

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION WINTER 2008 \$2.95

National PARKS

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A fragmented landscape beyond Yellowstone National Park is preventing pronghorn antelope from gaining access to crucial feeding grounds—putting an ancient herd at risk.

By Tom Arrandale

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An increase in coal-fired power plants near historical parks like Mesa Verde and Chaco Canyon could erase dramatic views and destroy the ancient buildings and artifacts that still remain.

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Photographer Ian Shive wanders through the quiet rail yard and crumbling railcars of Steamtown National Historic Site, resurrecting the rowdy card games, classic jazz tunes, and buzzing social scene that once defined America's railroad culture.

By Ian Shive



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TOURISTS WATCH a gray whale floating alongside their boat, in Baja, Mexico.

© BRANDON COLE

COVER PHOTO:
A GRAY WHALE at the southern end of its migration route in Baja, California

© TODD PUSSER/NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY

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ON THE WEB

Yes, it's true—a bear is running for the White House. Meet Teddy Mather, NPCA's own presidential candidate. With the weight of NPCA behind his campaign, Teddy hopes to draw the public's attention to the needs of our 391 park units, making national parks a national priority. To join the movement, see "President's Outlook" on page 3, or visit www.electteddy.org.



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Make National Parks a National Priority

I know I don't need to remind anyone that 2008 is an election year. For the most part, the political discourse this year will focus on the wars overseas, health care, and the economy. We recognize that national parks will not be at the top of our presidential candidates' lists, but we also know that whoever is elected to the presidency and to Congress this coming fall could have a profound effect on the future of our nation's significant lands and landmarks.



LAURA ATCHISON/NPCA

Our National Park System will celebrate its centennial in 2016. If a president is going to restore America's National Park System in time for the centennial, we need to begin the work now. But how do we get the presidential candidates to pay greater attention to national parks issues?

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we are prohibited from endorsing or campaigning for any one single candidate. So in the past, we have provided position papers on national parks to each of the presidential candidates. This year, we decided to try an innovative way to draw attention to national parks issues. We created our own fictional candidate—Theodore Mather—who would make national parks a national priority. He is our mascot—a bear—and has a website, along with bumper stickers, and campaign signs. Although the candidate is not a serious one, the issues he represents are very real. He is named for two important conservationists and national parks advocates, Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th president, and Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service and one of NPCA's founders.

Our national parks protect some of America's most significant landmarks and landscapes. They tell our nation's stories. Yet they suffer from air pollution, development threats, and a chronic lack of funding. So far, few of the presidential candidates are talking about our national parks, and when they do they are suggesting that we sell off Channel Islands National Park or drill for oil in the Everglades—not welcome proposals for the most significant landmarks and landscapes in the nation.

To educate the candidates and to gain some attention for parks in this very noisy presidential campaign season, we have launched Teddy's campaign online, and we are encouraging our members and friends to send messages to the presidential candidates to make national parks a national priority. And you can help. Please support Teddy for president. Sign up for our e-newsletter, Parklines, which will offer updates on Teddy's campaign and current national park issues.

For more information about Teddy and to get your free "Teddy for President" bumper sticker, visit www.electteddy.org. As always, thank you for your support and for helping to make the national parks a national priority.

THOMAS C. KIERNAN

Moving Stories



Arctic caribou herd, Kobuk River

© NICK JARVIS / ALASKA STOCK LLC

Whether it's a herd of wild animals stampeding across a landscape, a young pilot escaping gravity's clutches for the first time, or the slow progression of a mountain climber scaling a daunting peak, there's something irresistible about movement. And this issue is packed with it.

You'll read about the migratory journeys of monarch butterflies in Big Bend, grey whales that skirt Point Reyes National Seashore, and pronghorn antelope struggling to reach vital habitat north of Yellowstone. You'll learn about the experiences of Nate Raines and other college students who spent last summer driving across the country, spreading the gospel of renewable energy to thousands of national park visitors.

And you'll find movement in some less expected places. You'll meet Frank Kitamoto, who was only 2 years old when his family was taken from their home, transported hundreds of miles, and detained at a prison camp for Japanese Americans during World War II. Just as thousands of Americans were being imprisoned, still others were being freed: Young black men like Lt. Col. Herbert Carter earned the moniker "Tuskegee Airmen" as they emerged from the segregation of the South to pilot airplanes in the very same war. Their achievements over the skies of Europe opened eyes and opened doors, bolstering one of the biggest movements of all—the civil rights movement.

Sixty years later, their stories still move us. We hope they move you, too.

SCOTT KIRKWOOD
NPMAG@NPCA.ORG

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Suzi Shepherd: 913.344.1453; sshepherd@ascendmedia.com
Cherith Mummert: 913.344.1454; cmummert@ascendmedia.com

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National Parks Conservation Association®
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

WHO WE ARE

Established in 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association is America's only private, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting, preserving, and enhancing the U.S. National Park System.

WHAT WE DO

NPCA protects national parks by identifying problems and generating support to resolve them.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The mission of NPCA is to protect and enhance America's National Park System for present and future generations.

EDITORIAL MISSION

National Parks magazine fosters an appreciation of the natural and historic treasures found in the parks, educates readers about the need to preserve those resources, and illustrates how member contributions drive our organization's park-protection efforts. The magazine uses the power of imagery and language to forge a lasting bond between NPCA and its members, while inspiring new readers to join the cause.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Members can help defend America's

natural and cultural heritage. Activists alert Congress and the administration to park threats; comment on park planning and adjacent land-use decisions; assist NPCA in developing partnerships; and educate the public and the media. Please sign up to receive Park Lines, our biweekly e-mail newsletter. Go to www.npca.org to sign up.

HOW TO DONATE

To donate, please visit www.npca.org or call 800.628.7275. For information about bequests, planned gifts, and matching gifts, call our Development Department, extension 145 or 146.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about your membership, call Member Services at 800-628-7275. *National Parks* magazine is among a member's chief benefits. Of the \$25 membership dues, \$6 covers a one-year subscription to the magazine.

HOW TO REACH US

National Parks Conservation Association, 1300 19th Street, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036; by phone: 1.800.NAT.PARK (628.7275); by e-mail: npca@npca.org; and www.npca.org.



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WINTER 08



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PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): EMERALD POOL IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK. © FRANKY DREAMSTIME. BISON AT OLD FAUNTS IN YELLOWSTONE. © JERRY COOPER/ISTOCKPHOTO. YELLOWSTONE LOWER FALLS. © JAMES BRIDGEMAN/DREAMTIME. GRAY WOLF AT YELLOWSTONE. © CALER FOOT/DREAMSTIME.



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Visit us at www.npca.org/travel.
Or circle #16 in the insert on page 19.

2008 NPCA TOUR SCHEDULE

- NATIONAL PARKS OF BELIZE (February)
- ADVENTURES AFOOT IN BIG BEND (March)
- WILDLIFE & WILDFLOWERS OF THE SMOKIES (April)
- PHOTO SAFARI IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK (May)
- YOSEMITE & THE TUOLUMNE RIVER (June)
- EXHILARATING ALASKAN EXCURSIONS (July)
- CUYAHOGA & THE CLASSICS (July)
- MAINE COAST ADVENTURE (August)
- WOLF-MOOSE RESEARCH IN ISLE ROYALE (August)
- COLORADO'S HISTORIC LANDS, LANDMARKS, AND LOCOMOTIVES (September)
- UTAH CANYON LANDS (October)
- NATIONAL PARKS & PRESERVES OF FLORIDA (November)
- NEW YEAR'S IN YELLOWSTONE (December '08 - January '09)

PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

I just finished reading “A Climate of Change” in the Fall 2007 issue and felt compelled to write. Absolutely no one can argue that making our national parks more climate-friendly is a bad thing. Such initiatives as implementing shuttle systems to transport visitors, thus eliminating private vehicles from park roads and



LAND DESIGN AND SIMULATION LAB, VIRGINIA TECH

parking areas, will most certainly reduce traffic congestion and pollutants emitted. Nevertheless, as these changes are being executed in our parks, one must consider the unintended consequences.

My wife and I visited Zion in September and used the shuttle system to travel around the park. The shuttles themselves were timely and certainly didn't impede what we wanted to do. But the number of people hiking the trails, even after Labor Day, was far and away more than we had ever seen. In fact, while hiking up to Angel's Landing, we were forced to stop for five minutes or more on numerous occasions to either accommodate large groups of people attempting to climb, or to allow other hikers to descend. Normally this hike takes us about an hour, but this time it took nearly two.

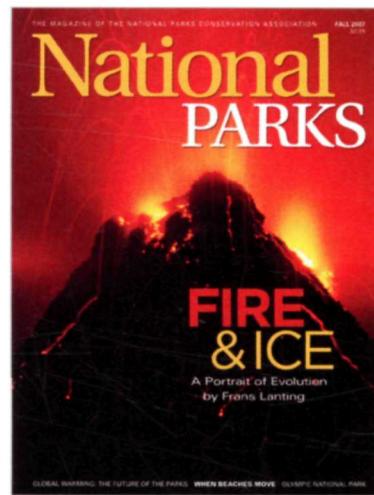
The climb itself was still exhilarating and we would not trade it for anything. But the shuttle system is probably facilitating the congestion we saw on the trails. Before the shuttle, parking was quite limited, which most likely led to a smaller number of hikers at any given time and place. With the shuttle, however, those people who really want to hike are not restricted in any way, and the trails are seeing increased numbers of people.

So, do we prefer “hiking jams” to “traffic jams” and any associated adverse affects on trail maintenance? If these are our only choices, then we most certainly do. But this underscores a much broader issue. Anytime we choose to make significant changes to well-established norms, unintended consequences will occur. We must try to understand these consequences beforehand, and do everything we can to minimize the negative impacts.

PATRICK NEALE
Lacombe, LA

The phenomena, called “pulsing,” is one of the few downsides to mass transportation systems. Pulsing occurs when a large group of visitors arrive at a trail or feature at the same time instead of trickling in, as they would if they had all driven individually. Zion's shuttle system is also responsible for the overall increase in hikers, because visitors are no longer limited by the number of parking spaces at a trailhead. The Park Service is just starting to introduce shuttles to many parks, so the process has yet to be perfected, but for now we should all recognize that our parks are healthier as a result.

— Editors



CHECK YOUR VISION

The Fall 2007 *National Parks* ranks among the magazine's best issues ever—in content, and quality of writing, illustrations, layout, and printing. “A Shifting Landscape” and “A Climate of Change” are especially illuminating.

In the latter article, I was especially interested in Jeff Rennie's reference to “a new vision for our parks” that would include a “visitor center, which blends almost invisibly into the background because of its natural architecture and landscaping.” What a welcome contrast to Mission 66, the 1956-66 construction program that produced what *National Parks* then described as “conspicuous park structures” that “compete... for public attention” with the natural environment the parks were established to protect, unimpaired.

We should place NPCA President Tom Kiernan's editorial on the prospects for greatly enhanced park funding in the context of Mr. Rennie's vision for the parks.

RUSS BUTCHER
Tucson, AZ

TAKE A HIKE

I was excited to see your Fall 2007 article on Olympic National Park's trails because I knew it would bring back beautiful memories of our visit there. But the author focused on trails more suited to young and rugged hikers. We'd like to offer your readers a few more options for hikers in their 50s, whose physical condition may hinder them on such challenging terrain.

On the coast, Rialto Beach is only one-tenth of a mile from the parking lot and Hole in the Wall is 1.5 miles up the beach. Two other great hikes to the shore are Second Beach at .7 miles and Third Beach at 1.4 miles. For great alpine views, hike Hurricane Ridge at 1.5 miles, but take your time—it's all uphill.

One hike that few people make is the Upper Mill Lake Trail. It's less than half a mile and all downhill. You'll find a secluded waterfall and an isolated black sand beach, dotted with willows beside a tumbling teal-colored river. It's our favorite hike.

**DIANE YALE-PEABODY
& GERRY PEABODY**
Amherst, OH

What a stunning article by Karen Sykes ["A Northwest Passage," Fall 2007]. This area is remote and wild, and in many respects, still waiting to be discovered.

Much has been made of the considerable damage to Mount Rainier, due to a horrific storm in 2006. But there was similar damage to Olympic National Park. Visitors should stop by ranger stations to check road and trail conditions before setting out. Footbridges might have been washed away, and some roads are still closed. But don't let it stop you from visiting! Wonders await! Just check first.

RON BUCKLAND
Pasco, WA

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE

As a mother of a 10-year-old girl who has Cerebral Palsy, Sensory Integration Disorder, and ADHD, I must commend you on the wonderful article entitled "Natural Healing" in *National Parks'* summer issue. The outdoors—especially our national parks—are a wonderful form of therapy for so many children, including my daughter. As the clinical director of the Southern California Cerebral Palsy Center, I have listed the national parks as a resource for our patients. I hope that many of them have the opportunity to enjoy the parks.

Please make sure that all parents of children who have permanent disabilities know that they can obtain a free lifetime pass to the national parks (visit www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm). This wonderful gift from the National Park Service helps ease some of the financial burdens that come with caring for these children and/or family members.

CAROLINA SCHABER
San Diego, CA

JUST IN TIME

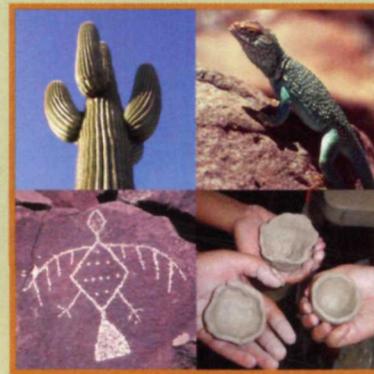
In your interesting article on John Muir in the Fall 2007 issue, you write that President Teddy Roosevelt established Yosemite as a national park in October 1890. Teddy was only 30 or 31 in 1890, and Benjamin Harrison was president. Teddy was president from 1901 to 1909, visited Yosemite with John Muir in 1903, and expanded the park in 1906, with the urging of John Muir and the Sierra Club.

RICHARD LEE MERRITT
San Francisco, CA

CORRECTION:

The photo of San Juan Islands on page 36 of the fall issue should have been credited to Kevin Schafer.

Arizona State Parks



Conserving Arizona's Treasures



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www.azstateparks.com

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1300 19th St., N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC, 20036
STOCKHOLDERS, BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGE AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS
None

	Winter 07 through Fall 07	Single-issue filing date Fall 07
A. TOTAL COPIES PRINTED (net press run)	329,887	335,285
B. PAID CIRCULATION Mail subscriptions	319,054	328,571
C. TOTAL PAID CIRC.	319,054	328,571
D. FREE DISTRIBUTION	5,565	3,458
E. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (sum of C and D)	324,619	332,029
F. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED	5,268	3,256
G. TOTAL (sum of E & F)	329,887	335,285

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Published letters may be edited for length and clarity.

EVENTS



Denali Winterfest

FEBRUARY 12

CELEBRATE THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTH at Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site in Hodgenville, Kentucky. The ceremony will feature actors, authors, and historians as guest speakers, along with Civil War reenactors and live music from the era. The event kicks off two years of bicentennial activities at various sites throughout the National Park System. For more information, visit www.abrahamlincoln200.org.

FEBRUARY 22-24

ALASKA'S NOT SUCH A BAD PLACE IN THE WINTER—at least not during the annual Winterfest, hosted by Denali National Park & Preserve and local communities. Activities include dog mushing, snow sculptures, winter bicycling, story telling, cross-country skiing, guided snowshoe walks, and a chili-cooking contest. Visit www.nps.gov/dena or call 907.683.2294 for more details.

MARCH 29 & 30

HONOR THE SOLDIERS AND AMERICAN INDIANS WHO FELL IN THE BATTLE OF HORSESHOE BEND at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park's 194th anniversary celebration in Daviston, Alabama. Historical war re-enactors and individuals of Creek and Cherokee heritage will demonstrate traditional dances, basket weaving, musket and cannon drills, and traditional cooking. Activities run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on March 29, and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on March 30. Call 256.234.7111 or e-mail hobe_information@nps.gov for more information.

A MODERN INTERPRETATION

Want to experience a national park? Just click, and listen.

Boots crunch gravel. Birdsong fills quiet spaces. A narrator introduces a wild landscape in such detail that the walls around you disappear. Who knew a podcast—a digital audio recording—could make you feel like you're in a national park? The virtual travel experience is now as vivid and natural as ever, thanks to NPCA's innovative new podcast series.

Award-winning host Jim Williams takes listeners on an interpretive



© RICHARD BRADWELL/ALAMY

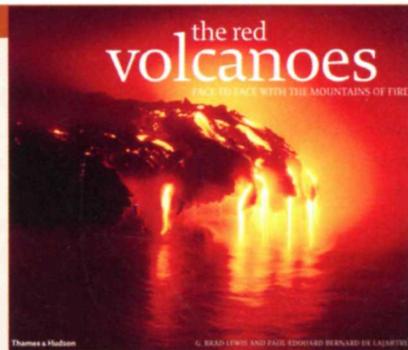
tour through Yosemite National Park in California where the easy, musical cadence of a ranger's voice rises and falls with tales of Buffalo Soldiers—African American men who served as Yosemite's first park rangers. Farther south in Joshua Tree National Park (above), crickets serve as a musical backdrop on a hike through a Suess-like landscape threatened by global warming. In another episode, a creaky door places listeners in an old stone building beside a canyon trail in New Mexico's Bandelier National Monument, where the Park Service is cleaning modern graffiti off 800-year-old cliff dwellings.

Most people enjoy podcasts—or broadcasts for iPods—by downloading the sound files to their digital devices so they can listen on the go. But you can also copy the file to your computer, grab a pair of headphones, and let the story carry you away. To listen to one of NPCA's segments or subscribe to the entire series, visit www.npca.org/podcast.

—Amy Leinbach Marquis

EYE-OPENER

EACH YEAR, 3 MILLION PEOPLE VISIT VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK IN HAWAII to witness the stunning lava landscapes and bizarre geological activity. In a new book called "**The Red Volcanoes**," photographer G. Brad Lewis has captured an intimate look at Kilauea, the world's most active volcano. While Lewis was behind the lens, Paul-Edouard Bernard de Lajarte was busy photographing Kilauea's sister volcano, Piton de la Fournaise in the Indian Ocean. Together, their intimate portraits stir up a similar range of emotions—the fear, excitement, and wonder—that come with living in the shadows of the most ancient and violent geological features on the planet. 144 pages, \$34.95, Thames & Hudson.



FLYING HIGH

A Victory for the California Condor

It's not easy being a scavenger. But things just got a little better for the California condor, thanks to legislation passed in November.

In 1982, the condor was on the brink of extinction, with only 22 surviving birds. Today more than 150 condors live in the wild, and more than 70 spread their 9-foot-wing-span over California's skies, including parks like Pinnacles National Monument south of San Francisco; 150 condors live in captivity.

The main reason their numbers plummeted? Lead. When hunters kill an animal and fail to remove the entire carcass, condors often feast upon the remains and ingest the toxic metal found in bullets. For years, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's California Condor Recovery Program worked diligently to rehabilitate ailing birds, removing them from the wild and launching captive breeding programs. Young birds and rehabilitated adult birds were released at Pinnacles National Monument and other sites as early as 1992. But even as this work moved forward, lead poisoning remained the number one cause of death.

The Ridley-Tree Condor Preservation Act, which takes effect in July, prohibits hunters from using lead ammunition within a critical portion of condor habitat in Central and Southern California. "This law acknowledges a toxin in our community and eliminates it in a pretty large swath of the state," says Joshua Stark, program manager in NPCA's Pacific Regional Office. "Condors and other scavengers like turkey vultures, coyotes, foxes, opossums, and skunks will all be protected.

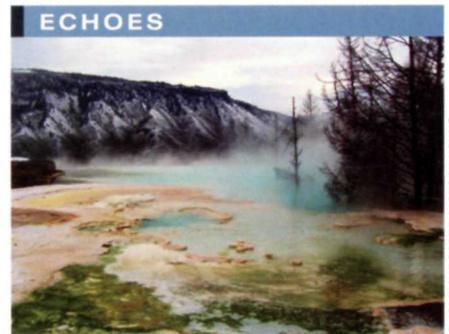
"On one hike through Pinnacles you can see nearly every condor in the park, but those birds are also found on the California coast. Just because a park boundary provides a level of protection doesn't mean that the wildlife in the park are going to be safe."

That's why the next stop is Arizona, where NPCA and Defenders of Wildlife are hoping to push for similar legislation to protect California condors reestablishing territory in the Grand Canyon.

—Scott Kirkwood



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© JEREMY DOORTEN / STOCK.XCHNG

The days of plunking these towers down just anywhere... are coming to an end.

TIM STEVENS, senior program manager for NPCA's Yellowstone Field Office, quoted in the Billings Gazette, on plans to erect a 115-foot cell-phone tower on private property near the park, where it would be visible 100 yards from a Yellowstone trailhead.

It's like pulling the stopper out of a bathtub. You can actually see dirt rings on the new shorelines that are formed.

JIM STRATTON, senior director of NPCA's Alaska Regional Office, describing the tundra ponds drying up throughout some of Alaska's parks, quoted in Backpacker magazine's special issue devoted to global warming.

This [new] rule is not about clarification—this rule is regulatory relief... sacrificing the headwaters of our streams and rivers to the economics of large-scale steep-slope mining.

DON BARGER, senior director of NPCA's Southeast regional office, quoted in the Knoxville News-Sentinel in response to proposed changes in mining regulations, which would have dire consequences for the Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area.

379.1

HEIGHT, IN FEET, of the world's tallest known tree in California's Redwood National and State Parks. The national park was established in 1968, but ten years passed before Jimmy Carter expanded the boundaries to include this giant among giants. In 2006, Chris Atkins and Michael Taylor were on a mission to find the tallest tree when they stumbled upon this redwood, situated in a dense forest on a hillside. But park visitors shouldn't expect to see signs pointing its way: Rangers are keeping its location a secret because too much foot traffic could harm the tree's roots.

THREE GRIZZLY CUBS watch as their mother fishes for salmon in Katmai National Park.



© FLORIAN SCHULZ

A BEAR OF A PROBLEM

It's getting harder to spot brown bears in Katmai National Preserve, and nobody is quite sure why.

If you've ever seen a stunning photograph of a brown bear gulping down an unfortunate salmon, odds are the image was captured near the southwestern coast of Alaska, in McNeil River Sanctuary or Katmai National Park & Preserve. Ask any local about the best place to experience a 1,000-pound grizzly up close and in person, and most will tell you the preserve is the place to be. Or at least it was the place to be.

With a coastal habitat that provides ideal foraging opportunities for hungry bears, and a salmon run that beckons hundreds more each summer, Katmai was set aside in 1980, "to protect habitat for high

concentrations of grizzly bears," among other reasons. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act also established an adjacent preserve, to continue the state's rich tradition of hunting. And no one is asking that to be changed. But in recent years, the average number of grizzlies being killed under the watchful eye of the Park Service has more than doubled from seven to 17. At the same time, bear guides offering wildlife-viewing opportunities in the preserve have noticed that trips that once yielded 40-60 bear sightings now include fewer than a dozen.

"We've noticed a dramatic decrease in the numbers of bears in Funnel and Marine Creek," says Derek Stonorov, a bear biologist and owner of Alaska Bear Quest, a guide service in the area. "We've also seen a big shift in the age and sex of the population, compared to 2000—a lot fewer big males and a big decrease in the numbers of young males. Now we're mostly seeing mothers and cubs and young adults, and some single females. As a guide, it's really important to me to show people a fairly representative population—mothers with cubs and some big old male bears. And that's something we can't do too much anymore in the preserve."

The connection between hunting and the guides' experience might seem obvious, but this is no simple equation. Counting grizzlies is a difficult task. And because bears often roam over hundreds of square miles in search of food, declining numbers in one small area may be no indication of the population's general health.

Still, the anecdotal evidence is raising eyebrows. Last fall, NPCA successfully fought against the expansion of hunting on state land adjacent to the park, but that was only one small victory. For now, there is still no comprehensive management plan in place to ensure the health of the population. The only limitation on the number of bears killed is an agreement between the Park Service and a private guide who leads trips to the preserve, which caps the annual harvest to 25. And even that number conflicts with the state's 2003 recommendation of 7-9 bears each calendar year.

In cases of hunting, the state is the first authority on such matters, until and unless their actions have an impact on the Park Service's mission. So in light of declining numbers of bears in some spots, NPCA asked the state to consider a shorter hunting season while more data were collected, a move which the Park Service supported at the time, as reflected in comments delivered to the Alaska Board of Game: "[We

ning areas.' " The Board of Game refused the initial request, so NPCA asked the Park Service to exercise its own authority, but the Park Service has refused to take any action on the matter, in spite of its earlier testimony recognizing the threat.

Most bear biologists in the region believe that the overall population is relatively healthy, and that pressure from sportfisherman in the area combined with hunting

For now, Alaska's powerful hunting lobby seems interested in maintaining the status quo. Some hunters might reasonably argue that the more wildlife-viewing opportunities expand, the more people want to extend buffers around parks and sanctuaries. Still, in the end, everyone at the table supports healthy populations of brown bears in the region, and representatives from both side believe that there's room for a healthy compromise.

"I don't think bears on the Alaska peninsula are endangered in any way," says Stonorov, "but this land was set aside to preserve high concentrations of brown bears, and I don't think the Park Service is managing the land in the spirit it was intended. We just want to see the Park Service get everybody together and come up with a joint management plan. That doesn't necessarily mean less hunting—but the times are changing and bears just have this one little corner of the world, and now seems like the time to get a handle on it."

—Scott Kirkwood

Guides have noticed that trips that once yielded 40-60 bear sightings now include fewer than a dozen.

are] concerned that the current trend of increasing harvest rates for brown bears in Katmai National Preserve cannot be maintained over the long term. This may lead to violation of our Congressional directive... to manage for 'high concentrations of brown/grizzly bears and their den-

may be redistributing the bears, leading to a lower quality experience for those armed with nothing more than binoculars. Some of the most acclimated bears might have been killed, or they might have simply moved on to another part of the park—there's no way to be sure.

A woman in a historical costume, likely Queen Elizabeth I, stands in a garden. She is wearing a crown and a large, ornate, gold and red dress with a ruffled collar. The background shows a garden with a fountain and a large topiary tree.

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DR. FRANK KITAMOTO was only 2 years old when he was taken to the internment camp at Manzanar.

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Q&A

LOOKING BACK

A prisoner of the Japanese-American internment camp at Minidoka recalls his time there, 60 years ago.

A year ago, President George W. Bush enacted legislation authorizing up to \$38 million for the preservation and interpretation of historic sites where thousands of Japanese Americans were detained during World War II. The National Park Service has been seeking public comment on how to best allocate those funds, which may bode well for Minidoka Internment National Monument in Idaho, where structures continue to crumble, and rangers are nearly impossible to find.

Last fall, NPCA and other groups staved off a purchase of nearby land that would have placed a huge animal feedlot just upwind of the site, bringing all the noise and odor that go along with such operations.

The next step is to help the park do a better job of telling its stories—stories like those of Dr. Frank Kitamoto. When he was only 2 years old, Kitamoto's family was removed from Bainbridge Island, Washington, and taken to Manzanar, then Minidoka.

He now shares his experiences with schools and other community groups in and around the Seattle area. In October, Kitamoto spoke to National Parks' editor-in-chief, Scott Kirkwood.

Q. You were very young when these events took place. What do you remember about life in the camp?

A. I don't have any memories of leaving [home] and I don't have that many memories about Manzanar, but I do have some memories from Minidoka, because I was a little older at the time. I remember the simple things, like playing in the sandboxes and watching the older people play baseball.

But the camps were harder on the adults, especially the men. The women certainly struggled as well, but at home, many of them were working in the fields constantly, so in ways that gave them a little bit of relief. Even so, the conditions

were hard—the mothers occupied themselves in trying to make it seem like life as usual because they didn't want their kids to know how terrible it was.

Q. What did you do most of the time you were there?

A. We had to go to school, just like any other kids. I went to kindergarten in Minidoka. When the kids from Bainbridge Island first got to Manzanar, there was no school yet, so the principal on the island, Mr. Dennis, sent them schoolwork through the mail, and they graduated by correspondence. They even had a graduation ceremony in Manzanar when the rest of the kids on the island were graduating.

Q. What did adults do?

A. The mothers who had kids were occupied. The camps themselves were run like a city so some of the teenagers and a lot of the men worked in sanitation or cooked meals. Eventually many people took on jobs and got paid as much as ten to 12 dollars a month.

Later, when the camps were turned over to the War Relocation Authority, they didn't think we should be there, so they actually went out and recruited businesses and farms for people to go work—like being on probation or getting out on a pass. Remember, there was a manpower shortage because of all the people that had gone to the war. Finally, they started letting people leave the camps if they had found a school that was willing to sponsor them—my father was allowed to back to Chicago to go to watch-repair school.

Q. And how did you eventually get out?

A. After our dad left the camp, a case before the Supreme Court [challenged the Constitutionality of our imprisonment], and the government lawyers knew that they were going to lose the case, so before the war was even over, they decided to let people out of the concentration camps. They said, "Here's twenty-five bucks, find your own way home." My father went back to Bainbridge to make sure it was safe to go home, then came back and took us home.

Q. I've heard Minidoka and other sites host annual reunions. What are those events like?

A. With each pilgrimage, it becomes more obvious to me that the richest part of the reunions is the people—whether it's the older people who share their experiences or the young people who knew very little about what was going on, there's this feeling that we all got through this, like a badge of courage that really binds us. Knowing that this doesn't make us lesser people, but people who should take pride in what they had to do to get through it all.

Last year we brought my 96-year-old aunt with us for the first time, and she kept saying, "I don't know if I want to go back there," but by the end of the weekend, she was really glad she had gone, because she was able to share her stories and talk to other people who had experienced it too.

Q. Why is it important for people to know about these places?

A. A lot of people think that the United States is special is because it's such a powerful nation, but I think what people really like about the U.S.—especially those who aren't citizens—is our freedom of thought, the chance to advance and grow and the humanitarian qualities that are associated with this country.

These concentration camps can show that when we fear for our safety and want to protect ourselves, we sometimes forget about the human aspects of things and we forget that everybody really is of value—these camps help remind us there are things more valuable than power.

In a way, they represent the hope for this country—not to remind us that people can be awful, but to remind us that we can do these kinds of things if we let fear or a thirst for power override the more important things, like being helpful to each other and caring about each other. The hope really lies in people being reminded that this *can* happen again, but it doesn't *have* to happen again. NP

To read the entire interview, visit www.npca.org/magazine/2008/winter.

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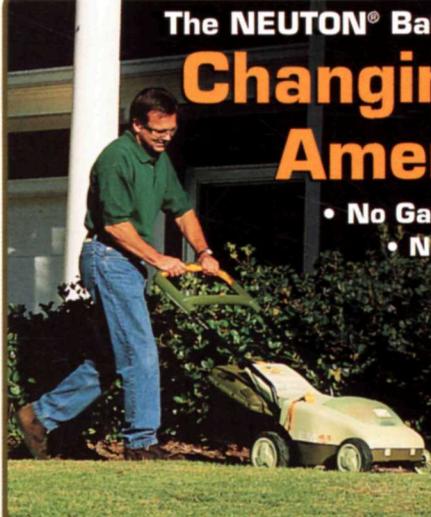
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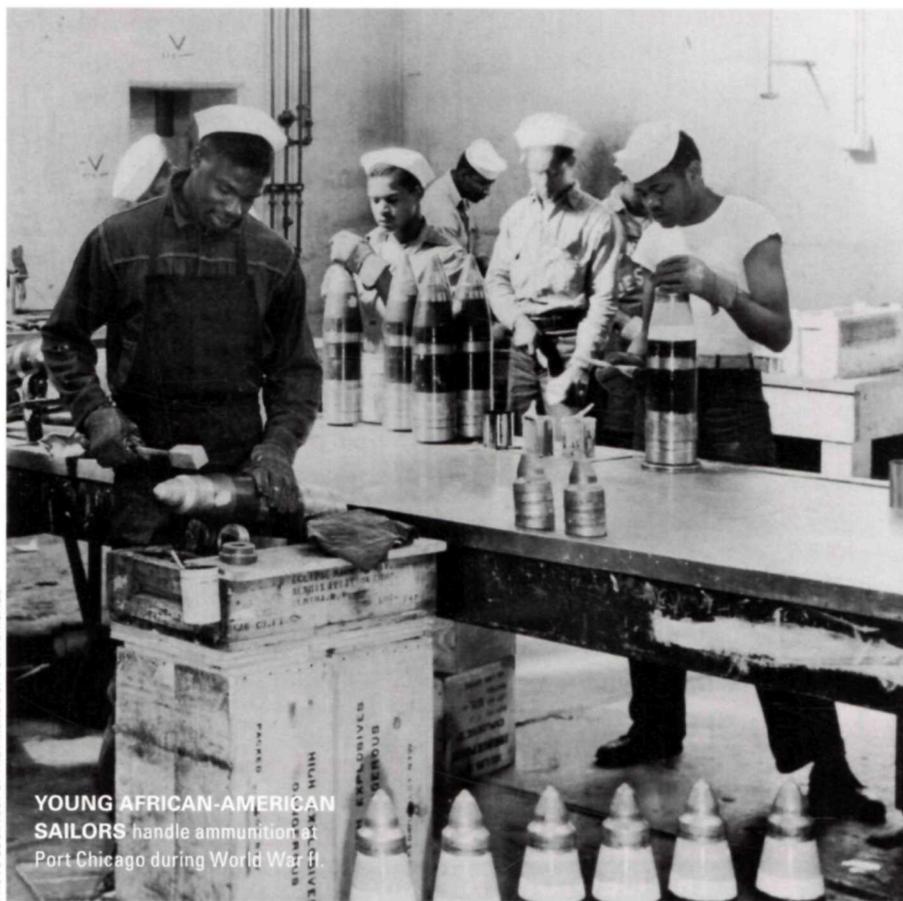


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FRIENDS OF PORT CHICAGO

YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN SAILORS handle ammunition at Port Chicago during World War II.

A SILENT EXPLOSION

New legislation could put a forgotten naval site on the National Park System map.

On the night of July 17, 1944, Petty Officer Irvin Lowery was in his room relaxing with friends when a powerful explosion blasted him out of his chair. The window behind him shattered, and hundreds of pieces of glass cut into his back as he was slammed against the opposite wall. It was the largest, most violent explosion during World War II—but he survived; 320 of his colleagues weren't as lucky.

The bloodshed didn't happen overseas, and it wasn't caused by a foreign enemy. The location was California's Port Chicago Naval Magazine near the San Francisco Bay, where thousands of tons of ammunition exploded mysteriously. At that time,

the military was segregated, and African-American seamen like Lowery were prohibited from serving in battle. Many of those men ended up in munitions plants, working under white officers who held contests to see whose team could load explosives onto ships the fastest. But the black seamen were never trained to handle artillery, and many had to purchase gloves and other basic safeguards themselves.

The explosion was felt as far away as Boulder City, Nevada—but the events that followed shook the entire country. More than 60 years later, a growing number of people would like to see the National Park Service start telling that story in more detail. Last July, Rep. George Miller (D-CA) took the first step by introducing legislation that would make Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial Site an official unit of the National Park System.

"I knew of the explosion from growing up in the town next door," Miller says. "Teachers would often describe it to us in these spectacular terms. But no one ever discussed the aftermath."

At the time of the explosion, Port Chicago was front-page news around the country. "But in the midst of war, new, dramatic headlines quickly replace yesterday's stories," says Robert Allen, PhD, historian, and author of *The Port Chicago Mutiny*. "Port Chicago soon faded from the news, and was in danger of being lost to memory. We need a national memorial so that all those who served and died at Port Chicago are remembered and honored for their service to the nation."

While white officers at Port Chicago were flaunted as heroes, the Navy cast all blame on the African-Americans at the port—including those who perished. The black men who were hospitalized never received medical leave, and no one of color was allowed time to visit with friends and family.

About a week after the blast, the Navy assigned 258 black survivors to return to work loading ammunition at a new base. But 50 men refused, citing the unsafe working conditions. The U.S. Navy charged each of

them with mutiny, put them on trial, and sentenced them to up to 15 years in prison; all of them were dishonorably discharged from the Navy. Thurgood Marshall, a budding civil rights lawyer at the time, was horrified by the military's blatant racism, so he stepped in to file an appeal.

"The African Americans who challenged the status quo at Port Chicago really helped get the ball rolling for the broader civil rights movement," says General Superintendent Martha Lee, who oversees three other national park units in the region. "I really see them as heroes."

any funding to do so.

Miller's legislation could help secure funding to repair the facility, build a visitor center, and hire educational rangers to work with school groups. The bill passed through the Natural Resources Committee, but had not yet reached the House floor at the time this issue went to print.

"If we want to work toward solving the complex issues of racial and social injustice, we need to educate ourselves about this shared history," says Neal Desai, NPCA's Bay Area Program Manager. "And that includes the story of Port Chicago."

If the remaining survivors can share their experiences with the nation, old wounds might begin to heal. "After World War II, veterans generally didn't talk about their experiences—but this story was a particularly dark cloud," says Reverend Diana McDaniel, Irvin Lowery's niece. "I think the Port Chicago survivors would feel a sense of relief to know their story is being told."

— Amy Leinbach Marquis

If the remaining survivors can share their experiences with the nation, old wounds might begin to heal.

Although he ultimately failed to clear the men's names, he captured the nation's attention long enough to put pressure on President Franklin Roosevelt to end the prison sentences in 1945. Other victories followed, including President Harry S. Truman's order to desegregate the military in 1948, and the institution of proper training and safety features on Naval ports where soldiers handled munitions.

Port Chicago has been under Park Service management since 1992, but the site lacks Congressional funding—and it shows. A solitary memorial lists the names of those who died in the explosion, but there is little else for visitors to see. Because the Army owns the land, visitors need to make appointments in advance to tour the site. And while regional park staff offer basic tours, Congress doesn't offer



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WINTER 08



A COLORFUL AURORA and the Hale Bopp comet paint the sky over Alaska's Denali Lake.

Fire in the Sky

The aurora borealis lights up the sky above several national parks in Alaska, but what complex forces are behind the fireworks?

If you've ever seen the heavenly lights dancing at the ends of the Earth, it probably comes as no surprise that ancient people created colorful myths to explain these surreal displays.

According to Ernest Hawkes' writings in the early 1900s, Eskimos believed the sky was a hard dome that arched over the Earth, and a solitary hole allowed souls to pass through to the heavens. "The spirits who live there light torches to guide the feet of the

new arrivals—this is the light of the aurora," Hawkes wrote. "They can be seen there feasting and playing football with a walrus skull." Ancient European legends explained the polar lights as souls of the dead in battle or the spirits of the murdered. One of the earliest references to the phenomenon dates back to 350 B.C., and the Old Testament contains several mentions as well.

As late as the early 1700s, scientists still weren't sure what to make of the aurora

borealis. Some believed an electric current flowed from the North Pole to South Pole, and when it was disrupted, the result was an aurora. Others believed the colorful glow was simply refracted light from glaciers and snowfields deep in the arctic. Finally in the early 1800s, observers noticed that the most dramatic auroras seemed to be timed with intense sunspot activity. Eventually scientists determined that sunspot cycles and aurora cycles were coordinated, both peaking every 11 years.

"It's all a very complicated process, like setting up some dominoes and knocking one over so that the whole chain goes down," says Sten Odenwald, PhD, an astronomer at Catholic University who has worked as a science educator for NASA. "But in this case, you can't see half of the dominoes that start the process.

"It all begins with a big storm on the sun called a coronal mass ejection—a huge cloud of gas coughed up by the sun, literally a billion to 10 billion tons of charged particles

rushing at the Earth at millions of miles an hour.” As hard as it is to conceive, this mass of protons and neutrons stripped from hydrogen and helium atoms weigh nearly as much as a small mountain. And when that magnetized cargo makes the journey from the sun in the span of only two or three days, it understandably upsets the planet’s mag-

“The closer you are to the poles, and the deeper into winter, the darker the skies, and the better the chance to see the fireworks.”

netic field—the very same magnetic field that Boy Scouts and ship captains measure at the Earth’s surface, using a compass.

But why are auroras most often seen at the poles, of all places?

“If you could picture the Earth’s magnetic field from space, it would make the planet look like a giant comet,” says Odenwald. “The head of that comet, where the magnetism is the most intense, is the Earth, then a huge magnetic tail stretches out directly behind the Earth, opposite the sun—like a windsock in space. When these clouds of gas pass by the Earth, that tail gets very disturbed—it can get pulled like taffy, snap back, and do all kinds of things, and when that happens, particles that are normally trapped in the distant regions of Earth’s magnetic field flow into the North and South poles of the Earth and produce an aurora as they collide with atoms of oxygen and nitrogen.”

The altitude of this chemical reaction generally determines the color: Blue-violet auroras and red streaks of light occur below 60 miles; bright green lights are strongest between 60-150 miles; and ruby reds appear at altitudes beyond 150 miles. But auroras aren’t simply a phenomenon that occurs “out there,” miles above the planet; their impact can be widespread.

“One thing we’ve noticed about space weather since the 1800s is that it has always had an effect on human technology,” says Odenwald. “First it was compass needles, then it was telegraph systems, then telephone

systems, then short-wave radio systems, and now it’s electrical power grids and satellites in space.”

Powerful auroras in the upper atmosphere actually create a current in the ground as well, and those currents can sometimes wreak havoc on electrical cables. Newspaper articles dating back to the 19th century

recount telegraph outages associated with auroras. As recently as 1989, high-voltage transformers in the power grid were damaged by an intense magnetic storm, causing a 12-hour blackout in Quebec, Canada; electrical problems in utility sub-stations along the Eastern seaboard of the United States are

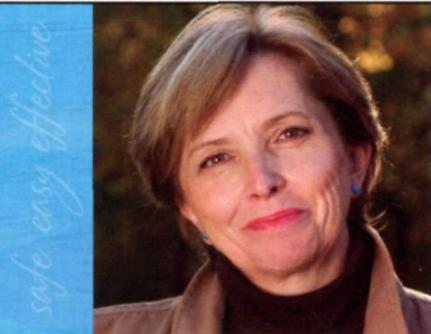
often attributed to the same sources.

“Because the sun is very quiet now—we’re close to the lowest point in sunspot activity—there aren’t a lot of big clouds of gas being ejected by the sun, so you might see an aurora in Alaska or Canada every couple of months or so, but when that activity is at its peak, you might get several dramatic auroras every week,” says Odenwald. “The closer you are to the poles, and the deeper into winter, the darker the skies, and the better the chance to see the fireworks.”

Of course, most visitors to the northernmost parks like Denali, Gates of the Arctic, and Noatak choose the summer months for their trips, for obvious reasons. But if you plan a visit to Alaska in the depths of a pitch-black winter, those 20 hours of darkness just might be shattered by a sight that you’ll never forget. **NP**

Scott Kirkwood is *National Parks* magazine’s editor in chief.

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A KEMP'S RIDLEY sea turtle hatchling at Padre Island National Seashore.



Recovery, at a Turtle's Pace

Padre Island National Seashore has given an endangered sea turtle a fighting chance.

And it only took 30 years to do it.

On a summer day in 1947, an engineer named Andrés Herrera stumbled on the answer to one of the greatest wildlife mysteries of his time: where the world's smallest sea turtle goes to nest. From his plane high above Mexico's coastline, Herrera filmed thousands of Kemp's ridley turtles swarming Rancho Nuevo to lay eggs on the 14-mile stretch of beach. He had no idea that a few minutes of grainy black-and-white footage would become so important to the species' survival. So the

film reels sat in a drawer until 1961, when biologists caught wind of the details. Later analysis confirmed that 40,000 females had nested on Rancho Nuevo that day.

That statistic would confound biologists for decades. Because when they returned a few years later, only about 10 percent of the population remained. In 1978, the worldwide nest count dropped to 924, making the Kemp's ridley the most critically endangered of the seven sea turtle species. "This was not a natural population decline," says Donna

Shaver, head of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery for Padre Island National Seashore in Texas. "Humans caused it."

Even in a healthy ecosystem, the odds are against most hatchlings: Just one in a thousand reach adulthood. Young turtles are an easy target for fire ants, raccoons, coyotes, and birds. Add to that Mexico's demand for turtle eggs, plus deadly commercial shrimp-ing fleets—whose trawling equipment claimed as many as 5,000 Kemp's ridleys each year—and it's no wonder the population floundered.

Recognizing this, Mexico passed laws against poaching and the U.S. government mandated turtle-exclusion devices on trawling nets to decrease turtle deaths. And an international, multi-agency group—which included the National Park Service—designated Padre Island National Seashore as an additional colony for nesting females. There was just one catch: ensuring Kemp's ridleys would nest there.

So biologists devised a plan based on fascinating behavior that no one really understands: natal imprinting. Once female sea turtles are ready to nest, they return to the beach where they were born. How they find

their way home is a mystery, but imprinting probably happens early—perhaps as soon as eggs hit the sand.

Using this information, biologists at Rancho Nuevo collected turtle eggs so fresh they hadn't even touched Mexican soil, and then shipped them back to the park in boxes full of Padre Island sand. A couple of months later, emerging hatchlings were allowed to run a short distance into the surf before staff scooped them up with nets and shipped them to a third site in Galveston, Texas. Here, the turtles could live out their early years until they were large enough to escape most natural predators, when they were released into the Gulf of Mexico; this "head start" program ran from 1978 to 1989.

Then the park staff waited. And waited. Nearly two decades later, the first "head start" turtle returned to lay eggs on Padre Island—one of six nests in Texas that year, a number that doubled in 1998. In 2002, the count jumped to 38, and rose to 50 in 2005. Last year brought a whopping 128 nests.

"We'll likely have hundreds of nests soon," Shaver says. "This is an endangered species success story in the making."

As the population grows, Shaver's team of 100 volunteers and a few paid staff will need to become increasingly efficient. So they've recruited an unlikely family member—Ridley, a two-year-old Cairn terrier. This Toto look-alike had a knack for sniffing out a target—starting with dog treats, then turtle eggs, and finally, turtle eggs buried in sand. Ridley's skills are invaluable on the vast, windswept beach, where turtle tracks can be cryptic and faint. "Ridley found his first nest on a day when staff and volunteers had been digging for five hours with no success," Shaver says. "We were thrilled."

Casual beach visitors also play a critical role, finding as many as half of the Kemp's ridley nests in Texas each year—an invaluable service on a national seashore that stretches 72 miles long. But the park and its visitors can't abandon their conservation efforts just yet. Within the park, natural

predators and high tides will always threaten hatchlings. Outside the protected seashore, light pollution still makes it hard for hatchlings to find the ocean at night, beach replenishment projects can turn nests into graves, and poaching may become more common as turtle populations increase.

If and when 10,000 females ever nest in a single year, the Kemp's ridley will be down-listed from endangered to threatened. (The latest worldwide count is around 5,000.) No criteria exist for removing the turtles from the Endangered Species list entirely, but the recovery team is working on a plan to determine the proper benchmarks.

"The National Park Service should be very proud of the role we've played in helping to restore this species," Shaver says. "The Kemp's ridley has been a distinct species for 4 million years, and within a blink of an eye mankind almost wiped them out." NP

Amy Leinbach Marquis is assistant editor of *National Parks* magazine.

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THE BIG GREEN BUS in the shadow of the Grand Tetons, Wyoming.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATE RAINES

The Big Green Bus

A college student spreads the word about renewable energy, and renews his own spirit in the process.

Most college kids spend their summers working for the minimum wage to keep their student loans in check, or interning in an office to beef up their resumes. I spent last summer traveling around the country on a big green bus, talking to people about renewable energy and conservation. In the process, I had conversations with thousands of people, from the board rooms of major companies to the parking lot of a Doobie Brothers concert. Along the way, I also visited Arches, the Badlands, Bryce, the Great Smoky Mountains, Grand Tetons, Moab, Yellowstone,

and Zion National Parks.

The group of people I worked with, The Big Green Bus, is a collection of Dartmouth College students trying to get people to think and talk about how we can all use energy more responsibly. The vehicle itself is an old diesel school bus we converted to run on waste vegetable oil and retrofitted to include beds, tables, and all the amenities that 11 college students might need while traveling around the country for a summer. We also displayed plenty of other ways to use renewable energy, including a working solar panel and a working wind turbine.

On our journey, we engaged crowds by pulling up to a venue, parking, and talking to people while showing them the features of the bus. Although this approach allowed us to generate a healthy dialogue, participating in such conversations with complete strangers nearly every day for 11 weeks, 13,000 miles, 39 states, and more than 45 major cities was exhausting enough to make even the most devoted activist have second thoughts.

I arrived at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in June, immediately after spending six days talking about energy at the

continued on page 22

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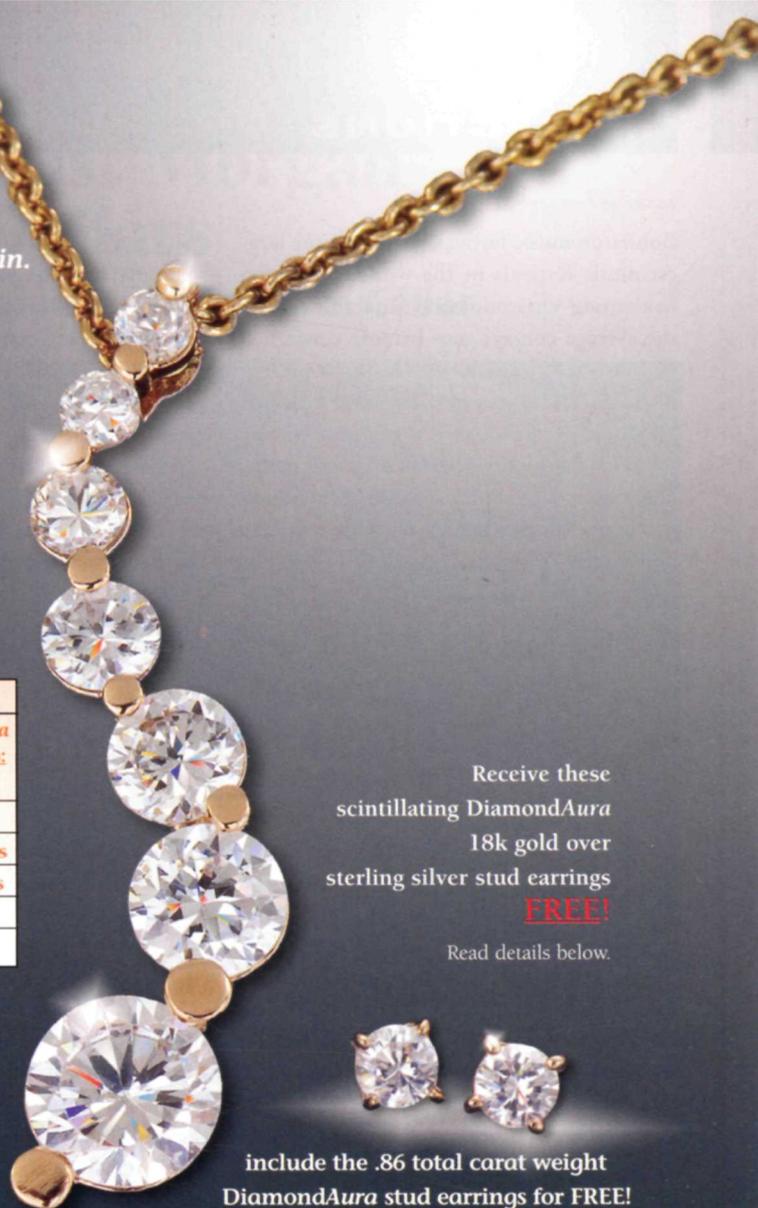
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continued from page 20

Bonnaroo music festival. As one of the largest music festivals in the world, Bonnaroo has strong environmental undertones, but the average concert-goer is more concerned with hearing the Cold War Kids than learning about the source of energy that heats his home. So even though it was a great venue, it left me questioning our mission and methods a little. Why should anyone be interested in energy issues when faced with everyday life issues?

The national parks reminded me why I was motivated to criss-cross the nation talking to complete strangers.

With doubts raised by my experience at Bonnaroo still gnawing at my devotion to the project, I decided to go for a run in the park to clear my head. I started up the trail towards Hen Wallow Falls, and found myself running through a green tunnel of chestnut oaks, beeches, and yellow poplars backlit by late afternoon sun. As I made my way up the steep, rocky trail towards the falls, I passed through a clearing, a low patch of blackberry and raspberry bushes.

As I stopped to sample the fruit, I saw a bit of movement near the back of the berry patch. I looked up and, less than 20 feet away from me, a black bear stood on all fours, casually meandering through the shrubs. I froze immediately: This was a small bear, small enough that it might still be a cub, and I couldn't see the mother anywhere. I stood there motionless, recognizing that by moving, I was more likely to disturb the cub or get between it and its mother. The bear, still unperturbed, finally wandered away from me and disappeared into the trees.

I walked back the way I had come, and decided to sit and think by the stream alongside the trail. I've seen plenty of bears before, having grown up in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and the north woods and lakes of Ontario, but the novelty and excitement at seeing one hasn't yet diminished for me (and, actually, I hope it never will). I kept thinking, "Wow, that was really cool, I wish someone else was there to share it with me."

It's odd that I can pinpoint the moment so clearly, but this was when I was reminded why I'd hopped on The Big Green Bus in the first place. The Great Smoky Mountains and other national parks are visible, tangible reminders of what environmental activists like me strive to protect.

As owners and users of America's national parks, we, more than most people, appreciate the importance of conservation, both for our own enjoyment and for the enjoyment

of future generations. Energy issues have a direct impact on the parks' conservation, particularly those issues related to the production of carbon dioxide and the expansion of fuel mining into wilderness areas.

It was dark by the time I got back to our campsite, but my mood had lightened considerably. And I wasn't the only one with renewed self-confidence; Seven of the eight people who were with me when I arrived in the park had also gone for runs and they'd all come back with less furrowed brows. We spent the rest of the evening around a campfire, hanging out and talking optimistically, about how, just maybe, our trip might get a few people thinking differently about the way they use energy.

Zion National Park gave me a more tangible reminder of how important it is to have the national parks around for future generations. We had rolled into Zion for a couple days of presenting in front of the lodge and at a nearby community center. First, though, we spent some time exploring. My friend Hayley and I decided to check out the weeping rocks, intrigued by the prospect of tasting water that had been percolating through the canyon walls for nearly a millennium, after falling on the plateau above.

As we hiked up, we fell behind a group of eight- to ten-year-old kids who were playing dodgeball, using rocks they'd found at the side of the trail. As a couple of crotchety twenty-somethings, we started getting an-

nnoyed each time their projectiles missed the target and hit us instead. By the time we all got to the top and started walking under the weeping rocks, we were pretty fed up.

Then the kids started dancing beneath the falling water. At first, it seemed like they would have been just as happy under a shower at a water park. Then their guide started telling them where the water had come from, how it had fallen as rain long before Europeans ever came to this country, and was only now emerging on the surface one again. The children responded. It seemed as if they really started to look at their surrounding more carefully, as they suddenly realized what an amazing place they were in.

For me, this scene illustrates the national parks' ability to inspire those of us with an established interest in nature and the environment, and their ability to foster an appreciation for the outdoors among future environmentalists. I was first interested in environmental issues as a kid when, hiking through Shenandoah National Park, my dad showed me acid-rain damage and told horror stories about what would happen if we didn't fight to conserve wilderness. In the same vein, when we ran into the same group of kids later during a public presentation in front of the lodge, they were much more interested in learning what they could do to help reduce energy usage and protect the environment than were most similarly aged children we had come across in our travels.

The national parks reminded me why I was motivated to criss-cross the nation talking to complete strangers for a whole summer. Not surprisingly, it was also in the national parks that we found many of our most engaged audiences. And while interest is the first step, I'm hopeful that national parks users are ready to take the next step: Seek out ways to reduce energy use, purchase renewable energy, and support initiatives that encourage or implement alternatives to fossil fuels. It's the best way to make sure the national parks are here for generations yet to come. **NP**

Nate Raines is now pursuing graduate work at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, preparing for a career in ecological and evolutionary sciences.

Found! The Last Morgan Silver Dollars

Amazing Discovery Hidden in Midwest Farm Cellar

Indiana. A farmer in America's heartland recently cashed in his long-forgotten savings, hidden away for decades in a dusty crate in his cellar—a hoard of the last Morgan Silver dollars minted by the U.S. Treasury before they ceased production for good, in 1921.

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By all rights these silver dollars should have been destroyed decades ago. Government silver melt-downs, including the 1918 Pittman Act, which alone destroyed 270 million Morgans, have decimated supplies. Millions more were called in by the government and melted for their silver content between 1921 and 1965. Today private hoards account for virtually all the surviving coins. And of those, only a fraction survive in Brilliant Uncirculated condition highly coveted by collectors.

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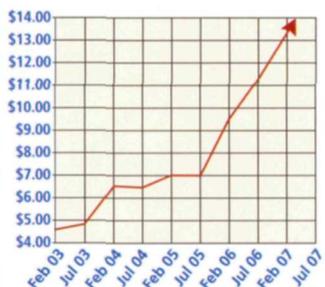
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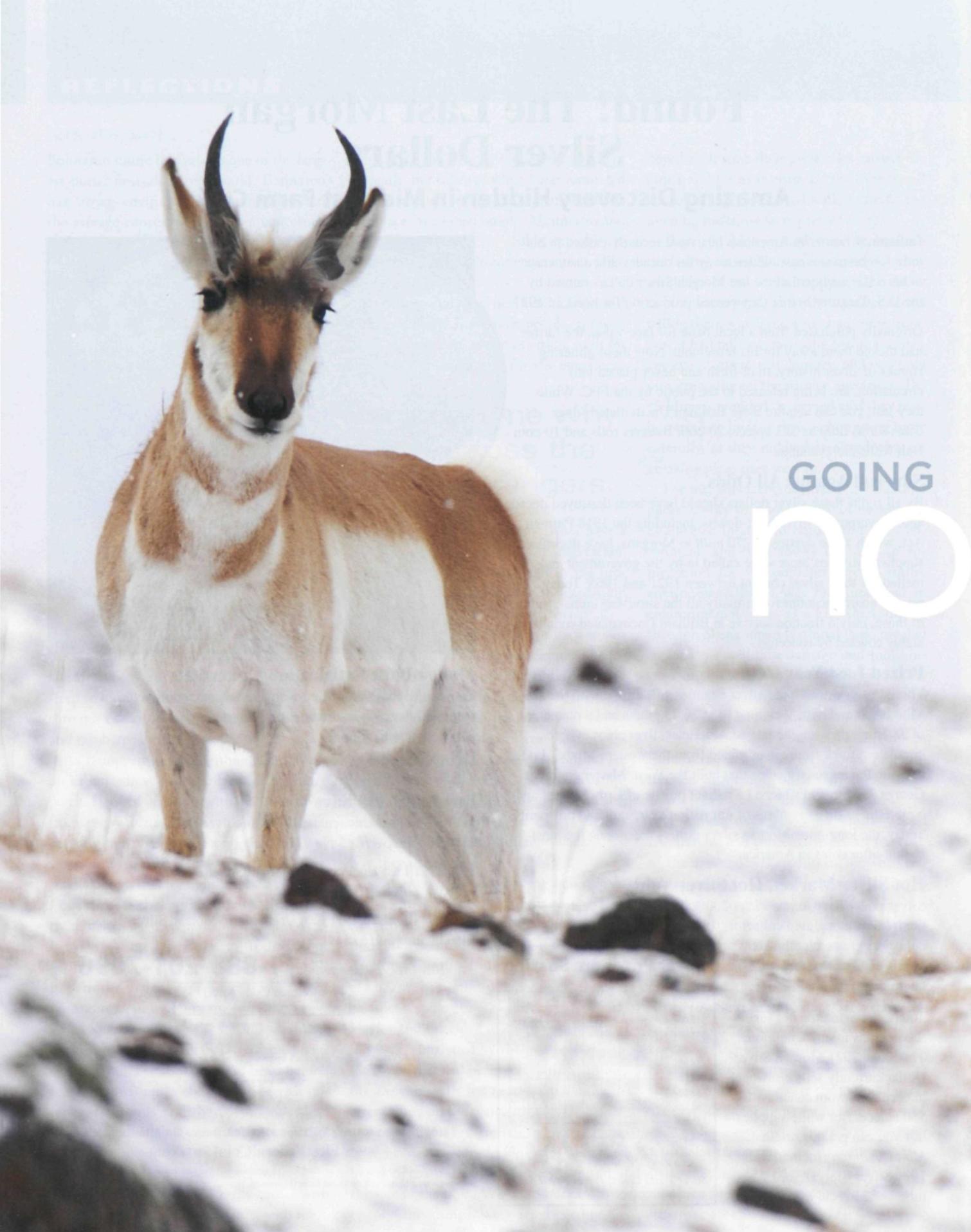


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A migration route north of Yellowstone is being pinched by human development, and the park's pronghorn antelope are feeling the squeeze.

GOING nowhere FAST

BY TOM ARRANDALE

WITH THEIR SLENDER LEGS, oversized lungs, and big protruding eyes that can spot movement up to four miles away, pronghorn antelope are matched to the bold sweep of the American West like few other animals. They can sprint 70 miles an hour, cruising over treeless deserts and plains mile after unbroken mile. True nomads, pronghorn are always on the move, looking for fresh forage in the spring and shelter from snowstorms in the winter.

© FLORIAN SCHULZ



YELLOWSTONE PRONGHORN winter exclusively in the Gardiner Basin, which straddles the park's northern border.

© FLORIAN SCHULZ

But this icon of the West's wide-open spaces might soon vanish from America's first national park. Most of Yellowstone National Park's pronghorn still complete the trek from mountain valleys to snow-free plains and back, tracking the changing seasons. But even within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem's protected 40,000 square miles, these ancient seasonal currents have been cut short beyond the park's northern boundary by fences, agricultural fields, and most recently, the rapid rise of housing subdivisions.

Thirty to 60 million pronghorn once roamed areas from Canada to Texas.

"If that path stays severed and a disease were to spread through the herd or a harsh winter took its toll, there might not be a native pronghorn herd in northern Yellowstone 20 years from now," says Tim Stevens, NPCA's Yellowstone field representative. "That would be a tragic loss to the West's natural wealth."

Cornered by obstacles and confined to a depleted winter range, Yellowstone's pronghorn have begun losing the nomadic instinct that suits them so perfectly to Big Sky coun-

try. Their plight demonstrates the challenges that human barriers can present to wildlife.

Just like wolf packs howling at rendezvous sites, elk bugling in fall, bison bulls sparring over mates, and grizzlies rambling for calories before their winter slumber, the pronghorn's spring and fall migrations mark Yellowstone's dramatic seasonal shifts. Such innate animal behaviors remain intrinsic parts of the natural world—just the sort of thing that national parks are meant to preserve in their fullest glory.

"Big migratory pronghorn herds are down to a handful, and those that are left are just barely hanging on," says John Varley, former director of Yellowstone's natural resources division. With the reintroduction of wolves more than a decade ago, the park's biodiversity is nearly the same as when Columbus set sail. "We're trying to hang on to those conditions," Varley says, "but Yellowstone is increasingly becoming an island."

Around the globe, more and more man-made barriers stand in the way of migrating

elephants and wildebeest on African savannahs, chiru on Asian steppes, and caribou on Arctic tundra. Just south of Yellowstone, another herd of pronghorn makes a 350-mile round trip between Grand Teton National Park and Wyoming's Red Desert, the longest terrestrial migration on the continent. Although the migration of the Yellowstone herd is on a much smaller scale—what was once a 70-mile journey has been whittled down to merely 30 miles—the instinct to move is just as strong. And it unfolds each spring, within sight of the century-old stone arch that marks Yellowstone's northern gateway. In early April, pronghorn gather on the brushy flats, ready to start trekking to higher elevations. "Just like birds [sensing that the time has come to fly north each spring], a few pronghorn sort of get itchy, and then one or two will take off, and then they all start moving," says Troy Davis, a Yellowstone ungulate biologist.

But human development now clogs the valleys where rivers race down from Yellowstone, obstructing 75 percent of the migratory routes that pronghorn, bison, and elk once traveled. Just to complete a shortened migration, Yellowstone's pronghorn must cover formidable terrain, swimming rivers

and venturing across forested 7,500-foot-high mountains in the spring before spreading out in the park's mountain valleys. In summer, on the Blacktail Plateau, a solitary buck often browses sagebrush right along the paved road, displaying the black 12- to 20-inch lyre-shaped horns with forward-jutting prongs that give *Antilocapra americana* its common name. (Although females sport horns, only the male's are pronged.) Summertime visitors spot tan-and-white-marked does, many nursing twin fawns prancing on long spindly legs. Yellowstone's pronghorn occupy a crucial ecological



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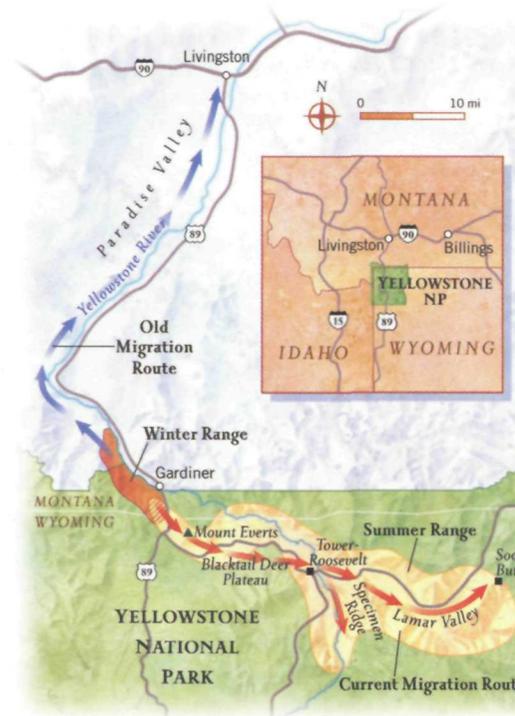
niche. Vulnerable newborn fawns provide prey for coyotes and bobcats, which seldom tackle healthy bison or elk calves.

European explorers described them as "antelope" or "goats" because of their resemblance to more familiar animals, but pronghorn are actually unique to North America and have no close relatives anywhere else in the world. The sole survivors of species that evolved fleeing from giant wolves and fast cheetahs that once hunted North American prairies, they're thought to have occupied the Great Plains for more than a million years.

To this day, pronghorn rely overwhelmingly on their vision, seeking out open ground where their speed gives them an edge if danger approaches. Between 30 million and 60 million pronghorn once roamed alongside bison, across unbroken short-grass desert and prairies from Canada to Texas. Around the time of the nation's centennial, Plains residents described a massive migrating herd of pronghorns—an estimated 1 million animals—stretching across 70 miles. But overhunting and settlement of the West dramatically reduced pronghorn numbers to a mere 15,000 nationwide. Yellowstone, established in 1872, provided one of the last refuges where a handful hung on alongside the remnants of once-endless bison herds.

State game and fish departments brought the pronghorn back, and today roughly a

million of the animals roam throughout the West, from Montana and Wyoming as far south as Arizona. Inside Yellowstone, pronghorn numbers peaked as high as a thousand in the era when the National Park Service actively maintained big ungulate herds for tourists to enjoy watching. In the 1940s and 1950s, with the population burgeoning, wildlife managers transplanted nearly 1,200 of the park's pronghorn to the Great Plains rangelands around the West. But Yellowstone's herd fell on harder times when the Park Service began to let natural forces regulate wildlife populations. A few years ago, pronghorn numbers crashed to slightly more than 200 animals as drought hit their winter range. Yellowstone's coyotes



© KAREN MINOT

PRONGHORN NEVER DEVELOPED the instinct to jump over fences and other barriers, which are increasingly common in the Greater Yellowstone Area. A map (above) reflects current and historic migration routes of the Yellowstone herd.

also preyed heavily on fawns, striking in the few perilous days right after birth, when fawns must cower in sagebrush cover until they're strong enough to flee danger.

The herd bounced back to roughly 300 last winter, but pronghorn no longer return to Yellowstone's vast Hayden Valley and other remote summer ranges where transplant operations removed significant numbers from the population 50 years ago. Biologists speculate that the herd may be losing the memory of the migratory routes that generation after generation had followed. What's more, roughly a third of the herd no longer migrates at all, sticking year-round to sparse winter range.

Now, isolation puts Yellowstone's pronghorn in peril. When the pronghorn return in October, the entire herd is trapped on a barren, severely degraded landscape on the

park's northern boundary. That confinement leaves Yellowstone's pronghorn at risk if disease breaks out, inbreeding weakens their genetic stock, or the occasional blizzard buries winter forage. Bison and elk can plow or step through deep drifts, but pronghorn make it through winter only by gathering where snow seldom piles up more than a couple of inches.

Although the Park Service had acquired more than 7,500 acres of land decades ago, extending Yellowstone's northern boundary and increasing winter range for ungulates, rainfall there averages less than ten inches a year, and the land remains beaten down by the residual effects of irrigated farming and grazing. This spring, both the Park Service and adjacent Gallatin National Forest will again try to clear out noxious weeds and other invasive plants and replant



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A STRING OF PRONGHORN move through a wintry landscape in Yellowstone's Northern Range (above). In winter, when deep snow blankets mountain valleys in the park (opposite), pronghorn must be able to migrate to feeding grounds on higher, snow-free plains.

native sagebrush and grasses, but it will take decades to bring natural conditions back to the landscape. By then, park biologists say, Yellowstone's pronghorn could vanish unless they can reestablish a longer migration route down the Yellowstone River to reach Montana's Paradise Valley.

There was a time when much of the Yellowstone ecosystem's bison, elk, pronghorn,

and deer spent harsh winters in that spectacular 40-mile-long valley. But today, the journey to the valley would take pronghorn across private lands, where numerous fences block the migration route.

Starting in the 1860s, ranchers transformed the corridor into lushly irrigated fields and fenced them off for livestock pastures. Pronghorn, so finely tuned to open ground, have never developed any instinct to jump over barriers. Most are too befuddled to try to get through even the flimsiest four-foot-high barbed wire fencing; a few try lunging across, and some die entangled in wire. Sturdier steel mesh fences built to hold sheep or calves have taken even deadlier tolls around Western rangelands. Pronghorn have been known to pile up behind impenetrable barriers and die trying to flee winter storms or move to greener forage. As the landscape was carved up, most pronghorn vanished altogether from the Yellowstone's valley—leaving the

park's herd disconnected from Montana's recovering population.

But most pronghorn learn to scoot beneath fencing if they can find spots where the bottom strand is high enough off the ground. A few years ago, at least two Yellowstone pronghorn managed to navigate the steep-walled gorge north from the park to

to work with local ranchers and community leaders to clear the way across private lands so pronghorn can reach wintering grounds farther northward.

Danielle Blank, NPCA's Yellowstone outreach coordinator, is hoping to work with local ranching families to replace old barbed-wire barriers with wildlife-friendly

to sheep and calves, and the park's elk sometimes consume hay and destroy fencing, most ranchers say they have no qualms about sharing the range with pronghorn. "I haven't heard anybody complain about antelope," says Marty Malone, the Park County, Montana, agricultural extension agent. "Ranchers just admire them."

So do other Westerners who still can glimpse a band of pronghorn in full flight, stretching out single file with smooth flowing strides, like a streamliner gliding along the boundless skyline. "Along with the bison, pronghorn have always been a dominant feature of this landscape," Blank says. "It would be a shame if future visitors lost the chance to watch these iconic animals moving across the plains en masse—just like the first settlers in this region were able to see, so many years ago." NP

Tom Arrandale is a freelance journalist in Livingston, Montana.

Most ranchers say they have no qualms about sharing the range with pronghorn.

found a new herd, now 50 animals strong, that's thrived on alfalfa fields at the south end of the valley. Their journey gives park biologists hope that Yellowstone's pronghorn could rediscover a migration corridor that would reconnect them with healthy antelope herds where the Yellowstone River emerges from the mountains and starts meandering across Montana's high plains. To that end, NPCA is exploring opportunities

fencing. New designs string a smooth bottom wire at least 18 inches off the ground, leaving pronghorn enough of a gap to maneuver beneath it.

Some Paradise Valley ranches have already installed "let-down" sections built so cowboys can easily drop the wires to the ground when wildlife need to move through. Although Yellowstone's wolves aren't popular among ranchers for the threat they pose

BY TIM VANDERPOOL
Photographs by George H.H. Huey

*“Navajo people respect these sacred areas —
they are part of our history.”*

— **Enei Begaye**, director of the Black Mesa Water Coalition, a group of Navajo and Hopi Indians fighting the Desert Rock power plant

CLEAR SKIES and expansive views allow park visitors to imagine Chaco Culture National Historical Park as it was thousands of years ago.

The explosive growth of coal-fired power plants in the Four Corners region could jeopardize the archaeological treasures of Mesa Verde and Chaco Canyon.

THREATENED *Vistas*

STANDING ATOP A ROCK-STREWN MESA at Chaco Canyon, Barbara West can gaze back in time. To one side lie the Pueblo Alto ruins—remnants of a great house rising from the tawny earth. On the other is a vast expanse, cradling the very roots of Chaco civilization.

“When you get up on top of a mesa by Pueblo Alto and you look out, the skies are pretty clear,” says West, the superintendent of Chaco Culture National Historical Park in northwestern New Mexico. “There’s not a whole lot of development, just the occasional Navajo dwelling or camp. It’s a pretty unoccupied landscape.”

But hundreds of years ago, from 850 to 1250 A.D., Chaco was a flourishing nexus of Pueblo society, rich in ceremony, commerce, and even nascent astronomy. Today, the park recalls that remarkable culture in complex ruins stretching into the distance.

In 1980, Congress expanded Chaco from a national monument into a national historic site and also designated 39 sites beyond the

THREATENED *Vistas*



AIR POLLUTION from coal-fired power plants threatens the very walls of housing structures like the ruins at New Alto and Pueblo Bonita (*below*) at Chaco Culture, both built circa 1100-1300 A.D.



park's boundaries for archaeological protection. Today, those distant reaches of Chaco culture are visible from Pueblo Alto. But they may not be for long. Less than 50 miles away on the Navajo Reservation, New York-based Sithe Global Power hopes to build a huge, coal-burning power plant. The Desert Rock Energy Facility would spew up to 12 million tons of carbon dioxide, or CO₂, into the atmosphere each year.

That's in addition to the 29 million tons of CO₂ already emitted by two area power plants, along with a host of toxins ranging from mercury to sulfur dioxide. This all combines to spew haze and pollution into the Four Corners region—the intersection of Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico—an area as remote and undeveloped as any in the continental United States.

Unfortunately, Chaco and Mesa Verde aren't alone. Despite federal legislation meant to safeguard the air around national parks, too many are falling victim to pollution from oil- and gas-burning power plants. Out of 391 units in the National Park System, 150 are located in areas that fail to meet air-quality standards.

At Four Corners, however, a power plant would not only doom the park's stunning vistas—imagine a haze clouding Chaco's Pueblo Bonito or Mesa Verde's Cliff Palace—but acids from coal-based pollution may directly damage the ancient treasures themselves and compromise future research. If the trend continues, Four Corners' park units could be poster children for air pollution.

"These parks are in grave danger," says David Nimkin, director of NPCA's Southwest regional office. "There are currently 17 coal-fired plants on the Colorado Plateau and six with licenses pending. Those coal plants are the largest contributors to CO₂ in this area."

Ironically, nine of the park units in question—including Mesa Verde—are Class-1 air quality areas, according them the highest level of protection under the Clean Air Act. Failure to live up to that standard not only damages natural and cultural resources, says Nimkin, but could exact a toll on the tourist



ANCIENT PICTOGRAPHS at Mesa Verde (*above*) could vanish if the construction of coal-fired powerplants continues. Undiscovered artifacts from Chaco Culture, similar to those shown here, might also be at risk.



economy. The area draws up to 13 million visitors a year to explore Una Vida, Chaco's kiva-dotted great house, or climb ladders in Mesa Verde's 40-room Balcony House.

Recognizing potential impacts, the National Park Service has negotiated with Sithe to reduce overall Four Corners emissions. The company has pledged to fund emission-reducing equipment for other area polluters, assuming amenable partners can be found, says John Bunyak, chief of planning and permit reviews for the Park Service's Air Resources Division. "If Sithe does what they say they'll do and the Environmental Protection Agency makes those provisions enforceable, then we're okay with the project moving forward."

Even so, the Park Service's own reports suggest that acidic compounds contained



tion. But he's not holding his breath. "We have a long history of federal agencies not really addressing impacts to archaeology," he says. "Power-plant emissions contain a variety of chemicals and compounds which can be corrosive and adversely affect rock art. Pollutants can interact with the paint pigments and coat them with materials that would erode them."

it will boost the reservation's economy, where unemployment approaches 50 percent and yearly household incomes average around \$8,000. Desert Rock could provide hundreds of jobs and an expected \$50 million in annual taxes and coal royalties.

Sithe officials call Desert Rock a boost for the tribe—and for cutting-edge energy generation. "To us, this project is a step forward," says Nathan Plagens, project director for Desert Rock. Sithe will help reduce overall emissions across Four Corners, he says, and the plant can easily be retrofitted with new technology.

Shirley, the leader of the Navajo people, has remained a steadfast supporter of the power plant, despite angry opposition that boiled over in January 2007, when Desert Rock protesters rallied at his inauguration ceremony.

Among those protesters was Elouise Brown, president of a group called Dooda Desert Rock, or "No to Desert Rock" in Navajo. Beyond concerns that the plant's emissions would compromise the health of Navajos, Brown fears that the same air

If the trend continues, Four Corners' park units could be poster children for air pollution.

in coal-plant emissions—nitrates and sulfates—could threaten ruins such as Bandelier National Monument's sandstone pueblos in New Mexico and Mesa Verde's magnificent Spruce Tree House, with its 130 rooms dating from 1211 A.D.

That worries Jerry Spangler, executive director of the Colorado Plateau Archaeological Alliance. He argues that pollution's impact on archaeological sites isn't well understood, and for that reason, government officials should err on the side of protec-

Coal-based pollution could also hinder research, says Spangler. "When you're introducing exotic chemicals or compounds to archaeological deposits, it contaminates the site. When anything gets into the soil, you then have to know what those substances are and when they got there, to be able to compensate for them."

On the other side of the Four Corners conflict are Sithe Global Power and Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr. Shirley and tribal council members who support the plant hope

THREATENED *Vistas*

pollution would jeopardize traditional practices like rug weaving by affecting natural pigments used to dye the fabrics.

Others point to the irony of siting a plant on Navajo land that could irreparably damage ancient Native American ruins at Chaco and Mesa Verde. “Navajo people respect these sacred areas—they are part of our history,” says Enei Begaye, director of the Black Mesa Water Coalition, a group of



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Navajo and Hopi Indians fighting Desert Rock. “So it’s particularly painful that our own tribal government is insisting on building the plant.”

Desert Rock has another powerful foe in New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, a former secretary of the Department of Energy and a current presidential candidate. Although New Mexico holds no jurisdiction over tribal lands, Richardson has loudly warned that Desert Rock could hike New Mexico’s total greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent. The state legislature also rejected an \$85-million tax credit sought by power plant officials.

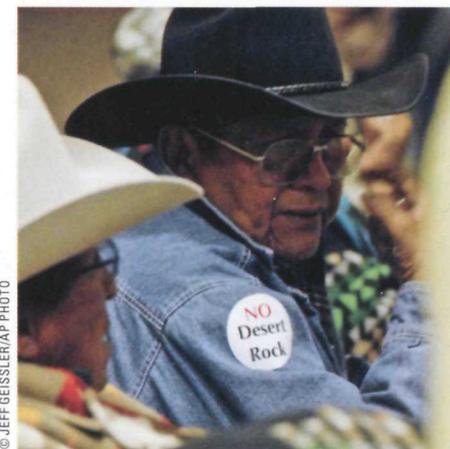
Nationally, the coal industry took a hit when influential Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-NV) pledged to fight new

coal plants in his state. “The threat of global warming is certainly part of my concern, but there’s more,” Reid wrote in an August guest editorial for *The Ely Times*. “This is about the health and well being of our entire state and the West.”

Because Desert Rock would be built in Navajo country, however, even members of Congress have limited options for stopping it. “I don’t know what our hook is,” says Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), chairman of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands. “If it were on federal land, we’d obviously have a significant hook to deal with it. But it’s on tribal land.”

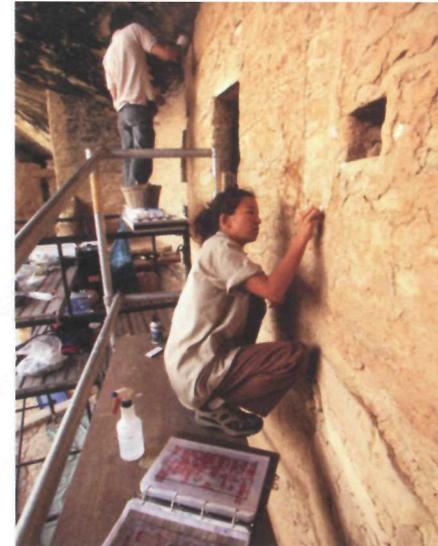
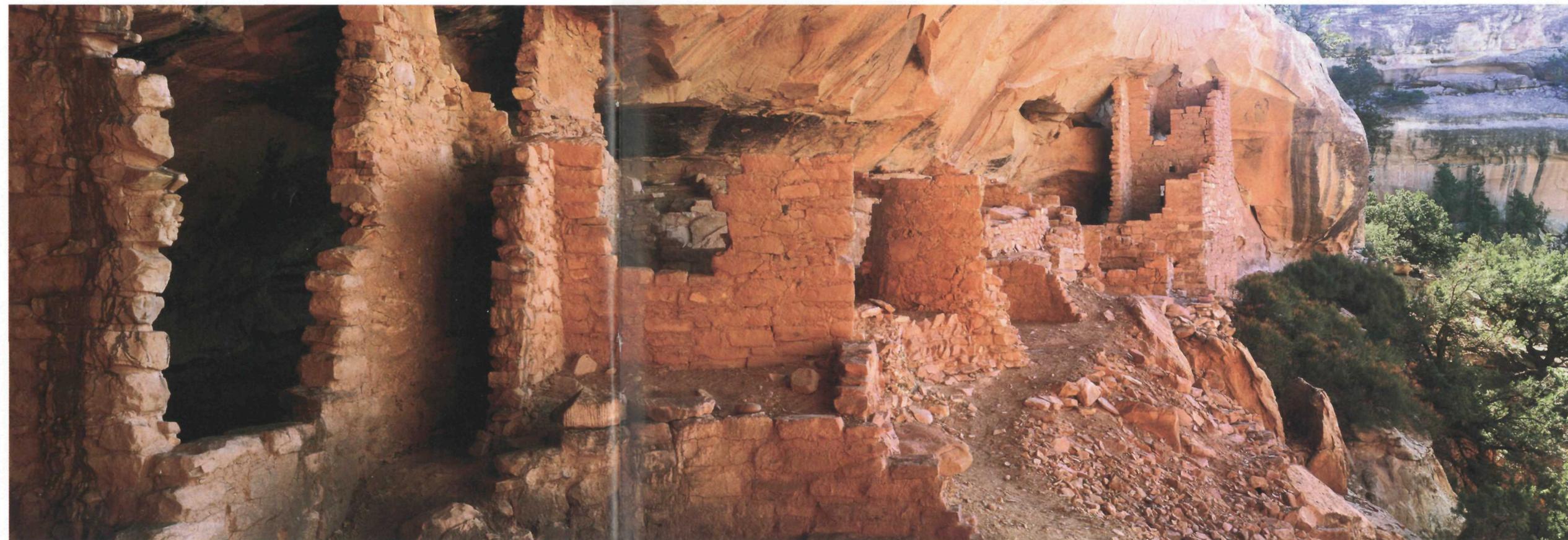
Still, he says, Desert Rock supporters should look beyond tribal boundaries. “The Navajo Nation calls it a sovereignty

“It’s particularly painful that our own tribal government is insisting on building the plant.”



© JEFF BEISSLER/AP PHOTO

MANY MEMBERS OF THE NAVAJO NATION in New Mexico oppose the construction of coal-fired power plants in the region (*above*). The Ancestral Puebloan culture within Mesa Verde (*right*) represents an important part of Native American history.



GRADUATE STUDENTS in archeology from the University of Pennsylvania reinforce a wall in the Spruce Tree House in Mesa Verde—a job that might become more challenging if pollution from coal-based powerplants continues to increase.

Grand Canyon Trust, one of the partners that have joined forces with NPCA to address the issue. “This new power plant can do nothing but add to that decline in visibility.”

His point isn’t lost on Tessa Shirakawa, chief of interpretation at Mesa Verde National Park. Stretching across Colorado’s southwestern corner, Mesa Verde possesses treasures of Pueblo cultural remnants, from rock art to stunning cliff dwellings.

At one time, visitors were greeted by vast views. But not anymore. “On a normal summer day, we certainly don’t have the 100-mile-plus visibility we had in previous times,” Shirakawa says. “We’re concerned, because people drive all the way to the top of the mesa and have an opportunity to see all of the Four Corners states. And now the view is hazy.”

“A fair number of our visitors come from urban areas,” she says, “to a place where they expect clean air and blue skies and great

visibility. And then they can’t see any better than in their own city.”

“The whole Four Corners area has been a sacrifice area for energy development since the 1950s, starting with uranium mining,” says Roger Clark. “And it just goes on and on. One reason is the resources contained there, and another is [the absence of a] politically organized group of people with a means of income beyond coal.”

Back at Chaco, Superintendent West just waits—and watches. Looking outward from the park, “there’s a sense that the view could have been very much like this in the 10th century,” she says. That perspective may not last for long. “If the air quality changes much, our ability to see those far-off areas is going to be diminished. And I think visitors’ understanding of the sheer size of the Chacoan civilization is going to be diminished as well.” **NP**

Tim Vanderpool writes about environmental and Southwest border issues from Tucson, Arizona.

CARIBOU HERDS stampede through Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge en route to Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

© MICHIO HOSHINO/MINDEN PICTURES



THE SWIRL OF SPECIES

We live in a world of motion. John Muir knew it: "Everything is flowing — going somewhere... pulsed on and on forever like blood... in Nature's warm heart." Like flowing blood, motion means survival to most creatures. To stand still is to die. Call it the dance of life, the swirl of species.

There are many variations on the dance. For some it entails small steps: Elk climb to the high country in Rocky Mountain National Park to graze on new spring growth as the quilt of winter is pulled back. Katmai grizzlies zero in on Brooks Falls just as the first sockeye begin streaking the rivers like shooting stars. Horseshoe crabs click and clatter their way

Sometimes the best way to witness the marvel of migration is to find a national park and just stay put.

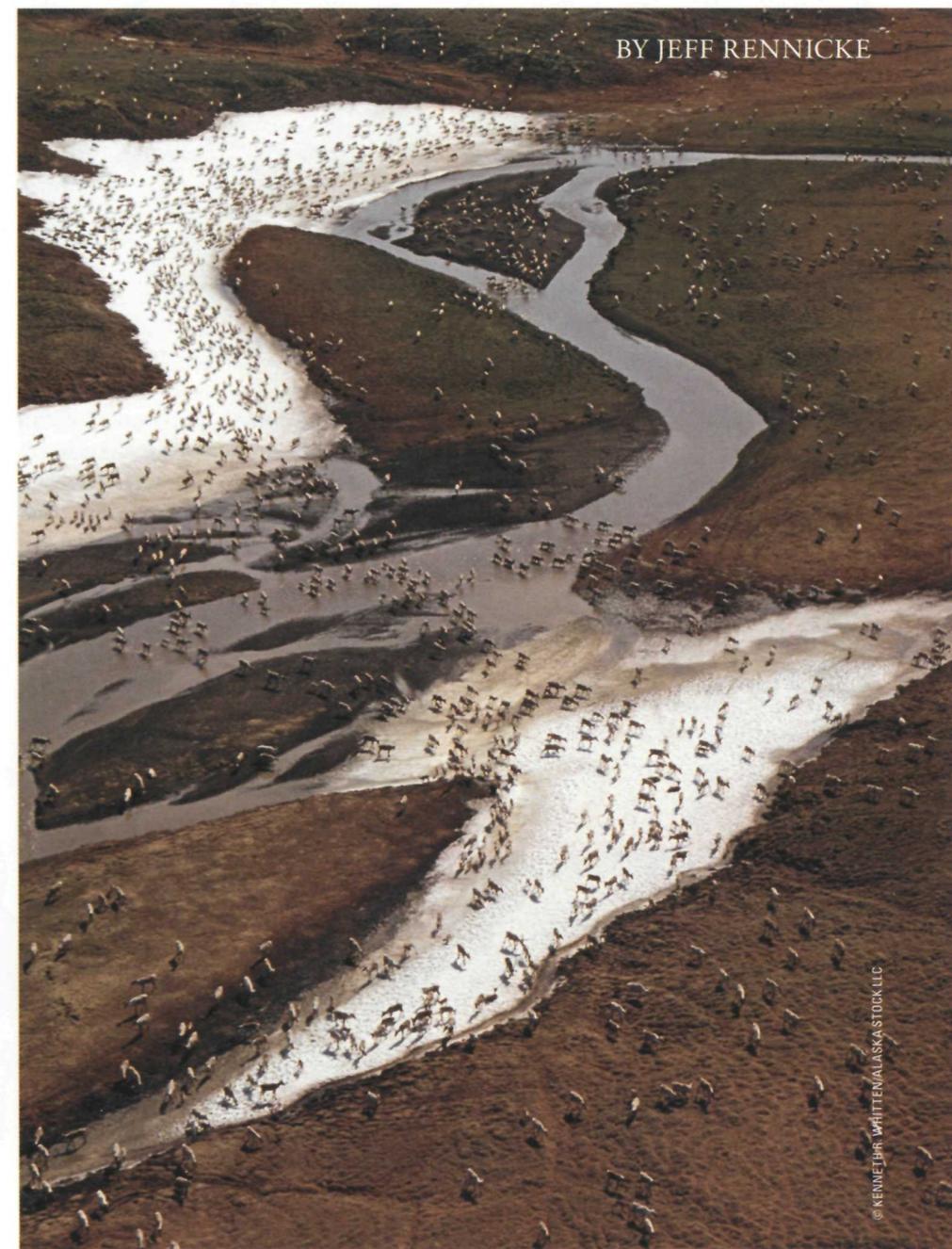
ashore on moonlit nights, laying their eggs in Cape Cod National Seashore.

Birds, animals, fish, and insects are moving around us all the time. But twice a year this swirl of species reaches a crescendo. Triggered by a slant of sunlight or dips in temperature, guided by inner compass bearings we hardly understand, millions of creatures

are on the move each spring and fall in the grand spectacle of seasonal migration. Arctic terns stitch together continents with their wing beats on a 22,000-mile journey, the longest on Earth; humpback whales sound their way through the blue-black ocean depths. Wildlife biologists estimate that one-third of all the birds on the planet

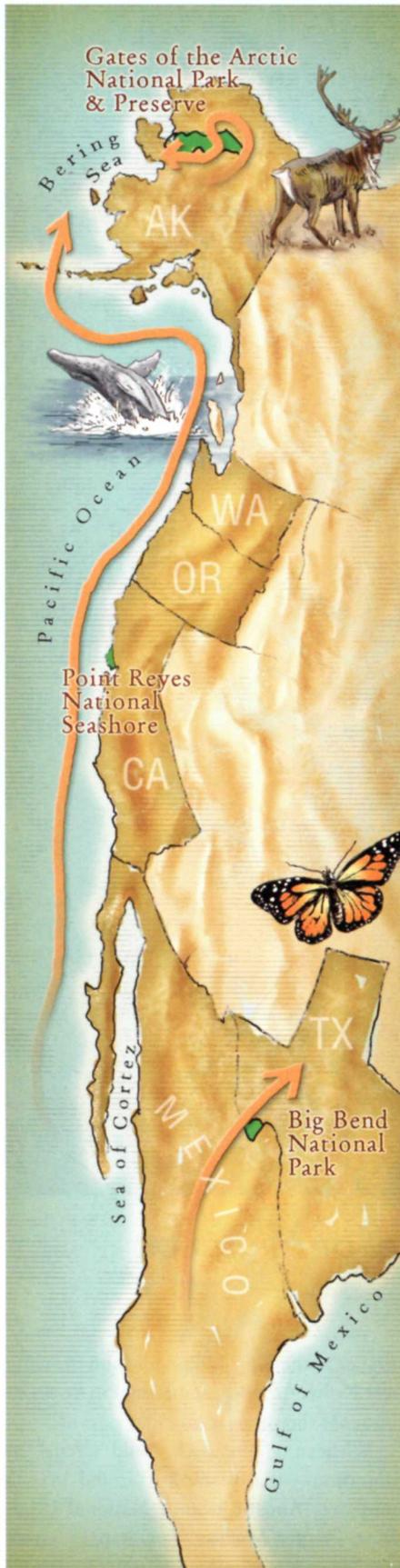
migrate—that's 5.7 billion birds on the wing over North America, sometimes in flocks so immense they appear on radar screens.

Witnessing one such "wild circus" of migration—28,000 birds counted in one hour over Apostle Islands National Lakeshore—writer Michael Van Stappen wrote that "the overwhelming urge is not to ponder



BY JEFF RENNICKE

© KENNETH WHITTEN/ALASKASTOCK LLC



THE MIGRATION ROUTES OF CARIBOU,

gray whales, and monarch butterflies offer some of the best wildlife-watching opportunities (see map, left). Below, a group of bull caribou crosses the Kobuk River, heading south to their wintering grounds.

or wonder, not to linger or go home... in your heart the singular, deeply felt sense is to follow."

Without the gift of wings or fins, it's nearly impossible to follow. But within our national parks, which protect some of the most vital migration routes and stopovers on the planet, there are places where we can put ourselves in the path of this seasonal outpouring of life, look skyward, peer through the ocean depths, watch the horizons, and simply marvel.

ern Arctic Caribou Herd, the state's largest. The movement begins as a trickle in March, as females leave the wintering grounds on the tree-speckled southern slopes of the Brooks Range and wend their way north up the river valleys of the North Fork of the Koyukuk, the Alatna, and the John. Stitching their hoofprints in the snow, they cross high passes to the Colville and Killik, the Anaktuvuk and the Chandler, toward calving grounds farther west and north. Later, the bulls and yearlings will follow. Amid the



Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

The ground trembles, the air fills with low grunts and clicking hooves, and your tent suddenly resembles a boulder in a flash flood, surrounded by thousands of caribou cascading down a ridgeline. Or not. The migration in Alaska's Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve is one of North America's grandest wildlife experiences, but predicting it is a wilderness shell game.

Each year, the maze of mountain passes and valleys in this 7.2-million-acre park plays host to three different herds of caribou, including the 450,000 animals of the West-

first wildflowers, the females calve and join larger groups, which by early June begin moving into the foothills again to disperse for the short grace period of the Arctic summer. In the softening light of August, the herds gather again before returning to their wintering grounds, moving south across trails carved out by caribou that trod the very same ground over thousands of years.

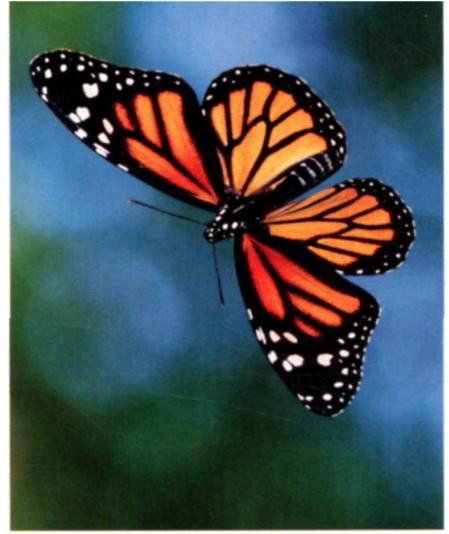
It would seem difficult to miss the movement of nearly a half-million large animals, but this is raw wilderness, a "black-belt park" as one ranger has called it, without a single maintained hiking trail or campground. It is a land blessed with space, horizon after



© DONALD SPECKER/ANIMALS-EARTH-SCENES



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horizon of nameless valleys and passes. Just which pass the main herd will choose is a guessing game. Biologists, wilderness guides, and caribou watchers use radio telemetry, track herds with satellites, search with bush planes, and play their hunches. Still it is the wind direction, snow depth, forage, the presence of predators, and perhaps several unknown factors that set the rules. The best you can do is to guess, set your camp in a likely place, and hope.

To Carol Kasza of Arctic Treks, who has guided trips into Gates for 30 years, that's just the way it should be. "To those who look carefully, the land is always alive with the signs of the animals who live here," Kasza says. "If the timing is right and luck is with you, you can experience the 'lifeblood' of the Arctic—flowing rivers of caribou. Even if you don't see that, you might be humbled as you ponder the palm-sized birds that fly from the other end of the Earth just to nest in this rich land." It's all a part of the dance of migration.

Big Bend National Park

The West Texas skyline cuts a rugged profile. Naked spires of the Chisos Mountains rise like claws from arroyos armed with the spears of cactus and agave. It can seem an unlikely place for a creature weighing less than half an ounce with a wispy four-inch wingspan as fragile and beautiful as stained glass. But the skies over Texas contain 442 species of butterflies, making it the most butterfly-rich state in the country. More than 170 of those species are found in Big Bend, including seven recorded nowhere else in the United States. One of the park's highlights is the annual monarch migration.

With its familiar orange-and-black wing pattern, the monarch is one of the best

known butterflies and the only one to undertake a long-distance, multi-generational migration. Each fall, millions of adult monarchs glide over North America, bobbing like musical notes on the breeze. Those west of the Continental Divide congregate in 300 sites along the coast of California, including Muir Woods National Monument and Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Eastern populations funnel through a 300-mile-wide swath of Texas known as the Central Flyway to gather in immense clusters in fir trees high in the transvolcanic mountain ranges of Mexico, sometimes hundreds of

MONARCHS ARE THE ONLY BUTTERFLIES to make long-distance, multi-generational journeys. Their spring and fall migrations each include stops in Big Bend National Park.

© JACK DYKINGA





MIGRATING GRAY WHALES give boaters the opportunity to experience close encounters.

© GEORGE D. LEPP/CORBIS

Travel Essentials

Good migration-spotting requires knowledge, patience, preparation, and luck. Study the natural history of the species you want to see, get to know its habits, its habitat, and its likely migratory route. Some species spook easily, making blinds and camouflage helpful. Good binoculars and spotting scopes can bring you close to the wildlife without disturbing the animals. New “close focus” binoculars are revolutionizing butterfly watching. For a run-down of some of the top brands and features, go to the North American Butterfly Association website (www.naba.org/binocs.html). Getting to the stomping grounds of caribou can require daunting logistics—wilderness outfitters can help. For a list, contact the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association (www.awrta.org). Point Reyes National Seashore provides shuttle buses to the lighthouse and other popular whale-watching sites; reservations are required. For information, contact the park at www.nps.gov/pore/planyourvisit/shuttle.htm.



© SCOTT KIRKWOOD/NPCA

thousands on a single branch, passing the winter in a kind of suspended animation.

As spring approaches, these same butterflies begin to stir, mate, and drop to lower elevations. In mid-March, their wings tint the spring breeze orange and black as they leave the Mexican roosts to move north in search of milkweed plants to host their eggs. Once they've laid their eggs, the original migrants die, leaving the rest of the 2,500-mile journey to a succession of generations, each with a brief three- to five-week lifespan in which to hatch, grow, mate, and lay eggs themselves as they move north at 30 miles an hour, up to 80 miles a day, through the lengthening summer. As fall approaches, a longer-lived (six to eight months) generation is produced to migrate south, overwinter, and begin the process all over again.

Both spring and fall are good times to see monarch butterflies in Big Bend, which lies

just west of the Central Flyway. In spring, migrants waft up from Mexico following the Rio Grande into the park and moving north through side creek canyons and low valleys. Monarchs need warmth and ride the sun-stirred thermals just as many migrating birds do, meaning the best times to look for them in the park are on warm spring days between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when temperatures are at their highest. In autumn, the fall migration begins in even more dramatic fashion with dozens of monarchs gathering on single plants within the park before being warmed by the sun and taking flight again to move on, connecting Big Bend to places far beyond on the fierce strength of their gossamer wings.

Point Reyes National Seashore

It's hard to believe a creature that's 40 feet long and weighs 35 tons can move through the water as easily as curved light, but watch the annual migration of gray whales at Point Reyes National Seashore and you'll understand why "grace" is the only word that comes close to describing it.

The action begins far to the south in the warm, clear lagoons of Mexico's Sea of Cortez, where female gray whales give birth to their 1,500-pound young, nursing them through the winter months on milk rich with 53 percent fat. By March, the young are strong enough to travel, and the whales move north toward feeding grounds off the Alaskan coast, a two- to three-month, 7,000-mile journey that is among the longest migrations of any mammal on the planet. And Point Reyes National Seashore is right in their way.

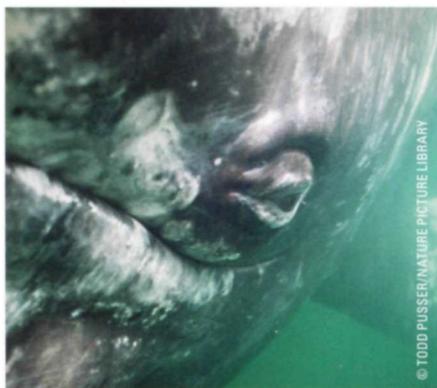
Jutting ten miles out into the Pacific Ocean, California's largest peninsula is the perfect stage to witness the graceful passing of the gray whales. Once hunted nearly to extinction, gray whales now number more than 20,000. A large part of that population swims right past your eyes at Point Reyes.



A GRAY WHALE CALF "SPYHOPPING," a behavior that may play a role in its ability to navigate.

© BRANDON COLE

"These gray giants simply dance a slow dance with the waves and the miles."



© TODD RUSSEN/NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY

You can sign up for whale-watching boat tours with local outfitters, but you might be able to view them from tall cliffs on the water's edge, or hike the 54 stairs down to the Sea Lion Overlook.

One of the best places on the peninsula for whale spotting is the Point Reyes Lighthouse. The first northward-bound whales—mostly

males—appear in mid-March. Mothers and calves, which leave the wintering grounds later, appear closer to shore in late April and early May. It's a slow parade. Unlike feeding humpbacks, gray whales only occasionally breach, although they often bob up and down in the water as if to look around—a behavior known as "spy hopping." Mostly these gray giants simply dance a slow dance with the waves and the miles, maintaining a leisurely five-mile-per-hour pace, often in pairs that swim close to the surface, making them easy to spot. With a potential lifespan of 60 to 80 years and a journey that's undertaken twice each year, a gray whale can swim nearly a million miles during its lifetime, every sweep of its tail the very definition of grace. NP

Jeff Rennie is a teacher at Conserve School in Wisconsin's North Woods.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY IAN SHIVE

GHOSTS OF STEAMTOWN



A photographer finds inspiration in the locomotives of Steamtown National Historic Site.

American culture hit a fever pitch in the early 20th century. A new device called the radio became a popular pastime. Charlie Chaplin made his pivotal debut on the silver screen, charming audiences with his quirky mustache, cane, and top hat. Every smoke-filled bar, jazz club, and speakeasy in America blared Louis Armstrong. Chivalry was still in fashion.

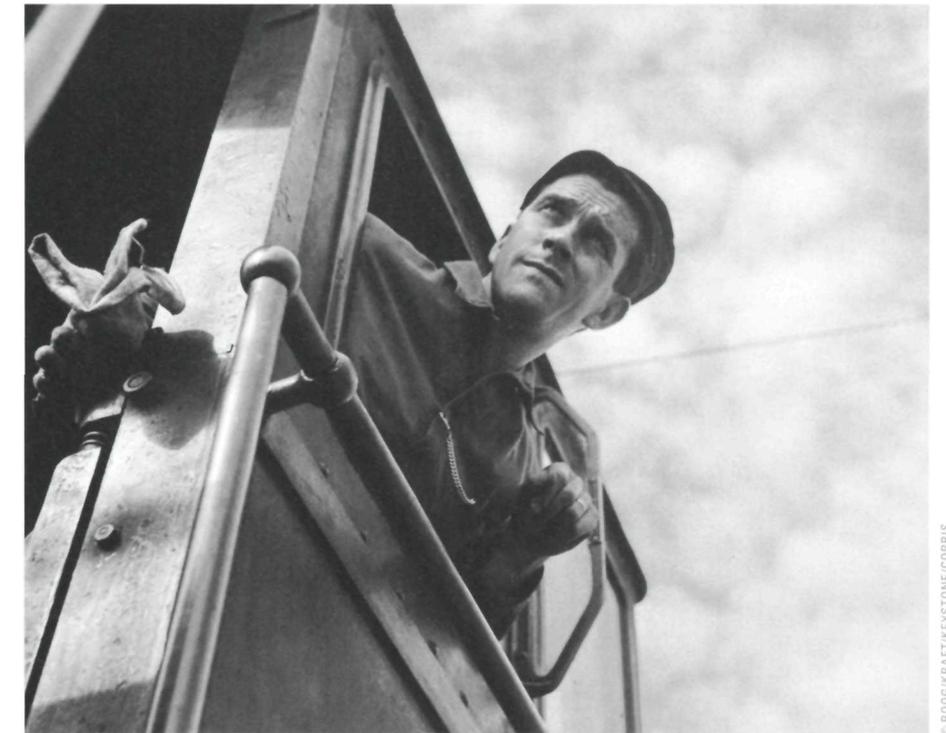
The RMS *Titanic* had just made headlines when it plunged to a watery grave in the Atlantic Ocean—its passengers, personal effects, and decorative fixtures preserved like a time capsule in the black abyss.

STEAMTOWN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE preserves America's steam locomotive history, and continues to house an active turntable and roundhouse dating back to 1902.





A WIDE-ANGLE VIEW of the turntable offers a modern glimpse of the park, but the history is in the details. It's not hard to imagine the people who rode these trains decades ago, like a conductor from the 1950s (far right).



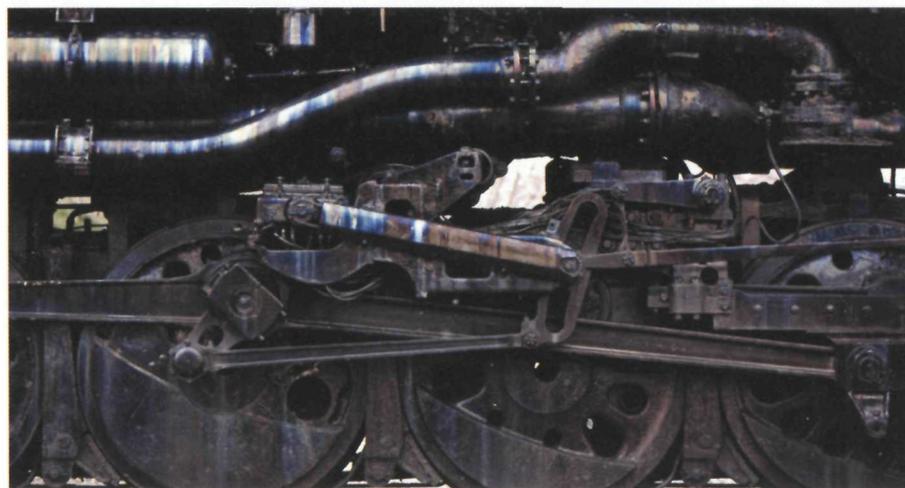
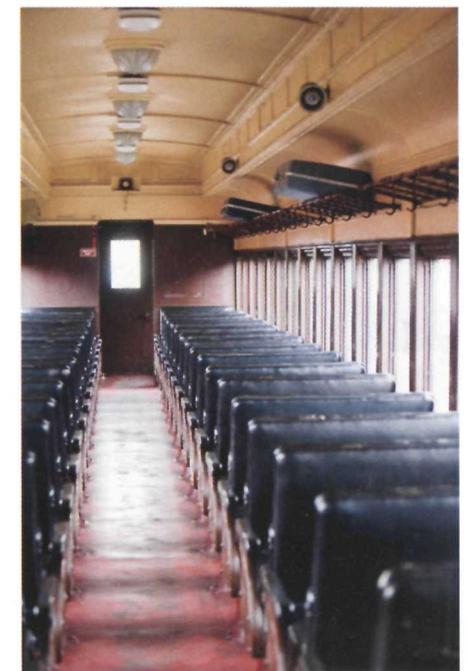
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"I want to know their names, their stories, where they are from, and where they are headed."

sections date back to 1902 and 1937. Cars from the 1950s and '60s have been fully restored, adding balance to those that lie languishing. Some tracks still service today's modern locomotives.

The park was dreamt up by the late F. Nelson Blount, a seafood magnate and vintage-locomotive collector who was attempting to establish a site in New England under the moniker "Steamtown USA." After his untimely death in 1967, the collection moved to several different locations, finally settling in Scranton. A sleepy town in northeastern Pennsylvania, Scranton is situated among a patchwork of former coal-mining communities where patriotism, religion, hunting, and traditional country fairs are hallmarks.

It is easy to think that places like Steamtown could be overlooked, but the park does a respectable business. The site attracted more than 88,000 visitors in 2005 with its loco-



Nearly one century later, I stand among similar wreckage—but on ground, in another point of history waiting to be reborn. A razor-cold chill fills the morning air. I am at the 62-acre site of Steamtown National Historic Park in downtown Scranton, prowling about the rusty ruins of old railroad tracks and train cars that sit quietly idle, waiting for another chance at the next stop. An eerie feeling settles in, like billows of steam from a forgotten era, and as snow begins to fall I find shelter inside a decaying passenger car. Even in disrepair, its interior whispers of a more elegant age as faded red wallpaper peels from the walls and ceiling and ornately

carved seats lie strewn about. It is not a far stretch to imagine passengers from a century earlier excitedly searching for their seats and stuffing luggage into overhead racks. Suddenly, I want to know their names, their stories, where they are from, and where they are headed. I do not want them to be forgotten.

It was the same intent that led Congress to establish Steamtown National Historic Site in October 1986, at the location of the former rail yards of the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad. The site's museum itself is built around a working turntable and roundhouse, both unearthed during an archaeological excavation; original

GHOSTS OF STEAMTOWN



© MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY/CORBIS



EVEN CRUMBLING BOX CARS and peeling number plates have their charm, reminding visitors of the glamorous train culture that is America's heritage.

tives, demonstrations, tours, and excursions, including rides to the scenic Lackawanna River valley and trips through New England's renowned autumn foliage.

The museum and many trains are in excellent condition, but other trains are plagued by neglect. Windows are broken, exteriors are stained by graffiti, and some passenger trains are caving in from the weight of time and weather. But this lack of attention might also be part of the adventure for a would-be explorer. Where else can you find old tables and chairs sitting around a wood-

"It's easy to imagine entire families dressed up in their Sunday best for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to New York City."

burning stove that hasn't been lit in 75 years? It's easy to imagine a raucous game of cards under way or entire families dressed up in their Sunday best for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to New York City. Walking through rows of trains—the coach cars, dining cars,

and boxcars—you can feel the ghosts of the Roaring Twenties right there behind you.

As I stood out in the rail yard, a light snow falling around me, I realized Steamtown was so much more than the final resting place of mainline steam railroading. It's

a place where you can run your hands along the cold steel of American imagination and innovation. A restoration effort would transform these old cars to their former heyday. But the fresh paint, velvet drapery, and new adornments would erase the pure magic of stepping back in time and experiencing a moment that exists only in the creaky old floorboards of these cherished relics. **NP**

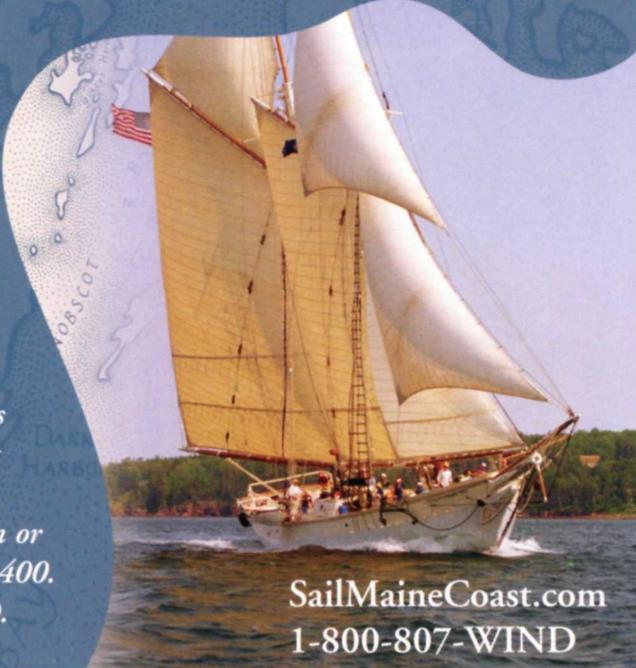
Ian Shive is a Los Angeles-based photographer who never leaves home without a camera. Visit www.WaterandSky.com to see more of his work.

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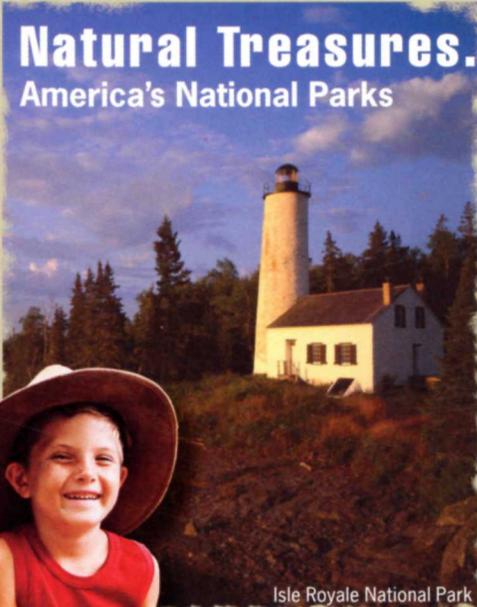
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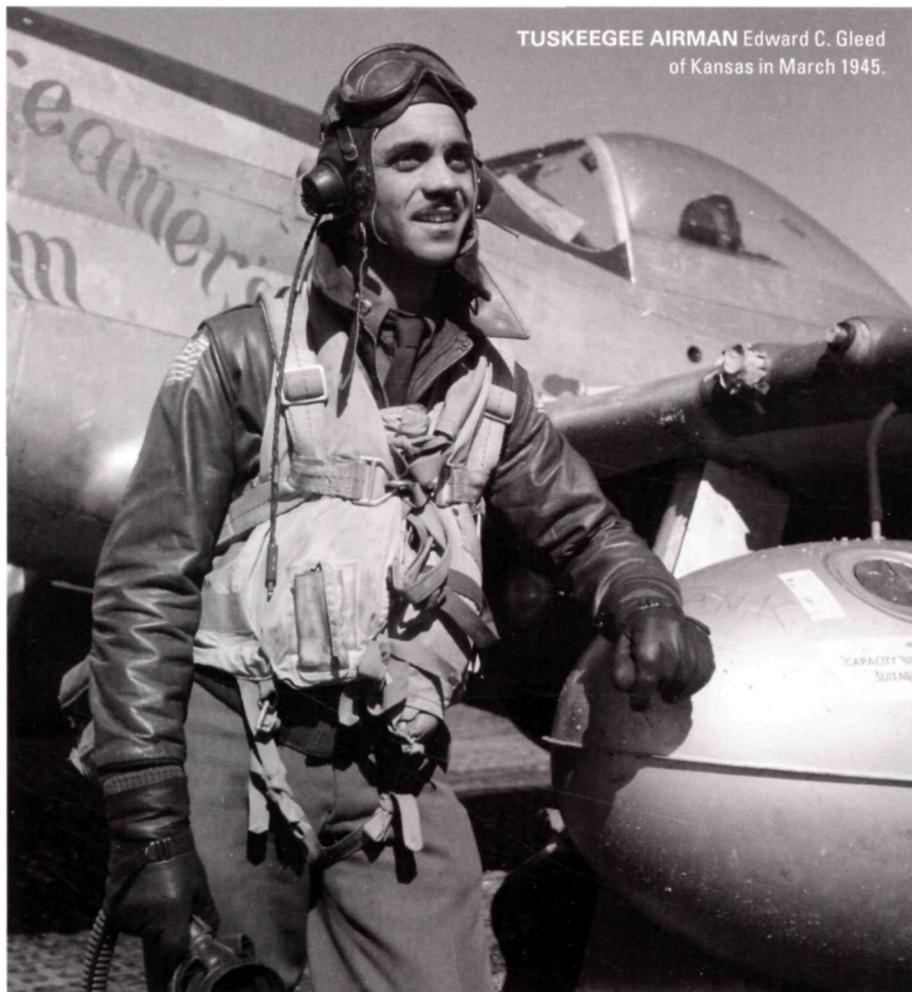
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TUSKEEGEE AIRMAN Edward C. Glead
of Kansas in March 1945.

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Wings of Glory

Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site honors those who soared past racial barriers to help win World War II.

When Lt. Col. Herbert Carter thinks back to the days when he flew through the Alabama skies training for World War II missions overseas, the image that remains in his mind is the bright orange windsock at Moton Field.

“That windsock always reminds me of a unique characteristic of the airfield: There were no runways,” says Carter, one of 15,000 African-American men and women to receive training at the airfield in the 1940s. Pi-

lots would simply determine the prevailing winds, then land in the opposite direction, anywhere on the field.

From the air, the training facility probably didn't look like much: A wide-open, grassy airfield, two hangars, a control tower, and a few storage buildings. Yet this place became a touchstone, a symbol of America's eventual shift from prejudice and segregation.

For the pilots who would eventually be called the Tuskegee Airmen, the freedom of flying a plane contrasted sharply with the prejudice they faced in the 1940s. At that time, African-Americans lived under Jim Crow laws, which legalized segregation and turned a blind eye toward mob violence against blacks.

“Our uniforms didn't make any difference in the civilian world,” Carter says. “First and foremost, we were Negroes; we weren't recognized for our service or the sacrifices we made for the country.”

Before 1940, blacks weren't allowed to fly for the U.S. military. But as America became involved in the war, the military needed more pilots, so a new training facility was established at Moton Field. Many African Americans like Carter were recruited from the neighboring Tuskegee College, which offered aeronautics courses.

“Most of America didn't think we were capable of piloting something as complicated as an aircraft, but we didn't let that discourage us,” says Carter, who was assigned to the Army's 99th pursuit squadron in Casablanca, North Africa, in April 1943. “We came up with a motto we called the 11th commandment: ‘Thou shall not quit.’”

Along with the pilots, those trained at the Tuskegee facility during World War II included bombardiers, navigators, maintenance workers, and other support staff. They received the same instruction as others in the U.S. military, and pilots even took advanced training courses at the nearby Tuskegee Army Airfield alongside white soldiers. These initial steps toward integration made the site and the stories of the Airmen worth preserving.

“The legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen isn't just black history, it's our national history,”

says the park's site manager, Deanna Mitchell. "These pilots showed that prejudice can be overcome—that our country is better as a whole, not separated by race. People from all over the world have visited the site to see how these men refused to let race become a barrier to their abilities."

In 1998, President Clinton signed legislation creating the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site. Today, tiered pathways lead to the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial site and to a hill overlooking Moton Field. In a renovated hangar on the 89-acre site, visitors can listen to an interactive audio-visual exhibit and hear stories told by the airmen and others who served at the facility.

"We want to give the visitor an experience of stepping back in time," says Mitchell, "so we're making the site look like it did in the 1940s." With the help of first-hand accounts like Carter's, the Park Service is reconstructing the site; rooms in the hangar have been recreated to show a cadet waiting area and a war room with authentic flight

logs and intelligence reports.

In the coming months, the control tower's interior will be renovated, and a second hangar will be reconstructed to include an IMAX theatre and a memorial to Daniel "Chappie" James Jr., a Tuskegee Airman who became the first African-American four-star general.

"The legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen isn't just black history, it's our national history."

The renovations won't be completed until 2010, but in October 2008, the site will have a grand opening of sorts to celebrate

the on-going reconstruction. "The Airmen are getting up in years, but some have said they are hanging around to see us re-open," Mitchell says.

Of the more than 900 Tuskegee Airmen, fewer than 200 are still alive; the group loses about 50 a year. But they continue to meet annually at conventions throughout the country, including the Memorial Day air show in Tuskegee.

"The restoration of the site means the legacy will be maintained for generations to come, so others can see what these men experienced," says Carter, who lives nearby and often stops by to share stories. "We demonstrated that race, creed, and color doesn't matter. Our innate abilities, desires, and determination are all that matter. And we proved that." NP

Doug Donaldson is a freelance writer and cyclist from Jersey City, New Jersey, whose favorite bike route offers a view of the Statue of Liberty.



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WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE

Alaska

I captured this photograph on a 28-day expedition to Mt. Sanford's 16,300-foot summit in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve. We had already braved the Copper River in rafts, trekked four days to the base of Mt. Sanford, and fought summer swarms of mosquitoes on the vast Alaskan tundra. On our climb up Sheep Glacier (shown here), the icebox climate and relentless winds screamed at us to turn back. But I'm one of the few people who finds something wildly attractive about a challenge like this.

Wrangell-St. Elias, often called the Himalayas of North America, offers 20,000 square miles of secluded Alaskan wilderness—six times the size of Yellowstone. Nearby Mt. McKinley in Denali National Park sees much heavier climbing traffic, but the Wrangells are special. We didn't see another person during our month-long expedition.

This photograph speaks to how foreign humans are in this place. In a world of increasing noise, America's national parks preserve the pure spirit of the wild.



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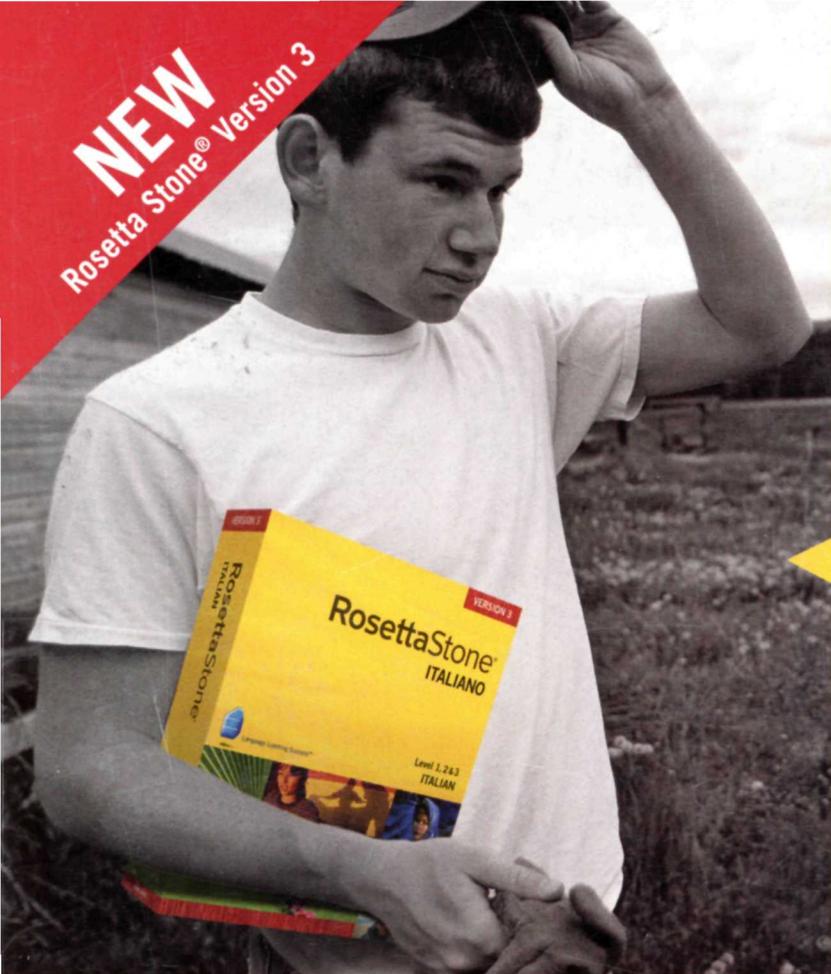
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