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CONTENTS Pages

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Wildlife -	A Day in the Life	5
Issues-	Vote YES on Amendment 69 - ColoCare	6, 7
Conservation -	Controversial deal - divert water	8, 9
Issues -	Help stop Expansion of Gross Reservoir	10
	Sharing the road with Large Trucks	11
Arts -	5th Annual Gilpin Art Studio Tour	13, 14
Environmental-	Fusion Energy-Nuclear gone good	15
	Unexpected Carbon Release	16, 17
Wildlife -	Elk (viewing) Etiquette	22 thru 24
Issues-	Will bigger grid make way for renewables?	25,26,27
Wildlife -	Update Buffalo Field Campaign	28
Inner View-	Choosing Low Self-Esteem	29, 30
Wildlife-	Alaska killed collared wolves- study ends	32, 33

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REGULAR FEATURES	
Animals & Their Companions	18, 19
Book Review	31
Ad Index & Telephone #'s	34

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A Day In The Life

By Omayra Acevedo - Nature & Wildlife Photojournalist

“Ah, Spring has sprung and I am ready to live again,” I heard a squirrel say. Okay, maybe I didn’t really hear it say that, but I can only imagine what it was thinking. It jumped onto my deck taking a nice long stretch making me believe it just got out of bed. I began to wonder, as I typically do when it comes to the wild things in nature, what it had planned for the day. I watched as he sniffed around, picked at the dirt, hid under the deck, got back on the deck, ran to my flowers, ran back under the deck in continuous circles. This little critter was so fast I was convinced it gave me whiplash.

The Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel is one of our many endotherms. Similar to many hibernating creatures they are warm blooded and are dependent on or capable of the internal generation of heat. Imagine if the human race was capable of altering our own temperature. Good bye air conditioners, space heaters and hot flashes! I can’t help but envy the Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel. It’s cute and very self-sufficient.

Wouldn’t it be fantastic, for those of us that struggle during winter, if we could just sleep through the winter and avoid driving on icy roads, blizzards and the ever time-consuming shoveling of snow? Well, we could, but only if we were an endotherm. If we could simply maintain a constant body temperature independent of our environment; slow our heart beat, slow our breathing, lower our metabolism, hide from the world, become completely inactive, gain a little bit of weight and people still think we’re cute. Oh, if only...

Many of us associate hibernation with bears. However, numerous of our Earth’s creatures practice hibernation. Birds, mammals and even some fish. Hibernation can occur not just due to the lack of warmth, but also due to lack of food or water. The adorable Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel’s diet consists of nuts, fruits, seeds, green plants, some insects and underground fungi. Before hibernating they put on a layer of fat. They use their cheek pouches to carry food to their den and store it to eat periodically during hibernation and in the Spring when they wake up. Golden-Mantled Ground squirrels hibernate primarily in dens found near or under a tree or log. Their dens are not very deep but can be as long as 100 feet.

Unlike Chipmunks, the Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel has no stripes on its face and tends to be a bit bigger with a shorter tail. Their weight ranges from 120 to 394 grams, and can grow 235 to 295 mm. This beautiful species is sexually dimorphic, which means it is easy to tell the differences between males and females. The most obvious detail is that the males have a brighter red mantle.

These squirrels are polygynous. After emerging from hibernation males compete with each other to establish territorial boundaries. Two to three weeks after males emerge females mate with the male on whose territory they are found. Females build their nests out of human hair, insect frass and mud. I kid! Just checking to see if you’re still paying attention. Their nests are made of leaves, grass and bark in an underground burrow. Anywhere between May to about the beginning of September a female will give birth to a litter of 2-8 pups depending on elevation.

Ready for more “hippie-inspired” facts? When in captivity their lifespan has been recorded to be about five years. When in nature, the way they were intended to live, free and happy, their lifespan has been recorded at seven years. That’s two more years to fully live life than in captivity. Not a surprise to me as I, like the Golden-Mantled Ground squirrel, find it difficult to stay anywhere where I feel trapped. I feel most happy, healthy and inspired when I can benefit from the scents and colors of nature, and allow the sun to dance across my shoulders.

Like most things in nature, the Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel is full of many lessons and inspiration. Another fact I find fascinating about the Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel is that they are very adaptable. The only fact I find disturbing about them is that they can be quite brazen. This is most likely due to that adaptability of theirs. They will beg for your food while camping, hiking or just sitting outside your own home. I cannot say it enough - Please keep our wildlife wild by not feeding them. I promise you this is for their benefit and ours.

“Yum. I’ll take this and this, a little bit of that too,” the squirrel said before hiding away for the remainder of the night - at least that’s what I heard in my head as he scurried one last time back into his den. I whispered, “good night little guy. I’ll see you in the morning.”

http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Spermophilus_lateralis/#lifespan_longevity

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Vote YES On Amendment 69 - ColoradoCare

In 2015, volunteers all over the state of Colorado collected more than 150,000 signatures for a universal health care system, **ColoradoCare**, which made ballot this November as **Amendment 69**. This resident-owned, non-governmental health care financing system will be like Medicare for all Coloradans in ensuring quality comprehensive health care for everyone **without deductibles for less than we pay now**.

Amendment 69 will ensure quality, accessible, lifetime health care for every Colorado resident. Premiums will be collected based on income, securing health care regardless of financial circumstance. This efficient, universal system would operate in the interests of Coloradans. By eliminating layers of bureaucracy and reducing administrative and other non-medical costs, ColoradoCare would cover all residents, cost less than the current system, and eliminate deductibles and co-pays for primary and preventative care.

ColoradoCare is a resident-owned, non-governmental health care financing system designed to ensure comprehensive, quality, accessible, lifetime health care for every Colorado resident. The benefit package will enhance the comprehensive health care services required by Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act. Premiums will be collected from Coloradans based on income, securing health care regardless of financial circumstance. 100% of residents will be covered, leading Colorado to be the first state in the U.S. to achieve universal health care.

ColoradoCare will greatly expand access to and improve the quality of healthcare. Health benefits include primary, mental health, and specialty care, including dental. Patients can choose their primary care providers.

Under ColoradoCare, in 2019 Colorado residents and employers would pay \$26.7 billion in premiums and out-of-pocket expenses for the services typically covered by comprehensive health and dental insurance — \$4.5

billion less than the \$31.2 billion cost with the current system.

ColoradoCare's universal health care system—private providers paid with combined funds—reduces layers of administrative costs, allows for bulk purchasing of drugs and medical equipment, and reduces fraud and duplication.

An economic analysis of health care spending in Colorado has calculated that comprehensive health coverage for every resident could be paid for with pre-tax payroll premiums of 3.33% for employees and 6.67% for employers.

What would you think is the number one determinant of how much someone pays for health insurance in Colorado? It's not whether they're healthy or what



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I moved to Boulder County has been a team effort — a partnership of like-minded people working toward a common goal. Working as a

County Commissioner is no different. My partners now are my fellow

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their age is—it's where they live. Data continues to show that what a person pays in health insurance premiums are largely attributable to geography. Put simply, health care in rural and mountain areas of Colorado is significantly more expensive than in metro areas.

This is why lawmakers in rural and mountain areas are pushing to do away with the regional cost calculations so that health insurance costs the same whether you live along the Front Range or the Western Slope.

Because health care providers are concentrated on the metropolitan front range, a simple appointment with a specialist may require more than a one-day trip to a metropolitan area for Coloradans living in rural and mountain areas. Couple this with provider shortages that are aggravated by insurance company policies that do not adequately reimburse rural and mountain providers, and you have a recipe for a troubled system for Coloradans in these communities.

Besides your vote this year for Amendment 69 on the ballot, **the immediate need is for funds to increase grassroots outreach to ensure everyone knows the benefits passing this Amendment will have for all of us.** Go to www.ColoradoCare.org if you can give to this worthy cause, and to calculate your own costs under this plan.

With Amendment 69, ColoradoCare, every Colorado resident can contribute their best, knowing ColoradoCare has everyone covered with universal health care. Imagine life with ColoradoCare. If you're a resident and you need any kind of health care (including mental health), you just go to see your provider, and ColoradoCare pays the bill. Without the layers of hassles, businesses, providers, and everyone in the state can go about their important work of contributing to their families and communities knowing ColoradoCare has everyone covered.

Now, a vast array for-profit private health insurers compete to make the largest profits by taking in as much in premiums as possible and paying out as little as possible in health care. (Private insurers call paying for our health care "medical loss.") In order to maximize profits, they've created complex layers of administration to make it more difficult for providers to get paid. That leaves people scrambling to fight for what they're owed when they're least up for a fight: When they are sick or injured. As a non-profit cooperative owned by all the members—all Coloradans, ColoradoCare will save money overall while covering everyone.

Editor's Note: Highlander readers pay more for health coverage than anyone else due to our location in the mountains. Go to the website and see how much you save.



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A Controversial Deal For Diverting Water

By Sarah Tory - High Country News

In 2003, when Denver Water first proposed diverting more water from the Fraser River and its tributaries, officials in Grand County, Colorado, balked. Every year, billions of gallons are piped out of the Western Slope's rivers, bound for the cities and suburbs that sprawl along the dry eastern side of the Rocky Mountains. Grand County contributes the most — 60 percent of its water is sent eastward — and after years of watching their rivers shrink, many locals were less than thrilled at the prospect of losing more water.

It could have been the start of another lengthy court battle, a routine occurrence in Colorado, where east and west have fought over water for decades. But after Denver Water promised to help the Fraser recover from years of depletion, Grand County reconsidered and agreed to let the utility siphon another 18,700 acre-feet (equal to 15 percent) from the river through the existing Moffat Tunnel. When the deal was signed in March 2014, proponents lauded this new collaborative approach to managing Colorado's dwindling — and contentious — water supply. It proved, they said, that the state could meet future water needs without destroying ecosystems. On July 1, the \$360 million project celebrated a major milestone in the approval process when it received a key permit from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The final decision rests with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. But meanwhile, threats of an environmental lawsuit are growing — raising questions about the future of other

collaborative agreements over water.

"It was hard for people to believe that giving away more water was in our best interests," says Lurline Underbrink Curran, the former Grand County manager and a lead negotiator with Denver Water. But in the end, she says, the decision to compromise offered a better outcome: "Instead of endless court battles, we accepted more water will be diverted out."

For Denver Water, Colorado's largest and most powerful water utility, brokering a deal with Grand County was part of a new business strategy. In 1990, environmentalists killed Denver Water's bid to build the massive Two Forks Reservoir on the South Platte River, ending the utility's dreams of doubling its storage capacity. "In the good old days, Denver Water would just roll over people and not care about the implications," says Jim Lochhead, the utility's CEO. But the Two Forks debacle showed that new forces were coming into play, including growing public opposition to more dams.

A new approach was needed, says Lochhead. "So we went to Grand County and asked how we could develop it (Moffat) with their support." Negotiations began in 2007 and eventually included 18 other Western Slope water providers and municipalities. The end result was two major agreements that pave the way for new Western Slope water development — development that is badly needed, says Lochhead, to bolster Denver's supplies against future drought and climate change.

Both agreements include the usual measures required by law to address the impacts of diversions. But they also

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include “enhancement” measures that Denver Water proposed to improve the health of the Fraser, which suffers from excessively warm temperatures and sediment-clogged streambeds that have decimated cutthroat trout and other coldwater species, such as sculpin fish and stoneflies.



Still, it seemed like a long shot: How could conditions improve if more water was taken? Curran was initially skeptical, but she changed her mind when Denver Water offered to help compensate her county for the impacts caused by previous water diversions. Accepting the deal, she decided, might be Grand County’s only chance to secure that help.

Under the agreements, Denver Water will monitor the Fraser on an ongoing basis, tracking temperatures in key streams. When readings spike, the utility will release additional flows to cool the water. In addition, diversions will largely occur during peak runoff season, and not at all during severely dry years.

For critics, however, any deal, no matter how good, is yet another blow to the larger Colorado River system, which is already suffering from overuse. “We don’t get involved in compromising,” says Gary Wockner, director of the advocacy group Save the Colorado and one of the lawyers preparing a lawsuit. “Further draining the river is not doing things in a new way.”

Geoff Elliot, a local watershed scientist, believes that the deal is based on negotiation instead of on science. Taking more water from the Fraser, he warns, will bring the river’s ecosystem to the “brink of collapse.” No one knows, he says, whether the proposed mitigation measures will be enough to account for all the potential damage. More water diversions could dry up vast swaths of wetlands, for

example, but that possibility was omitted from the project’s environmental impact statement. Lochhead believes that the amount of monitoring in the deal addresses such concerns. “We’re not looking to develop a water supply that kills the river,” he says. “That would be like shooting ourselves in the foot.” Still, the deal-making bothers

environmentalists — the notion that you can take as much water as you want from a system and then negotiate about how much you’ll give back later. “That isn’t the way ecology works,” Elliot says. “That’s the way politics works.” *The Moffat Water Tunnel brings water from Grand County, Colorado, to the Front Range of Colorado, diverting flow from the Fraser River, which is becoming depleted.* Mark Conlin / Alamy Stock Photo
 Correspondent Sarah Tory writes from Paonia, Colorado, and covers water issues.

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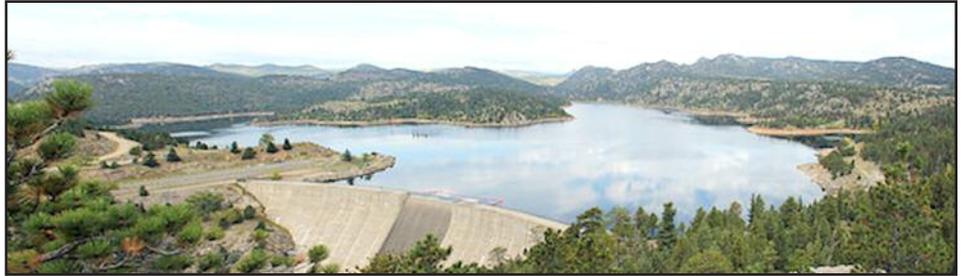
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Help To Stop The Expansion Of Gross Reservoir

It sort of sets my blood to boil when I read coverage such as the last article - on Diverting Water from the Colorado River - and I know High Country News is a good source for issues, but how come the proposed expansion of Gross Reservoir rarely rates a mention? All the talk is about saving the river, Fraser or Colorado, and even in the EIS the people most likely to be impacted are left out of the equation. Don't we count a bit? The quality of our lives will be negatively impacted for more than five years if Denver Water gets its way and this beautiful reservoir will undergo a construction project the size and scope never before seen or HEARD in Boulder County.

Now, granted our local environmental group is busy preparing to wage legal battle against the proposed project even though Grand County and several other players have caved in with hopes and promises made by the largest utility in our state. People in Boulder and Eldorado Springs should be shaking in their boots with fear of the noise and air pollution a project of this magnitude would bring to them, less than ten miles away as the crow flies.

I've tried to get an opinion out of the two candidates for Boulder County Commissioner, on their positions to invoking Rule 1041 should they need to stop the project in the event the Army Corp's permits it, and they know less



than the average mountain resident living nearby. This fact does not bode well for our quality of life in Coal Creek Canyon or in the city of Boulder for that matter.

I'm dismayed by the lack of knowledge necessary to run for an elected county official position that can impact our lives more than our country's president. Few people know that more than 50 percent of all the water going to Denver ends up on lawns. Why are those water hungry bluegrass lawns more important than my quiet and clean air living in a bedroom community than will see no benefit at all from a massive expansion of the existing dam and reservoir.

What the previous article fails to disclose is that there is more at stake than 18,000 cubic feet of water: the proposed and ill advised Jefferson Parkway Tollroad, Candelas's commercial plans (big hotels and big box stores east of the residential homes already being built) and that exit off the Jeffco Toll Road into Arvada. The larger dam and reservoir are part of the plan for developers to make the last piece of a bypass around Denver pay off for the few. And the toll road won't even really connect C-470 to the Norwest Parkway completely. All of it just looks good on paper and the paper is dollars for out of state/country investors. This includes the congestion on State Highway 93, the plan to make residents want the Jeffco Tollroad. *By A. M. Wilks*



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Sharing The Road With Large Trucks

From Jim Plane - State Farm Insurance

Do you clutch the wheel a little tighter as you pass a semi or other large trucks? You're not alone. Semis and large trucks navigate the roadways differently than other vehicles. Learning what they need — and what you can do — can help you safely share the road with large trucks.

What's Different About Driving Large Trucks or Semis

Drivers of heavy trucks face a few difficulties on the road, including:

Reduced field of vision. Truck drivers have multiple blind spots on both sides, in front of and behind their trucks.

Longer stopping time. A large truck's size and weight increases its stopping distance. For example: If large trucks are going 65 miles per hour, they could need up to 200 yards — nearly the length of two football fields — to stop.

Slower reactions. Most vehicles can merge quickly. Large trucks can't because of size.

Wind vulnerability. Semis have a lot of surface area, making them harder to control when the wind picks up.

Wide turns. Large trucks need plenty of room to make turns — especially right turns.

What You Can Do

Follow these tips to safely share the road with large trucks:

Pass safely. Always pass on the left — the blind spot is smaller on this side — and maintain a steady speed.

Give them space. Keep a safe following distance — four seconds or more — between you and large trucks to help avoid dangerous situations, such as sudden stops (and subsequent rear-ending), a truck rollover over in high wind, a tire blowout or a wide truck turn. **Note: If you can't see the truck's mirrors, they can't see you.**

Be aware. Stay alert at all times, and keep your proximity to large trucks in mind as you share the road. In a smaller vehicle, you can maneuver more quickly which can help you stay out of danger.

Editor's Note: Denver Water's proposed plan to expand Gross Dam and reservoir will bring large trucks to Coal Creek Canyon for the construction, for multiple years. This will add a monumental safety issue to our two lane roads and is virtually impossible on Gross Dam Road. Any effort to mitigate this problem will impact residents negatively. Any help you can give our TEG organization to stop this project could make a positive impact and keep our local region quiet and safe. Go to www.tegcolorado.org

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5th Annual Gilpin Art Studio Tour

From Virginia Unsell

Phone: 303-582-5724

www.GilpinArtStudioTour.org

Gilpin County Colorado: The 5th Annual Gilpin Art Studio Tour will happen **Saturday & Sunday September 17-18, 2016, 11am-5pm**, with a **Meet the Artists Preview Night on Thursday September 8th** at the Central City Visitors Center Art Gallery, 103 Eureka Street, Central City, from 6 to 7:30pm. *(Please note that the location has changed since we printed our brochures).* The Gilpin Art Studio Tour is organized by local artists to foster an appreciation of the arts in Gilpin County to coincide with the fall aspen viewing. Enjoy your weekend in the high



country meeting the artists and craftspeople in their studios, as they exhibit their art, demonstrate their craft and offer work for sale.

This is the 5th and most diverse year to date. There are 16 artists participating with a wide array of styles, including painters, illustrators, photographers, ceramic artists, jewelers, fiber, metal

and glass artists and even laser cut wood pieces.

The 5th Annual Gilpin Art Studio **Tour is a free**, family friendly event that has something of interest for everyone! Central City is hosting the Hot Rod Hill Climb the same weekend, but all artists and gallery stops in Central City will be open during that event. Come support the artists, view the aspens at their peak and *(Continued next page.)*





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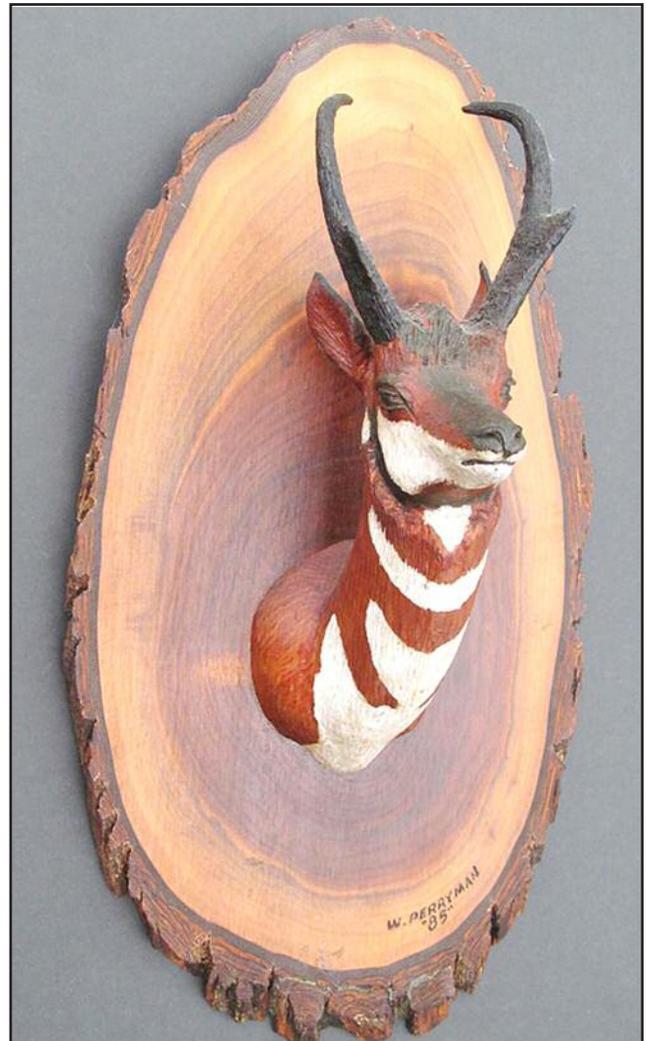
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see the beauty of the high country. Artists' studios will be marked by signs along the tour route in and around Gilpin County, directing you to each stop. Like us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/GilpinArtStudioTour for the latest updates. Maps are available at our sponsors, artists and many other locations in Gilpin County, or visit <http://www.GilpinArtStudioTour.org> for full maps, samples of each artists work, descriptions and more information.



Editor's Note: Support local art, expose your children to the arts and help them see where and how it is done by visiting the artists in their studios.



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Fusion Energy: Nuclear Gone Good?

Dear EarthTalk: What is fusion energy and why are environmentalists so bullish on it? *Mickey Brent*

Nuclear fusion may be the most promising energy source that most of us have never heard of. Scientists first discovered fusion as a potential energy source in the 1930's and have been quietly working on it ever since. Only recently, given societal pressure to find alternatives to fossil fuels, has fusion started to capture the attention of the media and policymakers—and now researchers are hoping the process can become a key source of safe, clean, reliable energy in the near future. The EU, U.S., China, India, Korea, Russia and Japan have all contributed to the ITER fusion reactor currently under construction in southern France.

Nuclear fusion is the fusing of two atoms into one. Fusion is very different from fission, in which atoms are split in half. Although both emit energy, fusion emits much more. Fusion takes an immense amount of heat and pressure and is the reaction that happens inside of stars, including our own sun. The temperature at the center of the sun is around 15 million Kelvin (27 million degrees Fahrenheit)! Scientists have achieved temperatures of around 100 million degrees inside experimental fusion devices but have yet to make the process net energy positive. The issue with doing reactions at such high heats is that the heated substance cannot touch anything or the container will melt. Therefore, fusion reactions are done in a donut of floating plasma, suspended by magnetic fields.

When compared to other energy sources, fusion energy seems like it might be our best bet in the long term. Compared to fossil fuels and renewable energy sources, fusion is wildly more efficient and no more dangerous. Fusion is three to four times more efficient even than nuclear fission, without the downsides such as the risk of nuclear meltdown or dirty bombs. While nuclear fission requires uranium to function, fusion reactors only require deuterium, which occurs naturally in seawater, and tritium, which can be produced through a reaction of deuterium and lithium. These low raw material costs cause fusion to be considered a potential source of limitless energy. Due to the low radioactivity of fusion, even in the case of an explosion, radioactivity would be contained to the reactor site. Fusion

reactors' small input and extremely high output have made them a popular idea.

So what are the drawbacks of nuclear fusion? Or is it the perfect energy source? Most critics of fusion energy point to the timeline as its greatest weakness. The majority of projections see 2050 as the first year fusion reactors could be commercially available. This is too late for fusion energy to solve our current energy crisis. Some environmentalists claim that funding for fusion energy could be better spent on renewable sources such as solar and hydro that give us clean energy now. Another concern with fusion is public opinion. People tend to be wary of anything nuclear, if only because of the incredible devastation of nuclear bombs. While nuclear fusion is far safer than fission, many activists in France, for example, are protesting all forms of nuclear energy.

The biggest fusion energy project in the world is called the ITER which means "the way" in Latin. ITER is located in Southern France and funded by the European Union, the U.S., China, India, Korea, Russia and Japan. ITER will be a fusion reactor used for research and is currently under construction. Current plans are for ITER to be ready for the first test of plasma by 2025. Though commercial fusion reactors are far from a reality, the abundant raw materials and high safety, paired with enormous energy output, make it an outstanding possibility for the future. www.EarthTalk.org

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Unexpected Carbon Release

By Lyndsey Gilpin - HCN

Flooding a dry riverbed restored vegetation, but released significant amounts of methane and carbon dioxide.

When water rushed over the dry riverbed of the Colorado River Delta for the first time in two decades, thousands of bubbles popped up in the sand. Alongside the bank, a group of scientists stood in awe, theorizing that oxygen and nitrogen trapped in the sediment were the cause. But nearly two years later, in early 2016, the team discovered those bubbles were actually composed of greenhouse gases – methane and carbon dioxide – that dissolved into the water, traveled downstream, and eventually made their way into the air.

The Colorado River supplies water to 40 million people. It is used so heavily by farms and communities in the West that it rarely reaches the ocean, so where the river should meet the Gulf of California, only a dry delta exists. In 2012, Mexico and the U.S. hashed out the Minute 319 pact to allow for a one-time pulse flow to restore water in the Delta so scientists could study the regenerative capability of the floodplain ecosystem. So in 2014, the U.S. released over 100,000 acre-feet of water at Morelos Dam near Yuma, Arizona, to restore wildlife and native plant habitats in the Delta downstream. But a new study by University of Florida, University of Arizona, Yale University and University of Washington researchers shows the water also caused the ground to rapidly emit carbon stored for years beneath the riverbeds, which could have an impact on the global carbon cycle and affect future river restoration.

“It’s still a big unknown on the true magnitude of these fluxes, but these large river(beds) are turning out to have really high concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane,” says David Butman, an environmental science and engineering professor at the University of Washington who worked on the study. “Looking at the exchanges of carbon gasses between landscapes, the atmosphere, and water as we look to restore these disturbed ecosystems may be important.”

The study, funded in part by the National Science Foundation, is a step toward understanding carbon balance in water systems and the impact it could have on carbon levels on land and in the ocean. It’s still unclear why carbon was released, but the study documented that 30% more greenhouse gases came out of the riverbed and dissolved into the water at one site during the Minute 319 flow than before it (they’re still working to determine how much was released into the atmosphere). Several researchers who worked on this study say most of the gas was stored underground in sediment, and sand-dwelling microbes created the rest when the water reached them. The riverbed normally releases greenhouse gases gradually as part of the typical carbon cycle, but the Delta released a significant amount in a matter of just eight weeks during the pulse flow, though the researchers aren’t yet sure exactly how much.

The consequences of that are still tough to quantify, says Karl Flessa, a co-author of the study and co-chief scientist of Minute 319, but he doesn’t think the risks of emitting

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greenhouse gases outweigh the benefits of watering a parched ecosystem and growing new plant life. Since the pulse flow event, vegetation has thrived in the riparian zone where the land meets the river in the Colorado River Delta – cottonwoods and willows have turned the space greener than it had been in years.

The U.S. and Mexico are currently in negotiations about more restoration efforts when this one expires in 2017. And now, the researchers plan to look into how the duration of floods like this one affects water chemistry, how controlled flooding could support coastal stability, and how the consequences of flood pulses compare to a steady, minimum water flow in rivers like the Colorado.

This study may actually strengthen the case for consistent flow of the Colorado River. Keeping the Delta wet is something advocates have long been fighting for because it could help with wildlife protection, water access for those who live near the Delta in Mexico, and irrigation and water rights throughout the region. If a significant release of greenhouse gases happened because the riverbed was dry for so many years, “the costs of drying out rivers are greater than we knew,” says Jennifer Pitt, director of the Colorado River Project at the Audubon Society. She also said a more holistic view of the carbon in river ecosystems— specifically, how much carbon is sequestered and restored by new plant life — is necessary to quantify the full impact.

Butman and some U.S. Geological Survey scientists are already running similar tests in the Columbia and Mississippi Rivers using new tools to map methane and carbon dioxide (similar to how methane plumes from oil wells are mapped on land). In some parts of the riverbed of the Columbia

River, they’re finding methane at three to five times the concentration in the atmosphere; in others, it’s up to almost 1,000 times.

What they’re finding could end up having big impacts on water management: As humans manipulate their water sources in times of drought, the impacts those tweaks have on the carbon cycle could become a part of planning, too. “What’s really interesting,” Flessa says, “is getting people to start thinking about rivers and having a



carbon budget. It’s a whole new way of thinking about rivers.”

*A view of the Colorado River Delta where it meets the Sea of Cortez. University of Colorado Boulder
Lyndsey Gilpin is an editorial fellow at High Country News.*



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Left: Cattle dog mix at the Sundance Cafe.

Top Right: Corgi smiles at the Carousel in Nederland.

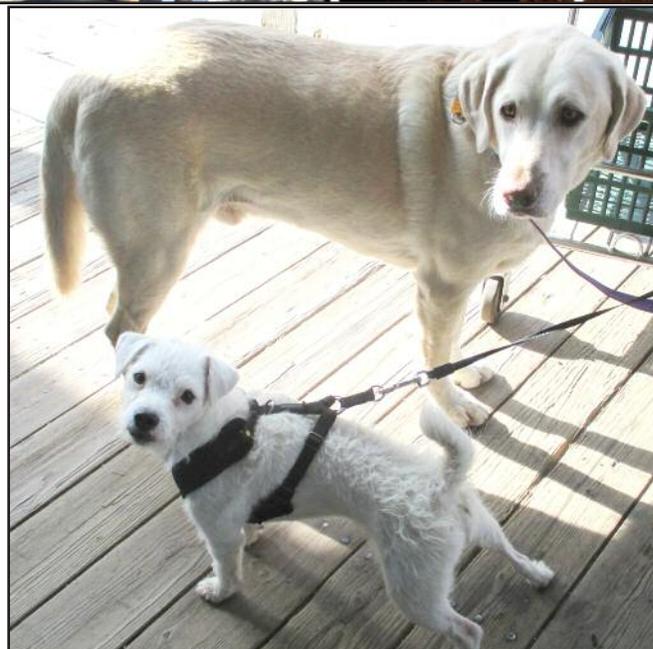
Bottom: Newborn colt.



Left: Opus & Dune.



Top Right: Comet yawns with Rojo in the background.



Bottom: Nederland dog visitors.

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Elk (viewing) Etiquette

Article and photographs by Diane Bergstrom

own urine and musk. In the world of elk, the bigger, darker,

It's rut time again! Woo hoo! If I could imitate the rumble-squeal-grunt call of a rutting bull elk, I would! Or maybe not. That could draw trouble. It's an exciting time to be an elk and a park visitor. Rocky Mountain National Park will host more visitors in September than it did in July, primarily for the wondrous displays of turning aspen leaves and fascinating elk mating rituals. In September and October, the bulls experience a rise in testosterone and a decrease in tolerance for their former bull buddies. They will fight for dominance and breeding rights, though the female cows still have final say. As well they should. The dominant bulls in their prime, around 8 years, will entice females by their brute strength, strong calls, and unique costume concoction created by rolling in mud made with their



and smellier they are, the greater their attractiveness quotient. To each his own. Called "wapiti" by the Shawnee, which means white rump, both sexes display a light tan rump patch and a dark brown ruff around their necks. They have lived in the area for hundreds of years, but were hunted to near extinction by 1900. In 1914, 49 elk were brought to RMNP from the Yellowstone National Park area, and now (Continued next page.)

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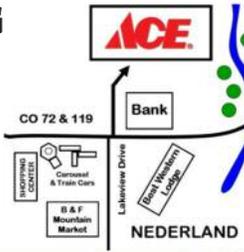
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Highlander Wildlife

Colorado has the largest population in North America, around 260,000. Their lifespan ranges from 14 to 26 years. The cows' estrus cycles only last a day or two so the bulls must be...well...vigilant. The gestation period for a calf is about 8.5 months, and the typical single births weigh in at 35 pounds. The cows can weigh up to 500 pounds while the bulls can weigh 800 pounds, with up to 40 pounds of antlers that are shed annually.

Subordinate bulls will sit on the sidelines and maybe play fight each other, shrubs, and trees. Some will try to steal cows from the dominant bulls to create their own harems, which can be comprised of 3 to 75 elk. The bull yearlings ranging from 1 to 2 years old sport single antlers and are called "spikes." Mature bulls will usually tolerate these teenagers as they continue to stay near their mothers until she kicks them out of the house, err, herd.

Here are some tips to maximize your elk viewing: Prime viewing in the park is in the early evening, 4 pm to 7 pm. Elk are primarily grazers and can often be found in Moraine Park, Upper Beaver Meadows, Horseshoe Park, Sheep Lakes area, Estes Park golf courses, and in the



meadows near the entrance stations. Keep your distance of at least 50 yards and if they move closer to you, move away. Stay out of the meadows between 5 pm and 7 pm, reading the posted closure signs for specific guidelines. Park your car safely off the road, putting away valuables and locking the doors before you stroll the road to take photos. Last year, an



Estes Park theft ring targeted cars of distracted elk viewers. Turn off your engine and lights. An annoyed dominant bull won when a truck driver refused to turn off his rumbling engine, teaching him a lesson after doing damage to his front grill and side panels. If elk approach the area where you are standing, get back in your car. The asphalt is still on their turf and they don't heed the yellow lines. Elk callers and spotlights are prohibited. Leave your dogs at home, as they will provoke the elk. Reread the truck line if you are not convinced. The bull elk are more easily provoked now and your dog will be perceived as a threatening coyote. RMNP has a great volunteer elk interpretation-roving group called the "Bugle Corp." Listen and talk to them and patrolling rangers for more information. They try to be where the elk are, though they are vastly outnumbered. Don't cause any disturbances which cause the elk to alter their behavior in any way, including ceasing eating, moving away or toward you.

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Harassment of wildlife is a felony in our state. Don't creep up on the elk for selfies. Leave Pokémon Go for other places. Safety first.

Take only photos, leave only foot prints. I have noticed more visitors running around with picked



flowers this year, and at the end of the growing season, the plants' sole function is to leave seeds for future generations. Many people coming from out of state don't understand our fragile topography and semi-arid climate. Picked flowers also deprive animals and birds depending on their seeds for food to survive the winter or fuel their migration. Steve, at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, explained the severity of picking even one Alpine Sunflower, found at tundra levels. The short bright yellow flowering plant, also called "Old Man of the Mountain," continually takes in energy through the sun, soil and elements, storing it in its root system until it is full and ready to produce a single flower. This process can take 20-25 years. After the plant produces one flower, it dies. One flower, quarter of a century. Amazing. That one flower will hopefully make it to maturity to produce seeds



for future plants.

If you have a fourth grader in the family, they can get a free yearly National Park pass by going on line at

www.everykidinapark.gov, filling out the forms, printing them, then presenting them to an entrance fee station. The pass admits the family for a year! Fourth Grader Freebie Alert: after you receive your pass or *(Continued next page.)*

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voucher, stop at the Estes Park Visitors Center at 500 Big Thompson Avenue and show them your pass to receive a free backpack filled with fun and



warning barks for danger, and mews to signal their young who mew or bleat back. One autumn, I came across a woman watching a herd from her car, a bucket of



chicken on the seat next to her. She said it was the best way to end her day! Relax into the rut. The successful mating bulls can spend hours each day running protective circles around the parameter of their harem, losing up to 1/3 of their body weight. After mating ceases, grazing becomes top priority. It is essential they replenish their fat stores in order to survive the winter. Once the rut is over, the bull adversaries will be buddies again and form small bachelor groups, while the cows, calves and spikes will stay together in larger herds. As the snow starts to fall, most will migrate out of the park to forage and winter at lower elevations. The protective cows will give birth to spotted calves between May and June, and the entire elk life cycle begins again. This fall, come be a part of it. Check the park's website for further information at www.rmnp.gov.

useful items promoting the park experience. These are provided by Visit Estes Park. The best eastern access route to the park this fall is US 36. Road repairs and flood mitigation upgrades are being made on CO highway 7 and US 34. Check the status of traffic accessibility before using these routes at www.codot.gov.

A buzz phrase today in travel is "micro adventures." Mini outdoor vacations that last anywhere from a few hours to a few days. A great micro adventure for the autumn is to spend a night in a campground. You might hear the bulls bugle throughout the night, a magical sound to hear by moonlight. Call (877)444-6777 or go online at www.recreation.gov for reservations. Plan an evening outing, bring a lawn chair and a blanket, watch the sunset over the Continental Divide, and listen to the elk bugle while they gather their harems. The cows also vocalize with



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Will Bigger Grid Make Way For Renewables?

By Mark Jaffe - High Country News www.hcn.org

On the 10th floor of Xcel Energy's downtown Denver office building, energy traders sit before banks of screens filled with flickering, colored digits, buying and selling electricity for the utility's sprawling service areas. In one corner, a trader monitors the Midwest wholesale market and in another, the Southwest Power Pool — an odd name given that it actually covers the Great Plains, not the Southwest.

On a recent day, an electronic map showed North Dakota in blue, for the price of the state's wind power was near zero, while southern Indiana was burnt orange, with the price of a kilowatt-hour near 8 cents. Five minutes later, Ohio turned pale green as the price dropped to 5 cents. Meanwhile, on the other side of the room, the trader handling Colorado had no fancy, color-coded price map. When he needed to buy or sell, he had to get on the phone and call around to other utilities to find out what they had at what prices. Then he had to fix the price, coordinate the dispatch of the electricity and file the paperwork — all things being done automatically across the room by the Midwest Independent System Operator, or MISO, and the Southwest Power Pool, which covers all or parts of seven

states.

There in a nutshell is the state of affairs when it comes to Western electricity markets. While 60 percent of the nation's electricity is handled through computerized regional markets, the West is stuck in the 1980s. Electricity sales in the West are Balkanized among 38 "balancing authorities" or local markets. "It is a bus with 38 drivers," says Carl Zichella, director of Western transmission for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group. "It is tremendously inefficient."

Western Area Power

All provisions for necessary plants and power including back-up reserves must be made by the utilities in each local market, while the companies in the neighboring market do the same. Electrons don't flow between them. But in a bigger market, electricity — a perishable commodity that moves at the speed of light — can travel to wherever there is demand. There is less need for redundant back-up systems as someone is always making electricity and someone is always buying. "If Iowa wants to go to 80 percent [wind], they can because they belong to the Midwest ISO," says Steve Berberich, CEO of the California Independent System (Continued next page.)



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Operator (CAISO), an in-state wholesale market.

But the day of a Western electricity market, also known as a regional transmission organization (RTO), may be at hand. CAISO and Portland, Oregon-based PacifiCorp, which operates power plants in six Western states, are looking to form a regional market. Berberich says he hopes that market can be extended across the entire West.

On the eastern end of the region, seven utilities, including Xcel, have formed the Mountain West Transmission Group, which extends from Wyoming into New Mexico and Arizona. The group — a precursor to an RTO — is trying to develop a uniform transmission charge, or tariff, for the region. Currently, each utility has its own charge for moving electricity through its wires. Once it has developed a uniform tariff it may join one of the nearby regional transmission organizations or create its own market.

Regional markets have a lot of moving parts. MISO operates a day-ahead market where wholesale power is sold from utility to utility for the coming day, and a real-time market to fill in for unexpected demand or outages. Electricity suppliers submit bids to MISO, which then fills orders for that power starting with the lowest price. The price at which all orders are filled is called the clearing price, calculated by algorithms and computers for the spot, or real-time market every five minutes.

In this bidding system, wind and solar, with their steadily declining prices, are becoming more attractive to utilities. “Any time you can avoid a fuel burn, you’ve got an opportunity for savings,” says Stephen Beuning, Xcel’s director of market operations.

At the moment, however, wind power from Wyoming or solar electricity from California can’t easily move around the West. On one day, CAISO had to dump 485 megawatts of wind and 657 megawatts of solar because there was no way to sell it to utilities outside its grid. “We can’t get to the goal of 50 to 60 percent renewable energy by 2050 without an RTO,” says Zichella.

In theory, a West-wide RTO would have allowed California to sell that excess wind and solar to, say, Utah or Colorado, thus avoiding the need to burn natural gas there. Similarly, Colorado utilities could ship excess wind power to California to back up solar during times of peak demand.

Setting up an RTO isn’t easy, though. “The software is a huge expense, and California has created it and is willing to share with the West,” says Nancy Kelly, a senior energy policy adviser with Western Resource Advocates, an environmental group.

California’s offer to share, however, is being met warily around the West by those who are concerned that while a Golden State-dominated system might be good for California it may be less so for others.

CAISO is controlled by the California governor and

legislature. "That is going to have to change to be acceptable to the PacifiCorp states," says Bryce Freeman, administrator of the Wyoming Office of Consumer Advocate. "Unless that is resolved, it's a fool's errand." PacifiCorp operates in Oregon, Washington, California, Utah, Wyoming and Idaho.

In Utah, lawmakers are drafting a bill to give them veto power over joining the CAISO market. "We aren't opposed," says Jeffrey Barrett, deputy director of the Utah Governor's Office of Energy Development. "We just want to make sure it is a good deal for Utah." The state has among the lowest electricity rates in the West, a competitive advantage it doesn't want to lose, Barrett says. While 60 percent of the nation's electricity is handled through computerized regional markets, the West is stuck in the 1980s.

Though they concede that a regional grid could help renewables, the Sierra Club is opposed to the current CAISO expansion plan because it would bring 24 coal-fired PacifiCorp units into the regional system.

"In bumping up the productivity of these coal plants, it will throw a lifeline to some, allowing them to operate for another 16 years," said Travis Ritchie, an attorney with Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign.

Still, economic forces and renewable-energy policies look to be pushing the West toward a regional market. A CAISO

study released in July found the proposed RTO would lead to up to \$1.5 billion in savings annually in California by 2030, equal to a 3-percent cut in electricity rates. It would also lead to a reduction in toxic and greenhouse gas emissions across the West, according to the study, although there would be a slight bump up in the early years from the PacifiCorp coal-fired plants.

The analysis, however, didn't look at benefits outside California. "A big question is, will costs and benefits be equal across the system," says Elta Kolo, an analyst with GTM Research, an energy consulting firm. "It will be crucial to get consumers on board."

The West presents some unique challenges. The New England ISO covers six states, but is an area one-thirteenth the size of the size of the West, with its mix of sparsely populated states and heavily urban ones, states with ambitious renewable energy standards and those heavily tied to coal. "They are different, but still similar in that they need electrons, they need reserve capacity, they need to make money," says Amanda Ormond, managing director of the Western Grid Group, which advocates for a more efficient grid to promote renewable energy.

"A Western market is almost certainly inevitable," Ormond says. "Most of the utilities in this country and the rest of the world operate in organized markets because it is more efficient. It is going to happen."

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Choosing Low Self-Esteem

By Frosty Wooldridge

Carrying The Mental Equivalent For Self-defeat

Millions of Americans live their lives with low self-esteem. Teenagers learn it from one or both parents. Others choose it by comparing themselves with movie stars. Many young women mutter to themselves, "I'm not good enough...I'm not as pretty as Becky the captain of the cheerleading squad...I'm not smart enough to pull top grades."

Often, young men drink booze to numb their frustrations from not being handsome, athletic or academically successful. They hang with the wrong crowd or stay home where they find solitude. Too often, teenagers of both sexes compare themselves to others.

Low self-esteem may be one of the greatest detriments to personal success socially, mentally and/or economically. But, since it's a learned behavior, it can be unlearned and changed.

Recently, one of my lifelong friends, the successful author of three published books, visited me in Golden, Colorado. That night, after dinner on our deck, he and I reminisced about our college days together. We both became teachers. During the conversation, I asked him about his fourth book.

"I can't seem to motivate myself to finish the book," he said. "I'm still dealing with low self-esteem." Mind you, this man earned a world record in one category of weight lifting. He earned a Master's degree in advanced education. He reared four highly successful children. His wife elevated herself to a world-class artist through his encouragement.

"So, Paul, are you going to coast your way to the doorstep of death?" I asked. "Are you going to waste your literary gifts because of low self-esteem? What's the value



in that choice? Why would you squander your gifts because somewhere along the line, you bought into the 'low self-esteem' train, and you're still riding it?" "I'm not sure how to figure it out and how to get off the train," he replied.

"It's amazing," I said. "All my life, I've been accused of being too over-confident and (Continued next page.)"

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Highlander Inner View

self-assured. Some call me brash. I never thought of myself as inferior to anyone or anything. Plus, I never compared myself to anyone. In my youth, my dad put his arm around my shoulder when I faced difficult challenges. He said, 'You can do that son.' That became my truth. Maybe you could borrow that 'truth' and incorporate it into your own life. It's more fun to live a life of high self-esteem. It creates a higher vibrational frequency in your daily life. It makes you happy. It makes you creative. It allows you to laugh often. It allows you to move toward your highest and best."

"I never thought about it that way," said Paul. How do you escape low self-esteem?

First, change your view of yourself. Are you a victim or a product or a tragedy? You decide. You choose your relationship with any of your challenges or situations. In the end, the universe doesn't bequeath you a positive or negative thought pattern. You choose it and you live it. Either way, you evolve your life by your choices. If you run from something, it consumes you. When you face it, you devour it.

Second, choose by daily habit to up-level your intentions for your world. Choose to value every problem, disaster and defeat. Use the gifts of defeat to grow your life. At your funeral, would you feel good when your best friend

spoke about you in the eulogy, "Paul lived a so-so life because he chose low-self esteem, which buried any chance of living a truly remarkable life. He wasted so many of his incredible talents."

Third, no matter how tough the problem, you choose the solutions and engage the intention to grow. Remember that an answer exists for every challenge in your life.

Fourth, unbridle your dreams. Henry David Thoreau said it best,

"If you advance confidently toward your dreams, and endeavor to live the life which you have imagined, you will meet with success unexpected in common hours. You will pass through invisible boundaries. You will engage new and liberal laws. And you will live with the license of a higher order of beings."

Fifth, consciously open to the joy, happiness and creative energy of your life by shedding the 'low self-esteem' skin to engage a 'high self-esteem' energy field around your heart, mind and body.

Finally, you write the next chapter of your life by your hand and by your choices. Engage the power of brave thoughts.

*Frosty Wooldridge has bicycled across six continents - from the Arctic to the South Pole - as well as eight times across the USA, coast to coast and border to border. In 2005, he bicycled from the Arctic Circle, Norway to Athens, Greece. In 2012, he bicycled coast to coast across America. His latest book is: **How to Live a Life of Adventure: The Art of Exploring the World** by Frosty Wooldridge, copies at 1 888 280 7715*

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On Those Who Live & Die Along The Border

By Jon M. Shumaker - High Country News

A new book look at the ever-changing face of the U.S.-Mexico border.

A very different border tale unfolds in Linda Valdez's thoughtful, important new memoir *Crossing the Line: A Marriage Across Borders*. She has written a love story about immigration, and it is a well-crafted antidote to de León's: *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* border-induced despair.

Valdez was an asthmatic 11-year old middle-class German-Irish girl from Ohio's Rust Belt when her mother brought her to Tucson seeking a desert cure. After a bumpy transition to adulthood, Valdez became a newspaper reporter. A chance trip to Mexico after a boyfriend's suicide resulted in a storybook romance when she met the man of her dreams, Sixto Valdez.

They could not have come from more different backgrounds. He grew up in a house made of cactus ribs, mud, and corrugated tin in Sinaloa. He was kind, decent, a rock-solid partner. But as a poor Mexican man, he couldn't get a visa. So one day in 1988, he simply popped through a hole in the fence and safely reached the other side. It was, of course, a very different border in those days than the one so painfully documented in another: de León's book.

Later, after Sixto finally received his papers, the couple returned to Sinaloa to visit his family. Valdez describes a luminous day at the beach:

"Right now, in the water, in the sun, there was only this moment — and it would remain warm and joyful years later, even in the dark of winter, even when getting along was hard work instead of child's play. "We sparkled in the water. Sea jewels."

The book describes Sixto's crossing, their marriage, their families, the challenges of dealing with immigration bureaucracy and how they created a happy bicultural life together on both sides of the border. Sixto eventually earned a master's degree and became a teacher. Valdez, now an editorial writer for the Arizona Republic and a Pulitzer Prize finalist, has written a humane cross-cultural odyssey of love, family, commitment and devotion that revels in the tenacity of the human spirit.

This book show us the realities of the border: Where Valdez celebrates life, other's are mired in death. de León's graphically bears witness that not everyone makes it, and that even for those

who do, the fairy-tale ending all too often is a desert mirage.

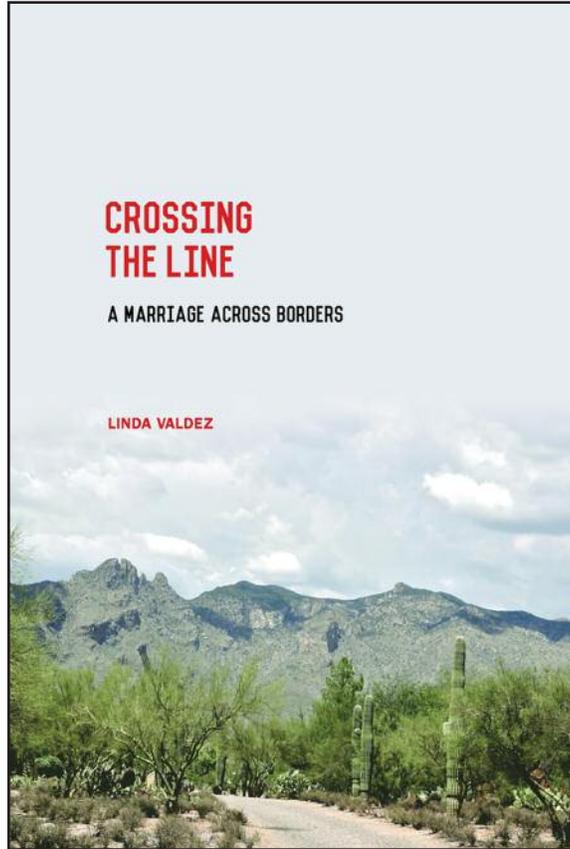
Crossing the Line: A Marriage Across Borders

Linda Valdez

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Alaska Killed Collared Wolves So Study Ended

By Anna V. Smith - HCN

For more than two decades, the National Park Service monitored the wolf packs in Alaska's Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. Now, so many of the predators have been killed by the state's Department of Fish and Game that the feds have had to drop the program. It's no longer feasible to conduct research, according to information recently published by the watchdog nonprofit, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

The state has been shooting the wolves when they wander outside the boundaries of the federal preserve, to try to increase populations of moose and caribou for human hunters. According to Greg Dudgeon, superintendent of the preserve, since 2005, 90 wolves with ranges in Yukon-Charley have been killed, including 13 radio-collared animals that were essential to the park's study. Each of the preserve's nine wolf packs has lost members, and three packs have been entirely eliminated, while another five have been reduced to a single wolf each. The last population count by the National Park Service in 2011 came up with 77 wolves. Since that count, the Park Service wound down its study, officially ending it in 2014.

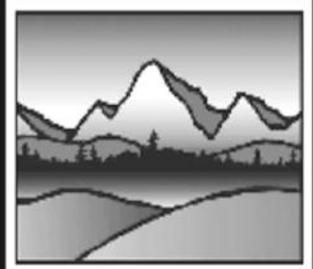
Jeff Rasic, chief of resources for Yukon-Charley Rivers and Gates of the Arctic National Park, says that federal budget constrictions played a factor in ending the study, but so did the number of collared wolves killed by ADFG and the fact that the state stopped giving the Park Service permits for collaring wolves on state land. "The state was pretty successful in killing wolves," Rasic adds.

PEER published a letter on August 8, 2016 about the impacts the state's predator killings had on the feds' wolf study, bringing these issues back into the public eye. "The expense of collaring and monitoring wolves for research is not sustainable when ADFG culls the same animals when located outside of the Preserve," Dudgeon wrote in the letter to Richard Steiner of PEER, who had asked him what impacts ADFG has on wolf packs.

In additional correspondence that has been made public by PEER, Bruce Dale of ADFG confirmed that from 2011 to 2015, the department killed 179 wolves through its wolf control program. Dale also confirmed that his department uses 28 radio-collared "Judas" wolves to help them locate and kill other wolves.

Last fall, the National Park Service banned several sports hunting practices within federal preserves in an attempt to

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protect Alaskan predators like wolves and bears. But recent news of how many wolf packs have been eliminated or severely reduced by Alaska Department of Fish and Game across the state call into question if the federal ban went far enough to protect predators.

The 1916 Organic Act requires the National Park Service to manage wildlife for healthy populations of all animals, not just the ones that humans hunt for food. In October 2015, the Park Service made a breakthrough with something they had been asking Alaska Board of Game to do for years — exclude harmful practices within preserves like hunting wolves and coyotes with pups, baiting black and brown bears and using artificial lights to rouse hibernating bears out of their dens. The ban took effect this January.

Alaska’s Board of Game says that it’s required to curb predators by a 1994 food security law that required managing for abundant ungulate populations. By reducing wolves and bears, the board said, those populations would do better, benefiting Alaskans that rely on the herds for

sustenance. The ban was eventually approved within the preserves, but the practices are still allowed outside their borders. This includes directly outside Denali National Park, where in 2010 the Board of Game eliminated a 122-square-mile buffer that protected wolves from hunting and



trapping. The park’s famed East Fork wolf pack, which had 17 members in 2014, disappeared in July 2016, according to state biologists. A number of wolves were known to have been hunted and killed, but it’s not clear what happened to the rest. Three days before Dudgeon wrote about the loss of wolves (*A wolf runs in Denali National*

Park and Preserve, where wolves are protected. Although they can be killed if they exit the parks boundaries. Kent Miller/NPS) in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, biologists visited the den. Vegetation had begun to creep back over the entrance, and there were signs that porcupines had taken up residence. No wolves had been there for some time. *Anna V. Smith is an editorial intern at High Country News.*

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Are You Ready?

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This year's theme, "*Don't Wait, Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today,*" focuses on preparedness for youth, older adults and people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. It's important to think about an emergency communication plan focusing on how your family will get emergency alerts and warnings, how your family will get to safe locations, how your family will get in touch if cell phones, internet and landlines don't work and how families will get to a meeting place after the emergency.

Individuals and families should remember to prepare for the unique needs of family members, friends and neighbors. For more information on National Preparedness Month, visit www.ready.gov.



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31972 Warrens Road
Your Little Oasis Awaits
2 BD/ 2 BA on 1.92 Acres **\$324,000**



398 Crescent Lake Road
Stunning Custom Home
3 BD/ 3 BA 3,366 sq.ft. **\$588,000**



10777 Ralston Creek Road
Blissful, private & peaceful
2 BD/ 1 BA 35+ Acres **\$389,000**



Buy or Sell a Home with Kathy Keating or Susan Peterson and Use the Moving Truck for FREE!



Kathy Keating,
CRS, ABR, GRI
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