

High Country News

For people who care about the West

FOR WHICH IT STANDS

Why the showdown at Standing Rock was more than just a pipeline protest





A signpost in the Oceti Sakowin camp bears evidence of people from hundreds of tribes who flocked to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota to oppose the Dakota Access Pipeline. TERRAY SYLVESTER

Editor's note

Standing Rock and beyond

Earlier this month, a group of protesters calling themselves "water protectors" set up a camp to stop the imminent construction of a controversial pipeline. This was not in North Dakota, however; it was in Texas. The Two Rivers camp, established by activists who were also part of the opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline, or DAPL, aims to stop a similar, 148-mile-long project, the Trans-Pecos.



Without the NoDAPL movement, which was inspired by the Standing Rock Sioux's desire to protect the tribe's water and cultural sites, the Two Rivers encampment might never have happened. At the very least, it would have looked much different.

"We're going to follow the same model as Standing Rock," Frankie Orona, an organizer at Two Rivers, told the *Guardian* newspaper. "This is a huge historical moment for environmental issues, for protecting our water, protecting our land, protecting sacred sites and protecting treaties."

The standoff at Standing Rock may well be the start of something historic. In North Dakota, the world watched as an Indigenous land-and-water movement found common cause with climate activism to confront a fossil-fuel corporation protected by a militarized police force. The administration of President Donald Trump may yet overturn the Army Corps of Engineers' decision to halt the pipeline, pending review of its impact on environmental and cultural resources. But Standing Rock, as Associate Editor Tay Wiles reports in this issue, has nevertheless empowered people in new ways. It likely will prove to be just one of many coming battles, as the stakes of climate change continue to rise, and as Indigenous populations build on the Standing Rock model.

Even as our country slides further away from democracy and closer to corporate oligarchy, Standing Rock provides heartening evidence that people who stand together still have power. In this issue, we have tried to provide you with a view of not only how a complex array of actors from across the world came together on the High Plains of North Dakota, but how they are taking newfound confidence and commitment back home to address a wide range of environmental and justice issues.

It's too early to know where all the protests, prayers, divestment campaigns and new alliances will lead us. But we know these things are adding up. Energy Transfer Partners, for example, the company behind the Dakota Access Pipeline (and the Trans-Pecos, it turns out) is now having a cash-flow problem. In early January, the company sought a \$568 million infusion from its parent company, Energy Transfer Equity, which in turn sought outside investment to make the deal. These peaceful protests, in other words, have at last found a language the oligarchs can understand: profit and loss, cost and benefit. Let more discussions now commence.

-Brian Calvert, managing editor

On the cover

Kyle Mateo, Marisa Pelletier, and Rick Buckman Coe (from left) pose for a photograph in the Oceti Sakowin camp on the edge of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in November. Pelletier is Ojibwe. The three traveled from Vancouver, British Columbia, to oppose the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

TERRAY SYLVESTER

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The tiny Delta smelt is notorious among opponents of the Endangered Species Act because efforts to save it have contributed to farm closures and water reductions, yet its population continues to decline. JOHN RIDILLA/USFW

Will the Endangered Species Act survive House Republicans?

For years, House Republicans have tried to modify and weaken the Endangered Species Act. But in December, Utah Rep. Rob Bishop went even further and said that the law is so dysfunctional that lawmakers may “simply have to start over again” and “repeal it and replace it.” Antipathy toward the act dates back to its 1973 passage, but Republicans stepped up efforts to weaken it in the 1990s, blaming several listings for economic travails. The attacks on the law haven’t let up since, even though environmentalists have challenged claims that protection blocks development. If it’s repealed, protections could vary widely, and since states get a portion of their funds from hunting licenses and fees, one obvious pitfall could be incentives for them to prioritize game management over at-risk species. Pat Parenteau, a Vermont Law School professor, says: “The truth is the (ESA) isn’t the pitbull of environmental law. It’s a poodle.” JOSHUA ZAFFOS
 MORE: hcne.ws/endangered-esa

Trending Revolutionary consumers

Prominent among President Donald Trump’s Cabinet nominees are friends of the energy industry, such as Scott Pruitt, who is slated to run the Environmental Protection Agency (an agency he is currently suing), and possible Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, the chief executive of Exxon Mobil. In an opinion column, *HCN* Managing Editor Brian Calvert suggests an antidote to corporate takeover. “True power ... has been organizing itself around the logic of corporate capitalism for a long time,” Calvert writes. “We have equally obvious ways to resist: By changing the way we spend.”
 BRIAN CALVERT, OPINION

You say

BRYAN JOHNSON: “Mr. Calvert is implying that a vote in 21st century American democracy is rooted in how we engage with capitalism. ... Not everybody has the privilege and luxury to sit back and wait it out, particularly queer and trans folks, people of color, and immigrants.”

RUBY RAM: “Something is seriously off with our culture when suggestions of the only way we can be ‘heard’ is by shutting up and just not buying stuff.”

CHARLES FOX: “Voting with our dollars is what we do every day, so much more frequently than voting for president every four years. In a sense, our vote for president becomes almost trivial compared to the thousands of votes we cast ... through our consumption habits.”

MORE: hcne.ws/dollar-democracy and [Facebook.com/highcountrynews](https://www.facebook.com/highcountrynews)

500,000

more visitors have visited each of these five parks —Yosemite, Zion, Bryce Canyon, Great Smoky Mountains and Glacier — in 2016 than in 2015.

35 miles

of “social trails,” unplanned paths created by unauthorized foot traffic, now exist in Zion National Park. There are only **15 miles** of designated trails.

“(It is) inconceivable that a country would find billions of barrels of oil and leave it in the ground while there is a market for it.”

—Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during an announcement of a series of oil sands pipeline approvals.

The Park Service centennial celebration’s damage to the lands

By some measures, the National Park Service’s centennial year, during which the agency focused marketing campaigns to drive traffic, was a resounding success. Within the Park Service’s 413 units by the end of 2016, the agency smashed all-time records, welcoming nearly 325 million visitors and far surpassing the prior record of 307 million, set in 2015. Thirteen parks surpassed the 2 million mark in visitation, while 11 reached that level in 2015. But such overcrowding also increases adverse hiker behavior and vandalism. The most profound impacts could be longer-lasting: Wildlife increasingly succumbs to traffic-related deaths, and the most sensitive landscapes are the most strained and damaged. National Park Service staff struggled just to keep up.

GLENN NELSON/TRAIL POSSE

MORE: hcne.ws/celebration-depreciation

Since 2015, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has issued plans for a new nationwide carbon tax, begun phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, and set a goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. But a rash of new fossil fuel projects run counter to Trudeau’s environmental record and cast doubt on whether Canada can meet its climate goals.

SARAH TORY

MORE: hcne.ws/canada-climate-counter



SAMUEL WILSON

Around the West, in photos

This year, as always, we reported many stories in the region, but we also covered some of the little-known corners of the always-surprising West. That included photos of a rare “super bloom” in Death Valley, members of an unauthorized “border patrol” and a man who braves frigid waters to harvest sea cucumbers.

STAFF MORE: hcne.ws/2016-pictures



MATT MILLS MCKNIGHT



NEIL KREMER AND CORY JOHNSON



JOHN CURLEY



DESEMONA DALLAS

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INDUSTRIAL SOLAR
SHORTCOMINGS

“So Shines a Good Deed” gives incomplete coverage to solar energy development and presents only one view of a rather complicated situation (*HCN*, 12/26/16).

Both the federal government and the article cited are avid promoters of industrial-scale solar development on public lands. In California, the total solar energy produced from installations on parking lot structures, warehouse roofs and individual homes significantly exceeds that produced by industrial-scale facilities. These distributed sources are closer to the points of use, employ local labor and are sited on already disturbed land. It is much more difficult for the federal government to promote development on private lands than on public lands, so it is understandable, but shortsighted, that the Interior Department should act as it has. It is less understandable that *High Country News* should accept and print such a view with no caveat.

Neither does the story mention damage to Native American artifacts, tortoise deaths due to translocation, documented avian fatalities, or the fact that the Ivanpah facility has failed to deliver the electrical power that was promised. Honest reporting ought to include a wider perspective than that shown.

Craig Deutsche
Los Angeles, California

REGULATIONS REJECTED

“Will a twice-burned county change its ways?” (*HCN*, 12/26/16) details how residents of Montana’s Bitterroot Valley block efforts by their state and county governments to require homeowners in the fire zone to prepare for inevitable wildfires. Residents reject county regulation and demand private-property rights. These Bitterroot Valley conservatives can teach us a great deal about a mindset that demands that the federal government turn public lands over to the state because of “overreach” on the part of the U.S. Forest Service (which has spent tens of millions of dollars protecting Bitterroot Valley homeowners and fighting fires made worse by past subsidized logging). Conservatives not only reject federal regulation, they reject regulation by the most local, respon-



DAVE GRANLUND/POLITICALCARTOONS.COM

sive level of government. I’m sure the free-market insurance companies that are asked to replace burned homes are noticing the lack of county and private action to protect homes. Perhaps the locals will be more receptive to government action when insurance companies raise their rates or cancel their policies altogether.

Tom Ribe
Santa Fe, New Mexico

THE DARK SIDE OF THE PARK SERVICE

Please give Lyndsey Gilpin my congratulations on her great investigative reporting for “How the Park Service is Failing Women” (*HCN*, 12/12/16). I am in my 23rd year of retirement after wearing the National Park Service ranger uniform for more than 30 years. I can validate and corroborate every point that Lyndsey writes in her article. That traditional flat hat of the Park Service uniform covers up a lot of weird and strange stuff! I have come to believe that what you write about happening in the NPS is not at all unique to just one agency. You are likely to find such a dark sinister side to all U.S. federal agencies. It is my experience and observation that if one does not fit into the agency mold, then one is drummed out of the corps.

Alden L. Nash
Bishop, California

SHADES OF WHAT’S TO COME?

I thoroughly appreciated, although was equally saddened by, “How the Park Service is Failing Women” (*HCN*, 12/12/16). It does not surprise me that women — and most likely people of color, of Hispanic or Muslim backgrounds, and others who are not white

males — are treated in this manner throughout multiple government organizations and business as a whole.

The worst part of all of this is that with the incoming occupant of the White House — the one with Neanderthal leanings and cronies with the same mentality — we can only expect more of this type of treatment for far too many people.

Get ready, America. There will be an extensive amount of work to be done — beginning now — to avoid a reversal of the decades of toil by many to create equal opportunities for everyone in what has always been a great nation.

Don Hagedorn
Columbia, South Carolina

AN EXCEPTION, NOT A ‘LOOPHOLE’

Elizabeth Shogren’s “Latest” column in the Dec. 12 issue grossly mischaracterized the North Fork coal-mining exception to the Colorado roadless rule, as a “loophole.” The state of Colorado was never ambiguous with its intent to make provisions for the \$1 billion-dollar coal-mining industry in the North Fork coal-mining area with its own roadless rule, and this, alongside many other exceptions, was part of its original 2005 petition. The provision was identified and deliberated for seven years in an open public process; some local environmental groups even supported it. This is not to deny that the affected coal mines have staggering greenhouse gas emissions and that such operations warrant scrutiny for their climate consequences. But to misrepresent the North Fork coal mining exception as a “loophole” obfuscates the history of how and why this exception exists. In today’s information (and misinformation) landscape, it’s imperative for professional journalism sources to be exacting in pursuit of accuracy. If reporting creeps ever slightly toward confirming suspicions of those who wish to cast any professional news source as “liberal lies,” then hope for continued democratic processes — like the one that resulted in this delicately negotiated compromise between landscape conservation and rural economic development — is really sunk.

Ben Graves
Paonia, Colorado



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Bears Ears National Monument is a go

Despite compromises, opposition is riled up

BY JONATHAN THOMPSON

On the eve of the new year, President Barack Obama designated the Bears Ears National Monument — culminating an eight-decade-long struggle to preserve this ecologically diverse, archaeologically rich landscape in southeastern Utah, the ancestral homeland of several Southwestern tribes.

The Dec. 28 decision is being heralded as a victory not only for the conservation community, but also for the five tribes that proposed the monument and will play a role in managing it. Yet even its most ardent opponents — mostly Utahns who regard Obama’s use of the Antiquities Act as federal overreach — got something in

return: More than a half-million acres in the original proposal were excluded from the final boundaries.

Bears Ears National Monument covers 1.35 million acres in San Juan County currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. The two agencies will jointly manage the new monument, with “guidance and recommendations” from a commission made up of elected officers from the Hopi Nation, Zuni Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah Ouray. The monument proclamation goes on to note: “The traditional ecological knowledge amassed by the Native Americans whose ancestors inhabited this region ... is, itself, a resource to be protected and used in understanding and managing this

landscape sustainably for generations to come.”

This emphasis on Native American cultures and values, says University of Colorado, Boulder, law professor Charles Wilkinson, promises to make the new monument “one of the most distinctive and uplifting landscapes in America’s public land systems.”

The area is home to tens of thousands of archaeological sites, mostly remnants of the ancestral Puebloan culture, who inhabited this landscape for at least 2,000 years. Many of them have suffered from illegal pothunting, vandalism and artifact collecting. Monument supporters hope that the designation will bring the resources needed to enforce existing laws, shore up regulations and educate the public about the importance of these cultural resources.

Opponents often cite the controversial designation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument west of here, created by then-President Bill Clinton in 1996. But a better comparison might involve the Canyon of the Ancients in southwestern Colorado, also given monument status by Clinton in 2000. “Canyons of the Ancients was perhaps the

No president has ever tried to abolish a monument; it’s not clear that it’s even possible.

Contributing editor Jonathan Thompson is writing a book about Colorado’s Gold King Mine spill. @jonnypeace



Areas that were not included in the final monument designation

- A.** The Daneros uranium mine, along with a vast swath of land near the confluence of the San Juan and Colorado River, was left out of the final monument. This gives the mine room to expand, and keeps other potential uranium mining areas outside the monument.
- B.** Some of the Ute Mountain Ute people opposed to the monument were concerned about its impact on Ute lands in Allen Canyon; some of those lands were excluded from the monument.
- C.** The Abajo Mountains and adjacent Harts Draw are popular recreation, grazing and firewood-gathering areas for locals.
- D.** Most of the dramatic Raplee Anticline and Lime Ridge were left out. These areas have a history of some oil development and limestone quarrying.
- E.** Black Mesa was left out of the monument as a concession to locals, and because of historic impacts.
- F.** All but the very end section of Recapture Canyon was left out of the monument. There is potential for oil and gas development here.



A Shell oil drilling rig in the arctic.
COURTESY SHELL

THE LATEST

Backstory

For two years, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, worked to reform America's decade-old energy policy while increasing oil drilling in her home state ("Lisa Murkowski's Alter Ego," *HCN*, 10/12/15). Murkowski's bipartisan Energy Policy Modernization Act — which tackled a slew of issues including grid modernization, energy efficiency and industry regulation — made it past committee in the fall of 2015 and headed for a vote in Congress.

Followup

On Dec. 9, 2016, Sen. Murkowski conceded that her bill had died. Despite passing in the Senate by an 85-12 vote, the bill was stopped by House Republicans who were waiting to control both Congress and the White House before revisiting energy policy. In late December, changes in Washington hit close to home for Murkowski: President Obama moved to protect most U.S. Arctic waters from offshore oil and gas leasing. Then, in January, **Murkowski introduced legislation to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's coastal plain to drilling. It was her ninth such attempt.**

MAYA L. KAPOOR

first to explicitly recognize that ruins do not tell the entire story — that ancients lived in, hunted, gathered and raised crops, and developed water and religious sites throughout the larger landscape," says Bruce Babbitt, Clinton's Interior secretary. "Bears Ears brings this concept to fruition in an even larger landscape."

In response to stiff resistance from local politicians and citizens, Obama pared down the original 1.9 million-acre Bears Ears proposal by 550,000 acres, cutting out the Abajo Mountains, most of the Raplee Anticline and Lime Ridge, and a swath of land near the confluence of the San Juan and Colorado rivers where uranium is being mined. The final boundaries are closer to those in the Public Lands Initiative bill that Utah Republican Rep. Rob Bishop tried and failed to get through Congress in 2016. That bill would have put essentially the same lands into two national conservation areas and a wilderness area.

The monument's proclamation preserves traditional Native American access to firewood, herbs and piñon nuts — a major concern for those Navajos and Utes who resisted the designation. Existing

mineral rights and grazing rights will be preserved, private lands will not be impacted, and the feds will work to swap state lands within monument boundaries for parcels elsewhere. Though the 1996 Grand Staircase-Escalante designation effectively killed a proposed coal mine, no such developments are on the table at Bears Ears.

Nevertheless, the Utah Legislature's public lands committee denounced the designation as "unilateral tyranny," and Utah Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch called it an "attack on an entire way of life." That's despite the fact that the only existing economic activity likely to be hindered by the monument is the pilfering and black-market sale of antiquities. "Some of the Utah delegation don't care about the actual proclamation," says John Freemuth, executive director of the Cecil D. Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State University. "They only care about confrontational politics and clichéd symbolism."

Utah lawmakers pledged to urge the president-elect to overturn the designation. Yet no president has ever tried to abolish a monument; it's not clear that it's even possible. "Existing law tells us that

Trump has little or no ability to alter this monument," says Wilkinson. Even if challenged, "there is an overwhelming likelihood that courts will hew to existing law that the Antiquities Act allows presidents to create monuments but not to overturn them."

Hatch wants Congress to ditch the Antiquities Act altogether, or follow Wyoming's example and exempt Utah from it. Since the law's 1906 passage, however, all but three presidents have used it, protecting tens of millions of acres in extraordinary landscapes like Death Valley, the Grand Canyon and Zion. It's hard to imagine any president willingly giving up so much power and legacy-building potential.

Meanwhile, environmentalists, archaeologists, and tribes are prepared to fight to keep Bears Ears — and other monuments — intact. But for now, they're also celebrating. "Mormon history, the Constitution and laws, and white man's history are written on paper," said Octavius Seowtewa of Zuni. "Our history — the Native history — is written in stone on canyon walls. We celebrate, knowing our history at Bears Ears will be protected for future generations, forever." □



The Cedar Mesa Citadel Ruins are one of thousands of archaeological sites in the 1.35 million acres of land now designated as Bears Ears National Monument that include rock art, cliff dwellings and ceremonial kivas. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Bedroom community

In Oregon, artificial burrows help owls recover

BY LEIGH CALVEZ

Lugging two heavy buckets of rocks, David Johnson trudged across north-east Oregon's sunburnt shrub-steppe in the hot mid-May sun. Before him lay the U.S. Army's Umatilla Chemical Depot, where rows of concrete igloos once held stockpiled chemical weapons. Now, the virtually deserted Depot provides thousands of acres of prime burrowing owl habitat. Johnson, head of the Global Owl Project, dumped the rocks around the man-made owl home he'd recently installed, to coyote-proof it.

Burrowing owls, nine inches tall with white Groucho Marx eyebrows and long skinny legs, are farmers' friends — a single owl family can gobble over 1,000 crop-chewing rodents per year. Once found from Minnesota to California, their populations have plummeted as development encroaches on their habitat — treeless grasslands and deserts — and on the burrow-diggers they rely on, like badgers and prairie dogs. The owls are considered "birds of conservation concern" federally, as well as in eight Western states.

The burrowing owls on the Umatilla Chemical Depot provide a case study in unintended consequences. An unsuccessful attempt to breed pronghorn inadvertently caused the owl population to crash. The Global Owl Project has helped the bird to recover, but now it faces a new threat, a proposed solar farm. "This is how a species becomes endangered in the first place," says Johnson. When habitat protection and economic development become mutually exclusive, he says, "No one wins."

Since 1941, the 17,000-acre Depot has been protected from development and agricultural expansion. That's allowed wildlife to thrive, including long-billed curlews, loggerhead shrikes, black-throated sparrows, coyotes, red-tailed hawks and burrowing owls.

Then, in 1969, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife decided to relocate pronghorn here, hoping to breed animals that could be released in other parts of the state. The herd grew to about 350, then declined, most likely from overgrazing and inbreeding. Wildlife officials, though, blamed coyotes and set out to exterminate

Leigh Calvez is the author of the bestselling book *The Hidden Lives of Owls*, published by Sasquatch Books. She lives near Seattle, Washington.



Volunteer Julie Conley of Yakima, Washington, flattens the soil over an artificial burrow at the Umatilla Chemical Depot in Oregon. Below, a burrowing owl perches on a wire.

KATHY ANEY/EAST OREGONIAN; JADINE COOK/GLOBAL OWL PROJECT



nate them by trapping. In the process, they killed most of the Depot's badgers. But burrowing owls need badger dens for nesting and raising their young, and as the now-abandoned burrows caved in, so did the population of owls. By 2008, they had almost disappeared, dropping to an all-time low of four nesting pairs.

So Johnson and some volunteers began installing artificial burrows. Every nest site has two or three buried chambers, each made from half of a 55-gallon barrel with a 10-foot-long entrance tunnel of flexible drainage pipe. The owls moved in, and by 2009, there were nine nesting pairs. Over the next eight years, Johnson installed 183 artificial burrows. In 2016, 64 nesting pairs raised 182 chicks. "If you know what you need to put back into the system, intensive effort can work and work really well," says Dave Oleyar, senior scientist for Hawkwatch International, who encountered similar "housing" issues with tree-cavity-nesting flammulated owls. Johnson hopes the Depot's owls will eventually spread around Oregon and Washington, part of this unique Northwest sub-population's historic range.

But now the owls face a new hurdle: the potential intrusion of construction equipment followed by solar panels. When the U.S. Army decided to close the Depot, a federal task force came up with a plan in 2010 for its land, including an area for National Guard training and a 5,678-acre wildlife refuge. To pay for removing base infrastructure, restoring native species, and managing the refuge, the plan also called for a small solar farm, up to 200 acres.

After the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declined to run the refuge, the Columbia Development Authority, a consortium of public and private business organizations, offered to take over. It also proposed a much larger solar farm — 2,000 acres that could generate \$1 million worth of electricity annually. "We want to find a balance to protect habitat and economic development," says Oregon State Rep. Greg Smith, executive director of the authority.

However, the solar farm would be built squarely on the "best remaining owl and curlew habitat," says Johnson, "in direct opposition to why the wildlife refuge was designed and zoned to start with." Johnson is working on an alternative that would place the solar array along the edges of the refuge, where no owls nest and where it can act as a fire break. He's also seeking a wildlife-focused group, such as a land trust, to take title to the refuge land. The Depot handover could happen as early as spring 2017.

Johnson also hopes to help restore balance by relocating nuisance badgers to the refuge from around Oregon. The mustelids would rein in the exploding population of pocket gophers, which eat native plants like big sagebrush and bunchgrasses, allowing non-natives such as cheatgrass and Russian thistle to invade. And more importantly, they'd once again dig homes for burrowing owls. Says Johnson, "I'd like to get out of the burrow business altogether." □

THE LATEST

Backstory

Even as a majority of states and counties explicitly reject the idea of transferring federal land to states, the transfer drumbeat is getting louder, championed in Congress by Republican lawmakers like Alaska's Sen. Lisa Murkowski and Utah's Rep. Rob Bishop. **Since 2014, a number of Western counties have joined the American Lands Council, which lobbies to "return" lands to states** ("The ultra-right 'remedy' for public lands," *HCN*, 10/24/14).

Followup

Congress kicked off 2017 with the House GOP passing a package of rules that includes one making it easier to transfer federal lands to states, by removing the requirement that other federal programs must be cut by an amount equal to the transferred land's value. Because this action involves a House rule, the Senate does not get a vote. This doesn't mean proposed land transfers are sure to pass, however: They'd need 60 votes to avoid a filibuster, and Senate Republicans outnumber Democrats 52 to 48.

PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER



LAWRENCE JACKSON / THE WHITE HOUSE

A more open forest

The Forest Service relaxes restrictions on guided groups

BY ANNA V. SMITH

In late August, Matt Leslie led nine high schoolers to the top of Sperry Peak in Washington state. Many had never been in the mountains before, much less on a backpacking trip. Leslie is a guide for Seattle's Boys Outdoor Leadership Development & Girls Outdoor Leadership Development (BOLD & GOLD), an outdoor adventure program run by the YMCA that includes kids from underrepresented backgrounds. But like many such groups, it's got a problem: a broken permitting system that often hampers access to nearby national forests.

That means more time and money is spent to get to places farther from home — places kids are less likely to revisit after the trip is over. "By not having to drive many, many hours, students can see, 'Wow, this is something I can do all on my own,'" Leslie says. Instead, the program is forced to use a patchwork of national parks and state-owned Department of Natural Resources land where permitting is easier. Sperry Peak, for example, is an island of DNR land surrounded by U.S. Forest Service land.

Guided groups like BOLD & GOLD have long called for better access to national forests. In response, the Forest Service

recently announced that it is modernizing and streamlining its recreation permit process. The agency says it wants to encourage groups to use its land, not restrict access. "There is a clear need to say yes more often, both to stay relevant as a public agency and to make sure that future generations stay connected to their public lands," says Mike Schlafmann, public services officer at Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in Washington.

Nationwide, the Forest Service manages 23,000 special use permits annually for guided trips. A temporary permit for 50 to 200 days can cost \$150 to \$600, and long-term permits cost more. In some cases, the permit process can take up to a year or longer, especially if an environmental study is required.

The current system favors casual users, allowing them access to forest lands without permits. But guided organizations, whether nonprofit or commercial, large or small, often have to apply for permits even if their activities don't have much impact. A 2004 policy change gave rangers more flexibility to waive permits if a group has nominal impacts, but the rule wasn't reflected in practice. In fact, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest issued no new permits for 27 years, a

moratorium lifted only last year as part of the agency's shifting attitude. Schlafmann says the moratorium continued largely because the agency lacked the staff to do an environmental study. "My sense is it became easier to maintain the moratorium in some people's minds than to undo it," Schlafmann says. The rapid growth of Seattle had also raised concerns about a recreation boom in nearby forests.

To address the collective frustration, in 2014, industry leaders formed the Outdoor Advocacy Working Group, made up of around 40 volunteer groups, nonprofits and outfitters. The permitting process, they found, created a significant hurdle to public access. In Seattle, BOLD & GOLD taught kids to rock-climb in Canada instead of Washington; in Montana, a group couldn't take children to Bitterroot National Forest. "This permit system doesn't work well for anyone, including land managers," says Katherine Hollis, conservation and advocacy director of the Washington-based Mountaineers and a member of the working group. She says arranging permits takes up a third or more of one Mountaineers employee's time. "We had concerns about the next generation of conservationists because of these bureaucratic barriers." Hollis sees the Forest Service's commitment to improving access as a way of acknowledging that recreation is as important as other land uses, like mining and logging.

In September, agency representatives announced plans for a redesigned permit database, online applications and better ranger training for identifying low-impact activities, a big step forward in a long process. Seventeen national forests, all in the West, are testing the new system. That includes Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, where an environmental study on recreation concluded last year, opening up more permits. BOLD & GOLD will begin trial permits in summer 2017. Now, if a guided group wants to hike and camp in an area already used for recreation, the Forest Service encourages district rangers to consider the effects, and waive the special-use permit requirement when possible. Permits will continue to exist, but the agency is taking a more nuanced approach.

Although the Forest Service has earmarked \$5 million for the changes, guided groups worry about the agency's tight budget: Over the past two decades, staffing has plunged, and wildfire costs consume 52 percent of the budget while recreation and wilderness funding has dropped 15 percent. All that detracts from permit capacity.

Nonetheless, the Forest Service's recent actions are evidence of its changing attitude toward recreation, says Courtney Aber, national director of BOLD & GOLD. Once more kids get outside, close to home, she says, "they'll understand why this is a place for them." □

Participants in a co-ed BOLD & GOLD expedition look at a map while backpacking in Olympic National Park. Since it can be difficult to obtain permits in national forests, the leadership program often visits national parks or DNR land where permitting is easier. The Forest Service is streamlining its process to give these kinds of groups better access.

COURTESY BOLD & GOLD

Anna V. Smith is an editorial fellow at *High Country News*. [@annavtoriasmith](#)



While wolves still have names

As Pacific Northwest wolf numbers grow, they'll be managed as a population rather than known as individuals

BY EMMA MARRIS

Night is falling in the Wood River Valley, a broad, flat expanse of southern Oregon, just south of Crater Lake National Park. John Stephenson, a gray-haired, lantern-jawed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, is building a campfire on this chilly late October evening. He is here to be a human — to move around and make noise and generally discourage a nearby wolf pack from coming out of the dark timbered hills. These wolves have killed four yearling cattle in this particular pasture already. And this isn't any old wolf pack; it was the first to settle in southern Oregon, and the family of a legendary lupine wanderer known as OR7.

The campfire's flickering amber flames compete with the irregular flashing of anti-predator lights mounted on fences. This is Stephenson's fourth night in this field. In a few days, the cows will be rounded up and shipped to California for the winter. Once they're gone, he'll be able to more or less relax until the cattle return in the spring.

Wolves are expanding across the West, though they're still federally endangered in some places. At the edges of their range, the wolf frontier, the animals are more likely to be individually known and managed as if each one is precious. If one finds a mate or has pups, it's announced in the local paper and even on Facebook. And if one begins killing livestock, government officials camp out for days in a cold pasture, hoping to maintain a fragile coexistence without further bloodshed — especially if the wolf is as famous as OR7.

But the era of knowing and managing Western wolves as individuals probably won't last. If and when gray wolves become well established, they will be

Emma Marris writes about wildlife, ecology, conservation and occasionally food from Klamath Falls, Oregon.



managed like black bears, cougars or other animals — as largely anonymous populations. In another wolf generation or three, an animal that kills livestock in this valley might well be shot. “Part of the deal of having wolves back on the landscape is there are going to be some problem ones we have to remove,” Stephenson says. “It is the price of success.”

OR7, whom local environmentalists dubbed “Journey,” gained his official designation in early 2011, when he became the seventh wolf to be captured and fitted with a radio collar in Oregon. That fall, he left his natal pack and took off on an epic thousand-mile trek that saw him cross into California for a time, becoming the first wild wolf in the Golden State since the 1920s. His wanderings surprised biologists, who hadn't realized how far wolves were prepared to travel in search of a good territory and a mate. And he inspired environmentalists, who regarded “Journey” as symbolic: the personification of wildness reclaiming the Pacific Northwest. OR7 has since inspired two documentaries, a children's book, and a Twitter account (“Hobbies: wandering, ungulates”).

Since his famous cross-state trek, OR7 has settled down in a large territory stretching from north of Crater Lake down to the California border. He's found a mate and had several rounds of pups. The family is known as the Rogue Pack after the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest that makes up much of their turf. OR7's radio collar has gone dead, but Stephenson has been unable to trap him or his mate; the wolves are too wily.

OR7 is now 7 years old, and he and his family have largely kept to themselves, hunting elk and staying in the remotest parts of the forest. It wasn't until this year that the Rogue Pack bothered livestock, perhaps owing to what Utah State

University ecologist Dan MacNulty calls “predatory senescence” — older wolves simply have a harder time chasing down wild game, and fat, placid cattle make a tempting alternative. So far, the attacks have been few, annoying rather than infuriating Klamath County ranchers.

Butch Wampler is the manager at the Nicholson Ranch, where the pack killed cattle. He was riding his horse on a Monday morning in October when he came across several wolves dining on the carcass of a 600-pound steer. He suspected the wolves had made the kill. “I rode the cattle really good on Friday, and there were no sick ones,” he says. The next night, the pack struck again. “All they ate out of that second one was the heart and lungs and liver,” Wampler says, clearly irked. “Wolves kill just to kill.”

Eventually, they took two more steers. The owner of the cattle, DeTar Livestock of Dixon, California, was paid \$3,660 in compensation from the Klamath County Wolf Depredation Committee. And after the third loss, Stephenson began his vigil. Wampler told Stephenson he understood the real reason he was working so hard to avoid yet another kill: “You are not protecting these cattle from the wolves; you are protecting your wolves from these cattle.”

Stephenson acknowledges that the fame of this particular wolf figures into the amount of effort he's putting in. “It would take an extreme situation for us to order a removal of OR7,” Stephenson says.

However, even here on the wolf frontier, the fate of a single animal hardly matters, given the likely spread of these smart, flexible predators, who know how to move and take advantage of local resources, says Mike Jimenez, a recently retired wolf biologist. And so he supports early lethal control of livestock-killing wolves to encourage tolerance in rural

Please see Wolves, page 24

As darkness falls, John Stephenson, a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, watches over the ranch in southern Oregon where wolves from the Rogue Pack have killed four calves. EMMA MARRIS

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¡ÓRALE! LOWRIDER: CUSTOM MADE IN NEW MEXICO

Don J. Usner and Katherine Ware
179 pages, hardcover: \$39.95.
Museum of New Mexico Press, 2016

A procession of lowriders glides down the highway, chrome glinting in the sun and the New Mexico landscape rolling past. The photo,

from 1980, is part of a collection of images by photographers featuring the elaborate cars and their special place in Mexican-American culture.

The photographs in *¡Órale! Lowrider*, by Don J. Usner and Katherine Ware, celebrate the Impalas, Chevrolets and Fords as personalized works of art rather than just status symbols: black-and-white portraits of men and their beloved cars, a bride and groom in a motorcade, a colorful icon of Our Lady Guadalupe airbrushed on a hood. "Each vehicle embodies a story, sometimes in a painted mural memorializing a lost loved one or depicting a narrative of struggle and redemption," Usner writes. The project documents the decades-long evolution of styles in New Mexico's lowriders, a unique cultural tradition that is, as Usner puts it, "redolent with memories of extended family, community and place." ANNA V. SMITH

Precision, 2014, left.

Eppie clowning with his '64 Impala, Chimayo, 2012, above.

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New faces in town

Generally speaking, we run a pretty lean newsroom at our Paonia, Colorado, headquarters. As January 2017 gets underway, however, we've got a full house. Our newest staff member, **Maya L. Kapoor**, just started as associate editor.

Maya, who was born in New Mexico and grew up in New Jersey, spent her 20s exploring the country through various seasonal field biology jobs. She studied biology, getting a bachelor's degree from Williams College and a master's degree from Arizona State University. While at the University of Arizona, where she got an MFA in creative writing, Maya co-founded Many Voices, a university club dedicated to supporting creative writing students of color. In

her free time, Maya loves backpacking and looks forward to exploring Colorado's Western Slope. Maya will report on climate change, natural resources and other science news. We're very excited to have her onboard.

As we wrapped up this issue, two undergraduate students, **Isabel Lyndon** and **Patrick Stein**, visited us for a week to learn more about magazine production and writing. Isabel and Patrick acquainted themselves with the writing process and explored to the ins and outs of production. The two came from Reed College, in Portland, Oregon, the alma mater of **Kate Schimel**, our deputy editor-digital. It was a pleasure to have them here.

As the new political season begins, we're busy stuffing envelopes for our annual "Send HCN to Congress" fundraiser. Each year, we ask readers to send subscriptions to all 535 members of Congress. That way they can make better-informed decisions about issues crucial to the American West. If they want to. Visit hcn.ws/send-us-to-congress to add your pledge.

We've had some especially interesting visitors recently,

including **Jim West**, a photographer from Detroit and longtime subscriber, who stopped by our office "to find some solace" and explore places like the proposed Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. His visit proved a good omen: Bears Ears was declared a national monument the very next day.

Alas, a few corrections: In "Can a video game render a culture more visible," (*HCN* 12/12/16), Amy Freeden was misidentified; she is the executive vice president of the Cook Inlet Tribal Council.

In our Dec. 26, 2016 issue, we updated snow geese fatalities at the Berkeley Pit in Butte, Montana; the deaths came not only because of cadmium, lead and arsenic, but



Maya L. Kapoor, our new associate editor, came from warm Tucson, Arizona, to a very snowy Colorado. BROOKE WARREN

because of a specific problem with oxidation of iron sulfide. In that issue's "The chickenization of beef," a photo caption incorrectly identified a truck's contents: corn silage, not mulched corn. And in *Heard Around the West*, we reported on a dog that was chained up next to a polar bear, which was not chained up, while a messy frozen-food truck spill was near Bend, Oregon, not Burns. We regret the errors.

—Paige Blankenbuehler,
for the staff

FOR WHICH IT

Police use a water cannon to drench opponents of the Dakota Access Pipeline during a standoff in freezing temperatures at Backwater Bridge near Cannon Ball, North Dakota, in late November. Officers also used rubber bullets, concussion grenades and tear gas in an attempt to force the crowd out of the area. Facing page, the camp celebrates on Dec. 4, after the Army Corps of Engineers temporarily denied the permit needed for the Dakota Access Pipeline to proceed.

TERRAY SYLVESTER



Duty and #NoDAPL

FEATURE BY JENNI MONET

How local tribal concerns grew into an international movement

In September 2014, a colleague sent Wasté Win Young, then the historic preservation officer for North Dakota's Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, a news article. It described a proposed oil pipeline that was headed straight for ancestral lands and water, Young said, yet no one had told the tribe about it.

The \$3.8 billion, 1,172-mile-long Dakota Access Pipeline, operated by Energy Transfer Partners, was slated to be the largest pipeline ever to originate in North Dakota, able to transport up to 570,000 gallons of crude per day from the booming Bakken oil patch, across South Dakota and Iowa to a refinery in Patoka, Illinois. North Dakota welcomed the project, which could further boost the state's oil production. By April 2014, output had topped 1 million barrels per day, and proponents said transporting the oil by pipeline would be safer than using trains, which can derail, causing spills or explosive fires.

South of the Bakken, though, the Standing Rock Sioux were increasingly wary of the state's energy ambitions. The

tribe had long resisted the multibillion-dollar fracking industry, even as North Dakota was becoming one of America's leading oil producers, second only to Texas. A strong believer in tribal sovereignty, the Standing Rock Sioux began banning Bakken-related projects on its territory as early as 2007, citing historic treaties, the tribe's right to natural resources and its deep spiritual connection to the land and water.

The tribe's distrust of the oil industry only deepened when the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, 200 miles up the Missouri River, began to experience the darker side of the Bakken boom. These tribal communities on the Fort Berthold Reservation were among the state's leading oil producers. But the boom also brought an increase in drugs and crime: According to the FBI, rape, murder and assaults rose 121 percent between 2005 and 2011 throughout the Williston Basin, home to Fort Berthold.

The Standing Rock Sioux's doubts about fracking and oil carried over to the Dakota Access Pipeline, provoking some-

thing state officials rarely encountered in their pursuit of an energy agenda: environmental debate. The tribe's resistance to the pipeline eventually blossomed into a much larger struggle for Indigenous rights, environmental justice and racial equality. But it all started out quietly, as great social movements so often do.

YOUNG, NOW 38, WAS THE FIRST to draw attention to the pipeline plans. As historic preservation officer, she was responsible for overseeing artifacts and cultural sites across the reservation's 3,500 square miles. Young emailed Energy Transfer Partners the day she learned about the pipeline, and on Sept. 30, 2014, two company officials, Chuck Frey and Tammy Ibach, visited tribal headquarters in the small town of Fort Yates, on the state's southern edge. Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault II thanked them for showing up — something similar infrastructure companies had never bothered to do — but he was adamant: The tribe had no intention of offering support.

"We recognize our treaty boundaries,

STANDS

Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and 1868, which encompasses North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming,” Archambault explained, according to a recording of the meeting. He was referring to treaties that had been broken by the U.S. government but remained central to the tribe’s policies and decisions.

The energy company representatives did not seem to understand.

“As Tammy (Ibach) just mentioned,” Frey said, “we have avoided the existing tribal boundary property, and we actually come within 2,500 feet to your current tribal boundary.” Frey meant the current reservation boundary, not the larger ancestral territory claimed by the Sioux. His statement sidestepped the sensitive issue of tribal sovereignty, as well as the lingering rancor caused by previous Army Corps of Engineers projects on the Missouri. The construction of the Oahe Dam and other projects during the Pick-Sloan program in the 1950s and ’60s had swallowed up Standing Rock’s more fertile bottomlands, forcing out tribal members and throwing many into lasting poverty.

To make matters worse, the Army Corps representative who agreed to attend the September 2014 talks never showed up. “We’ve actually been having a hard time setting up a meeting with the Corps for this particular project,” Young told Ibach and Frey. (The Army Corps maintains that it tried multiple times to discuss the pipeline with the Standing Rock Sioux.)

The Standing Rock Sioux’s stance was clear from the start. “Our water is our single last property that we have for our people,” Councilwoman Phyllis Young, Wasté Win Young’s mother, told the company representatives. “*Mni Wiconi*. Water is life.”

LAST SPRING, SUPPORTERS BEGAN TO ARRIVE and were warmly welcomed by Standing Rock’s leaders. Activists pitched teepees and tents along the Missouri and joined in prayers to protest the pipeline. At the time, construction had yet to reach the river. Protesters, who called themselves “water protectors,” described the pipeline as the “black snake,” citing a Lakota prophecy that warns of the destruction of Mother Earth.

The first encampment, the Sacred Stone Camp, was established April 1, and initially consisted of just two people, Joye Braun, 47, and her cousin, Wiyaka Eagleman, 30. Braun hailed from the nearby Cheyenne River Sioux, Eagleman from the Rosebud Sioux. Within a month, a dozen more joined them, including veterans of the Keystone XL pipeline protests. They became the core of the burgeoning

movement, and their determined presence along the banks of the Cannon Ball and Missouri rivers helped legitimize the resistance campaign. “This isn’t just a Native American issue, this is a human issue,” Braun said.

Among the early activists was Tom Goldtooth, director of the Indigenous Environmental Network and a member of the Navajo Nation. “It’s not ‘if there’s going to be a (pipeline) spill, but ‘when,’” he said in late August, echoing the view of many fellow protesters. “It’s corporations like Dakota Access and Energy (Transfer) Partners that are committing an act of aggression, that are violent against Mother Earth.”

As summer settled over the prairie, Goldtooth’s son, Dallas, who is Mde-wakanton Dakota and Diné, began to organize the movement online, distributing short videos, live updates and drone footage of the growing camps. North Dakota Gov. Jack Dalrymple, R, later acknowledged that the state’s efforts to address the movement were “outgunned” by Standing Rock’s “social media machine.” The camps continued to grow, from no more than 20 people in April to nearly 2,000 in early September.

A major turning point came on Sept. 3, after private security guards attacked dozens of protesters with pepper spray and dogs. That Saturday, on Labor Day weekend, Dakota Access crews began bulldozing land that the Standing Rock Sioux consider sacred, home to tribal burial sites. A group of women scaled a wire fence, followed by men and children. Violence swiftly erupted. Some guards had attack dogs on leashes, and several demonstrators were bitten. “The dog has blood in its nose and its mouth,” *Democracy Now!* host Amy Goodman declared in a dramatic video that went viral.

The ranks of protesters swelled, and by October as many as 300 tribal flags flew over the Oceti Sakowin Camp, named for the Seven Council Fires, the bands of the Great Sioux Nation that had assembled earlier in the summer. The gathering represented the first time they had reunited since the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. Oceti Sakowin grew into a sprawling community of encampments, defined by tribal affiliations and other traits including the Red Warrior Camp and Two Spirit Camp.

Hollywood celebrities, including actor Mark Ruffalo, became involved, as did a broader coalition of civil rights activists. The Rev. Jesse Jackson compared the issue to Flint, Michigan’s water crisis, which continues to devastate already impoverished African-Americans. The camps included Indigenous delegations

from as far away as Norway, Ecuador and New Zealand.

In response, law enforcement efforts also intensified, and by late September, Morton County sheriff’s deputies were arriving at prayer demonstrations in armored vehicles and riot gear. By mid-October, security forces were again pepper-spraying protesters. In late October, two mass arrests took place just days apart, and nearly 250 people, including respected



spiritual elders, were detained by police. On Oct. 27, Morton County deputies, assisted by the National Guard and more than 200 officers from six neighboring states, conducted a military-style sweep along Highway 1806. They razed a newly established camp that sat directly in the path of the pipeline and used tear gas, rubber bullets and Tasers to push protesters back to the Oceti Sakowin Camp. On the night of Nov. 20, deputies sprayed water cannons on dozens of people in sub-freezing temperatures during a protest over the police barricade at the Backwater Bridge.

Finally, on Dec. 4, the Army announced that it would not grant an easement to the pipeline without further review and an environmental impact assessment. By then, an estimated 10,000 to 14,000 people were living in the camps. But winter had come as well, and after the Army’s announcement, Chairman Archambault urged the protesters to return home. Many left as blizzards raked the prairie, but some have stayed on, ready if necessary to renew their opposition to the pipeline and the system it represents.

“It’s always been their laws, their political system, their money interests,” Wasté Win Young told me. “We have a duty to our people to protect our resources and our land.” □



Jenni Monet is a freelance journalist reporting for *PBS NewsHour*, *PRI The World*, *Al Jazeera America* and *Yes! Magazine*. She is executive producer and host of the podcast *Still Here* and is a tribal member of the Laguna Pueblo. [@jennimonet](https://twitter.com/jennimonet)

On Thanksgiving Day, an opponent of the Dakota Access Pipeline watches as police monitor ceremonies and demonstrations near the pipeline route on the edge of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. Facing page, Navajo Cyrus Norcross, who visited Standing Rock several times this fall, looks at Oak Flat, in Arizona, where he's considering setting up a Sheep Camp so other Navajos can help the Apache Tribe in their fight against a copper mine.

TERRAY SYLVESTER, RIGHT; DUKE ROMERO PHOTO COURTESY CYRUS NORCROSS, FACING



Standing Rock's Ripple

Lessons from the NoDAPL movement are building coalitions and breaking down barriers in Indian Country and beyond

Dec. 8 dawned cloudy on the North Dakota plains. A blizzard two days before brought negative temperatures and wind gusts up to 50 mph, and now the temperature hovered at about 3 degrees. Cars inched past drifts on the highway, shuttling people and provisions in and out of sprawling encampments with names like Rosebud, Sacred Stone and Oceti Sakowin, where an estimated 10,000 to 14,000 people had assembled to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline, or “DAPL.” The 1,172-mile project, designed to carry crude oil from the Bakken fields south, was nearly complete, except for the section that the self-described “water protectors” — members of the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies — had blocked for months. The pipeline would tunnel beneath the tribe’s water supply, raising the specter of spills, and through ancestral grounds. Just four days earlier, the Army Corps of Engineers had denied a key easement for the pipeline, giving a minor victory to the Standing Rock protesters.

Ten miles south, near a tiny community called Cannon Ball, the Prairie Knights Casino and Resort was still crowded with activists who had sheltered there during the blizzard. A mother of four boys packed up her belongings, while a Standing Rock Sioux elder talked quietly with reporters and an Omaha

woman dragged on a cigarette near a row of purring slot machines. Two people who had fallen in love during the storm — a 19-year-old from South Dakota’s Cheyenne River Reservation and a 20-year-old from Minneapolis — lounged on a blanket in the lobby, having slept there the night before along with hundreds of others.

The water protectors now faced a choice: Go home, or stay until the pipeline was definitively halted. Either way, for most people here, Standing Rock wasn’t over. The protests, which had grown through the fall and early winter, had deeply inspired many of the activists now hunkered down in the casino, people like Christian Johnson, 20, from Red Valley, Arizona, who had recently spent a week in the Oceti Sakowin Camp. Johnson, who is Diné, or Navajo, had just come to the hotel to shower and use the internet. Tall but unassuming, and wearing a large turquoise necklace, Johnson had once worked with his father driving oil trucks. “I was pro-oil, because you’re out of high school, you want to make money,” he told me, as we sat on the floor of the casino and drank free coffee from the hotel desk. But when he heard about Standing Rock, he said, he quit his job to devote himself to the NoDAPL movement. Now he was becoming involved in similar issues at home.

The protests meanwhile inspired

countless others who never touched down in the camps, who had only watched events unfold through rapid-fire social media posts and live-streamed videos. Demonstrations of solidarity flared up from remote Alaska villages to busy Florida cities. As with past social movements, NoDAPL’s fight helped catalyze and strengthen relationships within and between disparate communities, sometimes across vast distances. As one participant put it, “The camps in Standing Rock were hotbeds of Indigenous networking.”

Standing Rock, in other words, was more of a beginning than end. It was both a potent symbol for this American moment, and the start of something bigger. NoDAPL participants now hope the movement will raise the national consciousness on a broad array of Native American issues, from tribal sovereignty to environmental justice to the local impacts of the extractive industry — issues often removed from public discourse and overlooked in history books. As cars left the Prairie Knights’ parking lot, taking hitchhikers back to Seattle or Fort Collins or Flagstaff, they also carried the lessons of Standing Rock into a diverse array of communities across the country.

SEEN FROM THE AIR, the Navajo Nation — which spans parts of northwestern New Mexico, northeastern Arizona and southern Utah — is a red-and-tan expanse of



We talked to protesters at Standing Rock. Here's what they learned.

Now that the cold has set in and the Army Corps has temporarily denied the easement to continue pipeline construction, many protesters at Standing Rock have headed home. On Dec. 9, as the crowds dissipated and some lingered to winterize the camp, photographer Andrew Cullen asked what people had learned during their time there. Many said they experienced transformation, and spoke with hope about taking action on other social justice and environmental justice issues. To view the complete series of images and interviews, see hcn.org/articles/lessons-from-standing-rock
PHOTOGRAPHS AND INTERVIEWS BY ANDREW CULLEN

Drea Rose
31, Spokane, Washington
Member of the Spokane Tribe

"Growing up on the reservation, I'm taught a lot of things ... but I was never really taught why. Coming here, I was able to learn a lot from the people and the stories. ... I was able to learn a lot about my culture and the reasons why we do things. Here, they strongly believe women are sacred, and they were taught the story behind it — that we came from a woman. It's a beautiful story. There was a curious little girl, who fell from outer space onto a turtle's back. The woman came first, and the man came from the woman, and that's why women are sacred. I have girls, so I definitely need to pass that down to them. ... Another thing I'm learning here is that this is only the beginning. It's a step. As long as we all stay united, we can make that change and stand up for ourselves. Back home we have the same issue going on, but we've never stood up to them because we don't think ... that everybody could come together like this. But now that we've done it here, I feel like we can do it everywhere."



Darren Cross 17, Pine Ridge, South Dakota

"(Before) I came up here, I had kind of an attitude. I was lazy all the time. But ever since I came up here, I've been busy the whole time. Being up here, I have a lot of responsibilities. It's me, my dad and my little sister. It's kind of tough, but we're getting through it. When I go back home, I'll be more mature and responsible."

"About a year ago I started getting more spiritual. I believe in something more powerful now. This coming summer I'm going to be Sun Dancing. I'm really excited. We pray a lot. A couple nights ago we had a *chanupa* ceremony in our tent. We were all there, all my brothers were there and we had a couple *chanupas* there with us. Then we all prayed in a circle. We smoked the *chanupas*, and we prayed before we smoked, so whenever you smoke that *chanupa*, that smoke carries on your prayers to *Tunkachala*, and the next morning *Tunkachala* answered our prayers. We were low on wood and some people came over with a truckload of wood, and ... donations of food. ... (I witnessed) the power of prayers."



Effects

FEATURE BY TAY WILES

desert plain, broken by canyons, sandstone outcroppings, verdant mesas and rugged mountain ranges. The scars on this landscape reveal the long and complicated relationship between extractive industries and Indian Country — one of many reasons why the Standing Rock fight holds such strong resonance here.

Companies have scraped Navajo earth for coal since the 1960s — funding the tribal government, which has been largely pro-extraction, and dividing local communities over its environmental costs and economic benefits. Uranium mining began here after World War II and tapered off in the 1980s, leaving radioactive drinking water and cancer in the bodies of mine workers. Webs of roads in the San Juan Basin mark almost a century of enthusiastic oil and gas drilling. In 2014, a company called Saddle Butte San Juan Midstream proposed a 148-mile-long pipeline to transport crude oil. The Piñon Pipeline would have skirted Chaco Culture National Historical Park, the remains of an ancestral Puebloan society that is also part of the Diné spiritual origin story. So it was that in 2016 Piñon earned the nickname "New Mexico's DAPL."

Opponents scored a victory this December when the company withdrew its application, citing low oil prices. But other fights in Navajo ancestral territory have increased in intensity even as

Standing Rock has cooled down. One of the hottest conflicts now centers on current and proposed fracking in the landscape surrounding Chaco Canyon.

Christian Johnson is one of many who have become increasingly involved in the fight against Piñon, Chaco Canyon and other energy projects, traveling back and forth between the reservation and Standing Rock. Johnson's activism is personal, like that of many Navajos I spoke with: His grandfather and five other elders in his community, all uranium miners, died from lung cancer. In August, Johnson and a dozen other young Navajos met on Facebook, looking for rides to North Dakota and help delivering supplies to the camps. They gathered in Shiprock, New Mexico, and caravanned from there. A supporter in Chino Valley, Arizona, eventually donated a truck, and students and faculty at Diné College helped fund a recent supply run.

Others in Johnson's community heard about his work, and his former teachers asked him to speak at his old elementary school and high school about Standing Rock and local environmental issues. "I never thought I'd have a next generation of kids looking up to me and what I'm doing," Johnson said, when we spoke at the Prairie Knights Casino. His group is informal, but its members are thinking about making it official — calling it Sheep Camp after their tent site in North

Bryce Peppard
52, Oregon and Idaho

"I've been experiencing apathy for a while. (Standing Rock) has changed the way I think about our government treating its own citizens and finally realizing that they are using tactics that they were using when people were run off their land to begin with. I thought it was a non-issue, but there's so many pipelines going through their land, and up until recently they had no say in it, no power, and up until recently they had no voice. I've developed more of a resolve to be more active in our community. That's what I'm coming away with. I'm just going to try to be more aware of what's going on in the world, and let my voice be known."



Andre Perez
46, Oahu, Hawaii
Member of the Kanaka Maoli tribe

"It has allowed me to develop and enhance my skills (as an activist/organizer/trainer), taking it to another level that I can take back home. The training, the analysis, my understanding of what's important during a direct action of this level, with this kind of high-level aggression. It's given me an experience of what's important and how to keep people safe, and strategies and tactics and messaging. This whole camp has taught me about how to hold space in a large way, what anywhere from two to 10,000 people can do, and what the limitations of that are. Like when the vets rolled in, their estimates were 10,000 to 12,000 people, and that was too

much. It wasn't safe, and then the storm rolled in.

"I learned about increased organizing on that level. I learned about strategy and tactics against big power, law enforcement and corporations. I learned about community and taking care of one another. This whole experience has been, I wouldn't even say learning, I would say transformative."

Nick DiCenzo
Denver, Colorado

"Community building and activism is apparently huge on my personal agenda, and I never really knew that. It wasn't until Standing Rock that something was ignited in me to come help, and I think that I have realized from coming here that I am an activist, and I would have never known that.

"I see people formulating solutions instead of just complaining about problems. The other day in a meeting ... someone brought up the danger of children sledding.

... He was like 'Can we put up some barriers on the roads? I'm a little concerned about the roads.' And the meeting leader said, 'All right, you're the leader of the roads department. Take charge on that.'"



Isabella Zizi, who is Northern Cheyenne, Arikara and Muskogee Creek, speaks at an environmental justice rally in San Francisco, California, after having reached out to fellow activists in environmental groups and has helped organize NoDAPL events with the Indigenous rights group Idle No More. BROOKE ANDERSON

Dakota, which they named for the cabins Navajo ranchers use while tending livestock. One member, Cyrus Norcross, 28, headed to the southern tip of Arizona's Tonto National Forest, in early January, to join an Apache protest against a proposed copper mine there. Norcross is considering setting up a Sheep Camp there; his friends are establishing one in Texas to help fight the Trans-Pecos Pipeline, and have plans for another at the Grand Canyon to protest uranium mining.

Longtime Navajo activists in Arizona and New Mexico are feeling the effects of the NoDAPL-inspired uptick in activism. Carol Davis, a coordinator with the nonprofit Diné Citizens Against Ruining

our Environment (Diné CARE), is fielding more Facebook requests from people who want to get involved, and seeing greater participation at rallies and public meetings. Several members of Johnson's group, for example, have started attending Bureau of Land Management scoping meetings for a new amendment to the Resource Management Plan for the greater Chaco Canyon area, which will govern future energy development and other uses on more than a million acres. Over 300 people came to the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, Arizona, in early December to give input on that plan — a stark change from meetings earlier in the year, when attendance was

“dismal,” Davis said. The venue was so packed that officials had to stop letting people in to comply with fire codes.

NoDAPL seems to have connected nonprofit groups across the reservation, Davis said. In the past, some environmentalists and social justice activists had been hesitant to work together, partly because of nuanced differences in local strategies and goals, and partly because available grants are limited, forcing groups to compete for their share. “At Standing Rock, you saw all kinds of people from all kinds of nations,” Davis said. “I think people realized everybody wants to help.”

The organization Dooda Fracking, for example, fights oil and gas development. Now, co-founder Kim Howe, 28, said she’s started working with groups like Diné CARE and Black Mesa Water Coalition, a Flagstaff-based nonprofit that opposes fossil fuel development and seeks to protect water on Navajo land. The seeds of some of these collaborations existed before Standing Rock, but they have taken on new meaning and depth since then. Sheep Camp members are also planning to work with Dooda Fracking this winter. The networking has transcended tribal boundaries, Howe said. “People from other Southwest tribes are reaching out to us (to help protect) Chaco Canyon.” The Albuquerque-based Indigenous Action Alliance, a group of young Pueblos that launched in September after members returned from Standing Rock, spent October encouraging Pueblo Indian communities to attend meetings and get involved, prompting tribal members in turn to reach out to Dooda Fracking.

Even some of the age-old barriers to organizing on the Navajo Reservation, such as unreliable access to a radio signal, let alone smartphones, cell service or internet, seem more surmountable than they have in the past, activists say. In a trip to Nageezi, New Mexico, where an oil production storage site caught fire in July and forced residents to evacuate the area, Dooda Fracking’s Howe noted people’s optimism. “I spoke with some elders and locals,” she said, “and they were like, ‘Wow, Standing Rock, that can actually happen. And it could happen here for Chaco Canyon.’”

ON DEC. 19, the air in San Francisco’s skyscraper-shaded financial district was brisk. About 50 people huddled on the sidewalk outside the towering Wells Fargo headquarters, holding “Water Is Life,” “NoDAPL” and “Keep It In the Ground” signs. An American flag was mounted on the wall behind them next to an ATM, and a large plaque read “Wells Fargo, since 1852.” Like Standing Rock supporters have done with Wells Fargo and other banks, the demonstrators were targeting investments in the Dakota Access Pipeline, encouraging customers to take their business elsewhere.

The organizer of this event was Isa-

bella Zizi, a 22-year-old Northern Cheyenne, Arikara and Muskogee Creek from Richmond, California, with braces and long brown hair. She had gathered people through local branches of the Indigenous rights group Idle No More, and the environmental groups Friends of the Earth and Earth Guardians. Since graduating high school, Zizi has worked in retail, but took up environmental justice causes in 2012 after a fire at a Chevron oil refinery filled her hometown with black smoke and sent thousands of people to the hospital with respiratory problems. Before a closing prayer, Zizi addressed the small crowd: “I’m just starting into this movement,” she said. “But it’s so important.”

The Bay Area is one of many major urban centers with strong NoDAPL contingents. The area has a long history of progressive activism, but the issues have particular resonance in Oakland’s well-established Native American community. Oakland and San Francisco were sanctioned destinations during a 1950s federal relocation program that brought Native Americans to cities with more job opportunities than the reservations. Some of the grassroots networks and organizations built by and for Native Americans during that time, and later during the American Indian Movement of the ’70s, are still going strong. One of those, the nonprofit American Indian Child Resource Center, provides tutoring, nutrition classes and case management for students and their families in area schools, which don’t always meet Native American needs, Manny Lieras, 38, a program coordinator there, told me.

Native youth living in mainstream white society often lack opportunities to connect to their heritage and forge identities within it, Lieras explained. But over several months of organizing caravans of Native youth from the Bay Area to Standing Rock, Lieras saw several people, especially young men, develop a new sense of self and purpose. “There’s often a lack of instruction or guidance about what being a warrior means, but out there, it was very clear what the fight was,” said Lieras, who is part Diné and Comanche. “In our tribal societies, there are certain responsibilities put on men that are just not able to be completely lived through the society we live in. Out there, a lot of men found their voice.”

Lieras’ own voice has been amplified as NoDAPL’s high profile has increased awareness of the local Indigenous population. After he returned from a trip to Standing Rock in September, one of the nation’s leading grassroots climate groups, 350.org, asked him to speak at a rally in Oakland. “I’d never heard of this organization,” Lieras said. “I was one of the only Native Americans. It was weird and awkward, but amazing to see that much support.”

It’s just one example of the new and stronger relationships forged between Native Americans and non-Natives



Dinea Evans 33, Seattle, Washington

“The one thing I wasn’t expecting to get from all this was a spiritual awakening. I prayed a lot. I got back in touch with my spiritual roots.

“It happened in Seattle at a rally that one of my friends put on. She asked me to give a speech in support of Standing Rock. After I gave the speech, they came in with their drums. I knelt down to give some space for the drums, and after they began chanting and singing, I just felt something in my heart, and I began to pray. I hadn’t prayed in a long time. I felt compelled to come out here after that. ...

“When you look at African-Americans and you look at our ancestors and our history of being slaves and not having rights and being mistreated ... this hits close to home, because this is happening to the Natives. That definitely resonates with me a great deal, being a black woman, to stand up with my Native American brothers and sisters. ... Native Americans make up less than 2 percent of the population, and time and time again they’ve been mistreated and their culture has not been honored in a place where they’re the original landowners.”

Veronica Vargas 25, Eagle Butte, South Dakota
Member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

“I overcame looking at different races differently. Growing up, we were only allowed to look at it certain ways, because of the history and our grandparents’ grudges.

Being here it taught me that we’re all human, we are. We all have feelings. That color doesn’t matter.

“The way my grandpa would tell me, he would say, ‘(The police) are blind, they don’t have a heart.’ But there’s a lot of people that are here for the right reason. We’re all here to do one thing. That’s when we start to open our heart up to other people, to letting them in, to let our barriers down, and we start to trust again. ...

“And here, everyone’s so welcoming, they show you that love and that compassion. We’re all here for one reason, and it’s a big impact on us. I have two kids, and my kids get to see from the real world and from camp, that it is different, that we’re all here together as one, ... My daughter realized that. She said, ‘Mom, I love it here at camp. Over here it’s welcoming.’ It makes a big impact on us.” □



through the fight at Standing Rock, which has drawn hundreds of tribal nations and thousands of non-Natives from across the country. Dozens of non-Native organizations have also become involved, helping to build a vast network that is unique when considered in a historical context, said Erich Steinman, a Pitzer

College sociologist who specializes in social movements, race and American Indians. "Often when there have been potential collaborations in the past, a lot of people come in and don't get what the Native people are wanting and saying." When tribes were fighting for access to their treaty-guaranteed share

of Washington state's salmon fisheries in the 1970s, for example, both critics and some white allies miscast the struggle as one for racial equality. But Native activists thought this missed the point, and in a potentially dangerous and confusing fashion; the truth was that their fishery rights as First Peoples were

Protesters from several tribes gather outside the standing-room-only meeting held Dec. 2 by the Bureau of Land Management in Window Rock, Arizona, on the proposed expansion of oil and gas drilling near Chaco Canyon. SUSAN TORRES/NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE FEDERATION



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simply stronger, in a legal sense, than those of non-Natives.

A similar dynamic played out during the 1990s, in the fight to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in north-east Alaska from oil drilling, said Tom Goldtooth, 63, director of the nonprofit Indigenous Environmental Network, a longstanding organization that is a major player in the NoDAPL movement. “Many environmentalists gravitated to the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd more than the recognition of Alaska Native rights,” Goldtooth said. “A lot of those organizations don’t have the accountability (to Indigenous frontline communities) built in.”

The Indigenous Environmental Network was one of several groups in the early ’90s that wanted an environmental movement focused on biodiversity and land protection to fight for human communities as well — particularly for people of color or impoverished people impacted by pollution and industry. Their work ultimately helped the nascent “environmental justice” movement become mainstream. The networks that have arisen from Standing Rock are an outcome of that work, Goldtooth said. “Even our working relationship took some time to develop with Bill McKibben and 350.org. Now, some Native people are working there.”

Given their history, tribes have been

hesitant to seek outside help in fighting local battles. That’s why Standing Rock is such a big deal, Steinman said. The upshot? The fight there may ultimately lead to broader public understanding of tribal issues. “Events can be catalyzing to shift not just peoples’ commitments,” he said, “but their understanding.”

WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED IN NORTH DAKOTA

to report on Standing Rock, I visited the State Capitol, built in 1934, the tallest building in Bismarck. The Art Deco interior has gilded everything — doorframes, ashtrays, elevator buttons. On a late afternoon in December, I stood at a window on the 18th floor and looked outside. Tiny people scurried through the streets below, and tailpipes puffed a fog of spent petroleum into the cold air. The snowy horizon was the same color as the clouds in the light gray sky, the landscape a pale abstraction that went on forever beyond the neatly gridded city. Somewhere to the south, thousands of people hunkered in the NoDAPL camps against the coming winter. From where I stood, I couldn’t see them.

In the days that followed, as I traveled through the camps and spoke to the water protectors, I had the sense that this movement, invisible though it was to Bismarck, was coming into sharp relief here and elsewhere. The Trump administration has indicated that it might push

the pipeline through. If so, NoDAPL itself may be remembered simply as a brief moment of hopefulness — for the Standing Rock Sioux, social justice activists and climate protesters. Hope, though, once planted, tends to grow, to take on a life of its own. At Oceti Sakowin, it was palpable, at communal meals and in the daily teamwork it takes to keep such a sprawling encampment functioning, a feeling that people who stand together can overcome injustice and systems that do not serve them, no matter who is in power. That hope, now lodged in the memories of tens of thousands of people, will be hard to erase. “Getting well in your mind, body, spirit is what this camp really is about,” one Standing Rock Sioux elder told me. “People are coming to be healed.”

Dakota Access may yet carry oil south, and the demonstrations it has inspired may disintegrate. But if the inspiration of a new generation of “protectors” is any indication of success, maybe they’ve already won. On my last day at the casino, I met a woman who works at the restaurant there. She was exceptionally busy that week, as thousands of NoDAPL protesters passed through for a hot meal, but she took a few minutes to speak with me. “Through (NoDAPL), our elders have gained confidence,” she said. “I hope this thing leaves its fingerprints on you, too.” □



Associate Editor Tay Wiles writes from Oakland, California. [@taywiles](#)

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Reading retreat in Umbria, Italy (June 11-21, 2017) – Focused discussion on environmental restoration and rewilding. Contact christopher.preston@umontana.edu for details. christopher.preston@umontana.edu.

Rocky Mountain Agricultural Conference – Feb. 7-9, 2017, Ski Hi Park, Monte Vista, Colo. Topics include: pest management, puncture vine control, private pesticide applicator continuing education training, managing hantavirus on the farm, controlling wild oats and sunflowers, and more. Keynote speaker: Damon Mason. Contact CPAC at 719-852-3322 for info to register.

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Project assistant, Arizona Land and Water Trust – alwt.org/misc/employment.shtml.

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Desert Rivers program manager Arizona Land and Water Trust. www.alwt.org/misc/employment.shtml.

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Painted in the snow
Within a family of trees
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Wolves *continued from page 9*

residents. “You give wolves a little bit of protection and don’t indiscriminately kill them, and then take care of the problem ones, they come back ferociously,” he says.

Robert Klavins, the northeast Oregon field coordinator for Oregon Wild, does not believe that wolves will inevitably cover Oregon. The state’s population, around 110 animals in 12 packs, is still far too small and thinly spread to assume they are here to stay, he says. “I think it is pretty premature to start talking about when do we start killing wolves in western Oregon.”

Wolves haven’t colonized all of the West’s suitable habitat, including parts of Utah, Colorado and Nevada, but they have expanded faster and more broadly than expected. Twenty-one years after the first wolves were moved from Western Canada to Yellowstone, there are approximately 1,900 wolves in the Northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest, plus another 3,610 in the robust Great Lakes population and 65,000 in Canada and Alaska. Wolves have already been delisted in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho, which now have hunting and trapping seasons. They’ve also been delisted in the eastern third of Oregon (without legal hunting or trapping), and the state has removed the species from its endangered species list.

When wolf numbers are very low — during the early days of reintroduction, or in small, isolated populations like the Mexican wolf subspecies — genetic diversity is precious and every breeding adult with unique genes can be vital to recovery, says MacNulty. But at a certain point, that’s no longer true. Once wolves have a large enough interconnected population, removing one won’t matter to their conservation status. And thus many Oregon wolves, including OR7 and his pack, are probably, ecologically speaking, expendable.

But even if their ecological value isn’t especially high, their “social value” is, MacNulty says. Social value tends to be higher in new populations at the edge of wolves’ range. In Minnesota, where MacNulty worked for a decade, wolves were never eradicated, so they didn’t have to be reintroduced. “I don’t recall individuals having the kind of attention and press that individuals out West would get,” he says. “Maybe once you have established populations, these individuals lose their charm or notoriety.”

The draw of the individual is testified to by the popularity of wild animals with distinctive characteristics — an unusual gait, a recognizable voice or an easy-to-spot color variation, like that of the grizzly cub called “Snowy” in Grand Teton National Park. Well-known animals are featured in the press releases of groups

like Defenders of Wildlife or the Center for Biological Diversity, which often releases fundraising appeals when a particular favorite is killed by officials or poached. Recently, an email blast from Defenders announced that a locally famous sea otter in Southern California known as “Mr. Enchilada” was killed by a car. The group used the “devastating loss” to lobby for speed humps to slow down motorists.

Kierán Suckling, executive director of the Center for Biological Diversity, says this focus on the individual is rhetorically effective, even though his organization is primarily concerned with populations and species-level conservation: “There have been lots of psychological studies showing that people connect emotionally to individuals and small groups more than large groups. They’ll give hundreds of dollars to help one poor child, tens of dollars to help a family, and very little to help a struggling nation.”

The tension between managing a population and caring for individual animals can be hard to reconcile. Even Stephenson, whose job it is to act at the population level, regards many of the wolves he manages as individuals. “You get attached,” he says. “We all do.”

OR7 is a celebrity, and no doubt the Fish and Wildlife Service will go the extra mile to enable him to live out his life and die a wild wolf’s death, perhaps after getting kicked by an elk or starving to death in a bad winter. But in a future where wolves are a normal, everyday part of the landscape, his great-grandchildren may not warrant such special consideration. Killing wolves should always be the last resort, says Klavins, but more conflicts will be inevitable as their population increases. When wolves are truly recovered, it will no longer be possible to know each one individually, he says: “There is a part of me that looks forward to the day that we don’t know every wolf’s story.” □

“I think it is pretty premature to start talking about when do we start killing wolves in western Oregon.”

—Robert Klavins, northeast Oregon field coordinator for Oregon Wild



▲ A 2014 trail camera image of OR7, leader of the Rogue Pack, in the forest between Klamath Falls and Medford. U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

◀ At the Nicholson Ranch, Butch Wampler, left, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists Tom Collom and Jon Muir examine the carcass of a yearling they suspect was killed by wolves. COURTESY NICHOLSON RANCH

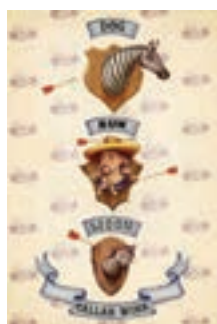


LORRAINE BOOGICH/GETTY IMAGES

Big stories from Big Sky Country



For A Little While
Rick Bass
480 pages,
softcover: \$18.
Back Bay Books, 2017.



Dog Run Moon: Stories
Callan Wink
256 pages,
hardcover: \$26.
Dial Press, 2016.

Fans of short Western fiction hit the jackpot with the publication of two significant collections by Montana writers. *For A Little While* spans the entire distinguished career of author and activist Rick Bass. *Dog Run Moon* is the first book by Callan Wink, a young writer with an easy grace, good humor and a knack for striking imagery that prove his work merits its cover blurbs by Jim Harrison and Thomas McGuane.

Bass regularly writes on behalf of environmental causes, especially to benefit the Yaak Valley, the remote forested area in northwest Montana where he lived from 1987 to 2011. Nature, whether degraded or pristine, is an integral part of his fiction, from a dog trainer's enchanted journey under the frozen surface of a lake in "The Hermit's Story," to the misshapen creatures teenagers discover in a poisoned Houston river in "Pagans."

Wink, too, reveals the landscape as key to the psychology of his characters and a force that helps shape their lives. Wink, a Michigan native, lives in Livingston, Montana, and works as a fly-fishing guide on the Yellowstone River.

In Wink's title story, set in Utah, a young man named Sid ruminates about his ex-girlfriend, "a small woman, pale, so much so that the desert hurt her in ways that Sid would never fully understand."

Bass' characters, too, often have difficulty making love endure. Their geographic isolation mirrors their own interpersonal reserve. In Bass' gorgeous "Fires," the narrator, who lives in a remote mountain valley, confesses, "Whenever one does move in with me, it feels as if I've tricked her."

Both writers' collections include novellas about an older woman living alone who is drawn out of her shell through an unexpected connection with someone much younger. In Wink's "Hindsight," Lauren maintains a standoff with the resentful son of her deceased husband until a girl turns up at his trailer and she begins to cook for them. In "The Lives of Rocks," one of Bass' most moving and beautiful stories, Jyl is recovering from cancer treatment at her cabin in the forest, and finds she has little energy to do anything except whittle boats and set them afloat for the neighbor children to find, "seeking partly to provide entertainment and even a touch of magic for the hardened lives of the Workman children living downstream from her — and seeking also some contact with the outside world."

Two children befriend Jyl, and she eagerly anticipates their visits. We know from other stories that Jyl grew up in this forest and has often been content to live alone in it, but her newfound vulnerability makes her crave human connection. Both novellas suggest that solitude provides too much time to ruminate on past mistakes, and that it's healthier to engage in the world and especially with children, who dwell mostly in the present.

Many of the characters in Wink's collection are young men trying to comprehend what it means to commit to something: a woman, a job or a way of life. While some of the characters in Bass' earlier stories share similar struggles, most of them have committed to something — they've thrown themselves into marriages, jobs, lifestyles and raising

children, and Bass probes the bittersweet ache that this can generate, the yearning for the road not taken.

There is an additional layer of awareness to Bass' stories compared to Wink's, a sense of time's swift passing, the string of consequences that domino out from one's actions, and the ephemerality of love, health, contentment and untarnished nature. This heightens the intensity of the characters' emotions and the reader's experience of the stories. It's right there in the title: *For A Little While*, which seems to apply to people's time on earth and their momentary idylls and sorrows. There is also a sense of greater stakes — Bass' stories aren't just about a particular character, but about the impact that character's decisions will have on the following generations, including children, wildlife and the landscape. As one character muses about the disappearance of spotted leopard frogs, "What other bright phenomena will vanish in our lifetimes, becoming one day merely memory and story, tale and legacy, and then fragments of story and legacy, and then nothing, only wind?"

Some of Wink's stories begin to offer hints of that seasoned perspective, but it's unfair to compare Wink to Bass on this score. Bass, after all, is a master, author of numerous well-regarded short stories, novels and nonfiction books. But Wink has written a crackerjack first collection, every bit as fine as Rick Bass' first, 1989's *The Watch*. *Dog Run Moon* promises that Wink's unfolding as an artist might prove just as riveting for fans of Western fiction as Bass' has been.

BY JENNY SHANK



Standing Rock's Men at War

The standoff asked us to re-examine our myths of the West and its warriors

"They think we're dangerous. We're just on horses. We don't have weapons. They have weapons."

—Sonny Ironclad,
Standing Rock Sioux
tribal member

A lone inside a teepee one night, I stoked the embers of a dying fire, my mind searching for a common thread through the moments that had defined my time at the Standing Rock camps. Quietly, a man with military service in his past and American Indian heritage settled onto a nearby chair, and then, as if sensing my thoughts, asked me if I knew how to beat a warrior. I stared at the fire and shook my head. He said, "Come to him in peace."

With those words, he had captured the quiet war underway on the plains of North Dakota. It was an unannounced battle, waged by some of the men who had traveled to the camp — warriors — publicly and within the spirit, as they confronted the legacy of the American frontier battles and genocides that had cast the mold of the American man and charted the course of the nation.

The most evident sign of such battles

occurred two days earlier, on Dec. 5, when Wes Clark Jr. and a dozen other veterans announced themselves as the "conscience of the nation" before a group of Sioux spiritual leaders. Clark, the son and namesake of U.S. Army Gen. Wesley Clark, the former supreme allied commander of NATO, had donned a hat and jacket, deep blue with gold braid, the uniform of George Custer's 7th Cavalry, which fought the Sioux in the 19th century. On bended knee, Clark removed his hat and bowed his head before Leonard Crow Dog, a Lakota medicine man. And then he begged for forgiveness for the atrocities committed by the U.S. military and the nation, for the theft of Native American land and children, the desecration of sacred sites and the destruction of Native American languages.

The forgiveness ceremony seemed fitting within the massive and historic

opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline, which had been rerouted from the mostly white city of Bismarck, and now threatened the water source and sacred sites of the Standing Rock Sioux. With the pipeline project, American Indian tribes and their supporters reckon with forces much like those that were behind the creation of the modern American West — banks, corporations, the government and troops representing their interests — working in concert to extract and exploit in the name of prosperity.

With those forces came cultural messages about men in the West, messages that seemingly confronted Sonny Ironclad, a 25-year-old member of the Standing Rock Sioux, when he and other young Native American men on horseback rode from camp to a nearby bridge, the front line, where law enforcement constructed a barricade. The police become visibly nervous, he told me.

◀ Riders from the Standing Rock, Rosebud and Lower Brule Lakota reservations came together on horseback in August to face off with a police line that had formed between protesters and the entrance to the Dakota Access Pipeline construction site.

DANIELLA ZALCMAN

▼ Maria Michael, a Lakota elder from San Francisco, left, talks with U.S. Army veteran Tatiana McLee, right, during a forgiveness ceremony at the Prairie Knights Casino and Resort on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in December. The ceremony was held to give veterans an opportunity to atone for centuries of military actions conducted against Native Americans.

HELEN H. RICHARDSON/THE DENVER POST VIA GETTY IMAGES

“They think we’re dangerous; we’re just on horses. We don’t have weapons. They have weapons.” Ironclad stroked his mare and chuckled.

In the Western myth, men conquer and exploit. At Standing Rock, men spoke of finding family. “Everybody treated us differently off the reservation,” Ironclad said, greeting new friends walking by. The camp had drawn representatives of 300 American Indian tribes. It had grown with the arrival of whites, African-Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans. “I have found another part of my family I have never known,” he said. In the spirit of a Lakota tradition of *Hunka*, he embraced tribal members from all over the world as family. And, he said, after his former co-worker, a white man, visited him at the camp, he was no longer just a best friend, he was a brother.

At daybreak, as the sky turned silvery blue, men found a place of prayer in the water ceremony celebrated by women. At the ceremonial fire in the center of camp, women distributed water in small cups, tiny reminders of material life. The crowd then moved through the camp and down to the snow-covered banks of the Cannonball River. We pinched off some tobacco and, one by one, approached the iced-over river with our offerings. Before us, standing shoulder to shoulder, the men lined the rocky, icy stairs, each with his hands outstretched, giving of himself as support, as part of the prayer. The men asked for nothing, not gratitude or even acknowledgment. Some said, “Good morning.” Later, I overheard a man express wonder and joy at supporting women simply by being present. It was not their physical strength that was valued, or their help, but their presence — an act of giving by being. From the river, I climbed the snowy bank, returning to the camp to the sound of “The Star-Spangled Banner” played on a bugle.

With Standing Rock comes a response and another chapter to the 19th century formation of the nation, when the “Indian wars” became symbolic of the United States’ greatness, morally and economically, and of a promised future. In *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization*, Richard Slotkin writes that Custer’s march into the Great Plains was saddled with the pressing political and social needs of the time. Custer’s “triumph over the savages of the plains would not only end the Indian wars, it would point a stern lesson to the other

forces within the Metropolis — disorderly ‘tramps,’ immigrant laborers, recalcitrant blacks about the will and capacity of the republic to punish its enemies and vindicate its moral and political authority.” Custer’s defeat, however, did nothing to diminish the nation’s intent to impose order on the unruly and marginalized.

Standing Rock summoned warriors who detected that legacy in law enforcement’s use of water cannons and attack dogs. “The way they were treating people was horrible,” said 33-year-old Issac Segura, as he gazed from a snowy embankment not far from where the clashes took place. Segura and his friend, Eric Flores, battle brothers from Iraq, had watched the videos of the clashes back in Chicago; both men called the images tragic. Flores organized a team and rounded up supplies, and the men set off for Standing Rock.

As always, there are cowards among men, men who replicate the frontier ideology that produced the pipeline they traveled to oppose. I found one such man at the medic tent, pouring hot tea into his thermos. I asked him where I could find toe warmers, which work better than the foot warmers I packed. He pointed to the door of a yurt, then, as he prepared to leave, added: “You were supposed to bring your own.”

“And who are you?” I retorted. “Someone who brought his own,” the man said, as he walked away with someone else’s tea. In him, I observed his forefathers, men who built their fortunes by seizing the riches of others.

From Standing Rock emerges a redefinition of the warrior. Chris Hardeen, a 27-year-old Navajo and veteran of the Marines, joined the military searching for the road to becoming a warrior. But it had been a false start. He had become a “warrior for the government,” he said. Soon after a deployment, questions rushed at him, and the absence of purpose became clear. He had set aside himself, his identity, to fulfill a false warrior ideal, and was left with a sense of what he described as “longing.”

But through prayer and speaking with elders, he said, he had learned that “it is the true warrior that’s within us that’s starting to come out.” His warrior life is now spiritual, blessed.

On the day I prepared to leave, inside the enormous Dome at the camp, Candi Brings Plenty, an Oglala Lakota tribal member, urged departing visitors

to support the Standing Rock struggle by looking within themselves. She asked visitors to do something that American culture has discouraged since the “Indian wars,” to shift the gaze from the external boundaries to the internal, as a true warrior would. “You get to a place and it’s unknown,” she said. “You can choose to be brave, you can choose the unknown.”

In Standing Rock, I confronted the split image of the world I knew and the



one I was taught. In the images of unarmed Sioux men on horseback riding up to the front line, I was reminded of men I have loved and respected, men who measure their worth by serving their communities and families. In them, the warrior becomes life-giver. But in the United States, there is no escaping a shared frontier mythology that brands non-white men as natural-born threats. And that message is embedded in the genetic code of this nation.

Standing Rock represented a challenge to the collective belief, my personal belief, that the code is inalterable. I had come to understand that the peace my friend in the teepee referred to wasn’t the absence of violence. It is the journey, the home that Ironclad mentioned, that Hardeen seeks, the one that Brings Plenty asks us all to take. When Clark apologized to the Sioux, Crow Dog’s response carried the weight and wisdom of this understanding. “Let me say a few words of accepting forgiveness,” he said. “World. Peace.” □

“You can choose to be brave, you can choose the unknown.”

—Candi Brings Plenty,
an Oglala Lakota
tribal member

Michelle García reports from New York, Mexico and points between. She is working on a narrative nonfiction book about the West, Texas, masculinity and myth.
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HEARD AROUND THE WEST | BY BETSY MARSTON

THE WEST

If you can't find the words to describe exactly where you are, how will you ever know that you are where you want to be? That's the kind of question that British nature writer Robert Macfarlane asks in his books *Landmarks*, *The Wild Places* and *The Old Ways*. He was shocked when the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* decided to delete words like *willow*, *acorn* and *buttercup* — while finding room for things like *celebrity*, *bullet-point* and *voice-mail* — because “language deficit leads to attention deficit.” As Tom Shippey put it in the *Wall Street Journal*: “If you have no vocabulary for things, you notice them less. So you start thinking they're not important. Then you destroy them.” Shippey, who calls Macfarlane the great nature writer of this generation, adds that it's not only England that's losing its vocabulary for the natural world. In America, he says, nearly a thousand words have been forgotten — words pioneers used, such as “cowbelly, the fine, soft mud that collects on the edges of slow-moving creeks,” according to the Home Ground Project. Expressive forestry terms are also fading away: *daddock*, for dead wood, *spronky*, for having many roots, and the perfect *griggles*, for those small apples left on the tree. Once we cut ourselves off from the bodily experience of being in the world, we literally “lose touch,” Shippey says. Macfarlane, who calls the words he collects “fossil poetry,” aims to help us notice more and wonder more. He does mention one Arizona man who hasn't lost his word-place connection: An Apache rancher who recites place names while stringing barbed wire. And why does he do that? Macfarlane inquired. “The cowboy explained, ‘I ride that way in my mind.’”

THE WEST

Mountain lions eat ungulates to survive, and during a big cat's average six-year lifespan, it will likely consume about 259 white-tailed deer. That's what two biologists, Sophie Gilbert of the University of Idaho and Laura Prugh of the University of Washington, found after studying what happened in western South Dakota in the 1990s, when mountain lions were restored after hunters had wiped them out a century earlier.



COLORADO When Frosty the Snowman knocks, answer with caution. PEACE WHEELER/ELEVEN EXPERIENCE

Surprisingly, the chief beneficiaries of the restored predator-prey relationship turned out to be us humans, reports the journal *Conservation Letters*: Fewer deer on the roads meant fewer deer-car collisions. The researchers speculate that if mountain lions returned to the rural Eastern U.S., they would eliminate so many deer from the road that over the next 30 years, “That would translate into 21,400 averted injuries, 155 fewer human deaths and more than \$2 billion in savings — a pretty good return for letting nature take its course.” Coexistence does require vigilance, however, and has its costs, including “yes, the infrequent attack.”

Bow hunter Wendell Van Beek met some friendly smaller cats on the first day of hunting season in Iowa, reports KMEG-TV. From his well-hidden spot in a tree stand, he watched a bobcat stalk a squirrel scampering just below

him. Then, 15 minutes later, another bobcat walked through the trees toward him, trailed by three offspring. Within moments, the baby bobcats had ventured a lot closer: “I looked down, and there sat one of the babies right next to me. ... I had an old wooden ladder that was going up to the blind, and they were swinging on there just like they were monkey bars. It was quite an experience.”

And the Gardner, Kansas, Police Department got a surprise when it examined what two mounted trail cameras had recorded in a town park one night. Expecting to glimpse the mountain lion some residents reported seeing — along with the usual local skunk or coyote — police were surprised to find romping gorillas, a long-necked monster and “a cat in a bow tie.” Some humans had gone cavorting in the dead of night to prank the cops, reports the *Washington Post*, but the police responded on Facebook with evident delight: “Your effort and sense of humor are greatly appreciated.”

COLORADO

For 40 years, a man named Billy Barr — that's the way he spells it — has cherished his solitude throughout the dead-cold winters of Gothic, Colorado, an old mining town at 9,485 feet. To pass the time, reports the *Crested Butte News*, Barr keeps a daily log of both the temperature and behavior of snow, and he's found that the trend is grim: “We're getting permanent snowpack later, and we get to bare ground sooner.” Barr shared his journal with climate scientists at the Rocky Mountain Biological lab, which is based in Gothic during the summer, and now there's a short film from Day's Edge Productions about the long-bearded loner and his decades of valuable data. *The Snow Guardian* has been a surprise hit at festivals and online.

WEB EXTRA For more from Heard around the West, see hcn.org.

Tips and photos of Western oddities are appreciated and often shared in this column. Write betsym@hcn.org or tag photos #heardaroundthewest on Instagram.



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“Extremes set the boundary of existence: the biggest, the oldest, the fastest. We were upset because that boundary retracted slightly when Prometheus was cut.”

Richard LeBlond, in his essay “Why a scientist cut down ‘the oldest living tree,’” from *Writers on the Range*, hcn.org/wotr