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**About the Cover:  
Great Horned Owl  
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# The Wise Great Horned Owl

## Habitat

Forests, woodlots, streamsides, open country. Found in practically all habitats in North America, from swamps to deserts to northern coniferous forest near treeline. In breeding season avoids tundra and unbroken grassland, since it requires some trees or heavy brush for cover.

Found almost throughout North America and much of South America is this big owl. Aggressive and powerful in its hunting (sometimes known by nicknames such as “tiger owl”), it takes prey as varied as rabbits, hawks, snakes, and even skunks, and will even attack porcupines, often with fatal results for both prey and predator. Great Horned Owls begin nesting very early in the north, and their deep hoots may be heard rolling across the forest on mid-winter nights.

**Feeding Behavior** - Hunts mostly at night, sometimes at dusk. Watches from high perch, then swoops down to capture prey in its talons. Has extremely good hearing and good vision in low light conditions. In north in winter, may store uneaten prey, coming back later to thaw out frozen carcass by “incubating” it.

**Eggs** - 2-3, sometimes 1-5, rarely 6. Dull whitish. Incubation mostly by female, 28-35 days. Young: Both parents take part in providing food for young owls. Young may leave nest and climb on nearby branches at 5 weeks, can fly at about 9-10 weeks; tended and fed by parents for up to several months.

**Diet** - Varied, mostly mammals and birds. Mammals make up majority of diet in most regions. Takes many rats, mice, and rabbits, also ground squirrels, opossums, skunks, many others. Eats some birds (especially in north), up to size of geese, ducks, hawks, and smaller owls. Also eats snakes, lizards, frogs, insects, scorpions, rarely fish.

**Nesting** - May begin nesting very early in north (late winter), possibly so that young will have time to learn hunting skills before next winter begins. In courtship, male performs display flight, also feeds female. Nest: Typically uses old nest of other large bird, such as hawk, eagle, crow,

heron, usually 20-60’ above ground; also may nest on cliff ledge, in cave, in broken-off tree stump, sometimes on ground. Adds little or no nest material, aside from feathers at times.

**Songs and Calls** - Series of low, sonorous, far-carrying hoots, hoo, hoo-hoo, hoo, hoo, with second and third notes shorter than the others.

The legs, feet, and talons are large and powerful. Tarsal length is (2.1–3.1 in). The average foot span of a fully spread foot, from talon to talon, is around (7.9 in), as compared to (3.1 in) in long-eared owls, (5.1 to 5.9 in) in barn owls, and (7.1 in) in the great grey owl. Great horned owls can apply at least 300 lb/in of crushing power in their talons, a pressure considerably greater than the human hand is capable of exerting. In some big females, the gripping power of the great horned owl may be comparable to much larger raptor species such as the golden eagle. The hard, inflexible bill of the great horned owl is (1.3–2.0 in) long, although the culmen, the exposed bill portion as measured along the top of the beak, is only (0.83 to 1.30 in).

The outer ear openings, which are concealed by feathers on the sides of the head, are *(Continued on next page.)*



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## Highlander Wildlife

relatively smaller than those of the Eurasian eagle owl, being (0.91 in) in vertical axis, with the left ear slightly larger than the right. Like most exclusively (or near exclusively) nocturnal species, the great horned owl has asymmetrical ear holes that allow for the triangulation of sounds when hunting in the dark.

Rodenticides are designed to kill mammals such as rats and mice. It should therefore come as no surprise that these products commonly poison non-target wildlife species. Numerous studies have documented harm to mammals and birds. Other vertebrate species, such as reptiles and amphibians, are also at risk. Most rodenticides work by disrupting the normal blood clotting or coagulation process so that dosed individuals suffer from uncontrolled bleeding or hemorrhaging. This hemorrhaging can occur spontaneously or from any cuts or scratches. Because internal hemorrhaging is difficult to spot, often the only indication of poisoning in exposed wildlife is that they are weak or listless. Signs of bleeding



from the nose or mouth may be visible on occasion. Affected wildlife may be more likely to crash into structures or moving vehicles or to be killed by predators. This makes these poisonings even more difficult to document. Wildlife poisonings have been documented in over 25 wildlife species including: San Joaquin kit foxes, Pacific fishers, golden eagles, bald eagles, bobcats, mountain lions, black bears, coyotes, gray foxes, red foxes, Cooper's hawks, red-shouldered hawks, red-tailed hawks, kestrels, barn owls, great horned owls, long-eared owls, western screech owls, spotted owls, Swainson's hawks, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, opossums, turkey vultures and crows.

American Indian tribes ascribed knowledge and spirituality to the Owl.

*This photo and the cover both by Jennifer Lomeli.*

*Sources: National Audubon Society, Wikipedia and Safe Rodent Control.*

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# Sworn To Refuse: Courage!

By Valerie Wedel

On 13 September, 2020, Sworn to Refuse members were interviewed by phone and email: Matt Nicodemus, co-founder, Sworn to Refuse; Jonathan Singer, Representative, Colorado State Legislature; Cliff Smedley, member, Sworn to Refuse.

**Wedel:** “When and why did Sworn to Refuse start?”

**Nicodemus:** “The idea for StR began during the 2015-16 campaign for President of the United States. During his presidential campaign, Donald Trump advocated a return to torture as United States policy. He also asked ‘why did we not take oil from Iraq while we were there?’ Within days of these statements, high level military leaders publicly stated they would refuse to break United States law, even if such an order came from the Commander in Chief. These military leaders reminded all of us they would uphold the United States Military Code of Justice. While our military already has an oath similar to Sworn to Refuse, not all levels of our society are aware of this type of code, or protected by it.”

The Military Code of Justice gives our military leaders the explicit right and duty to uphold our country’s laws. This overrides orders from any specific political party. StR

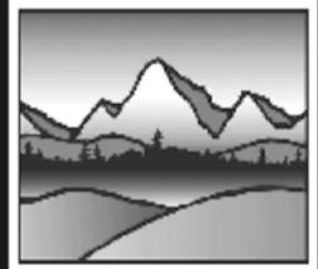
seeks to educate, encourage and support all government employees to do the right thing, by refusing to do the wrong thing. This includes all levels of government. It includes election workers, to help ensure fair 2020 elections. It includes our police officers, whom so many of us deeply respect and appreciate for their courageous service.

StR Member Cliff Smedley brought StR into the Colorado state democratic party, as a “plank” in it’s platform. According to Smedley, it is important to realize this is much more than the Whistle Blower protections already in place. The vision of StR means legislating explicit protection for all public servants, in the moment that they act. Having this protection in place is designed to help prevent illegal action and abuse of power.

Sworn to Refuse is working on a resolution for Colorado State employees, with Representative Jonathan Singer. The team hopes Governor Polis will sign this into law as an executive order this fall, before the upcoming Presidential elections. The Colorado legislature can then review when they convene in January of 2021. It is hoped this resolution will provide a national model for other states and also our federal government.

*(Continued on next page.)*

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## Highlander Politics

**Wedel:** “Rep. Singer, why did you decide to work with Sworn to Refuse on this resolution?”

**Rep. Singer:** “... This is incredibly timely right now!” Singer reminds us that thanks in part to the Black Lives Matter movement, Colorado has become the first state in our nation to pass legislation holding police more accountable for their actions in the field. The Police Integrity and Accountability law was passed this summer in part because similar bills had been put forth previously, so their legal language could be borrowed to help draft a strong bill quickly. In other words, a conversation about police accountability had already begun here in Colorado.

Rep. Singer described one of his Republican colleagues in the House citing hazards to our police as a result of this bill. This is a very real concern. Police officers could find themselves between a rock and a hard place. For example, if a junior officer refuses an order from a senior officer in the field, or seeks to interfere in what he or she feels is unlawful behavior, his/her career could be over. However, if the junior officer follows the order and is later judged to have aided and abetted an unlawful order, again his/her career could be over.

What protection is there for our police officers, to actually stand up and do the right thing? Especially while standing between one civilian group decrying police brutality, and another civilian group demanding law and

order? We now have the first law in our nation seeking to protect civilians. What about also protecting our police officers, and other government workers?

Regarding our police forces, Singer says, “This is the perfect time for the state [of Colorado] to say we are going to make your right to refuse explicit in state law!”

**Rep. Singer agrees with Smedley:** “Regarding the Presidential election... We want this very public – state workers need explicit protection if they are trying to do the right thing. This is different from Whistle Blower laws, in that it aims to protect ethical action in the moment it is happening.”

**Wedel:** “What steps have been taken?”

**Rep. Singer:** “We have reached out to the Fraternal Order of Police... If we are talking about acting with integrity, let’s make sure the police are supported! The ACLU is also interested. We would like to bring together civil liberties, civil rights, and police groups. Normally these groups may be in conflict with each other. This StR legislation is a way of bringing diverse groups together with a shared goal.

**Wedel:** What next steps do you see to achieve the Executive Order before elections this fall?

**Rep. Singer:** “[Keep] laying ground work now – continue building a broader coalition, at grass roots and policy level. [We also need to] understand how the nuts and bolts work in HR system at the State level - how can this be implemented by HR? We need the State Attorney General to review the measure, relative to our state constitution. [There are] ...multiple paths to turn a beautiful idea into reality. We will also work with the legislative session in January, 2021. Remember the clerk who refused to sign same sex marriage certificates on religious grounds. This law might be abused, so we need plans in place.”

**Nicodemus:** Another example of abusing law recently are some Sheriffs refusing to support the Red Flag Law. A good safeguard for refusing orders is testing in our courts for right or wrong action. The StR legislation can be tested this way.”

**Rep. Singer:** “I hope this StR legislation will be reproduced throughout the country, and be historic for supporting true democracy and true rule of law. I hope it will be a bipartisan opportunity. I hope to bring left and right together to do something good for everyone.”

**What you can do to help:** Sworn to Refuse has a MoveOn petition addressed directly to oath-taking election workers, to support fair elections. Add your voice: [https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/oath-taking-election-workers-refuse-illegal-orders-to-ensure-fair-2020elections?fbclid=IwAR3ycJ9KWUOotMK4YMnhlnau\\_QBCbB1j6VbNPWD8JcU-EQ2ZGaRbrGq0maU](https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/oath-taking-election-workers-refuse-illegal-orders-to-ensure-fair-2020elections?fbclid=IwAR3ycJ9KWUOotMK4YMnhlnau_QBCbB1j6VbNPWD8JcU-EQ2ZGaRbrGq0maU)

The measure draft needs to be translated into appropriate legal language. Continuing grassroots coalition building is in the works. Readers are asked to get in touch with StR: [swornrefuse.info@gmail.com](mailto:swornrefuse.info@gmail.com) or via facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/sworn2refuse>

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# Response To Prop. 113 The Nat'l Popular Vote

## Letter to the Editor,

Ok, are you a journalist that only prints your point of view, or do you give space to another point of view? This is in response to your article, *4 Reasons to Support National Popular Vote*, in the September Highlander that tried to build a case for the popular vote.

Can I assume you are advocating a Constitutional Convention to amend Article II, Section 1 of the United States Constitution or do you just want to ignore that dated document that does not align with your wishes? There was a reason the Founding Fathers instituted the provision for an Electoral College.

Let's look at voting by population if all were voters. Taking population count according to <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states>, the top ten population account for 179 million (rounding to the nearest million) while the rest of the nation accounts for just 156 million (rounding to the nearest million). If we went to the popular vote, ten states would govern for the rest.

Looking back on the 2016 election, go to <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/> and click around to counties' results. Clinton won 490 counties and Trump won 2,4622 counties. (*Assuming you put the comma in the wrong place you may mean 24,622?*)

If we went to a popular vote, the cities and a few states would rule over everyone else. Not just one election year but every election year. That isn't what I want nor is it valid under the United States Constitution.

Marian Trowbridge and Walter Marciniak

Marian and Walter, thank you for taking the time and energy to respond to what you read in last month's issue about the Popular Vote. One of the points your argument fails to note is that while certain states may have more population numbers – not all of those people vote – and to address your other important concern about the Constitutional ramifications...the myth that: The National Popular Vote “sidesteps” the Constitution - The National Popular Vote ensures the presidential candidate that wins

the most popular votes nationwide wins the election and it does that by working within the provisions of the United States Constitution. Article II, Section 1, Clause 2 of the United States Constitution says: “Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors.” **The winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes is not in the U.S.**

**Constitution.** It was not debated at the 1787 Constitutional Convention. It was not mentioned in the Federalist Papers. It was used by only three states in the first presidential election in 1789 (and all three repealed it by 1800).

The National Popular Vote preserves the Electoral College while at the same time making sure every vote for President throughout the country counts equally. Our founders set up the Electoral College as the way to elect our President, but purposefully did not specify how those Electors would be selected or allocated. States have used many different methods to select and allocate their Electors during our history. Currently 48 states, including Colorado, have a “winner-take-all” system which means the candidate that wins the most popular votes within Colorado gets all of Colorado's electors. Nothing in the United States Constitution requires this; in fact, the majority of states did not implement a winner-take-all system until our 11th Presidential election.

**Proposition 113, the National Popular Vote**, simply changes Colorado's statewide winner-take-all system to a nationwide winner-take-all system. Whichever presidential candidate receives the most votes in all fifty states plus Washington, DC gets the electoral votes from Colorado and the other states in the agreement. The President and Vice-President are our only nationwide elected office holders and the National Popular Vote treats their selection like a true nationwide election. The most popular votes wins – just like every other election throughout our nation.

For more information explaining the Constitutional basis for the National Popular Vote, read *Myths about the U.S. Constitution in Every Vote Equal*: a state-based plan for electing the President by (Continued on next page.)



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## Highlander Letters

National Popular Vote or watch the video on the National Popular Vote website.

The National Popular Vote guarantees the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states. During the 2019 legislative session the Colorado legislature passed, and Governor Polis signed the National Popular Vote into law (SB19-042). Colorado joined with 14 other states and the District of Columbia, together representing 196 electoral votes, in passing the National Popular Vote. The National Popular Vote law will go into effect when enacted by states possessing a majority of the presidential electors—that is, 270 of 538. All the electoral votes from those states will then be awarded to the candidate receiving the most votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

This November, Coloradans will be asked to approve the decision of the Legislature and the Governor to join the National Popular Vote with Proposition 113. **A YES vote on Proposition 113 supports the National Popular Vote.**

### **The Clear Benefits of the National Popular Vote (Proposition 113)**

The National Popular Vote fixes the electoral college. It replaces the current state-by-state winner-take-all system of awarding electoral college votes and therefore guarantees

every voter matters and the candidates with the most votes wins the election.

### **The candidate with the most popular votes in all 50 states and DC should win**

The presidential candidate who wins the national popular vote should be president –period. Under the current system, however, the candidate who lost the national popular vote has become president in two of the last five elections. Voting YES on Proposition 113, the National Popular Vote, would ensure that the candidate with the most votes wins.

Living in a democracy should mean “one person, one vote” to ensure everyone’s vote counts equally. Our current system for electing the president is broken because it makes some people’s vote count more than others. In America, every voter deserves to be treated equally, no matter what state they live in or what political party they belong to. Voting YES on Proposition 113 will ensure that every vote is counted equally. Presidential candidates should focus on all 50 states – not just on the handful of closely divided “swing” or “battleground” states they think will decide the election. Thank you again to Marian and Walter for this opportunity to dispel the myth and inform my readers.

**Editor**

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# The Wreckreation In Our Wild Places

By Todd Wilkinson - Writers On The Range - HCN

Mark DeOpsomer of Bozeman, Montana, is a backpacker with lots of miles on his soles. For almost four decades he's gone to the remotest corners of the Northern Rockies.

On a recent trek 24 miles into the Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana, he was relaxing along the banks of a creek, when out of nowhere a pack-rafter floated by. "I'd never seen any rafters before in The Bob but now they're all over the place," he said.

A few weeks later, he was driving to a trailhead at the end of a bumpy 50-mile-long dirt road along the Wind River Range of Wyoming. "There's a game we like to play guessing the number of cars you expect to see in the parking lot," he said. "Given that this is a strange year, I thought maybe 30. But there were over 200 and the scene was total mayhem."

License plates on vehicles hailed from two dozen states and makeshift camps (without designated bathrooms) were everywhere.

At Forest Service campgrounds near Jackson, Wyoming, piles of human waste and toilet paper were ubiquitous and so was litter. The smelly messes were spread throughout an area in the middle of public land frequented by bears, including at times the famous Jackson Hole Grizzly 399 and her cubs.

When talking with managers of state and federal public lands these pandemic days, two issues popped up: what to do about large amounts of human feces deposited in wild places and how to handle far too many visitors. Both issues have served as a wake-up call to both land managers and environmentalists about the downsides of recreation.

"The crush of people and the ecological impacts of rising recreation uses is right here, among us – right now – and it's transforming the character of wild places."

"It's like we've stared into a future that wasn't supposed to arrive for a few decades," said Randy Carpenter, who works with the community-planning organization FutureWest, in Bozeman. "The crush of people and the ecological impacts of rising recreation uses is right here, among us – right now – and it's transforming the character of wild places."

A paper published in the scientific journal *PLOS One* reviewed 274 scientific studies completed between 1981 and 2015 that examined the effects of recreation on a variety of animal species across all geographic areas and recreational activities. Kevin Crooks, a conservation biologist at Colorado State University, said given what we know now, "It might be time to establish limits on public access to protected areas and encourage changes in the behavior of recreationists."

Though conservation groups continue to point fingers at

logging, mining and ranching, they've been slow to acknowledge impacts from outdoor recreation.

Last winter, at a U.S. Forest Service meeting in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, biologists noted that backcountry skiing and snowboarding were harming a dwindling, isolated herd of bighorn sheep. Displaying what can only be called a crass attitude, one skier was heard to remark: "Well, the sheep have had these mountains for 10,000 years. Now it's our turn."

Justin Farrell, the author of the book *Billionaire Wilderness: The Ultra-Wealthy and the Remaking of the American West*, grew up in Wyoming, watched it change as big money moved in, and now teaches at Yale. He told me recently, "It's too easy for all of us to look the other way — a sort of willful ignorance — to not really see and examine the actual impacts of recreation."

Some recreationists insist on a quid pro quo: They'll advocate protecting public land only if they're allowed to use some of it. It's happened in Idaho over wilderness and recently in debates over how to safeguard wildlife habitat in the Gallatin Range of southwest Montana.

An outdoor industry eager to get its slice of an \$800 billion pie helps fuel the rush to the West's public lands. Farrell says that outdoor-product (Continued on next page.)

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## Highlander Issues

manufacturers push hard for increased access to public lands in part because more users boost their bottom lines.

Conservation groups continue to point fingers at logging, mining and ranching, but they've been slow to acknowledge impacts from outdoor recreation.

Meanwhile, many state tourism bureaus – like those in Montana, Wyoming and Utah – spend millions of dollars advertising national parks and other places that are already uncomfortably overcrowded.

“Critical discussions about recreation are rare because these activities are layered with a thin veneer of innocence,” Farrell said. This recalls a narrative of heedless use that goes back to the 19th and 20th centuries: Exploit a special place until it's used up and then move on, leaving waste, damage and displaced wildlife behind.

The problem is there aren't many true wild places left to exploit.



*Packrafts are becoming more common in what were once less-traveled areas, as seen here at Youngs Creek in Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness. Troy Smith/CC via Flickr*

*Todd Wilkinson is a contributor to Writers on the Range, (writersontherange.org), a non-profit spurring lively conversation about the West. He is the Bozeman-based correspondent for National Geographic and the Guardian and founder of Mountain Journal.*

**Editor's Note:** As a

long time whitewater rafter from the early days, we were prohibited from putting our raft onto any river without a groover, i.e. a 5-gallon bucket with a toilet seat and sealing lid. Hiker's equivalents (*Ammo cans with liners.*) were also required. Why important regulations are not enforced to all recreationists wishing to use public lands or Nat'l Forests without amenities is beyond me. Rangers that can check for reservation permits and required gear... that were there in the 80's & 90's... are sadly missing these days.



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# Candidate For Gilpin County Commission

## Candidate Sandy Hollingworth for Gilpin County Commissioner

This is one of the most challenging times for our local residents and government. Those who live or work in Gilpin County know that it is the hardest hit county economically due to Covid 19. This has meant shrinking family budgets, challenges for small businesses, and county government staff and department budget cuts. Hundreds of casino jobs froze when the pandemic meant closure of these vital businesses. Our community recreation center and public buildings also closed. We are slowly working our way out of the lows in part due to casinos safely reopening, residents taking precautions, and adjusting the financial path of budgets. We are fortunate to have neighbors who are also our first responders, small businesses that we are loyal to, and dedicated public employees who provide caring human services, essential services, and decent roads.



I have lived in Gilpin County for 22 years. Over these years I have been very engaged in the community volunteering with service groups, our neighborhood association, committees, and projects toward making our county a strong place to live. My favorite part of campaigning is the opportunity to talk with individuals, families, and groups about what matters most to them and the direction that they wish for our rural mountain community. People love their homes and their community. I understand that listening to the ideas and feedback from residents, plus respecting varied viewpoints, and lifestyles, is an integral part of decisive future planning.

I grew up in a career military family, learning the value of public service which led me on a path as a Social Worker with people from diverse backgrounds. My municipal government experience in Housing and Human Services for nearly 25 years ranged from caseworker to division manager. I will bring to the job of County Commissioner my experience in budget oversight, strategic planning, program and policy development, collaboration with nonprofit and private entities, and employee recruitment and training. I am helping to reopen the community center, address food insecurity, and bring a health clinic back to the county. I serve High Country Auxiliary to support the fire and animal rescue response teams which we all depend on, CSU Extension, food bank, and Senior Living Board.

County Commissioners govern, oversee land use and budgetary decisions, and respond to resident concerns. It is not unusual that people who have lived in the county for

decades, even generations, have different opinions from recent residents about what is best for and desired in the county and their neighborhoods. Decisions can have long lasting impacts and need to consider the pressures on people, property, public land, water and first responders. Add in the statutory and regulatory requirements and no decision is made lightly. In talking with residents from Russell Gulch to Rollinsville, people are concerned about development in areas without safe emergency routes, mining contamination, overuse of trailheads, healthcare and our economy. It is important that people feel heard, our public lands are used safely by all types of recreation, forests are kept healthy with strong wildfire protection and emergency preparedness plans, core county services are staffed, local small businesses can grow, and we support services to meet the needs of our youth and our aging county, all with fiscal sustainability for the long haul. It would be an honor to serve as your next County Commissioner to help Gilpin County work toward positive solutions. Feel free to contact me at Sandy-forgilpin@gmail.com or www.SandyforGilpin.com



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# 48 Extinctions Prevented By Conservation Actions

From CSU

## The Denver Zoo houses a small herd of Przewalski's horses, one of the success stories in this research.

Conservation action has prevented the global extinction of at least 28 bird and mammal species since 1993, according to a study led by Newcastle University in the United Kingdom and BirdLife International. Colorado State University's Sarah King, research scientist in the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory, is a co-author of the study, published September 10 in *Conservation Letters*.

The international team of scientists estimated that up to 32 bird and 16 mammal species would have disappeared forever without conservation efforts in recent decades. The species highlighted include Przewalski's horse, Iberian lynx and the Black stilt, a wading bird found in New Zealand, among others.

King, who has been studying the Przewalski's horse for 20 years, described the animal as prehistoric and similar to horses portrayed in ancient cave paintings. The horses went extinct in the wild in the 1960s.

In the 1990s, conservationists began reintroduction

efforts and in 1996, the first Przewalski's horse was born in the wild. Now, more than 760 of these horses are roaming the steppes of Mongolia once again.

## Actions taken to preserve rare species

The study highlights the most frequent actions to prevent extinctions in bird and mammal species. Twenty-one bird species benefited from invasive species control, 20 from conservation in zoos and collections and 19 from site protection. Fourteen mammal species benefited from legislation and nine from species re-introductions and conservation in zoos and collections.

The research team identified bird and mammal species that were listed as threatened on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List.

They subsequently compiled information from 137 experts on the population size, trends, threats and actions implemented for the most threatened birds and mammals to estimate the likelihood that each species would have gone extinct without action. Their findings show that without conservation actions, extinction rates would have been around three to four times greater.



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**Species preserved from extinction**

One of the species the team evaluated was the Puerto Rican amazon, a small parrot species that lives on the island of Puerto Rico. The formerly abundant population was at its lowest in 1975, when only 13 individuals remained in the wild. Since 2006, efforts were made to reintroduce the species to the Rio Abajo State Park on Puerto Rico. In 2017, hurricanes wiped out the original population, leaving only the reintroduced population at Rio Abajo.

Other species remain only in captivity, but there are opportunities for such species to be reintroduced into the wild. This gives hope that other species that are now only held in zoos, collections, or for plants in botanic gardens and seed banks, will be successfully returned to the wild in the future.

The Denver Zoo houses a small herd of Przewalski's horses, and this type of conservation is critical, said King, who has served as co-chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Equid Specialist Group since 2007.

"Zoos get bashed a lot, but they have prevented the extinction of species," she said.

Some species included in the study, such as the vaquita, a species of porpoise found in the northern end of the Gulf of California, are still rapidly declining.

King said that while conservation actions have been very helpful for some species, others may yet go extinct.



Rike Bolam, lead author of the study and a post-doctoral research associate from Newcastle University, said the analyses provide a strikingly positive message that conservation has substantially reduced extinction rates for birds and mammals.

Professor Phil McGowan, a co-author from Newcastle University who leads the IUCN Species Survival Commission task force, said that while the study provides a glimmer of hope, "we mustn't forget that in the same period,

15 bird and mammal species went extinct or are strongly suspected to have gone extinct."

"We usually hear bad stories about the biodiversity crisis and there is no doubt that we are facing an unprecedented loss in biodiversity through human activity," said McGowan. "The loss of entire species can be stopped if there is sufficient will to do so. This is a call to action: showing the scale of the issue and what we can achieve if we act now to support conservation and prevent extinction."

*(Photograph of the Przewalski Horse, courtesy of Claudia Feh.)*

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# Arctic National Wildlife Refuge May Be Saved

By Victoria Petersen Sept. 11, 2020 High Country News

Every summer, the Porcupine caribou herd travels hundreds of miles to return to the northernmost edge of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on Alaska’s North Slope. There, on the coastal plain known as Area 1002, the cows give birth to calves, and the animals forage for food and huddle together against the swarms of mosquitoes.

The caribou are protected, almost, by the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which granted federal protection to more than a quarter of Alaska’s 375 million acres, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Most of the nearly 20-million-acre refuge was designated as wilderness, but the coastal plain was set aside for oil and gas development, if and when Congress approved it. Since then, politicians have batted the issue back and forth, neither fully protecting the region or opening it up. Last month, though, the current Executive administration opened the entire 1.56 million acres of the 1002 for leasing, removing the last regulatory hurdle to the prospect of well pads, roads and pipelines in the calving grounds and setting the stage for the exploitation of one of the conservation movement’s most important sites.


The fate of the area, and the caribou that depend on it, is


not yet sealed, however. Before drill rigs can move in, developers must overcome other legal and political challenges, along with an increasingly uncertain petroleum economy and the possibility of a new presidential administration.

The latest obstacle was thrown up on Sept. 9, when 15 state governments in the Lower 48 and three Alaska tribal entities south of the Refuge — Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government, Arctic Village Council and Venetie Village Council — all took separate legal action against the federal government to try to stop the lease sale. That’s in addition to other lawsuits filed last month by the Gwich’in Steering Committee — which advocates for 15 Gwich’in communities in Alaska and Canada — with 12 other environmental organizations, and another from a coalition of conservation groups. “We used to migrate alongside (the caribou) for over 40,000 years,” Bernadette Demientieff, executive director of the Steering Committee, said in an interview. “We can’t survive without them.” The Gwich’in Steering Committee was formed in 1988 in response to proposals to drill in the herd’s calving grounds. With the help of other conservation groups, the Gwich’in managed to convince major banks — including Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase — to curtail or ban

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investment in fossil fuel projects in Alaska, a serious matter for an industry still reeling from low oil prices.

Even if the conservationists' legal and political challenges fail, petroleum companies will have to decide whether developing the coastal plain is worth it. Oil prices have been relatively low for the last five years, and new drilling techniques have opened up huge, more appealing reserves in shale formations in the Lower 48.

The oil industry's longtime "holy grail" — drilling the Arctic Refuge — is no longer quite as alluring, said Philip Wight, a professor specializing in Arctic energy history at University of Alaska Fairbanks. The industry is transforming, and arguments for drilling in ANWR to supercharge revenues for Alaska simply don't pencil out, he said.

The current presidency and its Republican-led Congress gave Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, the opportunity to insert a provision approving a lease sale into the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Nevertheless, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act initiated an environmental analysis of exploration and development possibilities, which wrapped up this August, when Interior Secretary David Bernhardt signed the record of decision setting the first lease sale of the 1002 for late 2021. But a new president could reverse the approval: A campaign spokesman told the Associated Press last month that Joseph Biden seeks to "permanently protect ANWR and other areas impacted by this administrations attacks on federal lands and waters." A new president could use the Antiquities Act to declare the coastal plain a national monument, permanently halting the lease sale. "There is just so much that changed to make this happen that can change completely with the next administration," Siqiniq Maupin, Arctic community organizer for Native Movement and the director of Sovereign Inupiaq for a Living Arctic, said in an interview.



*Caribou from the Porcupine herd in ANWR. Peter Mather*

Given all the political and economic uncertainties, drilling in the Arctic may simply be too risky for companies today. For now, the fate of the Porcupine caribou lies in the invisible hand of the market, buffeted by political changes that are hard to predict. Guessing what the world is going to look like in the 2030s and beyond is a "substantial risk," Larry Persily, the former federal coordinator for gas projects in Alaska, said. "You cannot hold on (to a lease) for 20 years in speculation. If you don't do something, you won't make the money back. That's a lot of crystal ball work."

*Victoria Petersen is an intern at High Country News*

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# Winterizing

From Jim Plane – State Farm Insurance

## Winterizing your home to protect against snow and freezing temps can help withstand the ups and downs of winter.

Is your home or apartment ready for the upcoming winter months?

No matter where you live, winter can signal a dip in temperatures and the possibility of unpredictable weather, including inches of snow and dangerous ice.

**Winterizing** - from climates that expect snow and below-freezing temps for months to regions that experience a cooling off and unpredictable precipitation - can help your home withstand the ups, downs and erratic moods of Mother Nature. Use these tips to make sure your home is ready for the season.

### Tips to prepare the inside of your home for winter

The comforts of a cozy, warm home in winter can help you forget about the short days and the multiple layers of clothing. These tips can help you weather the winter season.

Have your furnace inspected. Since your heating system will probably be running constantly throughout the winter, you should have it inspected annually to help it run

efficiently and prevent CO2 from entering your home. Also remember to change out your HVAC filters every month.

Inspect the insulation in your attic and crawlspaces. Warm air rises and leaves the house through the roof, so you should focus on insulation in your ceilings. Insulating the crawlspaces will help keep your floors warm.

Seal potential leaks. Seal areas around recessed lights, the attic hatch, and plumbing vents that may be allowing warm air from the living space below to enter the attic.

Allow for ventilation. Proper attic ventilation, adequate attic insulation, and a tight air barrier between the attic and the interior of the house will work together to prevent ice dams.

Use window sheet kits. If you don't have double paned or storm windows pick up a plastic-film sheet kit from your local hardware store. These will only last one season, but they do help with energy efficiency and are able to halt the cold flow of winter drafts.

Apply weather stripping. Add weather stripping to doors and caulk window gaps. Make sure all windows are locked to keep out as much cold air as possible.

Use a fireplace. If you plan to use it, schedule an inspection and service by a professional to make sure your chimney is clear of debris and make sure that your damper opens, closes, and seals tightly.

Insulate pipes. Pipes located in attics, crawl spaces, basements, and near outer walls can be susceptible to freezing in extreme temperatures. Insulate to help prevent your pipes from freezing. When the forecast calls for unusually cold temperatures: Let water drip from hot and cold faucets overnight. Keeping cabinet doors open to allow warm air to circulate in places like below sinks. If you open the cabinet doors, be sure to remove anything inside the cabinets that may pose a safety hazard to children, such as household cleaners.

Finally, consult your local utility company about an energy assessment to determine where your home is losing



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energy and what energy-smart investments would make sense.

**Outside winter home maintenance tips**

Tool checkup. Make sure your snow shovels are free from cracks. Schedule the annual tune-up for your snow blower, if you have one. Winterize outdoor faucets. Remove all hoses or devices attached to outdoor spigots. Be sure to drain any water left behind in the pipes. Have in-ground sprinkler systems blown out, and turn off water to the outdoor spigots.

Outdoor furniture. Wash upholstery and frames. In northern climates, store both furniture and cushions in a covered spot free from moisture. Install storm windows and doors. Storm windows and doors add a layer of protection to your home and help increase their energy efficiency. Clear any landscape debris and waste. Remove any debris or branches from around the HVAC unit, gas meters, away from basement windows, and your dryer exhaust vent. Cut back dead or dying limbs and any branches that can touch the roof or siding. When it's windy, branches can rub or scratch the surfaces of your home and cause damage. They also could fall during a storm or break under heavy snow and ice.

**Firewood. Store your firewood in a dry place at least 30 feet from your home to avoid a fire hazard.** Visually inspect your roof. Look for any missing or damaged shingles; consult a roof professional if needed. Ensure that all gutters are clean and securely attached to help prevent ice dams.

Outdoor lights. Ensure that lights at doors (front, back, and garage) are functioning. Replace any burned-out bulbs with more efficient LED options. Prevent pests. Walk around your house: check the foundation for small cracks or openings where mice or other pests can tunnel in. Winter is when they seek the warmth of your house, so seal up any possible entrances.

**Winter storm preparation tips**

Blackouts and snow-ins can occur during winter months, so take a moment to prepare yourself and your family for such winter emergencies. Having the following items ready will help you make it through safely: Battery-powered

flashlights or lanterns and extra batteries. Drinking and/or bottled water.

Nonperishable food items. Keep the pantry stocked: It's smart to keep your house stocked with groceries all winter long. Should the power go out, you'll want to have plenty of extra water and nonperishable food that you can prepare without cooking. Extra blankets, sleeping bags, and warm winter coats. Phone numbers for your utility companies. Cell phone and portable charger. Prescription drugs and other medicine. A battery-powered radio, with extra batteries, for listening to local emergency instructions. Battery backup to protect your computer and other important electronic equipment.

A first-aid kit. And you can also consider buying a generator. A permanent or portable generator can provide temporary power when and where you need it.

**Inspect winter decorations after a winter storm**

'Tis the season to be festive, but remember to stay safe with your holiday decorations. Inspect the wires of your light display before switching them on—they may be frayed and present an electrical fire hazard. Same goes for the Christmas tree inside - always check the light strands for any sign of wear and tear from being in storage. If you have a real Christmas tree, keep it watered, since dry trees catch fire easier.



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# 6 States Threaten Lawsuit Re: Lake Powell Pipeline

By Jason Blevins Sept. 14, 2020 High Country News  
**This Administration's plan to expedite review of Utah's diversion project undoes decades of collaborative agreements between the states that rely on the Colorado River.**

*The Glen Canyon Dam near Page, Arizona, sits on the Colorado River and forms Lake Powell, one of the largest man-made reservoirs in the U.S. Mircea Goia/CC via Flickr*  
*This story was originally published by The Colorado Sun and is republished here by permission.*

For more than 20 years, negotiations among the seven states that rely on the Colorado River have avoided lawsuits, even as drought and population growth threaten the river's flows. That may change as a promise to rush the environmental review of a diversion project between the Colorado River's upper and lower basins has six states suggesting lawsuits challenging the project could topple years of agreements. Colorado recently joined Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada and Wyoming in protesting a fast-tracked environmental review of the 140-mile Lake Powell Pipeline in Utah. Using special "national emergency" executive powers the president has during the pandemic, the Administration in June ordered the Interior Department to scale back environmental reviews of major infrastructure projects.

"Antiquated regulations and bureaucratic practices have hindered American infrastructure investments" and slowed growth in construction and trade jobs, the President said in the June 4 executive order. "Unnecessary regulatory delays will deny our citizens opportunities for jobs and economic security, keeping millions of Americans out of work and hindering our economic recovery from the national emergency," he wrote in the order, which did not cite specific projects. The Associated Press also identified more

than 60 energy, environmental, natural resource and transportation projects slated for expedited review, including the Lake Powell Pipeline.

The six states, in a letter sent to Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, said the probability of multi-year litigation over a rushed approval of the 20-year-old Lake Powell Pipeline plan was "high." The Colorado River Basin states have been working with Utah on details of the Lake Powell Pipeline plan for years.

The project would divert 86,000 acre-feet of Utah's allocated water from Lake Powell – which is the largest storage bank for managing upper basin water – to fast-growing downstream communities in the Colorado River's lower basin in southwest Utah.

The issue is not necessarily the actual water. The project would move water that belongs to Utah.

But the transfer of water from the upper basin to the lower basin has traditionally involved agreement between all seven Colorado River Basin states on details like accounting for the diverted water and how that fits into recent drought plans. The states were working on those details when the project was identified for a hurried final decision.

"This diversion and use of Colorado River water as currently described by Utah and the Lake Powell Pipeline Draft Environmental Impact Statement ... raises significant questions" under 1922 and 1948 agreements, reads the letter, which notes that the basin states did agree to divert upper basin water to the lower basin in New Mexico with the under-construction Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

"As a result of the collaborative approach embodied in these successes and other efforts, we have not only limited the risk that the Colorado River system will crash, we have done so without introducing the unpredictability and untimeliness of having courts weigh in on Colorado River



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Office: 303-642-0628    Cell: 303-882-9544  
Karen@SchwimmerCPA.com – SchwimmerCPA.com

management,” the letter reads.

The six states have not spoken publicly about Utah’s Lake Powell Pipeline project until now. Public comment on the Bureau of Reclamation’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement studying the pipeline ended, setting up a final decision that could come soon under this Administration’s order to fast-track the process. “The Lake Powell Pipeline’s prospects for success are substantially diminished if we are compelled to address such issues in the context of the current Lake Powell NEPA process rather than through the collaborative, seven-state process we have developed,” the letter to Bernhardt from the six states reads. The states also said the lawsuits likely would raise “certain Law of the River questions” that should be left to the states to resolve. Wrangling in court, the letter reads, “is not the recipe for creating the kind of meaningful and positive change needed to sustain the Colorado River in the coming decades.”

The line between the upper and lower basins anchors the complex arrangement among Colorado River Basin states known as the Law of the River, which dates back to 1922 and governs pretty much every drop of the Colorado River. The Law of the River has been forged through collaborative work among all seven states that rely on the Colorado River. As a now 21-year drought shrinks flows in the river while populations grow in each of the states, the compacts governing the Colorado River have been reached without the need for lawsuits or legal intervention forcing cuts or curtailments. Interim guidelines for lower basin shortages and last year’s “pain-sharing” drought contingency plans involved intense negotiations among the states as the volume of water flowing down the Colorado River failed to meet the demand. All of those negotiations revolve around storage and releases in the basin’s two impoundments, Lake Mead and Lake Powell.

A rushed Final Environmental Impact Statement could establish protocols for moving water from the upper basin to the lower basin without basin-wide agreement on details like the accounting of the diversion, use of the water and other operational issues under the Law of the River. “Really what we were trying to convey in the letter is that the Colorado River Basin states have a long history of working together collaboratively and working toward consensus,” said Becky Mitchell, the director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board who signed the letter to Bernhardt. “These relationships have successfully guided the management and operations of the system for many years. That’s why we have requested the Department of Interior refrain from issuing the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision until we have time to really reach consensus on the legal and operational issues.”

*Jason Blevins is a staff writer at The Colorado Sun.*

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# Denver Water Update

By Gary Wockner - 24 Aug, 2020

## Denver Water and the current Executive Branch join together to undermine National Environmental Policy Act

Recently Denver Water and the this administration joined together in trying to undermine the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws, as part of the federal government’s review of the massive Gross Dam expansion in Boulder County, Colorado. Both Denver Water and this president’s Department of Justice issued “motions to dismiss” in the lawsuit that Save The Colorado et al. have brought against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for giving a permit to the dam project. Both entities argue that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Federal Power Act “pre-empt” the Army Corps’ environmental reviews under NEPA and other laws, and thus the case can only be litigated against FERC.

However, earlier in the this ongoing legal battle, FERC — whose commissioners are appointed directly by the President denied Save The Colorado’s motion to intervene in the FERC permit process. If both motions are successful, Save The Colorado and the public would be shut out of the permitting review process.

“Denver Water is locking arms with this administration trying to silence public review, wreck the environment, and undermine an Act of Congress,” said Gary Wockner, director of **Save The Colorado**.

The legal attempt to shut out the public has no precedent in case law, and is directly countered by FERC’s own order which shut out **Save The Colorado** from the FERC proceeding. The FERC order states that the Corps is the “lead” agency and that FERC’s order does not “shield the Corps from judicial review.”

“Our attorneys are engaged and we are fighting this outrageous attempt to lock out the public every step of the way,” continued Wockner. “Denver Water’s bullying antics are now aligned directly with that of this president and we will fight them both as long as it takes.”

## Denver Water Drops Lawsuit

By Beverly Kurtz 31 Jul, 2020 TEG

### And agrees to go through 1041 process

Denver Water has withdrawn their court case against Boulder County and has announced that they will submit a 1041 permit application for expanding Gross Dam per state statute. This is something the county, with our support, has been pushing for. We DO want to celebrate that!

However...

Denver Water has shown time and time and again that they have no compunction in overrunning local regulations in their quest to undertake the largest, most destructive construction project in Boulder County history. A *Daily Camera* article quotes a Denver Water spokesman saying “We have long welcomed, and incorporated, input from Boulder County and the project neighbors and we look forward to continuing that process at the earliest possible date.” Interesting perspective given that they have cost the county much money and aggravation by fighting against the regulation requiring them to go through the local permitting process.

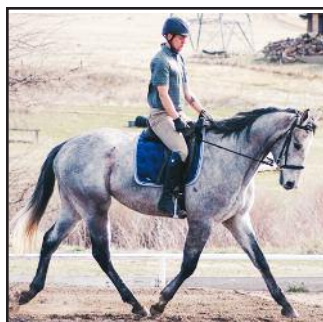
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Suing the county hardly showed good intentions.

So why the change of heart? The zebra has NOT changed its stripes. The recently issued FERC license order dictates that Denver Water start this project within two years and complete it within seven. Since it is no longer in their best interest to postpone a decision on the requirement to do a 1041 application, Denver Water suddenly claims to be good neighbors. WE ARE NOT FOOLED!

Boulder County 1041 permitting requirements are very stringent. We completely expect that Denver Water's goal is to 'dismiss' any significant issue around whether the project gets built - and that this will all very likely end up in court again. But in the meantime, we'll take this as a WIN!

It's absolutely critical that our Boulder County commissioners stay strong in requesting detailed plans and that they review and accurately assess the detrimental effects this project will have on the county's ecosystem and citizens. They must force Denver Water's compliance with Boulder County 1041 requirements. Please write the commissioners today to insist that they continue their vigilant defense of our county:

**Deb Gardner:** [dgardner@bouldercounty.org](mailto:dgardner@bouldercounty.org)  
**Elise Jones:** [ejones@bouldercounty.org](mailto:ejones@bouldercounty.org)  
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(Photo of Gross Reservoir by Shelly Peters-Schaller.)



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Here in Idaho we've been plagued by degraded air quality due to the wildfires across the western states. Humans and animals alike have been doing whatever we can to stay healthy in these harsh conditions. The wildfires raging across the west have raised awareness regarding the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events. My years of studying climate science, the geologic and archeologic record, and documenting pertinent oral testimonies of my tribal elders are paying off. For decades I have been observing the impacts of climate change and educating tribal youth on the deteriorating ecological conditions throughout my Nez Perce Homelands. Today, it is very difficult to see the world through the lens of an ecologist, climatologist, wildlife biologist, or as a person whose people have been on the landscape since time immemorial. For Yellowstone bison, climate change has been impacting their habitat. Those climate change impacts are being compounded by existing management priorities of the state of Montana and Yellowstone National Park through the Interagency Bison Management Plan. Climate change will reduce the availability of forage, disrupt or minimize symbiotic relationships, and decrease the persistence of other wildlife species within the ecosystem. We must continue our good work in restoring native grasses, and advocating for access to huge swathes of suitable habitat on federally-owned lands surrounding the park.

The warming climate in the Yellowstone Ecosystem is already changing regional precipitation patterns. The change in precipitation supports the introduction of invasive plants such as cheatgrass. The introduction of cheatgrass is competing with native grasses that bison rely on for foraging. Cheatgrass diminishes native plant populations, while not being a food source for bison. Further, a drier climate reduces the nutrients available in plants by providing less water for growth. The soil is also less productive due to the reduction in available moisture, facilitating the transition to invasive species. During our recent restoration project this summer I noticed the soil condition, and the plants spread out over the area. We observed climate change outcomes on the ground. I've witnessed similar scenarios through north-central Idaho as



well. If these climate conditions persist and natural resources continue to diminish, we can expect bison to physically shrink in size. An outcome of human-caused climate change. The Yellowstone Ecosystem has the greatest concentration of wildlife in the lower 48 states. It is a unique ecosystem filled with cherished wildlife worthy of our protection. *Photo above by Mike Gajda.*

As we consider steps to address regional climate change in the Yellowstone Ecosystem, it is important to remember bison are powerful healers of the land. Bison must be a foundational element in regional ecosystem restoration efforts. Yellowstone bison can help heal the land, and strengthen the resilience of other wildlife species against the impacts of climate change. By grazing in their specialized fashion, bison expose younger plants to sunlight allowing for strong growth. Further, they till native plant seeds into the soil as they walk, increasing the growth potential for native grasses. Bison also fertilize the soil with their feces. A few bird species also directly benefit from bison lifeways. A few bird populations clean the insects that gather in bison fur. This symbiotic relationship supports the health and viability of both populations. The only consistently-wild herd of bison in the lower 48 states, intimately understands the land. It is easy to reflect on the needs of ecosystems as we witness the destruction caused by massive forest fires, multiple hurricanes lurking in the Atlantic, mid-summer snowfall in the Rocky Mountains, record heat in Death Valley, drought and flooding. Buffalo Field Campaign recently won our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit against Yellowstone National Park and then Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. We exposed the National Park Service's scheme of managing bison as cattle. James Holt, Sr. - Executive Director BFC *"The Earth and I are of One Mind."* - Chief Joseph, Nez Perce

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# Remind Me

By Diane Bergstrom



*Darkness always births the light. There is no insanity without surfacing reason. Apathy can give way to conviction and action.*

*Remind me.*

*There is no suppression without eventual uprising. Public silence unleashes individual voices. Where there is death, there must be life.*

*Remind me.*

*Where there is waste, growth will be forged. Narcissistic leaders incense empowered communities. Censorship spurs collective voices.*

*Remind me.*

*Senseless occupations cause people to question. Unjustified spending arouses investigation. The pendulum always swings.*

*Remind me.*


*Hopelessness, despair, intolerance and fear can debilitate. Belief, anger, purpose, education and faith can facilitate. What can I do?*

*Remind me.*

*Vote.*

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# Irreversibly Changed New Mexico

By Nick Bowlin Sept. 16, 2020 High Country News

## At the Precipice: New Mexico's Changing Climate

Laura Paskus

200 pages, softcover: \$19.95

University of New Mexico Press, 2020.

In the summer of 2002, High Country News intern Laura Paskus sat at her desk in Paonia, Colorado. Every day, from 400 miles north of the river, she watched the Rio Grande on her computer — specifically, a stretch of it south of Albuquerque, the city she had left to enter journalism. Using the U.S. Geological Survey's real-time stream gauge, she tracked the water level. She saw the river drop below its Endangered Species Act-mandated level and called federal water managers, who told her the data must be wrong. Then the stream gauge dropped below zero: The riverbed was dry. Paskus calls the resulting HCN story, on the twin problems of drought and over-irrigation, her first piece of serious journalism.

Nearly two decades of writing and reporting later, Paskus still holds onto the image of a dry Rio Grande. "I know that lots of reporters can move on from stories," she told HCN recently, "but I just can't let that one go. I can't stop

obsessing over the fact that the Rio Grande dries in the summer."

Now a freelance journalist and reporter for New Mexico PBS, Paskus, 46, still writes about the river. She has become one of the Southwest's foremost chroniclers of climate change and ecological collapse. Her years of dedicated reporting have culminated in a new book, *At the Precipice: New Mexico's Changing Climate*, out last month from University of New Mexico Press. The book gives an on-the-ground account of climate impacts on both human and non-human communities, as well as the state's dependence on the energy industry.

She spoke to HCN from her home office in Albuquerque, discussing water shortages, the consequences of drilling on the Navajo Nation and her own feelings of "climate grief." This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

**High Country News:** Why is New Mexico at "the precipice," as you put it, of climate change?

**Laura Paskus:** For New Mexico, our water situation is the most concerning. Surface water supplies are heavily impacted by warming, and we've spent 80, 100 years relentlessly pumping groundwater. Cities like Albuquerque and Santa Fe have tried to diversify their water portfolios. They have a mix of Rio Grande water, imported Colorado River Basin water, and then groundwater. The Rio Grande is so low this year, Albuquerque has already had to switch to exclusive groundwater pumping, and Santa Fe had to consider ceasing its diversions from the Rio Grande (groundwater pumping depletes aquifers). Because we've never treated our groundwater like a savings bank for bad times, we're not going to have those supplies to rely on in the future.

People in New Mexico, whether they are business leaders or water managers, want to be optimistic about the water situation. I think that that's not realistic.

**HCN:** The book discusses energy development on the Navajo Nation, which crosses into the state's northwestern corner. Can you describe the situation on the ground?

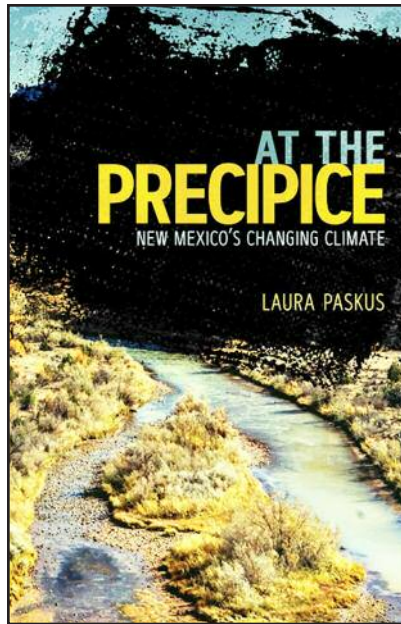
**LP:** When you drive through the eastern Navajo Nation,

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you see the impacts of our choices for cheap gas and oil, and how people's daily lives and their futures are affected. In the 2000s, after natural gas prices dropped, there was a push by the oil and gas industry to get the Bureau of Land Management to issue more (drilling) leases. And especially around 2013-2014 (on the Navajo Nation), there was a ton of development, lots of wells being drilled, a lot of flaring going on, a lot of these big industrial facilities starting to be built in places like across from Lybrook Elementary School (on the eastern Navajo Nation). You started seeing a ton of traffic up there, and the dirt roads that connect all these communities and Chapter Houses getting dug up by big trucks. There are definitely Navajo people who support the industry and who had leases, but I met this group of Navajo women who were pushing back against the industry — especially against the Bureau of Land Management. The concerns they had were very on-the-ground: The roads that were getting dug up would get so muddy in the springtime, they were having a hard time getting out or getting back to their homes. They were worried about the flaring (the practice of burning excess gas at oil extraction sites).



And then, at roughly that same time, NASA released a study showing this methane cloud over the Four Corners region. So, northwestern New Mexico became this really, really interesting place to pay attention to climate change, and the on-the-ground impacts of development and the choices that we make as a society. We might not have known what we were doing at first, but we definitely do now.

**HCN:** What's the relationship between tribal consultation, when it comes to oil and gas drilling, and subsequent climate impacts?

**LP:** I think that there are many people in federal agencies who do their best, but tribal consultation, agency-wide and nationwide, is abysmal. And I think that in northwestern New Mexico, you have the Navajo Nation, you have Navajo chapters, you have Navajo families, you have the All Pueblo Council of Governors, you have individual Pueblo families, and they are all saying: "This area around Chaco Canyon (a UNESCO World Heritage site, near where the Interior Dept. wants to expand oil and gas extraction) is special to us. It's sacred to us. It has

meaning to us. Please, not only protect it, but involve us, allow us a say in what happens." And if you look consistently at BLM decisions, they are not listening to the tribes. Tribal consultation in the United States has never honored the spirit of the law, and the laws themselves are way too flimsy.

**HCN:** In what ways do your observations about New Mexico's climate crisis apply to the Southwest at large?

**LP:** New Mexico is unique, of course — politically, historically. But what we see here is true across the arid U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico. The Rio Grande and the Colorado River share similar problems; even when there's good or normal snowpack, runoff has dipped because of

temperature increases. Across the (Continued on page 31.)



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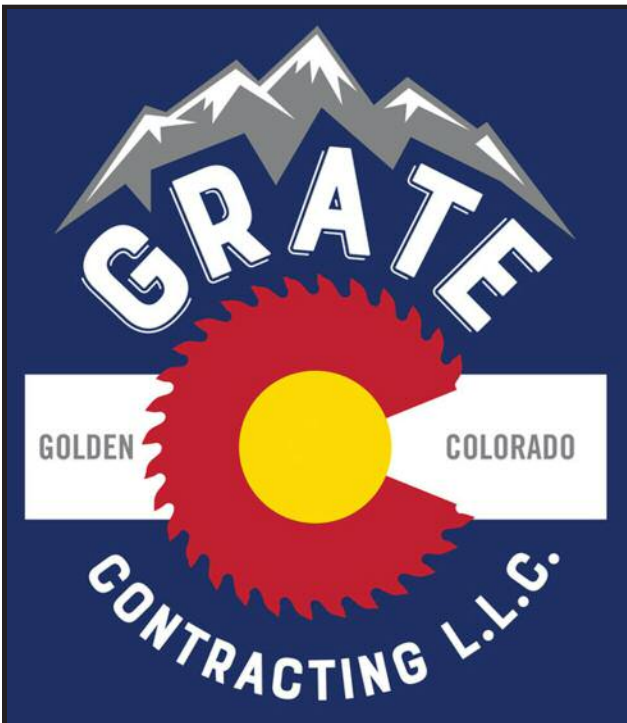
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region, we see conifer forests dying, farmlands puckered, cities with more extreme heat temperatures. And no matter where you look — Las Cruces, New Mexico, Phoenix, Arizona, or Chihuahua City, Mexico — people already facing challenges will be hit the hardest. That's true whether you're a small farmer, someone in a Sunbelt city with a cinderblock-construction home and an inadequate cooling system, or someone living where air quality is already poor and respiratory disease rates already high.

**HCN:** In your book, you discuss "climate grief." What irreversible changes to New Mexico ecosystems provoke this feeling for you?

**LP:** Definitely the Rio Grande, and then this big chunk of the Jemez Mountains, that, post the Los Conchas wildfire (a 2011 blaze, the largest in state history at the time) just could not recover. Before the fire, it was a dense conifer forest. True, it was too dense, but post-Los Conchas there are about 30,000 acres that are just these open, weedy mountainscapes, and in other places where there were conifers, you see locust, aspen and Gambel oak filling in. These are entirely different forests from what they were 10 or 20 years ago.

**HCN:** You write about the despair you feel for the planet and how that relates to personal forms of grief. The

example you give is your father's funeral. Can you talk about this connection?

**LP:** For people like me, who are not religious, the outdoors is often the place to go when we're sad or confused. When you're an environmental reporter and you learn not only what's happening to the climate but what we've let happen, there are times in my life when I've been unable to feel that solace. I certainly don't know what to do with my grief, and I think a lot of people don't. There's this tendency to think about what's happening to the climate, or even your favorite places, in an abstract way. I was at a point in my career where I couldn't see it was abstract anymore.

I've struggled my whole life with my relationship with my dad, and his funeral, as sad and as overwhelming as it was, was a really useful ceremony to travel through and allow me to think about parts of our lives together, and think about our physical relationship with the world in a way that gave me some tools to think about my reporting on the environment. If it's OK to mourn one person and grieve one person, it's definitely OK to grieve for an entire ecosystem or mountain range or planet.

*Nick Bowlin is a contributing editor at High Country News.*

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# The Benefits Of Integrity

By Frosty Wooldridge

What would you do if you found a lot of money in a wallet alongside the road during your transcontinental bicycle tour? Would you keep it depending on the amount? Would you return it? Is money more important than honesty? What is your integrity quotient? How's your Karma? This story may give you something to think about.

Gerry, Don and I rolled out of Marquette, Michigan along Route 28 on the Northern Tier of our coast to coast bicycle adventure. Over 2,500 miles into a trans-continental ride allows a cyclist to see quite a few items along the road.

We witnessed humans' propensity for throwing their trash of every description onto the shoulder and into the grass culverts. Bottles, cans, soiled baby diapers, cell phones, sofas, chairs, buckets, plastic bags, pizza boxes, fast food cups, shredded truck tires, towels, needles, tampons and another 100 kinds of items greeted us along our route. Many times, in pristine wilderness areas, humans dump their motorhomes, trailers, tractors, thousands of cars, and tons of crap anywhere they pleased.

In a word: sickening! How can anyone with a brain and a sense of personal accountability toward our natural world commit such atrocities? Answer: a lot of people lack an aware brain!

Some people lose things along the highway by accident. In Montana, a man stopped us on a route out of Missoula, after we had visited the Adventure Cycling headquarters.

"Hey guys," he said. "Could you do me a favor?" "Shoot," Don said.

"Yeah, I rode through the next 30 miles on a motorcycle yesterday and dropped my cell phone out of my pocket," he said. "I have driven it in a car four times, but couldn't find it. Any chance you guys could look for my black smart phone as you travel along this route?"

"Sure," Gerry said. "We'll keep our eyes out for it." "Thanks a million," he said. "I've got some family photos on it that are very important to me."

"We'll do our best," said Don.

For the next 30 miles, we scanned the breakdown lane and the grass for his cellphone. At the end of the day, we never saw it. We called him on his other phone and reported the bad news. He thanked us for our effort.

As we rolled along Route 28 east of Marquette, I led the group along the flat road that carved a path through dense maple woods along both sides of the highway. Farms dotted the landscape with cows grazing and some sheep in green pastures. We cycled through "Upper Michigan" and the people called themselves "U-p-pers." It always confounded me why they didn't create a second state because Upper Michigan remains pretty alien to Lower Michigan. Lake Michigan separates the two bodies of land by no less than five miles of water. The only thing connecting the two Michigan's: the five-mile-long Mackinac suspension bridge. Quite a marvel of the world when it first came on line!

In the mid-morning, we took a few water breaks and enjoyed the usual banter at our water stops. Amazingly, after 2,500 miles, we experienced only four hours of rain.

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But there's a reason for thick maple, birch, poplar and oak trees—rain! Nonetheless, we pedaled toward Munising, Michigan. Once again, I headed out in front of the group. Not one mile into the ride, I spotted a wallet broken open in the left tire lane.

“Dudes,” I yelled. “Stopping!” I held my left hand out to signal my intentions while yelling out, “Stopping!” “Gees,” I said, picking up a thick black wallet. “Some motorcycleist dropped his wallet.”

I examined it, “Holy catfish! It's got \$116.00, three credit cards, driver's license, family pictures and several cards from organizations he joined.”

“What are you going to do?” said Don.

“Hey, we could have a hell of a dinner for three,” I said, smiling! “Nope! Just kidding! This guy deserves to have his money and his wallet back in his rear pocket. I'll send it to him at the post office in Munising.”

“Good idea,” said Gerry. “The poor dude must be freaked out at losing his ID and credit cards.”

The next day in Munising, I mailed the wallet and contents in a Priority Mail container with insurance and tracking numbers. I wrote a note, “Dear Mr. Pamplet, I found your wallet in the middle of the highway yesterday. I'd love to be there to see the surprise on your face that you received all your money and credit cards, along with your

driver's license. I included the receipt of the cost of mailing it, but everything I found, you now have back in your possession. As for a reward, please pay it forward. Good health and high spirits, Frosty Wooldridge, long distance world bicycle traveler.”

What would you do if that wallet carried ten \$1,000.00 bills? Or more? Is money more important than integrity? What about Karma? When you do good things, you set up high vibrational frequency living, which returns to you in kind. If you lie, cheat or steal, Karma may revisit you with similar negative consequences in that low vibrational frequency level.

Over the years, I've learned that adhering to highest integrity and honesty sets up a person's life toward honorable living. In other words, you express the highest vibrational frequency energy. You never have to look over your emotional or spiritual life wondering about any of your actions. When you tell the truth and act with highest integrity, life treats you with gifts you never knew might happen.

Six months later, the man found my name in Facebook and wrote me one of the kindest and most compelling letters I've ever received in my life. His letter put a smile on my face that lasted right up to telling this story and beyond. When you do good things in this world, you receive more blessings than you can count.

During your bicycle life, you explore the world. You travel through time and space. You travel in your mind, in your emotions and in your heart. You travel into new dimensions of honor, true calling, introspection and spiritual connection with the infinite. You really get in touch with yourself. You're also tested like few others in the traveling realm. Yet, you persist, you express true grit and you present yourself at the doorstep of human nobility.

The great Roman teacher Epictetus said it best, “Tentative efforts lead to tentative outcomes. Therefore, give yourself fully to your endeavors. Decide to construct your character through your excellent actions and determine to pay a price of a worthy goal. The trials you encounter will give you your strengths. Remain steadfast, and one day you will build something that endures; something worthy of your potential.”

Tune into **KGNU Community Radio** at

88.5 FM & 1390 AM Boulder / Denver      93.7 FM Nederland




Listen to diverse voices, music from around the world and programming heard no where else!

KGNU, independent community radio, broadcasts hard hitting news and public affairs and an eclectic mix of music including world, hip-hop, folk, reggae, and bluegrass. KGNU gives volunteers the opportunity to take the media into their own hands, providing training, equipment and access to the airwaves.

88.5 FM & 1390 AM Boulder / Denver      93.7 FM Nederland

Only on KGNU Community Radio | [www.kgnu.org](http://www.kgnu.org) | 303-449-4885



**FORBES**  
Farrier Service

303-642-7437  
Paul Forbes      303-725-8471 Cell

# Highlander Ad Index & Business Telephone Numbers

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Highlander Monthly 303.642.0362

## ANIMAL CARE

Angels w/Paws-Cat Rescue pg 27 303.274.2264  
Cheshire Cat - CatiOS 303.642.0362  
Hands, Hoofs & Paws pg 29 303.503.6068

## ART

The Silver Horse - pg 28 303.279.6313  
The Rustic Moose - pg 28 303.258.3225

## AUTOMOBILE

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Karen Schwimmer, CPA pg 22 303.642.0628  
Wondervu Consulting Serv. pg 7 303.642.0433

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Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 27 720.583.4555

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Arrow Drilling pg 23 303.421.8766  
Colorado Water Wizard pg 21 303.447.0789

## United Power Celebrates National Co-op Month in October

The arrival of a global pandemic has challenged us to think creatively and act proactively as we consider how to best serve our members through uncertain times. We have responded the way only a cooperative could – by thinking of our members.

This October, United Power will join more than 64,000 cooperatives across the country, stretching across nearly every industry that touches our daily lives, to celebrate National Co-op Month.

Our foundational commitment to community challenged us to think strategically about how to continue offering services during the past few months. While leadership made difficult decisions about office closures, disconnects and late fees, all were in recognition of the health and safety of both employees and members.

In an effort to circumvent the financial hardships of members impacted by the pandemic, the cooperative's board of directors also took action to provide member relief. Over the past few months, the board has allocated \$250,000 to establish the Co-op Cares Fund to help offset electric bills and opted for an early capital credit retirement to provide a little extra relief.

In this unusual year, United Power found a way to care for your health and safety without sacrificing the level of service you've come to expect from the cooperative. We've continued to offer services like rebates and energy management solutions, expanded payment options by increasing kiosk locations and hours and our member services specialists have remained available to help with any account-related assistance our members need.

Most years we spend this time sponsoring local fairs and festivals, and when they return, United Power will likely have played a role in making them a reality. Instead, we've found other ways to support our local communities during this time, and continue to do so.

While we exist to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy, we hope you think of us as more than your energy provider, but as a partner in your community. We will "power on" through the difficult and unusual times and continue to serve our members the way we always have.

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## Round-Up: Members Helping Members

Every month thousands of United Power members voluntarily have their bills rounded up to the next whole dollar through Operation Round-Up. In a normal year, a board made up of fellow members of the cooperative would redistribute donated funds to nonprofits throughout the area to help provide meals, living assistance and other services to those in need.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, this year has been anything but normal. In an effort to ensure members impacted by COVID-19 were able to receive the same level of services from area nonprofits, Operation Round-Up responded by going above and beyond, while also maintaining its commitment to several partner organizations, such as Canyon Cares.

Your donations allow the foundation to distribute thousands of dollars to organizations that provide these services. However, this unusual year has stretched it to its limits, and the foundation needs your help to continue meeting these needs.

Donations average just \$.50 per billing statement, or just \$6/year. To show your support and sign up for Operation Round-Up, go to [www.unitedpower.com/round-up](http://www.unitedpower.com/round-up). To increase your contribution or make a one-time donation, please call our Member Services team at 303-637-1300.



## Have You Considered Driving Electric?

In special recognition of National Drive Electric Week from September 26 - October 4, United Power partnered with Nigel Zeid of Boulder Nissan to dispell some common electric vehicle myths. With more range and availability than ever, now is the perfect time to consider whether an electric vehicle is right for you and your family.

Some common hesitations members have about integrating an electric vehicle into their daily lives concern important topics such as range, charging infrastructure, cost and safety.

"There's a perception EVs can't meet the average person's needs," Zeid said, "but with a little information, we can turn hesitation into excitement. Electric vehicles have all the benefits of any other vehicle without much of the cost."

For more information about National Drive Electric Week and electric vehicles, go to [www.unitedpower.com/DriveEVWeek](http://www.unitedpower.com/DriveEVWeek).



# SKYWATCHERS

Saturday, October 3rd. 7pm - 9pm

CCCIA Hall - 31528 Hwy 72



**Under Contract**

**7 car garage**

**134 Kegley Road**

Best Views in Colorado

4 BD/ 3 BA 4,051 sq.ft. **\$1,350,000**



**6 Car Garage**

**Coal Creek Canyon**

Gorgeous Updated Log Home - 1.82 Acres

4 BD/ 4 BA 3,817 sq.ft. **\$1,100,000**



**New Listing**

**4 car garage**

**687 Copperdale Lane**

Privacy abounds amongst the Aspens

3 BD/ 2 BA 1,920 sq.ft. **\$429,000**



**New Listing**

**181 Hummingbird Lane**

Nicely Updated - Theater Room 1.29 Ac.

3 BD/ 2 BA 2,129 sq.ft.. **\$474,000**



**Orange Orchard**

**4303 30th Street, Boulder**

Wonderful Park Like Setting .40 Ac.

4 BD/ 3 BA 2,842 sq.ft. **\$990,000**



**SOLD!**

**11838 Ridge Road**

Lovely Mountain Home with Walkout

3 BD/2 BA 2,280 sq.ft. 1 Acre **\$469,900**



**Pinecliffe Subdivision**

**3497 Coal Creek Canyon #18**

Adorable Summer Cabin

3 BD/ 1 BA 1,184 sq.ft. **\$259,000**



**SOLD!**

**11470 Ranch Elsie Road**

Horse Property! 3.8 Acres

2 BD/ 1 BA 1,948 sq.ft. **\$455,000**



**Under Contract**

**198 Range Road**

Solar Powered & Secluded "Treehouse"

2 BD/ 2 BA 1,652 sq.ft. 2.7 Ac **\$569,900**



**SOLD!**

**294 E. Dory Drive**

Wonderful View Home 1.24 Acres

3 BD/ 3 BA 1,934 sq.ft. **\$469,900**



**New Price**

**Vacant Land**

**1257 / 1316 Chute Road**

Secluded 5+ acres, Divide, City,

and Gross Dam Views **\$139,000**



**Under Contract**

**11440 Inspiration Road**

Amazing Views at Road's End

3 BD/2 BA 2,341 sq.ft. 1.5 Ac. **\$540,000**



**Under Contract**

**31992 Coal Creek Canyon Drive**

Horse property- Walkout Guest Ste. - 4 Ac

3 BD/ 3 BA + Den 2,907 sq.ft. **\$689,900**



**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**



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