

# SEJ Journal

Summer 2008, Vol. 18 No. 2



## **In this issue:**

**The politics of polar bear numbers**

**Photographers “rave” about conservation**

**Prophetic journalists: The flood and climate**

**Top E-beat bloggers**

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# SEJournal

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Polar bear off the Svalbard island group of the Arctic Ocean north of Norway. James Richey, iStockphoto.

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# SEJ builds for more and better coverage of climate change story

By TIM WHEELER

No story dominates environmental news coverage these days like climate change. To be sure, there still are pressing environmental issues that have little or nothing to do with climate, such as human exposure to toxic chemicals. But climate affects so much of the natural and human world that it encompasses—or at least connects with—many of the traditional environmental stories reporters have covered for years, including fisheries, energy, endangered species and pollution, to name just a handful.

To help journalists sort through the complexities and controversies around climate change, SEJ has been engaged in a persistent campaign of continuing education over the past couple of years. We've organized regional workshops and annual conference sessions on various aspects of the issue, produced tipsheets and online listings of resources, and even highlighted outstanding reporting on the topic.

Our efforts to foster more and better coverage of climate change began last year, with an online reporting toolbox featuring contact information for leading climate scientists. Later in the year, we hosted workshops for journalists in Atlanta and in Oregon, capped by a one-day "summit" at Stanford University in the fall, where we drew 18 top editors and news managers from across the country to brief them on the latest science and brainstorm with them on how to enhance their coverage.

So far this year, SEJ has organized or cosponsored four different sessions on covering climate change.

In April, while the presidential race was still a three-way contest, environmental advisers to the candidates outlined their positions on energy and climate change policy at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The session, cosponsored by BNA, *Chemical & Engineering News*, the Environmental Law Institute and *National Geographic*, garnered press coverage, and even rated broadcast by C-SPAN.

Later that same month, SEJ joined with Harvard Medical School to present a workshop for journalists on the health, ecological and economic impacts of climate change. Among the scientific experts speaking was the president-elect of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The star-studded media panel hailed from ABC, NPR, *The New York Times*, "Living on Earth," and The Weather Channel. It also included the president of the Associated Press Managing Editors,



and Reuters.

All that name-dropping has a point – SEJ is working with North America's leading educational, scientific and journalistic organizations to foster more and better coverage of this critical issue. That's our mission, after all: to advance public understanding of environmental issues by improving the accuracy, quality and visibility of reporting on them.

(And for those "skeptics" who think the climate story is overblown at best, bear in mind that SEJ is not dictating what newspapers, broadcasters or bloggers say. We're handing journalists the tools and the information to do their own reporting. There's enough uncertainty and debate around local impacts and policy responses to satisfy the biggest controversy addict.)

SEJ is not the only resource for reporters covering environmental stories, but increasingly we're recognized as an indispensable one. Al Tompkins, who produces a widely read daily tipsheet for [www.poynter.org](http://www.poynter.org), often cites SEJ's work. And when he was looking for guest contributors to fill in this summer while he was on vacation, he turned, naturally enough, to SEJ.

Stay tuned. There's more to come. Meanwhile, much of the knowledge gleaned from those publications and events is still available online at [www.sej.org](http://www.sej.org), where we hope it will continue to inform and inspire journalists to keep digging into what's shaping up to be the story of the century.

*Tim Wheeler, SEJ board president, covers growth and development for The Baltimore Sun.*

the editor of the Wilmington, Del. *News Journal*.

In May, SEJ helped plan and recruit attendees for a weeklong seminar in Washington on the varied impacts and story lines tied up in the climate-change issue. The seminar, put on by the Knight Center for Specialized Journalism at the University of Maryland, was presented in collaboration with SEJ's frequent partner, the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University.

Finally, in June, the Society joined with the University of Toronto's Centre for Environment to host a public forum on the complexities of carbon taxes, cap and trade and other possible financial incentives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That session, cosponsored by the *Toronto Star*, featured panels of carbon-finance experts and top-flight journalists from the *Star*, CBC

# Magic Number

A sketchy "fact" about polar bears keeps going ... and going ... and going



Female polar bear jumps on broken ice near Svalbard Island.

By PETER DYKSTRA

When Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne announced the listing of the polar bear as a threatened species in May, the political trench warfare over global warming flared up anew.

Environmental groups professed surprise that a reluctant Bush Administration acted at all. Global warming deniers said the decision was ludicrous. They cited a polar bear population — a five-fold increase since the 1970s, a doubling since the 1950s, a quadrupling since the 1960s.

After wading through about thirty such references from readers of our CNN blog and hearing them from multiple radio and TV pundits, I got to thinking: Are *any* of these numbers true? And where do they come from? I embarked on a global quest, traveling by phone, email and Google, to find the truth.

My first stop was Bjorn Lomborg's 2007 book, "*Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming*." Lomborg, the Danish economist whose work provides a torrent of talking points for Conservative pundits, says there were "probably 5,000" polar bears in the 1960's.

The book's footnotes cryptically attribute the Number to "Krauss, 2006."

Lomborg confirmed for me that the "Krauss" in question is Clifford Krauss, a reporter for *The New York Times*, who wrote on May 27, 2006, about the conflict between polar bear protectors and trophy hunters: "Other experts see a healthier population. They note that there are more than 20,000 polar bears roaming the Arctic, compared to as few as 5,000 40 years ago." [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/27/world/americas/27bears.html?pagewanted=2&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/27/world/americas/27bears.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1)

Krauss, now a Houston-based correspondent for *The Times*, told me he couldn't recall the source of the 5,000 number, but said that he understood the number to be "widely accepted." Lomborg also emailed me a reference for another, different figure he said he'd discovered after the book's publication: A report from the Soviet Ministry of Agriculture's S.M. Uspensky, who surveyed nesting sites on a portion of Russian turf and extrapolated an

Arctic-wide population of 5,000 to 8,000 in 1965. [http://pbsg.npolar.no/docs/Proc01\\_1965.pdf](http://pbsg.npolar.no/docs/Proc01_1965.pdf)



*(Let us pause for a moment of irony: Critics of the polar bear decision, predominantly political Conservatives, are apparently placing their chips on a fact that traces its lineage back to two info sources that rarely make the conservative bibliography: The New York Times and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.)*

Here's a quick tour of a few other reports of polar bear prosperity:

In a May 20 *Los Angeles Times* opinion piece, Jonah Goldberg took a whack at what he sees as quasi-religious overtones to conservation. Part of his backup? "Never mind that polar bears are in fact thriving — their numbers have quadrupled in the last 50 years." <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-goldberg20-2008may20,0,315197.column?track=rss>

James Taylor of the Heartland Institute cited a London *Daily Telegraph* article that "confirmed the ongoing polar bear population explosion" in a Sept 11, 2007, blog. <http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=21966> and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/03/09/wpolar09.xml>

But the March 9, 2007, story that Taylor referenced actually makes no mention of global bear populations — quoting one scientist as observing strong growth in one local population, in Davis Strait; and another scientist reporting global warming-related declines in the local population in Hudson's Bay.

Taylor adds a new number into the mix from a March 26, 2008, posting at the Heartland site: "The global polar bear population has doubled since 1970, despite legal polar bear hunting." <http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=22994>

A May 12 *New York Post* op-ed piece by S.T. Karnick

*continued next page*

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*Magic Number*  
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introduces still another number – this time with a source:

“The world polar-bear population is at a modern high — and growing. Mitch Taylor, a polar-bear biologist with Canada’s Federal Provincial Polar Bear Technical Committee, notes that the bears now number about 24,000 — up about 40 percent from 1974, when fears arose about the bear’s ability to survive over hunting by Canadian Eskimos and aboriginals.” [http://www.ny-post.com/seven/05122008/postopinion/opedcolumnists/bear\\_baloney\\_110540.htm?page=0](http://www.ny-post.com/seven/05122008/postopinion/opedcolumnists/bear_baloney_110540.htm?page=0)

From James Delingpole, a *Times* of London blogger, similar numbers, but different dates. And no source. “In 1950, let us not forget, there were about 5,000 polar bears. Now there are 25,000.” [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest\\_contributors/article2852551.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article2852551.ece)

When we get to the retail level, the Arctic Urban Myth turns truly funky. We blogged about the polar bear ruling on CNN’s *SciTechBlog*, and about 30 of the 350 responses cited some variation of the number. Here are some examples:

“**Common Sense:** Who are we kidding. There were 5,000 bears in 1970 and now there are 26,000. Most populations are growing. This is obvious global warming politics.”

“**Jay Merr:** The global population of polar bears is 22,000, about double what it was just four decades ago. The environmentalists have taken control of the government and global warming is the scam of the century.”

“**Gary:** There are 5 times more polar bears now, than there was in 1960. Where is the problem?”

“**PJ:** Fact: the polar bear population is larger than in the 1970s up from 12,000 or less in 1960s to 25,000 today; might as well call white Americans ‘threatened’ their population is going down.”

“**PJ:** They don’t need protection at all, their population has increased more since the 1970s than the human population of any country on earth!”

But polar bear researchers say those old estimates were no better than guesses.



Polar bears near Svalbard Island.

Steven Amstrup, who led the USGS research on the current status of polar bears, emailed me from the field: “How many bears were around then, we don’t really know because the only studies of bears at that time were in their very early stages — people were just beginning to figure out how we might study animals scattered over the whole Arctic in difficult logistical situations. Some estimated that world population might have been as small as 5000 bears, but this was nothing more than a WAG. The scientific ability to estimate the sizes of polar bear populations has increased dramatically in recent years.”

(Editor’s note: “WAG” is scientific jargon for “Wild-Ass Guess.”)

Andrew Derocher of the University of Alberta added, “I have seen the figure of 5,000 in the 1960/70s but it is impossible to give it any scientific credibility. No estimation of any population was attempted until the early 1970s and even then, this was done very crudely for perhaps 10% of the global population and the estimates were highly questionable.”

Thor Larsen of Norway’s University of Life Sciences was actively involved in bear research back then. He recalls “Most data on numbers from the late 1960s and early 1970s were indeed anecdotal, simply because proper research was lacking. As far as I can remember, we did stick to a world-wide ‘guestimate’ of 20-25,000 bears in these years.”

Another veteran bear researcher, Ian Stirling, emailed me, “Any number given as an estimate of the total population at that time would simply have been a guess and, in all likelihood, 5,000 was almost certainly much too low.”

These and other scientists agree that polar bear populations have, in all likelihood, increased in the past several decades, but not five-fold, and for reasons that have nothing to do with global

warming. The Soviets, despite their horrendous environmental legacy on many issues, banned most polar bear hunting in 1956. Canada and the U.S. followed suit in the early 1970s — with limited exceptions for some native hunting, and permitted, high-priced trophy hunts. And a curtailment of some commercial seal hunting has sparked a seal population explosion — angering fishermen, but providing populations in eastern Canada and Greenland with plenty of polar bear chow, leading in turn to localized polar bear population growth in spite of the ice decline.

The scientists also caution that we *still* don’t have a firm count on these mobile, remote, supremely camouflaged beasts.

All this uncertainty over the numbers — past and present — even gave some conservative bloggers pause.

*Human Events* editor Terry Jeffrey acknowledged the absolute uncertainty of polar bear numbers in a May 21 blog. Even so, isn’t that reason to do nothing? he asked. “Before anybody tries to change the world to save polar bears ... somebody should figure out how many polar bears there are.” <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=26627#continueA>

I hope this thoroughly clears things up.

PETER DYKSTRA is executive producer for science, tech, weather at CNN.

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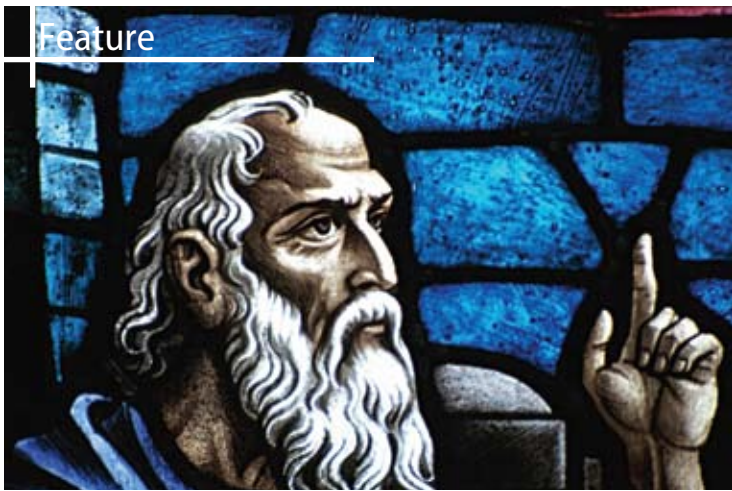
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# Journalists as prophets

## From the climate change story to the Great Flood

By MARK NEUZIL

*Editor's note: We are fortunate to be able to excerpt a small bit of The Environment and the Press, From Adventure Writing to Advocacy, by Mark Neuzil, that many SEJ members will find interesting, a history of environmental journalism and its roots. We have removed the footnotes from this section, taken from Chapter Two, "Journalism's Prophetic Voice."*

A modern-day environmental journalist, perhaps as much as any reporter, is called on to write stories about what might happen in the future. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the number of words filed on the subject of climate change. Scientists, the journalists' primary sources on these stories, are in agreement that global warming (an increase in the planet's mean atmospheric temperatures as a result of human activity) is of major concern.

Ross Gelbspan, a former special projects editor with *The Boston Globe*, has focused on the climate change story. His 1997 book, *The Heat Is On: The High Stakes Battle over Earth's Threatened Climate*, was read by President Clinton and attacked by the fossil fuel industry. The book's opening sentences seemed to conjure ancient images of disaster: the city of New Orleans, after going through the winters of 1990 to 1995 without a killing frost, was overrun by mosquitoes, cockroaches, and termites who were biting, infecting, and chewing their way through town. Other images that recalled biblical disasters, including floods, heat waves, heavy rain, snowstorms, and droughts, were all vividly described in the first few pages.

Although Gelbspan's book described modern climatic events and the political machinations surrounding the greenhouse gas issue, some of his reporting was predictive (and still heavily sourced). For example, he wrote about what could happen in coastal communities around the world should sea levels rise (twenty-six million refugees from Bangladesh, twelve million from the Egyptian delta, twenty million from India, and as many as seventy to one hundred million from China would be forced to evacuate). Many scientists quoted by the author relied on computer models to estimate what might take place. In his conclusions, Gelbspan departed from a more traditional standard of objective journalism by offering remedies to the problem ("a change in our energy technologies") and by criticizing foot-dragging politicians ("partial and inadequate measures"). "The pervasive denial of global warming that so frustrates the reporter in me could perhaps change with equal suddenness," he wrote. One reviewer, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, called Gelbspan "impatient." At least one conservative critic called him a false prophet. (Gelbspan anticipated such criticism in a forty-one page appendix.)

In his way, Gelbspan was following a path of prophesying that has its roots in ancient texts. The prophets for whom books are named in the Bible—Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, and the others—began appearing about eight hundred years before Christ; many of them used stories about nature to get their points across. Prophets often appeared during times of great social agitation, which probably helped them get more attention and get their ideas more widely dispersed. Prophets also wrote and spoke both in metaphoric and literal ways to help their audience understand the message. Isaiah is a good example. Although not much is known about him, Isaiah is considered to have been highly educated and from a prosperous if not high-status family, perhaps in Jerusalem. (Scholars debate how much of the book of Isaiah was written by the man himself—not all of it was, because although he prophesied for nearly sixty years, some of what is written in the later chapters describes political circumstances that happened 150 years after his death.) Like the other prophets, Isaiah suffered his share of criticism—the label of false prophet was often thrown at him.

Among the biblical prophets, Isaiah had much to say about the natural world. One of his most famous passages is from chapter 24, in which it is written:

*The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.*

Isaiah was a product of his time. It would be a mistake to think of him as a journalist, of course, but his words about pollution from 2,800 years ago seem remarkably modern. Many of the ancient writers loved the Earth and its creatures because God created them all, and one way writers would emphasize the consequences of sin was to speak in terms of the destruction of God's landscape. They could imagine little worse in the way of disaster and accountability. Most of what Isaiah wrote (and he and his followers wrote a lot; their book is one of the longest of the prophetic books of the Old Testament) covered the political turmoil of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. The foregoing text was taken from the chapters called "Apocalypse of Isaiah," so described because of the use of themes found in later apocalyptic writings. In verses like those in chapter 24, Isaiah was painting a picture of the destruction of the Earth, not unlike the warnings of modern works like *The Heat Is On* or *The Population Bomb*, which in 1968 predicted catastrophe for humanity because of starvation and overpopulation.

Like the job of a journalist (or an economist, or a stock trader,

or a meteorologist, or other occupations that traffic in the future), the business of being a prophet was a profession in ancient times. (People who asked for predictions sometimes paid for them.) Although prophecy is a special call by God, some prophets also had a sort of socialization—scholars note that they often used similar language, wore the same types of clothes, and congregated with each other, and many had a self-inflicted scar on the forehead. God was their primary source, and he was quoted through visions, dreams, and other appearances. "Biblical prophets occasionally made predictions about the future course of events, but they never did it to demonstrate how insightful or divinely inspired they were," wrote theologian Barry L. Bandstra. "Their predictions were basically extrapolations from the present state of affairs into the future, based on their knowledge of what God demanded." Prophets were the intermediaries between the human and the divine realms; prediction was part of their job description but not all of it ...

### *Prophets and the Flood Myth in New Orleans*

Few prophesied, dramatic, and near-apocalyptic events in the United States received as much attention as Hurricane Katrina (and three weeks later, Hurricane Rita). On Monday, August 29, 2005, the city of New Orleans and other areas along the Gulf Coast were smashed by a major hurricane that killed at least 1,300 people and left hundreds of others missing and presumed dead. On the Mississippi coast, the storm surge was twenty-eight feet. Lake Pontchartrain rose eleven feet in nine hours. In Pascagoula, Mississippi, winds reached 124 miles per hour. Within a day, 80 percent of New Orleans was under water. Mass media from all over the world focused their attention on the U.S. Gulf Coast and told gripping stories of tragedy, despair, and death. In the days that followed, attention fell on the local newspaper, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. Notably, the newspaper continued to publish, online, for two days even while its journalists were forced to evacuate their offices due to the rising waters. (The newspaper reported thirty million hits on its Web site per day for four days after the hurricane hit, and that was with its popular "Bourbon Street Webcam" inoperable.) After publishing online only, the paper set up shop in Baton Rouge and trucked papers around the region from a printing plant in Houma. It never missed a publication day. The newspaper won Pulitzer Prizes for public service and breaking news.

Amid the attention paid to Louisiana's largest newspaper was the prophetic work that reporters John McQuaid and Mark SchleiStein had done three years earlier, in 2002. In a five-part series of fifty thousand words entitled "Washing Away: How South Louisiana Is Growing More Vulnerable to a Catastrophic Hurricane," the journalists eerily predicted much of what would happen to the city if it was struck by a powerful storm. "Hurricanes are a common heritage for Louisiana residents, who until the past few decades had little choice in facing a hurricane but to ride it out and pray," they wrote. Some people paid attention to only parts of the story (a common result for a prophet), other people ignored the message altogether, and some probably prayed. (Their editor jokingly called their investigative work "disaster porn.") The series estimated that, should a storm of a Category 3 or higher magnitude hit, levees would fail, numerous deaths would occur, evacuation would be difficult, and that as a result of human actions, the effects of a storm would make the area more vulnerable, not less. "We knew it was going to happen. They knew it

was going to happen," SchleiStein said later.

McQuaid and SchleiStein are veteran journalists who shared a Pulitzer in 1997; they often work in the "moral order" investigative tradition as described by Glasser and Ettema. (Theologians also understand the work of the prophets as a form of moral discourse.)

Hurricane Katrina may have been "the most comprehensively predicted catastrophe in American history." In February 2005, *National Geographic News* reported that the ongoing loss of wetlands along Louisiana's Gulf Coast would make the region more vulnerable to hurricanes and flooding. The story included comments from scientists. "With the rapidly depleting wetlands, people that have lived in south Louisiana can tell that, over the last 30 years, large storms now come in faster, and the water rises faster, which gives less time to respond and less time to evacuate," said Denise Reed, a professor of geology and geophysics at the University of New Orleans. "In the next few years it's going to get worse." Reed was right—except that it got worse in the next few months. Other media, including *Scientific American*, National Public Radio's All Things Considered news show, *Civil Engineering* magazine, and the *New York Times*, also reported on the potential danger.

The *Times-Picayune's* analysis by McQuaid and SchleiStein suggested that St. Bernard Parish and eastern New Orleans, to name two areas, were much more at risk in a storm than the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had predicted. Among the accurate forecasts was this: "Evacuation is the most certain route to safety, but it may be a nightmare. And 100,000 without transportation will be left behind." And this: "Hundreds of thousands would be left homeless, and it would take months to dry out the area and begin to make it livable. But there wouldn't be much for residents to come home to. The local economy would be in ruins." In an unfortunate twist, SchleiStein lost his home to more than ten feet of water and, months later, herniated a disk in his back while moving garden bricks. For weeks, some of his journalism awards lay in his backyard amid the ruins, thrown out in hopes they might dry in the sun. One blog labeled SchleiStein a "Jewish environmental journalist as Jonah" and said "prophecy was not [his] intent," but it praised his accuracy.

In invoking Jonah, the blog writer took note of SchleiStein's reluctance to assume the mantle of preacher, rather than the outcome of his prophecy. The story of Jonah, who lived sometime in the fourth or fifth century B.C. (or earlier), is of someone called by God to preach repentance to the citizens of Nineveh. He refused and fled on a ship that was sailing as far away as he could get. A great storm hammered the craft, throwing the crew into panic. When the men found out Jonah was on board, running from his duty to his God, they—at his suggestion—threw the reluctant missionary overboard. God sent a giant fish to swallow him, and, after three days, the fish spat Jonah safely on shore, from where he sped to Nineveh and commenced preaching. Nineveh repented in the nick of time, God spared it, and Jonah's prophecy of doom did not come true. He became a prophet of God in spite of himself.

Understandably, the myth of Jonah and the big fish (often represented as a whale) has resonated through the ages. The seventeenth-century English author Izaak Walton, whom we will hear more from later, wove Jonah into *The Complete Angler*, his treatise on fish and fishing: "I might tell you that Almighty God is said to have spoken to a fish, but never to a beast; that he hath made a whale a ship, to carry and send his prophet, Jonah,

*continued on page 17*

# Move beyond natural science to include social, political research

By ROBERT J. BRULLE with MIRANDA SPENCER

One core tenet of environmental journalism is the inclusion and explanation of complex physical and natural scientific facts into coverage of environmental issues, and it is expected that reporters invest a considerable effort into understanding the science behind these topics. The journals *Science* and *Nature* are virtually required background reading, and physical and natural scientists typically serve as the sources for interviews.

But this scientific focus rarely includes the social sciences. Research on environmental issues from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, political science, communications, and psychology is seldom mentioned in environmental reporting, and when social or political questions are raised, sources tend to be natural scientists, regardless of whether they are qualified to speak on the topic at hand.

Natural science alone cannot explain environmental issues. Yet social science has been noticeably absent or extremely marginal in media coverage of global warming. The primary scientific spokespersons about this issue are physical scientists, principally climatologists. However, analyses of the social, institutional, and cultural processes involved in environmental issues lies in the social sciences, which are generally outside the expertise of natural scientists. These limitations are illustrated in lectures by luminaries in the global climate field, such as NASA's Jim Hansen, and Harvard's John Holdren. For the most part, both adhere tightly to the scientific literature up until the point where they turn to an analysis of the politics of global warming. Here they turn to simplistic assertions, with no engagement or reference to the relevant social science. Within the mass media, social science information on global warming is also lacking. In popular environmental blogs (*Grist*, *Dot Earth*), radio programs ("Living on Earth"), and magazines (*E*, *Sierra*), social scientific analysis of global warming is very marginal.

Environmental journalists can contribute to a greater public understanding of the processes that drive the creation of, and our responses to, environmental issues by incorporating social science perspectives into their reporting. Rather than seeing environmental degradation as a piecemeal set of problems, a social science approach examines how the normal functioning of social institutions, such as corporations, government, international agreements, and the environmental movement, create or influence environmental problems. Thus the social scientific research on environmental issues provides a wealth of important insights into the origins, impacts and responses to environmental change. If the public has some understanding of what social science says on a particular subject, they will be better informed and also in a better

position to judge the viability and soundness of different advocacy positions.

Of particular interest to reporters is the emerging field known as the "Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change." This research focuses on three interrelated social processes: 1) the social origins of environmental change, 2) the effects of environmental change on human living conditions and everyday practices, and 3) the social responses to changes in the natural environment.

Thus social scientific research can provide a broader context to environmental news that complements natural science analyses; in this way, reporters can show the connections between environmental problems and underlying social processes, thus integrating the social and natural sciences and providing a richer and deeper understanding of environmental issues.

How to develop a story using environmental social science:

Several key resources can help journalists bring social science perspectives to environmental stories. The following five sites are excellent points of entry into the field:

#### 1. Reports from the National Research Council:

The National Research Council has created the Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change to focus on the social science aspects of environmental issues. In recent years, the committee (composed of several leading U.S. environmental social scientists) has produced a number of excellent reports on topics such as environmental risk decision making, population and the environment, and public participation in environmental decision making. Information about this committee is available online at <http://www7.nationalacademies.org/hdgc/>.

#### 2. Annual Review of Environment and Resources:

This publication provides 15 to 20 review articles every year on a wide range of environmental topics. These essays summarize the existing refereed literature in a given topic area. Recent essays have covered corporate social responsibility, globalization and its impacts on the environment, and the role of environmental art in social change. The Annual Review provides excellent background information and identifies the leading scholars in the topic area. Abstracts can be viewed online at <http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/loi/energy?&cookieSet=1>

*... reporters can show the connections between environmental problems and underlying social processes ... providing a richer and deeper understanding of environmental issues.*

#### 3. Key Journals:

There are a number of specialized environmental social science journals. Using appropriate key words on Google Scholar will provide a good overview of environmental social science. Additionally, a compilation of academic journals that focus on environment and society is available online at [http://www.esf.edu/es/sonnenfeld/envsoc\\_journals.htm](http://www.esf.edu/es/sonnenfeld/envsoc_journals.htm). Some of the leading academic journals in this area include:

*Organization and Environment*

<http://www.coba.usf.edu/jermier/journal.htm>

*Environmental Politics*

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/0964-4016>

*Society and Natural Resources* <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713667234>

*Population and Environment*

<http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/demography/journal/11111>

*Environmental Communication*

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/17524032.asp>

*Rural Sociology*

<http://www.ruralsociology.org/pubs/RuralSociology/contents.html>

Additionally, general social science journals that focus on environmental social science include:

*American Sociological Review*

<http://www2.asanet.org/journals/asr/>

*Social Forces* <http://socialforces.unc.edu/>

*Mobilization* (research on the environmental movement) <http://www.mobilization.sdsu.edu/>

#### 4. Listservs:

Academics working in environmental sociology utilize several listserv to communicate research findings, upcoming conferences, or general announcements within their communities. The key listservs in environmental social science are:

Environmental Sociology Listserv:

Operated by the Environment and Technology Section of the American Sociological Association, this listserv focuses on academic discussions and events related to environmental sociology <http://listserv.brown.edu/archives/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=envisoc&A=1>

Environmental Communication Network Mailing List:

Operated by the Environmental Communication Network, this is an academic forum for scholars working in the area of environmental communications <http://www.esf.edu/ecn/ecnlist.htm>

Conservation Psychology Listserv:

This listserv connects scholars working in the area of environmental psychology. A link to join is provided at: <http://www.conservationpsychology.org/>

Environmental Anthropology Listserv: A scholarly listserv covering ecological and environmental anthropology <http://www.eanth.org/onlineresources2.php?resource=listserv.php>

#### 5. Professional Associations:

Most of the major social science associations have a section that focuses on environmental topics. As such, the annual meetings of these organizations include paper presentations/discussions on environmental social science topics. The professional societies include:

American Sociological Association: Section on Environment and Technology— <http://www.linfield.edu/soan/et/index.html>

American Psychological Association: Division 34 — Population and Environmental Psychology — [http://www.apa34.org/natural\\_index.php](http://www.apa34.org/natural_index.php)

American Political Science Association: Section in Science, Technology, and Environmental Politics <http://www.apsanet.org/~step/>

National Communication Association: Environmental Communication Division — <http://www.esf.edu/ecn/ecd.htm>

American Anthropological Association: Anthropology and the Environment Section — <http://www.eanth.org/>

There are also numerous multidisciplinary associations that focus on environmental social science. Some of the more prominent ones include:

Environmental Communication Network: <http://www.esf.edu/ecn/default.htm>

Society for Risk Analysis - <http://www.sra.org/>

North American Association for Environmental Education: <http://www.naaee.org/>



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*Miranda Spencer is an associate member of SEJ. She writes for E magazine and is the environmental media critic for the group blog WIMN's Voices. She is also editor of EGA Journal, the member magazine of the nonprofit Environmental Grantmakers Association.*

## Budget knives don't cut creativity, content in the blogging world

By BILL DAWSON

“Doing more with less.”

The phrase is now often lampooned as a preposterous cliché, but newspaper executives must have thought at first that it was an artful way to spin the bad news of escalating staff cuts.

Publisher **Joe Pepe** of *The Commercial Appeal*, for example, used the words when he announced in late 2005 that the Memphis newspaper would slash its workforce of 774 by 170 employees.

“All businesses, including newspapers, are going to have to do more with less or find more cost-effective ways of doing the work to stay competitive,” he was quoted by the *Associated Press* as saying.

By 2008, however, deploying the rhetoric of “more with less” has become a dicier tactic for industry leaders trying to put a hopeful face on the still-mounting toll of layoffs and buyouts.

Former *Baltimore Sun* reporter **David Simon** left no doubt that he was ridiculing the phrase this year when he had the editor of a fictionalized *Baltimore Sun* pompously utter it on *The Wire*, Simon’s gritty HBO drama about the intersecting lives of drug dealers, cops, politicians and journalists.

A similarly bitter note was evident in the *American Journalism Review*’s December/January 2008 edition in a piece titled “Doing Less with Less.” AJR editor **Rem Rieder** fumed that “the ‘do more with less’ silliness is bad enough when it comes from other industries. But it’s particularly appalling when it comes from people who are in the truth-telling business.”

Rieder suggested giving a “Pulitzer Prize for candor” to **Steven A. Smith**, editor of the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, for these blunt words: “A smaller staff means a lesser paper. Doing more with less is corporate-speak BS and you won’t hear it from me.”

Well, you won’t hear it from me, either.

But no one would argue that newspapers are doing a lot of new things with their smaller staffs – a growing number of reporters’ blogs are an especially prominent example – even if all the new functions and what’s left of the old ones don’t actually add up to “more.”

Under the heading, then, of “doing new things – plus old things – with less,” this installment of *The Beat* looks at some of the ways environmental reporters at newspapers of different sizes and missions are blogging.

*The New York Times* 

The nation’s leading newspaper got into the environment blog business last October, when reporter **Andrew C. Revkin** launched “Dot Earth” to supplement and complement his regular reporting.

Revkin’s blogging is focused largely on subjects related broadly to sustainability and climate change. “Dot Earth” is

“supported in part by a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship,” according to the “about” blurb that appears next to Revkin’s photo. Last year, *Blog Herald* reported that the Guggenheim grant would fund part of Revkin’s travel for the blog.

In a post introducing “Dot Earth,” Revkin wrote:

“The strength of science lies in the trajectory of understanding more than in any single finding, and the most durable ideas emerge from conversation, not monologue.

“So for me, a blog offers an ideal way to interact with the world, and with an audience — one that tracks and tests ideas over time and has the feel of a jam session more than a formal, static solo performance (forgive the comparison; I’m a musician in spare moments).”

A recent example of this “jam-session” approach was on display on May 14, when the U.S. Interior Department listed the polar bear as a “threatened” species.

Following a brief post reporting that development, Revkin posted Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne’s statement.

Interspersed throughout the text were Revkin’s explanatory comments. Added early the next morning were hyperlinks in the text, which led to

relevant comments that had been posted by readers. The comments appeared in their traditional place below the blog post itself.

*The Wall Street Journal* 

The nation’s leading business periodical – and as it is being restructured by new owner **Rupert Murdoch**, a direct competitor of the *Times* on more fronts than before – has its own environmental blog, “Environmental Capital,” which was launched in February 2007 to provide “daily analysis on the business of the environment.”

On the blog’s first day, there were 10 posts, most of them very brief (such as a one-sentence summary of a linked *Associated Press* story) and credited simply to “wsj.com staff.”

Now, the blog has a staff box, which identifies two *Journal* reporters as the two main contributors of “Environmental Capital.” One is **Keith Johnson** (the blog’s lead writer), who formerly reported from Europe on energy and other matters. The second is **Jeffrey Ball**, also the blog’s editor, “who has covered the auto and oil industries and now covers the business of the environment.” Other staffers at the *Journal*, *WSJ.com*, and *Dow Jones Newswire* also contribute.

Posts are now more entertainingly written than that early, terse summary of an AP report and also have grown longer (typically running 400 words or more) and decidedly more interpretive, analytical, and laden with multiple links.

A May 13 post, for instance, offered an overview of reporting and commentary on Sen. John McCain’s major speech on climate



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policy, including discussion of the *Journal* itself, other newspapers, standalone blogs, and *National Review*'s "Planet Gore" blog.

### International Herald Tribune

The Paris-based *International Herald Tribune*, now the "global edition of the *New York Times*," also features a business-oriented environmental blog on its website – "Business of Green: A Global Dialogue on the Environment."

Like the *Journal*'s blog, it also has two featured authors – **James Kanter**, whose assignment since 2005 for the *Herald Tribune* has involved coverage of "European and global business issues," and **Elizabeth Rosenthal**, who has been the newspaper's health, science and environment correspondent for the last three years.

Kanter has written most of the blog's posts in recent months – sometimes keyed to an article in the newspaper, such as one on June 2 by Rosenthal about desertification in Spain – and sometimes to a subject discussed in his own "Business of Green" column.

An example of the latter sort of synergy was his joint blog-column focus on May 27 on a biofuel project in Goteborg, Sweden, where biogas for vehicles is being produced from the decomposition of sludge from the municipal sewer system.

### The Boston Globe

The *Globe*'s entry in the enviro-blog arena, "The Green Blog," was launched in February with the proclaimed purpose of "helping Boston live a greener, more environmentally friendly life."

The blog's lengthy and diverse list of contributors attests to what might be called a wide-angle approach.

The roster of regular contributors on the right side of web page boasts seven *Globe* staff members. Besides **Beth Daley**, the *Globe*'s environmental news reporter, they are the *Globe*'s deputy business editor and health/science editor, plus the editor, site architect, lifestyle pages producer, and features editor of *Boston.com*, the newspaper's website.

Other contributors post on the blog, as well.

One February post – a nearly 900-word account of a speech by Lester Brown, founder of the Worldwatch and Earth Policy Institutes – was written by Michael Prager, whose own independent blog says he left the *Globe* in 2007 after 14 years when he took a buyout.

On May 27, a piece that did double duty as a news article for the *Globe* was posted on "The Green Blog." It was "A green tech bubble?" by staff reporter **Carolyn Y. Johnson**, which addressed the question of whether "amid concerns the planet is warming, the market for clean, green technology is beginning to show signs of overheating, too."

### Louisville Courier-Journal

In the brief history of newspapers on the Web, the *Courier-Journal*'s **James Bruggers** ranks as one of the forefathers of environment-beat blogging by reporters. In contrast to the more recent blogs mentioned above, Bruggers started his "Watchdog Earth" in mid-2006 with a helpful list of some of his favorite environmental links for readers.

Appropriately – for a blog with "watchdog" in the name and written by an SEJ board member – the list included this item:

"Government agencies are keeping more stuff secret. No surprise there. Get the latest examples from the Society of Environmental Journalists' *Watchdog TipSheet* on First Amendment and access issues and use them as conversation starters at your next party."

A mission statement on "Watchdog Earth" says Bruggers posts "news items and observations from inside the environment beat locally, regionally and globally. He calls your attention to new studies, reports and events. And he goes behind the headlines to answer questions and explain some of his own coverage in the newspaper."

The blog is wide-ranging, to put it mildly, though with an expected local and regional focus. For example, one post in May featured a photo from the Phoenix Mars Lander, with a link to more shots from the red planet. It was sandwiched between one post about polluted Kentucky waters and another about the new secretary of the state's reorganized environmental/energy cabinet.

Exemplifying the newspaper blogs' potential to enlist readers' assistance for reporting endeavors, another "Watchdog Earth" post in May asked for their "experiences, stories and photos" to help with an examination of water quality in a local creek.

### Texas

Fairly or unfairly, the Lone Star State may not enjoy the most environmentally conscious reputation compared to some other parts of the country. But it is no stranger to environmental concerns or the launching of newspaper environmental blogs.

The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*'s **Scott Streater** started writing his "Planet DFW" in January, offering "a look at the environmental issues that affect the Fort Worth region and what you can do to help." The Fort Worth region, of course, includes Dallas (the "D" in "DFW") and a lot of sprawling suburbia that isn't, strictly speaking, either Fort Worth or Dallas.

As Streater approaches the blogger's task, the definition of environmental issues affecting his metro region is a broad one, as illustrated by a regular blog feature, "Daily Roundup," which is billed as "a sampling of the best environmental journalism published today."

Typically running in the 800-word range, these posts include numerous citations of news stories from outside Texas. On May 19, for example, the 11 article summaries included a *Wall Street Journal* article about the Texas oil and gas industry, a *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* piece on the prospects of the coal industry, a *Washington Post* story on childhood obesity, and an *Associated Press* report on Al Gore's commencement speech at Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania.

Speaking of Gore, the *Austin American-Statesman*'s "Salsa Verde" blog by environmental reporter **Asher Price** may well be the nation's only newspaper blog about the environment or any other subject to include a standing "Al Gore" category on its tags list. The former vice president's name is right between "air emissions" (an item at home on just about any environmental blog) and "Barton Springs" (Austin's beloved, spring-fed swimming hole near downtown).

Price launched the "Salsa Verde" blog in April 2007, offering "commentary on green goings-on from deep in the heart of Texas."

The blog does indeed include commentary, often delivered with a typically bloggish dose of humor. One recent post was headlined "With gas at \$4 a gallon, walking to work looks like a bargain," and offered what Price drolly dubbed the "tragicomic

relief" of a press conference transcript from earlier in the year in which President Bush seemed surprised that the \$4 price was then being forecast.

Along with such posts, however, Price also provides often-brief news items, such as a three-paragraph post identifying candidates for the open job of executive director at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

About 180 miles east of Austin, the *Houston Chronicle* styles itself as one of America's most blog-friendly newspapers, with a website listing 20 staff blogs, some of which have more than one regular contributor. The *Chronicle*'s "Houston Politics" blog, for example, has five reporters writing posts.

Despite the newspaper's avid embrace of the blog phenomenon, an environment beat blog has not been introduced. (Disclosure: I was the *Chronicle*'s environment reporter in the long-ago pre-blog days of the early 2000s.)

*Chronicle* science writer **Eric Berger** writes about climate change as a regular topic on his "SciGuy" blog, however. And in May, Berger introduced a spin-off blog about climate science on the *Chronicle*'s website, called "Atmo.Sphere." Two university professors are the regular bloggers.

### Northwest

Newspapers in the legendarily eco-conscious Northwest likewise take a variety of approaches to blogging the environment.

The *Oregonian*'s only staff-produced blog on environmental matters, "PDXgreen," is tied to a weekly print-edition column. The column is displayed on the blog site along with often-shorter items that columnist-blogger **Shelby Wood** posts at other times during the week.

Wood's blog was introduced last September as an "intensely local clearinghouse for green news, views, tips and ideas that matter to Portlanders and Oregonians."

Links to the "PDXgreen" page are found on two other pages on *The Oregonian*'s website, *OregonLive.com*, hinting at the blog's blending of feature-writing and hard-news elements. One link is just beneath the logo of *The Oregonian*'s new web page that collects articles by its sizable environmental and sustainability team of reporters. Another link is on a separate list of all *Oregonian* blogs, where "PDXgreen" is grouped with blogs on lighter topics including fashion and pets.

"PDXgreen" has an obvious "green living" orientation, but Wood often incorporates a detailed, hard-news element in her handling of such subjects.

A recent column/post, for example, was a multifaceted examination of increasing commercial claims about products' biodegradability, including close attention to regulatory questions and municipal policy.

Reporter **Rocky Barker**'s "Letters from the West" blog for the *Idaho Statesman* is often focused on the science and law of the environment, but some posts are just plain politics.

This variety of content is telegraphed in a descriptive blurb that says Barker writes on the blog about "issues that define the American West including the environment and natural resources."

For instance, Barker recently followed a post titled "Fish and Game Commission sets the table for wolf delisting hearing" with one headlined "Paul's success in Idaho could show McCain's depth of support in the West."

He launched the text-heavy "Letters from the West" last October and (lately, at least) has been posting a fairly lengthy item practically every weekday.

The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*'s environmental blog, "Dateline Earth," has an even earlier provenance than Bruggers' "Watchdog Earth," with the oldest post in its archives dated Nov. 22, 2005. The *P-I*'s blog is produced by environmental reporters **Lisa Stiffler** and **Robert McClure** (McClure is an SEJ board member, like Bruggers).

The blog's self-description says it offers "enviro tidbits from around the region and across the globe – stuff you might have missed, cool environmental happenings locally and speedy updates for ongoing issues."

The two reporters make a prolific blogging team, sometimes posting two or three items per day.

"We really wanted to be able to write about the stuff that was falling through the cracks, whether it was something quirky and local or something national or international that was beyond the scope of what the *P-I*'s usual coverage includes," Stiffler said in an interview published in the *Environment Writer* newsletter in April 2006.

The blog's three posts on May 14 illustrate its kaleidoscopic approach.

Updating four previous posts about six sea lions that died near the Bonneville Dam, one item reported an announcement that they had succumbed to heat exhaustion, not gunshot wounds as previously reported.

The day's second item gave credit to the rival *Seattle Times* for a series on Puget Sound, saying it "broke some new ground on the disappearance of wetlands in the Puget Sound basin, a topic we've been meaning to get to," but also noting that the *Times* discussed "topics we've covered before numerous times and will certainly again."

The third and lengthiest post of the day dealt with the Interior Department's polar bear ruling.

### Sacramento

Newspaper blogs seem to be here to stay, but the Seattle blog's longevity offers no assurance that one will survive.

Stuart Leavenworth, an associate editor of the *Sacramento Bee*'s editorial pages, started writing a blog called "The Hot House" in 2007 to track implementation of California's landmark laws regulating greenhouse gases.

The blog's final post – "Hot House RIP" – was dated April 30, 2008.

Leavenworth wrote that "after a short year of blogging and 141 entries" it was apparent that "I just don't have the time to regularly feed this blog and handle other responsibilities, like writing one or two editorials each day.

"As a friend once told me: 'Starting a blog is like buying a puppy. You have to feed it at least twice a day, and the more you feed it, the bigger and hungrier it gets.'

"I should have listened."

*Bill Dawson is assistant editor of the SEJournal and (more disclosure) is not only a former Chronicle environment writer but also a former staff writer at The Commercial Appeal in Memphis.*

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# SEJ 2008 Annual Conference

*Phenomenal, memorable, practical, not to be missed*

By BILL KOVARIK AND KEN WARD JR.

The 18th annual SEJ conference in Roanoke, Va., Oct. 15-19, hosted by Virginia Tech, is shaping up to be one of the most memorable and practical yet.

- Memorable, because of the extraordinary speakers, the beautiful location, and the easy access to fun networking events.
- Practical, for you as a journalist, because of the wide variety of craft sessions in fully equipped computer labs focused on helping you survive and thrive in a changing news business.

Here are some of the details:

**Speakers and sessions:** We've lined up some extraordinary speakers including Alexandra and Philippe Cousteau, Wendell Berry, Bob Edwards, Jeff Goodell, Amory Lovins and Robert Bullard, among others. With 20 tours and more than 50 panel sessions over five days, the conference will provide a snapshot of the state of the art and the current issues confronting the profession. Among the panel sessions you will find incisive discussions on coal, climate, polar science, toxic chemicals, biofuels and environmental justice.

**Location, location, location:** The restored Tudor-style Hotel Roanoke is a treasure and much in demand at the height of the fall leaf season in the Blue Ridge. Also, downtown Roanoke is compact, and all beat dinners and other events are within easy walking distance.

**The Tours:** Thursday tours range from mountaintop removal site visits to hikes along the Appalachian Trail to ecotourism on the Blue Ridge Parkway to, count 'em, two separate kayak/canoe trips down renowned rivers.

**Craft sessions:** With two fully equipped computer labs next door to the conference center, the practical value of this year's conference is, in itself, a huge attraction. "These days, digital media offer the greatest opportunities for journalists— but those opportunities can be scary if you don't know where to start," said Poynter Institute weblog editor Amy Gahrn, who is coordinating the SEJ conference training. "We will focus on basic skills and tools that anyone can learn, even with limited time and budget."

The computer-training lineup includes:

- Using databases.
- Turning data into stories.
- Expanding career options during a Network Lunch breakout discussion group, so bring your questions!
- Basic audio production and editing.
- Basic video production and editing.
- Maps, geodata, and your stories.
- Smart blogging and useful social media.

Space in the computer labs is limited. Watch for announcements about advance sign-ups.

Saturday afternoon mini-tours will include some of the

region's finest research developments in environmental science. We'll have a chance to visit Virginia Tech's black bear research center, use GPS technology, learn about aquaculture, megalandfills, green buildings, agriculture research, creek restoration, prescribed forest burns, and nanotechnology in environmental science.

Saturday night you'll need a break, and we have a never-to-be-forgotten party located in the middle of a train yard. The reception and dance at the Virginia Museum of Transportation is hosted by the *Roanoke Times*, the *Roanoker* magazine, *Blue Ridge Business Journal* and other publishing groups in the region.

On Sunday, the "Bestsellers Breakfast" will be headlined by a conversation between Wendell Berry and Ann Pancake. Berry is a world-renowned author of many books of fiction and non-fiction, including the 1978 *Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*. Berry is often called the "conscience of Appalachia." Pancake wrote the 2007 book *Strange as this Weather Has Been* and has been called "Appalachia's Steinbeck" by *Kirkus Reviews*. Also, SEJ's many book authors will be gratified to hear that we will have a special ongoing venue for signings and readings during the conference.

**Pre-conference boot camp:** Michigan State University's Knight Center for Environmental Journalism will train those new to the beat or needing to bolster their reporting toolbox. The boot camp starts Sunday Oct 12 and continues through Wednesday Oct 15.

**Pre-conference workshop, Wednesday, Oct. 15:** Covering Climate Change and Our Energy Future in Rural America will explore the past, present and future of coal in Appalachia and the southeastern United States. This penetrating, day-long analysis will kick off SEJ's annual conference at Virginia Tech.

**Post-Conference Tour:** From the Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay, Sunday, Oct 19 through Wednesday, Oct. 22: The Chesapeake Bay, North America's largest and historically most productive estuary, is facing enormous challenges. This tour will introduce you to the people and places involved in the continuing struggle to save the bay 25 years after it became a poster child for regional ecosystem restoration. We'll take you from the headwaters of the James River to Tangier Island and on to the marshlands and oyster farms that are struggling to survive the onslaught of development.

Come build some memories, have some fun, and take advantage of the outstanding training and networking opportunities in Roanoke, Va. on Oct. 15 – 19, with the Society of Environmental Journalists.

*Bill Kovarik and Ken Ward Jr. are conference co-chairs.*

## \$75,000 Grantham Prize to *The New York Times'* "Choking on Growth" Series

A team of reporters at *The New York Times* has won the Grantham Prize for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment.

David Barboza, Keith Bradsher, Howard French, Joseph Kahn, Chang W. Lee, Jimmy Wang, and Jim Yardley will receive the \$75,000 prize for "Choking on Growth," their 10-part series about the environmental degradation that has accompanied China's unprecedented development.

Grantham Prize Jurors noted, "*The Times'* series is environmental journalism of the highest order, shaped for the 21st century. The stories, photographs and graphics on the printed page are outstanding. Even more impressive is the online presentation, which includes compelling videos, reader-interactive forums, question-and-answer sessions with scientific and political experts and — perhaps most important — versions of the original stories translated into Mandarin, for the consumption of readers within China".

The series describes pollution so severe that it is causing the premature deaths of nearly a million Chinese citizens yearly. The team reported that China is destroying its own landscape and waterways, killing off species and fouling the air and water of much of the rest of the planet.

Reaction to this series was striking because it flowed not only from the U.S. but also from China, which has long ignored the foreign press. Soon after the articles were published, the Chinese government responded with reforms, taking steps to discourage exports by polluting industries. Beijing pledged to expand the country's nature reserves and adopted measures to tighten regulation of seafood production.

Jurors also selected three Award of Special Merit recipients, each receiving a \$5,000 award:

- David Malakoff and Alison Richards, editors of the National Public Radio News series, "Climate Connections: How people change climate, how climate changes people." Jurors noted that the series provided a vital public service through its explanations of climate science, policy, and the wide-ranging nature of the coverage.

*Journalists as Prophets continued from page 9*

safe on the appointed shore." Herman Melville and George Orwell made use of the story, as did Aldous Huxley and many other producers of cultural messages, including American minstrel singers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Grandpa Jones and Mike Seeger. Clarence Darrow mockingly used his opponent's literal reading of the story of Jonah in his questioning of William Jennings Bryan at the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925.

It may be more accurate to compare McQuaid and Schleifstein to the Greek mythological figure of Cassandra. The daughter of the king and queen of Troy, Cassandra was granted the ability to see into the future after she caught the eye of Apollo. She did not return Apollo's love, so Apollo placed a curse on her that resulted in no one believing her predictions. Schleifstein said he had heard such comparisons; he said he'd also been called Nostradamus. A sixteenth-century French prophet who has resonated in popular culture as supposedly predicting the rise of Hitler, 9/11, the French Revolution, and the atomic bomb, Nostradamus in fact did not mention any of those disasters in his

• Dinah Voyles Pulver of the Daytona Beach *News-Journal* for her richly detailed 7-part series, "Natural Treasures - Are We Losing Our Way?" Jurors noted that this series represented a significant commitment for a daily newspaper of moderate size, especially in these difficult times for print journalism.

• Ed Struzik, for his series, "The Big Thaw - Arctic in Peril," which ran in two of Canada's major newspapers, the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Toronto Star*. Grantham Prize jurors were impressed by the way Struzik blended scientific information and highly readable personal journalism. The series was on the *Toronto Star's* "best-read" stories list for 2007, extraordinary for a series, issues-based series like this one.

The Grantham Prize and the three Awards of Special Merit will be presented at a September 8, 2008, ceremony and seminar to be held at the recently relocated Newseum in Washington, D.C.

The Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting, based at the University of Rhode Island, and the Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment created the Grantham Prize in 2005. The prize honors the work of one journalist or team of journalists for exemplary reporting on the environment. The annual prize is open to journalists, writers and producers in the U.S. and Canada and recognizes nonfiction work published or broadcast in the previous calendar year.

The Grantham Prize is funded by Jeremy and Hannelore Grantham through The Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment. The foundation supports natural resource conservation programs in the U.S. and internationally.

Metcalf Institute was established at the URI Graduate School of Oceanography in 1997 with funding from three media foundations, the Belo Corporation, the Providence Journal Charitable Foundation and the Philip L. Graham Fund, and the Telaka Foundation. Named for the late Michael P. Metcalf, a visionary in journalism and publisher of *The Providence Journal Bulletin*, the Metcalf Institute provides science training for journalists to improve the accuracy and clarity of reporting on the environment.

vague and handily dateless writings. (And on several occasions he denied claiming to be a prophet.)

The prophetic impulse and the myth of the flood came together in the coverage of a major environmental disaster along the Gulf Coast of North America in 2005. There is a well-known phrase about a "prophet being without honor in his own land" that would sometimes apply to reporters. Journalists do not think of themselves as prophets, nor do they think of themselves as telling and retelling ancient myths. "Yet like myth tellers of every age, journalists draw from archetypal stories to make sense of events," (journalism scholar Jack) Lule wrote. "They draw from sacred, societal stories that celebrate shared values, counsel with lessons and themes, instruct and inform with exemplary models." Some of these stories were told by prophets.

*Mark Neuzil teaches journalism at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., and is a former SEJ board member. His new book, The Environment and the Press. From Adventure Writing to Advocacy, will be published July 16 by Northwestern University Press.*



PHOTO COURTESY THE GLOBE STAFF/DINA RUDICK

Senior research scientist William Balch of the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in West Boothbay Harbor, Maine, measures the temperature in the Gulf of Maine from The Cat high speed ferry.

# A fresh perspective on climate change: The impacts at home

An interview with Beth Daley of The Boston Globe



PHOTO COURTESY THE GLOBE STAFF/DINA RUDICK

Entomologist Brenton Teillon studies a branch infected with the woolly adelgid at Purgatory Chasm in Sutton.

By BILL DAWSON

Beth Daley began her journalistic career 19 years ago at the *Newburyport Daily News* in northern Massachusetts. In 1994, she joined *The Boston Globe*, where she has covered breaking news and features and was the education reporter before moving to the environment beat in 2001.

Over the years, Daley has won numerous fellowships and awards. Earlier this year, she was named as a Pulitzer Prize finalist in the Explanatory Reporting category for her occasional series about the regional effects of climate change, “The 45th Parallel: Warming Where We Live.”

The Pulitzer judges praised Daley for her “evocative exploration of how global warming affects New Englanders, from ice fishermen to blueberry farmers.”

She answered questions from *SEJournal* about the climate project and her regular work as the *The Globe’s* environment reporter.

**Q: Please tell me first a little about how *The Globe* organizes environmental coverage. What is your particular assignment and how does it mesh with the paper’s other coverage of the environment? Were you the main staff member responsible for climate change coverage before your series?**

**A:** At *The Globe*, there is one designated environmental reporter – me – but other reporters regularly cover the environment. Our Washington bureau tends to cover broad environmental policy and legislation while our weekly sections tend to cover very local issues. I try to focus on enterprise stories – mostly regional issues or trends that could also be important nationally. I’ve been the primary reporter covering climate change since 2001, although I didn’t really get started until late 2002 because I was covering 9/11-related stories.

**Q: The series was a wide-ranging regional examination of different aspects of climate change across New England – science, economics, public policy. Why did you decide to undertake this project? Was it easy to persuade your editors to let you have so much time? Was the series a direct outgrowth of earlier climate coverage, which suggested a need for *The Globe* to produce a more in-depth treatment of the subject?**

**A:** I undertook the project because covering climate change the way I was doing wasn’t working. Too often I was writing dire report stories that all started with the same sentence: “Yesterday, scientists announced...” and then some observation that Arctic sea ice was diminishing, glaciers were melting or species were disappearing. I would also write about computer climate modeling or worldwide temperature data trends.

But after a while, most of these stories seemed removed to me – about places far away with few real people in them. My editors thought so too.

The stories began falling off the front page. There are only so many similar-sounding reports that readers can stomach before getting bored. So I began thinking about different ways to enter the climate change story that would grab *The Boston Globe* readers and keep them reading. I actually drew a circle, put global warming in the middle, and began thinking about what would change as the world warms – local economies, behavior, genetics, etc.

At the same time, it was clear something funky was going on with New England’s weather. I noticed flowers blooming earlier. Readers wrote me to say it didn’t seem to get as cold. Snow was less predictable. I found a scientist at the University of New Hampshire who had pulled federal data and concluded that New England winters had warmed about four degrees Fahrenheit in the last 30

PHOTO COURTESY DINA RUDICK & THE BOSTON GLOBE



Beth Daley of the Boston Globe

years. All these facts seemed the making of a powerful story.

But how could I be sure it was manmade climate change? Five years ago, scientists would tell me there was no way to say local impacts were being caused by the worldwide phenomenon. But more recently, researchers shifted their tone: Many told me it was increasingly clear some of the impacts were from the global rise in temperatures. Thirty years of solid temperature data — always in an upward trend, better computer modeling and consistent changes over the entire region gave them confidence to say that. That’s when I knew I had a story.

I spent six months thinking about the series before I presented the idea to my editor. He was intrigued and gave me more than a month to report the first piece. The first story, which meshed people’s anecdotes about the changing climate with science, was received well by *The Globe* and I was given the time to pursue subsequent stories. *The Globe’s* been very good about giving time for reporters to pursue longer, more time-intensive stories – even as our staff shrinks.

**Q: Was the series explicitly planned to coincide with the release during 2007 of the major update reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change? Did the content of the IPCC reports prompt any change in plans for the series?**

**A:** The series wasn’t planned to coincide with the IPCC reports but their findings helped guide some of the coverage. One report that dealt with adaptation – that we had to start planning for the inevitable changes from global warming – helped me form one story about what Boston and the rest of the country was doing to prepare for higher sea levels, etc.

Another IPCC report gave me the idea to do a story about the difficulty in changing individuals’ behavior to reduce emissions. Reducing an individual’s emissions requires dozens of behavioral changes – driving fewer miles, using less energy. It’s pretty hard to do.

**Q: In the first story of the series, published in January 2007, you refer to a reporting venture in fall and winter that involved traveling 1,000 miles and interviewing 150 New Englanders, including farmers, ice fishermen, ski resort owners, maple syrup producers. Was there a lot of additional reporting during 2007 – after that launch of the series in January – as the different stories were being written and published? If so, did it alter the original series plan substantially?**

**A:** I only had about three really solid ideas going into the series I knew I would do. The first story I reported in November and a bit in December, in between daily reporting and writing. Virtually all the reporting for subsequent stories was done in 2007. I wanted each story to focus on an impact being felt today – not in the future. I also wanted each story to feel surprising or give readers information they hadn’t heard before.

**Q: Were you largely or completely relieved of your regular duties while you were working on the series? If not, was it hard to juggle the routine demands of the job with the work on the project?**

**A:** I was incredibly lucky. I’d say I spent about 80 percent of my time on the series, with the time increasing as my editors saw the value of it. I’m a daily reporter at heart, however, so it was pretty challenging to sit and think hard about how to find, execute and deliver a story – sometimes for weeks. When I was very frustrated, I would put down the series, do some dailies until a solution came to me. That said, there were tradeoffs.

Because I wasn’t replaced we inevitably missed some environmental stories in New England.

**Q: Was there one particular story that elicited a notably bigger or more spirited response from readers than others? If so, why do you think that one struck a nerve?**

# Metaphors, milkshakes and drainage:

## A jargon-busting technique

By DAVID POULSON

Daniel Day-Lewis may owe his 2008 Best Actor Oscar to environmental reporting.

In “There Will Be Blood,” Day-Lewis plays Daniel Plainview, an oilman who describes a straw and a milkshake to explain to the Rev. Eli Sunday the intricacies of natural resource extraction.

Plainview’s maniacal description of oil drainage is an oft-quoted scene – right down to the slurping sound that follows the oilman screaming, “I drink your milkshake!”

If you haven’t seen the movie, go to <http://YouTube.com> and search for ‘milkshake scene.’ You’ll be treated to a technique that’s good not only for browbeating religious hypocrites. Metaphors, similes and analogies are great for explaining difficult environmental concepts. The best simplify and entertain. They are short.

And good journalists use them.

After interviewing a pollution expert, SEJ member Roger Witherspoon decided insect control was the way to explain a plan to render contaminated soil less harmful before the pollution reached groundwater.

“I came back with the notion of the way exterminators treat termites to explain the principles used to block hydrazine from migrating through soil and entering the water table,” Witherspoon said. “Exterminators put poison into the ground so termites never reach the house.”

Science isn’t the only subject ripe for such comparative techniques. Complex legislation, regulation and public policy are often tedious subjects appropriate for such treatment. I once described utility deregulation by comparing power plants to donut shops.

Comparative, visual writing works best when not overdone. Here’s a nice, simple, descriptive line from a story by *Muskegon* (Michigan) *Chronicle* environment reporter Jeff Alexander: “Numerous studies have found that exotic species imported by ocean ships have unleashed a biological hurricane beneath the sparkling waters of the Great Lakes.”

“Biological hurricane” describes a below-water turmoil that nicely contrasts with the deceptively “sparkling” water above.

Of course, accuracy comes before technique. Check out this Frazz cartoon below:



FRAZZ: © JEF MALLET/DIST. BY UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE, INC.

global warming was the cause. We all have. But it turns out that isn’t what we should be worried about: It’s the lowest temperatures. Really cold temperatures act as gatekeepers to pests and animals we don’t want. But it is these temperatures that in many places are warming up the quickest, allowing more and more creatures to survive the winter and take up residence.

**Q: Do you have any recommendations for reporters elsewhere about covering the regional aspects of this global issue?**

**A:** I learned three tools of the trade on the series for which I’m really grateful. One is that stories are very effective if you can merge anecdotes with science. For example, I know the Maine mud season (read that spring) is lengthening – records are kept of it. Sounds interesting but it was loggers who felt the impact: They were losing money because they were no longer able to bring machinery over frozen ground to get into low-lying areas to cut in the winter.

Second, I learned not to be afraid of writing a story about the process of science as opposed to some absolute finding. Many times I was stymied by a story because I couldn’t say unequivocally it was global warming. The way I solved it was writing about how scientists were studying it.

Lastly, think about entering the subject through different portals – feature an anthropologist studying how previous cultures dealt with dramatic environmental change. Writing about the drama involved in getting ice cores in unforgiving places or businesses upset at the uncertainty of future regulation can give readers a fresh perspective.

**Q: How and where are you continuing to pursue the climate issue in your reporting this year? Is blogging an increasingly demanding part of your job – on climate or otherwise?**

**A:** Climate change is about 50 percent of my job this year. I’d like it to be more, but in the year I was writing the series, I didn’t do a lot of other important stories I’m now pursuing. The *Globe* started a green blog about six months ago where several reporters, including me, contribute.

I’m doing a short piece every day, which on average takes about 1-2 hours. I’m still sorting out its value. As reporting staffs shrink in these financial times, I’m not sure if blogging short items is worth the hours that could be spent working on enterprise stories of greater public value. It’s fun learning how to post and do video though. I have some killer video of mating horseshoe crabs.

*Bill Dawson is assistant editor of the SEJournal.*

**A:** Yes – and it’s one I still can’t believe I actually stumbled upon. I discovered a coal-fired power plant being dismantled in Massachusetts and being shipped, girder by girder, to Guatemala to power a textile mill. It was a great illustration of how to get rid of a carbon-dioxide-belching technology here, only to give it to another country where the problem will persist for years to come. I received scores of emails from people saying they had never thought about something like that before, which to me feels like I did my job.

**Q: Did one of the series stories prove to be the most challenging for you to report and write?**

**A:** In the middle of a really rough Guatemalan city, the plant’s owners decided they didn’t want me to do the coal power plant story because they feared it would make them look like they were taking what the U.S. didn’t want. The person that picked the photographer and myself up from the airport pulled the SUV over and just about ordered us out of the car. We ultimately got to the coal plant but it was a really tense situation. The story was challenging for another reason: The coal plant was actually an improvement over what the textile plant had before. Sure, it was emitting lots of CO<sub>2</sub>, but the environmental controls it had were capturing other pollutants. That was an improvement and the Guatemalans were incredibly proud of this. So the story had another twist to it that made it more interesting, but harder to write.

**Q: Were you especially surprised by any one fact or insight you gleaned in your research – something that was really unexpected, even for a reporter familiar with the issue?**

**A:** I was stunned at how much was already happening to New England’s economy and environment because of warming temperatures and changing precipitation patterns. Blueberry farmers in Maine were worried, not because of any change they were experiencing, but because a warming Quebec meant stiffer competition as Canadian blueberry growing went gangbusters. A mosquito was changing its genetics because of warming temperatures. Snowmobile dealers were going out of business because snowfall had become so unpredictable.

These were not small things – and they gave a hint to me of how much of our ecology and economy rides on relatively minor changes in climate. I think those changes exist in any geographic region that relies on weather to drive agriculture or tourism.

The other wow I got was a science one. I had written so many stories about the 70-degree day in January asking the question if



Andy Core, an undergraduate research assistant, works in the University of Oregon lab of Christina M. Holzzapfel, who with her husband, William E. Bradshaw, has documented genetic changes in hundreds of thousands of mosquitoes.



By CHERYL HOGUE

It seems improbable — a regulatory agency officially inviting polluters to secretly influence the scientific judgments it uses in crafting cleanup plans. But it happened earlier this year.

And it's likely to have impacts in the communities you cover, especially if they're facing pollution threats from a nearby military base or a Department of Energy or NASA facility.

A new policy instituted by the Bush Administration in April changes a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency procedure for distilling scientific studies on toxic chemicals into information useful to regulators.

Federal, state and local officials rely on this information as they make key decisions such as the degree of cleanup required at a polluted site or the amount of a contaminant allowable in drinking water. Regulators from outside the United States, particularly in developing countries, also depend on this information, which is posted in an online EPA database called the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS).

The new Bush policy gives federal agencies facing liability for contamination—such as the Department of Defense—formal, behind-closed-doors opportunities to sway EPA's chemical assessments. They stand to save big dollars in cleanup costs or other steps, such as finding substitutes for a toxic chemical, if they can convince EPA to downgrade a pollutant's risks.

From an open government perspective, this is grim news. The policy deems closed-door discussions among agencies about EPA's chemical assessments to be "deliberative" and shielded from public view. This exempts the communications from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

George Gray, EPA assistant administrator for research and development, defends the secrecy provision. He told a Senate

hearing in May that protection from public disclosure "encourages a free and frank exchange" among federal agencies.

But according to David Michaels, a George Washington University professor and former DOE official in the Clinton Administration, the institutionalized secrecy demotes the views of EPA scientists and rewards greater weight to the views of federal agencies whose main mission is not protecting health or the environment.

Michaels, an SEJ academic member, said at the hearing, "We would never allow the EPA, in secret, to delay military activities." Michaels said. Yet under the new policy, Michaels continued, "DOD, in secret, has the ability to block EPA efforts to protect human health and the environment."

Michaels is author of *Doubt is Their Product: How Industry's Assault on Science Threatens Your Health*.

*Lawmakers in Congress are worried that the new policy is affecting EPA's scientific integrity.*

The Government Accountability Office (GAO), the non-partisan research arm of Congress, is harshly critical of the new policy. In a recent report (GAO-08-440), GAO says the policy limits both the usefulness and scientific credibility of EPA's chemical assessment, especially the secrecy provision.

"It is critical that input from all parties — particularly agencies that may be affected by the outcome of IRIS assessments — be publicly available," GAO says.

GAO also took the unusual step of recommending that Congress suspend the EPA policy.

Lawmakers in Congress are worried that the new policy is affecting EPA's scientific integrity. They are probing the matter through hearings and are asking for more information from the Bush Administration.

The new policy also gives federal polluters a special oppor-

tunity to further slow down EPA's already years-long process for assessing a chemical. They can declare that a chemical under scrutiny is critical to their mission, which allows them to put an EPA assessment on hold for years until they complete additional research. The policy's definition of "mission critical" appears broad enough to allow many pollutants to fall within it.

This provision could leave local, state, and EPA regulators without critical information on a contaminant as they make decisions that affect people's health and the environment for decades.

The story continues to unfold. Stay tuned to whether Congress tries to pass legislation overturning the new policy or refuses to fund implementation of the policy in fiscal 2009.

#### Links:

EPA's Integrated Risk Information System: [www.epa.gov/iris](http://www.epa.gov/iris)

New policy on chemical assessments:

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/cfm/recordisplay.cfm?deid=190045>

GAO's report: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08440.pdf>

Related GAO testimony to Congress: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08743t.pdf>

Webcast of Senate Environment and Public Works Committee May 7 hearing available through: <http://epw.senate.gov/public/>

*Cheryl Hogue tracks scientific integrity issues at EPA for Chemical & Engineering News. She admits a bias — she supports open government and believes it's a key element to effective democracy.*

#### *Metaphors, Milkshakes and Drainage*

*continued from page 21*

technique developed long after the early 1900s when the movie is set. It's when you drill from your property at an angle to reach oil under your neighbor's property. That way you can stick a long straw from across the room into your neighbor's milkshake and "drink it up."

Outside of a few oil drillers and journalists who cover natural resources, that discrepancy likely did not affect anyone's enjoyment of the movie. But it can have significant consequences elsewhere.

A few years ago Michigan developers wanted to expand the practice of directionally drilling from land-based sites to reach more oil under the Great Lakes. The proposal generated a huge environmental controversy and lots of news coverage.

It is a challenging concept to explain quickly in a tight news hole. Superficial descriptions conjured in the mind of the public visions of off-shore rigs piercing the sweet water seas and punching through the lake bottoms to reach the oil. The practice was often perceived as a direct threat to water quality.

Geologists and oil experts explained at public hearings that little danger existed — there is no connection between the well and the water. But public pressure resulted in a ban of the practice.

A good question: Would it have been allowed to continue if the proponents had hired the writers of "There Will be Blood" and asked Daniel Day-Lewis to testify about milkshakes and straws?

Maybe. But he'd have to leave out that disgusting slurping sound.

*David Poulson is the associate director of Michigan State University's Knight Center for Environmental Journalism where he teaches environmental, investigative and computer-assisted reporting.*

## A controversial new Bush Administration policy affects entries into the Environmental Protection Agency's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS)

This online database contains EPA's assessments of the risks of developing cancer and other, non-cancer health effects, such as kidney disease, from exposure to toxic chemicals.

Many environmental journalists depend on IRIS as a source of peer-reviewed government information about pollutants.

The database entries are based on EPA's scientific judgment about a chemical. The assessments often include safety factors to provide protection for those particularly vulnerable to the effects of exposure to the substance, especially children.

IRIS assessments provide EPA's best estimate of a "safe dose" for a chemical. This often takes the form of a safe daily dose — how much of a chemical a person could ingest in food or water every day for a lifetime and not get sick from it. EPA's term for this is a reference dose, or RfD.

For some substances, notably volatile ones, the agency establishes a reference concentration or RfC. This refers to how much of the chemical in air a person could breathe for a lifetime

without ill effects.

In the past 30 years, EPA scientists have processed toxicity data — mainly drawn from studies on laboratory animals — to produce assessments for more than 500 chemicals. Assessments of dozens more substances, from flame retardants to pesticides to perfluorooctanoic acid, are in the works. They generally take several years to complete.

The assessment for trichloroethylene, a widely used solvent degreaser that is a widespread contaminant in groundwater, has been pending for a decade.

The Government Accountability Office recently found that EPA finished only four chemical assessments in 2005 and two each in 2006 and 2007.

The agency in 2003 estimated that it needs to complete 50 assessments annually to keep up with the needs of regulators, who recommend more chemicals for inclusion into IRIS each year.

# Photographers “rave” about conservation

Photograph courtesy Thomas Mangelsen, ILCP Fellow



Truck kicking up dust in Upper Green River Basin, Wyoming

By ROGER ARCHIBALD

Protecting the cloud forest ecosystem of a nearly-extinct bird with a magnificent plumage.

Highlighting a tiny island, part of Equatorial Guinea and home to rare primates under threat from the bushmeat trade.

Documenting the plight of the pronghorn in the Green River basin of western Wyoming.

One could imagine a horde of scientists descending to gather needed data on the threats and impacts to such rare creatures in remote areas. In fact, conservation groups have been doing that for years.

But now a relatively new group, the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) has organized such trips — for photographers — to document the beauty and damage in areas with grave conservation concerns. The group calls them RAVES, Rapid Assessment Visual Expeditions.

“Photography is a witness to history,” says Cristina Mittermeier, ILCP founder and first executive director, “and the RAVE is the tool that allows us to provide our joint testimony in the court of public opinion.”

Mittermeier, a marine biologist by training, recognized that past conservation campaigns often lacked any imagery with impact. She concluded that compelling photography could play a pivotal role in responding to increasing challenges to the environment.

Established in 2005 at the 8th World Wilderness Congress in Anchorage, Alaska, the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) was created to further conservation through the use of ethical, credible photography. Its selective membership now includes some of the world’s best known nature and environmental photographers.

One of the first approaches the new organization has taken

to fulfilling that goal was creation of the RAVE, a documentary photography campaign led by members of ILCP to areas of the world in need of immediate conservation actions.

Modeled after the Rapid Assessment Program (RAP) created by Conservation International in 1990 to send teams of scientific experts to explore threatened ecosystems and obtain urgently needed biological data, RAVES seek to accomplish the same result in pictures. Conservation International reports that in “sixty-four RAP expeditions conducted around the world, scientists have discovered hundreds of species of plants and animals that are new to science.”

Spearheaded by RAVE concept co-developer Patricio Robles Gil, a Mexican conservationist, photographer and publisher who has been working to protect critical habitat for endangered species in his country for more than 20 years, the first RAVE in April 2007 was conducted in Mexico’s El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve, located in the Sierra Madre Mountains in the southern state of Chiapas.

The effort was aimed at protecting the cloud forest ecosystem of the quetzal, a bird of such magnificent plumage it was once revered by the Maya and Aztecs as being divine. The late Roger Tory Peterson once deemed it “the most spectacular bird in the New World.” Despite the area’s protected status, a planned road project that would bisect the reserve posed a threat to the quetzal’s habitat.

In addition to Robles Gil, participating photographers included Jack Dykinga, a Pulitzer-Prize-winning photojournalist formerly with the *Chicago Tribune* who now exclusively does large format landscape photography in the American southwest, Tom Mangelsen, a nature photographer from Jackson, Wyo. who operates a string of galleries in western states devoted to his

work, Florian Schulz, a German photographer best known for his documentation of the Yellowstone-to-Yukon biodiversity corridor, and Fulvio Eccardi, vice president of the El Triunfo Conservation Fund in Mexico, whose efforts to document and publicize El Triunfo led to its reserve designation in 1990. Together, the team shot 30,000 photos and 30 hours of video during their twelve days in the field.

According to the ILCP, that visual material is now being used “to put a spotlight on this region to develop a strategic international awareness campaign on the conservation needs of El Triunfo.” The effort has raised \$500,000 so far, and “is helping to inspire similar projects throughout Mexico, where environmentalism is still a relatively new, yet growing, movement,” the organization states.

A second RAVE in Sept. 2007 was also held in Mexico, this time at Balandra, located 20 kilometers north of the city of La Paz, on the Gulf of California near the tip of the Baja Peninsula, where the protection of more than 2,100 hectares of untouched estuarine and coastal habitat is being sought to prevent development into another beach resort.

Robles Gil again teamed up with Arizonan Jack Dykinga to lead the photography and video effort, this time compressed into just four days. They were accompanied by Mexican photographers Romeo Saldívar, Emilio Castillo Díaz and Miguel Angel de la Cueva, a younger professional who is a member of the ILCP’s Emergent League of Conservation Photographers. Despite the tight schedule, the team produced more than 6,000 images and 10 hours of video, all of it designed for use in a campaign to help obtain Mexican government protection for Balandra and promote its designation as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations.

The ILCP’s most ambitious RAVE came this past January with an 18-day expedition to Bioko, an 800-square-mile island — part of Equatorial Guinea — that lies twenty miles off the coast of Cameroon in Africa’s Gulf of Guinea. Of particular environmental concern is the plight of the island’s endemic population of endangered primates that, with the country’s newfound oil wealth, have become targets for the voracious African bushmeat trade.

Supported by both Conservation International and the National Geographic Society, the RAVE team consisted of two veteran *Geographic* contract photographers, Tim Laman, a Harvard-trained biologist, and Joel Sartore, a former newspaper photojournalist based in Lincoln, Neb., who were joined by Christian Zeigler, a German biologist associated with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama, and



Abstract aerial view of Upper Green River Basin, Wyoming

Ian Nichols, another ILCP Emerging League member who is the son of *Geographic* staff photographer Michael Nichols.

So far, the attention the RAVE drew to the plight of Bioko’s primates has significantly helped Conservation International negotiate an agreement with the Equatorial Guinea government to develop a long range conservation plan and to strengthen enforcement of the existing ban on primate hunting in Bioko. Details of the Bioko RAVE will be featured in the August 2008 issue of *National Geographic*.

The ILCP’s most recent RAVE was also its first in the United States. For two days in mid-May, their largest team yet converged on the upper Green River basin of western Wyoming near the juncture of the Gros Ventre, Wind River and Wyoming



Silver river and mountains in Upper Green River Basin, Wyoming

Mountain Ranges. The area has already been subject to significant oil and gas exploration, resulting in extraction complexes and support road systems that cut open range and migration corridors for the largest migratory animal herd in the lower forty-eight states, the pronghorn. And there are current Federal efforts to expand the exploration activity.

The Wyoming project also involved students attending a conservation photography workshop organized by former *National Geographic* Director of Photography Rich Clarkson at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in nearby Jackson. A selection of photos produced during the RAVE was displayed at the museum until late June, and can be viewed online at the ILCP website: <http://www.ilcp.com/?cid=87>

The organization’s next RAVE, scheduled for mid-August, plans to examine the environmental impact that the proposed high-tech southern boundary fence/barrier will likely have on America’s borderlands with Mexico.

*Roger Archibald, a freelance photographer and writer based in Boston, is photo editor of the SEJournal.*



By BUD WARD

# Lost in a digital world?

What's a "print journalist" to do?

Some suggestions

"Print reporter."  
For years – make that decades – it was a term I applied to myself with honor.

I figured I'd take it to the grave with me, there being no finer epitaph.

Now, dem's fightin' words. Insulting, disparaging, or, at the very least, anachronistic.

It's with morbid anxiety approaching embarrassment that I each spring await the next installment of the Project for Excellence in Journalism's (PEJ) "State of the News Media." It just feels too much like rushing to the front doorstep in the morning in guarded anticipation of finding the obituary of a best friend.

Things were no different this spring, with the opening sentence concluding that things with American news media are "more troubled than a year ago."

The "even" in that phrase was implied. No need to make it explicit.

But the medicine got *even* harder to swallow with the report's finding that the outlook for the mainstream media's progeny, technology-driven changes in today's journalism "business," may not yet be as rosy as earlier hoped:

"A clear case for democratization is harder to make," the report finds. "Research shows blogs and public affairs web sites attract a smaller audience than expected and are produced by people with even more elite backgrounds than journalists."

Even than journalists? I found myself gasping. I could have done without that qualifier altogether, either explicit or assumed. I doubt many of you feel elite.

For those SEJ members who haven't yet read the "State of ..." report (<http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.com/2008/>), clearly you should and must. It's not just where you work that's at issue; it's who you are and what you do.

Rays of hope and great opportunity stemming from society's full-bore lunge

toward the digital delivery of information are developing. Set aside for a moment those recent headlines about "the end of reading" and "the end of writing." Good journalism DNA won't perish merely because distribution means change.

You'll find, for instance, data suggesting that the real problem isn't so much where the public is turning for its information, but rather how they should be paying for it: "The emerging reality," as the PEJ authors say, is that "advertising isn't migrating online with the consumer."

"The crisis in journalism, in other words, may not strictly be loss of audience. It may, more fundamentally, be the

**"Good journalism DNA won't perish merely because distribution means change."**

decoupling of news and advertising."

The challenge posed for media managers? "They must reinvent their profession and their business model at the same time they are cutting back on their reporting and resources." ("And that's the *good* news?" you ask.)

Oh my. So what's the poor environmental reporter to do about it, being, let's say, no media bigwig tycoon?

Lots in fact.

In the first place, saving journalism, of course, is not on the shovel solely of reporters. It's certainly not solely the task of environmental reporters either. Reporters, editors, publishers, photographers, investors, academics, the public – all have important roles to play.

What *is* on the shovel of environmental reporters is maintaining the quality of coverage of the environmental and natural resources issues so critical to the health and economic well being of our

population...and so highly valued by that population, whether they sometimes realize it or not.

We're long past the time of endless debating the "friend or foe" riddle when it comes to providing news and information to the public. Make no mistake here: It's fine, and important, for that debate to go on, both in academic and in newsroom settings. What we can no longer allow is for that debate to impede progress toward maintaining those principles and practices that distinguish environmental journalism, let's say, from environmental "writing" or environmental "communications."

*Viva la difference.*

So if you were to set out today to save your sliver of the journalism pie, what might you do first? We turn, of course, to a blog for some insights. What else?

Media commentator and blogger Howard Owens, of Rochester, N.Y., summarizes the rules changes resulting from the move to digital media:

rizes the rules changes resulting from the move to digital media:

- Users, not editors and reporters, are in control, choosing what, when, and why they consume media;
- Users could care less about reporters' deadlines – "They want to know what we know when we know it. They want their news now."
- They want to participate, not simply read, watch, or listen to someone else. They want to supplement and complement stories, spouting off as they see fit.

In his blog on journalism and newspaper (<http://www.howardowens.com/>), Owens prescribes "12 things journalists can do to save journalism." (<http://www.howardowens.com/2007/twelve-things-journalists-can-do-to-save-journalism/>).

Among Owens's suggestions:  
1.) Becoming a blogger — recommendation #1, by which Owens means being an avid blog reader and follower

even if you don't also create a blog yourself ("never a bad idea").

2.) Become a producer. Use your digital recorder, video camera, camera phone, etc., to the max. Post your work. On YouTube, on Flickr, on PBase, on Twitter...and more.

3.) Comment on blogs you read. "Become known as somebody who converses on the Internet."

4.) Set up an account for your own web site. Learn HTML and also some development language such as Cold Fusion, JavaScript, PHP. Own your own domain.

5.) Become "web literate." Know the jargon and understand what applications are used for what purposes.

6.) Use RSS and an RSS feeder.

7.) "Become immersed in the digital lifestyle."

8.) Become an avid digital content consumer.

9.) Learn. Learn. Learn.

10.) Be an agent for change in your workplace. Excite your newsroom colleagues about the potentials of the new digital age, rather than simply bemoaning the challenges.

Back for a moment to my "print reporter" opening.

I'm over it now. I'm beginning, alas, to "get it." I now see that there will be no finer epitaph than just "reporter." Forget the qualifier, it's history.

"Reporter." That's a tombstone inscription I'd proudly take to the grave. But not just yet.

## Predicting the future of network news and newspapers

Most newspapers will print on paper for...	National %	Local %	Internet %
Less than 10 years	17	20	17
10-20 years	48	42	44
More than 20 years	32	34	37
Don't know	3	4	2
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

\*\*\*\*\*

## Networks will continue nightly broadcasts for...

Less than 10 years	42	29	39
10-20 years	30	38	36
More than 20 years	23	30	21
Don't know	5	3	3
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99</b>

\*From the Project for Excellence in Journalism's State of the News Media report released March 17, 2008 by the PEW Research Center. The survey of journalists is based on interviews with 585 national and local reporters, producers, editors and executives across the country. In most cases, the responses of national and local journalists are reported separately. The internet component of the sample was drawn from both online-only news organizations as well as from national and local news outlets with a significant Web presence. The report addresses current issues facing journalism and updates trends from earlier surveys conducted in 1995, 1999 and 2004.

*Bud Ward is an independent journalism educator and founder/former editor of Environment Writer. He now is editor of the Yale Forum on Climate Change & the Media.*

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# More social media tools strengthen coverage of the environment

By AMY GAHRAN

Media aren't what — or where — they used to be, especially when it comes to news.

As an example, look at May 12, 2008, when in the wee hours of the morning (by U.S. reckoning) users of the popular social media service Twitter broke the news of a major earthquake centered in Chengdu, China, three minutes before the U.S. Geological Survey earthquake reporting site posted its announcement.

How can journalists use social media and blogging tools to enhance coverage of local, national, or global environmental issues — as well as build stronger relationships with communities concerned with these issues?

In the *SEJournal* last quarter, David Poulson explored social networking sites. But here are even more detailed ideas about how any environmental journalist (on their own, or with the support of a news org) can try out — using free or cheap online tools:

## 1. PANEL BLOG

A “panel blog” is authored by a defined team of contributors: experts and/or community members, selected by the journalist or news org. Panel blogs seem to work best when focused on a beat (like the environment), rather than a single issue or story (like a local Superfund site). Contributors should represent diverse but complementary perspectives and expertise, and be drawn toward consensus (or at least civil disagreement), rather than conflict. Examples include:

- Greenwash Brigade, [www.publicradio.org/columns/sustainability/greenwash](http://www.publicradio.org/columns/sustainability/greenwash): Environmentally themed panel blog of experts, assembled through American Public Media's Public Insight Network.

- On Faith, <http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/>: Blog is on faith, rather than environment, but offers a good example of the genre.

Tips for running a panel blog:

- Find qualified contributors who are enthusiastic about participating. If

they're already blogging, that's even better. Don't work with anyone you have to coax.

- Rotate contributors in and out over time, for variety and so you don't burn out your volunteers. Allow would-be newcomers to try out via a “guest post.”

- Use a multi-author blogging tool that provides unique author bylines on each post. That's a nice perk for volunteers.

- Coordinate behind-the-scenes with your team of contributors by conference call or private e-mail list. This is a good way to set expectations, style, rules, and tone; do editorial planning; etc.

- Don't hold panel members to same standards as reporting staff. Transparency pays off here. For instance, if a writer works for a company involved in the issue being covered, that's OK as long as you disclose it and set expectations for fairness.

- If authors have trouble coming up with writing ideas, toss out a question and let them each respond.

- Allow readers to comment on the blog, and encourage your team to respond via public comments to readers and to each other.

## 2. NING.COM COMMUNITIES

Ning, <http://ning.com/>, is a social media “platform” — a service that allows you to set up your own community site, complete with a set of customizable tools to allow members to interact and share content in potentially useful ways. Setting up a Ning community for your beat could be a constructive way to engage your community in its own environmental news.

At the *San Jose Mercury News*, reporter Matt Nauman has created a semi-public Ning community, Green Tech Beat, [www.greentechbeat.com](http://www.greentechbeat.com), to support his coverage of alternative energy and green technology. Much of the content of that site is visible to the public, but access to the forum requires administrator approval. Nauman's project is part of NewAssign-

ment.net's Beat Blogging initiative, [www.beatblogging.com](http://www.beatblogging.com).

You can apply a domain name (like “sunsentinel.com”) or subdomain name (like “envirotalk.newsjournal.com”) to a Ning community site, to help establish its identity. However, at this time it does not seem possible to actually embed a Ning community with an existing news site. Therefore, visual branding on the Ning site (graphics, links, etc.) is important to establish the connection with the journalist or news org.

## 3. TWITTER

As the China example cited earlier indicates, Twitter, <http://twitter.com/>, is fast becoming the online equivalent of a police scanner. Plus, it's helpful for building community relationships.

Twitter is a social media service that allows you to publish text-only posts of 140 characters or less. You can post to Twitter, and receive posts from it, via SMS (text messaging via cell phone), making it a strong tool for mobile community connectivity. You can choose to “follow” (receive updates from) specific individuals (such as a local environmental activist, community leader, student, etc.) — and they can also choose to follow you. You can also reply publicly to specific posts, and contact people who follow you on Twitter via private direct message.

The key value-adds for Twitter are instant engagement, under your control and at your convenience. This is where you can form your “posse” to add depth or insight to your beat. It's also where you'll probably hear first about emerging issues and breaking news.

Twitter played a supporting role in the recent launch of a U.K. environmental news site, Environmental News Online <http://environmentalnewsonline.com/>. (ENO)

### Tips for using Twitter as a journalist:

- Pick a short Twitter ID: Characters count in this medium.

*continued on page 30*

# New trend in urban development: Clean up water pollution

By ROBERT McCLURE

The fastest-growing water pollution threat in my region — and probably in yours, too — is stormwater, that filthy mixture that results when rain or melting snow washes away oil, antifreeze, dog poop, fertilizer, pesticide and anything else on the ground. It is truly foul stuff.

All that ends up somewhere. Usually, that's your nearest stream, wetland or bay. And the rainwater running off streets and other hard surfaces tends to come in big surges that gouge out stream bottoms.

It doesn't have to be that way, a growing number of scientists are saying. But are their ideas for “low impact development” being held back by your local building official? It's more common that you might think, and could make for a good story almost anywhere.

It might not be the sexiest topic — but low-impact development is one of the top ways, if not *the* top way, officials could control water pollution in your area.

“Everybody likes the idea in principle. It's like motherhood — who could object?” said Bruce K. Ferguson, Franklin professor of landscape architecture at the University of Georgia. “Getting specific new technologies accepted by the people who have to pass off on these things is another story. There's some guy sitting at a desk in the bureaucracy who has to give approval to this thing from a technical viewpoint.”

The techniques are proven, say Ferguson and other LID experts — they're just not the way we've always done things. Ferguson said the Pacific Northwest is a national leader in employing low-impact development techniques, although you can

find examples in any region.

You will have an opportunity to write about this when a National Academy of Sciences panel currently studying the situation issues its report. The report, “Reducing Stormwater Discharge Contributions to Water Pollution,” is due out in the late fall. For more information go to <http://tinyurl.com/2tw2jk>.

The basic principle is to catch as much rain as possible before it hits the ground, in the tree canopy, then get as much as possible of what does hit the ground to percolate rather than run off toward the nearest stream or bay.

But that's not the way our cities have been built. Nor is it the way the suburbs spreading across the countryside are being constructed. Stormwater experts say solving the problem is going to mean employing LID techniques both in new subdivisions as they sprout and in already-built areas when properties are redeveloped.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, I've been amazed at the lack of progress in this direction when I see sites that employ LID — because, what's not to like? You get lush vegetation in swales at the side of a shady yard.

You can still have your patio or deck and other so-called “impervious” surfaces that don't let water soak in. You can still have a driveway. You just build the driveway out of porous pavement — Ferguson's specialty — and direct the runoff from the patio toward a “rain garden,” what Curtis Hinman calls the “workhorse of the low-impact development approach.”

“These techniques can add to the aesthetics of individual yards . . . add to an urban landscape vegetation and all



Permeable pavers, Wilsonville, Oregon

## Resources on stormwater and low-impact development:

“New stormwater rules can produce a flood of stories,” Summer 2002 *SEJournal*, >[http://www.sej.org/site/sejournal/past/sej\\_su02.pdf](http://www.sej.org/site/sejournal/past/sej_su02.pdf) (see page 14).

Low Impact Development Center, Beltsville, MD: <http://www.lid-stormwater.net/background.htm>. Phone 301-982-5559

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.gov/nps/lid/>

LID for big box retailers: <http://lowimpactdevelopment.org/bigbox/>

the pleasing things that come along with vegetation in a built environment,” said Hinman, a watershed ecologist with Washington State University.

Environmentalists are pushing a legal case in Washington to force the state to require developers to use these methods, citing Clean Water Act requirements to use “all known, available and reasonable technology” to the “maximum extent practicable.” If they succeed, similar requirements could pass elsewhere.

The big ding on LID is cost. But evidence presented in the Washington case showed that with LID, developers can actually save money in some instances.

Here's how: Many current building codes contemplate funneling stormwater at a new development into big detention ponds. Those ponds supposedly gulp up a torrent of stormwater during the rainstorm, let pollutants settle out, and then trickle out clean water on the lower end in the days to

## Features of low-impact development:

**Porous pavement.** It soaks up the rain. See <http://www.toolbase.org/Technology-Inventory/Network/permeable-pavement> and [http://www.stormcon.com/sw\\_0305\\_porous.html](http://www.stormcon.com/sw_0305_porous.html)

**Maximum retention of native vegetation.** Also, rain gardens and other forms of bio-retention. See <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/rfb/rain-gardens.shtml> and <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ultraurb/3fs3.htm>

**Green roofs:** Vegetation on the rooftop soaks up runoff. See <http://www.greenroofs.org/>

**Soil amendments.** To ensure water can soak in. Many lawns are just about as bad for generating runoff as paved areas. See [http://www.lid-stormwater.net/soilamend\\_construct.htm](http://www.lid-stormwater.net/soilamend_construct.htm)

### Reporter's Toolbox: New Trend continued from page 29

come. But, increasingly, it's apparent this doesn't work very well.

If each property instead employed low-impact techniques sufficient to catch all the rain falling on that property, there would be no need for ponds. That leaves room for more houses – and more profit.

In any case, it's not uniformly true the LID has to cost more, says the Low Impact Development Center, Inc., in Beltsville, MD: "This may or may not be true, depending on the experience of the project consultants and contractors with these

new techniques and the receptiveness of local government officials to innovative practices. These potential cost increases are not indictments of the concept of LID but of inexperienced institutions, individuals, and bureaucracies that remain unaware of the great necessity for and benefits of a new approach."

*Robert McClure covers environmental news in the Pacific Northwest, where it rains a lot, for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. His blog is [www.datelineearth.com](http://www.datelineearth.com).*

### Bits and Bytes: More Social Media Tools continued from page 28

- Find and follow local Twitter users, via TwitterLocal, <http://twitterlocal.net/>. Enter a city and state, and/or a zip code, and specify a radius to identify local Twitter users. Follow a lot of them at first, then weed out ("unfollow" the ones who are least relevant or interesting).

- Lurk (listen silently) first, for a few days, to get a sense for how conversation works in this medium. Then start posting. Try not to be boring, stiff, or overly trivial. Replying to others' posts is a good way to start.

- Don't sign up to receive text messages right away. You could quickly get overwhelmed with messages and SMS charges. Use Twitter for a month or two first, then decide who (if anyone) you want to get text messages from.

- Invite people to follow you on Twitter. Include your Twitter ID on your e-mail signature, your business card, your online bio, and maybe even your byline. Cultivate your "posse" from among people you already interact with.

- Remember that anything you post to Twitter is public, and can be linked to directly (except for private direct messages). Use discretion where warranted, but don't be overly paranoid about competitive concerns. Twitter is a low-overhead way to explore what a journalist can gain by participating directly in public conversation.

- Use Twitter to publicize your latest stories, by adding links to them in your Twitter posts.

- Third-party applications can vastly improve your Twitter experience, since Twitter.com is a very bare-bones site. A great free Twitter application can be found at [www.twhirl.com](http://www.twhirl.com). It's available for Mac and Windows. You must have the free Adobe installed first.

*Amy Gahrn (agahrn on Twitter) is an avid Twitter user. If you're not sure where to start or what to do once you sign up on Twitter, go to <http://twitter.com/agahrn> and ask her questions on Twitter.*

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## Troubles in Paradise: SEJ members study tropical ecosystems in Hawai'i

By JENNIFER OLADIPO

SEJ members Joy Horowitz, Erin K.D. Judd, Charlotte Kidd and Jennifer Oladipo were four of seven environmental reporting fellows at the National Tropical Botanical Garden in Hawai'i in May.

The mountainous island of Kaua'i, less developed than other larger islands of the archipelago, was the backdrop for a week-long examination of issues that threaten tropical ecosystems. Fellows learned how introduced species – from feral pigs to iron-wood trees to rosy wolfsnails – have helped Hawai'i earn the dubious distinction of "extinction capital of the world." Along the coast, development has also been a persistent source of habitat loss and species extinction.

The fellows' packed schedule included talks and demonstrations by botanists and cultural experts from the Botanical Garden staff and from the community. Journalists also engaged in activities such as a kava ceremony and trying their hand at making kapa cloth from mulberry tree bark. Such activities provided a welcome break from indoor lectures, but also helped elucidate Polynesian culture and Hawaiian history.

The National Tropical Botanical



Fellows at NTBG's Limahuli Garden & Preserve. Top row: LtoR JoAnn Valenti (Founder and Director of NTBG), Charlotte Kidd. Middle: Kawika Winter (Director of Limahuli), Barry Shell, Bryn Nelson, Erin K.D. Judd. Bottom: Jennifer Oladipo, Joy Horowitz, Beth Judy.

Garden has gardens on the north and south shores of the island, which house collections of native plants, including rare species found by "extreme botanists" known for maneuvering rough terrain and steep mountainsides in search of new and endangered species. Fellows toured the sites with some of those same botanists, and were able to experience living specimens up close.

Weather throughout the week, as could

be expected, was perfect. "Vog" – the sulphuric haze that wafts from the Big Island when the trade winds shift – darkened the skies for just a day, and scant rains came in the evenings. The only reality that might have marred the otherwise spectacular scenery was learning that the view comprised mostly invasive species. Only on their final day together did journalists have the opportunity to see a pristine Hawaiian forest, 4,000 feet above sea level where most humans, animals, and even

many insects have been unable or unwilling to live. It was a fitting close to the fellowship, a living example of what island conservationists strive to protect and restore.

*Jennifer Oladipo is an SEJ member and freelance journalist in Louisville, Ky. She participated in this year's NTBG fellowship.*

## SEJ regional meetings address climate change

Advisers for presidential candidates in what was then a three-way race for the White House addressed their positions on the environment at an April 11 panel, "Political Climate: Environment, Energy & the 2008 Election."

With support from BNA, Chemical & Engineering News, the Environmental Law Institute and National Geographic, the SEJ regional event was held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The meeting was held in conjunction with SEJ's board meeting, held April 12. Speak-

*continued on back page*



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The Steinbrenner Institute for Environmental Education and Research, Porter Hall 111, Carnegie Mellon University, 5000 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213 [www.cmu.edu/steinbrenner](http://www.cmu.edu/steinbrenner)

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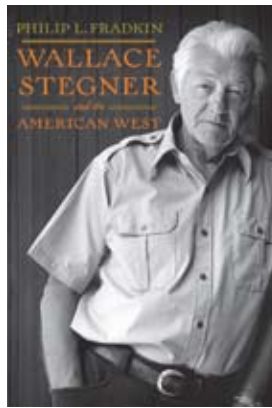
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*Stegner's failures and fire revealed*

## Wallace Stegner and the American West

By Philip L. Fradkin

Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, \$27.50

Reviewed by Laura Paskus

In his new book, *Wallace Stegner and the American West*, Philip L. Fradkin delves into the writer's upbringing, passions, his artistic influences and his demons.

Stegner influenced generations of writers but was disgusted by the counter-culture movements of the 1960s and left his teaching position at Stanford with "a sense that I had wasted a lot of years of my life," Fradkin writes.

Most of all, Stegner wished to be known for his novels; he taught and wrote non-fiction to support his family. But ultimately he became best known for his non-fiction accomplishments: He was Bernard DeVoto's biographer, penned seminal works of non-fiction such as *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* and was a fierce protector of the West's natural resources. He fought the damming of the Green River in Dinosaur National Monument as well as sprawl in southern California; as a member of the National Parks Advisory Board, he advocated for expansion of the National Park system.

And if Stegner "reluctantly acted as a spokesperson for the region," as Fradkin writes, it seems his reluctance came down to his desire to spend more of his time writing novels. Here's an excerpt from a letter Stegner wrote while working at the Department of the Interior at the pleasure of then-Secretary Stewart Udall:

"You speak of the writer's involvement in his society. I think too many writers are far too little involved. They sit in the middle of their own skulls, or their endocrines, and snipe at the saints, politi-

cians, working people, housewives, and bureaucrats who have to keep their world running. This doesn't mean I am anti-literary. The highest thing I can think of doing is literary. But literature does not exist in a vacuum, or even a partial vacuum. We are neither detached nor semi-detached, but are linked to our world by a million interdependencies. To deny the interdependencies, while living on the comforts and services they make possible, is adolescent when it isn't downright dishonest. And I would as soon say it to Henry Miller as to the book reviewer on the *Des Moines Register*."

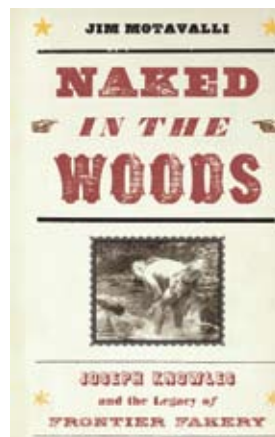
That's not an idle boast, either. As Fradkin points out, Stegner wouldn't back down from fights with students, fellow professors or other prominent writers. In 1992, he even declined the National Medal of Arts from George H.W. Bush, citing the administration's habit of censoring rather than supporting the arts.

Fradkin's engaging and compassionate book provides insight into Stegner's personal and professional life, offers up juicy gossip from the literary world of the first half of the twentieth century, but also reminds readers that even the most illustrious writers are complex and yes, flawed human beings.

"Stegner was a good man," writes Fradkin, "but he was not the perfect man he was eulogized as being."

And what a relief that is to know.

Laura Paskus is a freelance writer based in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



*A naked media stunt like none seen this century*

## Naked in the Woods: Joseph Knowles and the Legacy of Frontier Fakery

By Jim Motavalli

\$26.95 Da Capo Press

Reviewed by Bill Kovarik

Hermits and wild men of every shape

and motivation have long been fixtures of world folklore. From John the Baptist to TV's Bear Grylls, survival in the wilderness has been a hallmark of integrity and, sometimes, intelligence.

In America, stories of mountain men who adapted to harsh conditions and matched wits with the original inhabitants formed foundation blocks of a national identity.

By the same token, a new aura of anxiety surrounded wilderness stories when the frontier closed in the early 20th century.

Perhaps that explains why so many Bostonians fixed their attention on the exploits of Joseph Knowles as he stalked off into the woods on Aug. 4, 1913, leaving behind the last vestige – and vestment – of civilization.

As part of a publicity stunt cooked up for the *Boston Post*, the self-taught artist and hunting guide was stark naked when he began his survival experience in a remote area of Maine.

Knowles reported the daily details of making his own tools, shelter, and even clothes. He also trapped and killed a bear with primitive tools, using his kill for both food and clothing.

Daily accounts and illustrations done in charcoal on birch bark kept the *Post*'s readers entertained for two months. When he emerged from the woods on October 4, some 200,000 cheering Bostonians turned out to greet him.

A rival newspaper, Hearst's *Boston American*, was not impressed. Hearst reporters knew something about stunts, and they claimed that Knowles' bearskin had bullet holes and his primitive lean-to was really a comfortable cabin.

Knowles defended himself and soon Hearst's *San Francisco Chronicle* challenged him to another round of frontier survivalism, this time to be fully supervised. The feat would be promoted in newspaper columns and lecture halls from Boston to San Francisco.

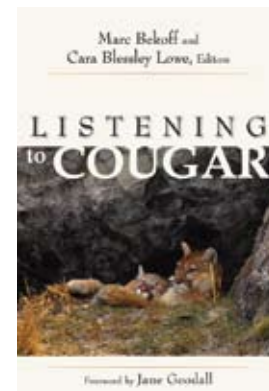
The fact that Knowles was so wildly popular tells us more about popular culture in the early 20th century than it does about the innate human desire and ability to match wits with nature.

Although Knowles probably engaged in some fakery, he was also part of a long and colorful tradition that had genuine roots in the American struggle for survival on the frontier and the attempt to describe that experience in vivid and accessible terms.

*Naked in the Woods* is an engaging and often hilarious account of a five-star media

stunt. It reveals the spirit of an age that hardly seems as confident or innocent as it is often portrayed. And it provides a deep insight into wilderness as a wellspring of the American psyche.

Bill Kovarik is a journalism professor at Radford University in Virginia.



*Book attempts to give voice to a 'graceful creature'*

## LISTENING TO COUGAR

By Marc Bekoff and Cara Blesley Lowe, editors  
University Press of Colorado \$24.95  
Reviewed by David Baron

Compared with North America's other apex predators, cougars get little respect. Whether measured by screen time on the Discovery Channel or dollars raised for their protection, wolves and grizzlies gain the lion's share of attention.

To redress this imbalance, wildlife advocates in 2001 created the Cougar Fund, an organization that aims to "assure a lasting place for this graceful creature." Two of the group's principals – director Cara Blesley Lowe and board member Marc Bekoff, an ethologist at the University of Colorado – have now compiled an anthology of cougar-related writings called *Listening to Cougar*. The book's goal: "to give voice" to cougars so that more Americans will care about the animals and their plight.

The book contains some fine writing. Rick Bass amusingly relates the time his dog flushed a lion from the Montana brush; Bass's response was to utter a lame (though effective) "Hey, asshole, leave my dog alone."

Ted Kerasote writes poetically about *not* encountering a cougar after finding

tracks during a backcountry ski in Wyoming. In a moving short story by Joan Fox, memories of cougars haunt a husband and wife as they cope with loss and try to build a family.

One of the more noteworthy contributions to this collection comes not from a professional writer but from a scientist. Wildlife biologist Linda Sweanor recounts feline coming-of-age stories from a ten-year cougar study she conducted in New Mexico.

She writes of young males she radio-collared and their literal journeys to adulthood. Adolescent toms possess an urge to disperse, and their wanderings often prove deadly as they confront highway crossings, hunters, and territorial attacks by older cougars. Sweanor's stories show in rich detail how habitat fragmentation can threaten the survival of a species.

However, *Listening to Cougar* is frustratingly uneven. Several of the essays suffer from a breathless earnestness that marks clichéd nature writing. Parts of the book are suffused with a cloying New Age spirituality. (I'm sorry, but when I read a sentence that begins "Just as I was focusing on my second chakra..." I have trouble continuing.) One essay, on the role of mountain lions in Navajo culture, reads like an anthropology dissertation, not like a piece of writing intended for a lay audience.

Good anthologies benefit from writing that is complementary. Here the writing styles clash. The chapters jump from scientific to pseudoscientific, mythological to historical, light-hearted to solemn. To call the book eclectic would be generous.

For those already enamored of America's great cat, *Listening to Cougar* provides some interesting reading, but this book's goal is to reach a new audience, and that effort is likely to fail. If the Cougar Fund wants the public to listen to its message, it must begin with something coherent and compelling to say.

David Baron is health & science editor for the public radio program "The World" and author of *The Beast in the Garden, which explores the growing conflict between people and cougars in suburban America*.

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*Advocating a fervent push for an energy solution*

## APOLLO'S FIRE: IGNITING AMERICA'S CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY

By Jay Inslee and Bracken Hendricks  
Island Press \$25.95  
Reviewed by Tom Henry

Veteran White House correspondent Helen Thomas calls *Apollo's Fire* a "brilliant, inspiring book on the need to set goals and find future solutions to achieve clean, efficient energy."

Robert Redford lauds it as something that can help readers get "beyond the doom and gloom warming dialogue."

Brilliant might be a stretch, but the points they're making are certainly on the mark.

*Apollo's Fire* is one of the more comprehensive, ambitious, balanced and upbeat books out there now about America's energy situation.

And the field is getting cluttered with many, from children's books to intensely dry and academic research epics.

*Apollo's Fire* fits somewhere in-between, something that's set in enough of a conversational tone for the layman while not running short on facts to back up its argument.

Unlike Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Apollo's Fire* is not about how we got to where we are — but where we can go from here.

If there's an obvious bias, it's one against complacency.

The book's premise is that solutions to the energy crisis need to be sought with the same fervor that Americans had in the 1960s while pursuing President John F. Kennedy's challenge to land a man on the moon and bring him safely back to Earth by the end of that decade.

It encourages people to think big, while instilling a sense of urgency. It has a message of hope, not futility.

The pros and cons of each of the various technologies are laid out in detail, some more than others.

It's clear the authors are excited about the prospects of wind, solar, and tidal energy while more neutral on hydrogen, nuclear, and clean coal. But they don't advocate exclusively for one or totally discount any of them.

And, of course, they explain what can be gained from greater energy efficiency and the use of industrial steam for co-generated power, though they could have done more with the latter.

While they bring strong analysis and enthusiasm to the energy issue, the reader

is left wondering at times if they see everything as a panacea. And why markets haven't responded faster if the advantages of certain technologies are so clear.

Jay Inslee is a Seattle-area congressman, a Democrat who, coincidentally, was Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland's roommate in Washington for several years until Strickland ran for governor.

Bracken Hendricks is a senior fellow with the Center for American Progress and former executive director of the Apollo Alliance, a consortium of business, labor and environmental groups dedicated to energy solutions. He was a special assistant to Gore while Gore was vice president, as well as being involved on climate change issues for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Both digress with occasional sidebars, including ones in which Inslee provides some detail about the predictable resistance he has encountered from President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney.

The book is balanced in how it approaches technological solutions. That's not to say there's no Bush-bashing.

Included is a brief forward by former President Bill Clinton.

*Tom Henry is an environmental reporter at the Toledo (Oh.) Blade.*

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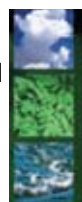
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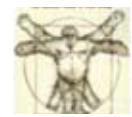
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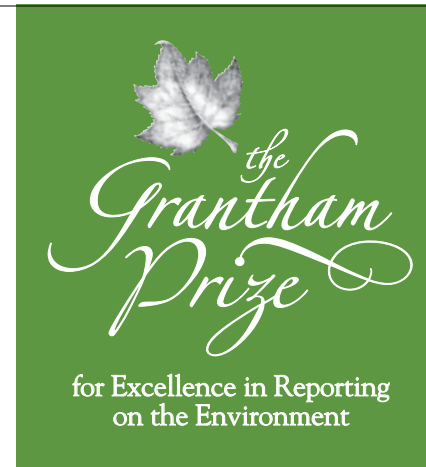
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Inspiring stories of how communities and companies are overcoming obstacles to create an ecologically sustainable society. *Polipoint Press.*  
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**Congratulations to the 2008 winners of the \$75,000 Grantham Prize—**

**David Barboza, Keith Brasher, Howard French, Chang W. Lee, Joseph Kahn, Jimmy Wang, and Jim Yardley** of the *New York Times* for their series *Choking on Growth*



Photos: Chang W. Lee/New York Times

and to the winners of \$5,000 Awards of Special Merit—

**David Malakoff and Alison Richards**, editors of the National Public Radio News series, *Climate Connections: How people change climate, how climate changes people.*

**Dinah Voyles Pulver** of the Daytona Beach News-Journal for her series, *Natural Treasures—Are We Losing Our Way?*

**Edward Struzik** for his series, *The Big Thaw—Arctic in Peril*, which ran in two of Canada's largest newspapers, the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Toronto Star*.

All honorees will be recognized at the 2008 Grantham Prize Seminar, to be held September 8, 2008, at the Newseum in Washington, D.C.

Details about the winning stories available at [www.granthamprize.org](http://www.granthamprize.org)

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LtoR, Tim Wheeler, Jason Grumet, James Woolsey and Todd Stern.

### *SEJ Regional Meetings continued from page 31*

ers at the D.C. event included Jason Grumet, environmental advisor for Sen. Barack Obama, and the president and founder of the bipartisan Policy Council in Washington, D.C.; Todd Stern, advisor to Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and a partner at the Washington, D.C., law firm Wilmer- Hale; and Jim Woolsey, former CIA director and environmental adviser to Sen. John McCain, and an attorney with Goodwin Procter.

The panel was moderated by Margie Kriz, energy and environment reporter for *National Journal* and Susan Feeney, senior editor for “All Things Considered” on National Public Radio.

The event brought the environmental advisers together under one roof for the first time and anticipation among journalists attending the event was high. Comments overheard after the session were that the advisers spent the hour agreeing with each other about pretty much everything.

The panel discussion was followed by a preview of the new PBS Frontline documentary “Heat,” with producer Martin Smith, exploring how big business — under pressure from governments, green groups and investors — is shifting its approach to the environment in ways that promise to fundamentally transform the politics of the long-stalled climate policy debate in Washington.

On June 20, SEJ and University of Toronto’s Centre for Environment presented *Pumped Up Prices: Can we combat climate change by raising the cost of energy?* Moderated by Nicola Ross, editor of *Alternatives Journal*, the panel included Peter Gorrie, environment reporter at the *Toronto Star*; Jim Lebens, producer of “Quirks & Quarks,” CBC radio; Mark Lutes, climate change and energy policy analyst from the David Suzuki Foundation; Sue McGeachie, from Sustainable Business Solutions, PricewaterhouseCoopers; and Stefan Reichenbach, head of Environmental Markets at Thomson Reuters.

Panelists discussed the pros and cons of carbon taxing, cap-and-trade systems, carbon sequestration and other options for putting a price tag on greenhouse gas emissions.

The meeting was followed by a reception. Supporters for this program include CBC, *The Toronto Star* and Hart House at the University of Toronto.

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