

• (Proper's postulate) (Maxim 1) Use most of this in Management. 2

• The most important place in the world is where I happen to live.

- Our man in Samarkand has by now decided that Uzbekistan is of pivotal importance.

- Note pivot. World revolves around me, & no doubt you.

- You can't cure this. Just have to know you've got it. It's when you don't know that you're in trouble.

I live in GYA now

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Everyone ^{in it} agrees that it's the very pivot of
an environmental movement.

We've got: grizzlies, old-growth ~~the~~ timber, cattle,
& rivers that have trout when there's any
water left in them. We've got the Park.

We've got offices of every environmental organization
that wants, & pretty quick we'll have the
Gallatin Institute.

We have a paper with more environmental
coverage than N.Y.T. [Einstein]

"Capitalism may be efficient, but it hasn't caught
people's moral imagination." (Bob Nelson)¹⁴

Reason (per Michael Rothchild) is that
"capitalism isn't an ism," i.e. an ideology.
it's just irrevocable. it's how things work.

Troubled us policy planners + speechwriters for
years. Some tried to dress up Capitalism in
terms comparable to marxism. No good. We just
had to say "We're more free, + we eat better, +
we produce more of everything you want, incl. art."

(greatly troubled Catholic theologians, who were,
+ perhaps are, looking for a "3rd way." There is
none. Just education.

- Don't pick ends to suit your means
(Deep economists) e.g., ask what kind of
national parks you want first (ends)
& then figure out what means will get you there.
May or may not be the market.

- Don't demand ends that can't be reached by
any conceivable means.
(Deep ecologists)

6
Separate church & state,

Science & religion, secular & sacred

~~And~~ I answered this feebly because I didn't think
anyone would question the proposition.

In foreign Affairs you have to do it because
you're negotiating across religions. Same in env. affairs.
~~Farmers~~ Ranchers worship cattle & I trout - &
never the twain shall meet, on religious grounds.

But we both understand property values.

If you're not on dealing in the sacred, you're
going to get scalped. Bought off for lead & trinkets.
We may be doing this with wolves.

Problem solving -

Impressed by: sharpened of issues
width of gulfs between proponents
ferocity of argument
the pairs! (Irrigation vs. Cingle ^{Israelis} ≠ Grabs vs. Joadis)
And also by ~~the~~ app. weakness of problem-solving.
Dispassioned amateurs & part-time State politicians
(Maybe this is where Gallatin committee comes in.)

b) Hard vs. Soft, Vital or not
 (Vital means going to war)
Secular vs. Sacred

e.g., cattle vs. wolves

ranchers/farmers feel seriously threatened.

secular,
 tho' ±
 exaggerated

(I know one who was prob. put out of
 the sheep business by coyotes.)

vs.

folks from wolf matter run deep.

(symbolism at work on both sides.
 Rancher fears "buffalo common")

any community

But he does have a living at stake

Environmentalists can afford to negotiate: we'll get
 wolves back anyhow, & no thing threatened in the meantime.

Topic: 2
Zero-sum game

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* Farmer who needs water on land

vs.

Angler who needs it in ~~the~~ the stream.

Room for negotiation is small.

→
(2) Outcome is war. But get your army in shape first.
You want to come out like general Schwarzkopf.

(1) Try to change the game. ~~make him~~ ~~be~~ find out
that he's worth 3x with a trout stream.

2) Avoid Despair (Bleat from Don + Randal?)

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In foreign policy, we fought a very hard fight for some 45 years. Seemed endless, twisting, ~~hopeless~~ ^{expensive,} and exceedingly dangerous. All you could be sure of was that fighting seemed better than giving up. Then all of a sudden our enemy collapsed + almost everyone wanted what we'd been selling all along: freedom, economically + personally, (capitalism) (democracy);

• The Better Things Get, The Worse People Are. (Turg)

They want to spend their lives in malls, live in houses that are statements, drive pretentious cars, + find amusement in simulated reality. This is the discrete charm of the bourgeoisie. In a successful, growing capitalist economy, we're almost all ~~so~~ nouveau riche.

// We have to help them find aerobics dance classes for their brains.

Not an address

1

Continuation of seminars by a guy who
has not done his homework.

(John ~~do~~ not like you to waste time)

Since I do not know much about matters
environmental or economic, will bring
to bear some maxims from foreign affairs.

You can judge whether they ~~be~~ have
any relevance.

We humans have all fallen out of our trees.

~~bleat.~~

I resolved to look for innocence henceforth only among partridges and the dogs who hunted them -- [or maybe among brave cattle. They did look like the bulls painted in caves by the people who invented art. Still, their propensity to fight had been exaggerated by selective breeding. I had seen real wild cattle in Africa and they were fierce fighters too, but they would rather run than fight if they had a choice.)

(Bolmers)

(Sept)

The partridge, 2nd do
^{(up for (in the press))}
sell here, and the pheasant.

down in the bottom. This

is ~~still~~ sharp-tailed grouse
country. always has been

The next day (mountain)
it may be cattle, and
the way John uses them.

There are various weeds,
but few, under control.

as sent to Maggie 7/6/94

About 3600 words

Datus Proper
1085 Hamilton Road
Belgrade, MT 59714
(406) 388-3345

See markings.

SPACE

You drive up to a one-story house that is modern but not new, comfortable but not big, painted but not decorated. The house is on the lowest part of the ranch, below the wind and close to the highway. There is enough lawn to stop grass-fires and plenty of running water for the fire engines, if sparks should jump across.

Draws on each side of the house run down from blue mountains, and trout are rising in the spring creek. This is the kind of Montana ranch that movie stars are looking for. If the couple who ranches the place had an income reflecting its value, they could buy me out with loose change, but I've got the only new truck in the yard.

Rancher John buys only pre-'86 Chevrolet pickups, he says, because he can fix anything that goes wrong with them, and parts are cheap. He spends as much time working on machinery as he does out on his 5,000 acres. He does not like to incur debt for trucks and implements. A rancher saddled with interest payments has to raise the same number of cows in dry years as in good ones, he says -- and Montana has lots of dry years.

Indicator Species

This is the right kind of ranch-house -- to make my bias explicit -- because it occupies one acre of Montana and protects 5,000 others from development. Space is the best thing in the universe, not outer space but space on the only earth we've got, space with grouse and elk and trout and curlews and just one human sticking up awkward from the prairie. The benches above the ranch house are crowded with blue grama grass, prairie junegrass, and Idaho fescue. They are my kind of crowd.

When I was growing up, we thought that our space would always be protected by the decisive Montana climate, but we were wrong. The transits have already carved thousands of little squares out of land that should have remained forever sinuous. Turkey Knob is dotted with starter castles, each built higher than the last to show who's top gobbler. (I didn't say that. A realtor did, off the record.) The new occupants are chopping Nature into ~~pieces~~ *Can't H.*

There are indicator-species -- those that show whether or not Nature is in good health. My indicators for grasslands like these are the prairie grouse: sharptails, sage grouse, even blue grouse wandering out from the mountains. Farther east -- in the tall-grass prairie -- you could add prairie chickens (another grouse). At the southern end of the prairies, add members of the quail family.

You could choose a less demanding indicator-species like the western meadowlark, which has the most beautiful song on the prairie. The meadowlark is the state bird of six prairie states, but it is so adaptable that it provides little information on the health of its habitat. At the other extreme, you could choose the curlew, which (rancher John tells me) will nest only in native grasses. No wonder curlews are scarce.

The prairie grouse are in trouble too, in most places. They have two strikes against them:

- First, they are members of a ground-nesting order (Galliformes) that has trouble with modern, clean-farming practices.
- Second, grassland birds as a group "have shown steeper and more consistent, geographically widespread declines than any other group of birds breeding in North America."¹

Earlier in the century, prairie grouse were extravagantly abundant in Montana. I have seen some of the flocks and heard numerous reports like this one from Ivan Doig's father:

... you wouldn't believe the grouse that were on those slopes then. The summer we were married and went herding on Grass Mountain, all that country was just alive with grouse then. I'd shoot them five at a time, and your mother -- your mother'd cook them at noon when the sheep had shaded up. We'd eat one apiece and seal the rest in quart jars and cool them in the spring water so we'd have them cold for supper. They were the best eatin' in this world."²

When given a chance, prairie grouse recover quickly. They are hardy, prolific, strong on the wing, and adapted by evolution

to a habitat that is hot, cold, windy, wet, dry, and full of predators. Sharp-tailed grouse and prairie chickens even benefit from agriculture, to a point. They do well in a mix of native prairie and farmland.

As it happens, I have worn out boots looking for grouse on both sides of the Atlantic and found Montana grasslands more productive than the moors of Ireland. The comparison is fair because there was no attempt to manage for grouse in either case.

In Scotland, home of Ivan Doig's father, grouse can be a landowner's most profitable crop, far more valuable than livestock or grain. The essential difference is in human culture -- a tradition of game management (which the British are good at) and tweed suits (which the Yanks adore). On this side of the Atlantic, Messrs. Orvis and Patagonia can be counted on to provide the attire if landowners will provide the habitat.

Who's in Charge Around Here?

If this were 1901, we might look to the Federal government to save the prairies. President Theodore Roosevelt did save the forests, at least by comparison to those in the hands of lumber companies, and his model remains persuasive (if I read the magazines and newspapers correctly). Writers, hunters, fishers, and hikers often assume that land has not been saved until it has a federal boundary.

TR's method will not work on the prairies, however. It would not work even if we were to elect another president able to read

Tolstoy on horseback. It may be," writes Jessica Matthews in the Washington Post,³ "...that we are in a transition period between the regulatory era and one in which economic signals will play a much greater role.... [but] Neither environmentalists nor the administration are ready to provide the leadership this new direction will demand."

One problem with the TR model is economic. Most federal agencies are short of funds for their existing responsibilities. None are likely to get funding for intensive management of the grasslands.

Come from "Managing Eden"
The more fundamental problem, however, is managerial gridlock. The public (and therefore Congress) does not want wildlife management in federal areas which, like the national parks, are intended to preserve natural values. Wild animals are supposed to be controlled by "natural regulation" -- a concept propagated in Yellowstone Park some years ago. It is not a scientific concept, though there was a time when some scientists were willing to give it a chance. Natural regulation is drawn from an older idea called the "balance of nature," which is appealing as religion but does not lend itself to management of anything except public relations.

One might look on managerial gridlock as a New Age version of Garret Hardin's "tragedy of the commons." The old-style commons was free range in the strictest sense, shared on a "help yourself" basis. It was overgrazed because no farmer had an incentive to conserve its forage. It was, in Hardin's words, "an

unmanaged commons".⁴ Yellowstone Park appears to have managers but is overgrazed nevertheless because they leave decisions on the size of the herd to nature.

Prairies may need intensive management because they are the products of nature at its most violent. Native vegetation depended on periodic fires set by lightning or native peoples. The grouse moors of Britain still depend on controlled burns, which require hard work.

Prairie plants also evolved under intermittent grazing by bison. On some ranches, their effect is today mimicked by domestic cattle, but that is getting ahead of the story. For now, the point is that grasslands need more than good intentions.

For a decade now I have been learning about my own small place. It is not a prairie but a meadow punctuated by brush, a few trees, a spring creek, and some marshy spots which, when you look closely, are old stream-channels. I can call most of the plants and animals by name. I spot-spray the invasive Eurasian weeds, try to keep the deer from eating up their habitat, farm in ways that suit wildlife, and help the spring creek recover from overuse by cattle.

There was an anniversary card that read "I don't know much about sex but I know what you like," and I am learning what my place likes. Nobody else is out here every day, watching, learning, wearing out gloves. There are crops: barley, hay, pheasants, and some big trout that are returned to the stream. (They have a muddy taste.) My family eats one or two mallard

drakes every autumn -- a small fraction of the number we produce.

Separating Church and State

This kind of thinking is objectionable to some. Wild food, they say, is not a crop and you do not harvest it. It is a gift from God (or nature) and belongs to everyone, or to no one. When you compare pheasants to wheat, you show disrespect.

One philosopher was an articulate participant in a conference that we both attended. He had the right instincts, the right reverence. Later, he wrote that "I do not want my 'policy' [toward nature] to stand on incentives.... It is a moral issue and I do not decide moral issues with cash."

Many writers on nature have fallen into such reasoning -- though a philosopher might have been more wary. He was saying, in effect, that when an end is extremely important, one should not concern oneself with means for achieving it. Unfortunately, nature can only transcend economics if nature still exists. She will not be rescued without decisions, incentives, expenditures, and worn gloves. There is nothing wrong with improving wildlife habitat even if it costs money -- and it usually does.

For economic purposes, a wild duck is as clearly a crop as the barley on which it fattens for the winter migration. Without expenditures on habitat, we will lose whole species of ducks.

For spiritual purposes, on the other hand, a mallard is "meat from God" -- a quotation from Aldo Leopold.⁵ A hunter who does not feel what Leopold felt ought to consider taking up golf.

(May be too academic
in format.)

The American Constitution was not intended as a guide to wildlife management, but it is at least a guide to thinking about nature. When you want to help her, you have to start by separating church and state in your mind. Fortunately, the human brain is divided along Constitutional lines.

Church

State

revealed wisdom

science

myth

history

Mother Nature

nature

ends

means

meat from God

crop

natural regulation

management

Separating Predator and Prey

There is another proposal for wildlife -- much newer and more radical -- that needs to be cited here, if only to show how different it is from the balance-of-nature argument.

Cleveland Amory, a spokesman for the Fund for Animals, argues that, in an ideal world, animals would be protected not only from humans but from each other: "prey will be separated from predator and there will be no overpopulation or starvation because all will be controlled by sterilization or implant."⁶

Compare Amory's animal-rights model to the natural-regulation and management models mentioned above.

1. Animal-Rights Model. Man becomes the full-time custodian of wildlife. Non-human animals live in habitats that are spacious

could "model"
Acute readers of?

and attractive (in the wealthy nations), but artificial. Predators are fed by keepers. Sterilization of rabbits and ground-squirrels is labor-intensive. There is no natural selection except in populations that avoid impoundment, such as rats and cockroaches. Nature is dead.

2. Natural-Regulation model. The objective is to keep Nature natural -- which means that this is not a variation on animal-rights model but the opposite of it. Man divorces Nature in the belief that she can do better on her own. She gets custody of the wildlife. Man retains visitation rights. (It may or may not be significant that Man and Nature are among the few nouns with genders in the English language.)

3. Management model. This is the centrist approach, between the other two. Man wants Nature to be natural but recognizes that she cannot function as she did before the Industrial Revolution and human population explosion. When necessary, Man lends a hand. In return, Nature gives him what he needs. Best man at their wedding is Aldo Leopold.

The Incentive

Farmers and ranchers are managers, by definition, and all -- or at least all who own their place -- will remind you that they have an incentive to keep their land in good condition. This is absolutely correct, in principle.

When a visitor wants to see the original Montana, however, my bit of it is not the place to look. The native grasses are

gone. In their place is bluegrass, which tells me that cattle were once in this bottomland for long periods without rotation, cropping every blade close to the ground. Bluegrass can stand this treatment. Wildlife can't. The sharp-tailed grouse may never move back.

Not far from Yellowstone Park's northern range, there is a much larger farm with prairies that Lewis and Clark would recognize. You see pronghorns on every walk. Cattle replace the bison. Many of the grasses are native. The draws have running water for my dogs to drink, even in September, and if I look closely I might spot little native trout dashing for cover. Some of the stream bottoms and slopes are crowded with aspens of all ages. (You would not see that on the northern range, where elk and bison have eaten the young aspens and willows.) There is a good population of sharp-tailed grouse (long gone from Yellowstone).

On the other hand, some Montana ranches have dry draws, no brush to speak of, and overgrazed range. They are in worse shape than anything in the Park. Neither public nor private ownership, then, automatically produces a healthy environment.

Part of the problem is that different managers have different indicator-species. We do not see the same things when we look at land. I see habitat for wildlife. A rancher sees habitat for cattle. It's what he must see, if he is going to survive.

Cattle habitat is called "range," which is -- according to

the dictionary -- "an extensive area of open land on which livestock wander and graze." When ranchers say that the range is in good shape, they usually mean that there is enough grass for the cattle. Some ranchers see beyond that. Some know the range and its inhabitants, wild and domestic, with an intimacy that escapes most Americans. But ranchers may or may not have an economic incentive to look beyond cattle.

It is hard to see what you are not trained to look for -- harder still to see what you do not want to see. One farmer told me, sincerely and fervently, that cattle never harm streams. At the time we were standing within sight of a spring creek that was wide, shallow, filled with silt, and denuded of vegetation on the banks. Some cows were in the water even as we talked.

Ranchers and farmers are human beings like the rest of us, and humans aren't automatically equipped with "the vision thing," as one of our Presidents put it. He was not Theodore Roosevelt. Some ranchers and farmers are not Aldo Leopold. Even so, they can learn to live with Nature, and a farm has a chance to recover. Land cut up for starter castles is not likely to become open space again, ever.

maybe this would work w/modification
What it Takes

What follows is a personal catalog of arts and attitudes and that seem to work for people, cattle, and wildlife. I will be quoting rancher John -- whose place opened this essay -- and drawing on what others have said.

Avoiding Debt. The pre-'86 trucks and elderly farm machinery were a sign of frugality. Successful ranches and farms in Montana have a way of looking like that.


Another farm nearby has a magnificent new tractor as tall as the house -- but it was bought at auction, for pennies on the dollar. The farmer who went into debt for that tractor lost his farm along with it.

It's where your priorities are, says John. His priority was to raise a family in the way he grew up. His grandparents homesteaded nearby in 1900, bought this place in the '20s, and did not blow away in the dust-bowl years, like so many others.

John's wife agrees on the priorities, and she is half the team. Both of them scramble to make this place work. He has branched out of ranching into farming. She works at the local Soil Conservation District.

Maybe one or two of the kids will want to run the place, John says. They will really have to want to make it work, though. It's not just something to try because nothing else is available.

I ought to feel encouraged. I do feel encouraged, for this generation, because they chose this life and like it. But how long will it be till some heir wants to live like a movie star? If virtue could be transmitted by genes, the world would still be run by aristocracies.

Being a Willow. John knows that he still has "the original grass" because he can see the old trail running through it, up over the benches and down through Whisky Springs Coulee. Wagons and sleighs went down the trail in the 19th century, hauling gold and silver ore to Fort Benton, then making a return trip with meat for the mining camp. 

(The old camp is a ghost town now. Miners took what they could from the earth and moved on, leaving wagon ruts that sum up the history of Montana. (It was "an extraction colony," writes William Kittredge.)

I don't hear John using polysyllables like "sustainable" or "environmentalist," but I hike through grass that is knee-high and full of life. On the 600 acres I like best, he runs only forty head of cattle year-round, occasionally more in the winter. The worst mistake, he says, would be heavy grazing in spring.

It's "awful easy to think 'this is my land'," John says, "but you grow in it. You learn to bend. You have to be a flexible little willow, not a big cottonwood in a windstorm."

Everybody can live a little better for it. John has added some land to his place and sold acreage that he does not need on the periphery, but he won't sell "the heart of the ranch" -- its spring creek. The cows around it are not on the banks. There are swampy spots and brush in the pasture. The water table is high enough to be reached by the roots of vegetation.

Farther downstream, after the creek leaves the ranch, it flows in a miniature canyon, six feet below the level of the pasture. The cattle have turned a well-watered pasture into dry land.

A few years ago, John and some of the neighbors decided to help the stream recover. (By that time, other spring creeks in Montana had anglers on a waiting list to pay rod fees.) The Soil Conservation Service did not help, so John got an expert from the University to look at the stream and make recommendations for restoration.

John's wife, meanwhile, worked through the Soil Conservation District to organize the restoration project. The District -- unlike the Soil Conservation Service -- is made up of local ranchers and farmers.

There is a long way to go before the whole stream has recovered its health, but movement is in the right direction. People have come to understand that water is like gold, in Montana -- better, really, because gold runs out and streams flow forever, if you treat them right.

John explains the economics of stream restoration to me. You have to take the expenses out of current income, he says, and you have to see results that justify the costs. You cannot just reason that you are increasing the value of your land -- not unless you are planning to sell.

You could fence off the whole stream, he says, but fencing is expensive and he has plenty of chores without maintaining

barbed wire. He has found that he can fence intermittently, in places where he notices that cattle are creating a problem. In other places, willows and brush protect the banks.

John sees a lot of difference in human attitudes toward the stream now. More and more of his neighbors are learning how to help nature without spending much money, and "everybody can live a little better for it," he says.

*I was thinking of
F&S when I wrote this.*
Ranchers don't ask why. The pheasants on this place are barely hanging on, says John. They need grain, tall grass for cover, and running water -- all close together. They can't travel far to get what they need. Pheasants are not natives and it's hard to live this life if you don't grow up with it.

The sharp-tailed grouse are different. They evolved on this land and if they don't find what they want in one part of it, they fly to another part. They commute between fragments of habitat that are miles apart. I might find them on the benches, John says, or across the road in the alfalfa. Or maybe I won't find them at all.

He does not ask why I want to look for the grouse. This place has been hunted by humans since the glacier went out. John's sons are up in the hills right now, though they probably won't get close enough for a shot at an elk with their bows and arrows.

Sometimes the folks in starter castles ask why I want to hunt, and my answer probably does not satisfy them. It's hard to

Space

Datus Proper

live this life if you don't grow up with it.

Notes

(1) From a 1994 release by the Audubon Society. A recent study by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reaches the same conclusion.

(2) Doig, Ivan. This House of Sky. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1992, p. 4.

(3) May 9, 1994

(4) Scientific American, May 1994, p. 10.

(5) Leopold, Aldo. A Sand County Almanac. NY: Oxford, 1970. p.viii.

(6) The Economist, August 21, 1993. p. 25.

Dunes Doan's Vegetation

Hawthorn predominant
Rose (high-growing)
Patches of chokecherry
Skunkbush on side hills

Prairie

Snowberry in clumps
Leatris (purple flowers)
Snakeroot
Lupine
Harebell
Fringe Sage + another sage that
looks like ♀ horsetail.
Blue bunch Cheatgrass
June grass
Aleg. fl - and - thread
S. date grass
Western Wheatgrass
Blue grama
Richardson's med. grass

The Original Grass (Sub title?)

What John calls the stuff on
his bench.

(Not back to Africa)

Seems like the best place there is to
me, & probably is in September.

Stewardship is not the
natural reg. nor unnatural
development. It's management w/ a
view to natural values.

2 small Int. Butterflies
playing w/ each other - or mating
+ circling upward into the sky.

Sharp-tailed ~~tail~~ crops + contained
many little strips yellow
caterp. lar., plus some red berries
(or a lip or hairs), green leaves,
+ feces.

Jim says Antlers rest in the
native grass, but only in
native grass.

open? Where I want to be. CRP was
too high, so I skirted the hills
at the best altitude for the
vegetation ST like - snowberries +
native grasses. Jim was higher on E side
than west. He pointed 1, I
which I shot one, plucked. Went
back + he pointed another, which
I shot + a third I passed up.
Might have got 4.

Q. Under what circumstances
can you get good management/
stewardship? XPS afraid to
take decisions. Private managers
often take bad ones.

I am no orange expert - but
the chapter is
- Biodiversity
- native
- ~~threatened~~ precious habitat
- Not a cow.
- Desirable

(Quote John on the Smoky
Mount. It's a bit of a mess
then. Hawthorn,
strakeberries - impenetrable).

2 of the kids married in
last year. Photos.
They hunt!

-8-

John Bodur

Every family rancher feels
threatened these days.

Believes in using resources -
Conservation, not preservation.

↙
a way of life that's disappearing
just like that of the Indians.
Too many people.

JB he controls 1,000 ~~acres~~ acres
plus water power. In lower end
of middle-sized ranches.
Enough for one family w/4 kids.

You have to bend, ~~you can't~~ You
have to be a flexible little willow,
not a 1.7 Cottonwood in a wind storm.

A little cooperation (w/ govt &
environmentalists) works a lot
better than bull-headed
resistance.

Awful easy to think "This is my land" -
but you have to be a steward.
You have to evolve or die.



"It's where your priorities are."

JB's priorities were a good place
to raise a family.

It would be hard to get into
this if you didn't grow up w/it.

Does see more + more farmers
willing to fence off their stream to
keep cattle out. aware of things they
can do that don't cost much + work -
"everybody can live a little
better for it."



Cattle are happy w/it
in a 20' wide
"water lane" than
in the stream
anyhow.

New fence now
\$3000 ± per mile.

Her fenced stream bank ~~is~~
intermittently, where there was a
problem. In other places willows
& brush protect the bank, and
stock lightly.

"off-stream watering facilities"
spread cattle out any how.

Yearling cattle are the worst —
so everywhere like teenagers.
Cows & calves more calm.

Her plenty to do w/o repairing
unnecessary work & expense
maintaining fence. Constant chore.

See a lot of difference in
people's attitudes toward stream.

(Rancher who he branches out into farming)
Maybe one or ~~two~~ two of the
boys/kids will want to run
the ranch - but you've got to
really want to do it to make
it work. Not just something to
do because nothing else is available.

Working at several things now.
Used to just ranch.



Title: Being a Willow

Send Montague Stevens look to
John Bodley + Aldo Leopold.

40 hat on 600 acres you want.
more occasional & wild

(10 year drought)

Worst was grazing heavily in spring -
May. Pushing the season.

"original grass" on the benches.



-2-

You can still see wagon trails
from the 1830's ^{60's} so it must be
original grain. Wagon from
Hughesville in the mountain herds
fold + silver go to Fort Benton -
river boats. Passed through
Whiskey Spring Coulee.

Anderson butchered cattle & hauled
meat up to the mining camp
by sleigh in the winter.

Talked to Richman in BGR, who
 came up to look at other Creek, got
 a grant from Montana

Pat was the spark plug in getting
 local Soil Conservation District interested
 in restoring Big other Creek.

SOD is local, funded by local District,
 made up of local ranches + farmers.

Creek bottom is the heart of the
ranch - Don't want to sell it.



Very disappointed
in SCS.

Water is like gold,
 in Montana.

-4-

How to solve the problem of
interest? Hard for young man to do
this.

||| People try to raise the same # of
cows in dry years because expenses
are the same.

John's grandparents homesteaded ^(means) in
1900 + bought this place in the
20s. It has been in family since then.
(But John has bought more land +
has a debt to it.)

Don't see any front row equipment,
from perhaps to tractor.

Buy old ^(Pre-86) Chevy pickups because
motors + parts are so cheap.

Ranchers don't ask why *

Like living where you're living & doing what you're doing.

Can't be easy. [I suspect it's true that we'd never get people back to farming if we made them extinct.]
You're worth more on paper than the fellow in the bank ~~in the SCS~~ - but may live in a smaller house.

You've got as good an education as the guy running the SCS office, but you spend half your time fixing machinery.

~~Suspect it doesn't work unless~~
Where it works, there can seem to be a couple who like doing this.

Means enjoying things most Americans, these days, have not even experienced.

* ~~I notice that that~~ ranchers don't ask why I want to go fishing, or hunting, or just chase my bird dogs around in circles. Most Americans do, these days. Why would you want to shoot ^{something} beautiful ~~game~~?
(FF they understand.)

Sept.

SEEING THE PRAIRIE

BY E. DONNALL THOMAS, JR.



Huck shows me what is there.

When I first came into this country to stay twenty-five years ago, we drove south out of Canada after a two day non-stop run from Montreal where I had just finished a medical internship. We had been on the road all night—Susan and I in our old Landcruiser, Dick and Annie in their truck behind us—and by the time we had crossed the border into northeastern Montana, we were all flush with the feeling of a new country and the exuberance that escape from any form of confinement implies. Then the sun began to rise behind us, and, with the light at our backs, we could look forward into a new definition of emptiness. It is simply impossible to record those first impressions except by virtue of what was not there: towns, traffic, vertical terrain; the hurly-burly of life as almost everyone of us knows it. The sense of isolation was so complete that I felt as if I could lie down and go to sleep in the middle of the road in total safety.

Despite the regard for wild places that all of us shared, a general sinking of the spirits swept through both vehi-

cles as the dawn let us appreciate the extent of our sudden isolation, the magnitude of the nothingness we had entered. We sped on across the open landscape searching for something in which to ground the senses—a hill, perhaps, or a tree—but there was only more sagebrush and more grass, and finally more sky than any of us could ever remember seeing before. By the time the new morning light had burned the shadows out of the road, I knew that I had to stop and get out and look, and I did. None of it was any easier face to face. We can do this, I said to Susan. We can do this. Then we drove on down the road to our new home and did it.

We went on to learn all kinds of things in the year that followed, about subject matter as diverse as our marriages, our professions and ourselves. That's not unusual, I've subsequently learned; one of the prairie's favorite tricks is to foster a rich sense of introspection among its inhabitants. None of the year's lessons, however, were any more striking than our new environment's resounding contradiction of our own first impressions. The apparent

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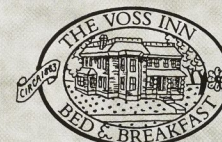
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JOHN SMART

IT IS SHOCKING TO REALIZE THAT OUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT
MAY BE TO ESCAPE ALL TRACES OF OURSELVES.

emptiness that left us stunned upon arrival was an illusion born of our own false expectations. Needless to say, the mistake was ours rather than the prairie's.

? The varied natural history we discovered all around us really should have come as no surprise. Savannah habitat is the richest in the world, and the combination of temperate climate and wide open spaces is responsible for the genesis of a remarkable number of the world's vertebrate species, including, for better or for worse, our own. The grasslands and broken coulees of eastern Montana are no exception to this pattern of biodiversity. The prairie's charms are no less real for being less than obvious. Out here, it just takes people awhile to see what lies around them, and, consequently, many never do. I suppose that's what we get for living in an age of easy gratification.

But *why* don't we see? What is it about this country that

makes people hurry right on by with their eyes fixed straight ahead like urban commuters trying to ignore a homeless panhandler on the street? The answer to this question will probably tell us all kinds of things about ourselves, but before we pursue it, I would suggest that we take a look at what there is out here to miss.

Dawn is always the prairie's finest hour. The flat, clear light rising in the east emphasizes the country's subtle texture, and, on the best mornings, the sunrise stretches far enough away along the horizon to suggest the essential curvature of the earth. There are no intrusions here. The nearest town is twenty-five miles away, and even though it is the county seat, an outfielder with a good arm could throw a baseball from one end of it to the other. What is really absent here is people; what we see and hear



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and smell this morning is what we have left behind. It is shocking to realize that our greatest accomplishment as a species may be to escape all traces of ourselves, but if that realization is what it takes, so be it.

It is early May. I am curled up inside a crude blind made of sagebrush and camouflage netting. A tripod and a camera with a 300 mm lens rest between my knees. I discovered this sage hen lek several years ago when I was living out of the back of my truck during the course of a divorce. The birds' joyous appearance suggested the possibility of renewal at a time when I badly needed to be reminded of that possibility. I've come back here every spring since then, and I have yet to be disappointed.

As usual though, there is apprehension at first light; the sagebrush seems so barren, the anticipated event so unlikely. But suddenly the players begin to materialize as if by magic, heavy, gallinaceous birds whose plumage so perfectly matches the terrain that it is obvious no one would ever see them unless the birds chose to be seen. Then a low, booming woodwind note sounds somewhere behind the blind, and the dance begins. As always, the experience is so dramatic that I cannot begin to think about the camera and its technical demands until I have absorbed some of the sights and sounds around me.

Boreal game bird species—ruffed grouse, for example—depend predominantly on auditory cues to advertise themselves during mating season. Because of the open terrain they inhabit, all prairie grouse offer a striking visual display to supplement the sound effects during their spring-time rituals, and none is more spectacular than the sage hens'. Viewed from a distance, this assembly of sixty males would look like a handful of cotton balls blowing about in an erratic wind, a phenomenon that is visible for miles. The white spots represent the under-plumage of the males' inflated throat sacs; the somewhat

hysterical sense of motion derives from their up-and-down rhythm as each cock dances to the beat of an unseen drummer.

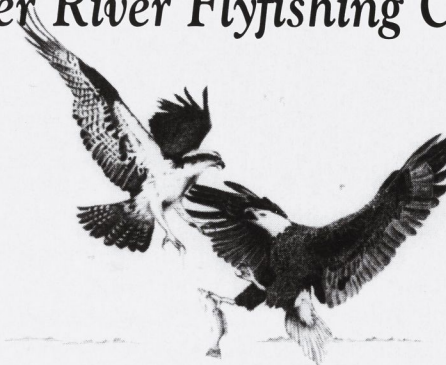
But that is all impressionism. The reward for getting up early and crawling into the blind before sunrise is an appreciation of the details: the splendid yellow of the naked throat sacs glowing in the morning light, the delicate coif of black hackles on top of the nearest cock's head, the fearful symmetry of the displayed tails, with every feather groomed to a perfect point. This is choreography, not an accident; an event as crisp and precise as a production by the Bolshoi Ballet. The functional view is that there is nothing going on here but the propagation of the species, but, even as a naturalist, I'm skeptical. The simple manufacture of sage hens shouldn't have to be so involved, so intricate, so beautiful.

The light rising behind me climbs at a measured pace toward the necessary f-stop, but by the time it reaches the critical level, the birds are already losing interest in their own performance. I snap a few quick frames, and then it is over, for reasons known only to the sage hens. The cocks stop dancing, the inflated throat sacs disappear, and the roar of wings fills the air and subsides, leaving me alone once again in the middle of the empty prairie with nothing objective to show for my trouble but a few exposures that will never do me any good. No doubt there is a lesson here about the futility of trying to capture and possess what should be left alone, but I am beyond all that by this time.

What matters now is this: the prairie looks barren once again, but I am fortunate enough to know better.

To some degree, all remote country is destined to be defined by its earliest chroniclers, in which respect the plains of eastern Montana really couldn't have done much better for themselves if they had tried. The trained eyes of Lewis and Clark saw what few have seen with equal

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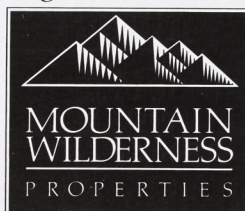
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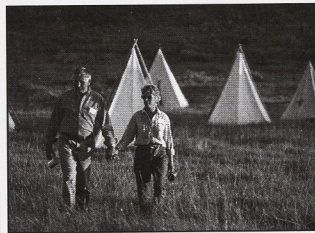
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clarity in the nearly two centuries since their original Voyage of Discovery. Even though they came from the unspoiled, pre-industrial version of the eastern seaboard, they were clearly astounded by the natural bounty they encountered, and the most remarkable element of their journals may be just how little they missed.

The waves of entrepreneurial pioneers who followed were driven by the material promise of furs, gold and business, most of which lay in wait on the distant Pacific coast. Those are the sort of concerns that introduce the element of time into the algebra of travel, and as soon as that happened, the prairie became, above all else, an inconvenience, a vast source of tedium eating away relentlessly at human spirits and the bottom line. I suspect that this is how we first developed the insidious cultural notion that the midsection of America is something of an embarrassment, an ordeal intended to make us suck up our guts and get on to the good stuff as expeditiously as possible. That bias persists to this day, and it helps explain the uneasiness my friends and I felt when we stopped beside that lonely road and asked just what the hell we had got ourselves into.

For nearly a century after Lewis and Clark's original exploration, eastern Montana remained largely unsettled. Then a combination of forces made the prairie impossible to ignore any longer: new waves of immigrants with agrarian backgrounds needing somewhere to go; the development of hardy strains of wheat suitable to the prairie's harsh winters; a worldwide shortage of grain brought about by the First World War; and some world-class false advertising by railroad interests that realized what an economic boon a settled prairie would mean to them. The homesteaders' view of the prairie was a functional one: they saw what they needed to see to keep themselves alive. In the end, that wasn't enough for many of them, but at least they tried.

In fact, much of what we expect to find appealing about the outdoors is culturally determined, a simple fact that has never served the prairie well in the public relations department. There is no intrinsic reason why pine trees should be prettier than sagebrush, or mountain peaks more inspiring than badlands and coulees, although most visitors to this state certainly seem to think so. And why not? A generation's worth of coffee table picture books and unimaginative writers have enforced this idea so relentlessly that most of us have unwittingly come to believe it.

In this visually oriented age, much of the prairie's emotional distance derives from the difficulties it causes the photographer. There's nothing wrong with the light out here, but the overreaching sky often allows nothing but a brief window of expression at the edges of the day. What comes in between is often served harshly. And the country doesn't offer much of itself through the viewfinder either. The flat terrain out here seems to be lying down all the time, like a pouting model. No wonder the prairie has so much trouble competing with the western half of the state in the public imagination.

The fact is that we come programmed to believe in looking up for our inspiration. The mountains and the trees, whose absence from the prairie so many observers lament, appeal to the same instinct as the church steeple. They draw our attention upwards, where western cultural influences from Michelangelo to Christopher Wren have insisted that God resides.

Leave it to the prairie to remind us of the limitations of that point of view.

It is February, and I am hunting coyotes. The coulee's rim winds back and forth in front of me until it disappears in an amorphous white sea of clouds and snow. There is no horizon today, and it is impossible to tell where the world ends and the sky begins. If I were the last person alive on earth, I could not feel any more alone.

Today the coyotes are more an excuse than a quarry. If it were really important that I kill one, I would be carrying the .243, but I've got the longbow with me instead. Every half mile or so, I ease my way out to the edge of the coulee, set up behind a bush, and cry like a dying rabbit. The noise is so ridiculous that it's hard to keep from laughing. That's one reason why I do my coyote calling in remote places: there is hardly any chance that anyone I know will ever see or hear me.

All right, I'm not here for the coyotes. I'm here for the exercise and the feel of the weather against my face and the release from the tedium of cabin fever. I'm here to remind myself where I live and why. You can fall for any place on earth when the going is easy. Belonging requires that you feel at home during the hard times, and out here that means winter. The easy thing to do is to run away from it like the tourists and the songbirds, but once you've

YOU CAN FALL FOR ANY PLACE
ON EARTH WHEN THE GOING IS EASY.
BELONGING REQUIRES THAT
YOU FEEL AT HOME DURING
THE HARD TIMES.

ruled out that option you either learn to embrace the winter or you go mad. And coyote calling is more than an embrace, it's total immersion.

Today, the absolute lack of color is even more striking than the loneliness. The landscape stretching away into the distance looks like the background for an old black and white movie. Figure-ground relationships are hopelessly distorted by the snow. A raptor appears below me, riding a wind current through the maze of twisted terrain, and I reach out to grab it like a bug before I realize it is a hundred yards away. Across the coulee, stunted junipers materialize like darkened ghosts, defying the eyes to make sense of them. This is getting spooky. It's time to call one last time and go home.

I hike across to the next point, crawl out to a pathetic windblown bush that will have to pass for cover, and call down into the yawning gap in the earth before me. Nothing moves, but that doesn't matter; nothing has moved all day. There are so few distractions here. I settle in and wait, and finally I see.

A bow's length away lies the dynamic imprint of a bird's two wings, each primary recorded perfectly in the snow's powdered texture. There are no footprints. Whatever made these marks came by air intent on landing but changed its mind at the last instant, leaving this simple record of its indecision before it climbed back up into the sky and disappeared. I pride myself in my tracking ability, but this is uncharted territory and I have no idea what species of bird left these wingprints. On the basis of size alone I guess the visitor might have been a magpie, but that is only speculation. The amazing thing is the utter delicacy of the impression, the certain capture of the detail left by every feather. This is just the sort of thing an inquisitive person should be willing to walk a few cold miles to see.

Which is why there are no regrets when the coyotes once again refuse to be bamboozled by my predator calling. They're all just excuses in the end, the coyotes and the pheasants and the elk and the trout, excuses to be where others cannot invent reasons to go. And that is how you learn to see the prairie in the end: by looking for it. **BSJ**

HEADWATERS

ON THE LAM, ON THE RIVER

BY DOUG PEACOCK

THE MONTANA SUMMER DAY eased towards the coolness of evening. As the shadows crawled across the river, swarms of caddis and mayflies churned above the shaded water along the bank. Trout rose along the rocks and at the current's edge. I grabbed my fly rod hoping to get a cast off as I floated past. The drift boat slammed into a rock. I dropped the rod and picked up the oars. Fly-fishing the Big Hole River while rowing in low water was next to impossible.

It was the first of July, and I had just entered a time in my life when I needed to disappear for a while. No vehicle or boat trailer remained behind to mark my departure at the launch site near Divide, Montana. Jim Crumley—after dropping me and my gear off below the bridge—had towed the old trailer to Livingston where he left it in front of a friend's house. My own pickup had gone away with my ex-wife.

It had been one hell of a year. My close friend, the writer Edward Abbey, had died; tribal loyalty dictated I be there to attend his death and see to his requested illegal burial deep in the desert wilderness. These duties I executed. Then there were the wakes and memorials—hard on the health of the living. Two months later, the FBI busted the radical environmental group Earth First!. Since Earth First! was loosely conceived around a book Abbey had written, these events were linked. The problem was that on the same morning that the group's leader, Dave Foreman, was popped, the FBI showed up at my home in Tucson. By then I was in Montana, but I was still concerned. Though I was too old and antisocial to have played a significant role in Earth First! or any other group, subpoenas for Grand Jury appearances had been served to people I knew and I had places—wild places—on my spring and summer schedule and didn't want any mandatory appearances to interfere with my trips. I figured the Feds would eventually back off; I wasn't that important and rumors had surfaced that legendary lawyer Gerry Spence would, if necessary, defend me. I did nothing to discourage them.

The *Los Angeles Times Magazine* said this:

"Spence, who has taken on Foreman's case pro bono, became involved when his good friend Doug Peacock called to ask for help. Peacock happens to be the man Edward Abbey modeled his rabble-rousing character Hayduke after in The Monkeywrench Gang."

The first part about Peacock happened to be massively

incorrect: a mutual, good friend did indeed call Gerry to ask him to help, but it wasn't me. I chose to let the misinformation stand. The truth could marinate for a while. This may have been a tad chickenshit of me, but it certainly didn't hurt in keeping the feds at bay.

Seeing myself as on the lam from the feds wasn't the only thing on my mind; I'd call it merely a significant distraction. Much worse, I had let unfounded reports that the FBI was after me sour my mood. The cornered-ferret aspect of my otherwise charming personality had surfaced and my marriage came apart. So here I was, stuck on this damned river, up the proverbial creek with no paddle, getting ready to put my life on the currents of a stream that was rapidly drying up in one of the worst droughts of the decade.

No one besides Crumley knew I was here, and no one knew how fast or how far I might travel downstream. I didn't know myself. Since I had no way to get off the river—no truck or trailer waiting down river—I just had to keep on going downstream. I had some rudimentary maps but no details showing what awaited me on the rivers below. The Big Hole ran another fifty miles south and east, hooking into the Beaverhead near Twin Bridges, after which it was called the Jefferson. The Jefferson meandered over another 100 miles back to the northeast where it joined two other great rivers, the Gallatin and the Madison, to create the headwaters of the Missouri River. No matter how long it took or how difficult the obstacles, I wanted to reach the headwaters.

My boat was a thirty year old plywood dory someone had dubbed "the Green Queen." The name stuck. My biggest concern was that the heavy boat wouldn't make it through the low water. It was already scraping over rocks in the rifles and shallows of the tail-outs. Ranchers diverted an incredible amount of water out of this river to irrigate alfalfa fields for cattle. Diversion dams blocked the river in numerous places to channel the flow into irriga-

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Inside:

The pursuit of the 'true' American West/16

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A struggle for the last grass



Michael P. Berman

Environmental activist Susan Schock of Gila Watch, with daughter Katy, in New Mexico's Aldo Leopold Wilderness

by Tony Davis

SILVER CITY, N.M. — Black Canyon is a place that only a hard-core stream addict should be able to love, so barren are its edges, so sparse its grasses.

Superficially, the canyon offers a park-like atmosphere in America's first wilderness. The stream runs freely over its shallow bed, and a few 75- to 100-foot-tall cottonwoods provide shelter from the sun.

But a crucial element is missing. The aging willows are the last of their kind in this canyon. There are no young trees.

"It's not beautiful — it's dying," says Susan Schock. "The young trees aren't (regenerating). When the old trees die in 10 to 20 years, it will be gone."

For more than two years, this canyon and a half-dozen more like it on one of the Southwest's biggest cattle operations have been a passion for Schock and a few hundred supporters. A rancher's granddaughter and Tucson, Ariz., native who moved to Silver City in 1990 to escape the city life, Schock runs a group called Gila Watch. It has fought both a fourth-generation rancher and a federal agency to a standstill over the fate of this wilderness.

Black Canyon is straddled by the Diamond Bar grazing allotment that blankets much of the Gila and Aldo Leopold wildernesses. The fate of the canyon and the allotment have turned a once-peaceful town tense and fearful.

Silver City, long a sleepy mining town of 11,000, seems poised to join Moab as a "new Western" town. Newcomers from California and Seattle are jacking up the prices of century-old brick houses. They're adding galleries, espresso bars and gourmet restaurants to the town's cowboy bars and thrift shops.

A mixed culture of ranchers, Hispanic copper miners, New Agers, busi-

ness people and aging hippies, the town has started appearing in books listing the country's best small towns and retirement communities — a prescription for rapid change.

Right now, the town is knee-deep in culture clashes. Boycotts, a firing, censorship, threats of violence, radio ads attacking environmentalists as "pagan nature worshippers" and hate-filled letters to the editor have all been part of the anti-environmentalist agenda.

But to Schock and her supporters

around the country, the Diamond Bar is worth the fight because it underscores all that's wrong with Forest Service management of cows in a wilderness. To let a rancher keep making loan payments to the bank, and to buy time for the Forest Service to make decisions, the Black Canyon was grazed to the bone. Numerous other canyons and streams on the Diamond Bar are as bad

The town's ugliness makes Schock feel as if she lives in the South during the early 1960s

off, or worse, with many having no water at all anymore.

Lying 65 miles northeast of Silver City by car, the Diamond Bar allotment is a seemingly endless series of steep, rocky and juniper-topped ridges and canyons climbing 4,000 feet through the wilderness to the 10,000-foot-high Continental Divide. At 227 square miles, it's the biggest Forest Service grazing allotment in the Southwest. It's also remote, lying two hours of rutted, car-killing dirt roads from the nearest paved highway.

Schock, 41, with medium brown hair dipping past her shoulders, is hardly a yuppie. Gila Watch gets less than \$10,000 annually in foundation grants. Her friend and colleague Michael Sauber pays the phone bills with income from his backpacking-bike shop. But she has been one of the engines driving the tension.

Working from a computer and telephone in her dining room, she has dashed out scores of memos and letters, press releases, newsletters and articles about the Diamond Bar and sent them around the country. She has battered federal agencies with Freedom of Information Act requests and brought in technical experts to study the stream damage first-hand. She, Sauber and other Gila Watchers have backpacked up to 20 miles in the wilderness, to monitor streams and find trespassing cattle.

Working with The Wilderness Society, the National Wildlife Federation and other environmental groups, Gila Watch has successfully pressured the Forest Service to delay approving dozens of new livestock tanks in the wilderness and to conduct a full environmental impact study. Last fall, the agency proposed cutting the rancher's permitted cattle numbers by nearly 30 percent.

Gila Watch is not alone. The Greater Gila Biodiversity Project is making its own waves. Using the law as its club, that group's biologists — serious, intense activists who used to survey spotted owls for the Forest Service —

continued on page 10



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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Dear friends,

Odds and ends

The Grand Canyon Community Library writes to say: "Our library burned to the ground on March 18. We are in dire need of donations if anyone has books they no longer need." The library can be reached at P.O. Box 518, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023-0518.

Subscribers Rick and Lindsay Silverman and son Max of Telluride came through Paonia. Rick organizes Telluride's MountainFilm Festival, whose guests this year are Patagonia owner Yvon

Chouinard, grizzly bear friend Doug Peacock, National Outdoor Leadership School founder Paul Petzoldt, photographer Galen Rowell and "lots of Tibetans." Rick says MountainFilm, which formerly emphasized athletic daring against beautiful backdrops, has been transformed into an environmental event. For information on the May 27-30 film festival, call 303/728-4123.

Surveys

If you have not yet responded to HCN's annual survey, please think about doing so. And if you want to remove your name from all mailing lists, don't use the

address in the survey. A reader tells us the correct address is: Mail Preference Service, c/o Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008.

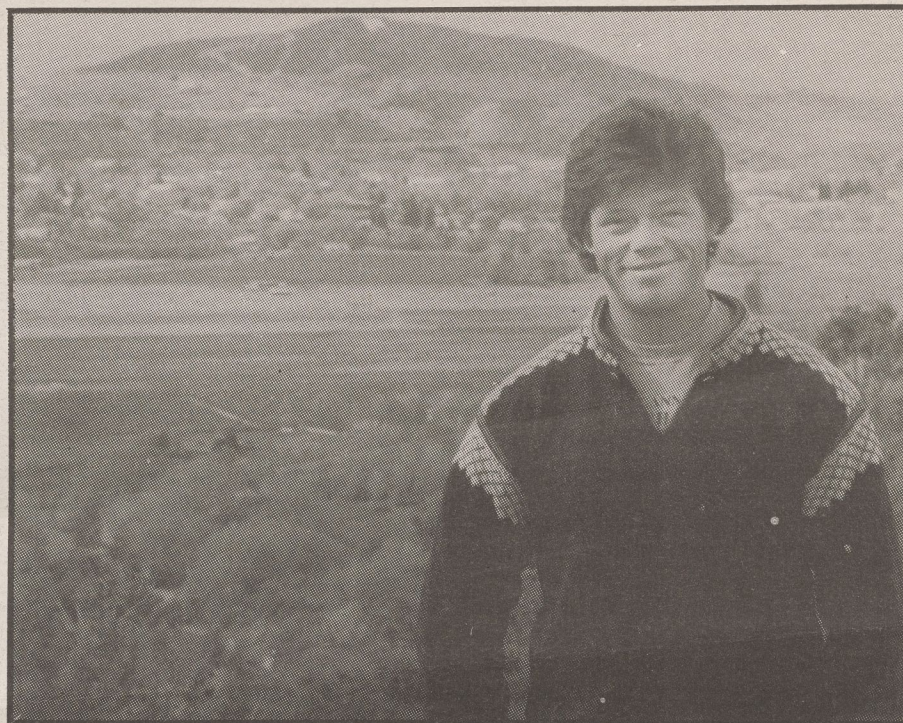
Come back in early summer

The Wasatch Forest Service office tells us, via E-Mail, that high temperatures have set off several big avalanches in Utah's Wasatch Mountains. One slow-moving monster in a Cottonwood Canyon gulch buried 15 packs beneath 30 feet of debris. Luckily, it missed the packs' owners — 17 Wasatch Mountain Club members who climbed the walls of the gully to

through six countries in South America by motorcycle. "It was the experience of a lifetime, but it is good to be back in Colorado again," he says. Peter recently spent the winter ski racing in Colorado and teaching school part-time in Aspen.

After growing up in and around the Aspen area, Peter tells us he is looking forward to living in one place for a while, particularly a different part of Colorado. He is especially excited about working for HCN since he wrote his senior thesis on public-land ranching and the proposed BLM grazing fee hikes.

— Ed and Betsy Marston
for the staff



Cindy Wehling

Intern Peter McBride with Paonia and "P" hill in the distance

escape the slide. The reason for many slides, the message said, was that "high day-time temperatures combined with lack of freezing at night" have resulted in a "typically weak and faceted" snowpack.

Change of pace

New intern Peter McBride comes to Paonia from a nearby ranch in Old Snowmass, Colo. After graduating in June from Dartmouth College with an English-environmental studies degree, Peter traveled for four months

The Forest Service sells out

by Steve Hinchman

As the West's economy shifts from traditional extractive industries to real estate and recreation, the region's largest landowner is proving to be a big-time sucker.

For decades the Forest Service has lost money on timber sales, and has leased valuable oil and gas reserves virtually for free. So it's no surprise that the agency is equally irresponsible in the world of real estate.

But it is troubling to see the Forest Service cave in to a speculator as blatant as Colorado developer Tom Chapman. On April 15, Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas granted final approval of a land trade that would dupe the federal taxpayers and make Chapman a millionaire. In doing so, the agency looked away from possible illegal activity by Chapman and refused to participate in a Justice Department investigation.

Forest Service officials also ignored an angry public in western Colorado, and, most surprisingly, spurned an offer by Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, D-Colo., to take Chapman to the mat.

Chapman's strategy is by now well documented. He purchases private land within or adjacent to major national resources; then he threatens to develop it unless the federal government promises to buy him out at vastly inflated prices. It worked before in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument, and Chapman used the same gambit briefly in the Bureau of Land Management's Gunnison Gorge recreation area.

Then, in 1989, Chapman and an investor named Bob Minerich picked up a 240-acre inholding in the West Elk Wilderness near Paonia, Colo., for \$240,000, or \$1,000 an acre. Chapman spent two years threatening to build a cabin and sue for road access into the wilderness unless the Forest Service bought them out for \$5,500 an acre.

The agency held firm and Minerich balked at further action. Chapman found a couple of other investors and bought the land himself as the principal owner of the West Elk Development Corp. Chapman says he paid \$960,000 — or \$4,000 an acre — but the price included only \$300,000 in cash and a \$660,000 loan from Minerich.

Soon after, Chapman and his new partners started flying in

logs for a \$1 million cabin in the heart of the wilderness. That outraged everyone, from diehard backpackers to the head of the local Republican Party, and prompted formal protests from then Sen. Tim Wirth and Campbell, then a congressman.

But instead of protecting its turf, the Forest Service collapsed. Officials from the agency's Denver and Washington offices — who a year earlier declined to even meet with Chapman — suddenly agreed to a land exchange and offered him 105 acres adjacent to the Telluride Ski Area. The agency's appraisers drafted a new study that valued both parcels at \$640,000.

While the Forest Service insists the land trade is of equal value, similar parcels in Telluride are selling for \$2 million to \$3 million. Inexplicably, the Forest Service has not only stuck with the deal; it continues to defend it in the face of increasing opposition.

In western Colorado, local governments, the San Miguel County Board of Realtors and environmental groups have appealed the Forest Service proposal. The appellants provided the agency with a hefty portfolio showing the Telluride parcel is worth several million dollars. The Forest Service rejected their case.

Sen. Campbell vowed to introduce legislation in Congress to condemn Chapman's inholdings if the Forest Service would deny the land trade. The agency never responded.

Finally, a former business partner of Chapman's came forward to testify that not only was the Forest Service set up from the beginning, but that Chapman himself estimates the value of the Telluride lands at almost four times the official Forest Service appraisal. That was enough to trigger an inquiry by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Denver (HCN, 4/18/94). But again, the Forest Service declined to investigate or even cooperate with the Department of Justice. Sources there say that without a plaintiff, the case stands little chance.

It's a slim reed, but those who object to Chapman's manipulation of a federal agency now have only the Congress to turn to. It has the power to condemn Chapman's private inholding in the West Elk Wilderness. Doing so would be a timely warning to all wilderness profiteers. ■

Steve Hinchman is a staff reporter for *High Country News*.

Separating Church and State

This kind of thinking is objectionable to some. Wild food, they say, is not a crop and you do not harvest it. It is a gift from God (or nature) and belongs to everyone, or to no one. When you compare pheasants to wheat, you show disrespect.

One philosopher was an articulate participant in a conference that we both attended. He had the right instincts, the right reverence. Later, he wrote that "I do not want my 'policy' [toward nature] to stand on incentives.... It is a moral issue and I do not decide moral issues with cash."

Many writers on nature have fallen into such reasoning -- though a philosopher might have been more wary. He was saying, in effect, that when an end is extremely important, one should not concern oneself with means for achieving it. Unfortunately, nature can only transcend economics if nature still exists. She will not be rescued without decisions, incentives, expenditures, and worn gloves. There is nothing wrong with improving wildlife habitat even if it costs money -- and it usually does.

For economic purposes, a wild duck is as clearly a crop as the barley on which it fattens for the winter migration. Without expenditures on habitat, we will lose whole species of ducks.

For spiritual purposes, on the other hand, a mallard is "meat from God" -- a quotation from Aldo Leopold.⁵ A hunter who does not feel what Leopold felt ought to consider taking up golf.

The American Constitution was not intended as a guide to wildlife management, but it is at least a guide to thinking about

nature. When you want to help her, you have to start by separating church and state in your mind. Fortunately, the human brain is divided along Constitutional lines.

<u>Church</u>	<u>State</u>
revealed wisdom	science
myth	history
Mother Nature	nature
ends	means
meat from God	crop
natural regulation	management
<i>Balance of Nature</i>	<i>decisions</i>

Separating Predator and Prey

There is another proposal for wildlife -- much newer and more radical -- that needs to be cited here, if only to show how different it is from the balance-of-nature argument.

Cleveland Amory, a spokesman for the Fund for Animals, argues that, in an ideal world, animals would be protected not only from humans but from each other: "prey will be separated from predator and there will be no overpopulation or starvation because all will be controlled by sterilization or implant."⁶

Compare Amory's animal-rights model to the natural-regulation and management models mentioned above.

1. Animal-Rights Model. Man becomes the full-time custodian of wildlife. Non-human animals live in habitats that are spacious and attractive (in the wealthy nations), but artificial. Predators are fed by keepers. Sterilization of rabbits and ground-squirrels is labor-intensive. There is no natural

selection except in populations that avoid impoundment, such as rats and cockroaches. Nature is dead.

2. Natural-Regulation model. The objective is to keep Nature natural -- which means that this is not a variation on animal-rights model but the opposite of it. Man divorces Nature in the belief that she can do better on her own. She gets custody of the wildlife. Man retains visitation rights. (It may or may not be significant that Man and Nature are among the few nouns with genders in the English language.)

3. Management model. This is the centrist approach, between the other two. Man wants Nature to be natural but recognizes that she cannot function as she did before the Industrial Revolution and human population explosion. When necessary, Man lends a hand. In return, Nature gives him what he needs. Best man at their wedding is Aldo Leopold.

The Incentive

Farmers and ranchers are managers, by definition, and all -- or at least all who own their place -- will remind you that they have an incentive to keep their land in good condition. This is absolutely correct, in principle.

When a visitor wants to see the original Montana, however, my bit of it is not the place to look. The native grasses are gone. In their place is bluegrass, which tells me that cattle were once in this bottomland for long periods without rotation, cropping every blade close to the ground. Bluegrass can stand

this treatment. Wildlife can't. The sharp-tailed grouse may never move back.

Not far from Yellowstone Park's northern range, there is a much larger farm with prairies that Lewis and Clark would recognize. You see pronghorns on every walk. Cattle replace the bison. Many of the grasses are native. The draws have running water for my dogs to drink, even in September, and if I look closely I might spot little native trout dashing for cover. Some of the stream bottoms and slopes are crowded with aspens of all ages. (You would not see that on the northern range, where elk and bison have eaten the young aspens and willows.) There is a good population of sharp-tailed grouse (long gone from Yellowstone).

On the other hand, some Montana ranches have dry draws, no brush to speak of, and overgrazed range. They are in worse shape than anything in the Park. Neither public nor private ownership, then, automatically produces a healthy environment.

Part of the problem is that different managers have different indicator-species. We do not see the same things when we look at land. I see habitat for wildlife. A rancher sees habitat for cattle. It's what he must see, if he is going to survive.

Cattle habitat is called "range," which is -- according to the dictionary -- "an extensive area of open land on which livestock wander and graze." When ranchers say that the range is in good shape, they usually mean that there is enough grass for

the cattle. Some ranchers see beyond that. Some know the range and its inhabitants, wild and domestic, with an intimacy that escapes most Americans. But ranchers may or may not have an economic incentive to look beyond cattle.

It is hard to see what you are not trained to look for -- harder still to see what you do not want to see. One farmer told me, sincerely and fervently, that cattle never harm streams. At the time we were standing within sight of a spring creek that was wide, shallow, filled with silt, and denuded of vegetation on the banks. Some cows were in the water even as we talked.

Ranchers and farmers are human beings like the rest of us, and humans aren't automatically equipped with "the vision thing," as one of our Presidents put it. He was not Theodore Roosevelt. Some ranchers and farmers are not Aldo Leopold. Even so, they can learn to live with Nature, and a farm has a chance to recover. Land cut up for starter castles is not likely to become open space again, ever.

What it Takes

What follows is a personal catalog of arts and attitudes and that seem to work for people, cattle, and wildlife. I will be quoting rancher John -- whose place opened this essay -- and drawing on what others have said.

Avoiding Debt. The pre-'86 trucks and elderly farm machinery were a sign of frugality. Successful ranches and farms

in Montana have a way of looking like that.

Another farm nearby has a magnificent new tractor as tall as the house -- but it was bought at auction, for pennies on the dollar. The farmer who went into debt for that tractor lost his farm along with it.

It's where your priorities are, says John. His priority was to raise a family in the way he grew up. His grandparents homesteaded nearby in 1900, bought this place in the '20s, and did not blow away in the dust-bowl years, like so many others.

John's wife agrees on the priorities, and she is half the team. Both of them scramble to make this place work. He has branched out of ranching into farming. She works at the local Soil Conservation District.

Maybe one or two of the kids will want to run the place, John says. They will really have to want to make it work, though. It's not just something to try because nothing else is available.

I ought to feel encouraged. I do feel encouraged, for this generation, because they chose this life and like it. But how long will it be till some heir wants to live like a movie star? If virtue could be transmitted by genes, the world would still be run by aristocracies.

Being a Willow. John knows that he still has "the original grass" because he can see the old trail running through it, up over the benches and down through Whisky Springs Coulee. Wagons

and sleighs went down the trail in the 19th century, hauling gold and silver ore to Fort Benton, then making a return trip with meat for the mining camp.

The old camp is a ghost town now. Miners took what they could from the earth and moved on, leaving wagon ruts that sum up the history of Montana. It was "an extraction colony," writes William Kittredge.

I don't hear John using polysyllables like "sustainable" or "environmentalist," but I hike through grass that is knee-high and full of life. On the 600 acres I like best, he runs only forty head of cattle year-round, occasionally more in the winter. The worst mistake, he says, would be heavy grazing in spring.

It's "awful easy to think 'this is my land'," John says, "but you grow in it. You learn to bend. You have to be a flexible little willow, not a big cottonwood in a windstorm."

Everybody can live a little better for it. John has added some land to his place and sold acreage that he does not need on the periphery, but he won't sell "the heart of the ranch" -- its spring creek. The cows around it are not on the banks. There are swampy spots and brush in the pasture. The water table is high enough to be reached by the roots of vegetation.

Farther downstream, after the creek leaves the ranch, it flows in a miniature canyon, six feet below the level of the pasture. The cattle have turned a well-watered pasture into dry land.

A few years ago, John and some of the neighbors decided to help the stream recover. (By that time, other spring creeks in Montana had anglers on a waiting list to pay rod fees.) The Soil Conservation Service did not help, so John got an expert from the University to look at the stream and make recommendations for restoration.

John's wife, meanwhile, worked through the Soil Conservation District to organize the restoration project. The District -- unlike the Soil Conservation Service -- is made up of local ranchers and farmers.

There is a long way to go before the whole stream has recovered its health, but movement is in the right direction. People have come to understand that water is like gold, in Montana -- better, really, because gold runs out and streams flow forever, if you treat them right.

John explains the economics of stream restoration to me. You have to take the expenses out of current income, he says, and you have to see results that justify the costs. You cannot just reason that you are increasing the value of your land -- not unless you are planning to sell.

You could fence off the whole stream, he says, but fencing is expensive and he has plenty of chores without maintaining barbed wire. He has found that he can fence intermittently, in places where he notices that cattle are creating a problem. In other places, willows and brush protect the banks.

John sees a lot of difference in human attitudes toward the

stream now. More and more of his neighbors are learning how to help nature without spending much money, and "everybody can live a little better for it," he says.

Ranchers don't ask why. The pheasants on this place are barely hanging on, says John. They need grain, tall grass for cover, and running water -- all close together. They can't travel far to get what they need. Pheasants are not natives and it's hard to live this life if you don't grow up with it.

The sharp-tailed grouse are different. They evolved on this land and if they don't find what they want in one part of it, they fly to another part. They commute between fragments of habitat that are miles apart. I might find them on the benches, John says, or across the road in the alfalfa. Or maybe I won't find them at all.

He does not ask why I want to look for the grouse. This place has been hunted by humans since the glacier went out. John's sons are up in the hills right now, though they probably won't get close enough for a shot at an elk with their bows and arrows.

Sometimes the folks in starter castles ask why I want to hunt, and my answer probably does not satisfy them. It's hard to live this life if you don't grow up with it.

Notes

(1) From a 1994 release by the Audubon Society. A recent study by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reaches the same conclusion.

(2) Doig, Ivan. This House of Sky. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1992, p. 4.

(3) May 9, 1994

(4) Scientific American, May 1994, p. 10.

(5) Leopold, Aldo. A Sand County Almanac. NY: Oxford, 1970. p.viii.

(6) The Economist, August 21, 1993. p. 25.

About 3600 words

Separate chapter?

Print again?

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Epigraph: Yeats or
Cunliffe.

SPACE

You drive up to a one-story house that is modern but not new, comfortable but not big, painted but not decorated. The house is on the lowest part of the ranch, below the wind and close to the highway. There is enough lawn to stop grass-fires and plenty of running water for the fire engines, if sparks should jump across.

Draws on each side of the house run down from blue mountains, and trout are rising in the spring creek. This is the kind of Montana ranch that movie stars are looking for. If the couple who ranches the place had an income reflecting its value, they could buy me out with loose change, but I've got the only new truck in the yard.

Rancher John buys only pre-'86 Chevrolet pickups, he says, because he can fix anything that goes wrong with them, and parts are cheap. He spends as much time working on machinery as he does out on his 5,000 acres. He does not like to incur debt for trucks and implements. A rancher saddled with interest payments has to raise the same number of cows in dry years as in good ones, he says -- and Montana has lots of dry years.

Indicator Species

This is the right kind of ranch-house -- to make my bias explicit -- because it occupies one acre of Montana and protects 5,000 others from development. Space is the best thing in the universe, not outer space but space on the only earth we've got, space with grouse and elk and trout and curlews and just one human sticking up awkward from the prairie. The benches above the ranch house are crowded with blue grama grass, prairie junegrass, and Idaho fescue. They are my kind of crowd.

When I was growing up, we thought that our space would always be protected by the decisive Montana climate, but we were wrong. The transits have already carved thousands of little squares out of land that should have remained forever sinuous. Turkey Knob is dotted with starter castles, each built higher than the last to show who's top gobbler. (I didn't say that. A realtor did, off the record.) The new occupants are chopping Nature into pieces.

There are indicator-species -- those that show whether or not Nature is in good health. My indicators for grasslands like these are the prairie grouse: sharptails, sage grouse, even blue grouse wandering out from the mountains. Farther east -- in the tall-grass prairie -- you could add prairie chickens (another grouse). At the southern end of the prairies, add members of the quail family.

You could choose a less demanding indicator-species like the western meadowlark, which has the most beautiful song on the

prairie. The meadowlark is the state bird of six prairie states, but it is so adaptable that it provides little information on the health of its habitat. At the other extreme, you could choose the curlew, which (rancher John tells me) will nest only in native grasses. No wonder curlews are scarce.

The prairie grouse are in trouble too, in most places. They have two strikes against them:

- First, they are members of a ground-nesting order (Galliformes) that has trouble with modern, clean-farming practices.
- Second, grassland birds as a group "have shown steeper and more consistent, geographically widespread declines than any other group of birds breeding in North America."¹

Earlier in the century, prairie grouse were extravagantly abundant in Montana. I have seen some of the flocks and heard numerous reports like this one from Ivan Doig's father:

... you wouldn't believe the grouse that were on those slopes then. The summer we were married and went herding on Grass Mountain, all that country was just alive with grouse then. I'd shoot them five at a time, and your mother -- your mother'd cook them at noon when the sheep had shaded up. We'd eat one apiece and seal the rest in quart jars and cool them in the spring water so we'd have them cold for supper. They were the best eatin' in this world."²

When given a chance, prairie grouse recover quickly. They are hardy, prolific, strong on the wing, and adapted by evolution to a habitat that is hot, cold, windy, wet, dry, and full of predators. Sharp-tailed grouse and prairie chickens even benefit

from agriculture, to a point. They do well in a mix of native prairie and farmland.

As it happens, I have worn out boots looking for grouse on both sides of the Atlantic and found Montana grasslands more productive than the moors of Ireland. The comparison is fair because there was no attempt to manage for grouse in either case.

In Scotland, home of Ivan Doig's father, grouse can be a landowner's most profitable crop, far more valuable than livestock or grain. The essential difference is in human culture -- a tradition of game management (which the British are good at) and tweed suits (which the Yanks adore). On this side of the Atlantic, Messrs. Orvis and Patagonia can be counted on to provide the attire if landowners will provide the habitat.

Who's in Charge Around Here?

If this were 1901, we might look to the Federal government to save the prairies. President Theodore Roosevelt did save the forests, at least by comparison to those in the hands of lumber companies, and his model remains persuasive (if I read the magazines and newspapers correctly). Writers, hunters, fishers, and hikers often assume that land has not been saved until it has a federal boundary.

TR's method will not work on the prairies, however. It would not work even if we were to elect another president able to read Tolstoy on horseback. It may be," writes Jessica Matthews in the Washington Post,"³ ...that we are in a transition period between

the regulatory era and one in which economic signals will play a much greater role.... [but] Neither environmentalists nor the administration are ready to provide the leadership this new direction will demand."

One problem with the TR model is economic. Most federal agencies are short of funds for their existing responsibilities. None are likely to get funding for intensive management of the grasslands.

The more fundamental problem, however, is managerial gridlock. The public (and therefore Congress) does not want wildlife management in federal areas which, like the national parks, are intended to preserve natural values. Wild animals are supposed to be controlled by "natural regulation" -- a concept propagated in Yellowstone Park some years ago. It is not a scientific concept, though there was a time when some scientists were willing to give it a chance. Natural regulation is drawn from an older idea called the "balance of nature," which is appealing as religion but does not lend itself to management of anything except public relations.

One might look on managerial gridlock as a New Age version of Garret Hardin's "tragedy of the commons." The old-style commons was free range in the strictest sense, shared on a "help yourself" basis. It was overgrazed because no farmer had an incentive to conserve its forage. It was, in Hardin's words, "an unmanaged commons".⁴ Yellowstone Park appears to have managers but is overgrazed nevertheless because they leave decisions on

the size of the herd to nature.

Prairies may need intensive management because they are the products of nature at its most violent. Native vegetation depended on periodic fires set by lightning or native peoples. The grouse moors of Britain still depend on controlled burns, which require hard work.

Prairie plants also evolved under intermittent grazing by bison. On some ranches, their effect is today mimicked by domestic cattle, but that is getting ahead of the story. For now, the point is that grasslands need more than good intentions.

For a decade now I have been learning about my own small place. It is not a prairie but a meadow punctuated by brush, a few trees, a spring creek, and some marshy spots which, when you look closely, are old stream-channels. I can call most of the plants and animals by name. I spot-spray the invasive Eurasian weeds, try to keep the deer from eating up their habitat, farm in ways that suit wildlife, and help the spring creek recover from overuse by cattle.

There was an anniversary card that read "I don't know much about sex but I know what you like," and I am learning what my place likes. Nobody else is out here every day, watching, learning, wearing out gloves. There are crops: barley, hay, pheasants, and some big trout that are returned to the stream. (They have a muddy taste.) My family eats one or two mallard drakes every autumn -- a small fraction of the number we produce.

Stories: Passion

About 800 words

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Sept.
Dec?

Passion

Passion is what matters. You get it without effort when you are a teen-ager, assuming that you run at 98.6° degrees, but later your blood cools and you may have to chase passion instead of waiting for it to pounce on you. Only a few poets have a surplus of flame life-long -- or life-short as the case may be. You and I have to hunt harder. Ten miles is enough, if it is through tall grass and up draws and out in stubble and maybe, with luck, into snowy foothills where an old cock pheasant thought he could wait out the season. It's better than anything climate-controlled.

I assume that your passion happens in nature, if you are reading this, but it is not the only possible place. Michelangelo chased passion to the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and you might even get waves of it riding a keyboard. But nature is where it happened first and where passion still catches up with you most often.

Mind you, nature is obsolete, these days, for supply-side

economists and politically correct scholars and most of rest of the population, for that matter, but she's still out there, nature hot and cold, scratchy and wet, kind and brutal. Might as well make love to her while you have the chance, because this won't go on forever.

Fact is that we're already obsolete, you and I, doing the same thing we've been doing for a million years or so. But passion is about extremes, so if I hate the brave new world of cities surrounded by malls, I might as well love the brave old world of villages surrounded by wilderness. I'll run the buffalo while my pony's wind holds out. Do you know how retrograde we are, culture-wise? Walk into any bookstore, ask to see their selection on hunting, and see what happens.

We're what's known as a niche market. A niche is a recess in a wall, as for holding a statue. We're in there looking out while the crowd rushes by to the mall. But we're not cast in marble, not quite yet.

When I was a young man, I knew that I had been born a little too late. My father and grandfather got the best of both nature and technology. They could hop into a Model A Ford, or in Grandpa's case a Cadillac heated by lifting a flap in the firewall. [] They could drive to Minnesota, row into Woman Lake in a lapstrake boat, lower a minnow, and catch as many walleyes as they cared to eat. Or they could drive the Ford [] over Bozeman pass in the mud, hopping out when they needed a grouse for dinner. They could visit the Firehole River, tie a size 16

Quill Gordon on a 4X gut leader, and show a four-pound brown trout his first dry fly.

It could not last. The tip of technology is followed by a wide, wedging base, and we need a lot of rules these days to save a little of nature. Fenced fields must hem her in, and short little rivers with people doing polite things. We need rules, mind you. We mustn't just run around with our atlatls throwing spears at mastodons, [] not anymore. Damn it.

On the other hand, passion is boundless, by definition, and she's pretty as ever, where you find her. Nature does not get old, like a human. She is young, ever young, and then dead. You don't mourn. You want to shoot somebody, but the poor guy driving the bulldozer is just making a living. It's the only way he knows.

I'm lucky, then. I've got a bottle of 1889 Port that a friend gave me to baptize a book I wrote. Wine and book are both about nature. The Port tastes better now than it would have a hundred years ago, even if I'd been there. Wine is not something that I know much about, or intend to learn, and anyhow Port does not taste like blackberries or hazelnuts or anything so simple. It tastes like the end of the last century. We've made it to the next, anyhow.

Tomorrow Pup and I will start up a creek-bottom where the blue grouse may still be, but probably are not, and follow their life-cycle a thousand feet up to a ridge of very old firs, and shoot a bird for dinner if I can, and if not watch one fly all

the way to the bottom. We will return home, Pup and I and possibly bird, with several sore legs and all passion spent. [] We will have burned it to good purpose on one more day and one last century.

Passion = logs on the fire. There are more flames as long as there are more logs.