



September/October/November 2021

Good Grief

Oregon's Ana River feeds the patchwork of ditches, marshes, and ponds that make up the Summer Lake



Smoky Summer Lake Skies

Wildlife Area, an important stop each spring and fall for waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway and home to a staggering variety of shore birds and other species. That these wetlands are so healthy is in part due to the hard work of an unsung hero: fresh water mussels. To learn more about the heroics of these mollusks (one species in the West can live longer than a century!) I highly recommend *Freshwater Mussels of the Pacific Northwest*. Tragically, dropping water levels this summer stranded dozens of these tiny, efficient filter feeders on the shores of the Refuge waterways where they baked inside their shells due to recent high temperatures.

Cliff swallows were another casualty of the heatwave. Looking for all the world like giant barnacles under the brow of banks and rimrocks, cliff swallows' mud pellet nests turned into kilns during the prolonged fever, mummifying the feathered inhabitants inside their compact cocoons.

The smoke from the Bootleg fire has shrouded the skies of Central Oregon for weeks with smoke from fires elsewhere joining the choking parade, ghostly evidence of destruction of flora and fauna, homes and livelihoods.

These are but a few signs of things going haywire in this desert...never mind nationally and internationally, never mind everyday challenges each of us faces. I frequently feel stopped in my tracks by the grief I feel for the all of it, for the mussels, the swallows, for all humans and non-humans everywhere. But I have come to realize we don't have the luxury of treating grief as a stopping place, rather a pause before renewed action and commitment. If each if us does what we can to stanch the bleeding wherever we live, metaphorical mussel by metaphorical mussel, swallow by swallow, we will, as Adrienne Rich said,

“perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world.”

Walking the High Desert a WILLA Finalist!



Walking the High Desert, Encounters with Rural America Along the Oregon Desert Trail has been named a 2021 WILLA Literary Award Finalist in Creative Nonfiction. Winners and finalists in all categories will be celebrated at the 2021 conference, October 7-9. Visit the [Women Writing the West website](#) for conference details.

Renowned Poet Will Read at 2021 Waterston Desert Writing Prize Ceal Klingler Announced as Winner of 2021 Prize

The Waterston Desert Writing Prize honors literary nonfiction that illustrates artistic excellence, sensitivity to place, and desert literacy, with the desert as both subject and setting. In its inaugural year as a program of the High Desert Museum, the Prize event will take place on Wednesday, September 29 to honor the winner and finalists of this year's Prize, and will feature a reading by poet, essayist and visual artist Elizabeth Woody (Navajo, Warm Springs, Wasco, Yakama).

Woody, the executive director of the Museum at Warm Springs, was named Oregon's Poet Laureate in 2016, won the American Book Award in 1990 and the William Stafford Memorial Award for Poetry in 1995, and was a finalist for the Oregon Book Awards in 1995. Woody also served as guest judge for the 2021 Prize.



This year's winner of the Waterston Desert Writing Prize is [Ceal Klingler](#) for "How We Live With Each Other." Klingler's submission addresses how animals, plants, and other organisms have created livable places with each other at the hard edges of heat,

cold, dehydration, floods and fires at the westernmost overlap of the Mojave and Great Basin deserts. Tracing exchanges of air, shelter, pollination, nectar, microbiota, parasites, protein, and pest control, she asks how much we are a part of each other, how much depends on being a good neighbor, and how we can survive our collective futures together.

Klingler has degrees in linguistics, psychology and biology and was a National Science Foundation graduate fellow in biology. Her writing has appeared in *Backpacker*, *High Country News*, *Orion* and *Natural History*, and she received a special recognition grant for writing on water from the Ellen Meloy Fund for Desert Writers. Klingler will receive a two-week residency at PLAYA at Summer Lake, Oregon and a \$2,500 cash award.

Finalists include **Charles Hood** for “Deserts After Dark.” Hood lives and teaches in the Mojave Desert. He is the author of 16 books and has won awards for both poetry and prose. The second finalist, **Joe Wilkins** for “Desert Reckoning,” directs the creative program at Linfield University in Western Oregon. He is the author of an award-winning novel, a memoir, and four poetry collections. Both will receive a check for \$500.

The 2021 Waterston Desert Writing Prize is possible with support from the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies.

Finding Oneself While “Lost in Place”



The first of many, the fully subscribed **August 12-15** collaboration between the **Writing Ranch** and the **High Desert Museum Literary Series** did not disappoint. The long weekend writing intensive included field trips and lectures complemented by creative writing workshops that excited and inspired. The frosting on this perfect confection was the hospitality of PLAYA’s staff and the amazing meals prepared by PLAYA chef Shawna Negus. Thanks to all!



Jon Nelson leads writers through the Wildlife Refuge

Who knew that when turkey vultures stand on a branch or the cross bar of a telephone pole with their wings outstretched, not only are they using the sun’s rays to warm up in the morning, but also to keep their feathers healthy, the sun causing parasites to cluster where the birds can more easily get at them! So much more was learned from Jon Nelson, the High Desert Museum’s Curator of Wildlife, during Lost in Place, a Writing Ranch and High Desert Museum writing intensive.

Thanks to a fact-packed evening presentation followed by a morning trek to the Paisley caves, Lost in Place workshop participants time-traveled back 14,000 years led by Dr. Dennis Jenkins, a research archaeologist and field school supervisor for the Museum of Natural and Cultural History at the University of Oregon.



Dennis Jenkins Explains

Playing the Fool

Check out "Playing the Fool" and all The Third Act columns in Bend's [The Source Weekly](#).

Tune In

KPOV, Bend's community radio station, interviewed Ellen Waterston on Wednesday, September 22, 2021 about The Third Act, her column on ageing. To listen to the interview, [visit the KPOV website](#).



LAST CALL!

Writing Down the Baja 2022

February 19-27, 2022

The eleventh annual "Writing Down the Baja" writing retreat in Todos Santos, BCS, Mexico, has extended the **registration deadline to October 31, 2021**. Unless COVID decides otherwise, all systems are a balmy, breezy go! Updates on 2022 retreats are available on the [Writing Ranch website](#).



DIY at PLAYA

PLAYA has announced the new schedule for self-directed residencies. [Visit PLAYA's website for dates and details.](#)



Questions of Fall

by
Ellen Waterston

The logs of their house need oiling
to seal the two inside. He extends
his ladder to the second story, a coat
of shellac applied before her questions
have time to dry. Fat chickadees pry
sunflower seeds from inside brittle pocks
and ponder *dee, dee* if it's time to leave.
Koi dumbfounded in the frigid pool
can't tell if they are meant to weather
these questions of extreme cold. Cock
pheasants hurry color along the edge
of harvest, unsure if their vestigial wings
can lift them to the other side. And the mare
in heat breathes short and fast, lining her
black nose hairs with frost, tail held high
like one younger. She can't help but answer
the call that puts geese in a V to penetrate
the sky, lays a woman across an empty
bed lonely, provokes a wild gallop across
the frozen field and then a whinnied
shrill, first for a lover, then for anyone
who will answer the wonder.

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