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FEATURES

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THE MADRONA SAILBOAT in the still waters of Aialik Bay off the coast of Alaska's Kenai Fjords National Park.
©CRAIG WOLFROM

COVER:
"BEAUTY IN PURPLE," oil on canvas, 2020.
©DEL CURFMAN

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FALL COLORS ON Mount Desert Island, Acadia National Park, Maine. The deciduous trees responsible for Acadia's famous autumn foliage largely grew courtesy of a wildfire that engulfed much of the park 75 years ago.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ©COLLEEN MINIUK-SPERRY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; ©ANDREAS STROH/SHUTTERSTOCK; ©O.T. DAVIS, HISTORY COLORADO 2022.117.8; ©3ALEXD/ISTOCKPHOTO.

DEPARTMENTS

WINTER 2023 / Vol. 97 No. 1

ON THE WEB
Follow NPCA on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and get park news, travel tips and more on NPCA's blog: **npca.org/blog.**

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A Rich Fabric

There's never a bad time to be in the Great Smokies, but fall days there are simply stunning. From the ridges to the valleys, the trees seem to suddenly come alive. Under the crisp light of autumn skies, golden hickories, orange maples and scarlet dogwoods reveal the vivid colors that had been hidden within their leaves all along.

This was the backdrop for my travels to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in October, when I, along with several members of NPCA's staff and board, had the great pleasure of visiting with Antoine Fletcher, a ranger and science communicator at the park. Antoine leads the park's African American Experience project, an effort begun in 2018 to research, document and share the stories of African Americans in the Smokies — stories that have long been buried, both figuratively and literally.

We gathered in Elkmont and walked a wide path that took us to the crumbling chimneys and foundations of what were houses long ago. There, Fletcher shared accounts of those who had once made their homes in this spot. Enslaved people not only farmed the land, but they knew it so intimately that they were widely sought out as expert hunting and fishing guides. Once finally freed, they chose to stay on the land they felt connected to, where they continued to work, raise families, and enjoy the bounty of this special place, from its magical fireflies to its cool, clear streams rich with trout and smallmouth bass. And, yes, many were eventually laid to rest on that same land, in the half-dozen or so affiliated African American cemeteries in what is now the park.

Thanks to the diligent research being conducted by Fletcher and his partners, we are gaining new insight into the remarkable lives these residents led and a better understanding of the last several centuries of life in the Smokies. African Americans have always been part of the rich fabric of the park. We just haven't heard much about it — until now.

That just might be what makes returning to favorite places such as Great Smoky Mountains so rewarding: Even when we think we know them so well, they can still surprise, delight and inspire us.

With gratitude,
Theresa Pierno

Editor's Note

COURTESY OF ŠINÁ BEAR EAGLE

RANGER ŠINÁ BEAR EAGLE at a demonstration in 2017.

Un-Vanishing

Between 1907 and 1930, photographer Edward Sherriff Curtis produced "The North American Indian," a 20-volume series that included thousands of images of people from dozens of Tribes. In the introduction, he wrote that the work "represents the result of personal study of a people who are rapidly losing the traces of their aboriginal character and who are destined ultimately to become assimilated with the 'superior race.'"

Artist Del Curfman, whose cover artwork is part of a project he calls the "Vanishing Series," says his paintings of runners, riders and dancers are a response to Curtis and others who have mythologized the erasure of American Indian Tribes. "To expose these misrepresentations and other misinformation, my paintings celebrate the contemporary and beautiful regalia, dance, song, and culture demonstrating we are living, vibrant communities," Curfman, a member of the Apsáalooke Nation (Crow Tribe) wrote in an artist's statement. "My paintings transgress the boundaries and limits of American Indian stereotypes."

Curfman's paintings are paired in this issue with Shane Doyle's article, "Land of Steam," which highlights Apsáalooke stories connected to landscape features in Yellowstone. But the themes Curfman is exploring also crop up in Katherine DeGroff's "'We're Still Here,'" a collection of profiles of Native Americans who work for the National Park Service. In addition to addressing questions about vitality and representation, the interviewees reflect on one of the great challenges facing the park system: All national parks sit on Native lands. So how should the Park Service and the country confront that difficult truth and move forward? There are no simple answers, but it's illuminating to hear the perspectives of people who wear Park Service uniforms and are members of Tribes — and sometimes find themselves pulled between those two roles.

Turn to pages 32-48 to read more by and about people whose lives and work are a wholehearted rebuke of the vanishing narrative.

Rona Marech
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NationalParks

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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 and enhances America's national parks for present and future generations by identifying problems and generating support to resolve them.

EDITORIAL MISSION
National Parks magazine fosters an appreciation for 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. National Parks magazine is among a member's chief benefits. Of the $25 membership dues, $6 covers a one-year subscription to the magazine.

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. Sign up to receive Park Notes, our monthly email newsletter at npca.org/join.

HOW TO DONATE
To donate, please visit 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. On a selective basis, NPCA makes its membership list available to organizations that our members may find of interest. If you would like your name removed from this list, please call us at the number listed above.

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Letters

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

Kudos to National Parks magazine for such broad, meaningful content. Case in point is "'First, Tell the Truth'" in the Fall 2022 issue. The article focuses on Forks of the Road, a small tract of land in Natchez, Mississippi, where slaveholders once bought and sold people in the mid-1800s. The Park Service plays an invaluable role in our society by identifying and protecting not only majestic, inspirational places but also sites that are painful reminders of our country's history. How else can there be hope of learning from our grievous mistakes?

LIZANNE FLEMING
Redlands, CA

SUSTAINED HOPE

Thanks to Theresa Pierno for recognizing the new hope brought by the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act [President's Outlook, Fall 2022]. This sweeping legislation is the hard-won result of efforts by this magazine and organization, voters and forward-looking legislators. Of course, we have to keep speaking with our decision-makers about what matters, which is how initiatives like the child tax credit, climate legislation and housing crisis relief have passed and will continue to pass. So to your readers: Be inspired by hope and continue using your voices to build on these initiatives!

WILLIE DICKERSON
Snohomish, WA

EXPERIENCE AND EMPATHY

I enjoyed Ben Goldfarb's article ["Troubled Waters"] in the Summer 2022 issue of National Parks. He not only relayed his own experience with aquatic resource management in national parks, but also drew attention to the past harm that was caused by the government's introduction of non-native species to fragile ecosystems. At the same time, the author expressed compassion for the introduced species that suffered through no fault of their own. Good writing!

KATHLEEN BRADEN
Seattle, WA

VICARIOUS MEMORIES

Over the past few years, I have appreciated receiving and reading your quarterly magazine. The Fall 2022 issue, with its "Your Park Stories" feature, was no exception. I so enjoyed seeing the various contributors and reading their stories about the parks that hold such wonderful memories for them. Thank you for doing a great job.

JOHN CONNELL
Cheshire, CT

PARK BY PARK

Your recent issue was a personal delight to me. I visited John Day Fossil Beds in 2017 to experience the solar eclipse, so the comic strip "Time Travel" jogged my memory. Friends of mine are frequent visitors to Assateague Island, so I connected with "A Hoof Too Far." I just returned from visiting Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, adding to my own set of park stories. "'First, Tell the Truth,'" about a former slave market that is now part of Natchez National Historical Park, was an eye-opener, revealing things we should know about but don't. Thanks for exposing me to this piece of history and educating me. Finally, you've motivated me to visit Johnstown and the Path of the Flood Trail ["Following the Flood"], which is less than three hours from my house.

Thanks so much for the work you do for our national parks and for national park fans.

RICKI HURWITZ
Harrisburg, PA

MEMORY LANE

My husband of 63 years just died, and the Fall issue brought back so many

memories of all the parks we visited during our years together. The magazine triggered a real trip down memory lane and produced a few tears, too. We have such a variety of national parks in our country, and it's a wonderful system. I hope I can revisit a few more in whatever time I have left. Thank you.

CAROL HUETHER
Newport, KY

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

Paul Harnden, in a letter published in the Summer issue, states that a site dedicated to the Black Panther Party is completely inappropriate because Huey Newton and Fred Hampton are "indelibly linked to a violent and tumultuous period in our nation's history." Since when do we only focus on the nonviolent and serene parts of our history as he implies? Manzanar, Tule Lake, Minidoka, the Trail of Tears and Ford's Theatre are just a few of the more shameful, but critical, sites that reveal a less than positive history. Even more disconcerting are the battlefields where American Indigenous people were killed and Civil War sites that highlight acts of rebellion against the nation. History, to be accurate and not just propaganda, must show the many sides of a story, and the Black Panther story is critical to our national need for understanding, whether you like Huey Newton or not.

FRANK A. MONKMAN
Lake Stevens, WA

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

We are pleased to announce that National Parks magazine received several accolades in the 2022 Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Competition and in the 2022 Folio: Eddie & Ozzie Awards. In the Lowell Thomas contest, Ernie Atencio's essay about climbing Grand Teton, "Lofty Heights" [Spring 2022], earned silver in the personal comment category; the magazine took bronze for overall travel coverage; and Katherine DeGroff received honorable mention for her story about obsessive park stampers, "Park Ink" [Winter 2022]. In the Folios, Atencio's story won in the essays and criticism category; the Spring 2022 issue received honorable mention in the full issue category; and DeGroff received honorable mention in the range of work by a single author category.

Send letters to National Parks Magazine, 777 6th Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-3723. Or email npmag@npca.org. Include your name, city and state. Published letters may be edited for length and clarity.

NationalParks

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EDITOR IN CHIEF AND MANAGING EDITOR
Rona Marech

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B. PAID CIRCULATION		
	341,974	326,061
C. TOTAL PAID CIRC.	341,974	326,061
E. FREE DISTRIBUTION	3,565	3,327
F. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (sum of C and E)	345,539	329,388
G. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED	2,142	0
H. TOTAL (sum of F & G)	347,681	329,388

Echoes

"The court flat-out found that the current rule is illegal and that the Park Service indeed has authority to protect the national interest in federal public lands."

NPCA's Jim Adams as quoted in National Parks Traveler, regarding a recent decision about wildlife in Alaska's national preserves. In September, a federal district court found a 2020 Park Service rule that allows hunting practices such as brown bear baiting to be poorly reasoned and arbitrary, though the court allowed the rule to remain in place while the agency revises its regulations. NPCA — one of the parties to the lawsuit that spurred the case — will continue the fight for ethical hunting regulations in Alaska's parklands.

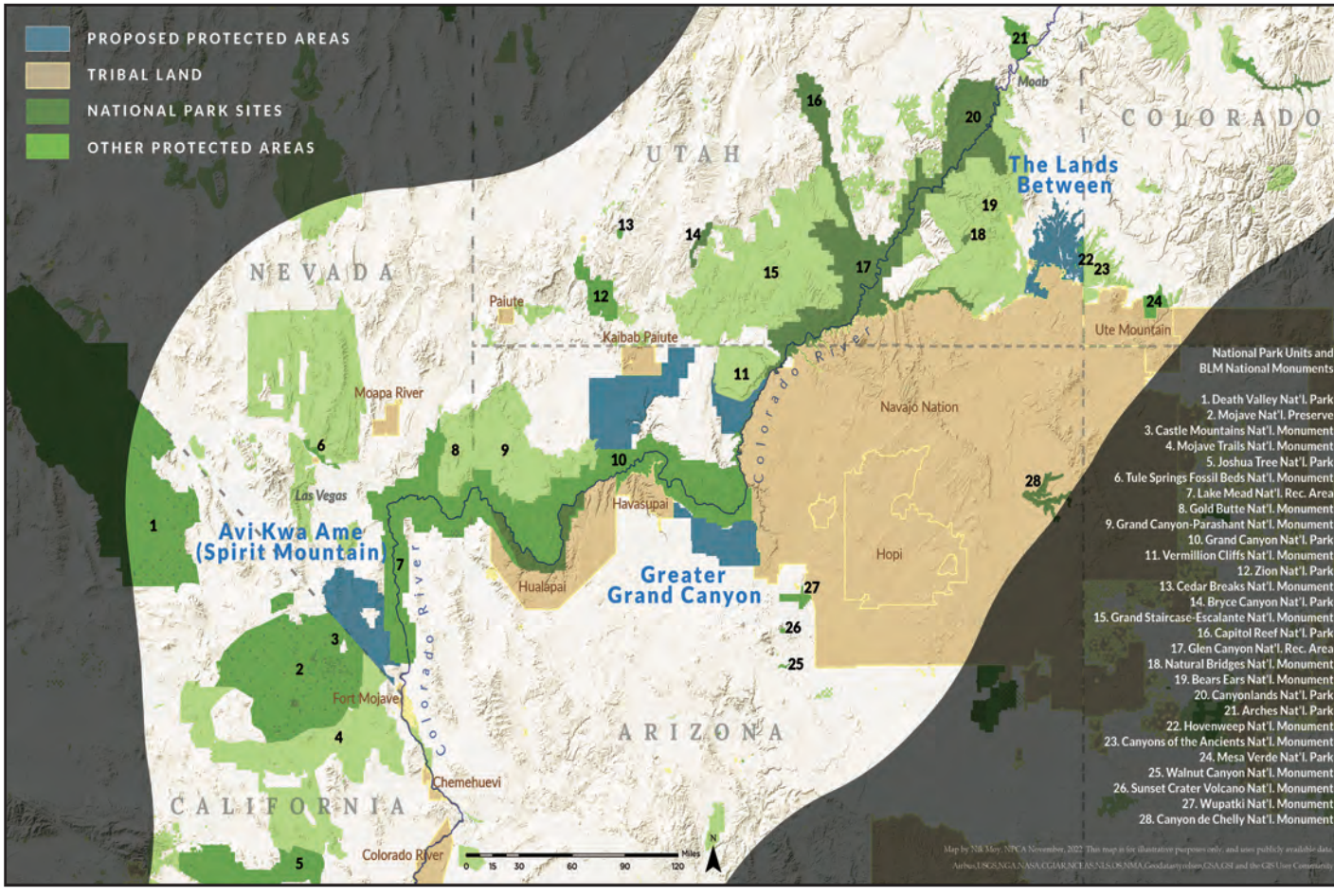
"This national park site will be a testament to the resilience of Mexican American communities in our country's borderlands, and the immeasurable impact they have had on the United States of America."

NPCA President and CEO Theresa Pierno, celebrating the designation of Blackwell School National Historic Site in The Hill. The Marfa, Texas, site preserves a century-old adobe schoolhouse where Mexican American students were segregated from their white peers and expected to give up their language.

"We thank the Biden administration for protecting our scarce desert water and beloved national parks from this irresponsible water mining scheme."

Chris Clarke, associate director of NPCA's California Desert program, detailing the latest episode in the Cadiz Inc. pipeline saga to the Los Angeles Business Journal. The pipeline, which would pump 16 billion gallons of water a year from a precious aquifer underlying the Mojave Desert, hit another roadblock this September when a federal judge revoked a key permit, citing insufficient environmental review.

PHOTO: A BROWN BEAR PREYS ON SOCKEYE SALMON AT KATMAI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE, ALASKA.



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California to Colorado

An unbroken stretch of protected land would benefit ecosystems, wildlife and cultural landscapes.

Beginning with the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, national parks have largely been viewed one way — as clearly delineated areas designed to protect some of the country's most important natural and cultural treasures. But that approach is no longer adequate as the climate changes and a global biodiversity crisis accelerates. If we are to address these challenges, among the most urgent of our time, we need to think beyond park boundaries and ensure the lands surrounding parks are better protected. We need to see national parks not as isolated islands of preserved land but as anchors of conservation within broader landscapes.

As the senior director for landscape conservation at NPCA, I consider this way of looking at national parks as core to our mission. We are working with partners, Tribes and community members across the country to promote and advocate for this more holistic approach to conservation.

The map above shows our vision for connecting and transforming a patchwork of parks and national monuments into an unbroken swath of protected land stretching from Joshua Tree National Park in California to Canyons of the Ancients in Colorado. Preserving Avi Kwa Ame in Nevada, the Greater Grand Canyon in Arizona and the Lands Between in Utah would fill the gaps, conserve some of the most important Indigenous sacred sites and cultural landscapes in the region, and provide crucial ecosystem links. Such connectivity is vital to protect habitats for wildlife, biodiversity, and key ecosystem functions such as migration, water movement, food availability and more.

Desert bighorn sheep and pronghorn antelope are among the species that would benefit from a more connected landscape. Both need to move to survive, but that is increasingly difficult as roads, energy facilities, fences and other structures continue to splinter the land. Reducing fragmentation and giving animals space to roam more broadly are critical as climate change alters habitats, makes water scarcer, reduces food security and forces wildlife to adapt.

Community members, including Indigenous people who have lived on and used these lands for centuries, are leading the campaigns in Nevada, Arizona and Utah. For landscape-scale conservation to work, we must ensure that people are at the heart of the effort to craft conservation solutions.

To learn about the ambitious goal of preserving 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 and NPCA's broad landscape protection efforts, go to npca.org/landscapes.

—MATTHEW KIRBY

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Case Reopened

A major school desegregation victory in Colorado was all but forgotten. A century later, it's getting its due.

Gonzalo Guzmán was conducting research on the experience of Latino students in Wyoming when he came across a mention in a 1914 newspaper of "Mexican" parents protesting discrimination in Alamosa, Colorado. "It wasn't even a full sentence," Guzmán said. A historian and assistant professor of education at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Guzmán was curious, so he searched Colorado newspaper archives and found that the protest eventually led to a legal victory by Francisco Maestas and other parents in a desegregation case. He also contacted Rubén Donato, an educational historian at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Surely, Donato, a pioneer in the field of Latino education history, would have heard of the Maestas case. It turned out he hadn't.

"As an academic I was shocked that nobody had done a study on it," Donato said.

Guzmán, Donato and Jarrod Hanson, an education professor at the University of Colorado in Denver, teamed up to uncover the full story. They reached out to Judge Martín Gonzales in Alamosa to ask for the case file. Gonzales, despite generations-deep roots in the area and a judgeship in the very district where the case was argued, had never heard of it either. He found the file and sent it to the academics, who quickly assessed the importance of the long-buried Maestas case.

"We, as educational historians, can pretty confidently say that this is the first Mexican American-led school desegregation challenge in the United States," said Donato, whose paper, co-authored with Guzmán and Hanson, was published in 2017. "That's huge!"

Still, Gonzales, descendants of the Maestas family and other locals felt a case of this significance deserved to be recognized beyond the confines of academia. Together with the three professors, they formed the Maestas Case Commemoration Committee. The school at the center of the case and the old courthouse were gone, but committee members thought a commemorative marker was needed, so they commissioned a bronze relief by New Mexico-based sculptor Reynaldo "Sonny" Rivera. In October, the bronze was installed in the new courthouse, which was completed four years ago.

"It made some sense to give this courthouse a proper christening to tie it back to where it came from," said Gonzales, who retired recently.

COURTESY OF DR. RON W. MAESTAS AND TONY SANDOVAL, MEMBERS OF THE MAESTAS FAMILY

A PORTRAIT OF Miguel Maestas, the 11-year-old at the center of a 1914 school segregation court case in Alamosa, Colorado.

Alamosa is the commercial hub of the San Luis Valley, a 120-mile-long basin in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico that includes Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. The small city also sits inside the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, a nationally significant landscape managed by local entities in collaboration with the National Park Service, which administers some funds and offers technical assistance. NPCA has supported efforts to increase awareness of the Maestas case and is working with the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and other allies to renew funding for Sangre de Cristo and the 54 other national heritage areas, whose federal money is at risk, said Tracy Coppola, NPCA's senior program manager for Colorado.

Native American presence in the region dates back at least 10,000 years, and the valley was later populated by people of Spanish and early Mexican descent. It became part of the United States in 1848 after the Mexican-American War. Katie Dokson, a member of the Maestas committee whose family has lived in the valley for eight generations, said the term she uses for people like her is "Hispano." "We all come from this mixed lineage that has become Spanish-speaking, so it's a hard category to explain."

The Maestas family had long been established in the area by the time the Alamosa school board directed all Hispano children to the "Mexican School" located in the southern part of town in 1912. A group of parents complained to local and state authorities, arguing that the move was tantamount to racial discrimination, which ran counter to the Colorado Constitution. Francisco Maestas thought attending the Mexican School was not only inconvenient but dangerous for his 11-year-old son Miguel, as it involved crossing several railroad tracks.

In the fall of 1913, after their complaints had gone unheeded, the parents decided to pull their children from the school and file a lawsuit in the district court. They raised money for legal fees and received support from a local civil rights organization and a Catholic priest, who found a young lawyer in Denver to represent them. The school board denied discrimination accusations because Hispano children were officially considered "white," but testimony contradicted that assertion, according to a newspaper account.

"We had some board members that said, 'I don't want my kid to go to school with Mexicans,'" said Ronald Maestas, a relative of Francisco and Miguel who has researched the family's history. "That was the attitude at that time."

The board also argued that Hispano children were directed to the Mexican School because of their inability to speak English, but that rationale was debunked in court when Miguel and other children responded to questions in English. In March 1914, Judge Charles Holbrook rejected the board's arguments and ruled that all children competent in English should be able to join the school of their choice.

No one knows how many children switched schools, as records were lost. What happened to Miguel later in life has also largely been lost to history, but Ronald Maestas learned from Miguel's daughter Eva that he eventually moved to New York where he tried to become a professional boxer.

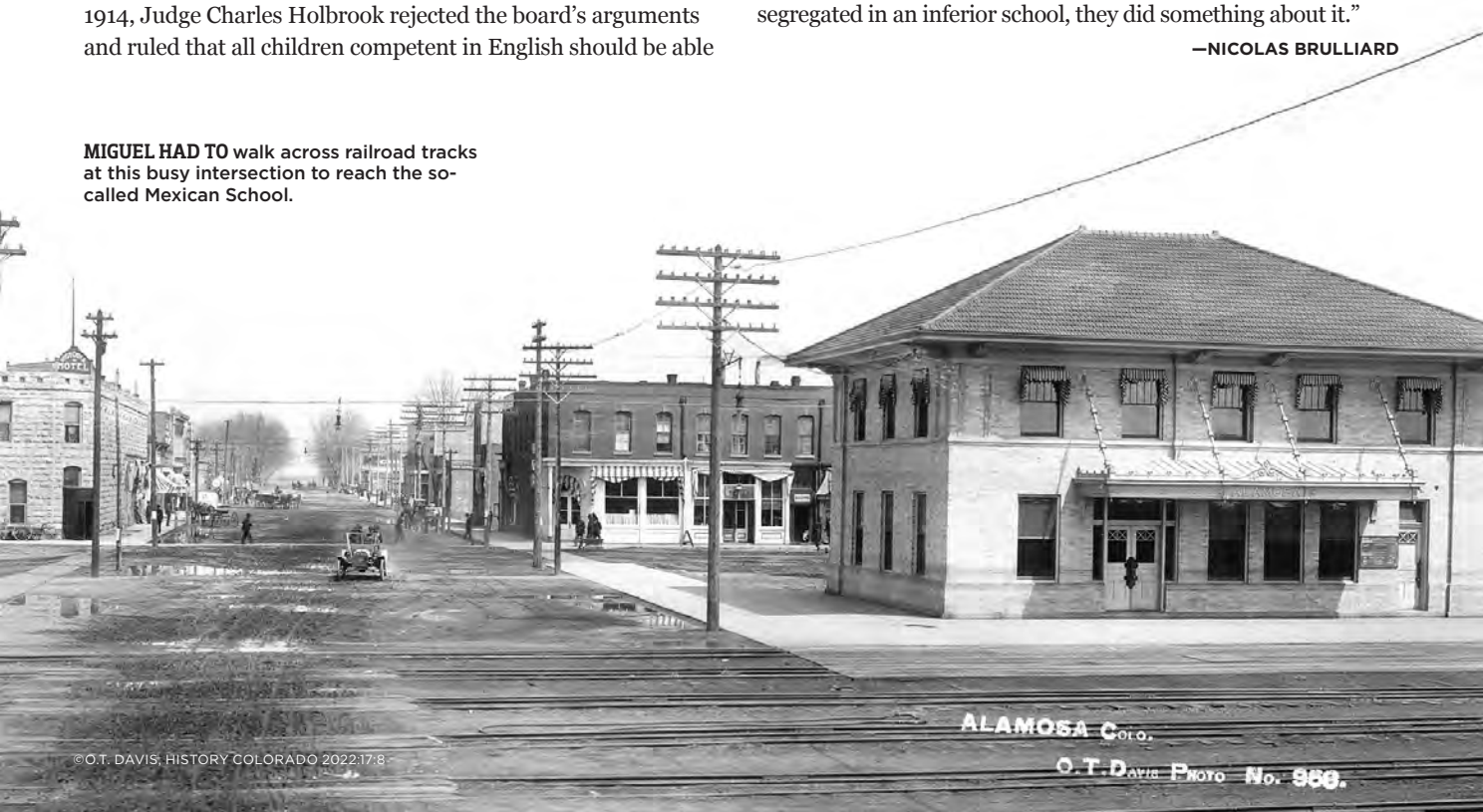
Two years after the ruling, Maestas' lawyer came back to Alamosa to fight — and win — another discrimination case against the owners of a bowling alley. The ongoing fight for equal rights explains in part why the Maestas case was largely forgotten, Gonzales said. "This was just one struggle of many," he said, "and as time would have it, things disappeared from the memory." Gonzales also said the fact that the case was apparently never appealed meant it was not widely disseminated.

The members of the Maestas committee have worked hard to make sure the case is not forgotten once more. They installed an exhibit in Colorado's Capitol, where the legislature passed a resolution honoring the struggle to integrate the state's schools, and the committee plans to take a replica of the bronze relief to locations around the state. And they hope that the case will become part of Colorado schools' curriculum so that students can be inspired by the story of a group of determined Hispano parents.

"What I get out of it is that Mexican Americans have always cared about the schooling of their children," Donato said. "So this community here, when they saw that their children were being segregated in an inferior school, they did something about it."

—NICOLAS BRULLIARD

MIGUEL HAD TO walk across railroad tracks at this busy intersection to reach the so-called Mexican School.



Victory Lap

Passage of the Inflation Reduction Act heralds a sea change in climate action.

You don't have to be a policy wonk to be ecstatic about this summer's passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. Here's why: The bill — signed into law by President Joe Biden after a tortuous journey through Congress — represents the largest investment in clean energy in U.S. history. Plus, it allots nearly $1 billion to staff the National Park Service and build more climate-resilient parks.

There are provisions of the multipronged law that NPCA doesn't support, namely how it requires the Department of the Interior to offer leases on millions of acres of federal lands and waters for oil and gas development before leasing for wind and solar energy projects. But the bill's profound net gain can't be overstated, said Daniel Hart, NPCA's director of clean energy and climate resiliency policy. "This is nearly $370 billion to fight climate change, protect parks and public lands, and help with the clean energy transition," he said. "That's huge. I can't think of anything larger that has happened in my lifetime."

—K.D.

Here are three park-related highlights worth celebrating:

$500 million to hire new park staff, including scientists, preservationists and other specialists with expertise in protecting park landscapes, structures, artifacts and other resources from a range of threats related to climate change, such as droughts, fires, floods and invasive species

$250 million to support conservation and habitat restoration projects on lands administered by the Park Service and Bureau of Land Management

$250 million to enhance the resiliency of natural, cultural and historical resources administered by the Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, such as historic buildings and artifacts

Desert Deluge

THIS SUMMER, 6 inches of rain doused portions of Mojave National Preserve over one weekend, while Death Valley National Park (pictured) — North America's driest spot — experienced a 1,000-year flooding event. With climate change predicted to exacerbate drought conditions and intensify storms, this year's historic, widespread flooding could be a portent of things to come. "We can probably say goodbye" to predictability, said NPCA's Chris Clarke. He likes to think this year's rain served as a lifeline for beleaguered plants, but agrees with experts who say that flash floods run off or evaporate before they can soak in and do little to help the ecosystem or combat the region's megadrought.

NPS

"In recent years, a group of international designers and artists has rediscovered the innate modernity of Italian blown glass, turning to Murano as inspiration..." — New York Times, 2020

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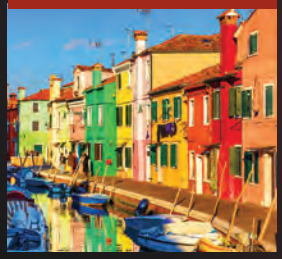

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PRESIDIO TUNNEL TOPS' 14 acres of newly created parkland sit atop a bustling highway in San Francisco.

Tunnel Top Triumph

How the Presidio of San Francisco got rid of an aging, ugly freeway — and scored new national parkland in the process.

My husband and I were locking up our bikes a few blocks away from the new Presidio Tunnel Tops when we first registered a high-pitched din, wafting on the breeze blowing off San Francisco Bay.

We walked closer. The noise grew louder. Then we rounded a corner and discovered its source: hundreds and hundreds of kids, joyfully screaming their heads off while romping around a sprawling playground at the foot of a bluff rising from the bay shore. Kids scrambled up granite crags, careened down concrete slides and hopscotched between sidewalk murals depicting poppies, hummingbirds and dozens of other California species.

My husband and I, who are in our mid-30s and childless, were astounded by how cool this playground is. But what's even more astounding is that just 10 years ago, the land the playground sits on, and the steep bluff carpeted with native plants behind it, didn't even exist. It's all part of Presidio Tunnel Tops, 14 acres of new parkland built over a six-lane freeway. The completion of Tunnel Tops marks a milestone in the ongoing effort to transform San Francisco's northern gateway from an off-limits Army base into a national park site that's accessible and welcoming to all.

This park, which has been packed with people every weekend since it opened in July, is part of a $1 billion project that began three decades ago with the need to replace a hazardous expressway called Doyle Drive. The 1.6-mile elevated expressway was built in 1936 to funnel drivers between the Golden Gate Bridge and downtown, passing right over the Presidio, which was then the oldest active military base on the West Coast.

But in 1988, a federal commission proposed closing the Presidio as an Army base, setting a course for the land to eventually be transferred to the

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COURTESY OF RACHEL STYER, PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PRESIDIO

CHILDREN PLAY during opening day at Tunnel Tops.

National Park Service and become part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. What's more, after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake rattled Doyle Drive's aging foundations, engineers determined that the expressway was not likely to withstand another such shock. Doyle Drive was now a rickety barrier blocking access to what would soon become San Francisco's newest national park site. So in 1991, San Franciscans began the process of replacing Doyle Drive with a new gateway to the city that would better meet the Presidio's evolving identity.

A local landscape architect and concerned citizen named Michael Painter came forward with the winning idea: Rather than replacing Doyle Drive with another hulking viaduct, or worse, building a traditional freeway at ground level, Painter pitched a roadway routed through tunnels covered in parkland. Thousands of cars a day could still pass through the Presidio, while overhead, hikers and bikers could follow trails sloping down to the bay. (Today Tunnel Tops covers the eastern tunnels, and an additional 6 acres of new parkland, Battery Bluff, cover the western tunnels. The California Department of Transportation helped fund the restoration of a marsh and other areas damaged by construction for a total of 50 acres of revitalized parkland.)

"I see this place as part of a much larger movement, which is about putting people first in our cities, rather than putting cars first," said Michael Boland, who led design and public engagement for Tunnel Tops as chief park officer for the Presidio Trust, the agency that manages the Presidio in collaboration with the Park Service. Projects that have rerouted or removed freeways to create more pedestrian-friendly public spaces include the tunnel that replaced the Alaskan Way Viaduct in downtown Seattle, Tom McCall Waterfront Park in Portland, Oregon, and Boston's Big Dig. And in San Francisco, the removal of the old Embarcadero Freeway in the early 1990s revived a stretch of the city's waterfront from the Bay Bridge to Fisherman's Wharf.

The effort to replace Doyle Drive had already been underway for two decades by the time I moved in next door. In 2013, I took an internship with the Presidio Trust, just as the agency was launching the public process to design the parkland that would cover the tunnels and the nonprofit Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy was starting to raise $98 million in private donations to build the park. (The Presidio Trust contributed an additional $20 million.) Meanwhile, the California Department of Transportation had begun building the new freeway and the tunnels it would pass through. For the year I lived and worked in the Presidio, my commute was a 10-minute walk skirting the freeway construction site, a yawning gulch from which dump trucks, clouds of dust and startling explosions issued routinely.

So it was pleasantly surreal, nine years later, to weave through crowds of people packing the mosaic of lawns and gardens on top of the tunnels and head across an old military parade ground to the door of my former office. From there, we walked west to check out Battery Bluff, named for four gun batteries built around the turn of the 20th century. Two of them were partially buried during the construction of Doyle Drive back in the 1930s, but portions of the batteries have been excavated and restored and are now open for the public to explore.

"Hopefully we're in an era of much greater social consciousness than the era of freeway building, and the way this bad infrastructure has destroyed communities across the country is recognized and acknowledged," said Jim Chappell. He's the former head of the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association, or SPUR, a nonprofit that helped convene agencies and community members to replace Doyle Drive, and he's been involved since the project's earliest days. "I think when people come to the Presidio and see what we've accomplished, they will demand better in their own communities."

After a morning of exploration, we were ready to check out the offerings from the dozen or so food trucks parked along the curb next to Tunnel Tops. We decided on a flight of empanadas and snagged a vacant patch of grass. While we ate, we gawked at the wide-angle view spanning from the Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin Headlands in the west, Angel Island and Alcatraz to the north, and the downtown San Francisco skyline to the east. All the while, a steady stream of cars rolled under our feet, unseen and unheard.

—JULIA BUSIEK

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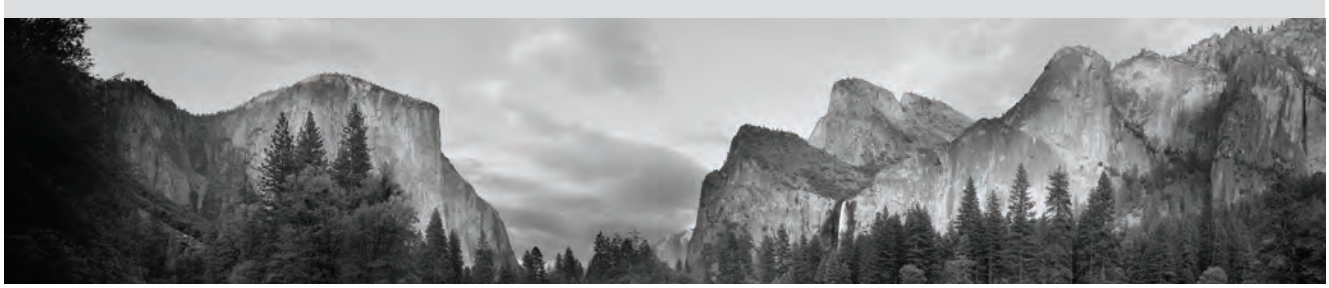


COURTESY OF JERRY FLEURY

A STORMY summer day in Saguaro National Park, Arizona. Water has long been suspected of influencing the number of arms each saguaro grows.

A Thorny Question

Why some saguaros grow more arms than others — and why it matters.

EVERY SPRING BREAK, Richard Hutto would drive to the Southwest with a group of his field ecology students to conduct some basic science. The first day, they'd walk around the desert looking for interesting patterns. Then they'd gather at a campground at night and brainstorm their ideas, and each student would settle on a particular line of inquiry. Hutto, then a professor at the University of Montana, would pick his own scientific quest, "because you've got to be doing something all day," he said.

And so it was that in March 2000 at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in southern Arizona, Hutto set his sights on the Sonoran Desert's stately icon — the saguaro cactus. Several years earlier, Hutto had examined the distribution of saguaro seeds and discovered they're more abundant near trees such as mesquite or palo verde. This time, he contemplated the cactus' varying shapes. "One of the immediate things that catches your eye is why do some saguaros have lots of arms and why others have none," he said. It would take two decades and the free time afforded by retirement for Hutto to finally publish his answer.

Saguaros (pronounced sah-wah-rohs), whose range extends across southern Arizona, northern Mexico and a small chunk of southeastern California, have long been the object of fascination — and deservedly so: They're not only among the tallest cacti in the world (more on that later) but also among the oldest, with some living up to 300 years. But the matter of the saguaro's so-called branching pattern is one that has piqued the interest of Hutto and many other scientists, and it's a question with both ecological and cultural ramifications.

The arms that give saguaros their iconic shape are actually crucial to the species' survival. Saguaros produce flowers almost exclusively on their extremities, so on a pillar-shaped saguaro, flowers will appear at the top. Once that saguaro grows one arm, the number of flowers — and seeds — will roughly double. Add one more arm, and the number of flowers will be about triple what it was originally, and so on. "We like for them to have as many arms as they can get away with," said Don Swann, a biologist at Saguaro National Park and the co-author of several research papers on the park's namesake.

The cacti's flowers eventually turn into fruits, and those hold deep significance for the Tohono O'odham, whose name translates as desert people. From the end of June to the beginning of July, they harvest the fruits using long tools built out of dead saguaro ribs, said Austin

Nuñez, chairman of the San Xavier District of the Tohono O'odham Nation. The fruits are used to make a jam and a very light wine that is central to the Tohono O'odham's rain ceremony. "The songs that are sung during the ceremony are to call for the rain and for good crops," Nuñez said. "And usually, like four days later, it would rain, and so that was the beginning of our new cycle year."

Saguaros grow extremely slowly. After five years, most haven't reached an inch in height. "It's so fun to find a baby saguaro no bigger than your baby finger," Hutto said. It takes decades for a saguaro to produce fruit and years more to grow its first arm — if it produces one at all — so observing growth patterns in real time is not a practical option. The best approach, then, is statistical.

To figure out which factors might play a role in determining a saguaro's number of arms, Hutto walked 1-kilometer transects in various areas of Organ Pipe, stopping at regular intervals to record the height of the saguaros he came across (which correlates to their age), the number of arms (those long enough to begin to turn), the species of nearby trees, the number of surrounding saguaros, and the existence or absence of a wash in the vicinity. In total, he surveyed 425 saguaros, and the highest number of arms he recorded was a modest 12. Saguaro National Park's Granddaddy, once thought to be the world's oldest saguaro, sported 52 arms before succumbing in the mid-1990s. A saguaro called Shiva for its very large number of arms (78) grows north of Tucson.

The first relationship Hutto examined is the one between branching and height, and he confirmed that the correlation was not straightforward. "There's a huge amount of slop around that line," he said. (The world's tallest cactus, which was felled by a windstorm in 1986, was a 78-foot-tall saguaro in Cave Creek, Arizona, that was estimated to be 150 years old. It was also armless.)

Water plays a major role in the growth of saguaros and has long been suspected to influence the number of arms. Predictably, Hutto found that the existence of a wash tended to be associated with more arms, while the presence of nearby saguaros that compete for water seemed to result in fewer arms. Interestingly, nurse trees appeared to influence saguaro branching when they were alive — and dead. Nurse trees are associated with a relative abundance of young saguaros — perhaps because of the shelter they provide to the seedlings or because birds perched on their branches excrete saguaros seeds that germinate under the canopy. Hutto discovered that saguaros growing near living nurse trees tended to have fewer arms, possibly because both species competed over water, but a saguaro next to a dead nurse tree was more likely to grow more arms. "Why that is, I don't know," he said. In all, the main factors examined by Hutto in his 2021 study accounted only for 15% of the variation in the number of arms.

So what else could be at play? Taly D. Drezner, a physical geographer at the College of Southern Nevada, assembled her own massive dataset on saguaros and published more than 35 papers on the cactus, including half a dozen on branching. In one of those, she compared her saguaro data with climate information for the cactus' range, and she found that, contrary to what many experts thought, summer monsoons were not the best predictor of branching patterns. "The areas with a lot of branches are clearly the areas where they get a lot of winter rain," she said. Drezner, who found a few years ago that the 1883 eruption of Krakatoa in Indonesia affected the global climate in a way that benefited young saguaros in Arizona, knows that there are a lot of saguaro-related mysteries left to be solved.

Nuñez isn't sure why saguaros have more or fewer arms, but he's certain the cacti have human qualities. He recounted a story told by one of his fellow Tribal members to anthropologists in which a woman's grandson transforms into a saguaro. Recognizing his voice, the grandmother embraces him and dies from her injuries, but the boy-turned-saguaro endures and promises to bear fruit for his people. In the aftermath of the destruction of saguaros during the construction of the U.S.-Mexico border wall, Nuñez authored a resolution — adopted by his nation's government — that acknowledged the plant's "personhood."

"We hold them in high regard and believe that they are relatives," Nuñez said. "I just took it for granted that they have arms."

KILLER WEED

Saguaro National Park staff refer to it as the archenemy of the Sonoran Desert. Buffelgrass is an invasive weed that poses a double threat to saguaros and other native plants. First, it competes with them for limited water, and second, it increases the potential damage wildfires can inflict on cacti. In a healthy desert ecosystem, plants are relatively isolated from each other, which makes it difficult for a wildfire to spread. "The buffelgrass fills in the areas between the plants," Swann said.

Removing the weed in the park is no easy task. Staff spray buffelgrass with herbicide, and volunteers manually pull out the grass every weekend from mid-October to mid-April. The same areas are treated several years in a row to minimize the chance of the weed's return. Swann said the efforts have been really successful. Several areas have been cleared, and campaigns to remove invasive grasses outside the park are also helping. Still, the buffelgrass is likely here to stay. "We'd certainly never shoot for eradication," Swann said. "That's not possible. What we want to do is reduce that fire threat and protect these native plants."

NICOLAS BRULLIARD is senior editor of National Parks magazine.

FROM PEAK

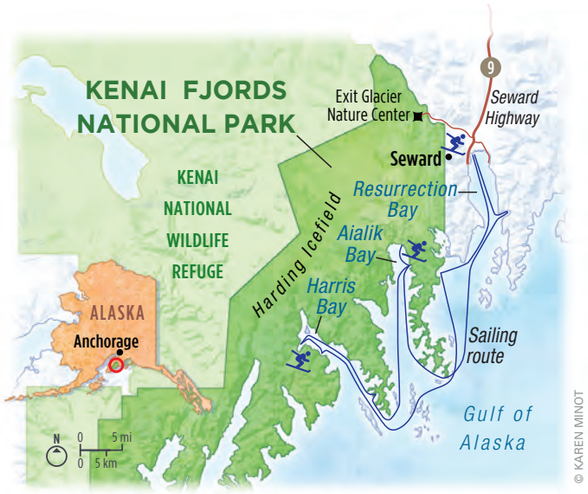
A group of backcountry skiers realized their dream of taking on the remote mountains of Alaska's Kenai Fjords National Park.

Photographer **Craig Wolfrom** documented 10 wild days.

TO SEA

PARTNERS ERIN GRIFFITH AND JACOB CHANEY (in blue), who are both registered paramedics and wildland firefighters, ascend a slope by Aialik Bay. Previous pages: Griffith drops into the fresh powder above Harris Bay (left). On a rare blue-sky day, the group sails in waters off Kenai Fjords National Park (right). Wolfrom took this photo from the dinghy rather than using his drone, in part because of the aircraft's disastrous inaugural outing. As the boat was pulling out of Seward, Wolfrom accidentally flew the drone into one of the mast's guy lines. In the captain's attempt to save the spiraling drone, he cut his palm, prompting an emergency room visit and five stitches.

After four days of inclement weather, sailing through swells as high as 8 feet, navigating a dinghy around motor-stalling sea ice, and skiing through whiteout snow squalls and three avalanches, we awoke to bluebird skies. The glassy Pacific Ocean reflected jagged mountains glowing in the early morning's light. Our floating campsite, a 35-foot Beneteau sailboat, gently bobbed in Northwestern Fjord, which is carved into the southern shore of Alaska's Kenai Fjords National Park. That brilliant morning, our dream of skiing in stellar conditions from mountain peaks down to the sea was looking like it would become a reality.



THE BLUE LINE shows the group's route from Seward to Harris Bay and back.

Our small group rallied to get the backcountry ski gear — avalanche transceivers, shovels, extra clothing, first-aid kit, food and water — loaded into the dinghy quickly, knowing all too well that the weather could change for the worse any minute. Once on shore, we adhered our climbing skins to the bottom of our skis, shouldered our backpacks and zigzagged our way up a glacier through boot-deep powder that became lighter and softer the higher we climbed. The sun steadily shone through an azure sky. On south-facing aspects, avalanches slid toward the valley floors with unsettling frequency, but on the northern slopes, where we were, an intense stillness held.

The natural beauty and quiet of backcountry skiing make it an exhilarating, nearly sacred experience for devotees. Alaska is a holy land where thousands of thrill-seekers undertake annual expeditions to ranges such as the Chugach or Talkeetna mountains. Our foursome of Idaho and Montana skiers were bent on an adventure that would take us even farther off the grid. We found a willing boat captain — who is a ski enthusiast to boot — and after months of careful planning, we set sail in early April from the small Alaska town of Seward to spend 10 days exploring and skiing in Kenai Fjords. The 670,000-acre park boasts dozens of glaciers and scores of peaks, most of which are unnamed; the highest reaches 6,450 feet. Just a fraction of the park's visitors — 412,000 in 2021, most of whom traveled there in the summer — hire bush planes or venture off the park's only road or disembark from their sightseeing boats to ski and hike. So for those like us seeking a remote backcountry adventure, the park is an unparalleled playground.

We finished the day's climb at 3,500 feet above sea level atop a ridge. On one side of the mountain, we could see our trail through the snow and the sailboat far below; the opposite view revealed bay after glacially carved bay extending south all the way to the Gulf of Alaska. We ate a quick lunch then stripped the skins from our skis and pushed off, letting gravity pull us into the downhill powder turns we'd been picturing for months. After skiing halfway down, we stopped, put our skins back on, then used our existing track to climb back up for another run.

Over and over we did this, until our lungs were spent and our legs could not take another turn. As golden afternoon light washed over the mountains, we skied down to the edge of the ocean. After clicking out of our bindings, we dug up the beers we had buried in the snow that morning. Then we sat quietly on the shore by the dinghy, sipping our drinks and grinning and staring with wonder at the glistening tracks we'd left behind.

CRAIG WOLFROM studied photography and creative writing at Montana State University, Bozeman, where he fell in love with backcountry skiing and spent time deep in the mountains. He now lives with his family in Hailey, Idaho, where he continues to nurture his passions for shooting photos, writing and skiing.

CAPTAIN NATHAN STRAUBINGER (at the helm) steers the 35-foot Madrona through the ice on Aialik Bay as Chaney (pointing), Griffith and Baldwin Goodell serve as lookouts (above). Though the group had hoped that much of the distance could be covered with sails unfurled, the winds were frequently too light. Boating still turned out to be a low-carbon method of travel, requiring only about 30 gallons of diesel for the 10-day trip. Left: Griffith and Chaney plot out the next day's routes in the cozy cabin of the Madrona.

THE WINTRY LANDSCAPE of Kenai Fjords National Park (left). Below: Only three people could fit in the dinghy, so every journey to and from the sailboat required two shuttles of skiers and gear. On this day, the first crew had to cut the motor and paddle because of chunks of ice on the bay. Confused by the delay and unable to contact anyone using their VHF radio, Wolfrom and Chaney (who had been left on shore) drew arrows to show where they had gone. "The thought of waiting any longer for the dinghy to return for us with nightfall only hours away, heavy snow falling on our tired bodies, and nearly 5 miles between us and the warmth and safety of the sailboat proved more scary than the three avalanches that had occurred on our backcountry ski tour that day," Wolfrom wrote in an email. Twenty minutes later, they heard the hum of the dinghy's motor. Salvation.

SUNRISE FINDS THE TEAM on the shore of Bulldog Cove, preparing for another day of backcountry skiing (above). Below: Goodell and Griffith watch as Chaney skis in near-whiteout conditions above Aialik Bay. Snowstorms, while expected, occasionally changed the group's well-crafted plans. On one particularly treacherous day, they built a small snow cave on the side of a mountain to wait out a squall. Right: Members of the group retrace their tracks as they head back up to the peak. Over the course of six days, they climbed over 19,000 feet of elevation on their skis.

DURING THEIR TIME in the park, the only human presence the group encountered was a single helicopter that flew overhead. Here, Goodell climbs an unnamed peak above Bulldog Cove.

We're Still Here

Every national park site sits on ancestral lands. So what does it mean to be a Native American working for the Park Service today?

By Katherine DeGroff

ETHAN WHITE CALFE, a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, stands in front of Bartlett Cove in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

NPS/HAILEY BURLEY

ŠINÁ BEAR EAGLE, who is an enrolled member of the Oglala Lakota Nation and a member of the Turtle Mountain Anishinaabe Nation, at the Grand Canyon.

COURTESY OF ŠINÁ BEAR EAGLE

"I AM NOT AN ARTIFACT," said Albert LeBeau III, an archaeologist and cultural resource program manager at Effigy Mounds National Monument in Iowa. "I'm a human being."

LeBeau, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, is forthright about the painful misperceptions he and other Native Americans working at the National Park Service confront on a regular basis. He points to everything from casual word choice to agency decisions that relegate Tribes to the past rather than acknowledging their present-day vibrancy and diversity. Take, for example, Dorothy Fire-Cloud's 2020 appointment to the post of Native American Affairs liaison within the Park Service, he said. LeBeau and others had to fight to keep her position out of the Cultural Resources department. "We're not a resource," he said. "Don't put us under Cultural Resources."

LeBeau believes exposure to an Indigenous perspective is the simplest way to preempt these sorts of missteps. But elevating Native voices requires the presence of Native voices — no small task in the Park Service, where this demographic makes up a slim fraction of the workforce. Despite the agency's efforts to diversify, only 2.5% of its 20,000-plus permanent, seasonal and temporary employees identify as Native American or Alaska Native.

Inevitably, Indigenous staff members face a host of challenges, underpinned by an uncomfortable truth: They are working — and living, in some cases — on lands that were, for the most part, illegally seized by the same entity that signs their paychecks. Many feel torn between representing the U.S. government in their Park Service uniforms and representing the sovereign nations to which they belong. Others say they struggle with a sense of isolation. Some recount instances of federally mandated Tribal consultation (regarding decisions that affect culturally significant areas of parks) that were perfunctory and failed to alter the outcome. At the same time, exhibits, signs, brochures and maps rarely paint the full picture of parks' Native history. And while some parks are working to expand this narrow narrative, chronic underfunding can halt novel interpretation and cultural preservation efforts before they start.

On the other hand, significant strides have been taken by the Park Service in recent years, Indigenous staffers say. Native Americans — for the first time — now lead both the Park Service and the Department of the Interior. Federal guidance encourages national parks to open their doors to traditional plant gathering. Grassroots campaigns to remove names that glorify perpetrators of past atrocities or that are based on ethnic slurs have finally gained traction. And a recent agreement between five Tribes and the federal government to jointly manage Bears Ears National Monument sets a promising precedent for co-stewardship of public lands.

But how much will this visible momentum buoy the individual park employee and how much of it is political posturing? And in this fraught landscape where personal and professional lives blur and unremedied wrongs cast long shadows, how do these staff members walk the line between activism and duty, frustration and hope?

Read on for the candid perspectives of five Park Service employees who wish to remind the world that their stories and their cultures endure, or as LeBeau so pointedly said: "We're still here."

"YA'AT'EEH. My name is Ravis Henry."

Henry was sitting in his parked car, wearing a crimson ball cap and black-framed glasses. Rather than diving straight into the video interview, he paused to introduce himself according to Navajo custom. After giving his English name, he proceeded in Navajo, explaining who he is by explaining who his family is, where he comes from, where he lives and which clans he belongs to. He called himself "Tséyi'nii tsíłkę'," which, he said, translates to "a young person of the canyon." His introduction, he said, "establishes kinship" with other Navajo.

Henry's family has lived in the Canyon de Chelly for generations. Their home, hemmed in by 900-foot sandstone walls, lies 9 miles from the canyon mouth. In this oasis, they raise livestock, tend crops and produce a profusion of fruit in their orchards. They are one of around 40 families who reside within Canyon de Chelly National Monument.

CANYON DE CHELLY NATIONAL MONUMENT, ARIZONA

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RAVIS HENRY
NAVAJO/DINÉ

"ESSENTIALLY, I REPRESENT THREE DIFFERENT PEOPLE. AND ALL THREE DON'T ALWAYS SEE EYE TO EYE."

Today, ownership of the land on which the park sits — just shy of 84,000 acres, including the totality of three canyons — remains with the Navajo Nation, as it has since time immemorial. "A lot of visitors come and say, 'Oh, the park allows people to live here,'" Henry said. "And I turn that around: 'No, the people and the Navajo Nation allow the park to be here and want the park to be here.'"

Growing up as the eldest of eight, Henry recalls being carried on his mother's back as she'd walk down White House Trail and set up her wares — jewelry and crafts — to sell to tourists. While his mother was occupied, Henry would run off to splash in Chinle Wash, if it was flowing, or join games with the other children. He knew people liked to visit his home and that his great-uncle was a park ranger. Beyond that, he knew almost nothing about the Park Service.

That began to change when, as a teenager, he started accompanying his father on the guided tours he led for park visitors. (Because the park is on Tribal land, non-Navajo visitors must have a Native guide to explore the backcountry.) Then in 2009, after a stint at Northern Arizona University, Henry started volunteering at the park. His now-supervisor encouraged him to apply for a seasonal job, which turned into a permanent ranger position in 2012.

Thanks to Henry's gift for storytelling and his knowledge of Tribal relations, he's been detailed to other parks, including Haleakalā National Park in Hawaii and Sitka National Historical Park in Alaska. He also spent a month in 2017 at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve in Colorado where he found himself — for the first time — in the minority as one of the few Indigenous employees.

Over the years, the 34-year-old's appreciation for Canyon de Chelly's predominantly Navajo staff has only deepened. He dreams of a day when other parks have more Native American representation. "That's one of the things I would like to see," Henry said. "More Indigenous people in the green and gray sharing their own stories, managing

their own parks, fighting and working for their people, for these sacred places."

Henry's identities as a park ranger, Navajo Nation member and Canyon de Chelly resident can be tricky to balance. When park or Tribal decisions need to be made, he often finds himself biting his tongue. "Essentially, I represent three different people," he said. "And all three don't always see eye to eye."

In recent years, Henry's commitment to carrying forward what he calls the Navajo lifeways has led him to dive headlong into the role of storyteller for his people and to

MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK, WASHINGTON

COURTESY OF JARED WAHKINNEY; LANDSCAPE: ©KELLY VANDELLEN/SHUTTERSTOCK

JARED WAHKINNEY
COMANCHE

"UNDERSTANDING THESE LANDS AND WHERE WE COME FROM WAS A HUGE PART OF MY UPBRINGING."

apprentice with an uncle who is a traditional medicine man. "Our language and our culture — our identity — are on the verge of being lost," he said.

That's why, though he's open to working anywhere in the National Park System, he'd like to stay within an eight-hour drive of the canyon. If circumstances demand, he could start out at daybreak and be back before nightfall. "I'm grounded to my home," he explained. "I'm grounded to my people."

JARED WAHKINNEY comes from a long line of dispatchers. In fact, his last name means "camp crier" in Comanche, "and here I am as a modern-day camp crier," he said in an interview in May.

The ebullient Oklahoman arrived at Mount Rainier National Park in early 2021, a novice to the field. As he plunged into the fast-paced world of park news, traffic stops, backcountry rescues and odd antics (including a domestic sheep that survived for two months in the park before being captured and re-homed), he came to appreciate the importance of his role. "I'm literally communicating with everybody in the park," he said. "What can I do to help them?" He also began to identify with relatives who served as Comanche code talkers in World War II and his father, who carried on the family legacy when he did a stint as a dispatcher in the U.S. Air Force.

Raised by a Comanche father and a Scottish mother, Wahkinney grew up surrounded by tales of his paternal relatives' movements across the Rockies and into the Plains. "Understanding these lands and where we come from was a huge part of my upbringing and really guides what I do," he said. It wasn't until a sunset detour to the Grand Canyon during a three-week STEM trip with the Native Explorers Foundation in his mid-20s, however, that national parks blinked to life on his mental map of the American West. Prior to that, he said, "I just didn't know that they were out there."

The desire to help other Native youth have their own park epiphanies drove Wahkinney, the father of two, to participate in an initiative called Mountains to Main Street in 2018. Through that program, which supports young leaders as they connect their communities to local parks, Wahkinney took a group of Comanche college students to Chickasaw National Recreation Area and Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Oklahoma. Participants explored their relationship to park land, learned about career opportunities and traditional uses of plants, and erected a teepee. The following year, Wahkinney snagged an internship at Grand Teton National Park, a place he considers "the main hub" of his ancestral lands.

While stationed in the Northwest, the 30-year-old sometimes struggled with the irony of being a Native American working for an agency that manages the spoils of government dispossession. "It's hard being in an area that's ancestral land," he said. "Even if it's not to me, I know it's ancestral land to somebody else."

Still, Wahkinney has also witnessed the slow churn of change. "I think right now the Park Service is engaging with Tribal communities in a different way," he said, pointing to the increasing respect for traditional ecological knowledge. He partly ascribes the shift to the presence of Indigenous employees in positions of power, such as Park Service Director Chuck Sams and Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland.

"Where does it go from here?" he asked. "How do we begin to work with these Tribes to be better for them and their communities and their use of the parks?" In the future, he pictures park and Tribal leadership collaborating on equal footing, government to government, and co-managing park units. "I would love to see that happen," he said.

Wahkinney left Mount Rainier this fall to serve as a park guide at Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum.

COURTESY OF ŠINÁ BEAR EAGLE; LANDSCAPE: ©DERRALD FARNSWORTH-LIVINGSTON

ŠINÁ BEAR EAGLE
OGLALA LAKOTA

"IT'S A PRIVILEGE NOT TO BE A REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUR RACE, TO BE HONEST."

WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH DAKOTA

A SLEEK CAT TAIL WHIPPED in front of Šiná Bear Eagle's computer camera as she described her unconventional path to the Park Service. "It was actually an accident," she said. "I had no intention to work for the Park Service."

Though more than 130,000 acres of the windswept prairies and spirelike buttes of Badlands National Park sit on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where she was raised, Bear Eagle was an adult before she realized part of her homeland was a national park. She was similarly unaware of the federal status of other nearby places, such as Bear Lodge (officially Devils Tower National Monument) and Wind Cave National Park, site of her people's emergence story. "When we visited these sites," she said, "it wasn't because we were going to national parks. It was because we were going to places that were important."

She stumbled into a job at Wind Cave after a friend spotted a Park Service recruitment table in 2013 at the Lakota Nation Invitational, a sporting and academic event, and wrote a Facebook post about the importance of Lakota people working in the Black Hills. Bear Eagle's whirlwind first few weeks as a seasonal ranger quickly dispelled the notion she'd had that the park was merely a "local thing." Other revelations followed. As she waded through unfamiliar bureaucracy and learned the insider terminology, it slowly dawned on her that she was the first Indigenous person many of her teammates had met. That was occasionally frustrating — "it's a privilege not to be a representative of your race, to be honest," she said — but it also motivated her, especially when it came to bringing her perspective to the park's outdated interpretation. She noticed that the linear timeline in the park's museum labeled everything prior to 1881 as "prehistory" and included a cursory reference to Native Americans discovering a breathing hole in the ground. She took exception to the simplification of Wind Cave and to the term prehistory. "It's not history before white people are involved?" she asked.

Bear Eagle, who has since earned a master's degree in American Indian studies, also realized that her fellow interpretive rangers had little grasp of the Native Ameri-

can presence in the area. (Today, more than 20 Tribes are associated with the park.) When a colleague asked her to switch tours because someone in his group wanted to hear about the Lakota emergence from Wind Cave, she was irked but ultimately sympathized. "He was kind of set up to fail," she said, because the park hadn't equipped him with the resources to tell that story.

So, Bear Eagle rolled up her sleeves. She led several staff trainings about Native American history in the area, which had the added benefit of preparing her colleagues to face visitors who treat rangers as a proxy for the U.S. government when they have grievances to air. "The Black Hills are still an extremely contested area," she said, referring to the bitter battle between the Lakota people and the U.S. government in which a 1980 Supreme Court ruling determined the Black Hills (known by the Lakota as "the heart of everything that is") had been illegally taken from the Tribe in 1877. The government awarded cash compensation for the value of the land, but the Lakota refused the money, having never agreed to cede the Black Hills in the first place. "If Lakota people are unhappy with the rangers," Bear Eagle said, "the rangers deserve to know why."

She also drafted a more complete account of local Indigenous history for the museum display panels and addressed the outdated timeline by consulting with Tribal elders and commissioning a winter count — a pictorial calendar that represents the Lakota emergence story — to replace the chronology on the museum wall. Bear Eagle even undertook the sensitive task of documenting the emergence story. "The problem with writing something down is it then becomes almost like a canon, which is not the way that oral histories work," she said. She explained how the story she tells has continued to evolve and how the act of giving it breath gives her rendition life. Despite her initial reservations, Bear Eagle decided that recording a version of the tale and permitting the video to be posted on Wind Cave's website would benefit those Lakota, park staff and visitors who'd never hear it otherwise.

Though she left the park in 2018 to work at other sites, from Grand Canyon National Park to Gateway National Recreation Area, her connection to Wind Cave eventually led her back. This fall, she took up a one-year temporary position there as a cultural training specialist.

She speaks reverently about first walking into the cave as a child 25 years ago. "My hands were shaking as I walked down the stairwell," she said. "I could just feel the power of that place." Overcome with a desire to permanently connect herself to Wind Cave, Bear Eagle left a few strands of her hair in the honeycombed cavern. Because the Lakota people believe that one's spirit is connected to one's hair, her long-ago tribute was her small way "to ensure that my spirit and my soul would come back to that place," she said.

COURTESY OF ETHAN WHITE CALFE

ETHAN WHITE CALFE
MANDAN, HIDATSA AND ARIKARA

"I TRY AND MAKE IT MY MISSION TO GO TO THESE PLACES AND TELL THE STORIES THAT WEREN'T BEING TOLD."

ETHAN WHITE CALFE wears many hats. He's co-owner of a family cattle ranch that lies mostly on Fort Berthold Reservation land in North Dakota. He's a part-time painter, blending modern motifs with designs he's seen on parfleche items (rawhide containers fashioned by Plains Indians). He's an NPCA volunteer, serving on the organization's national council and elsewhere over the years. He's also the grandson of Gerard Baker (pictured above in 2019), who was the highest-ranking Native American in the Park Service at the time of his retirement in 2010.

And while his three older siblings trod a path into the medical field, White Calfe followed in Baker's steps, landing a seasonal internship at Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, what he calls his "home park," in 2012. He spent several six-month stints at the Missouri River site before securing gigs at Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks and, this summer, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, where he doffed his cowboy boots and found his sea legs.

Like Ravis Henry and others, White Calfe envisions a day when there are many more Indigenous people telling their own stories from their own homelands. Until then, he said, "I try and make it my mission to go to these places and tell the stories that weren't being told about the people who were there and how they lived." This frequently involves after-hours research, informal interviews and, ultimately, securing permission to share the words entrusted to him.

Occasionally, there are hard realities he feels need telling. As an interpretive ranger in Yellowstone, for example, he regaled tourists with the saga of the bison's brush with extinction. "The federal government slaughtered the herds" as a way to force Native Americans to cede lands and accept treaties, White Calfe said. Drawing attention to this as a federal employee was a little "weird," he admitted, but his supervisors supported him. He recalls being told: "We're here to interpret the truth even if it doesn't paint us in the greatest light."

During his time with the Park Service, he's accumulated a few anecdotes about how *not* to work with Tribes — namely, belatedly and with a predetermined course of action in mind — but he was inspired by what he saw at Glacier Bay over the summer. The 29-year-old spoke animatedly about the park's increased collaboration with the Huna Tlingit people and how a building dedicated in 2016 — Xunaa Shuká Hít, or simply the Tribal House — serves as a cultural anchor on the shores of Bartlett Cove. "It's a place where they're always able to come back and say, 'This is my home, here in this place,'" he said.

White Calfe especially appreciates how the Park Service encourages interpreters to use Native monikers when referring to landscape features at Glacier Bay. This stands in stark contrast to what he saw in parks in the lower 48, such as Yellowstone, where some landmarks bear the names of "notorious Indian killers and bison killers," and it can feel like Indigenous footprints have been wiped off the land, he said.

It's little surprise then that one of his grandfather's most visible accomplishments — leading the effort to secure a 1991 name change for Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument — is a source of family pride. (The park was previously named for Lt. Col. George Custer, who led the U.S. Army in a failed 1876 charge against a contingent of Arapaho, Cheyenne and Lakota.) Angry opponents leveled death threats at Baker when the proposal was under consideration. "But he knew he was in the right, and he went through with it," White Calfe said. "I think that that's pretty amazing."

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THE AURORA BOREALIS sets off Glacier Bay's Tribal House, the first permanent Huna Tlingit clan house in their ancestral homeland since a glacier overran their villages in the 1700s.

White Calfe's seasonal position at Glacier Bay ended in September. He has since returned to North Dakota.

ALBERT LEBEAU III LIKES TO TELL PEOPLE that, as a Native American archaeologist, he's an oxymoron. He has spent his professional life reconciling two worlds: an archaeological world founded on neat categorization and a Native world indelibly tied to oral history and tradition; a world in which he works for a federal agency and a world in which he is, in his own words, "a ward of the United States government." (Like many Native Americans in a federally recognized Tribe, LeBeau has a number assigned to him by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood distills his family tree to a blood quantum. "I'm pedigreed. Like an animal," he said. "So are my grandkids.")

LeBeau, 47, grew up in South Dakota on the poverty-stricken Cheyenne River Reservation. He was exposed to death at an early age, losing family members and friends to violence, accidents and suicide. More recently, 22 relatives died of COVID-19. LeBeau also was deeply influenced by the intergenerational trauma inflicted on his family by the

EFFIGY MOUNDS NATIONAL MONUMENT, IOWA

ALBERT LEBEAU III
CHEYENNE RIVER SIOUX

"MY HEART STARTS RACING, MY HANDS START SWEATING, WHEN I FIND AN ARTIFACT."

NPS; LANDSCAPE: COURTESY OF NPS/ETHAN COTÉ

forced boarding of Native American youth at faraway schools, a practice that extended into the 1960s and directly affected some 100,000 children. "My father and grandmother are boarding school survivors," LeBeau said. "The stories they told me about boarding school — and those are the ones that are PG, family-friendly stories — are horrible."

Despite their own scarring experiences, LeBeau's parents and grandparents prioritized education — both what could be learned through traditional avenues (that is, oral history as shared by the Tribe) and through the American school system. He found the latter, which he calls being "European educated," to be woefully lacking. He recalls opening a history book in high school and finding only a handful of chapters on Native Americans. "This isn't right," he remembers thinking. "I know this isn't right."

He considered becoming a historian, partly to challenge this blinkered view of the past, before settling on the field of archaeology. Digging in the dirt like his childhood idol Indiana Jones, LeBeau decided, would grant him a greater understanding of who came before, what their lives were like and why they did what they did. "That's where history starts," he said. "Real history comes from boots on the ground."

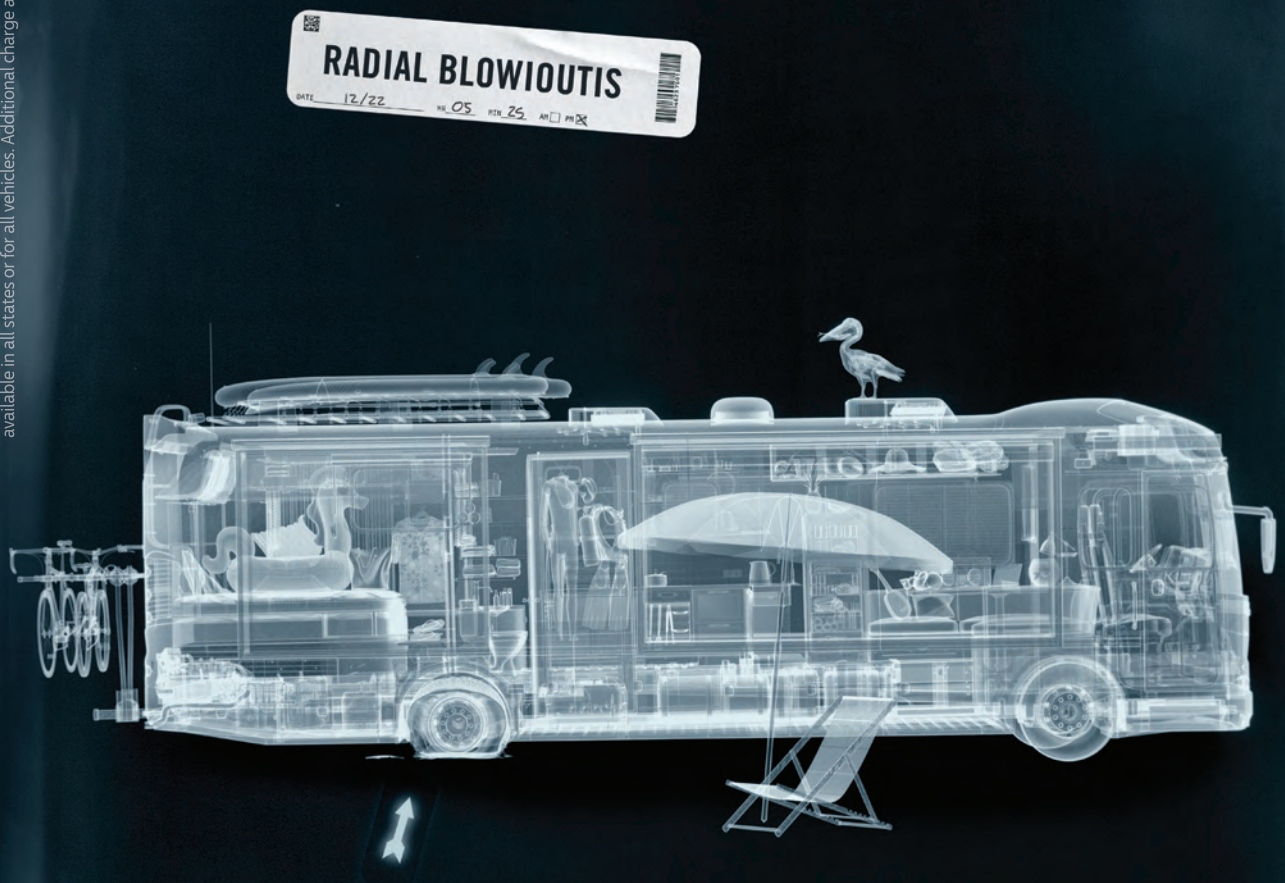
LeBeau's three decades as an archaeologist include 15 years with the Park Service. Before arriving at Effigy Mounds in 2013, he worked in Nebraska out of the Park Service's Midwest Archaeological Center and traveled to more than two dozen parks, from the forts of Kansas to the Apostle Islands in Wisconsin. He loved learning about these places, and he loved the clarity of his mission: "All I had to do was get up and go to work and dig a hole," he said with his trademark humor and self-deprecation.

The patience LeBeau developed while painstakingly excavating and processing artifacts paid off when he arrived at Effigy Mounds and walked into a managerial quagmire. The site is only now regaining Tribal trust after a former superintendent illegally removed 41 sets of human remains from the park in 1990. (The repatriation process is ongoing.) LeBeau said it took him and his former supervisor nearly a decade of transparency and fence-mending to reestablish credibility.

At times, LeBeau finds being one of the agency's few Native Americans "mind-numbingly isolating." He credits an employee working group that he co-chairs with routinely talking him down from the metaphorical ledge. CIRCLE, which stands for Council for Indigenous Relevancy, Communication, Leadership and Excellence, allows park staff "to kind of decompress and be ourselves and talk to each other in a manner that isn't prescribed," he said.

In the end, though new challenges arise and some old obstacles persist, LeBeau keeps showing up for work for one simple reason: He loves his job. "As an archaeologist, I still get a thrill," he said. "My heart starts racing, my hands start sweating, when I find an artifact." Whether it's a lithic scraper or just a flake of stone, he cups it in his palm and thinks: "The last person to see this was probably my ancestor, 4,000, 5,000, 6,000 years ago," he said. "That is awesome."

KATHERINE DEGROFF is associate editor of National Parks magazine.



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"SUPAMAN"
Oil on canvas, 2018

LAND OF STEAM

AN APSÁALOOKE WRITER SHARES THREE STORIES THAT SHED LIGHT ON HIS PEOPLE'S CONNECTIONS TO THE LANDS OF YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK.

BY SHANE DOYLE • ARTWORK BY DEL CURFMAN

STORIES ARE AN INTEGRAL PART of the human condition, and they are the most powerful tools we have to shape our understanding of the universe and guide our paths forward. Both old stories and new have the power to inform us, entertain us and bring us together as kindred folk. Whether told through living breath or signs on paper, the oldest stories inspire us to consider the human roots of our modern world: Where do we come from, what makes us special, and how can we honor our ancestors, ourselves and future generations? Ancient stories about a homeland are a deep kind of knowledge that allows us to know the place — not just with our heads, but with our hearts — and that is true whether or not you are Indigenous to a place.

Yellowstone National Park is an ancient Native homeland, and at least 27 Tribal Nations maintain strong connections to sacred sites within the park. My Tribe, the Apsáalooke (Crow), know it as Awé Púawishe, the Land of Steam, and our intimate knowledge of this land goes back centuries.

Growing up on the Crow Indian Reservation in the 1970s and '80s, I wasn't aware of the significance of the park to my Tribe or my family. Colonial calamities such as forced relocation, smallpox epidemics, warfare, Indian boarding schools and modern education systems devoid of Native American content or perspective all worked against my Tribe's oral tradition of passing knowledge down to the next generation. Many of my peers and I simply didn't learn about the age-old, rich cultural connection to the Land of Steam held by our ancestors. When I first visited Old Faithful as an 8-year-old tourist from Crow Agency, Montana, I was oblivious to the importance of the place to my great-great-grandparents. As I aged and matured, I sought to learn as much as I could about my culture – turning to Tribal elders, oral historians and rare written materials such as ethnographies. Learning about my Tribe's history in Yellowstone and the stories associated with it, I realized that this sacred homeland was the source of many foundational aspects of my culture and my ancestors' understanding of the world.

Our long history and deep knowledge of the Land of Steam are reflected in the many Apsáalooke place names located throughout Yellowstone that tell of a complex and profound relationship between the people and the landscape. Here are three ancient

"RHYTHM OF THE SONG"
Oil on canvas, 2021

Apsáalooke origin stories about some of Yellowstone's most prominent landmarks.

WHERE ELK RIVER BEGINS/IICHÍILIKAASHAASHE ALACHILICHE *(YELLOWSTONE LAKE)*

Yellowstone Lake has several Apsáalooke names, including Where the Elk Flirt and Elk Lake, that relate to the herds of elk that return in the spring and the summer, following an ancient migration pattern. It's no surprise that Yellowstone's largest lake, a body of water surrounded by geologic and hydrothermal wonders, represented a source of primordial power to the Apsáalooke community, and the stories about the place reflect that importance. These oral traditions help explain unique behavioral aspects of the region's wildlife, seasonal weather phenomena, and even human nature and our relationship to the animal kingdom. One noteworthy story about the lake touches on all these themes and provides insight into the Apsáalooke cosmological belief system.

Apsáalooke philosophy divides the universe into three realms. First is the Above World, where the stars, birds and clouds reside. The second is the Surface of the Earth, where many powerful beings exist and are generally identified as plants, animals and minerals. The third is Under Water/Earth, where beings such as fish, otters and turtles reign supreme. Otters are regarded by the Apsáalooke as the most dominant of all water beings. Within this tri-layered universe, there is a natural flow and tension between and among all living things.

One very old story, as shared by Apsáalooke elder Harry Bull Shows, is as follows: In the time of bows and arrows lived a great hunter. He was so skilled that he always brought home meat, and because he wore an antelope hide on his back as a disguise, he became known as Packs Antelope. Above Yellowstone Lake, a pair of Thunderbirds, eaglelike figures, lived on top of a high butte that no one could climb. Every spring, the eaglets fledged and shook off their downy feathers, which the wind would carry down to the lake, where they would collect on the water like driftwood. A powerful and crafty long-bodied otter creature lived in the depths of the lake. When he would see the feathers, he would use his powers to cause a heavy fog that cloaked the butte. Under the fog's cover, he would climb the steep mountain and devour the young Thunderbirds.

The devastated Thunderbird parents had seen Packs Antelope hunt and knew he was very skillful with his bow, so they decided to ask him to kill the long otter beast. One day, when Packs Antelope grew drowsy after a hunt, he lay down to rest. The male Thunderbird took him away in his talons and carried him to the butte. When Packs Antelope awoke, he was surprised to find out where he was. He looked over the edge, and the wind blew upward into his face. It was impossible to descend. Then he heard two eaglets crying, "Save us, save us, save us, brother." He asked why they cried, and they explained: Every spring, their parents had two hatchlings, and when they fledged, a fog would develop, and the long otter would come out of the lake and eat them. These eaglets were just starting to lose their downy feathers.

Suddenly, a fierce storm blew in, thunder boomed, and lightning struck the butte. It was the father Thunderbird. He told Packs Antelope, "Don't be afraid. I'm the one who brought you here. I want you to use your skills to kill the beast that eats my children." Packs Antelope said he would do his best.

That night, Packs Antelope could feel the fog setting in, and the next morning the air was completely clouded. Packs Antelope took his bow and all his arrows in his left hand and climbed to a sheltered spot below the nest. Soon, he could hear and smell the long otter coming. When Packs Antelope could see the long otter's head, he sent an arrow into its neck. It opened its mouth in pain, and Packs Antelope shot another arrow into its throat. He could hear it falling and rocks tumbling. The sun rose higher, and the fog lifted. Packs Antelope could see that the long otter was dead at the base of the butte.

The male Thunderbird called all the birds to feast on the dead

A LONG-STANDING PRESENCE

The archaeological evidence shows that Native communities have lived in the Yellowstone area for over 12,000 years. Our own oral histories recall that many generations ago, a prophetic dream by visionary leader No Vitals guided my Apsáalooke ancestors, who were farmers, from the Great Lakes region to the sacred and magical Land of Steam. They and their descendants trekked across thousands of miles to their new homeland, where they set aside their agricultural heritage and became hunters, gatherers and traders. Over time, they learned that the Land of Steam had many unique qualities and was a source of untold spiritual power. They maintained a presence there until the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty moved the boundaries of the reservation far to the east, and our connection to the Yellowstone country was legally severed. Despite being officially removed from the place in 1868, my Apsáalooke community has not forgotten about our ancient homeland.

animal. Hawks and eagles of all varieties came to eat. Then Packs Antelope said, "Those are my sacred arrows. I want them back in one piece, without a scratch." The Thunderbird called the cliff swallows, since they build their nests in little places. A whole bunch of swallows went into the mouth of the long otter. They could be heard inside the beast, chirping and flittering around. Soon the swallows returned with the two arrows undamaged.

Then the Thunderbird said, "I am going to make a special shield to show my appreciation for your help. When you meet an enemy, never attack first. Use this shield to protect yourself, then you shoot him with your arrows. This way you will always win." On the shield, the male Thunderbird painted two Thunderbirds, a male and a female. He then grabbed Packs Antelope in his claws, flew over the great lake and returned him to his people.

THE BULL/CHÍILAPE *(DRAGON'S MOUTH)* AND MOUNTAIN LION/ IISHPÍIA *(MUD VOLCANO)*

Apsáalooke and other Indigenous people of the Northern Plains are expert sky watchers, and much of their ceremonial way of life is embodied in their respect for the sun, moon, planets and stars. In Yellowstone, ancient stories shared by the Apsáalooke, Blackfeet and others explain the creation of important geologic features on and within the ground. The story of the Dragon's Mouth and the Mud Volcano are powerful examples of this circle of knowledge.

There are several known versions of this story, and all vary slightly, but the general narrative remains the same. In the beginning, the Sun tricked a Native woman into marrying him and starting a family in the sky. Their son became the Morning Star. But the woman was lonesome and longed to return to the ground, where her family and loved ones were left behind. When she finally escaped and used a rope to lower herself and her son to the ground, the Sun became enraged and threw a rock down on her, killing her and leaving their son an orphan on the Earth. He was raised by an old grandmother figure who taught him to be a good person and use his special powers to help people. As he grew, he did many good deeds, including rescuing the people from an evil and giant bison bull who was sucking them into his stomach. Before returning to the sky to be with his father and other relatives, he transformed the giant bison into the hot spring

"SISTER'S WAY"
Oil on canvas, 2018

"MOTHER'S KNOWLEDGE"
Oil on canvas, 2020 (below)

now known as the Dragon's Mouth and placed a mountain lion nearby, in the boiling mud pot that today is called Mud Volcano, to keep watch over the bull in case it ever returns to life. This explains the growling and rumbling sounds that emanate from these mysterious holes in the earth.

RED WOMAN'S DIGGING STICK/HÍSSHISHTAWIA ISBACHÍPE *(LIBERTY CAP)*

The hot springs at Mammoth are also graced by a significant cultural landmark: Red Woman's Digging Stick. Standing prominently in front of the Mammoth Terraces, this 37-foot-high and 10-foot-wide limestone formation is known today as the Liberty Cap. It was named so by geologist Ferdinand Hayden in 1871 because it reminded him of the rounded peasant hats worn during the French Revolution and depicted on early American coins. This noteworthy travertine structure is a cultural nexus point — its transcendent story connects every Tribe of the region. The oral tradition that illuminates the origin of the Digging Stick also explains the creation of a star pattern that includes the constellation better known as Orion. The part of the story of Red Woman that relates to the Divine Twins is known by the Apsáalooke from the east, Blackfeet from the north, Shoshone from the south and Salish from the west. Although their languages are mutually unintelligible and their histories in the region are all separate and distinct, all these Tribes share a version of this epic tale.

The story begins with a married couple living on their own and preparing to start a family. They were happy and doing well, until one day when the husband left his pregnant wife alone to go hunting. While he was gone, an evil and stealthy monster, Red Woman, visited the wife and took advantage of her kindness and generosity, killing her and attempting to do the same to her unborn babies. Red Woman disposed of the twins by throwing one in a nearby spring and the other behind the lining of the poor couple's teepee. The babies survived against all odds, and their names became Thrown Behind the Liner and Thrown Into the Spring. According to the story, Thrown Into the Spring became a creature of the water before his father transformed him back into a human when he was a toddler by taking him into a sweat lodge and making it so hot that he remembered who he really was. Having recovered from their near-death experiences, the twins now had super strength and resiliency, and they sought to be a force of good in the world by ridding the land of all monsters, including the one that took their mother from them — Red Woman. Eschewing their father's warning to avoid her, they chose to track her down and make her accountable for her sins. When they finally found her, she ran from them into the night sky, but they caught her and used their knives to exact revenge — cutting off her hand and leaving it in the heavens, while her digging stick fell to earth. The constellation Orion is the palm of her hand, with her fingers stretching out and beyond, and her stick became the travertine feature of Mammoth Hot Springs.

"GRANDFATHER'S KNOWLEDGE"
Oil on canvas, 2019

The Divine Twins story unites people across the mountains, plateaus, prairies and valleys, and it extends well beyond the borders of today's national park, illustrating the centrality of Yellowstone as a homeland for many Tribes. Yellowstone has been bringing diverse people together since time immemorial, which may be this extraordinary place's greatest legacy: providing our chaotic material world with an ancient connection to nature that we all can understand from the heart.

DR. SHANE DOYLE, Apsáalooke, is a cultural consultant based in Bozeman, Montana. His work includes archaeological and genetic research, curriculum design, environmental advocacy, performance art production and Plains Indian-style singing. Doyle helped to commemorate Yellowstone National Park's 150th anniversary by coordinating the installation of the All Nations Teepee Village at the Madison Junction in August 2022.

DEL CURFMAN is an Apsáalooke artist based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The artwork featured here is part of his "Vanishing Series," which is a direct response to the misguided narrative that Native American peoples are endangered and people of the past. To refute these misrepresentations, his paintings celebrate the contemporary regalia, dance, songs and culture that demonstrate the vibrancy of Native American communities.

HISTORIC TRAVEL **DESTINATIONS**

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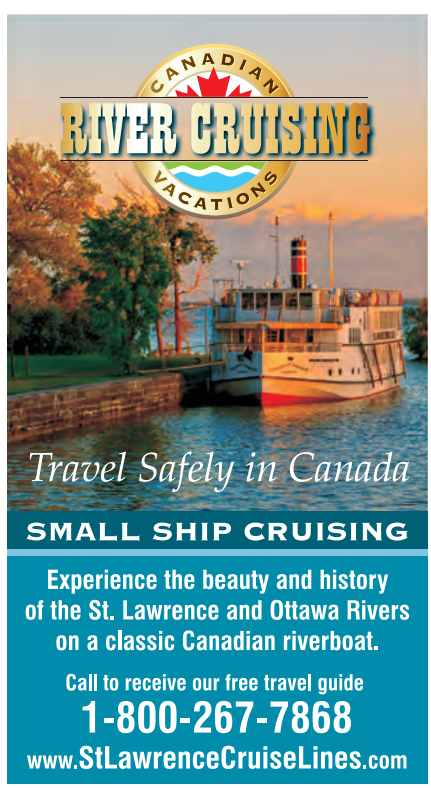

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And, of course, the entire region is brimming with foodie-pleasing dining establishments, offering local farm-to-table cuisine in a wide variety of styles. Enjoy unique, contemporary meals prepared by award-winning chefs, experience a period-specific food prepared in a landmark setting, or grab a quick bite at a popular pizza joint. To help warm you up, craft beers, wines, ciders, mead, and spirits produced in Adams County can be found along the Adams County Pour Tour, a popular beverage trail.

Make your own history in Gettysburg!

Courtesy Laura Romin

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Courtesy ©Visit Pensacola

A PARK EMPLOYEE plugs in an electric vehicle at Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.

NPS/HERBERT

Electrifying Parks

Will national parks build enough electric vehicle charging stations to meet the growing demand? An EV devotee sets out for Yellowstone to get some answers.

LAST YEAR, we brought home our first electric car, a plucky 2012 Nissan Leaf we found on a used-car lot in Spokane, three hours from our house in Missoula, Montana. My husband and I had been drooling over the idea of an electric vehicle for months but couldn't afford one of the newer models. So we picked up a first-generation Leaf and quickly became EV believers.

I love not burning gas (and not paying for it). I love how low-maintenance the car is. It's smooth, zippy and really fun to drive. And it came with a new hobby: trying to figure out exactly how far our EV could take us. Early on, as I was perusing the map of charging stations on the ChargeHub app, a constellation of lightning-bolt icons in northwest Wyoming caught my eye — charging stations in Yellowstone National Park? Could we possibly road trip to one of our favorite destinations in the Leaf?

To my great disappointment, no. Our EV has a maximum range of about 70 miles. That might be enough to travel between the charging stations inside the park, but maybe not: Range varies by driving conditions, and going uphill zaps the battery faster. No matter, because we couldn't even drive to Yellowstone itself. The nearest charging

station to Missoula heading southeast on I-90 is 118 miles away — too far for a 10-year-old battery. Reluctantly, we ended up taking a regular gas car to Yellowstone in September. But my experience is getting less common every day. EV technology has evolved rapidly over the last decade: Most new models boast at least 200 miles of range, and many can go more than 300 miles on a single charge. If the parade of Teslas we saw in the park is any indication, the national park EV road trip is already entirely possible.

With their remote locations, vast spaces and the limited-to-nonexistent public transit options to reach them, many national parks require a car to visit. But as we've known for decades, gas-powered cars create significant carbon emissions, which is bad news for the global climate. National parks themselves face mounting threats from climate change, from sea level rise in the Everglades to thawing permafrost at Denali National Park. At Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone, researchers predict hotter days, reduced snowpack, and more frequent and intense wildfires, which lead to increased air pollution from smoky skies. The less carbon we emit, the more manageable these changes will be.

That's where EVs come in. They generate significantly fewer carbon emissions than gas cars and spew zero tailpipe exhaust. (They're not carbon-free, though, as most utilities are still burning fossil fuels to produce the electricity used to power the cars.) In addition, EVs have immediate benefits. They're quiet, preserving the natural soundscape, and they don't produce local air pollution — a major plus at parks where lines of cars idle in entrance lines or bear and bison jams.

"The national parks are all about environmental stewardship," said Alicia Cox, executive director of the Yellowstone-Teton Clean Cities Coalition, a nonprofit affiliated with the Department of Energy that is dedicated to advancing the use of alternative fuels. Providing charging infrastructure should be a crucial piece of that mission. All EV drivers watch the range estimator on their cars with rapt attention: This dashboard number displays about how many more miles the car can go until the battery is depleted. If you can't reach the next charging station before that number zeroes out, you're stuck — at least for a while.

Seattle driver Mary Purdy knows "range anxiety" well. In September, Purdy and her husband took their 6-year-old Nissan Leaf, which gets a max range of 95 miles, up to Olympic National Park's Hurricane Ridge, an alpine zone at the top of a steep, winding road. "As we were ascending, the miles [on the range estimator] were just going down and down," she said. "We reached the visitor center with 11 miles left. I was having an anxiety attack, 'We're going to be stranded!'" Thanks to an EV's ability to recharge itself on downhills, Purdy's car made it to the nearest charging station in a gateway town. Still, "the visitor center absolutely should have EV stations to ensure that you can enjoy as much of the park as possible," she said.

Right now, pulling off an electron-powered road trip takes prep work. "You have to plan — it's not like you're going to find a gas station at the corner," said Deb Van Geest, a Tesla Model Y driver from Ontario I met at the trailhead to Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone's South Rim. She'd prebooked a campsite at Fishing Bridge RV Park and used an adapter that lets her plug into an RV

NPCA AT WORK

Planning a national park road trip with your electric car typically involves a bit of online sleuthing to plot out charging stations along your route and within the parks. To help, NPCA has been designing a map (scheduled for release this winter) that puts everything you need within a click. With just a pan and a zoom, you'll be able to determine that Rocky Mountain National Park, for example, has zero in-park charging stations, but that the gateway of Estes Park counts nearly a dozen, including one just outside the park entrance.

The map, which pulls from federal databases, also details which parks offer public transit, such as the shuttle at Zion National Park. Making that information more widely available to visitors is critical to combating traffic woes in many of the most popular national parks, said Karen Hevel-Mingo, NPCA's director of sustainability and climate change. She's working with other staff members and allies to think through how to expand park access for visitors of all income levels and physical abilities without sacrificing park resources.

Recently, NPCA successfully fought for legislation that would help the Park Service replace some of its aging buses with electric ones. Not only will electric shuttles alleviate congestion on roads and free up more visitors to take in the sights, but they'll also help make park skies healthier for all. A win-win.

—K.D.

"It's the Wild West from an EV charging standpoint."

electrical hookup, a trick that turns equipped campgrounds into de facto charging stations. Ryan Nelson, a Tesla owner from South Dakota, told me he'd plotted out and screenshotted the locations of all the park's chargers ahead of time and chose his lodging according to the nearest stations. As more infrastructure becomes available, these trips will be easier.

Parks are taking steps in the right direction. Currently, 27 national parks, from Biscayne in Florida to Yosemite in California, offer a total of 100 EV charging stations to the public, according to Jennifer Madello, manager of the National Park Service's park facility management division. Most are so-called Level 2 stations, which can fully top up an EV in four to 10 hours (making them ideal for people spending substantial time at a single destination, particularly overnight guests), with some direct-current fast chargers, which juice up a car in less than an hour (perfect for road trippers on the go). Yellowstone's Level 2s are sited throughout the park at major destinations with hotels, and chargers in the gateways of West Yellowstone and Gardiner in Montana greatly expand the area's EV capacity.

That's a good start, but the parks have work to do. "We've got enough options at the moment to meet the demand," said Dylan Hoffman, director of sustainability for Yellowstone National Park Lodges, "but demand is going to explode." He's already seen the use of one of the chargers in the park's Mammoth area skyrocket 572% from 2017 to 2021, for example. And experts expect the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, with its incentives to make buying an EV more affordable, to supercharge the U.S. market. Power infrastructure to match will be essential to make an EV park road trip not only feasible but enjoyable. Imagine cruising into Old Faithful with 20% battery power, only to discover you're fifth in line for one of the area's only two charging ports. Hoffman hasn't heard many complaints about EV drivers jostling for plugs, but Yellowstone isn't yet set up for a crush of battery-powered vehicles: The park's chargers don't offer reservations or set time limits. While in the park, I saw a gas car parked in one of Canyon Village's precious EV spots, seemingly without consequences. "It's the Wild West from an EV charging standpoint," he said.

Park officials recognize the need for updated infrastructure, but "it's not straightforward — just go and put a charging station over there," noted Lynn Chan, project manager of Yellowstone's sustainability program. Park staff must consider everything from electrical capacity to preserving historic buildings to how much light a charger emits in places dedicated to protecting dark skies. And the installation of charging stations often involves trenching for electrical cords, which requires going through an environmental compliance process. Still, Chan said Yellowstone is now looking at adding fast chargers in select locations.

Money is another major hurdle. The Park Service is currently working on a systemwide plan to expand EV charging, Madello said, but "our biggest challenge is a lack of funding to do this." Thus far, many parks have turned to outside help to foot the bill: A partnership with BMW paid for 100 charging stations built in and near various park sites between 2017 and 2019, and Yellowstone funded its chargers, installed between 2015 and 2018, through a Department of Energy grant facilitated by the Yellowstone-Teton Clean Cities Coalition.

If current trends hold, you'll soon be as likely to spot a Ford F-150 Lightning or Chevy Bolt as a white-tailed deer in a national park. Falling prices and rapidly improving battery technology point to a coming surge of EVs on the road, and the parks are pushing to meet the challenge. Just a few years ago, EV chargers in the parks were a nice-to-have amenity, said Cox of the Yellowstone-Teton Clean Cities Coalition. "In the past year, the conversation has switched, and it's an essential."

Our Leaf can't handle a park road trip right now, but without a doubt, our next car will be able to pull it off.

©MARK HRYCIW/DREAMSTIME.COM

Before settling into a career as a freelance writer and editor, Missoula, Montana-based **ELISABETH KWAK-HEFFERAN** worked at Rocky Mountain and Great Smoky Mountains national parks.

AFTER THE 1947 FIRE cleared the conifers and allowed sunlight to reach the ground, beech, oak, aspen and maple were able to proliferate.

Blazes and Colors

The 1947 fire ravaged Acadia National Park — and transformed the park's autumnal display.

THICK-LIMBED OAK, beech and maple trees towered over my wife, Chrissy, and me, as we pedaled along a carriage road in Acadia National Park a few days after Labor Day. A scattering of crimson leaves danced across the gravel, foreshadowing the brilliant colors that would appear in the coming weeks.

The red, yellow and orange fall foliage seems like quintessential Acadia, so it's hard to fathom that the trees that put on such a glorious display every year have not always been so prevalent. In large part, the deciduous trees are growing here courtesy of a wildfire that burned much of the park just 75 years ago.

Mount Desert Island, where most of the park is located, is generally cool and damp, even in the summer. High temperatures rarely crest 80 degrees. Annual precipitation typically measures more than 50 inches, and locals joke that the month of "Fogust" falls between July and September.

But in the late summer of 1947, the island was fog free, hot and achingly dry due to a drought that extended across New England. Throughout the Northeast, fire danger was raised to the highest level, and fire lookout towers, typically shut down in early September, were reopened.

The blaze that ravaged Mount Desert Island started on October 17 near a dump outside of Bar Harbor, the island's hub for park visitors, but no one knows for sure what caused it. Bar Harbor's fire department responded minutes after the first call came in. Acadia's firefighters soon joined the effort, and over the next three days, the crews confined the fire to 169 acres of dry marsh grass and kept it out of the nearby forests.

Then in the early morning of the 21st, the still-smoldering grasses flamed up again, fueled by fresh winds. The revived blaze swept north and south into timbered hills. By afternoon, the southern front jumped Eagle Lake Road and entered Acadia. The flames spread into the crowns of trees and threw out embers that started more spot fires, and soon the woods along the western shore of Eagle Lake were ablaze.

For the next two days, shifting winds drove the two fronts in one direction then another and another, complicating the task of fire crews, aided by local and federal reinforcements, as they battled the flames in Acadia and private lands north of the park. On the afternoon

"It was an awful scramble — women running through smoke with household goods and crying babies in their arms."

of the 23rd, a dry cold front ushered in gale-force winds that made the fire even more intense. The violent gusts pushed one front down Millionaires' Row — a stretch of Gilded Age mansions outside of town — and directly toward Bar Harbor. As the flames raced toward town, 2,500 residents fled to the athletic fields just south of Bar Harbor. "It was an awful scramble — women running through smoke with household goods and crying babies in their arms," a resident told an Associated Press reporter.

For a few hours, all roads out of town were closed off by the flames, and hundreds of people fled to the municipal pier where boats ferried them to safety as the sea foamed with whitecaps. When the road north was finally bulldozed clear, the remaining 2,000 residents piled into a caravan of 700 cars, buses and military trucks. Those in the open-air trucks covered themselves with wet blankets and tarps for protection from the falling embers.

Meanwhile, the southern arm of the fire tore through Acadia, scorching the eastern side of Cadillac Mountain, the Bubbles and several other peaks, before pushing all the way to the ocean at Great Head. "It was a bad dream, a terrific nightmare," firefighter William Sheldon Jr. said in an interview with United Press. "It was enough to drive anyone out of their minds."

Finally, on the 24th, the winds subsided. It took three more days to bring the stubborn blaze under control, though it wasn't officially declared out until November 14, four weeks after it first started.

When the evacuees returned, the scene was devastating. The fire burned more than 17,000 acres across Mount Desert Island and Acadia. Most of Acadia's iconic structures — including the popular Jordan Pond House restaurant — as well as Bar Harbor's business district survived, but 67 of Millionaires' Row's grand estates, along with five historic hotels and 170 other Bar Harbor-area homes, were destroyed.

Only five people died in the Mount Desert Island fire. A military officer and a young girl died from injuries sustained in a car accident during the harrowing flight out of town, and an elderly man, last seen running into the basement of his burning home to rescue his cat, never came back out. Two other residents, already ill, died from heart attacks. In the coming years, 1947 became known as "The Year Maine Burned." All told, over 200,000 acres of the state burned that fall, and 16 people died.

Today, the fire's impact is etched across Acadia, even if blackened snags have long since disappeared. The stately hardwood forests that cover much of the park's eastern core weren't nearly as widespread before the fire. Back then, thick groves of conifer trees — spruce, balsam fir and eastern white pine — dominated most of Acadia. After the fire cleared the conifers and allowed sunlight to reach the ground, beech, oak, aspen and maple were able to take root and proliferate. But new generations of shade-tolerant conifers now grow toward the leafy spread above them. In the coming centuries, they'll likely take over the park again.

For their part, Acadia officials aren't terribly concerned about another

THE BAR HARBOR FIRE as seen from the village of Town Hill.

WILLIS HUMPHREYS BALLARD/SOUTHWEST HARBOR PUBLIC LIBRARY

conflagration like the one in 1947. The day before our bike ride, I met with Jesse Wheeler, the park's vegetation program manager, and Kate Miller, a National Park Service forest ecologist.

According to Miller, 1947's severe drought was an anomaly, as was the stand-replacing fire it fueled. The Wabanaki didn't really use fire here as so many Indigenous Tribes did across North America, she explained. In Maine's damp coastal forests, up to 1,000 years would pass between large fire events. "Our primary disturbance regimes are winter storms, wind events and insect infestations, not fire," she said.

Because the likelihood of severe fire is so low, Acadia doesn't actively manage ladder fuel — downed trees, shrubs and other low-hanging vegetation — to reduce the risk. "Fuels management could actually be detrimental to our ecological management goals," Miller said, further explaining that when a June 2021 storm dumped several inches of rain in just 24 hours, erosion was far worse in places lacking downed wood to slow the torrents of water.

Even climate change isn't expected to cause another extreme drought anytime soon. Climate forecasts for this region do point to warmer temperatures in the peak summer months, but also to more rain in the spring and winter.

Of course, this doesn't mean park staff aren't taking the threat of fire seriously. "Even though we get fog all summer and the relative humidity stays high, our fire program monitors the moisture of the soil and downed wood regularly," Wheeler said before ticking off all the other work the park does to be ready should a blaze ever blow up: a regularly updated fire management plan, consistent communication with local fire departments, recurring training for the park's wildland firefighting crew and fire-safety education for park visitors.

And if a fire ever breaks out, it would be put out as quickly as possible. "We are a full-suppression park," Wheeler said.

The next day, as Chrissy and I biked on the carriage roads, something Miller had said popped into my mind: "Fires do have ecological benefits, so even if a fire did happen, it wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing," she told me.

I tried to reconcile her comment with the dramatic accounts I read from people who lived through the 1947 fire — people whose homes were destroyed, whose relatives died and whose lives were upended. But at the same time, private land, scorched by the blaze, was donated to the park. Forests of deciduous trees sprang from the devastation, and new hotels now welcome hordes of leaf peepers each fall, a boon to a tourist-dependent economy. It's a complicated legacy, one I struggled to assess as Chrissy pulled ahead.

Pedaling was easier than ruminating, so I shifted gears and accelerated to catch up to Chrissy.

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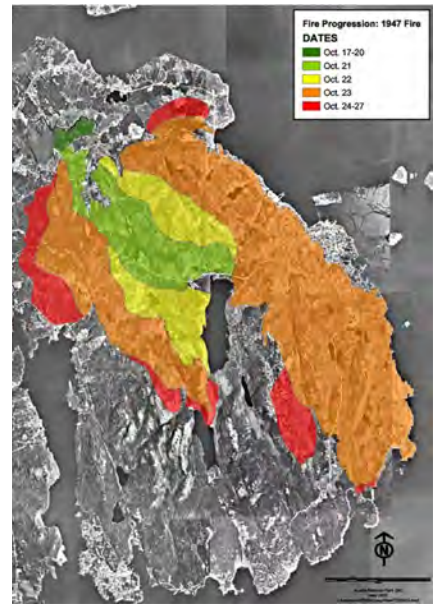
SURVEYING THE RUBBLE of an estate burned by the 1947 fire.



NPS

A MAP DOCUMENTING the fire's rapid spread over the course of a week.

GREG M. PETERS lives in Montana where he works as a writer and communications specialist. Find his work at www.gregmpeters.com.

That Was Then

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