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# National Parks

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

## WHERE THE AIR IS SWEET

**Sweeping the clouds away in Olympic National Park**

***COSMIC VIBES IN THE DESERT***

***THE BARD OF ACADIA***

***YOUR PARK STORIES***

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National Parks

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Looking out over Lake Crescent in Olympic National Park.

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COVER ILLUSTRATION:
Dusk at Rialto Beach in Olympic.

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## FEATURES



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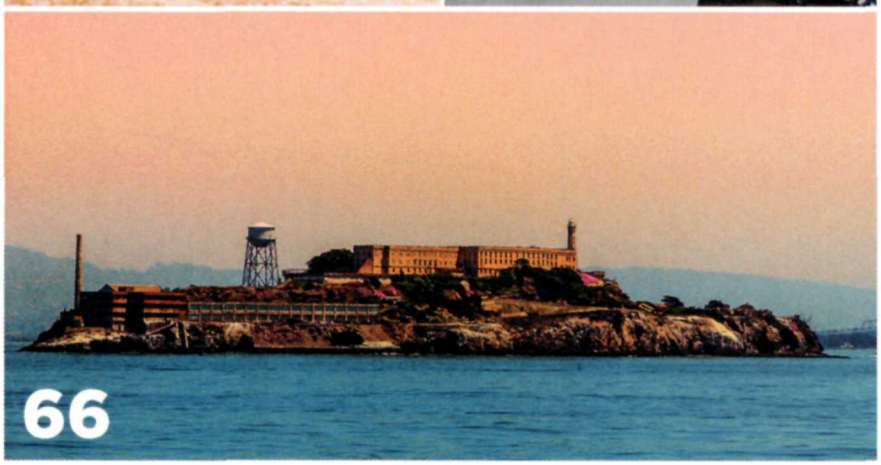
A SHIPWRECKED fishing vessel creates a protective habitat for marine life in Dry Tortugas National Park.






CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: BRETT SEYMOUR/SUBMERGED RESOURCES CENTER/NPS; NEAL HERBERT/NPS; © PYTYCZECH/DREAMSTIME.COM; © DONALD M. JONES/MINDEN PICTURES

## DEPARTMENTS

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# Completing the Story

**Our national parks tell stories from our past** — from Independence Hall and Ellis Island to the Manzanar internment camp, where thousands of Japanese-Americans were incarcerated during World War II.

Two sites, one just created and another in the works, will add to the depth of stories represented. Both illustrate the courage of those who risked their lives to ensure the rights that many of us enjoy today.

The first site is the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument. I attended the ceremony during which President Obama designated the headquarters of the National Woman's Party as a national park unit. Alice Paul, one of the country's greatest women's rights advocates and political strategists, led the National Woman's Party from her Washington, D.C., home. She endured imprisonment, force-feeding and harassment during her fight for women's right to vote, an effort that succeeded with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

The second site is in Birmingham, Alabama. Legislation has been introduced in Congress to establish Birmingham Civil Rights National Historical Park. The site would tell the story of those who fought segregation in Birmingham, a battle that came to a head in the spring of 1963. (See page 14.) As people marched for equal rights and to end segregated lunch counters, restrooms and drinking fountains, police blasted them with fire hoses and brought in attack dogs. Meanwhile, segregationists bombed businesses, homes and churches. The public outcry that followed galvanized the nation in support of the protesters and ultimately led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Both Belmont-Paul and Birmingham underscore the importance of speaking up for what is right and paving the way for a better future. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service on Aug. 25, we should also celebrate the fact that our National Park System strives to include sites that fully represent America's heritage and history, whether they celebrate triumphs or remind us of sorrows.

Warm regards,
Theresa Pierno

# Editor's Note

© RONA MARECH

**COUNTING DOWN** the days until Aug. 25 in D.C.'s Rock Creek Park.

# End of an Era

**Readers who care deeply about grammar** and style may have already stumbled across the satirical item that appeared in The Onion a few years ago: "Four more copy editors were killed this week amid ongoing violence between two rival gangs divided by their loyalties to The Associated Press Stylebook and The Chicago Manual Of Style." The short story goes on to explain that "an innocent 35-year-old passerby who found himself caught up in a long-winded dispute over use of the serial, or Oxford, comma had died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound."

Well, after decades in The Chicago Manual camp, we are switching sides at the magazine. Starting with this issue, we are now officially part of the AP style gang. The serial comma, which we dutifully inserted for as long as anyone can remember, is a thing of the past.

Many of you won't notice the changes — a space here, a hyphen there — but the shift has left our editorial staff positively giddy. We have traded in a thousand-plus-page tome for an easy-to-use guide that's half the size. AP style is widely used by publications like ours because it is logical and straightforward. Clear rules are liberating for writers and editors — they promote consistency, remove confusion and allow stories to shine.

But enough about style rules. I am also very excited about a date that is around the bend: Aug. 25. It's a momentous occasion for me because that day, my daughter turns 5 and the National Park Service turns 100. Wherever I am, I'll be raising a cupcake to these giants — the agency that oversees 411 sites and the pipsqueak who rules our household. Here's to long lives filled with true friends and clear skies. Happy, happy birthday!

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 of the natural and historic treasures found in the parks, educates readers about the need to preserve those resources, and illustrates how member contributions drive our organization's park-protection efforts. The magazine uses the power of imagery and language to forge a lasting bond between NPCA and its members, while inspiring new readers to join the cause. 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. Please sign up to receive Park Notes, our monthly e-mail newsletter. Go to npca.org to sign up.

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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 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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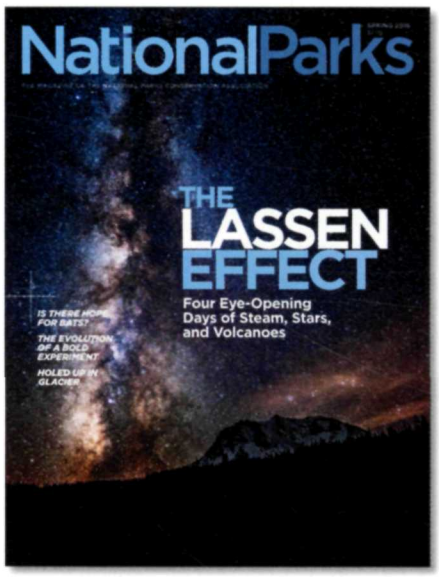



## ONGOING RECONSTRUCTION

Kudos to Kate Siber for "A Complicated Past," about the possibility of adding Reconstruction sites to the National Park System [Winter 2016]. It was informative and enlightening. Some organizations are seemingly still trying to fight the Civil War by refusing to move past the blame stage and opposing Reconstruction sites. I applaud the National Park Service's efforts to construct sites commemorating Reconstruction.

**FRANK TARTAGLIA**
*Belleville, NJ*

### IN DEFENSE OF CAVERS

As a lifelong caver, I take offense at the assertion in "The Trouble With Bats" that scientists think white-nose syndrome was imported into the U.S. from Europe by "spelunkers or other recreational cavers." Truth is, the scientific community has no empirical data to support this claim. In the absence of hard facts, some have surmised that WNS is transported by humans rather than by the bats themselves.

If Europeans were indeed the carriers of this scourge, would not Mammoth Cave, Carlsbad Caverns or another hugely popular cave that hundreds of thousands of people visit annually be ground zero for this infestation? But WNS was first discovered in an obscure cave in upstate New York. Ten years after arriving in America, WNS still hasn't infected Carlsbad Caverns, despite millions of visitors entering the park in that time period.

Park Service units around the country have recently instituted "decontamination" procedures at all cave parks, ignoring the reality that hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of bats go in and out of these caves unchecked. And of the humans who do enter caves, few if any ever come into direct contact with bats. Bats, on the other hand, snuggle up to other bats in tightly grouped colonies all winter long during hibernation, which is precisely when the bats are infected, as described in your article.

**LOUI SKENDERIS**
*Pasadena, CA*

### A JOB IN PARADISE

I'm so jealous! As I armchair-cruise with my broken leg through this incredible winter landscape ["Snowed In"], I am transported to its grandeur versus my view of four kitties on my duvet cover! But the last paragraph puzzles me: Grizzlies in the dead of winter? Aren't they hibernating? Maybe not all winter anymore? Not enough food or ... ?

Thanks for a great treat that I could enjoy vicariously!

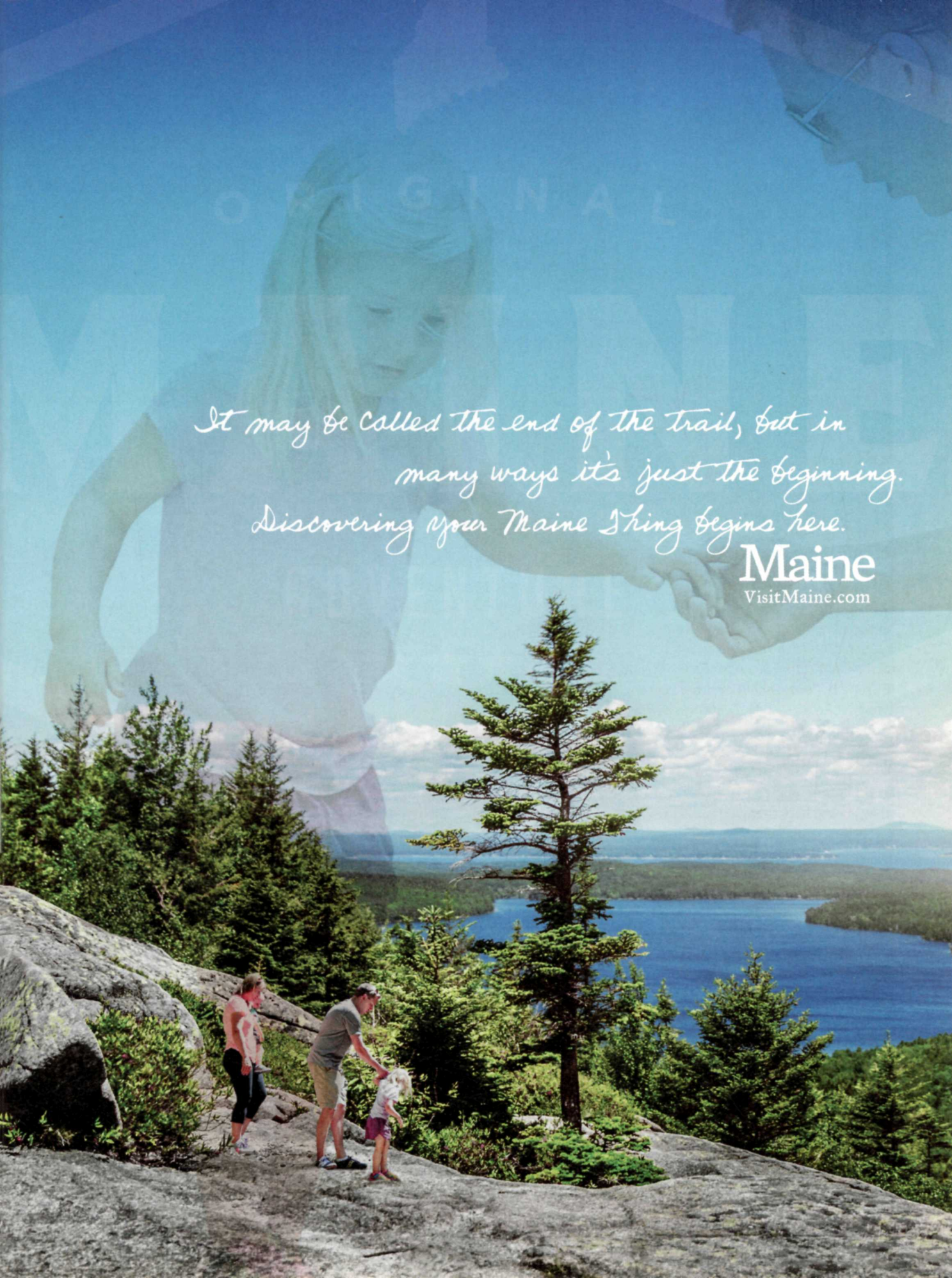
**LINDA IRRGANG**
*Black Diamond, WA*

*Though grizzly bears in the U.S. are known for hibernating, their energy-saving state is more like a winter "torpor" than the deep winter sleep of other mammals, said Ryan Valdez, NPCA's senior manager for Conservation Science & Policy. It's not uncommon for bears to wake up, exit their dens and return — even in the dead of winter. Also, climate change is affecting hibernation. With warming temperatures, bears in places including Yellowstone and Glacier have been seen emerging from their torpor as much as a month early.*

*—Editors*

Thanks for the article, "Snowed In." I wonder if you have heard of or read the book "A Year in Paradise" by Floyd Schmoe. The paradise referred to is the higher-elevation area at Mount Rainier National Park. The book is largely about the winter the Schmoe couple spent there around 1920 or so as caretakers of the inn. It is a beautiful, inspiring book with charming illustrations by the author. I came across the book in my years as a volunteer interpretive ranger at Mount Rainier, and I was so impressed by Floyd Schmoe's story (there was much more to it than just that year) that I created a program about him to present to visitors.

**RUTH GRAVES**
*Ypsilanti, MI*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**For more than 65 years, the National Park Service rightfully and lawfully exercised authority to protect all park wildlife. It should continue to do so moving forward.**

*Sharon Mader, Grand Teton program manager, to The Associated Press after NPCA and several partners filed lawsuits challenging a decision by the Park Service to allow Wyoming to manage wildlife on privately owned "inholdings" in Grand Teton. The groups say the decision opens the door to hunting moose, bison, elk and possibly even grizzlies, and could jeopardize visitors.*

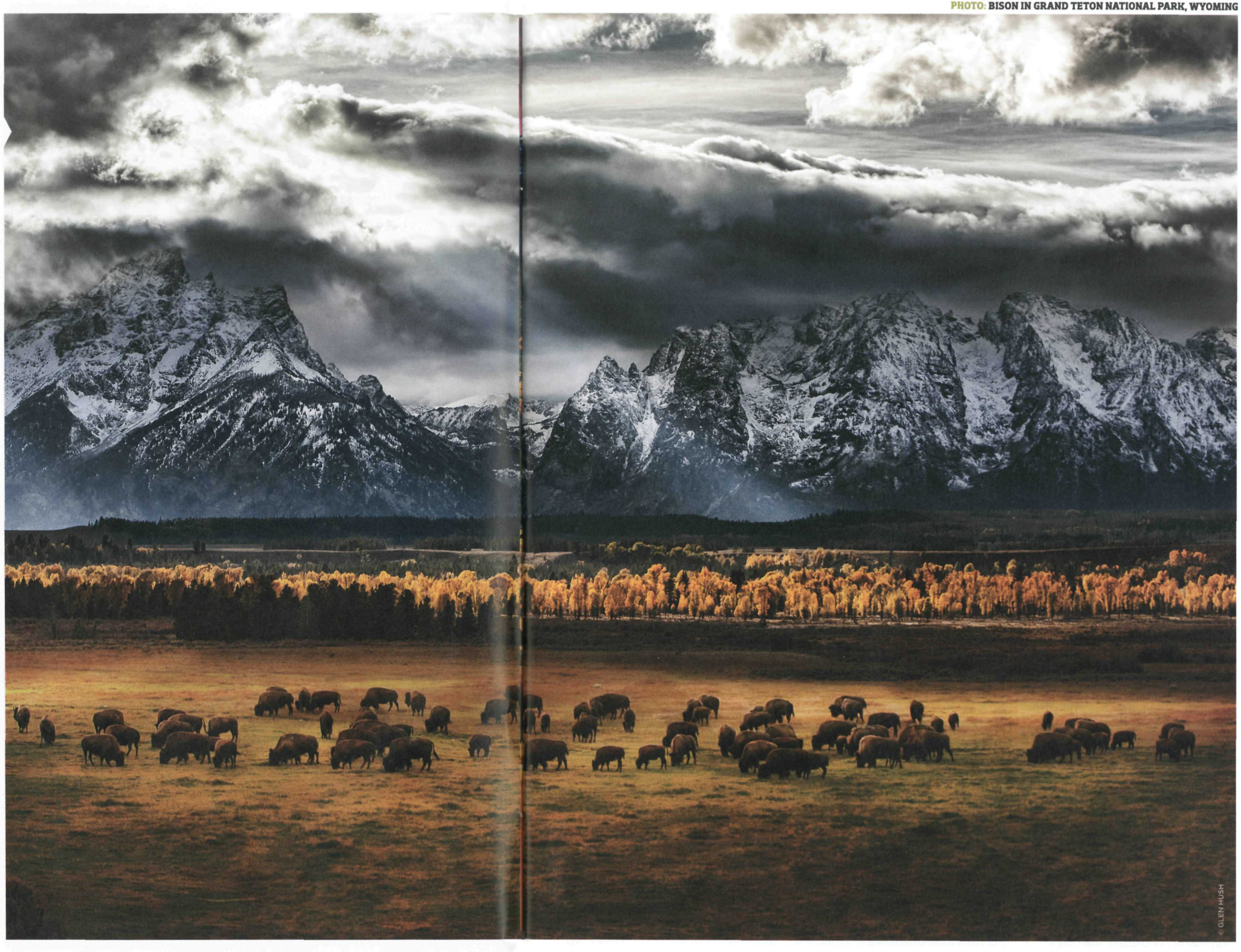
**In an incredibly disappointing move, the administration approved this harmful renewable energy project that is devoid of public support and contradicts its own scientists and policies.**

*President and CEO Theresa Pierno quoted in the Desert Dispatch about the Obama administration's approval of the Soda Mountain Solar Project, which NPCA opposes because it would have a very harmful effect on Mojave National Preserve and its wildlife.*

**Expanding Tusayan was an ill-conceived idea and would have been a massive threat to one of our country's crown jewels.**

*Kevin Dahl, Arizona senior program manager, quoted in National Parks Traveler after the U.S. Forest Service rejected an Italian developer's proposal to bring a resort-style village to a small town near the South Rim of the Grand Canyon.*

PHOTO: BISON IN GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING



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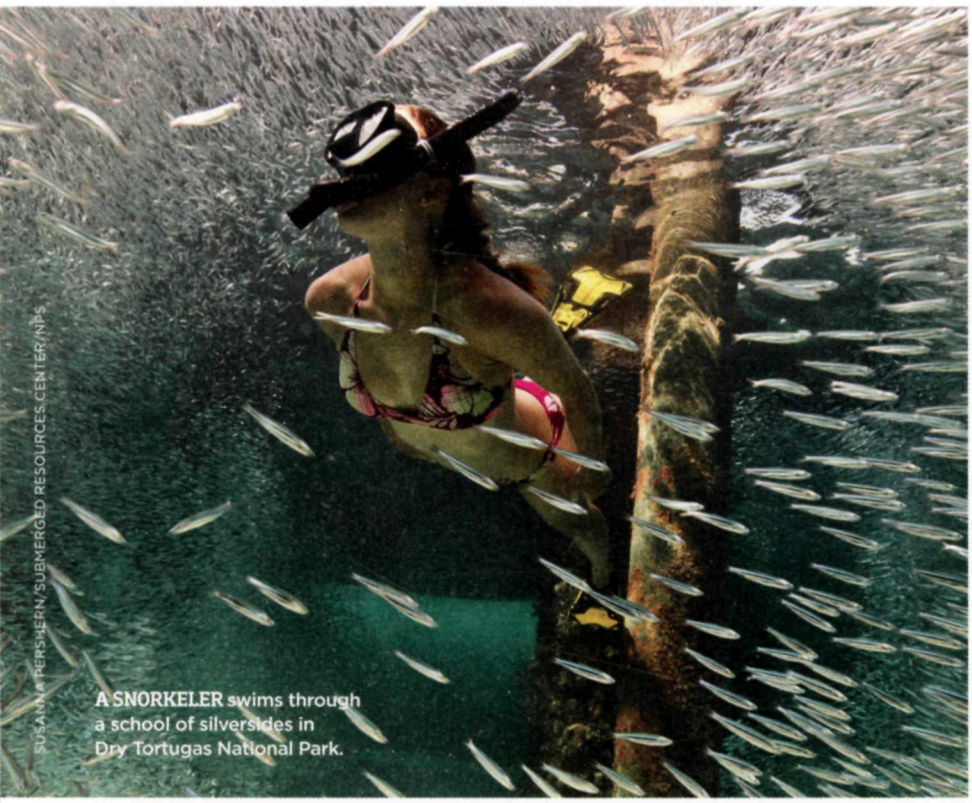


SUSANNE PERSHERN/SUBMERGED RESOURCES CENTER/NPS

**A SNORKELER** swims through a school of silversides in Dry Tortugas National Park.

# What Lies Beneath

## Want to find hidden treasures in the ocean or scuba dive through a shipwreck? The Submerged Resources Center is here to help.

**Last spring, a team** of National Park Service divers puttered about the shallow aquamarine waters of Buck Island Reef National Monument, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, in an aluminum boat. They cut the engine, dropped a buoy and a line, and, with scuba gear, hopped in and descended. Swimming in neat circles on the sea floor, they weren't looking for technicolor fish, sea turtles or eagle rays. They were looking for hidden archaeological treasures.

Earlier that week, the team, from the Submerged Resources Center, had surveyed the area using a magnetometer, a torpedo-like instrument that drags behind a boat and detects iron on the sea floor. Now, over dozens of dives, team members were investigating coordinates where the magnetometer had sensed metal. In some places they found discarded fish traps and other trash; elsewhere their high-tech gadgets led them to a sandy sea floor studded with soft corals. But they also discovered anchors, anchor chain and even the skeletal remains of a shipwreck that date to at least the 19th century — and possibly much earlier than that.

"These are resources the park never really knew were there," said Bert Ho, supervisory archaeologist for the Submerged Resources Center. "Each time you jump in, there's an opportunity to find something really amazing."

When most people think of national parks, places like Yosemite and Yellowstone come to mind, but the Park Service also manages more than 5 million acres of underwater lands. More than half of the park system's 411 sites have underwater resources, including coral reefs in Biscayne National Park, shipwrecks in Dry Tortugas, crashed airplanes in Lake Mead and a water-filled cavern in Death Valley National Park that harbors some of the world's rarest fish. In Yellowstone, spectacular geothermal vents spew streams of bubbles underwater, and in Montezuma Castle National Monument, in Arizona, layers of sand bubble and swirl in a spring-fed desert sinkhole. Few visitors know about these underwater worlds, but the Submerged Resources Center, a special unit of the Park Service, is on a mission to change that. And with the help of new 3-D modeling tools, custom software and other technology, they are able to explore and map these frontiers more effectively than ever.

"People have heard of the national parks, but they have no idea that there's this whole other world to the Park Service underwater," said Brett Seymour, an underwater photographer and deputy chief of the center. "We're constantly fighting for the same level of protection and education and outreach for underwater sites that land sites get."

Often, parks call in the group to help solve an underwater problem, such as mapping areas that are relatively unexplored, figuring out how to protect a disintegrating shipwreck or helping biologists perform studies of invasive species. In other cases, parks ask the divers to develop films, photographs and other media to help visitors appreciate the wonders of underwater public lands that are difficult for the average person to access.

The divers will also look for sunken slave ships that exist on old records but have never been located.

The Submerged Resources Center is in such high demand that the Denver-based team of nine underwater archaeologists and photographers travels around the country for up to seven months each year. They often arrive in a Suburban towing a cargo trailer full of gear and a Dodge pickup hauling a 27-foot Boston Whaler.

"It's tremendously satisfying to talk to superintendents and other people who have very difficult issues that require the kind of specialized skills that we've worked very hard to develop," said Dave Conlin, chief of the Submerged Resources Center. "I'm fully convinced I have the best job in the National Park Service."

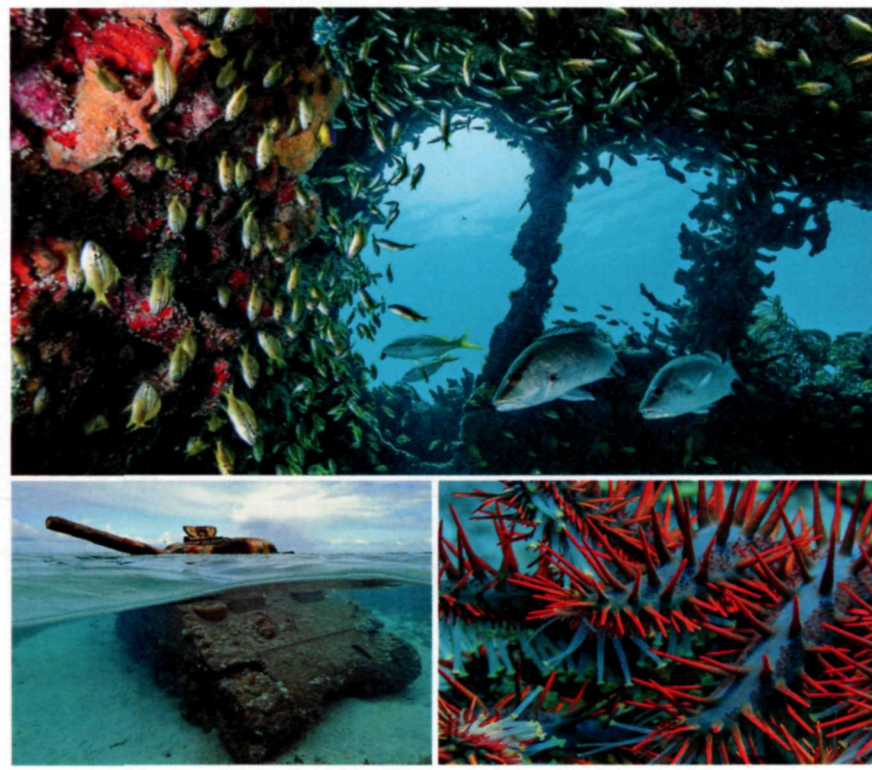
The idea for the Submerged Resources Center emerged in the late 1970s when the Park Service assembled a team of underwater archaeologists and anthropologists to study what happens to ruins flooded by big government projects, such as the Hoover Dam. After the study was complete, the Park Service realized it had a dream team of highly trained divers and scientists who could potentially answer other important questions in the parks, and the Submerged Resources Center was born.

Back then, the divers used cutting-edge scuba equipment and some of the first underwater color video cameras. Their tasks included exploring and mapping underwater lands in parks and taking detailed inventories of underwater resources they already knew existed, such as shipwrecks in Isle Royale National Park. Over the years, the cutting edge has evolved dramatically.

"To the 1980s Submerged Resources Center, we'd look like wizards," Conlin said. One example is the work the divers have done on the USS Arizona, a battleship that sank in the Pearl Harbor attack of December 1941. Now it is protected within the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, where visitors can pay their respects at a memorial to the 1,177 sailors and Marines who lost their lives there. Because only a few parts of the wreck poke out of the bay, however, it's challenging for park staff to make the underwater story come alive for visitors.

Over the last few years, the center's divers have worked with partners to use laser-scanning technologies and custom-made underwater 3-D cameras. They have created 3-D video and 3-D digital models, including one of the USS Arizona that is on display in the visitor center.

"The Pearl Harbor story is big, and it's hard to teach people about it," said Scott Pawlowski, chief of cultural and natural resources at World War II Valor in the Pacific. These new forms of media "help people to understand why this story is amazing and why it's such an important part of American history — and world history as well."



BRETT SEYMOUR/SUBMERGED RESOURCES CENTER/NPS

**TWO MANGROVE SNAPPERS** swim side by side inside the cabin of a fishing vessel resting 25 feet under the water in Dry Tortugas (top). Above left: A World War II M4 Sherman tank juts out of the shallow waters at the American Memorial Park in Saipan. Above right: The crown-of-thorns sea star (or starfish) — pictured in the National Park of American Samoa — receives its name from its venomous thorn-like spines.

The team has also helped park staff run LiveDives, during which they stream live video footage of divers exploring the wreck and answer questions in real time from people who have tuned in. As if they were diving themselves, viewers can peer into officers' quarters where a desk and telephone still sit exactly where they sank, marvel at the blast holes on the deck and see artifacts from the servicemen on the ship.

"When you come across these personal effects, like boots or a shaving kit or a hair tonic bottle, you can't help but think this belonged to a sailor or Marine on the ship — it really has an impact on you," Seymour said. "You have no idea if they survived the attack, but the connection to a person puts you closer to the fact that there was a massive loss of life on the vessel."

**KELLY MOORE,** a Park Service diver, holds a large spiny lobster during a live, web-based educational broadcast called Channel Islands Live.

BRETT SEYMOUR/SUBMERGED RESOURCES CENTER/NPS

This year, the Submerged Resources Center is taking its work a step further by collaborating with the Advance Imaging and Visualization Laboratory at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution to develop a remotely operated vehicle, which will be able to go deeper into the ship than ever before. The team plans to determine the condition of the bunkers, which still hold half a million gallons of fuel, and develop a documentary with PBS.

Other underwater needs will call the Submerged Resources team to different parts of the country. In Yellowstone National Park, the group will look for breeding sites of invasive lake trout, which biologists want to remove because they prey on native cutthroat, an officially "sensitive" species. In California, in partnership with the Interior Department's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the team will troll along the coast, using sonar and magnetometry to identify archaeological sites along ancient shorelines that could hold clues to the settling of the continent. In Dry Tortugas, it will lead a program to introduce youth from a mental health treatment facility to underwater photography; in Biscayne, it will run an underwater archaeology workshop for African-American and Latino students. The divers will also return to Buck Island in the U.S. Virgin Islands to look for sunken slave ships that exist on old records but have never been located.

Sometimes the team opens visitors' eyes to the underwater realms of the park system one interaction at a time, when curious onlookers spot the divers in their Park Service-emblazoned wetsuit uniforms preparing to enter a body of water where they might not be expected, such as Lake Yellowstone or Death Valley's Devils Hole, a desert cavern filled with ultra-clear spring water.

"It's always fun for us to just sort of tickle their fancy and challenge their assumptions," said Conlin, who delights in telling gobsmacked visitors that the vast majority of underwater sites in the park system, from World War II tanks in American Samoa to the kelp beds of the Channel Islands, are open to the public.

"Hopefully, for some of them, it'll entice them enough to put on a pair of fins and a mask and snorkel and get in the water and splash around," he said. "It's experiencing a whole other side of parks that most visitors don't even think about."

— KATE SIBER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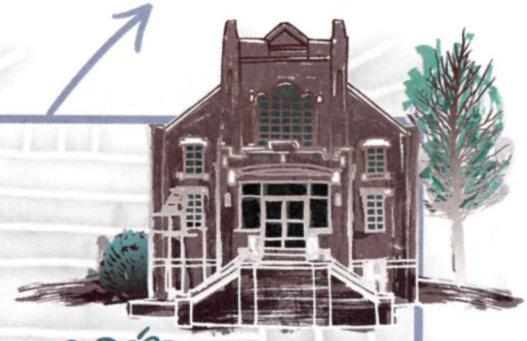
# Remembering Birmingham's Fight for Equality


## 16th Street Baptist Church

A 1963 bombing here killed four African-American girls, a crime that led directly to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

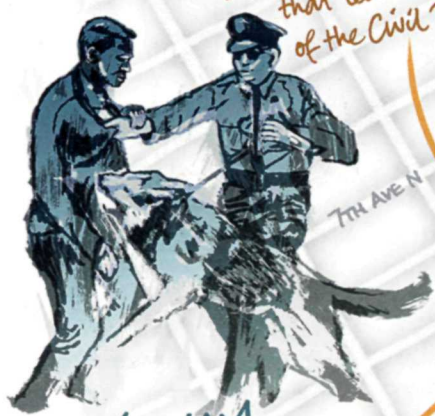


## Bethel Baptist Church

The church, its parishioners and its leaders played pivotal roles in the 1961 Freedom Rides and the 1963 protests.

## Kelly Ingram Park

In May 1963, police violently disrupted a gathering in the park, which was a meeting place for protestors.

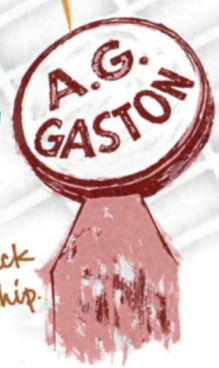


## Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

The museum and research center is dedicated to examining the Civil Rights Movement, race and equality.


## A.G. Gaston Motel

Opened in 1954, the hotel was a symbol of black entrepreneurship.




In 1963, hundreds of people joined non-violent protests for civil rights in Birmingham, Alabama. Local officials and the police responded by attacking demonstrators with dogs, tear gas, fire hoses and clubs. So many were arrested, they filled the city's jails. The violence drew national attention and ultimately, led to significant reforms. In March, Rep. Terri Sewell introduced legislation that would create the Birmingham Civil Rights National Historical Park. Here are five key sites in the proposed park.

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# Words and Stones

## On the trail with Acadia's new poet laureate.

**On a cold, sunny day** in Acadia National Park, Christian Barter crunched through late-March snow — unseasonable, even for northern Maine. A trail site supervisor with over 20 years' experience in the park, he was trying to show me his crew's handiwork near Sieur de Monts Spring, but the previous day's nor'easter had interfered.

"This trail has beautiful stone steps, but all you can see is snow!" he said, laughing.

He pointed out a springhouse and shallow pool conceived by George B. Dorr, "father" and first superintendent of Acadia, who settled on Mount Desert Island in the late 1800s and designed many of the highly crafted paths in the 155-mile trail system that Barter's crew rehabilitates and maintains. It was Dorr, with a handful of others, who pushed for Acadia's original national monument designation a century ago. In a poem called "The Stepping Stones," Barter describes the hard-lobbying Dorr as he appears in an old photograph: "he looks / like a normal man: distracted, tired, / trapped in the era's costume."

Barter, it turns out, is an accomplished poet — with two acclaimed poetry collections (and a third book forthcoming), stints at writers' colonies and a Princeton fellowship on his resume. Recently, his two careers merged: As part of this year's centennial celebration for both Acadia and the National Park Service, Barter has been named Acadia's first poet laureate. This summer he will participate in events sponsored by Acadia and partner organizations like the Bangor Public Library and College of the Atlantic, where he has taught classes. He's also working on a poem to commemorate the park's milestone (an "occasional" work, as it's known), which he hopes to share at a public reading in August.

Writers from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Edward Abbey have drawn inspiration from America's natural spaces, and more than 50 national parks offer residency programs for artists, but laureateships are unusual. Laura Hope-Gill was appointed the first poet laureate of the Blue Ridge Parkway in 2010, and back in 1971, Ella V. Costner was named poet laureate of the Smokies by the state of Tennessee. A few sites have unofficial poets, and that's about it for park bards.

Barter, who is 47, has welcomed the rare appointment, which he'll hold through 2016. At a Bar Harbor coffee shop, he was affable and articulate. Tall, wearing black-framed eyeglasses and a skullcap on his shaved head, he looks like a hip monk. But his sturdy shoulders betray his day job, which, along with scouting and planning new projects, often involves digging ditches or hefting rocks with 4,000-pound-capacity winches.

Acadia's system of hiking trails and footpaths, among the most intricate in the country, includes huge amounts of "dry" masonry — stone without mortar. Barter has grown to love working with stone. "It's demanding, it's heavy, it's unforgiving," he said. "You have to meet it on its terms." And of course, the idea that a well-designed trail or flight of hand-hewn granite steps is an enduring work of art is not lost on a poet: "There's a chance it could be here in 2,000 years. That really appeals to me."

John Kelly, Acadia's management assistant and public information officer, said that when the centennial task force floated the possibility of a poet laureate, Barter was the obvious choice. "Chris is out there every day getting his hands dirty," he said. "It's perfect to have someone in this position with a very physical connection to the park."

A Maine native, Barter grew up in Sullivan, a small town where his mother, a folk musician, and his stepfather, a carpenter, had moved to live

off the land. Raised in a liberal, intellectual family, Barter read constantly and "scribbled stories" as a kid, but he said the natural world was easy to take for granted. "I worked in the garden every day and chopped wood. It wouldn't have occurred to me to go hiking. The woods were all around me."

Barter attended Bates College, where he studied music. "It was the best training ground for poetry" because it honed his ear for rhythm, he said. As an undergraduate, he spent summers in Bar Harbor, though back then Acadia was barely on his radar. But when he learned from a friend that park jobs paid two bucks more than the pickup landscaping he was doing, he applied for a maintenance position and ended up on the trail crew. "I didn't know how lucky I was," he said.

Each summer, Barter returned as a seasonal worker, and all the while, he wrote poems. He jotted bits of lines in the backs of the notebooks he carried to catalog trails. Many of the phrases were "orphans," he said, but eventually, some coalesced into finished verse. During that time, he earned an MFA in writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts and began publishing work in prestigious journals including Ploughshares and The Georgia Review.

## Heisenberg

We interfere with what we know by knowing it.
We interfere with what we do by doing it.
We interfere with what we love by loving it.

I guess you could say we're the causes of our
own loneliness.

We interfere with what we watch by watching it.
We interfere with what we write by writing it.
We interfere with what we think by thinking it.
We interfere where we go by going there.

We are like Midas, or Medusa.

We interfere with life by living it.

In fact, one definition of perfection is simply
the way things are when we are not around.
Or might have been if I hadn't said so.

One question, though: is all this actually true?
We interfere with what we ask by asking it.

If there is a god we will
surely ruin him by believing in him.

And yet we must exist, correct?

Don't answer that! You
who remain you only by your absence.

*From Christian Barter's book, "In Someone Else's House."*

A turning point came in his late 20s, when he was offered a fully funded spot in a doctoral program just after landing a permanent position on the trail crew. It was a tough decision, but he passed on the PhD. After nearly a decade, the job he'd once considered a dependable placeholder had begun to feel like part of his identity. "I realized this is what I do," he said.

Juggling his two vocations, he admits, has never been easy. "It's not really a balance. You're always robbing from one or the other." During Acadia's peak season, when he co-manages a crew of around 30, plus volunteers, Barter writes just a few mornings each week, but his annual furlough — anywhere from two weeks to five-and-a-half months — allows him longer stretches to focus on poems. He also tackles non-literary projects during those breaks: Currently, he's building a house where he and his partner will eventually live. When his art frustrates him, he said, returning to the woods keeps him grounded. "I'm out there at 6 in the morning with the ducks and deer," he said.

As we talked, Barter dropped in quotes from Saul Bellow, Victorian art critic John Ruskin and Robert Frost, whose spare, earnest verses are touchstones for him. "I'm kind of a traditionalist," he said. Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell are other favorites. The poets he admires most, he said, are "speaking from the heart with some degree of sincerity."

In his own poems, that influence is clear. Barter's first book, "The Singers I Prefer," and his second collection, "In Someone Else's House," are full of lean lines that hum with honesty — even when the voice turns playful or wounded or comically cranky. Although his focus primarily has been on the personal, Barter said as he's gotten older, "the landscape is coming into my poetry more and more." When it does, the rough beauty of coastal Maine takes on vivid life: "this bay / of roiling, these mountains standing / stock in their hunched files ... ferns, swamp grass and tiny bush stems / all quivering like mad / in their little cliques ... "

"His work is very disciplined," said Jack Russell, co-chair of Acadia's centennial task force and a longtime member of the park's volunteer trail crew. "The diction is almost conversational, but as you would want in a fine poem, every word matters." In one of Russell's favorite poems, "Stars," Barter savors the night sky: "Between the bare branches left / hanging like threads on cut shirt sleeves, stars tingle, / whole galaxies for the leaves that now fill ditches."

For Barter, the best poems are conduits to a larger experience. "At the end of a really good poem, you're left with the place that it took you," he said. "The poem takes you there and drops you off." Not surprisingly, he's found this phenomenon

applies to his park work, too. "I think with trails it's the same way," he said. "When you do your work well, the thing you've done kind of disappears."

Lately, perhaps because of his new title, Barter has been thinking more about art as a form of stewardship. "There's maybe an ethical responsibility for artists to honor what we haven't destroyed yet." Beyond the stunning scenery, protected lands like Acadia can remind us of our impact by showing us the world with little human interference, he said, and they can move us to interfere less. "It's a place where you have the opportunity to be humbled, and you can seize it if you want to," he said.

Before we parted ways, Barter showed me Jesup Path, a "semi-floating" wooden boardwalk that spans part of Great Meadow, a large wetland at the base of Dorr Mountain. Barter's crew built the structure; he described how they laid it down in sections, one piece after another, falling into a rhythm. The walkway stretches out of sight through an arch of tall trees.

Standing ankle-deep in snow among the birches, I listened to the wind for a few beats. The sky was pure blue. Something Barter had told me earlier — about how wild spaces help us "remember where we are" — was still in the back of my mind. It's a beautiful place, I finally told him.

"It's a nice spot," he agreed. Then he gestured at another trail. "Here, hang a left," he said, and we started back toward the heart of the park.

— DORIAN FOX

# A Park-Loving Justice?

## Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland has a soft spot for national parks.

**When President Obama** nominated Merrick Garland in March to fill the vacancy left by late Justice Antonin Scalia on the Supreme Court, the White House released a lengthy biographical document extolling the nominee's judicial experience. What piqued our interest was a sentence toward the end: "The family enjoys skiing, hiking and canoeing, and together they have visited many of America's national parks."

Now, we *really* wanted to know more than that, but Supreme Court nominees facing the grueling Senate confirmation process are not prone to pontificating — about any topic. Garland, the chief judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, is keeping a very low profile, which may be wise since the Republican majority in the Senate has said that no confirmation will take place in this election year.

Still, it doesn't hurt to ask, so we called the judge's chambers. Someone there referred us to the White House press office, and unsurprisingly, a staff member declined to make the judge available for an interview. But this being Washington, we eventually did manage to get some additional information and a few photos from an anonymous source "close to the judge." It's not much, mind you, but it's more than you'll see anywhere else about Garland's love of national parks.

So here it is — drum roll, please — the complete list of national parks Garland has visited: Acadia, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Bryce Canyon, Capitol Reef, Denali, Glacier, Glacier Bay, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Hawaii Volcanoes, Kenai Fjords, Mesa Verde, Rocky Mountain and Shenandoah. These are national parks in the strict sense, but we're going to take a leap and assume he has visited other sites in the park system. Given his 19-year tenure on the D.C. Circuit, he must have wandered occasionally onto the National Mall, for instance, or perhaps, when his daughters were young, he introduced them to the carousel at Glen Echo Park near his home in Bethesda, Maryland.

Garland (above in Glacier Bay) would not be the first park aficionado on the country's highest court. Justice William O. Douglas campaigned for protection of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, which led to its designation as a national historical park in 1971, and former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor served on the National Parks Second Century Commission.

"There is no better route to civic understanding than visiting our national parks," she wrote in the commission's report. "They're who we are and where we've been."

— NICOLAS BRULLIARD

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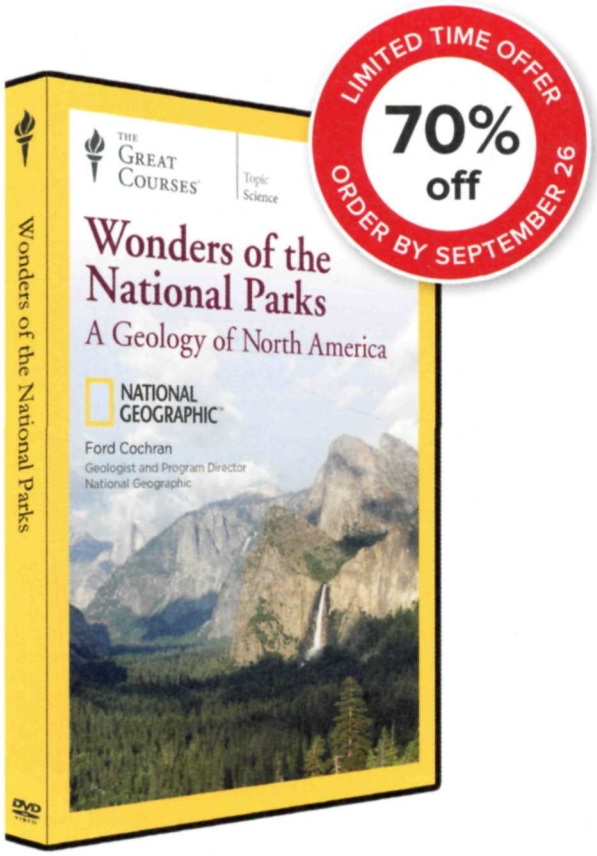


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# Surround Sound

The Acoustic Atlas' trove of recordings includes grizzly cubs purring, ice freezing and thousands of other elusive sounds.

NEAL HERBERT/NPS

JENNIFER JERRETT records the ambient and animal sounds of Yellowstone National Park for the Acoustic Atlas, an online sound archive.

**What sound does a frog make?** If you say *ribbit*! you would be right. And wrong. *Ribbit* is the sound of a Pacific chorus frog (also called Pacific tree frog), and because that species is abundant on the West Coast, Hollywood sound technicians turned to it when they needed frog noises for movie and television soundtracks. And so for most people, that has become the de facto frog sound. But *ribbit* is just one of the many sounds various frog species make, as Jeff Rice will tell you. He would know. A longtime frog aficionado with a frog ringtone to prove it, Rice has recorded many of these sounds himself, including the classic *ribbits* of the Pacific chorus frog in Olympic National Park.

Unlike Rice, most of us have lost our connection to pure natural sounds. Either we don't get the chance to step away from the urban cacophony, or if we do, we've forgotten how to listen. That's why Rice wanted to create recordings that would help people discover (or rediscover) what wild animals and nature actually sound like. In 2013, he and Kenning Arlitsch, dean of the library at Montana State University, teamed up to create the Acoustic Atlas, the largest repository of natural sounds dedicated to the American West. More than 2,500 recordings from places including Yellowstone, Saguaro and Mesa Verde are housed online, where anyone can listen to them and find the recording site pinpointed on a map. Rice said the archive fills a void.

"Before, there wasn't a lot of access to recordings of even common species," he said. "Where else are you going to find a recording of a northern grasshopper mouse?" And that's not to mention the variety of calls a single species can make; some even have different dialects in different regions.

The Atlas grew out of a similar but smaller project Rice and Arlitsch started at the University of Utah almost a decade ago. These days, Rice does a lot of the fieldwork himself, but many others contribute to the library, including the National Park Service, which has a mandate to manage and protect the soundscapes of national parks. The Atlas also has its own so-called recordist stationed in Yellowstone.

Documenting the region's soundscapes is an enormous task, but time is of the essence, Arlitsch said. Commercial and residential development continues to encroach on nature, not only shrinking habitats but also altering environmental sounds. Even remote locations are not immune. Air travel is so pervasive that places of permanent quiet are increasingly rare, and people like Rice speak only of "noise-free intervals." Climate change is another concern. As species are forced to adapt their geographical and altitudinal range to temperature variations, their songs and calls can disappear from a given area.

The library includes sounds of obscure species, but even the recordings of better-known ones have a novel quality. Some owls can mimic rattlesnake noises, for example, and grizzly cubs in Denali purr "kind of like a motorboat," Rice said. The collection also features ambient sounds you're not likely to hear at the massage therapist. Listeners can hear a branch breaking in Yosemite or ice freezing over Yellowstone Lake. You might not

Some owls can mimic rattlesnake noises, and grizzly cubs in Denali purr.

be aware that some of these sounds even exist. Rice recently dropped hydrophones into the waters of Puget Sound to record eelgrass producing bubbles of oxygen. "It's basically the sound of photosynthesis," he said.

The collection process is not easy. It often requires hiking long distances, carefully selecting locations and setting up the equipment before dawn to record animal activity. Recordists sometimes leave their equipment in the field for 24 hours or more, then sift through the material later for interesting sounds. Luck plays a big part.

Jennifer Jerrett, the Atlas employee stationed in Yellowstone, was at the right spot at the right time to record a wolf whining, and she captured the sound of a grizzly feeding on the carcass of a drowned bison from the safety of her car. She also has recorded the park's geothermal features — Veteran Geyser sounds "almost alive and breathing," she said. Jerrett produces clips for the Atlas and the park's own library, and she features them in podcasts. Her latest is about preserving the sounds of one of North America's most isolated populations of loons, whose calls include the yodel and the tremolo.

From an acoustic standpoint, there are two Yellowstones, Jerrett said. One is the backcountry, where pure, natural sounds abound. The other is the park's crowded roads, overlooks and visitor centers. Separating the two is a challenge.

"You spend a ton of your time trying to filter out that car that drove by at the exact wrong time when the wolf starts howling," she said.

But after spending her first year at Yellowstone trying to steer clear of man-made noises, Jerrett is starting to embrace the human component of the park's soundscape. She recently recorded the sound of "really really loud" Bombardier snowcoaches — decades-old vehicles that are being phased out. And after capturing several recordings of Old Faithful erupting, she would like to turn her microphone toward the spectators. "I want to spend some time documenting what it sounds like to be on the boardwalk with 3,000 people watching Old Faithful," she said.

— NICOLAS BRULLIARD

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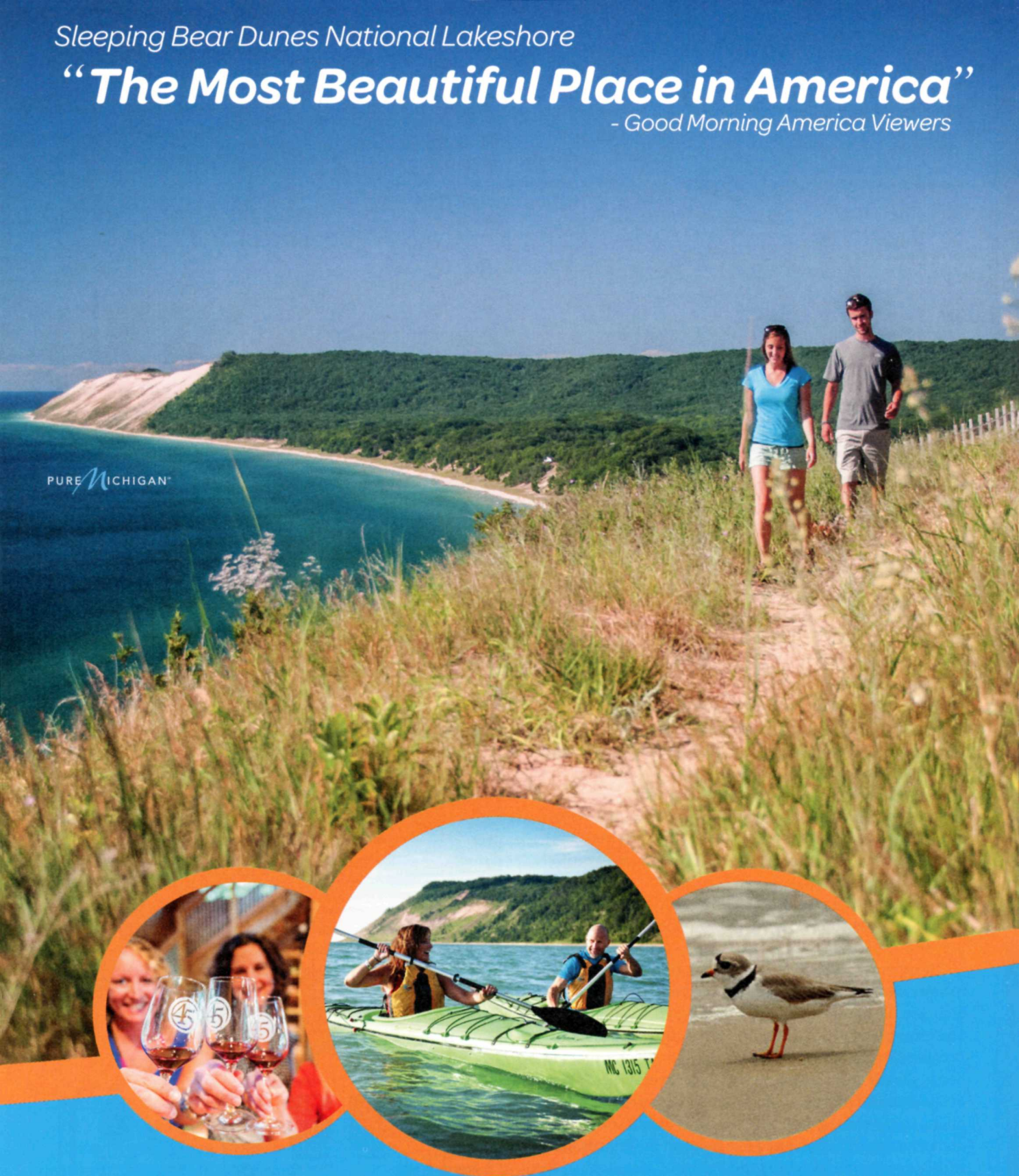








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**A WOLF** howls in Yellowstone, where research into the meaning of these sounds could yield important conservation benefits.

TOM & PAT LEESON

# What's in a Howl?

## Researchers in Yellowstone are hoping to uncover the meaning behind the haunting sounds of wolves.

**THE HOWL OF A WOLF SPARKED DREAD** in medieval Europeans and American settlers, and it still inspires fear in ranchers worried about their livestock. For biologists, the sound signals a major conservation victory — the return of a North American apex predator and its restorative impact on the food chain and landscape. But what about the intended recipients of the howl? What information do wolves receive through those long-range vocalizations? In short, what's the meaning of a howl?

Despite our centuries-old fascination, we have few answers. Observing wolves in natural settings is extremely difficult, and experiments on captive wolves have only limited value because those animals don't display the same social behaviors as their wild brethren. But scientists think they might be on their way to a breakthrough. After analyzing thousands of recordings of wolves, coyotes and other canids, they've identified distinct types of howls and created howl profiles for each species and subspecies. Now they are recording and observing the wolves of Yellowstone National Park and hope to match the different howl types with the activities of the animals to figure out what they are saying.

"You don't want to overstate your claim," said Sara Waller, a Montana State University philosophy professor coordinating the Yellowstone study, "but it would be very exciting if one day we could all take Wolf 101 and talk to the animals like Dr. Dolittle."

Wolves make other sounds — they bark, growl and yip — but howls are the only ones that travel long distances. They are meant to be heard up to 6 miles away in forested land so they have to convey information without relying on body language. The two primary functions of howls are to indicate the boundaries of the wolves' territory to rivals and to keep track of family members, said Doug Smith, leader of the Wolf Restoration Project in Yellowstone. "So one howl is 'stay out,' and the other howl is 'where are you?'" he said.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests wolves use howls to convey emotions. The late wolf biologist Gordon Haber observed wolves howling in "obvious pain and distress" when they were caught in a trap or a snare. Smith said that he's also seen wolves that have lost a mate howl "for a lack of a better way to put it, mournfully."

Smith also said howling varies according to seasons. Its frequency goes down in the spring and early summer because wolves don't want other packs to identify the location of their den and potentially kill their pups, he said. And it gradually increases again toward late summer as pups grow less vulnerable.

Fred Harrington, a wolf howl expert at Mount Saint Vincent University in Canada, said howls can be aggressive or lonesome and can also vary depending on which other pack members are around. Harrington said that pups howl differently depending

on whether they are with adults or by themselves, for instance. What's more, the same howl can be interpreted differently. During his research in northern Minnesota, Harrington howled at wolves to trigger responses, which is a standard practice in wolf research (he said a fellow researcher who lacked confidence in his howling ability used a siren with similar results). Although wolves usually retreated, some would instead move closer, apparently intrigued.

But before you can interpret howls, you have to figure out the different kinds that exist. Arik Kershenbaum, a biologist with the University of Cambridge, and six others — including Sara Waller — used a computer algorithm to identify 21 different howl types based on their frequency modulation. They then looked at how often the animals used each howl type — red wolves and coyotes, for instance, produce all 21 howls, but arctic wolves use only nine — and compiled that information to establish howl profiles for 13 different canine species, including gray wolves like those in Yellowstone and domestic dogs.

> "It would be very exciting if one day we could all take Wolf 101 and talk to the animals."

This work, which was recently published in the journal Behavioural Processes, could yield important conservation benefits. Red wolves are listed as an endangered species in the United States even as scientists debate their taxonomic status. Some consider them hybrids between gray wolves and coyotes, while others view them as a separate species at risk of disappearing through interbreeding with coyotes. Kershenbaum said understanding the vocal differences between red wolves and coyotes could help conservationists monitor and manage the two populations.

Distinguishing howl types could also help mitigate conflicts between wolves and farmers. Ranchers sometimes use devices playing wolf howls to keep wolves away, but it's possible that those recordings have been largely unsuccessful because they have been playing the wrong howl.

"A howl that says 'everyone, come over here! It's time to go hunting and catch some food' is not the kind of thing that you want to be broadcasting around your sheep," Kershenbaum said.

One of the main challenges in studying wolf howls is that it's really difficult to identify which animal is howling, because wolves are often obscured by forest cover. This is where the scientists' current work in Yellowstone could help. Not only do Yellowstone's clearings offer a direct line of sight to the wolves, but many of the park's wolves wear radio collars so their location can be tracked. Researchers have set up five recording devices that they move as the packs roam through the park. They plan to use the recordings and park biologists' detailed observations of what wolves are doing — reuniting after a hunt or rousing from sleep, for example — to move closer to deciphering the howls.

Waller is interested in more than the research's potential conservation applications. Having studied the philosophy of language, she found that none of the theories seeking to explain how words got their meaning was satisfying. She hopes that the wolves — social animals that rely on cooperation and have strong family bonds — can teach us about the origins of our own language. Waller said using the word "language" to describe wolf communication remains controversial but that the similarities with our own communication patterns are striking.

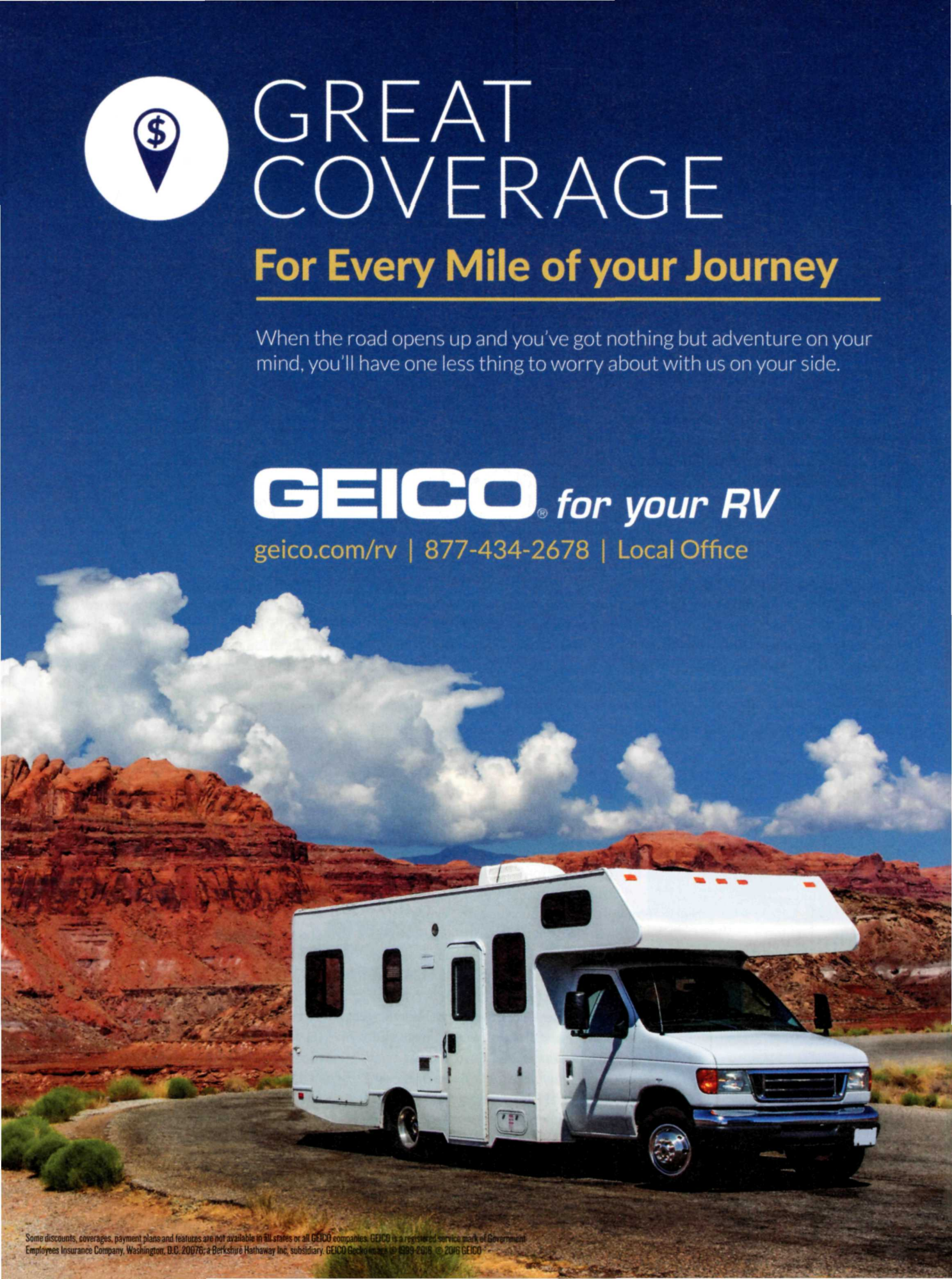
"My money is on that it's going to be much closer to human language than we expected," she said, "but it's still a bet on my part." **NP**

**NICOLAS BRULLIARD** is associate editor of National Parks magazine.



## ASKING FOR THE MOON?

**Gaudy T-shirts or paintings** seem to suggest that wolves frequently howl at the moon, but no scientific study has established a link between howling and Earth's satellite. The origin of the imagery is murky, but it may stem from the simple fact that wolves are more visible in the light of a full moon.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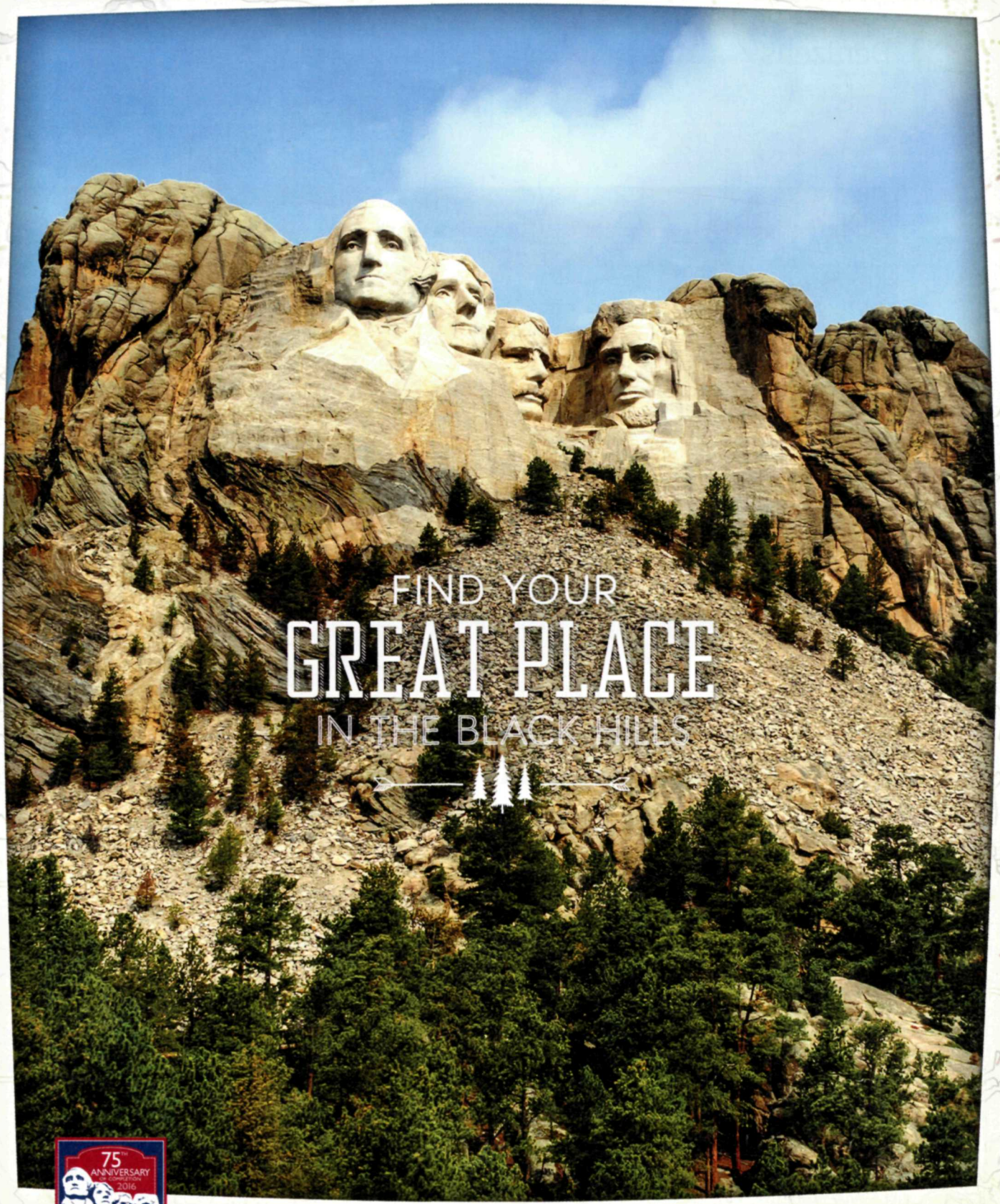
Mount Rushmore National Memorial

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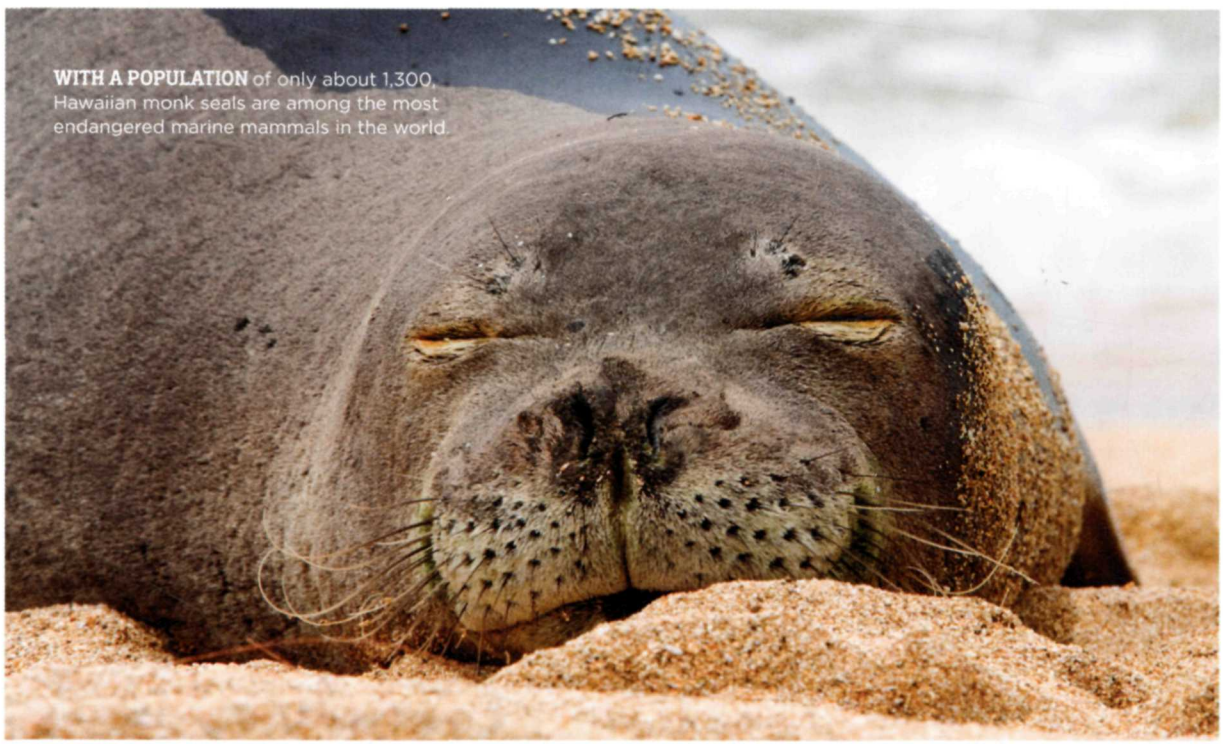

**WITH A POPULATION** of only about 1,300, Hawaiian monk seals are among the most endangered marine mammals in the world.



# Founding Mother

## Welcomed by former outcasts, an endangered seal starts a dynasty at Kalaupapa National Historical Park.

**AT FIRST SHE WAS JUST A YOUNG SEAL** swimming alone in unfamiliar waters. When she came ashore onto an empty beach on the island of Molokai, scientists assigned her a number, R006. Later, she gave birth to a pup on that beach, part of Kalaupapa National Historical Park. No seal had done that in recorded history, and it earned her a new name: Mama Eve.

Mama Eve doesn't look like much. If you saw her asleep on the beach, you'd be forgiven for mistaking her for a big rock, or a 450-pound lump of gray jelly. Her body's covered in so many scars and shark bites that scientists don't need to tag her to tell her apart from other seals. But for the population of Hawaiian monk seals, one of the world's most endangered marine mammals, Mama Eve is a ray of hope — the dynasty she's created at Kalaupapa is helping keep her species alive.

Only about 1,300 Hawaiian monk seals are left, and though the population has been relatively stable recently, it has historically declined at a rate of 4 percent a year. About 1,100 live in the remote Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, where discarded nets and other marine debris, shark attacks and beach loss contribute to an 80 percent mortality rate among pups. The 200 or so seals that live on the main islands vie for space on crowded beaches. They're also vulnerable to disease and, in a few documented cases, intentional killings. The Hawaiian monk seal's two closest relatives have fared even worse: Fewer than 700 Mediterranean monk seals hang on between Madeira and the Aegean Sea, while the last Caribbean monk seal was seen in the 1950s.

With survival rates down and the population at a critical juncture, R006's discovery of 'Īlio pi'i beach in 1997 presented a rare opportunity. Though seals

hadn't been seen there in decades, the shallow waters and offshore reefs made it an ideal place to raise pups. R006 gave birth to her first one soon after her arrival, and then to 13 more over the next 17 years. Her offspring eventually gave birth to 35 additional pups, all at Kalaupapa. Other seals learned of the safe pupping area and began to come to the beach year-round. In all, 92 monk seals — a significant chunk of the species' remaining population — have been born on the beaches of Kalaupapa over the past two decades.

Unknown to Mama Eve, Kalaupapa was a symbolic stage for a comeback.

In 1865, to contain the spread of leprosy, or Hansen's disease, King Kamehameha V signed a law mandating the isolation of all those afflicted. The first outcasts arrived on the Kalaupapa peninsula the following year. The setting was beautiful — with ocean on two sides and 2,000-foot-high sea cliffs on the third — but the residents were almost completely cut off from the rest of the world. More than 8,000 men and women lived and died at the colony until the state of Hawaii lifted the confinement laws in 1969. Kalaupapa National Historical Park was established in 1980 so that the National Park Service could preserve the history of the settlement.

Hawaiian monk seals may have used the beaches at Kalaupapa long ago. The name of the beach that Mama Eve first arrived at means "climbing dog" in Hawaiian, possibly a reference to the name for the seals themselves, īlio-holo-i-ka-uaua or "dog that runs in rough seas." No records of seals pupping on the peninsula exist, but the potential was always there, said Thea Johanos-Kam, a research wildlife biologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the federal agency responsible for managing the seals. "The shallow water and boulders near the beach protect pups from sharks," she said, "and the reefs here are in better shape than on nearby islands, so there's a local source of food." What's more, the isolation of the peninsula protects the seals from disturbances they would likely encounter on the main islands. That is still true today because of strict visitation rules — no one under 16 and no more than 100 visitors per day are permitted in the park.

A receptive local community has also contributed significantly to the success of Kalaupapa seals, said Eric Brown, a marine ecologist at Kalaupapa. Making room for the seals on the main islands can be complicated. Some local fishermen resent the protection of the seals, which they say pluck fish from their nets. Cohabitation along the shore is also a challenge: On beaches all over the main Hawaiian Islands, teams of volunteers with cones and caution tape cordon off seals to keep humans away, but that hasn't solved the problem. And then there are the killings. Since 2009, at least nine seals have died under suspicious circumstances on the main Hawaiian Islands. Some have been found beaten to death; others have been shot.

At Kalaupapa, the mood is different. Brown said that eight years ago, when NOAA approached the remaining residents about releasing a rehabilitated pup in the park, they made it clear that any seals would be well received. "'Bring 'em in!' they said," Brown recounted. "The residents wanted the peninsula to be known as a place where seals are welcomed and cherished." Brown thinks the community's acceptance of the seals is connected to its history. Leprosy patients sent to Kalaupapa "were outcasts, people who were forcibly separated from their families and loved ones," he said. "They view the seals as more than just another endangered species. They are part of the family here."

Mama Eve herself has not pupped at Kalaupapa since 2013, and she hasn't been seen for a couple of years. It's a little nerve-wracking, but Johanos-Kam is quick to point out that it doesn't mean that she's died. "There are a lot of places she could be," she said.

This spring, four baby seals made their debut at Kalaupapa. Two of those pups have the seal equivalent of royal blood — they are Mama Eve's great-granddaughters. Even though the matriarch of the island may never touch these shores again, her dynasty lives on. **NP**

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**NICK LUND** handles energy issues for NPCA, and he writes about birds and nature for the Audubon Society, Slate and National Geographic.

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THESE LANDS ARE YOUR LANDS

# YOUR PARK STORIES

THESE TALES ARE YOUR TALES

A couple of years ago, we set up a website, My Park Story, and asked people to send us stories about their experiences in parks. Hundreds of submissions later, the anecdotes are still rolling in. Your stories — full of wonder and wisdom — have made us laugh and cry. When an especially poignant one pops up, we send around the link and blink back tears at our desks. To celebrate the National Park Service centennial this summer, we are publishing some of our favorite submissions: Seeing the Milky Way for the first time. Sleeping under the stars and grieving. Watching the sun rise and realizing something profound about yourself. It's challenging to sum up the Park Service at 100, but we think these snapshots begin to tell the story. —Editors

## GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK
WYOMING

In the summer of 1957, my bride and I lived in a snug two-room log cabin six miles up Cascade Canyon, just two miles below Lake Solitude in Grand Teton.

My job as ranger was to patrol the trail to Lake Solitude and the South Fork of Cascade Canyon, interact with the hikers and report to ranger headquarters each evening — a dream job that has colored our lives!

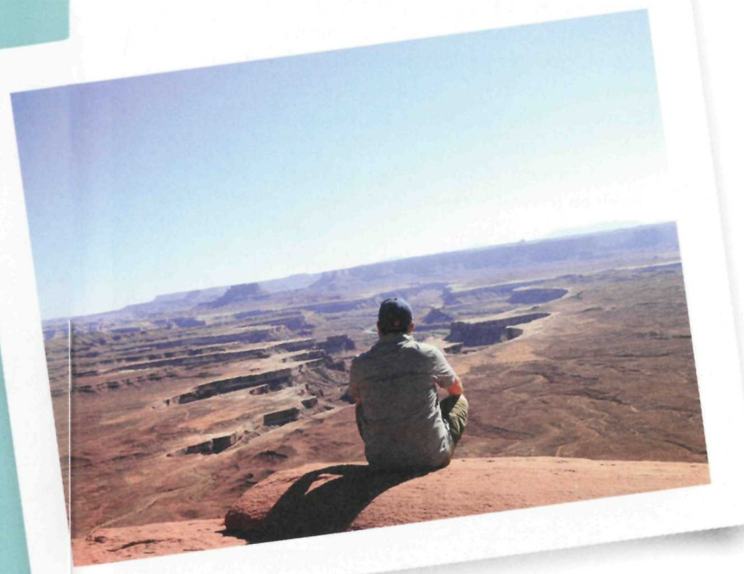
More than 50 years later the memories still shine brightly ... that first morning when we awoke to see a bear pressing his nose against the window; "our" resident bull moose who crossed the creek daily, visitors sheltering in our cabin from August thunderstorms, watching the collapse of Schoolroom Glacier, marveling at the carpet of flowers in the Alaska Basin, walking The Wall, glissading down the snowfield at the top of Paintbrush Canyon, swimming in the icy waters of String Lake, bushwhacking out of Avalanche Canyon.

Since then, we have visited national parks from Acadia to Denali, climbed Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain, watched buffalo appear out of the mist at Geyser Basin, gazed into the deep blue waters of Crater Lake, laughed at nimble goats leaping from ridge to ridge in Glacier and stood amazed at the magnificence of the Grand Canyon.

So many wonderful parks — what a gift to us from our nation.

—DICK BECKMAN

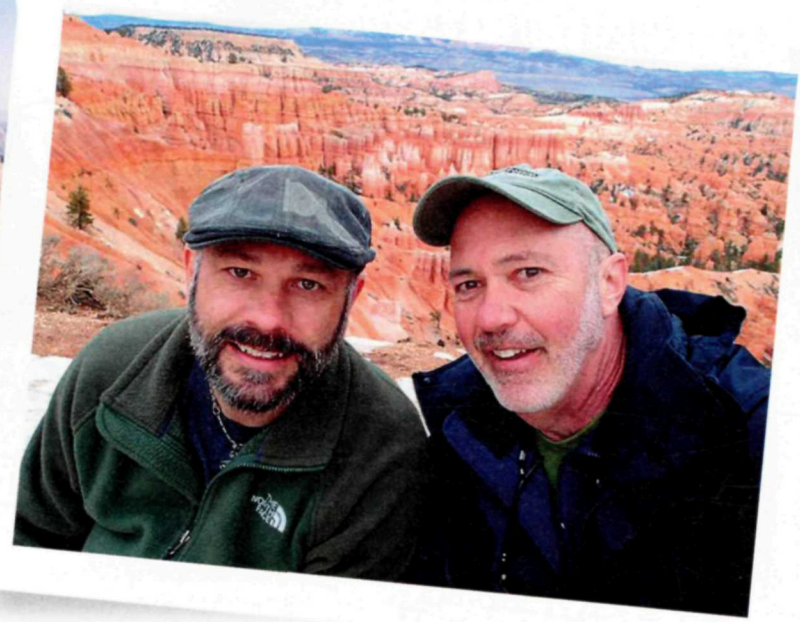
*(We were very sorry to learn the author died in March, nearly three years after submitting his story. Our condolences to his family. — Editors)*



## CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARK
UTAH

I live in a big city, and it's hard to ever truly get away from it all except when my wife and I visit the national parks. We traveled to Canyonlands in the summer of 2012, and I was truly enchanted by the stillness and quiet of it all. This picture was taken by my wife about 30 minutes into a long and tranquil "sit" on the edge of the Green River Overlook. The photo is the desktop background on my computer and acts as a daily reminder of that peaceful moment and the amazing things that lie within the boundaries of our national parks.

—JOEY DIFRANCO



**THE AUTHOR**
(at right, both photos) and Roger in Grand Canyon in 1998 (above) and Bryce Canyon in 2014 (right). After 18 years together, the couple's favorite destinations are still national parks.

## GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK
ARIZONA

It was April on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. I woke up early to find a blanket of snow covering everything, so I walked in darkness to take in the sunrise and the unfolding of a truly spectacular sight. The canyon's pinnacles, ledges, cracks and crevices were dusted with snow, creating beautiful contrast between icy white and golden stone.

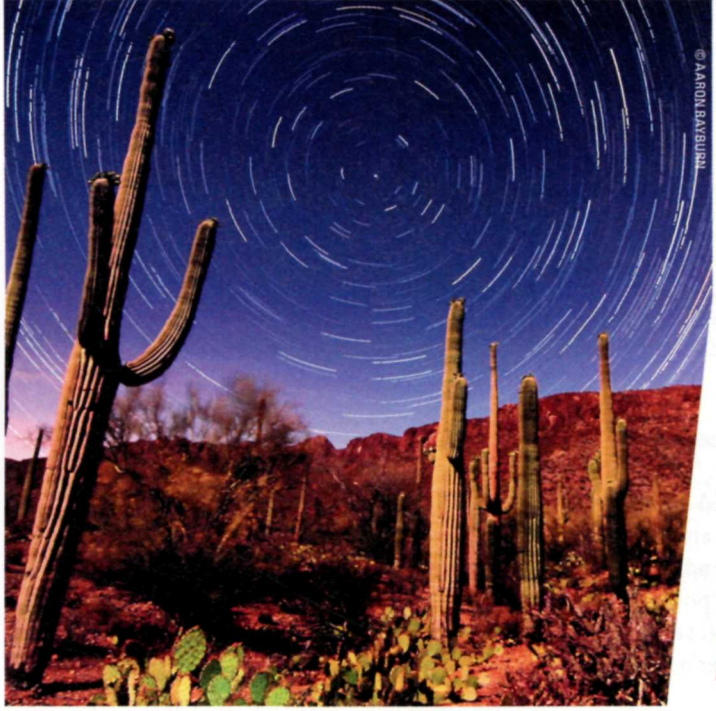
At first I was alone, but soon lots of other people were out, too, so I walked down the South Kaibab Trail a couple hundred yards. That was all it took to get away from people, most of whom only gaze into the canyon from above. I stepped to the side of the trail and sat down, elevated above the occasional hikers passing by. Out of the wind and comfortable, I just watched the constantly changing light show before me. I sat there for hours as long shadows became shorter and snow-filled crevices melted.

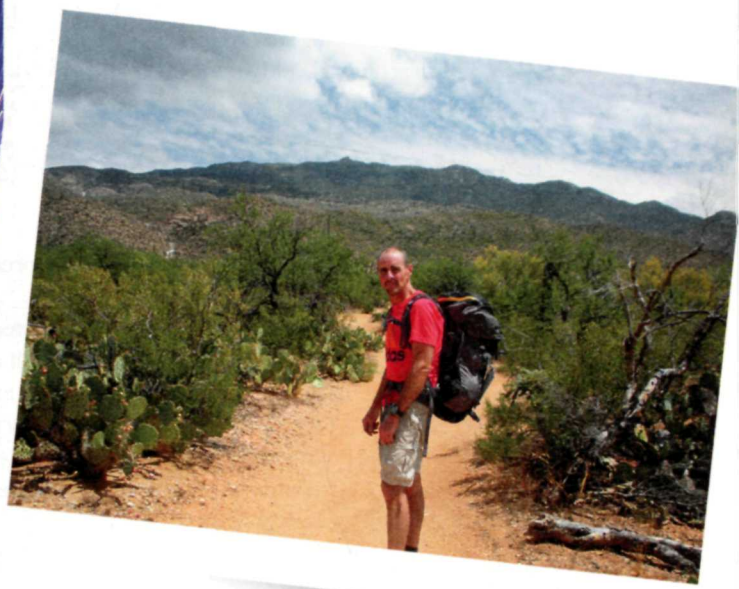
After 32 years, I was coming to terms with who I really was. I began to look at the canyon as a metaphor for my life. It was dark and coming out into the light. All the rough, craggy edges were smoothed out by the snow ... it was like a brand-new beginning. For over 20 years, I, too, had been lurking in the shadows, ashamed of who I was because so many around me told me I should be. I had never doubted that I was gay; I just never thought I would say those words aloud.

But there, just below the rim of this incredibly beautiful place, I saw an opportunity for a new beginning. I was no different than I was a few hours earlier, and yet at the same time, I was entirely different. I pledged that when I got home, I would be honest with those I loved about who I really was. It was tough at first, but surprisingly, it got better, and my life was richer and happier.

Fast-forward 14 months. Again I found myself on the rim of the Grand Canyon. It was before dawn, and snow was again on the ground. This time, though, it was the North Rim, and I was not alone. I told Roger to close his eyes as I led him to the edge for his first view of the place that got me to this moment ... this remarkable moment when every pinnacle, ledge, crack and crevice of this perfectly imperfect place was revealed in the growing light. We sat hand in hand on the edge of this miles-wide gash in the earth and watched the sun rise together.

—GARY BREMEN



## SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK
### ARIZONA

Bittersweet are my memories of the day we embarked on a trek into Saguaro for a night under the stars. This was a trip my dad and I had planned for quite some time, but he had been taken from us suddenly by a massive stroke a little over a year earlier.

Knowing he would want me to continue the many adventures we shared, his brother and I did the hike in his memory. I felt like he was there as I walked and let the desert lift my spirits and restore my soul.

—ROBERT M. GLEITZ

## ISLE ROYALE NATIONAL PARK
### MICHIGAN

After months of preparation and planning, my daughter and I ventured off on our first backpacking trip into the wilderness. With only each other to depend on, we soon began to experience the world in a completely new way.

We hiked for miles along the Greenstone Ridge and surrounding forest, among the wolves and the moose and, at one point, hundreds of miniature toads. We laughed a lot, making mistakes and learning lessons along the way. We hit our limit of pain, fatigue, hunger and irritability, but stopping was not an option, so we dug in our heels and discovered new levels of perseverance.

I never promised my daughter this would be a fun trip, but I did promise her it would be a memorable one. And a memorable trip it was.

In the weeks that followed, I noticed a change in my daughter. This young woman had somehow grown more confident, courageous and self-aware. Isle Royale transformed us. We didn't get lost in the wilderness, but rather, we found parts of ourselves we did not know we possessed.

—BETH A. OLIVER

## CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE
### MASSACHUSETTS

My parents and I began traveling to North Truro, Massachusetts, and camping on Cape Cod before and immediately after its designation as a national seashore in 1961. It was an amazing sight for a girl bred among the mountains to behold — the ocean in its full glory spread out before me to enjoy, to explore, to admire.

I loved those two-week summer adventures. I loved the feel of sand between my toes and the smell of salt and seaweed lingering in my hair. My body was warmed and browned by the sun, and my muscles were worked by powerful waves. It was glorious to get up every morning, eat a breakfast made on a Coleman stove by a caring mother and find the perfect spot on an endless stretch of fine-sand beach. Wasn't every spot perfect?

—SUSAN

© RICH REID/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CREATIVE

## GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
### MONTANA

It was September 2011, and I was in the midst of what I called "my trek." I had promised myself that I would visit Glacier after seeing pictures of it somewhere or other.

About one year earlier, I had been diagnosed with cancer, and during the period when I was recovering from surgery, I gained a lot of weight, and arthritis — which exercise had previously kept at bay — had invaded my body. But I was determined to make this hike to Hidden Lake. People passed me on the way, children among them, but I kept going and was rewarded with a remarkable view of the lake as I sat and rested.

A young couple joined me. The woman, a scarf wrapped around her head, sat next to me. She was just a girl, really, slight and pretty. Soon we were talking and, somehow, my cancer came up. She listened to my story and then told me that she was being treated for brain cancer. I commented on her attitude, on the aura of peace that seemed to envelop her. She seemed to have a serene, sure sense and belief that all would be well.

"How do you do it?" I asked, and she told me about her faith in God and how she trusted in Him.

There we were, two people of very different ages, thrown together by sheer chance and both dealing with cancer. I didn't and don't believe in God, but she inspired me to rediscover my feelings about being an integral part of the universe and to face my own cancer in a manner approaching hers. I only regret that I didn't take her picture so I could have tangible evidence that we really did meet.

—DAVID MOLNAR

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## MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK
### WASHINGTON

I am a medically retired combat veteran living in the Pacific Northwest. Riding my Harley and spending time on Mount Rainier are two things that help me reconnect and re-center. It was here that I got the idea to ride to 22 national parks in 22 days to raise awareness about the veteran suicide problem and to highlight how these parks can help veterans when they come home.

—MICHAEL NIELSEN

## YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK
### CALIFORNIA

I'm a first-generation college student and a first-generation park ranger. In the wild, I saw the Milky Way for the first time, and later, I cried as I watched others experience it for the first time. I have walked through living giant sequoias, and I have had the opportunity to lead others through these natural marvels. I've backpacked, hiked, rock climbed, snowboarded and so much more.

The privilege to do all this was granted to me by people who believed that I deserved it, and now I have the chance to pay this luxury forward. It is truly life-altering to go to a place that has changed so much and yet so little and know that someone a long time ago cared enough about us to make sure we could experience it. At least that's how I feel when I'm leading a trip to the park or picking up some trash on the trail.

For those who have never been to a national park, or for those of you who visit when you can: I care about you. I want you to experience these places and feel the love and belonging that I've felt here. I hope, someday, you can.

—JESSICA RIVAS

**THE AUTHOR,** in uniform at far left, with participants in a program that brings young adults to Yosemite to see what it's like to live and work there.

## YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK
### CALIFORNIA

There is little that compares to the tranquility of the ending day in Yosemite's wilderness. The whispering of soft breezes through the limbs of the trees and the filtered, low-angle light reflecting like jewels on the rippling surfaces of alpine lakes give me a sense of peace like few other things on this earth.

I have been fortunate to have experiences like this in national parks since I was 10 and went to Grand Teton for my first backpacking trip. Later, my first park job took me to Denali, where my eyes were opened to the vastness of the Alaskan landscape and the true wildness of untrammeled country. After five summers exploring and learning from some of the most challenging and beautiful landscapes I have seen, my career took me south to Yosemite. Here, I continued to explore wild places but began to feel a deep desire to share these experiences with young people who, for whatever reason, do not have access to them.

Since 2007, I have been working in collaboration with a variety of organizations and institutions to break down barriers and create meaningful opportunities for youth to connect to their national parks. I feel it is a great honor and also a great responsibility to share the places that have given me so much with the young people who will become the next generation of constituents, leaders and stewards of parks and wild places.

—JESSE CHAKRIN

## LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK
### CALIFORNIA

© RACHID DAHNOUN/TANDEM STILLS + MOTION

I had the best weekend of my life in Lassen. With a backpack, a few days' worth of food and one of my closest friends, I took off from Juniper Lake and headed out.

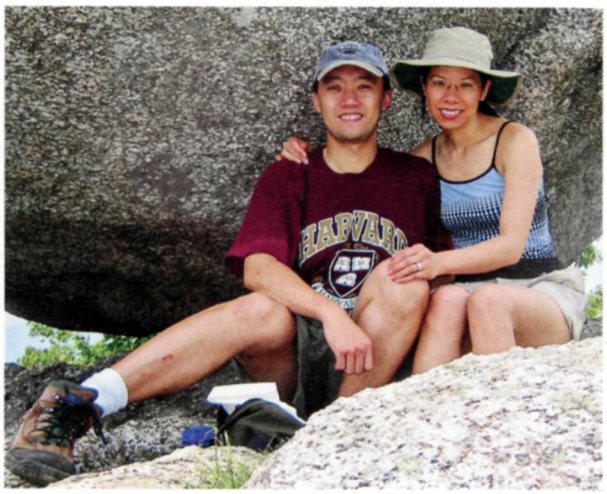
I showed up with an earth-shattering amount of stress. I had just graduated from college and had been working at least two jobs for the previous year. Dealing with the transitions and the moving and the financial stress of it all had really pulled me down. After catching an amazing view at Inspiration Point, where we could see Mount Shasta and Snag Lake, I permanently dropped the weight.

—NATALIE LESSA

## NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK
### WASHINGTON

My brother and I reconnected on a backpacking trip in North Cascades in the summer of 2013. It had been over 40 years since we had last backpacked together, and we sure picked the best place for the event. Words cannot describe the awe we felt in this backpackers' paradise. This picture shows my brother at the top of Easy Pass about to descend into the incomparable Fisher Basin.

—GARY MYERS



## SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

### VIRGINIA

Back when my wife and I were dating, we used to go hiking to the top of Old Rag in Shenandoah fairly often. I decided to propose to her near the top and secretly packed a tripod and camera in my backpack so I could take a picture. Here we are right after she accepted the proposal.

—ALAN CHIEN

## ON THE WAY TO YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

### IDAHO, MONTANA AND WYOMING

I like to call this photo "Yellowstone or Bust." In 1949, my mother and dad and their seven kids crowded into the new station wagon and set out on the journey from Southern Illinois to points west. Ultimate destination: Yellowstone National Park.

—PEGGY L. BRAYFIELD

## DENALI NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE

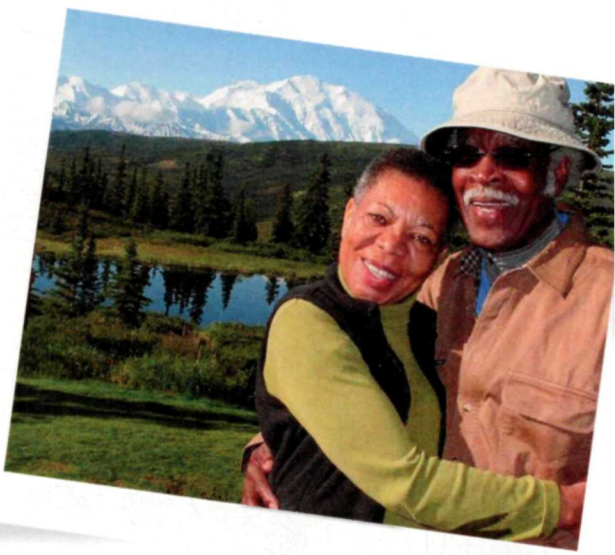
### ALASKA

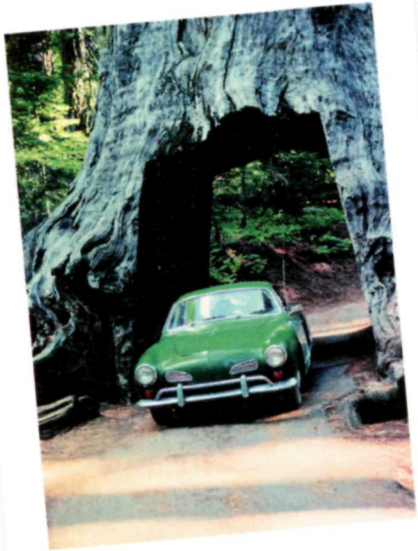
Through the window I could see Denali. Sometimes, clouds wafted across its face, and other times, it shone in blinding yellow-white light. I napped and ate and watched the mountain some more. And somewhere in the silence a most profound thought awakened in me.

It was as if the mountain was transmitting: "You know what? Look at the size of me and the size of you — a little different, yes? Relatively speaking, I am permanent and you are like chaff in the wind, here for a century if you're fortunate. So I really don't need you to 'protect' me. What I require of you and the other humans is that you wake up and recognize where the true power lies. Appreciate the force that created me, that created you and all life, and respect that."

I will carry that thought with me for the rest of my life.

—AUDREY PETERMAN





## YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

### CALIFORNIA

In 1976, my wife and I went on a month-long cross-country camping adventure for our first wedding anniversary. We drove from Miami to San Francisco in our 1969 Volkswagen Karmann Ghia, stopping to visit or camp in 14 national park sites including Hot Springs, Aztec Ruins, Mesa Verde, Arches, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, Bryce Canyon, Cedar Breaks and Yosemite. On our way back, we saw Grand Canyon, Wupatki, Sunset Crater, Petrified Forest and Carlsbad Caverns. We still remember the beautiful scenery and adventures of our trip (our slide projector helps). We made it through that experience and 38 years of marriage. We both just retired, and I think it's time for another long adventure. Maybe in a van this time.

—ED & BOBBIE ASKINS

To read more stories or to submit your own, go to myparkstory.org.

## GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

### NORTH CAROLINA AND TENNESSEE

I went on a weeklong camping trip with my best friend, Taylor. We explored new terrain and grew even closer. When I returned to Florida and was looking through old photos, I noticed I had gone to some of the same spots with my family 15 years earlier! The heart will always bring you back home to nature.

—ALISSA

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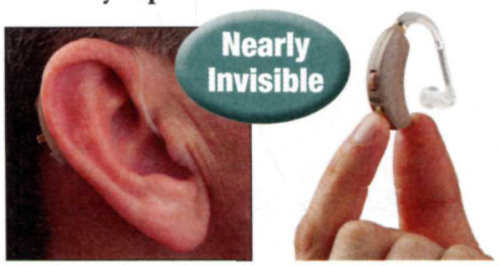


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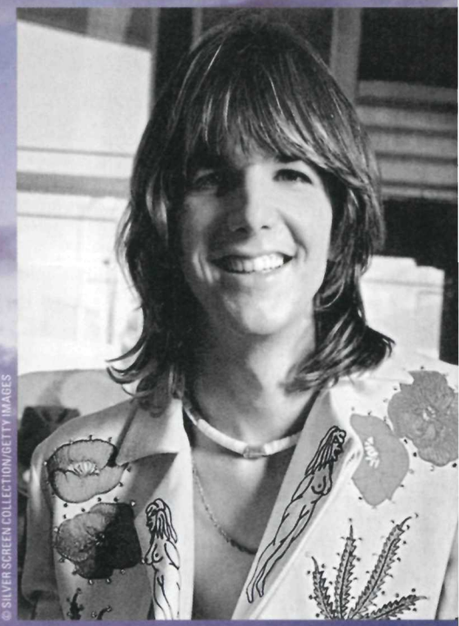
# Cosmic Vibes Abound

## Gram Parsons and his musical legacy at Joshua Tree.

By Melanie D.G. Kaplan



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In

**the moments after the last blaze** of sun slips behind the mountains at Joshua Tree National Park, stillness prevails. Dusk turns the Dr. Seuss-like trees into eerie shapes and shadows. In the dim light, they look like long bodies reaching up to the sky or contorting into alphabet letters. Beyond them lies a vast openness.

Nearly 150 miles east of Los Angeles, at the intersection of the Mojave and Colorado Deserts, the park offers a tranquility that's exceedingly rare. Visitors who travel from messy urban sound environments are sometimes taken aback by the silence.

The first time I visited Joshua Tree several years ago, I was struck by how the harsh environment and unforgiving — yet beautiful — landscape somehow seemed to invite creativity. I savored the time for contemplation, and writing came easily. In the shade behind a rock, I sat in the warm sand, scribbling onto lined pages.

Maybe the quirky Joshua trees, which defy our understanding of life by surviving for hundreds of years in stark conditions, remind us to step out of our habitual ways. Perhaps the wildflowers that flourish with the scantest rainfall stir the imagination. Or maybe it's that against the apparent emptiness and silence of the desert, things appear fresh and consequential. Whatever the pull, I have come to understand why artists of all types have drifted to this land for generations.

Among those who have found inspiration here, it is musician Gram Parsons whose connection to the park is possibly the most legendary. The father of what he called "cosmic American music" (and what we today describe as alt-country), Parsons is known for bringing together rock, country and blues. Curiosity about his intimate relationship with Joshua Tree — where he spent time before his death more than 40 years ago — draws visitors from around the world, especially to a spot in the northwestern section of the park called Cap Rock. The park, which logged a record 2 million visitors in 2015, is one of the top musical attractions in the world, according to a recent poll of USA Today readers.

I visited the park earlier this year to learn more about Parsons, and at the end of my first day, I found myself walking around Cap Rock. A massive formation rising high above the desert, it's named for a large flat rock that balances precariously on one side like a beret. The climbers and hikers had dispersed, and I stood on the north side, close to a makeshift shrine to Parsons. Someone had used twigs to make a cross in the sand; a blue guitar pick lay nearby. I watched the sun disappear and waited for the stars. Orion crept across the sky. It was very, very quiet.

Later that night, the temperature plummeted to near freezing. In the campsite adjacent to mine, a small group sat around a crackling fire with a guitar. From my tent, I listened to them sing Cat Stevens' "Peace Train" and Indigo Girls' "Closer to Fine." Hours later, the yips of a coyote woke me, and the moon shone on the park like a spotlight. Music remained on my mind.

Gram Parsons was born into a wealthy family of Florida citrus growers in 1946, and after meeting Elvis Presley at a young age, he decided to become a musician. Before he was out of his teens both his parents had died — his father had committed suicide, and his mother had succumbed to years of alcoholism. Parsons left the


© DESIGNED AND PRINTED BY IDAVID GRAFICKS OF JOSHUA TREE. IN MEMORY OF SNEAKY PETE KLEINOW, CHRIS ETHRIDGE & GIB GUILBEAU.

**GRAMFEST** and Gene Clark tribute poster from 2004.


**MARGO PAOLUCCI,** the owner of the Joshua Tree Inn, where Parsons died in 1973.

South with a large inheritance and briefly attended Harvard University. Around that time, he started the International Submarine Band. The group recorded only one album, "Safe at Home." It wasn't a hit — in fact, Parsons never had a hit record — but critics consider it seminal because it was one of the first to blend country music with rock 'n' roll. Though it was released years before I was born, it influenced the music I've listened to most of my adult life from the Rolling Stones to Son Volt. Before I entered the park, I'd visited HooDoo, a record shop in Yucca Valley that always stocks Parsons (as well as comic books and Iron Maiden onesies), and I bought the album in white vinyl.

Parsons joined the Byrds and recorded the hugely influential "Sweetheart of the Rodeo" in the late 1960s. But his time with the band was short-lived. During a tour stop in London, Parsons became fast friends with the Rolling Stones' Keith Richards. He decided at the 11th hour to forgo a trip to South Africa with the Byrds, ostensibly to advance his relationship with Richards. The Byrds released him from the band.

Back in Los Angeles, Parsons formed the Flying Burrito Brothers and continued mixing country and rock, cultivating a look that neither camp could fully claim. The band members wore rhinestone suits designed by Nudie's Rodeo Tailors in Hollywood; Parsons' included embroidered naked women on the lapels, poppies on the shoulders, oblong pills up the arms, marijuana leaves on the front, a large cross on the back and red flames racing up the legs.

Famously pretty, with a pronounced jawline and dreamy gaze, Parsons wore his hair long, with bangs often covering his eyes. He accessorized with scarves, frilly collars, tasseled jackets and outrageous hats. His voice was soulful and emotive; it's been said that women in the audience wept when he performed.

The Flying Burrito Brothers toured the country by train in a haze of psychedelic drugs and alcohol. The group wasn't

**"We'd start a song in one key and one tempo, and he'd start singing the song in another key and three-quarter time." One night a fight broke out, and band member Chris Hillman put his fist through Parsons' guitar.**

**ROOM 8** at the Joshua Tree Inn, where Parsons overdosed, is usually booked months in advance (right). Clockwise from top right: GramFest 1996 poster. Scott Wexton, the owner of HooDoo records, always stocks his store with Gram Parsons records and memorabilia. Musician Rojer Arnold jammed a few times with Parsons the summer before he died.


© GASTON LACOMBE


© GASTON LACOMBE

popular at the time and Parsons — who would show up to gigs late, drunk and stoned — became a liability. In the 2004 documentary "Gram Parsons: Fallen Angel," Bernie Leadon, who went on to become a founding member of the Eagles, said, "We'd start a song in one key and one tempo, and he'd start singing the song in another key and three-quarter time." One night a fight broke out, and band member Chris Hillman put his fist through Parsons' guitar. Leadon recounts: "Hillman said, 'Gram, you're fired.' And Gram was like, 'You can't fire me. I'm Gram.' And Hillman said, 'Well, you're fired. Goodbye.'"

Some of those familiar with Parsons' story say it was actor Ted Markland who introduced him to Joshua Tree, which was then a national monument with unpaved roads. Others say it was Tom Wilkes, who brought the Flying Burrito Brothers there for a photo shoot. However he found it, Parsons was hooked. Perhaps to flee the rock 'n' roll lifestyle, perhaps to prolong some aspects of it, he escaped there on many occasions, sometimes with Richards.

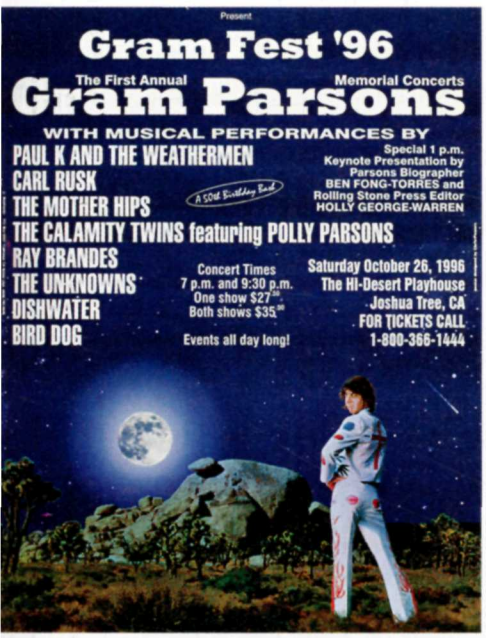
"When you tour a lot, it's the perfect place to go back to," said Dave Catching, a local producer and musician who plays with desert rock band earthlings? and most recently toured with Eagles of Death Metal. "It's a place that can clear your head so immediately." Over the last three decades, Catching has regularly visited the park, sometimes writing music, other times playing his guitar and recording. He claims that in the park, he's sensed a "spiritual vortex." It may sound trippy and New Agey, but over several days in the high desert, I heard the exact same phrase from several musicians.

"There are certain places on Earth that are special, that draw people there," Catching said. "It's deeper than the beauty and solitude."

In 1973, Parsons released his solo debut, "GP," with a young Emmylou Harris on vocals. Their exquisite duets remain a gold standard to this day: When I was in Texas recently, I saw the Black Lillies, a band fronted by singers that one critic described as the best-matched male-female duo since Parsons and Harris.

That summer, Parsons continued recording. He jammed a few times with guitarist Rojer Arnold, who grew up just outside the park. "He had a really pretty voice, and he had that spark," Arnold told me one afternoon at the Joshua Tree Saloon. He also remembers the non-stop partying. Once, Parsons rolled up to Arnold's house in a white Bentley, holding a liquor bottle out the window. "I got the feeling he needed to come here to be away from that stuff," he said.

In July, Parsons and his road manager, Phil Kaufman, attended the funeral of Byrds guitarist Clarence White, who was

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**"It was like a Beatles Fest or Star Trek convention. People across a wide spectrum of life experiences got together and felt comfortable in their obsession."**

killed in a drunk driving accident. As I heard time and again, Parsons and Kaufman made a pact there about their own deaths and Joshua Tree.

On September 19, 1973, at age 26, Parsons died of a drug overdose in Room 8 of the Joshua Tree Inn. The macabre events that followed began with Kaufman deciding to fulfill his promise to Parsons: to cremate his body at Joshua Tree and spread his ashes at Cap Rock. Questionably lucid, Kaufman and a friend stole the body from Los Angeles International Airport (where it was to be flown to the Parsons family) and drove it to Joshua Tree in a borrowed hearse. At Cap Rock, Kaufman poured gasoline inside the coffin and lit a match. As the story goes, he saw headlights, panicked and drove away. Parsons' body was partially cremated. His remains were eventually sent to his family and are now buried in New Orleans.

Some see Kaufman's actions as loyal; others call his exploits disgraceful. For decades, the National Park Service said nothing. That will change in the near future when the park adds a marker at Cap Rock that will briefly tell Parsons' story.

"It's part of the cultural history of Joshua Tree," said the park's superintendent David Smith. "Our job is to tell that history."

For decades, others have been telling the story, largely through music. Musician and concert promoter Jon McKinney organized an annual memorial concert, called GramFest (and later the Cosmic American Music Festival), which was held just outside the park from 1996 to 2006 and would draw hundreds of spectators each year. Scores of artists played songs written, inspired or covered by Parsons, and over the years, the events helped establish a community in and around the town of Joshua Tree.

"At that point, a lot of people didn't know who he was," said McKinney, who sometimes still gets goose bumps while talking about Parsons. "I wanted to capture the spirit of his music, encourage up-and-coming musicians and focus on the positive."

Ray Brandes, who considers Parsons a major musical and spiritual influence, was the first performer booked for the original GramFest. "It was like a Beatles Fest or Star Trek convention," Brandes said. "People across a wide spectrum of life experiences got together and felt comfortable in their obsession."

The high desert here is home to about 60,000 people who live

While Gram Parsons wasn't the first musician to find solace and inspiration at Joshua Tree, he was among the earliest to use the desert as a backdrop for his own outlandish aesthetic — on a Flying Burrito Brothers album cover.

Since then, countless artists have trekked out to Joshua Tree to create a visual pop for their videos and stills. Matching the eccentric beauty of the Joshua tree is a tall order, yet that hasn't stopped musicians from trying.

# A SET IN THE DESERT

© MARINA CHAVEZ

Local producer and musician Dave Catching said he's done numerous photo shoots and videos in the park. "It looks crazy and alien, and it's the perfect lighting for any video," Catching said. "You don't need a lot of set-up time. You can hand-shoot quickly, and it looks great."

Jesika von Rabbit (left) said she frequently shoots photos and videos in the park because she likes the juxtaposition of the colorful and wild against the desert. She often wears form-fitting, flamboyant outfits in her videos, which have also featured such visual non sequiturs as a disco ball and dancers in rabbit heads.

During the park's 75th anniversary celebration in 2011, one of the visitor centers featured an exhibit of album cover art. It highlighted work by legendary cover designer Gary Burden, including Eagles and America covers that were shot in the park.

U2's 1987 recording "The Joshua Tree" is among the best-selling albums in the world, but don't go looking in the park for the tree pictured on the album's back cover. Most people don't know that the photo shoot occurred elsewhere in the Mojave Desert, so every year, fans arrive at the park and search for it futilely.

In the last five years, the park has become an even more popular spot for shooting videos, as more musicians find themselves in the area for the wildly popular Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. Country singer Kacey Musgraves shot the video for "Follow Your Arrow" in the park; in another song, she mentions sleeping in Parsons' room at Joshua Tree Inn. Swedish folk duo First Aid Kit recorded their video for "Emmylou" in the park, much of it at Cap Rock. They sing, "I'll be your Emmylou and I'll be your June, if you'll be my Gram and my Johnny too."

Some artists simply pop in for a photo — and, presumably, some tranquility. Miley Cyrus posed there a couple of summers ago. When Neil Young was on his clean fuel road tour in 2013, he posted shots on Facebook from Keys View, which offers a panorama of the spine-like San Andreas Fault and the entire Coachella Valley from the Salton Sea to the snow-covered peak of San Gorgonio Mountain. "I started my day by visiting Keys View at Joshua Tree," he wrote. "Nice to get away from the LA smog."

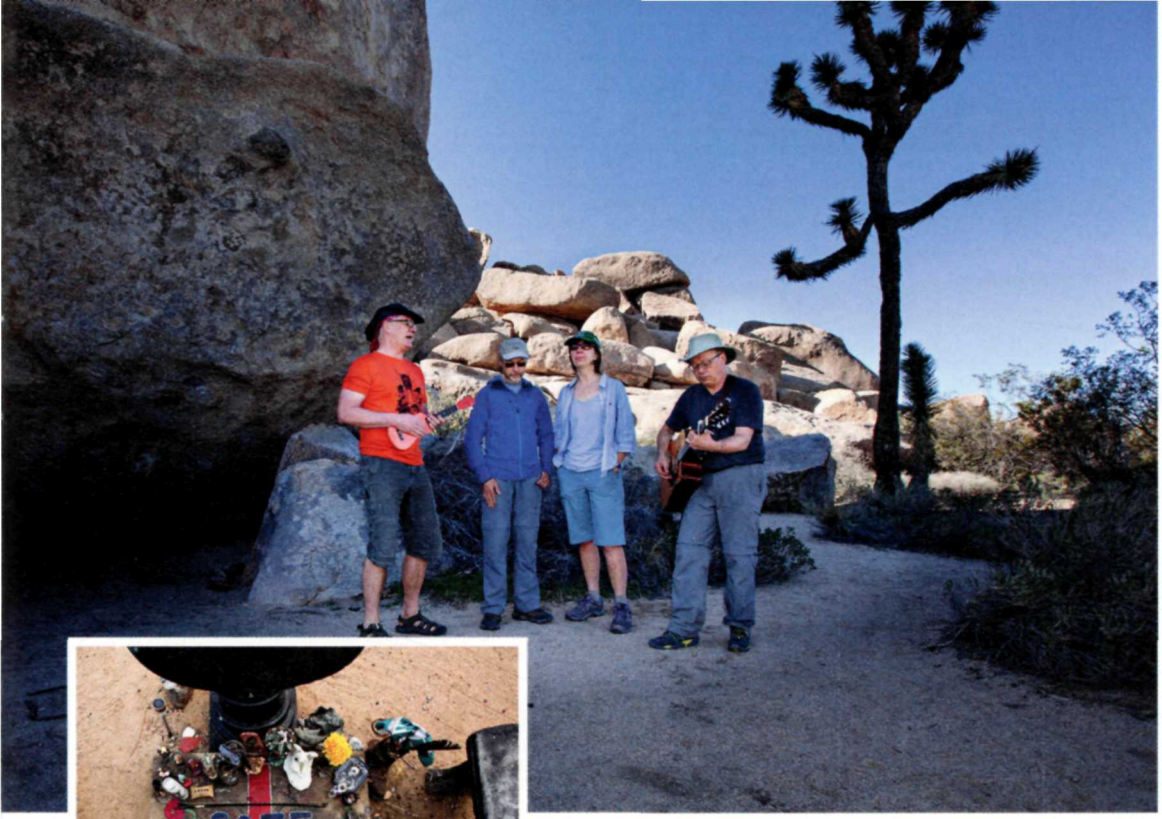
in a few small, dusty towns outside the park along Highway 62, the road through the Mojave also known as Twentynine Palms Highway. Occasionally tumbleweed somersaults across the road. Today, the area claims a community of musicians that was non-existent in Parsons' day, while big-name artists continue to visit the park to decompress. Iggy Pop, Foo Fighters and PJ Harvey have recorded at Catching's studio, Rancho de la Luna. Pappy & Harriet's, a former biker bar in Pioneertown, is an internationally recognized live music venue that has hosted a diverse group of artists from Rufus Wainwright to Modest Mouse to the Pixies. Robert Plant, Led Zeppelin's lead singer, once dropped by for an impromptu concert that locals still routinely mention in casual conversation.

Radio Free Joshua Tree founder and beloved local celebrity Ted Quinn, who is credited with keeping the local music scene alive, hosts a standing-room-only open mic night every week at Pappy & Harriet's. He hosts a similar event at the Joshua Tree Saloon, across the street from a pizza joint where one of the pies is named the David Bowie.

"I think Gram Parsons having been here drew a gigantic singer-songwriter community to the desert," said Eva Soltes, founder and director of Harrison House Music, Arts and Ecology, which supports artists in the high desert. She hosts resident musicians and composers and holds monthly concerts featuring local artists. "First it was a pilgrimage," she said. "Then they came to appreciate it for the same reasons Gram did."

A low-decibel environment, where one can hear the wind and animals, appeals to musicians, she added: "It's a wonderful place to open your ears."

Even those who aren't devotees of American roots music have found value in Parsons' work and story. Jesika von Rabbit never used to listen to country music, but after Todd Rutherford taught her Parsons and Emmylou Harris duets, the pair formed the band Gram Rabbit. These days, she's pursuing a solo career, and her style is more psychedelic rock and electro-pop than alt-country, but she's thankful that Parsons brought




**A GROUP** of Parsons' fans from Edmonton, Canada, pay tribute to the musician at Cap Rock, a massive formation in Joshua Tree. Inset: Detail of a memorial to Parsons at the Joshua Tree Inn.

© GASTON LACOMBE (2)

attention to Joshua Tree — and applauds his fashion sense.

"He's definitely left his mark on the desert," von Rabbit said. "His death put a little rock 'n' roll stake here."

One afternoon, I took a walk around Cap Rock with George Land, a ranger who considers himself the park's unofficial music historian. He becomes animated when talking about Parsons. "It's amazing how long the legend has lasted," he said.

Years ago, graffiti covered the rock where fans thought Parsons was cremated. People had the spot wrong, Land said. He added that the graffiti was a misguided way to honor Parsons, who cared enough about the park that he wouldn't have wanted people tagging it with spray paint. Today, the Park Service swiftly removes any markings. "You can pay your respects and leave no trace," he said. "Cap Rock is not a highway bridge in South L.A."

A short drive away, the Joshua Tree Inn, a roadside inn that once hosted John Wayne, is considered the epicenter of Parsons homage. I had spent a couple of nights there in the beginning on my trip, down the corridor from Room 8, where Parsons died. That room, which some claim is haunted, is booked months in advance. Guests from around the world leave messages and sketches in a book by the bed. "From one grievous angel to another," one message reads; another guest wrote, "Cosmic vibes abound in this room! Joshua Tree always provides the perfect recharge."

Motivated by little more than a gut feeling, Margo Paolucci purchased the inn in 2002. The previous owners had tried to cover up the Parsons connection, but Paolucci felt called to celebrate his accomplishments and honor his memory. The common areas are covered with art, posters and articles connected to Parsons. In pleasant weather, doors open, guitars come out and music fills the courtyard, where a memorial includes a large stone guitar and mementos left by visitors. Among the items: a fiddle bow, cowboy boots and a small Canadian football flag.

The folks I'd heard singing around the campfire, I found out the next morning, were visiting from Edmonton, and they'd planted the flag at the inn. As we all packed up our tents in the park, I learned that they were a group of 50-something professionals, hikers and music historians who played in a rock cover band.

We chatted a bit about Parsons. They were heading out for a hike, but on the way, they stopped at Cap Rock with their rented guitar. I came along and stood off to the side, listening to them play Emmylou Harris' tribute song to Parsons, "Boulder to Birmingham."

*Well you really got me this time*
*And the hardest part is knowing I'll survive. ...*
*I would walk all the way from Boulder to Birmingham*
*If I thought I could see, I could see your face.*

As they finished playing, the sun began peeking around the east side of the rocks. "We feel a connection to Gram through this physical place," said one of the singers, a space physicist named Dave Milling. "He was drawn to it. And we are, too."

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**MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN** is a Washington, D.C.-based writer who is trying to learn Gram Parsons' "Hickory Wind" on her ukulele.

**GASTON LACOMBE**, a photographer and filmmaker based in Washington, D.C., specializes in conservation and documentary projects.


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# SUNNY DAYS

Everything's A-OK when sunshine lights up the coastline, mountains and rainforest of Olympic National Park.

By Rona Marech
Photos by Justin Bailie

**THE LAND** at the mouth of the Elwha River used to be narrow and rocky, but the removal of the dams released sediment that formed a sandy beach. Previous page: Kayaking on Lake Crescent.

© STEVE RINGMAN/THE SEATTLE TIMES


© KAREN MINOT

I always travel with pen and paper, but on a recent trip to Olympic National Park, I fell into the habit of talking into my phone when it wasn't convenient to take notes. I didn't have a chance to listen to my voice memos right away, but one morning, several days after my return, I slipped on some headphones at work and hit play.

"Oh my God!" I had shout-whispered in a recording I'd made while standing on Rialto Beach. I'd just spotted a trio of river otters scampering across the sand. "They are so cute! It looks like a day at the beach for them! They're just tumbling around! They're riding the waves and the seagulls are lined up watching. Here they come! Oh my goodness!"

I'm above-average excitable, sure, but back at my desk, back in the real world of to-do lists and carpools, my ravings just made me laugh. It reminded me of the viral rainbow video that made the rounds a few years ago. A guy in California filmed a double rainbow and spent three and a half minutes laughing and crying and exclaiming about how vivid and beautiful and intense it was. "What does it mean?" he exulted. More than 43 million people watched the YouTube video; I was not the only one who chuckled and wondered what this fellow had consumed before his exuberant monologue.

Then I heard myself ranting, and suddenly, I didn't feel so smugly superior. *Whoa*, as the double rainbow guy would say. What exactly had happened to me in Olympic?

Well: not much but a lot. The sun shone and the park sparkled. I watched the sky awaken at dawn and darken at dusk. I visited three ecosystems and hiked and kayaked. It was totally ordinary and mind-blowing.

I almost hadn't gone. I'd thrown the trip together at the last minute, worried the whole time about bad weather and a possible government shutdown closing the park. Ragged and frazzled, I wondered whether I was making a mistake, given the timing and my responsibilities at home. And then I was utterly dazzled from the moment my adventure started at precisely 4:30 a.m. on a cold fall morning.

Determined to pack in as much as possible, I awoke before dawn, drove down abandoned Seattle streets and got in line at the ferry terminal for the trip to Bainbridge Island. It was September 28 — the date matters because it was the morning after the first total supermoon lunar eclipse, or blood moon, in 33 years. Hours earlier, the moon had appeared reddish, and it still seemed unimaginably huge, round and close. As the ferry chugged across Puget Sound, I stood on the deck, alone and awestruck, watching the darkness dissolve, mountains emerge under the lightening sky, and the city's blinking lights float away.

The crazy moon sat on my shoulder as I disembarked from the ferry, and it followed me on the hour-and-a-half trip to Port Angeles, the city on the park's edge. I kept pulling off the road to snap photos, and once, when the road curved and the moon burst

## TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

For those flying in to reach Olympic, the closest airports are Victoria International Airport and Sea-Tac International Airport. From Sea-Tac (or from Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia or Aberdeen), you can easily get to the park by car. It is also possible to take a bus from Sea-Tac to Port Angeles, the park's gateway city, and Clallam Transit System runs buses from there to popular park destinations along the northern part of Highway 101, which cuts through the park. In addition, several ferry routes cross Puget Sound to reach the Olympic Peninsula; travelers can drive to the park via ferry stops in Port Townsend, Kingston and Bainbridge Island.

Reservations are highly recommended at the four lodges inside the park. Lake Crescent Lodge, Log Cabin Resort, Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort and Kalaloch Lodge, which is the only one that is open year-round. The park also has 16 campgrounds. All of them are first come, first served, except for Kalaloch Campground, where reservations are required, and the Sol Duc Campground, which accepts reservations for some campsites. For backpackers, wilderness camping permits are required, and in some locations, reservations are also necessary. June through September are the park's busiest months.

Visitors should keep in mind that it can take hours to travel between destinations inside the park, which covers 1,442 square miles and does not have any roads criss-crossing it. Beware of wildlife when you are driving!

over the tree tops, I heard myself gasp.

A few minutes later, as I was driving over a bridge, the sun heaved itself over the horizon, and I was drenched in a flood of golden light. The combination of the moon, the pink mountains, the glittering water and the bath of light left me jittery with excitement. And I hadn't even reached the park yet.

It was still so early that even after stopping for breakfast, I managed to be in the front of the line at the main visitor center when it opened. I was looking for a little guidance since the park is huge — 1,442 square miles — and wildly diverse. Designated a monument in 1909 and a national park in 1938, it encompasses coastline, rainforest, rocky peaks, dozens of glaciers, 12 river basins and more than 300 lakes. A guidebook I picked up spelled out numerous superlatives: The park is home to at least 16 species of animals and eight kinds of plants that can't be found anywhere else and has one of the longest wild coastlines in the Lower 48. It is also the wettest place in the contiguous United States, and the famously green forest supports the greatest biomass — the amount of living matter — of any ecosystem on Earth.

My goal was to hit each of the three ecosystems, and I had a loose plan, but the ranger quickly dismissed my first-day sketch and urged me to drive to Hurricane Ridge, since it was an unusually clear morning high in the mountains. Convinced by his sparkly eyed insistence, I tossed out my plans and drove upward until I was deep in the folds of the Olympic Mountains staring out at snowy peaks and the twisting road below.

It was 47 degrees at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center, which sits at 5,242 feet. Antsy and chilly, I picked a path and started up the Klahhane Ridge Trail. The day grew warmer as I walked, and I kept stripping off layers until I was down to a tank top. I finally stopped in a clearing to sit down and soak it all in: the tall, spiny subalpine firs and mountain hemlocks, the shrill sun, the wind, the boats on the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the cloudless sky.

Usually the weather in late September is iffy. It's the start of the rainy season, and temperatures can drop precipitously. Even when it's not raining, people will complain about the constant gray mist that coats everything and clings to their skin. But every day I was there, the sky was blue, blue, blue. Scrubbed. It was possibly the clearest, shiniest weather I've ever encountered.

**A SMALL CREEK** running along the Sol Duc River Trail. Opposite (clockwise from top): A spider in the Hoh Rain Forest; the pebbly shore at Rialto Beach; ground cover near the famously wet and lush Hall of Mosses.

Walking into the mountains that first morning was like plunging into an inviting, cold lake. The advantage of starting so high, I realized, is that I was almost immediately surrounded by peaks, and within a few steps, it seemed like I'd made impressive progress. I hiked for about eight miles before returning to my car. I felt like I was floating as I drove back down the mountain and then along Lake Crescent, which shimmered in the late-day light.

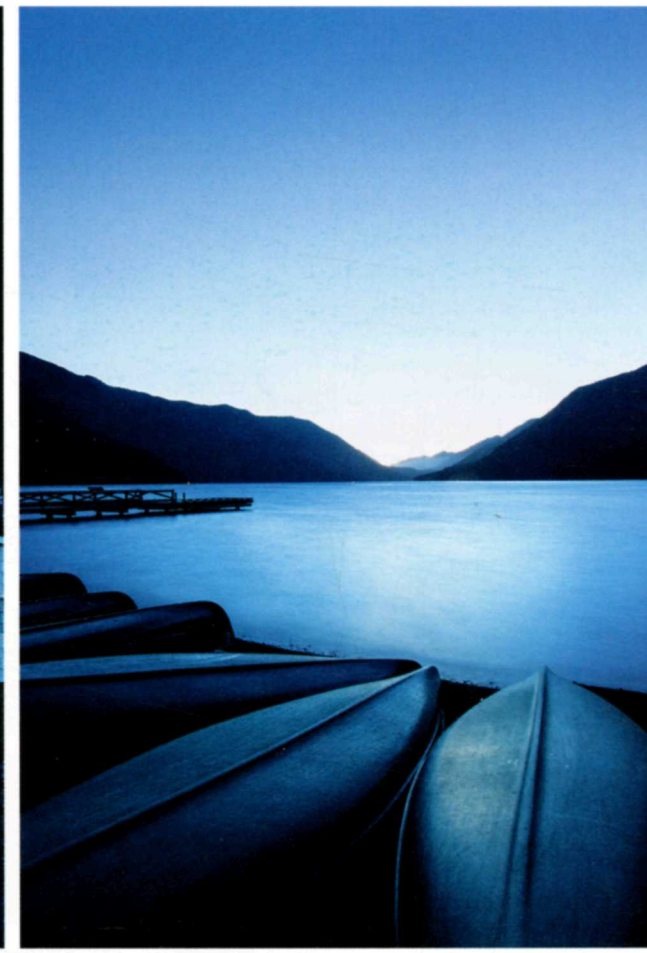
I'd booked the cheapest room, as far as I could tell, in Olympic: $73 a night to stay at Log Cabin Resort. One of four overnight lodges in the park, it's unpretentious and feels more like a summer camp than a resort. But my luck continued: With only a couple of days left in the season, the innkeepers were already starting to close up, so they upgraded me into a room with a loft just steps from Lake Crescent.

I'd pored over a map in advance, but somehow I hadn't fully absorbed just how close I'd be to the mountain-ringed lake. I ate in the lodge, staring out at the water. Was it possible that it was just that morning that I'd been driving around Seattle, making wrong turns onto empty streets and feeling like I was in a noir film?

It was cold and dark when I awoke the next morning, but before long, the first hints of sun began to breathe on the mountains and sky. I watched steam rising over the lake from my window, then slipped outside — just for a moment — to take a photo. But when I turned back to sip coffee and plan my day, I realized I'd locked myself out. In my pajamas. I wandered over to the front desk, but the no-frills lodge, it turned out, wasn't open yet. With some assertive knocking, I managed to get someone's attention, but he gruffly told me I'd have to wait for someone from housekeeping to help.

Ah well. By then, the sun had popped over the mountains, sending a pink streak skittering across the lake. There was really only one thing to do: I sat at the edge of the lake facing the growing light. The wind was blowing, and water was banging at the shore, but the middle of the lake was silvery black and calm. Some birds flew low over the lake, made a wide arc and disappeared with a squawk.

Somehow the gruff guy alerted a keeper of the keys, and my room was open when I returned from my lakeside reverie. I drank my coffee, put on a woolly hat and began Day Two. My first order of business was to see the Elwha River and its two former dam sites. A century ago, an industrialist built the dams to provide electricity for the remote Olympic Peninsula. It's a familiar



scenario: The dams fueled the local economy, but they also closed off 70 miles of salmon habitat, had a dismal effect on the ecosystem and flooded the homelands of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. For decades, NPCA and other groups pushed to tear down the dams, and finally, in 2011, work began on the largest dam removal in U.S. history. By 2014, both dams were gone.

The impact has been startling already. The National Park Service, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and hundreds of volunteers have planted more than 260,000 plants in newly exposed land. The salmon, once so abundant that native people told tales of walking across the river on them, are coming back. According to Lynda V. Mapes, a Seattle Times reporter who wrote a book about the recovery, the birds are plumper, and even the color of the river has changed.

You can see the remains of the dams and the free-flowing river at both the upper and lower dam sites, but one of the most dramatic transformations has been at the mouth of the Elwha, which is just outside the park. To get there, I drove to the end of an unmarked road and walked down a small path. And then, after a couple of minutes, I emerged onto the beach.

I'd already had my fair share of wonderstruck moments on my trip, but wow: The final, glistening piece of the Elwha curved through a long, empty expanse of sand, and the river was cluttered with birds, maybe hundreds or thousands of sandpipers, loons, gulls and ducks that were noisily squawking, flapping and foraging. The beach was littered with smooth stones and pale pieces of driftwood, and I sat down on a log to gawk. Suddenly, something disturbed the birds, and they rose in a whirring mass and whooshed in a big circle before settling down 100 yards away.

It's hard to believe this, but the sand is new. The strip of land here used to be narrow and rocky, but the removal of the dams released sediment and logs, which extended the river by a quarter mile and forged the beach.

I walked along the lip of the bay, my feet pressing into the sand, and then sat in a little driftwood hut. Through the holes in the roof I could see geometric pieces of deep blue sky. Double rainbow guy would have liked it.

It feels like a sin to rush in the wilderness, but I had a few more things to squeeze into my day, so I set off to Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort. It was well into the afternoon when I arrived, but I was determined to hike to a small alpine lake. I walked quickly through the woods, past blankets of moss and Douglas firs and western hemlocks lined up like soldiers and striped with sunlight. An hour later, I reached a ridge, then made my way down

**A PAIR** of sea stacks bursting out of the sand on Rialto Beach (left). Top left: Lake Crescent Lodge cabins clustered along the lakeshore. Top right: When Lake Crescent is calm, it's an ideal place to kayak or canoe.

# NPCA@WORK

Water clattering over rocks. Elk bugling in the rainforest. Birds fluttering at the mouth of the Elwha River. The sounds can be as breathtaking as the sights at Olympic, the most sonically diverse of any national park in the Lower 48, according to Gordon Hempton of The One Square Inch of Silence Foundation. It is also the least polluted by man-made noise, Hempton says.

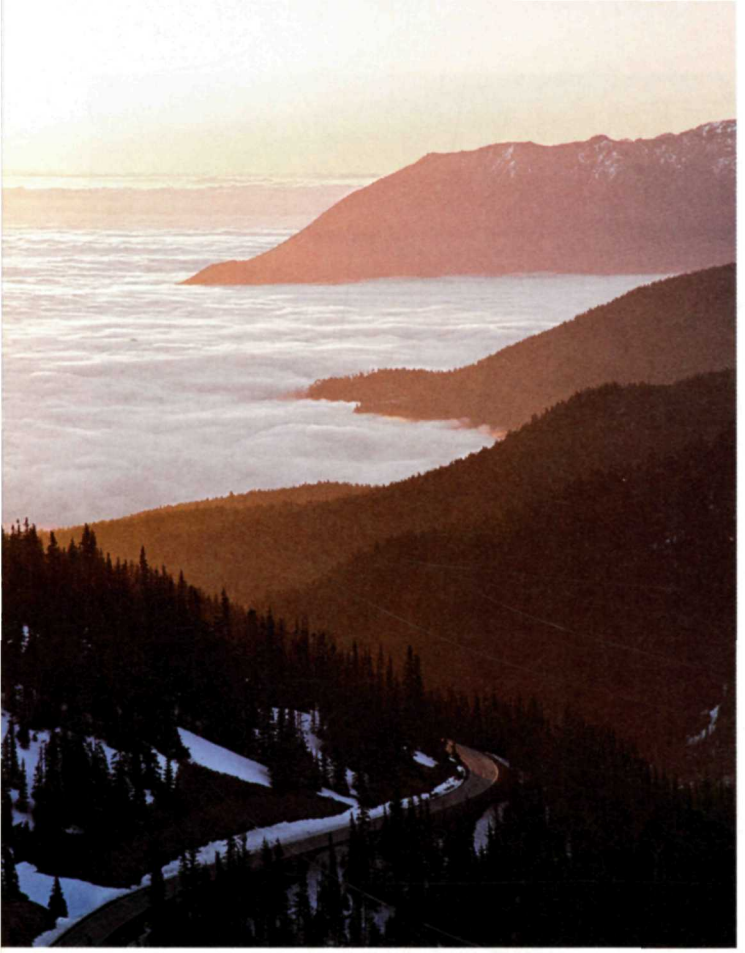
But that might be about to change. The U.S. Navy has proposed an increase in electronic warfare training exercises that could lead to military planes flying over Olympic as many as 260 days a year. The U.S. Forest Service is preparing to issue a permit that would allow trucks to beam signals to these Boeing EA-18G Growler jets from just outside the park boundary.

"We believe the law clearly requires the Forest Service and the Navy to take into account the impact of fighter jet noise on the park experience, its visitors and wildlife, and so far we haven't seen that," said Rob Smith, director of NPCA's Northwest Regional Office, which has been working with Hempton to protect the park's rare soundscape.

These potentially disruptive exercises are not the only difficulty that Olympic is facing. The park is also suffering from a significant funding shortfall. A recent NPCA report found that Olympic, one of the country's most visited national parks, only receives about 60 percent of the funds it needs to adequately serve visitors, maintain roads and trails, and protect the landscape and water. The report detailed several examples of how the funding gap hurts the park: The recently rehabilitated visitor center in the Hoh Rain Forest is understaffed, and the planned new exhibits are still not installed. Hurricane Ridge is inaccessible for most of the winter because of limited plowing. Along the coast, more than 100 inches of annual rainfall can turn trails into muddy streams and rot wooden boardwalks, but these weather-beaten areas cannot be maintained properly without more resources.

Finally, the Elwha River continues to need attention. The river restoration project, the largest dam removal in U.S. history, has been a major victory for NPCA and its allies. The salmon are returning in ever greater numbers, and plants are growing back on newly exposed land, but additional funds are necessary to ensure that revegetation, scientific monitoring and research can continue.

"The Elwha is a world-class, successful river-recovery effort," Smith said, "but Congress could let it fall short without funding to see it through and learn everything we can from it."



**A TWISTING ROAD** leads up to the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center, which sits at 5,242 feet.

to Mink Lake. The far side of the lake was awash in yellow light, and the reflection of the mountains was so crisp and unwavering that I could see individual leaves etched in the water.

Afterward, I went straight to the hot springs. A small fee gives you access to three pools — cool, warm, hot. The pools were crowded, and I wished I'd known that you have to bring your own towel (or purchase one). But after I sank into the hot water, none of that mattered at all.

Early the next morning I drove to Hoh Rain Forest. I'd already seen some wet, lush parts of the park, but that's nothing compared with Hoh, where the trees, dripping with moss, can look like hairy apes or Halloween spectacles. The official markers along the trail were sweetly poetic. "Here there is a primeval spirit," read one, "moldering logs, trunks shaggy with moss, and giant trees that seem old as the earth."

The forest is thick with Sitka spruce, western hemlock, Douglas fir and a smattering of big-leaf maple, vine maple, black cottonwood and red alder. Many of the conifers rise more than 200 feet. "It makes you feel small," I overheard someone say.

The forest had been fogged in when I arrived, but within minutes, the clouds lifted and the blue sky returned in force. I slowly looped through the Hall of Mosses and Spruce Nature Trail, occasionally reaching out to touch twisted roots and creeping moss. Then I strolled out to the banks of the Hoh River, where I sat for a long time just listening to the sound of rushing water.

I'd hit mountains and rainforest, so I had just one more ecosystem to go: the coast. It was hard to choose a destination among the 70-plus miles of beaches along the Pacific, but I opted for Rialto Beach — supposedly one of the state's most popular stretches of sand — arriving shortly before sunset. Sections of the beach are covered in bony driftwood, and I nestled into a nook on a worn log and stared out at the famous sea stacks and the lonely trees that cling to them with admirable tenacity.

It was around then that I freaked out over the otters squeaking, nuzzling each other, and tumbling in the waves. After watching for a long time, I walked toward Hole-in-the-Wall arch on the far side of the beach, just past two pointy rock pinnacles bursting out of the sand. I hurried, racing the sun, and finally reached my destination. Stepping over mussel-covered rocks and small pools, I looked around the corner to the beach beyond, glowing in the last wisps of daylight.

The sun slid below the horizon as I was walking back. The sky relaxed, beachcombers milled, the rocks shaded into black and the air turned purple and misty.

I'd hoped to have some remnants of light on my drive to Lake Crescent Lodge, where I was staying, but dusk quickly became night — and that was when a deer leapt into the road in front of me. I swerved and felt the deer brush against the car before it ran off. In a blink, my post-sunset euphoria evaporated. Though the deer seemed OK, I still felt awful, and I was vaguely panicked that it would happen again. The trip around the lake, so dreamy just the night before, turned into a dark and anxious grind. I felt jumpy every time I saw a deer-crossing sign.

Eventually, I made it. I ate dinner, and once I'd calmed down, I could see how charming the lodge was. One hundred years old, it has a massive stone fireplace in the main lobby and wall lamps crafted out of snowshoes. I hadn't been underappreciating my trip, but the near-miss with the deer made me feel especially grateful, and that feeling clung to me the next morning as I watched cotton candy clouds sweeping past the mountains at sunrise.

After a short walk, I still had a sliver of time before I had to leave to catch the ferry, so I rented a kayak and glided out onto the calm lake. I paddled to the opposite shore and drifted along, my hand trailing in the water. A log floated by and the sun beat down. I wondered if I'd ever see a string of days with such perfect weather again. I was going to miss the daily doses of awe. How do you even explain what that does for your spirit? I truly sympathize with the double rainbow guy; after all, in his joyful rambling, he was just trying to express something ineffable.

I drifted until I couldn't delay any longer; the time had come. I sighed, straightened up and started paddling as fast as I could back to the lodge.

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**RONA MARECH** is editor-in-chief of National Parks magazine. Based on the Oregon coast, photographer **JUSTIN BAILIE** is passionate about real food, slow living, storytelling, fly fishing and all things Pacific Northwest.

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

# PLANTING THE SEEDS OF SUPPORT FOR OUR NATIONAL PARKS

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The National Parks Conservation Association is celebrating the 100th birthday of the National Park Service throughout 2016, and we're calling on everyone who loves nature and history to help us help these inspirational places thrive into their next century. To find out how you can get involved through our new Find Your Voice initiative, visit

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Diane Kay Photography

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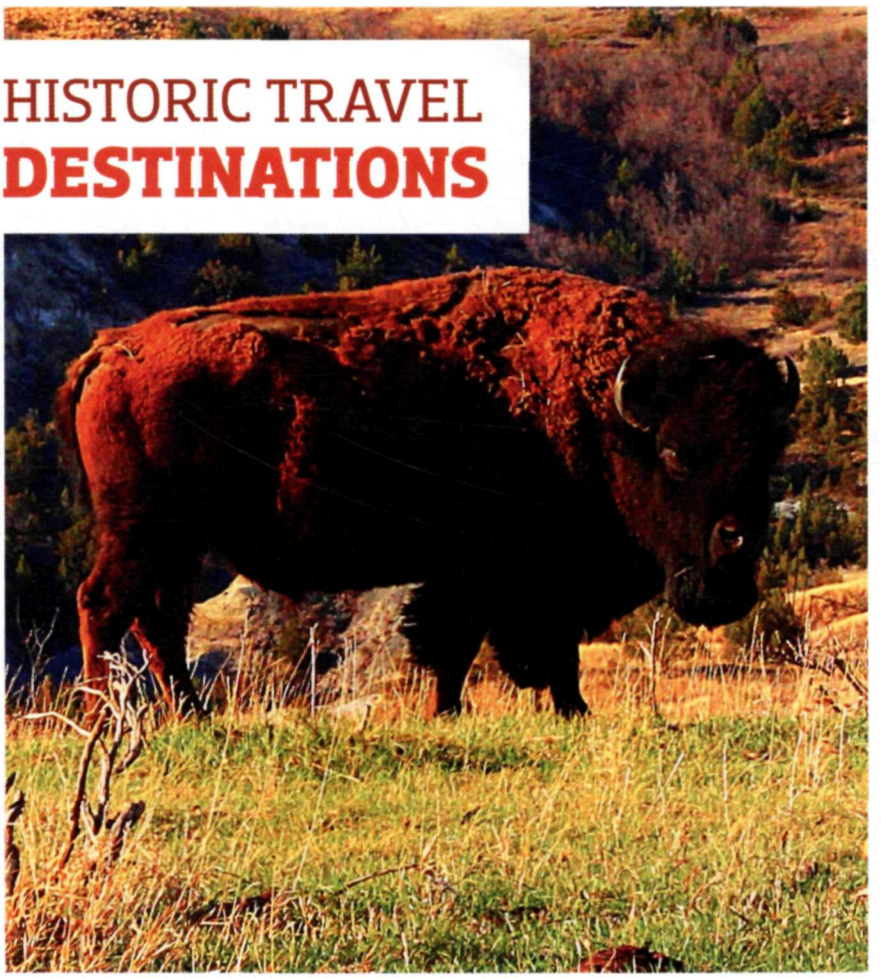

A Bison in Theodore Roosevelt National Park
Courtesy Diane Kay Photography

## WATFORD CITY, NORTH DAKOTA

### The Badlands Are Just the Beginning of the Adventure

*The New York Times* has placed Theodore Roosevelt National Park fifth on its list of the "Top 52 places to visit in 2016."

With miles of rugged badlands and rolling grasslands dotted with majestic wildlife, the North Unit of the park sits just 12 miles south of Watford City, a small-town getaway with big-city amenities.

The gateway to internationally acclaimed adventure, Watford City residents have enjoyed the natural beauty of the area for decades. Surrounded by the Yellowstone River, Lake Sakakawea, the Missouri River and the Little Missouri River, the area prides itself on being home to 500,000 acres of beautiful public land for exploring and miles of shoreline for boating and fishing.

With all that wide-open space to enjoy, Watford City is poised to accommodate all types of adventurers. With more than 700 available and newly constructed hotel rooms, a variety of cabins and campgrounds, unique shopping, diverse dining and newly built, construction-free highways to get you there, you can enjoy a vacation that's as rugged or as relaxing as you like!

Muddy your bike tires on the Maah Daah Hey Trail. Put some miles on your hiking boots in the pristine Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Make a splash kayaking the Little Missouri Rivers's historic waters. Ready to unwind? Kick back with fine dining, cocktail bars and rooms available at stunning new hotels. Your adventure awaits on the new frontier. To learn more, visit *visitwatfordcity.com*.

Front porch of the Sebastopol House Historic Site
Courtesy City of Seguin

## SEBASTOPOL HOUSE HISTORIC SITE

### A Concrete Paradigm of American Craftsmanship

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Sebastopol House, now a museum open to the public, is one of the best-preserved "limecrete" structures in America and rests in one of the oldest towns in Texas founded by Texas Rangers. Built in Greek Revival style by highly skilled slaves, it boasts a mystery dungeon and a secret water-cooling system. Also on exhibit is Wilson Pottery, rare artifacts from one of the first businesses in Texas owned by freed slaves. Open Thursday through Sunday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. To learn more, go to *visitseguin.com*.

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The Williston area is a great place to celebrate 100 years of the National Park Service! Visit Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site and scenic Theodore Roosevelt National Park – North Unit. Williston also offers new hotels, restaurants and shops, plus world-class golf and North Dakota's largest indoor rec center. Contact us today for a free visitors' guide!

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- August 6-7 - Indian Arts Showcase
- September 3-5 - Living History Weekend
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Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site
Courtesy Jesse Nelson

Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historic Park
Courtesy Bill Franz

## WILLISTON, NORTH DAKOTA

### Booming with Living History

Imagine watching a blacksmith or a fur trader preparing a beaver hide, when suddenly—BOOM! A musket fires nearby. This kind of experience is just one of many reasons to celebrate 100 years of the National Park Service in Williston, North Dakota.

The Williston area is rich with legendary vistas and living history, such as the annual Rendezvous at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, built near the Confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers in 1828. This fort was the center of trade with the Assiniboine, Cree, Crow, Blackfeet, Ojibwa, Hidatsa, Mandan and Arikara Indians.

Near Fort Union, visitors enjoy reenactments at Fort Buford State Historic Site, remembered as the place where Sitting Bull surrendered his rifle in 1881. A mile away, the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center offers the same magnificent views enjoyed by the Corps of Discovery. East of Williston at Lewis and Clark State Park, visitors walk interpretive trails showing what the famous explorers saw.

Theodore Roosevelt National Park, south of Williston, is one of the area's top attractions. In 1883, Theodore Roosevelt came to live the life of a cowboy. Today, the colorful North Dakota Badlands provide the scenic backdrop to the park honoring our 26th president. It is home to bison, mule deer, white-tailed deer, bighorn sheep, prairie dogs and more than 180 species of songbirds. To learn more, visit *visitwilliston.com*.

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**AMERICAN INDIANS** playing ball games outside the former prison on Alcatraz Island in 1969.

# Claiming the Rock

## The 19-month occupation of Alcatraz Island, from 1969 to 1971, marked a turning point in American Indian activism.

**THEY EMBARKED ON A THREE-MASTED BOAT,** intent on claiming what they saw as rightfully theirs. The problem was that the owner of the Monte Cristo had agreed only to take them on a tour around Alcatraz Island — he didn't plan to dock. So as the ship drew near, Richard Oakes, a Mohawk, decided to dive into the waters of San Francisco Bay. Four others would soon follow, and as the swimmers reached the island, the passengers cheered.

After centuries of violence, disease, land grabs, brutal assimilation policies and humiliation, this felt like a victory for the small group of American Indians. The U.S. Coast Guard rounded up the swimmers and brought them back to the mainland, but 11 days later, on Nov. 20, 1969, another boat sailed to Alcatraz and 79 people jump-started an occupation that would last 19 months.

The notorious prison had closed in 1963. A handful of Sioux occupied the island for a few hours in 1964, claiming the land under the provisions of the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, which authorized Indians to settle land unused by the government. Their assertion was ignored, and the city of San Francisco endorsed a wealthy developer's bid to turn the island into a theme park and shopping center. Many locals protested the move. Indians in the Bay Area viewed it as an affront.

"It was like another broken treaty, smack in our face," said LaNada War Jack, who mobilized university students to join the occupation. "So we said, 'We're going to have to take it back.'"

The United States' efforts to assimilate American Indians had accelerated in the previous decades. Starting in the 1940s, the government adopted a series of laws and policies that aimed to end tribes' special status, subjecting American Indians to state and federal laws and withdrawing aid and services to people living on reservations. Then in the mid-1950s, the government began to encourage them to leave their reservations, acquire professional skills and relocate to the country's urban centers. There, few were able to find decent-paying jobs, and poverty, culture shock and racial prejudice were the norm. Many settled in the San Francisco area, which became a hub of Indian activism.

The Alcatraz takeover was heavy on parody. Organizers created a mock "Bureau of Caucasian Affairs" and issued a proclamation offering $24 in "glass beads and red cloth" for the island. The document went on to note the many similarities between Alcatraz and the typical Indian reservation: Both have rocky and nonproductive soil, they wrote, and are "isolated from modern facilities, and without adequate means of transportation."

"We used satire and humor," said Adam Fortunate Eagle, one of the early organizers. "We were warriors without weapons."

The occupiers included students and families with children; many did not expect to stay long. "We didn't bring a whole lot except ourselves and sleeping bags," said Edward Castillo, then a young instructor at the University of California, Los Angeles. The following

days were difficult because a Coast Guard blockade prevented food supplies from reaching the island. But as Thanksgiving approached, the embargo was lifted and supplies started pouring in. The occupation received broad support. John Cantwell, an Alcatraz ranger who was about 10 at the time, remembers his parents donating canned goods. Rock band Creedence Clearwater Revival gave the occupiers money to buy a supply boat.

Federal authorities adopted a benevolent approach. An adviser to President Richard Nixon directed law enforcement to abstain from removing the occupiers forcibly to avoid a public-relations nightmare. But Nixon was also sensitive to the plight of American Indians — Wallace "Chief" Newman, his football coach at Whittier College and a Luiseño Indian, had made a profound impression on the future president.

In July 1970, eight months after the occupation started, Nixon called for a new era of self-determination and asked Congress to pass a bill authorizing the return of sacred land to the Taos Pueblo Indians. That bill was the first of a series that put an effective end to decades of government-sanctioned assimilation.

Fortunate Eagle sees the government's turnabout as the direct result of the occupation, but others dispute that interpretation. Paul Chaat Smith, a curator at the National Museum of the American Indian and the co-author of a book about Indian activism, said the administration's Indian policy was already in motion at that time and not triggered by the protest. But Smith credits the occupation with launching a more militant brand of activism and instilling pride in a population that had lost much of it. "These actions really captured the imagination of so many Indian people, and it gave people a lot of hope," he said.

"We used satire and humor," Adam Fortunate Eagle said. "We were warriors without weapons."

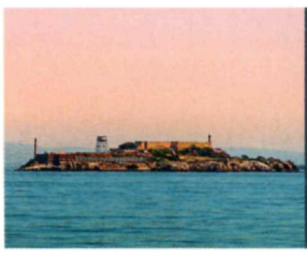
The occupation's legacy was muddied by internecine strife, though. Oakes, the first to swim to the island, left Alcatraz after his 13-year-old daughter fell to her death in unclear circumstances. Others departed, disenchanted with the leadership. In June 1971, U.S. marshals and other law enforcement stormed the island and removed the last 15 occupiers, who offered no resistance.

The protest shaped the lives of the participants in different ways. People on War Jack's reservation viewed her activist past with suspicion, which she said made it hard for her to secure work. Fortunate Eagle said the federal government impeded his business ventures, and he eventually retired to his wife's reservation in Nevada. Castillo, on the other hand, said the connections he made on the island opened new doors for his academic career. He also met his future wife there. "I did have a wonderful daughter as a result of this," he said.

One tangible outcome of the protest was the designation of the island as part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1972, which wouldn't have happened without the occupation and subsequent derailment of the proposed commercial development. That's what Eloy Martinez, one of the occupiers, told Cantwell, the park ranger, during a visit to the island almost three decades ago. "I had to remind him that without us, he wouldn't have a job there," Martinez said.

The two shook hands then and have worked together ever since to keep the occupation's story alive. **NP**

**NICOLAS BRULLIARD** is associate editor of National Parks magazine.





## ESCAPING ALCATRAZ

Alcatraz occupiers swam to the island, but some of the previous residents tried to swim the other way. Three prisoners famously broke out of prison and jumped in the water in June 1962. They were never found, and the FBI closed its investigation in 1979, deeming it unlikely the men survived the frigid waters.

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**INSPECTING A CANNON AT ANTIETAM NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD,** Maryland, 1961.

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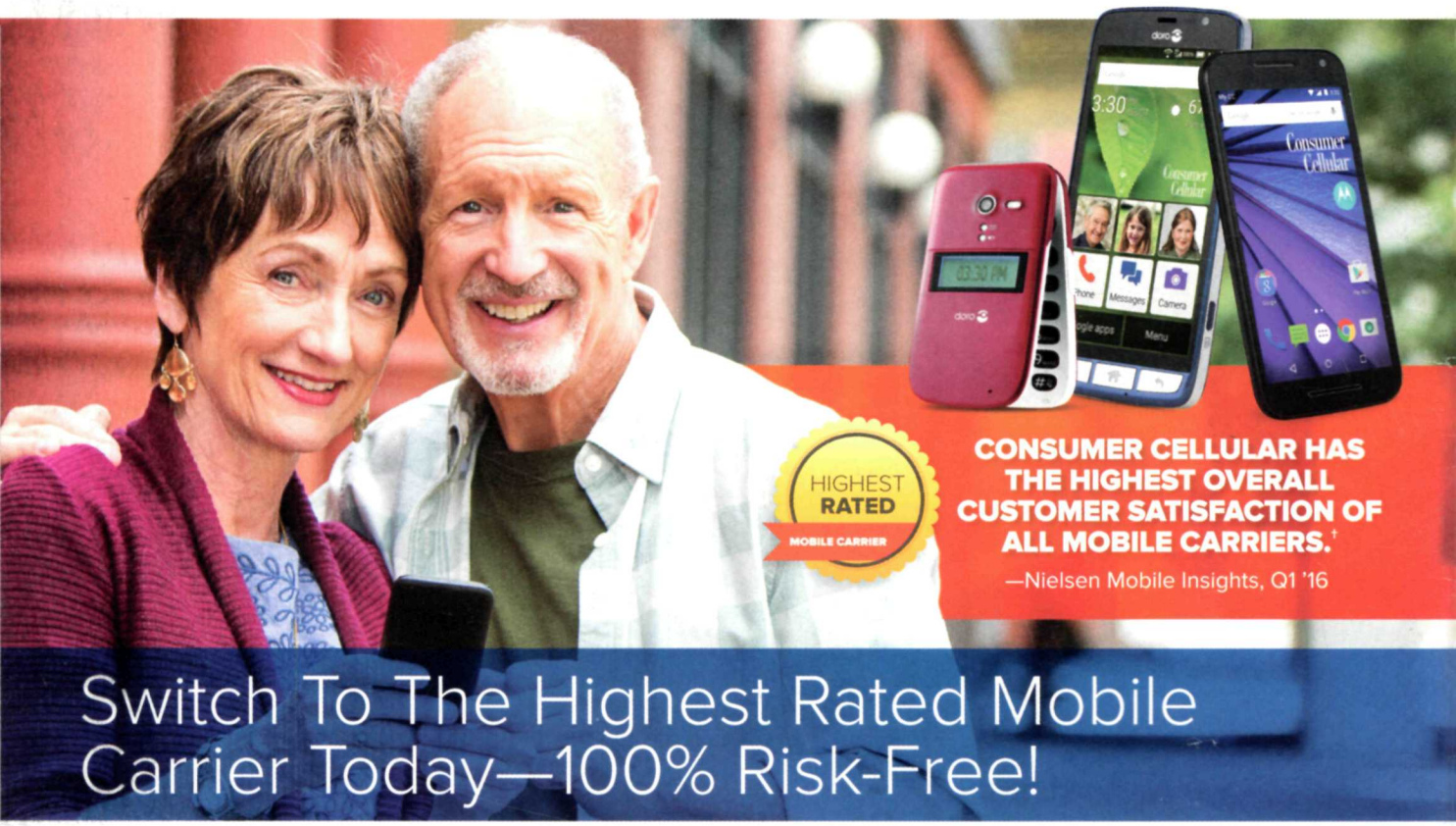


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