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The deep Anthropocene

As Wilderness Areas Attract More People, Volunteer Rangers Hit The Trail

Smithsonian Photo Contest

Mountain West Senators Push For Outdoor Recreation Spending To Boost Economy

The Best Bad Things

Covid-19 returns in wastewater tests

Climate change likely to keep hammering Colorado River's biggest reservoirs

CA Attorney General Opposes Administration Proposal to Exclude Critical Habitat Protections

Alarmed by Scope of Wildfires, Officials Turn to Native Americans for Help

Nearly Half of South America's Mammals Came from North America

Half the World Used to be Covered by Giant Mushrooms

Celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day with the California Native Vote Project

To Our Warrior Librarians

Orville Barlese



[Bob Tregilus](#)

The Great Gallery, Horseshoe Canyon, Utah.

The deep Anthropocene

Lucas Stephens, Erle Ellis, Dorian Fuller, Aeon

A revolution in archaeology has exposed the extraordinary extent of human influence over our planet's past and its future

***** As
Wilderness Areas Attract More People, Volunteer Rangers Hit The Trail
By [Amanda Peacher](#) • Oct 4, 2020



Volunteer wilderness stewards like Joyce Farbe, above, are a critical part of wilderness education, especially when managers have limited budgets for paid staff. Amanda Peacher / Mountain West News Bureau Originally published on 9.28.20

Listen

Listening...

When Joyce Farbe saw how many cars were parked at the Iron Creek Trailhead when she pulled in, she knew it would be a busy day. It was a warm, late summer morning, and her destination – Sawtooth Lake – is one of the most popular day hikes in Central Idaho. Cars were spilling out of the parking lot and lined the dirt road for a quarter mile. Farbe tightened her boot laces and pulled her backpack onto her shoulders. Before she could get going, her work began: She approached two men as they printed their name on a wilderness permit at the trailhead.

"Thanks for filling that out," Farbe said. She introduced herself as a wilderness stewardship volunteer with the Idaho Conservation League. "You going to be out there for a few days?" she asked, pointing to their heavy backpacks. The men were chatty and excited, telling Farbe about their fishing plans. Farbe reminded them that no campfires are allowed at the lake, wished them a great trip, and then they started up the trail.

Sawtooth Lake is a place that many describe as "loved to death." Visitors are awe-struck by the unusually large, deep blue alpine lake set against a spectacular backdrop of granite peaks. Striking in another way are the impacts of thousands of hikers and backpackers who visit each summer – piles of unburied human waste that dot the forest floor surrounding popular campsites, illegal campfire rings, trampled alpine plants where hikers wandered off trail.

But that's exactly why Farbe is here – to help educate hikers about [Leave No Trace principles](#), and hopefully impart the sense of stewardship that she has for this place.

"We want to keep it this way for future generations," Farbe told me. "We want to keep it this way for other hikers who are here today. They don't want to see the scraps from my lunch. And they don't want to see the pile of poop under a rock. As volunteers, I think that might be where we can have effect and credibility is to help people understand why they came here in the first place."

Farbe's one of about 40 volunteer wilderness stewards in a program run by the [Idaho Conservation League](#) in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. Volunteer wilderness stewardship programs are on the rise as budget and staffing levels drop and pressure on the landscape only grows.

Forest Service records show that wilderness and wild and scenic river volunteer hours have increased about 36% since 2013. Meanwhile, since 2001 the agency's budget for wilderness, recreation and heritage programs has [decreased by 15%](#).

"Volunteers are the de facto workforce for many Forest service districts that have a wilderness program," said Randy Welsh, executive director of the [National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance](#), a nonprofit that works with and tracks volunteer organizations. "They do not have the funding, the capability to hire wilderness seasonals."

Welsh has seen about 200 new volunteer wilderness stewardship programs pop up around the country over the past decade. These programs are different from the volunteer trail maintenance and AmeriCorps programs that have been around for much longer. Rather than physical labor building trails or repairing fences, stewardship programs emphasize interacting with and educating trail users. Like a paid wilderness ranger, volunteers like Farbe pick up trash, tell campers to bury their waste and stay on the trail, and, when necessary, remind people of the rules.

On the way to Sawtooth Lake, Farbe spotted a couple with an excited brown lab bounding ahead of them on the trail. She greeted the hikers in a friendly tone, asked them about their day, and then said, "You do know your dog needs to be on a leash?"

"Oh, got it," the hiker said. While he pulled a leash out of his backpack, Farbe explained that the leash rule is in place so dogs don't chase wildlife or get in conflicts with the many other dogs and people on the trail.

"I'm not here for enforcement," Farbe told me. "I'm just here to educate people and be an ambassador. And it's completely non confrontational."

The work of volunteers like Farbe adds up. Last year, 56 Idaho Conservation League wilderness stewards interacted with 3,216 trail users, destroyed 109 illegal campfire rings, packed out 100 pounds of litter, and extinguished three abandoned campfires.

But there's one big difference between what Farbe does as a volunteer and the job of a wilderness ranger: Volunteers can't enforce rules. If a backcountry recreator has an illegal campfire, or rides

their bike in the wilderness, or runs amuck cutting down live trees, Farbe can't give them a ticket. And that's a problem when backcountry managers have limited paid staff for an area as vast and popular as the 217,000-acre Sawtooth Wilderness.

"Volunteers cannot do everything that needs to be done," Welsh said. "They can fill in. But they're not a long-term solution to what is a crisis in public funding for natural resource agencies."

Maybe not, but forest managers like Ken Gebhart, the district ranger of the Salmon-Challis National Forest in Central Idaho, embrace volunteers' engagement.

"I think we all recognize we can't do it alone," Gebhart said. "The volunteer program and all the partners we work with are all part of the big picture of our success of managing national forests," Gebhardt said.

And the need for people on the ground – whether paid or volunteer – is more and more pressing. Backcountry visitation, [especially in wilderness areas](#), is increasing. And as the coronavirus pandemic played out over the summer, hikers and campers flocked to national forests, with [some seeing record visitation](#).

That trend applies to Sawtooth Lake, too. When Joyce Farbe finished up for the day, she counted 128 people on the trail. That's 128 people Farbe checked for permits, chatted with about wilderness, or asked to put their dogs on leash. There was no wilderness ranger on the trail that day, so without Farbe, those 128 people wouldn't have had that kind of interaction.

Back at the trailhead, Farbe said she had a fun day.

"Acting as a wilderness steward, I get to slow down and really appreciate the experience more than if I were just hiking as fast as I could," she said. "And interacting with all these friendly people was fun."

Farbe hopes the Forest Service will soon be able to fully staff trails and ranger programs. But in the meantime, she says she'll keep lacing up her boots.

This story was produced by the Mountain West News Bureau, a collaboration between Wyoming Public Media, Boise State Public Radio in Idaho, KUNR in Nevada, the O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West in Montana, KUNC in Colorado, KUNM in New Mexico, with support from affiliate stations across the region. Funding for the Mountain West News Bureau is provided in part by the [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#). Copyright 2020 Boise State Public Radio News. To see more, visit [Boise State Public Radio News](#).

<https://photocontest.smithsonianmag.com/photocontest/>

Mountain West Senators Push For Outdoor Recreation Spending To Boost Economy

By [Noah Glick](#) • Jul 16, 2020 *(Just love this photo. sdc)*



National Park Service

As the pandemic wears on, leaders across the country are looking at how to economically recover after the COVID-19 pandemic. Some in the Mountain West are calling for more outdoor recreation spending.

The Best Bad Things

California was, as advertised, a land of opportunity, but it was also dangerous as hell, especially for the people who were already there. Indigenous Californians, who had been colonized by the Spanish, were almost completely exterminated by disease and racism-inspired violence. The Californios lost all power and personal property, including great tracts of land, as immediate statehood erratically converted the legal system from Mexican to American law. As 49er and California state senator Elisha Oscar Crosby noted, according to author Gary Noy, “there was very little law.” Violence and general harassment fueled by racism and xenophobia were part of the daily lives of Chinese, Latino, and Black people—who were **also systematically excluded from politics. The paradox now, of course, is that the California of the Mind still conjures the splendors of the land and the creativity of its people.** [Read more.](#)

Covid-19 returns in wastewater tests

By Mariposa Gazette, 10/8/20

After a few weeks of Covid-19 not being found in samples taken from local wastewater treatment facilities, the virus is again present in the samples. “The virus is back,” said Mariposa County Health Officer Dr. Eric Sergienko. “What that tells us is that doing the surveillance of wastewater is important because it lets us know what the impacts of visitors to the area is on potential transmission, and it validates that when we do have the (Yosemite National) park open, we are bringing people into...”

Climate change likely to keep hammering Colorado River's biggest reservoirs

By Cronkite News, 10/8/20

The Colorado River's largest reservoirs are expected to keep struggling over the next five years due to climate change, according to the federal agency that oversees them. The Bureau of Reclamation's new modeling projections, which include this year's record-breaking heat and dryness in some parts of the southwestern watershed, show an increasing likelihood of an official shortage declaration before 2026.

California Attorney General Opposes Trump Administration Proposal to Exclude Critical Habitat from Endangered Species Act Protections

By Sierra Sun Times, 10/9/20

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, co-leading a multistate coalition with Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh and Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, on Thursday filed an official comment letter opposing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) proposal to establish a new, unlawful process for excluding areas from critical habitat designations under the federal Endangered Species Act. If finalized, the proposal is likely to drastically reduce the areas protected as critical habitat, further endangering the conservation of our nation's most imperiled species. In the comment letter, the coalition of 17 attorneys general argue that FWS's proposal is contrary to the plain language of the Endangered Species Act and arbitrarily limits its ability to protect endangered or threatened species as required by the Act.



Read more



Alarmed by Scope of Wildfires, Officials Turn to Native Americans for Help

By Jill Cowan

Indigenous groups have a long history of intentionally setting fires to keep ecosystems healthy. Policymakers are now more interested in the practice.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/07/us/native-american-burning-practices-california.html>

[campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20201008&instance_id=22912&nl=to_daysheadlines®i_id=25905172&segment_id=40226&user_id=c38947501e68571d7aa5496fbc02c266](https://www.donaldtrump.com/campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20201008&instance_id=22912&nl=to_daysheadlines®i_id=25905172&segment_id=40226&user_id=c38947501e68571d7aa5496fbc02c266)

Presidential Candidates' Plans

Biden-Harris Plan for Tribal Nations Battle *for the* Soul of the Nation

<https://joebiden.com/tribalnations/#>

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### [In Case You Missed It: The Trump Administration is Working to ...](#)

[www.bia.gov > as-ia > opa > online-press-release > case...](http://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/case...)

Aug 11, 2020 — Using the tools at his disposal, President *Trump* is working alongside American ... The OJS and its partners help *tribal* leaders and members combat illicit ... a general *plan* to dismantle and disrupt opioid and heroin distribution ... cold cases in Indian Country has been the lack of a *national* database that ...

\*\*\*\*\*

On this day (10/9) in 1635, **Puritan leaders banished Roger Williams** from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for what they considered dangerous views, which included religious freedom and fair dealings with Native Americans. Williams went on to found the Colony of Rhode Island, a safe haven for Quakers, Anabaptists and others who were denied religious expression

[Read about Williams' advocacy for the separation of church and state and his contributions to the ideological foundations of America](#)

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### Nearly Half of South America's Mammals Came from North America, New Research May Explain Why

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/nearly-half-south-americas-mammals-came-north-america-new-research-may-explain-why-180976035/?>

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Earth used to be covered in giant mushrooms, long before trees overtook the land 🍄



[blogspot.com](http://blogspot.com)

Around 400 million years ago, when plants were still relatively new and the tallest trees stood just a few feet high, giant mushrooms up to 24 feet (8 meters) high covered the Earth.

With the help of an enormous fossil dug up in Saudi Arabia, the landscape of the early earth is now [known](#) to have been very different to what we see today.



[livescience.com](http://livescience.com)

The giant fossil found in the desert of Saudi Arabia.

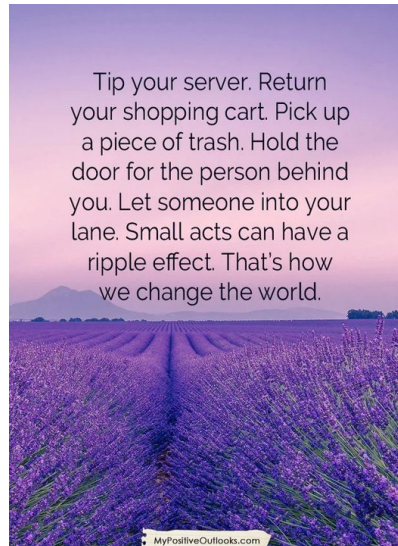
According to [New Scientist](#):

A 6-metre fungus would be odd enough in the modern world, but at least we are used to trees quite a bit bigger. Plants at that time were a few feet tall, invertebrate animals were small, and there were no terrestrial vertebrates. This fossil would have been all the more striking in such a diminutive landscape. Many fossils of the organisms, known as *Prototaxites*, have been found over the past century and a half, ever since they were first discovered by a Canadian in 1859.

But despite the fossil records, no one could figure out what these huge spires were, until in 2007 when a study concluded that they were giant mushrooms.

What an incredible sight the landscape of old must have been!





*In celebration of Indigenous Peoples' Day, we invite you to join our virtual voter guide event, today at 4 p.m. The event will take place on Zoom, and will also be livestreamed on Facebook.*

**REGISTER HERE**

**Celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day with the California Native Vote Project** and hear about the importance of this election to Native families and communities. We'll also discuss this year's ballot initiatives. Healthcare, voting rights, education, affordable housing, and more, are on the ballot! Join the growing movement to build Native power and make sure Native voices are heard.

Speakers include:

- Chrissie Castro (Diné & Chicana), Co-founder, California Native Vote Project
- Bethany Yellowtail (Northern Cheyenne & Crow), Founder, B.Yellowtail
- Calvin Hedrick (Mountain Maidu), Community Organizer, California Native Vote Project
- Cheyenne Phoenix (Diné & Northern Paiute), Youth Organizer, California Native Vote Project
- Angie Diaz (Diné & Mayan), Canvasser, California Native Vote Project
- Morning Star Gali (Pit River Tribe), Founder, Restoring Justice for Indigenous Peoples
- Justine Medina (Navajo, Ho-Chunk, Menominee), Community Organizer, California Native Vote Project

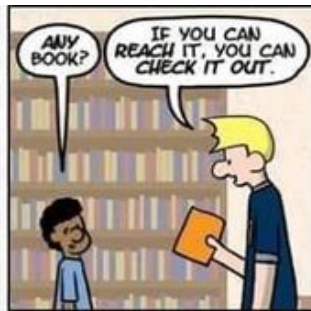
Performances by:      Jessa Calderon and Artson

With love, Chrissie Castro (Diné & Chicana), Co-founder, California Native Vote Project

*To our Warrior Librarians:*



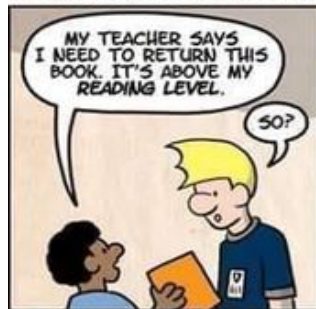
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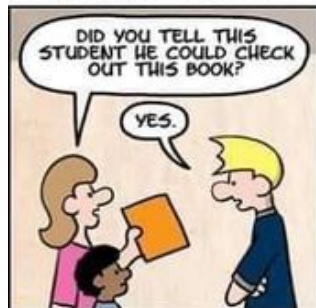
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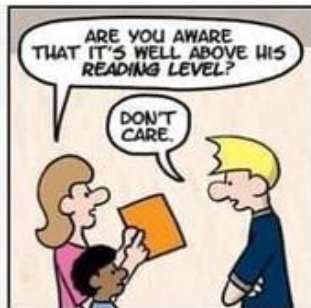
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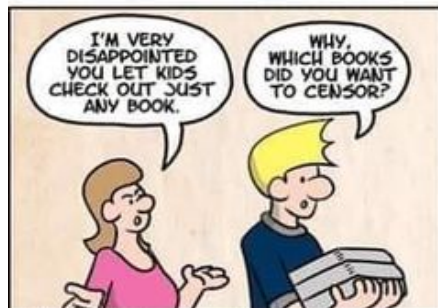
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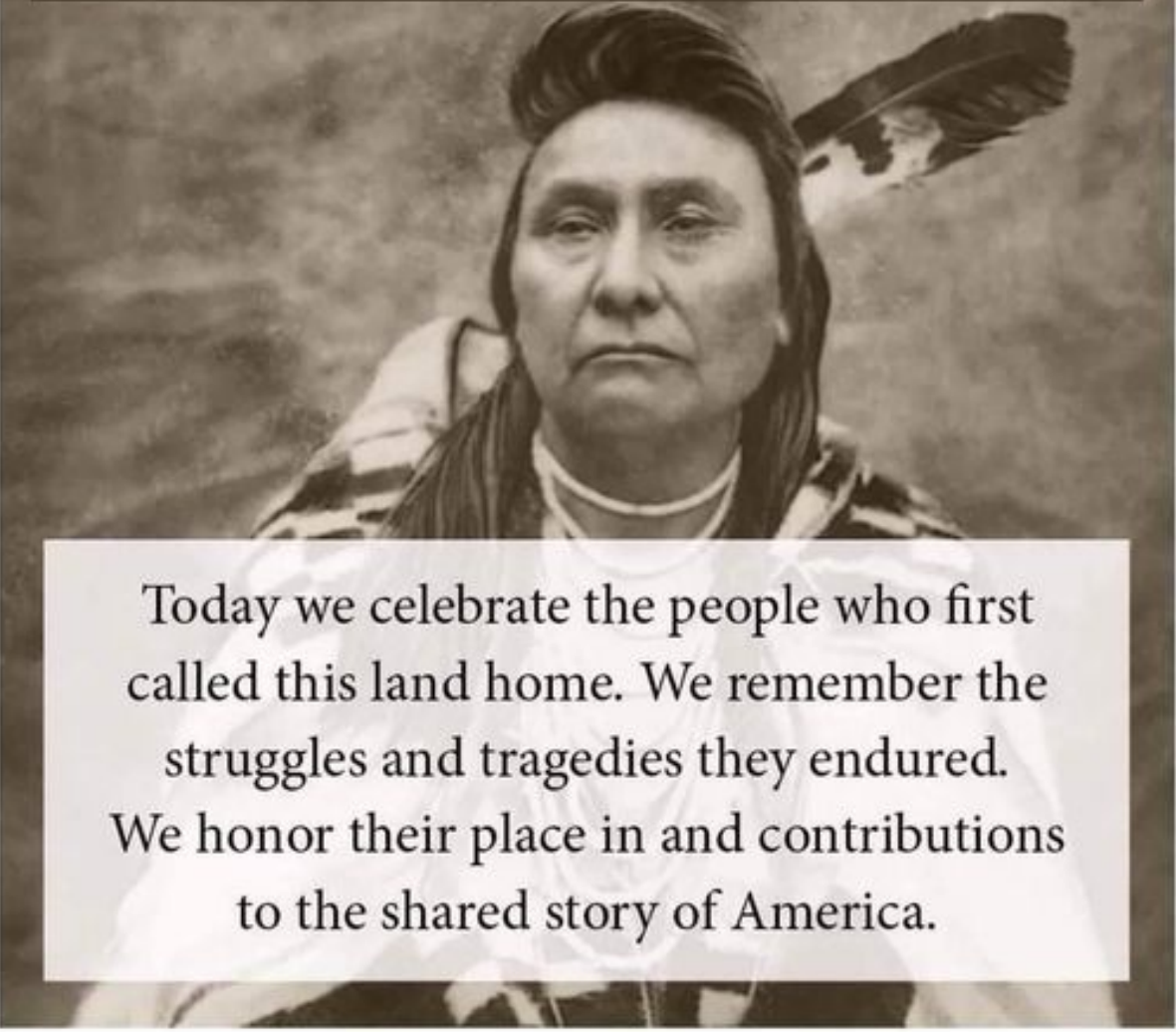


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# Indigenous Peoples Day

A sepia-toned portrait of a Native American woman, likely of the Crow or Blackfoot tribe, with a large feather in her hair. She is wearing a beaded necklace and a patterned garment. The portrait is the background for the text.

Today we celebrate the people who first called this land home. We remember the struggles and tragedies they endured. We honor their place in and contributions to the shared story of America.





[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

[O. Barlese 9/2011](#)

[Orville Barlese singing one of his favorite gospel songs.](#)



Took his last breath @ 8:20 pm yesterday

with family around. Arrangements forthcoming. We are thinking Wed. visitation @ his home and burial Thursday. We will be burning later today (per Dean). Always with guitar in hand. - Heidi