest, or walk around a bit until you feel better.

Make sure your air bag system hasn't been disabled or shut off. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists agree that air bags used in conjunction with safety belts help keep pregnant women and their babies safer.

As much as possible, avoid sharp, fast turns and sudden braking while driving.

Sit a safe distance from the steering wheel and dashboard. Move your seat so your breastbone is at least 10 inches from the steering wheel at all times. Tilt the wheel so it points toward your breastbone.

If your belly grows too large to allow you to turn comfortably, reach the pedals or otherwise drive safely, catch a ride with others until after the baby is born.

When you aren't driving, sit in the back seat for further protection.

If you are involved in a car accident, see your doctor right away to get checked over — even if you feel fine.

When your little one arrives, it's important to keep him or her buckled in properly, too. Review our common car seat mistakes and learn how to keep your little passenger safer in the car at

www. State Farm Insurance.com/simpleinsights

Vandalized Landscapes

By Elena Saavedra Buckley – High Country News

In 1985, photographer David T. Hanson turned his lens on certain American landscapes: 67 of the 400 Superfund sites — areas contaminated by toxic waste — considered "highly hazardous" by the Environmental Protection Agency. His series of aerial photographs, published in their entirety for the first time, comprise the book ***Waste Land***. Hanson's camera intensifies the 67 sites, which range from nuclear plants to asbestos mines, by filling the frame with their sprawling shapes, sludges and scattered mechanical structures.

They look as if they could stretch endlessly past the photographs' edges. In the book's foreword, Wendell Berry urges us not to see the images as beautiful. "What we can see in these vandalized and perhaps irreparable landscapes," Berry writes, "we are obliged to understand as symbolic of what we cannot see: the steady seeping of poison into our world and our bodies." ***Waste Land***, By David T. Hanson
176 pages, hardcover: $50 Taverner Press, 2018

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In addition to a desire to help people, you also need courage, dedication, assertiveness, and a willingness to face new challenges.

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Membership to the CCCFPD is open to anyone who meets the following qualifications:
Is between 18 and 60 years old
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Has a current, valid Colorado Driver's License
Has a high school diploma or equivalent
Is in good physical health (e.g., able to lift and carry up to 100 pounds at waist height)

Email: admin@coalcreekcanyonfd.org
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The application period begins October 15, 2018 ending November 26, 2018.

Colorado River

By Pete McBride

One morning this summer, I stepped onto my paddleboard and glided into the headwaters of the Colorado River. To my amazement, the Roaring Fork, a tributary of the Colorado in the western half of the state, was far from roaring. The stream was more like the kind of babbling brook you might find during a hot late summer. But it wasn't anywhere near the dog days of August. It was still June.

A splashy spring runoff, which typically appears in late May and June, delights boaters and allows water managers a chance to breathe easy. But this year, it was nowhere in sight. There was certainly no hint of it in the few, quilt-like patches of snow that clung to Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks.

Unfortunately, this is the new normal. Hydrologists have noted that the whitewater runoff came frighteningly earlier than usual this year, and the amount of water will go down as one of the lowest ever recorded. Most of us know that that's bad news, because the Colorado River quenches the thirst of some 40 million people across the Southwest, Los Angeles and Southern California and parts of Mexico.

As I navigated downstream, I marveled at the number of rocks already rising above the surface and the crystalline clear flow shrouding them. Fish need cool water to survive, and I knew that in the months ahead, the water would grow ever warmer.

Rivers fluctuate from year to year, so below-average years aren't out of the norm. But the Colorado River has already experienced over two decades of drought due to climate change, not to mention a history of over-allocation and increased demands from a growing population. As a result, it is a wrung-out river — from, here, where I was paddling, to some 1,400 miles downstream.

The Colorado River Delta, once the largest desert estuary in North America, is also struggling today. Not a drop of the river that once carved the Grand Canyon actually reaches the sea anymore. I know, because I've followed the river, mostly on foot, to its end numerous times as a photographer and filmmaker, documenting the rapidly changing state of my backyard river, the place where I learned to fish and swim as a child.

Shrinking snowpacks and low waterways will eventually affect everyone. As our watershed goes, so goes much of Colorado's recreation-based, tourist economy. The white bathtub rings that already mark the West's major reservoirs, Lakes Powell and Mead, are not only stark reminders of the water levels we once had; they also foreshadow what may come.

If we continue to ask too much of water, this finite and incredibly valuable resource, it will simply disappear. And then, like civilizations before *(Continued on next page.)*

us, we, too, will be forced to flee.

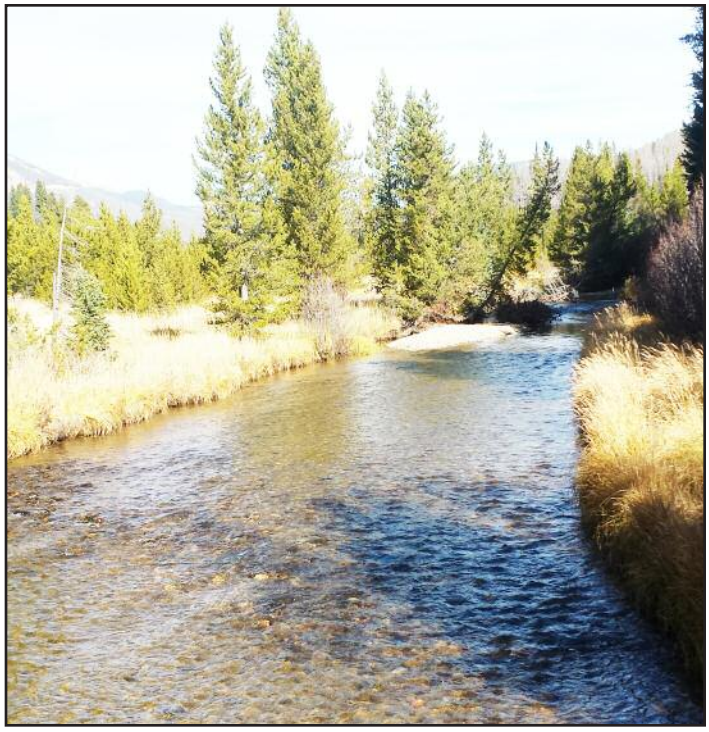
This year, our rivers experienced a remarkably thirsty start, and they are even lower now, as we are past the end of September. With predictions for continued statewide population growth and hotter and drier conditions becoming commonplace, it is past time to start thinking — and voting — to protect our water.

Colorado's Water Plan is a good place to start. The Water Plan was developed from the ground up and is intended to protect all of Colorado's water needs, including the needs of our rivers and streams for water. Its proposals include conservation, alternative methods of utilizing agricultural water that do not result in the permanent dry-up of farmland, and support for those water projects that meet the necessary requirements.

Our network of moving water needs as much help as Colorado's roads and bridges. Coloradans need to let their legislators and local leaders know how much they care and ask them to support additional funding to protect and improve our vital waterways.

We don't have much time. We need to insist on prioritizing the benefits of a healthy recreation and tourism industry and, of course, protect the fish and wildlife that depend on these rivers for their very existence.

Pete McBride is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). A native Coloradan, he is a photographer, filmmaker and author who has focused on the Colorado River watershed. He lives in the Roaring Fork Valley of Colorado.



(Photo above - The Colorado River at Coyote Valley Trailhead, Rocky Mountain National Park.)

Editor's Note: While Pete's opinion here is mostly factual he fails to fully understand (as most of the affluent population where he lives) that the Colorado River is endangered and the CO River Plan will do more harm than any good for this river. Tourism should be the least of our concerns as ecologically the Colorado River cannot suffer more drain from it for the expansion of/or new reservoirs to east slope metropolitan or agricultural users. Those water projects he speaks of would never be needed if true conservation were utilized. Even recycling the water already used all along the Front Range would do more to save the Colorado River than taking more from this already diminished national resource. Let your political representatives know you don't agree with the Colorado Water Plan. **Stop the Expansion of Gross Reservoir!**

Buffalo Field Campaign-buffalofieldcamgaign.org

Buffalo Advocates Join in Solidarity for Grizzly Bears
Buffalo Field Campaign (BFC) is the only group working both in the field and in the policy arenas to stop the harassment and slaughter of America's last wild buffalo. Formalized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1994, we also protect the natural habitat of wild free-roaming bison and other native wildlife, and stand with First Nations to honor the sacredness of wild buffalo. Our primary goal is to create permanent year-round protection for bison and the ecosystem they depend on—including respect for the migratory needs of this long-exploited and clearly endangered species.

BFC joined in solidarity with other grizzly bear advocates and attended the de-listing hearing at the Federal District Court in Missoula on Thursday, August 30. The court room was totally packed, so crowded that they opened an additional "overflow" court room, which was also packed. The rooms were thick with people who care about grizzly bears, lots of BFC family, and many others. After four hours of careful, thoughtful questioning of both the plaintiffs (grizzly advocates) and defendants (government), Judge Christensen called a recess and the hearing was over with no decision made, but, the feeling we came away with bordered the positive.

Some of the key points being brought up by grizzly bear advocates seeking to gain grizzly bears back their Endangered Species status include: The current Yellowstone population has flatlined and is starting to decline, Yellowstone grizzly bears are an isolated population, and if hunting commences in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana, it would be extremely difficult for grizzly bears to establish themselves in areas outside the Greater Yellowstone Area.

Climate change is drastically changing the way grizzly bears eat because of declining food sources, such as white bark pine nuts, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and army cutworm moths.

While grizzlies have always eaten buffalo and elk, with other high-fat and high-protein food sources dwindling, they are turning more to meat, which is placing bears in conflict with both hunters and ranchers. This is also another key reason to stop the Yellowstone buffalo slaughter, as more buffalo on a larger landscape will benefit both of these iconic, sacred species.

While grizzly bears have been protected under the Endangered Species Act for over forty decades,

they have yet to recover, and in fact had been declining, even with federal protections. Removing these protections prematurely, and initiating "trophy hunts" will cause irreparable harm to these vulnerable bears.

An issue that was not discussed, but which is equally as important, is the lack of consultation the federal government had with Tribes who hold the grizzly bear sacred.

The timing of the judges decision was critical, because the following Saturday, Wyoming's grizzly bear trophy killing spree was set to begin. In preparation to defend bears before a ruling, the grizzly bear legal team filed an emergency injunction to halt Wyoming's "hunt." The judge granted a temporary halt to the hunt for two weeks while he took the time to review the case. For now, grizzly bears in Wyoming are safe from trophy hunters. We don't know yet what the outcome will be, but we should be hearing from Judge Christensen soon. Check the website for news.

But It's Organic!

By Marjorie "Slim" Woodruff

As I clambered my way up the trail recently, I passed two languishing young women. One of them regarded her sandwich with distaste. "I am going to toss this. I know there is a squirrel who will appreciate it."

I cautioned, "We ask people not to feed the wildlife." As I walked off, one of them opined: "What does she know? She's hiking in a skirt!"

My sartorial preferences in trail wear aside, there appears to be a prevalent attitude that "organic" litter is copacetic. It will either evaporate into biodegradable thin air or somehow be devoured.

Does it vanish? At an outdoor education center, we set up a few experiments. We built a cage of chicken wire wide enough to allow small animals ingress and egress but small enough to keep items secure from wind. Therein we placed an apple core, a banana peel, orange peels, chewing gum and tissue paper. After six months, the orange peels had dried out, the banana peel was a distasteful black, and the tissue had collapsed into an inert mass. Nothing had rotted or been eaten.

What about interment? We commandeered a terrarium and entombed the same items, some in sand, some in organic soil. Six months later, everything was still recognizable.

Indeed, the venerable **Leave No Trace** organization has done experiments more sophisticated than mine. Banana peels can take up to two years to decompose, while orange peels can linger up to six months. In an arid environment, orange peels, rather like King Tut's mummy, will last indefinitely. Citrus contains a natural insecticide: Even the ants won't touch orange peels. And chewing gum contains rubber, so it won't rot.

But will not the timid woodland creatures enjoy my discards? Certainly at any rest stop on the trail, one is likely to see obese rodents waddling up and professing hunger.

But think about it: Do we eat banana peels or orange peels? We do not. So why would a squirrel? An apple core is edible, certainly, but if it is not part of the animal's daily diet, it can change the animal's biome to the point where it can no longer digest its normal food. Anyone who has experienced so-called "traveler's tummy" from a change in water or cuisine while vacationing can attest to this. Unless one is hiking through an apple orchard, apple cores are not a part of the local ecosystem.

Realistically, does a humble apple core really cause that much damage? Our national parks are enjoying a plethora of visitation. Grand Canyon welcomes 6 million people a year. It is estimated that 10 percent of visitors hike approximately a mile below the rim. Let us be generous and assume that 90 percent of these sightseers will carry out their trash. But that, for our purposes, presupposes that the remainder will toss, say, something like an apple core. That's 60,000 apple cores. We would be knee-deep in the execrable things.

So-called "empty calories," such as those that come from white bread, processed foods and sugar, are not good for us. Why should they be good for wildlife? Animals need some fat to survive winter, but excess adipose tissue is just as bad for them as it is for us. At Alaska's Denali National Park, there are signs asking people not to feed the marmots so they don't get too portly to escape from the grizzlies. (Meanwhile, of course, the grizzlies are watching, muttering, "Go ahead, feed them, already!")

Desert animals have a special difficulty. Many of these critters have no ready source of water: They get moisture from the food they eat. They cannot flush salt from their bodies, and excess salt will kill them.

Animals habituated to human food and, by association, humans, quickly become nuisances. Bears are the extreme example: They will rip off a car door to get at food. Smaller animals tear into packs and tents. Rodents carry hantavirus, rabies and tetanus. The ticks and fleas that inhabit their fur transport Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, relapsing fever and plague. I don't know about you, but I don't want them cuddling up to me.

Animals that are fed by humans will not collect and store enough food for winter. When hiking season is over and the tourists leave, they face starvation.

The bottom line is, before we got here, the faunae did just fine on nuts, berries and occasionally each other. They do not need us.

Would the two young women who were tossing that sandwich have done so in their own living room? Certainly not. Then again, considering what my son's college dorm room looked like, perhaps I should not be so sure.

Marjorie "Slim" Woodruff is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). She hikes and works in the Grand Canyon.

Editor's Note: Feeding any wild critters (other than birds) is not an act of kindness, it is simply a selfish way to get them to stick around so we can observe them closer than we normally would. That fox that frequented the Kwik Mart got run over hanging out in the parking lot, waiting.

Relittering

By Leath Tonino – High Country News

Ed Abbey was famous, or perhaps infamous, for tossing empty beer cans out the window of his pickup. Hell, he'd say, it's the damn road that we should be calling litter. This style of provocation dates back to the Cynics, a gang of Greek ethicists that came on the scene after Socrates died in 399 B.C. They were interested in drawing attention to nomoi, cultural conventions that go mostly unnoticed and, accordingly, mostly unquestioned. For guys like Antisthenes, Crates and Diogenes, acting outrageous in public was a favorite pastime.

Despite my wholehearted agreement with Abbey's point about the damn road being a damn road, there's a part of me that thinks his behavior was, if not wrong, at least sort of dumb. Adding trash to an already trashed planet is patently unnecessary, not to mention crude. Furthermore, this can-out-the-window radicalism has itself become a cultural convention, a standardized symbol of defiance.

If the goal is to shake things up, another Budweiser in the ditch isn't going to do the trick. Maybe we need a new outrageous act?

Personally, I'm a fan of relittering.

The story begins during my years as a philosophy student in Colorado Springs. Once or twice a week (more if I was reading a miserable text like Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit) I'd leave the dorm an hour before sundown, black Hefty bag in hand. Something about collecting the city's refuse — Styrofoam cups and cigarette butts, broken bottles and cigarette butts, rags and wrappers

Industrial designer Taylor Lane built a surfboard out of 10,000 cigarette butts to bring attention to littering. Hanna Yamamoto

and cigarette butts — freed my mind of words, concepts, big theories. It will sound paradoxical, but filthy trash consistently swept my headspace clean.

Unsurprisingly, the initial dozen or so outings ended with me back at campus, struggling to lift my bulging bag over the rim of a dumpster, fearful of catching a corner and leaking Eau de C. Spgs. onto my noggin. That is to say, I prettified the cityscape by consolidating strewn garbage and transferring it to a socially sanctioned receptacle. A no-brainer: Where else would a good young environmentalist offload 30 gallons of disgusting junk?

Alas, philosophy teaches us little more than how to confuse our settled opinions. Soon enough, I was wondering why a giant metal box brimming with rubbish was not a blight, and from there it was just a hop and a skip to the local dump where, one hot Saturday morning, I watched bulldozers busy themselves with heaps of steaming waste. Their work reminded me of a neurotic friend who "cleaned" his room by tidying clutter into, say, 17 neat piles.

All we're doing, I realized, is pushing this awful shit around. If it ain't recyclable, it ain't recyclable. Period! I understood, instantly, that pure intentions and elbow grease wouldn't green up a single inch of a society that overproduces and overconsumes. It hit me as gut-level sadness: This is your home. Welcome.

Thus, relittering was born.

I started small. At the edge of a park or playground I'd stoop, pluck a wadded napkin, then walk five blocks and set it gently down beside a bus stop. Within a few months, the napkins became pizza boxes, ratty jackets, tires yanked from overgrown lots. The artist in me wanted to consciously arrange, to fashion a thing of beauty, but my inner Cynic wouldn't allow sugarcoating. He insisted that this was about forcing a raw confrontation between the citizens of Athens, er, C. Spgs., and their milieu.

The task was relocation, plain and simple. Haul nastiness from abandoned spaces and set it in the sun (preferably in a spot where it wouldn't cause extra labor for a municipal janitor or landscaper).

These days I live in a rural area, and while there's definitely plenty of garbage around, it appears manageable against the backdrop of undeveloped nature, which means I generally shoo it towards a trashcan. I miss relittering, though. There was an absurdity to it, a black humor that helped me laugh in the face of our drive toward ruination. It was a grimy, tactile encounter with the truth of culture and place — what Henry David Thoreau would have called "Contact! Contact!"

Funny that old Henry should butt in here, as he, like Ed Abbey, was also an heir to the Cynics. Different eras call for different techniques, I suppose. One fellow finishes his Budweiser and rolls down the window. A second kicks that can out of the ditch, into plain view. A third borrows an ax, heads to a pond on the outskirts of town, and builds himself a cabin, a dwelling apart from the madness of his age.

And then there's Diogenes. He wore rags, resided in a wooden tub on the street corner, ticked off both Plato and Alexander the Great, and allegedly said, "Humans have complicated every simple gift of the gods." If such a generalization causes discomfort, well, that's the idea.

Leath Tonino's writing appears in Outside, Orion, The Sun and many other magazines.

Editor's Note: I recall a time when littering came with a fine, monetary punishment. Now we just organize days to pick up other people's litter. I really like to envision that beer can or bottle jumping back up into the turd's window, smacking them in the face. Or the lit cigarette butt flying back into their window and onto their crotch: relittering!

Optimism Vs. Pessimism

By Frosty Wooldridge

"To think well of yourself and to proclaim this fact to the world, not in loud words, but great deeds. To live in faith that the whole world is on your side so long as you are true to the best that is in you." *Christian D. Larson*

Clearly, Ms. Larson punches your ticket for the "optimism train-ride through life." She encourages you to step on board with the idea that life offers you enormous creative possibilities.

Throughout history, optimists overcame every human dilemma with their ideas that things turn out well on the positive side of living. Pessimists, on the other hand, expected the worst through choice.

Helen Keller said, "Let pessimism take hold of the mind, and life is all topsy-turvy, all vanity and vexation of spirit. There is no cure for individual or social disorder, except in forgetfulness and annihilation."

She understood the final result that pessimism renders the heart and mind deadened to the possibilities of vibrant living. While being positive or negative toward a certain outcome may not sway the universe in your direction, please consider the "Universe" conspires with your thought patterns when you align with Its flow propensities.

Sarah Breathnach said, "Both abundance and lack exist simultaneously in our lives, as parallel realities. It is always our conscious choice which secret garden we will tend...when we choose not to focus on what is missing from our lives but are grateful for the abundance that's present—love, health, family, friends, work, the joys of nature and personal pursuits that bring us pleasure—the wasteland of illusion falls away and we experience Heaven on earth."

One of the factors you will discover in your optimistic approach to life continues today: when you think something will turn out well, you live with expectation. For example, when you attend a basketball game, you anticipate your team may become victorious. You choose that "emotional idea" throughout the game. If you win, you feel the wonder of it all. If your team loses, your expectations feel dashed on the hard rocks of reality.

With a pessimist, he or she expects to lose the game. The question arises: why play or participate or engage life at all? It's all going to turn out poorly anyway.

Reality check: your DNA expects to win.
Optimism courses through each cell in your body.

Two things about optimistic thinking and living come to mind:

How you feel positively constitutes your interpretation of an event. It nudges you toward your own fulfillment.

The pure act of anticipation gives you expectation, which in turn, thrives within your cells.

While "absolute zero" reality could care less about your positive or negative thought processes, when you think in an optimistic manner, your directed thought patterns

manifest in ways you may not understand. It's called **"flow of the emerging creative energy of the universe."** Once you tap into it and align with its dynamic current, you accelerate or enhance every cell in your body toward living at its highest and best.

Therefore, what good do you find in pessimism? Would you hang out with pessimists because they dwell on the negatives of life? Or, do you hang with optimists who laugh in the face of rain at your garden party?

In my own life, I decided to circle the globe on a bicycle, stand on the South Pole and walk on the Wall of China. So far so good! How did I make my dreams come true? Answer: optimism, effort over time and persistence.

No matter what station in life you started, you can make yourself unhappy with a pessimistic attitude or you can choose happiness with your optimistic thrust. Such a choice allows you to soar with eagles, become a fabulous parent, write the next All-American novel, travel the globe and engage your highest and best. It makes for one hell of an adventure of your mind and heart.

(Life can be an uplifting reflection of reality or a downward reflection of reality. It all comes down to choices in daily living.) Photography by Frosty Wooldridge

Utilities Should Dump Coal

By Cesia Kearns - High Country News

Imagine you need to buy a car, but there's only one car dealer in your community. When you arrive at the lot, all you see are clunkers that cost more than a new car and get much worse mileage than the new car's 62 miles per gallon. When you ask the salesman why better options aren't available, he says: "What you see is what you get." So you end up having to buy a 1972 truck that costs the same as the 2018 model, and then get ready to swallow the fuel and maintenance costs that will double the overall price. You feel like you've been taken advantage of, but what choice did you have?

This scenario is unfolding right now across the Western United States, except that the car dealer we're talking about is actually PacifiCorp, the largest energy provider in the West and — for nearly 2 million people — the only one. And instead of old, inefficient cars, the clunkers involved are the utility's aging coal-fired power plants.

PacifiCorp serves customers in Utah, Wyoming, Oregon, Idaho, Washington and California. These customers know that over half of the utility's energy production comes from aging coal plants that are facing stiff competition from increasingly more affordable clean energy resources. Why won't their utility trade in the older, expensive model for a newer, cheaper and cleaner one?

This was the question the Oregon Public Utilities Commission posed in 2017, when it required the company to do its first open economic assessment of its coal plants. The study was released on June 28, but not to the public — to the dismay of many people, it remains secret. PacifiCorp has no plans to share this information with its customers. A company spokesman told the Portland Business Journal that "confidentiality is necessary to ensure the system isn't gamed and to protect customers."

This unnecessary secrecy creates many problems. The most glaring is that PacifiCorp is intentionally leaving customers in the dark about how its coal-fired units compare to clean-energy alternatives. If PacifiCorp were happy with the study's results, it wouldn't hide them. Second, the state of Oregon is already joining its coastal neighbors in eliminating coal-fired plants. This means that if coal costs continue to climb, the risk will be borne by customers in the states of Idaho, Wyoming and, primarily, Utah. Industrial consumers such as manufacturers, universities and farmers in those states could also see an increase in rates.

PacifiCorp's refusal to join today's energy transformation movement means it is being left behind as neighboring

utilities push ahead in choosing less risky, less expensive and less polluting options. For example, Xcel Energy, another large utility provider in the West, is ditching expensive coal units in Colorado and will bring savings to its customers by fully investing in solar, wind, electricity storage and energy efficiency.

PacifiCorp's economic analysis — if it ever does become public — would most likely confirm that many of its coal units cannot compete with wind and solar. Meanwhile, just for comparison, the Sierra Club commissioned an economic analysis from the Utah-based, independent energy consulting firm, Energy Strategies.

A retired coal-fired power plant in Price Canyon, Utah. Don Barrett / CC Flickr

Using publicly available data, this independent analysis compared the present value of each of the utility's coal-fired power plant's operating and capital costs with alternatives such as market purchases, solar and wind. We knew there'd be some information gaps, because only PacifiCorp knows how much it spends on operating its plants and on the terms of its fuel contracts.

What did Energy Strategies find? Bad news for PacfiCorp: Half of its coal-fired power plants run at a higher cost than solar or market purchases from PacifiCorp's neighbors. Almost all of PacifiCorp's 22 coal units run at a higher cost than wind. So what did PacifiCorp find? We may never know. But the Sierra Club is dedicated to getting answers, which is why it is challenging the utility's decision to keep its findings under lock and key. We do know that only 7% of PacifiCorp's energy production comes from wind and a pathetic 0.08% from solar. So though PacifiCorp claims to be a "clean energy leader," it is actually a coal-heavy user that balks at tapping into the abundant wind and solar potential throughout all of its service territory.

The facts are clear: The costs of coal are going up, and these costs are a significant driver of customers' energy bills. We've seen real-world examples of how customers can save money when utilities shift from coal to clean energy. PacifiCorp can hide its own numbers from customers, but it doesn't change these facts. It's time for PacifiCorp to become the energy leader it pretends to be.

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Power Update

October 2018

United Power Celebrates National Cooperative Month in October

The demand for renewable energy, electric vehicles and new technology is at an all-time high. As your electric provider, we are focused on utilizing the latest technology to bring you safe and reliable power.

This October, United Power will join more than 30,000 cooperatives across the country to celebrate National Co-op Month.

Technological improvements continue to change the future of our industry, but one thing about us will always remain unchanged. As your cooperative, we operate under a set of principles that impact how we interact and engage with our members and the communities we serve.

At their core, cooperatives care for their communities. From educating and empowering youth through safety demonstrations, scholarship opportunities or leadership training to sponsoring local fairs, festivals and parades, you'll regularly find United Power actively involved in and around the communities we serve.

United Power is dedicated to supporting community growth and development. Our employees work as partners in the cities and towns we serve, helping each community reach its vision for the future. Employees are encourages to have active roles within their communities through involvement in local organizations and charities, sitting on boards and councils and support for schools.

We understand what really prepares us for the future is you, our members. United Power is proud to be a part of America's cooperative network, and we are dedicated to bringing safe, reliable electricity to our members.

The #WhoPowersYou Contest: Help Spread Positive Energy

Local heroes make our communities better places to live. In honor of their inspiration and service in our lives, United Power has again partnered with Touchstone Energy Cooperatives to bring back **#WhoPowersYou**.

This is an opportunity to celebrate those people who have made a difference in our lives and in our communities.

Contest Details:

- Make your nomination at www.WhoPowersYou.com/enter
- Judges will announce winners in early December
- Prizes include: $5,000 Grand Prize; $2,000 Second Place; $1,500 Third Place; $500 Honorable Mention

UNITED POWER
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Monsterville Trick or Treat

October 31st www.Monsterville.com

Camp Eden Area 5 - 8 pm

808 Copperdale Lane
Quaint Mountain Home
3 BD/ 2 BA 1,204 sq.ft. **$369,900**

166 Hummingbird Lane
Remodeled Ranch - 1.3 Acres
3 BD/ 4 BA 3,192 sq.ft. **$499,000**

616 Tunnel 19 Road
Divide/Gross Dam VIEWS! 8.9 Acres
3 BD/ 3 BA 3,319 sq.ft. **$874,900**

BUY OR SELL A HOME with Kathy Keating & USE the moving truck for FREE

34121 Skyline Drive
Remodeled w/Mt Evans Views!
3 BD/ 3 BA 1,481 sq.ft. 1.5 Acres **$379,000**

33888 Sky Vu Drive
Amazing Hm w/Longs Peak View!
4 BD/ 3 BA 2,248 sq.ft. 3.29 Ac **$494,000**

200 The Lane Road
Spectacular Remodeled Mtn Home
3 BD/2 BA 1,423 sq.ft. 2.44 Ac. **$429,000**

11437 Coal Creek Heights
Mtn Home w/City VIEWS of Denver
2 BD/2 BA 2,443 sq.ft. 1.47 Ac. **$369,000**

606 Haul Road
Remodeled Mtn Home- Borders Nat'l Forest
3 BD/3 BA 3,600 sq.ft. 2.37 Ac. **$574,900**

1720 Gross Dam Road
Exquisite Home VIEWS - Pool - 4 Acres
4 BD/ 4 BA 5,913 sq.ft. **$899,000**

805 29th Street
Convenient Spanish Towers Condo
1 BD/ 1 BA VIEWS **$284,900**

776 Louis Drive
Beautiful Central City Condo
2 BD/ 3 BA 1,514 sq.ft. **$300,000**

25 Olde Carter Lake Road
Log Sided Mtn Home w/ Garage
1 BD/ 1 BA 916 sq.ft. .32 Acre **$286,000**

266 Aspen Drive
Remodeled Thruout, Engulfed in Aspens
3 BD/2 BA 2,036 sq.ft. .95 Ac **$482,000**

11773 Hillcrest Road
Private, Cozy Mtn Retreat Remodeled
2 BD/ 2 BA 1.15 Acre

33867 Ave De Pines
Beautiful Log Sided Hm - VIEWS
1 BD/ 1 BA 2.8 Acres **$269,000**

Kathy Keating,
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MOCK REALTY

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