



SEJ Journal

Summer 2010, Vol. 20 No. 2

Iceland surprise

Journalists fight for oil spill access

SEJ launches new grant program for stories

The making of a book on salmon

Roving reporters, let's be prepared

A quarterly publication of the

Society of Environmental Journalists



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The eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano was photographed on April 17, 2010 by Gudmundur Páll Ólafsson, SEJ's only Icelandic member. For his reporting on the event, see page 5.

PHOTO © GUDMUNDUR PÁLL ÓLAFSSON

Here's the pitch: Help guide SEJ and its mission to serve the search for facts

By CHRISTY GEORGE

It's been a tremendous privilege to serve as SEJ president during this time of professional change and churn, but it's been a bit scary, too.

We weathered the first year after the stock market collapsed in 2008, with help from our own earned income and underwriters who believe in SEJ. But this year, the economy caught up with donors — and us. Our longtime funders' stock holdings lost value. This year, some of the most stalwart cut back on how much they give, and others have stopped giving altogether.

Now we need to raise money from new sources, to keep all of SEJ's terrific programs going. If you can donate to SEJ's operating budget, great. If you can't, maybe you know of a foundation — or a person who shares SEJ's values — who can.

That search for new funding is Job One for SEJ board members, perhaps for years to come. There's no telling how long the bad economy will last, how many more bubbles will burst in the months and years ahead.

This is also a time of transition for SEJ's leadership. You elected four new board members last October, and there are likely to be more seats on the board opening up this coming October.

I encourage anyone interested to seriously consider running for the board.

Why should you run? Because you think it would be fun to meet up with like-minded folks every three or four months and explore different places. Because it would look good on your resumé. Because you know that serving on the board is a good way to learn new skills — God forbid, even management skills! Because you care about SEJ, and want to help guide this group into the future. Because you've gotten a lot from SEJ, and now you want to give something back.

What can you really expect from being on the board? I'm not saying it's not rewarding, but I'd be lying if I didn't also say it's a lot of work. For instance, if you become a board member, you'll:

- Look at budget spreadsheets and comprehend the nitty-gritty details;
- Read the bylaws and election rules, and membership policies and awards contest rules and financial policies and partnership guidelines;
- Get comfortable with Robert's Rules of Order;
- Serve on not one but two committees — at a minimum;
- Do SEJ work between board meetings;
- Spend time during the annual conference presiding over the membership table, answering questions, accepting donations and guiding people to the next event (which you'll be missing);
- Research, call or visit foundations which might give to SEJ; edit or even write up SEJ proposals to funders;
- Ask potential donors for money directly;
- Write out your own check to SEJ (the SEJ board has sought, and achieved 100% participation by board members ever since we created the 21st Century Fund. It's how any organization's board



of directors starts the process of fundraising);

And yes, you get to play a little too — create exciting new content for sej.org, scout future conference sites, launch new programs like the Fund for Environmental Journalism, and best of all — forge new friendships with SEJ's wonderful board and staff.

There's more here (<http://tinyurl.com/2eor7td>) and you should feel free to contact me, or any current or former board member, if you have questions about the experience.

New blood is always good to keep the cobwebs away, but it's also important to keep gut-checking ourselves, to make sure we're sticking to SEJ's founding values. And if we want to go somewhere new, to be sure it's somewhere the majority of members want to go.

More and more often these days, there are calls on the list-serve for SEJ to take a stand on environmental issues, to cudgel British Petroleum for despoiling the Gulf of Mexico, to protest Massey Energy Company's record of unsafe mining conditions, to bash government agencies for their failure to stop any and all of the above.

It's one thing to call for better access and more transparency for journalists, but it's quite another to speak out on behalf of our 1500 members, to see if SEJ has enough political capital to change the causes of environmental degradation. That would be a mistake.

SEJ painstakingly earned that clout, over the past 20 years of our existence, precisely because we are politically neutral operating as a non-partisan, non-advocacy, public service journalism organization. John Palen wrote a wonderful paper more than ten years ago about SEJ's commitment to objectivity and independence, which still rings true today — <http://www.sej.org/sejs-history> — well worth a read for any prospective boardie.

I'm a great believer in providing context to news stories — the history of an issue, the background of the personalities involved in an issue, the connection to economics or politics. But in the end, journalism is about following facts, wherever they take us, even when they take us places we didn't expect.

SEJ's mission is to serve that search for facts. We do it a lot of different ways: by helping each other understand the complexities of science, by providing story ideas through conferences and tip sheets, by protecting openness and transparency in government, and by maintaining a richly knowledgeable and experienced network of people on the beat, especially in this transitional period for the news business.

That bottom line is not going to change.

We welcome students and teachers, and people who meet our guidelines and share our mission. We welcome journalists whether you're part-time or full-time, print or broadcast, rural or national, American or a citizen of another country.

We are a journalists' group, run by journalists, for journalists. You've been enjoying the "for journalists" part. Maybe it's time to
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PHOTO © GUDMUNDUR PÁLL ÓLAFSSON



The eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano in April, 2010.

Report from Iceland

Eruption of 'shy' volcano suddenly surprises the experts and the world

Text and photographs by GUDMUNDUR PÁLL ÓLAFSSON

Surprise may be the perfect word to describe the volcanic eruption of the stratovolcano Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland. The tongue twister (for outsiders) Eyja-fjalla-jökull, which means *island-mountains-glacier*, is probably one of the oldest live volcanoes in Iceland, but certainly not among the most active ones.

For most people, Eyjafjallajökull was simply a beautiful glacial cone rising 1600 meters above sea level, praised in romantic poetry for its grandeur. It had erupted three times after the settlement of Iceland — in 920, 1612, and 1821. All those eruptions were small in the geohistory of Iceland, as is the present one, which has caused so much chaos across Europe, in trans-Atlantic flights, and numerous cancellations of air transport between Asia, Africa and Europe.

Icelandic meteorologists, geologists, and geophysicists have an extensive alert system. Yet this eruption came as a total surprise when, on April 14, a 1 kilometer-long fissure gaped and immediately melted the 250 meter-thick ice-filled crater, produc-

ing tremendous explosions.

Prior to this event, there had been three months of seismic unrest during which magma rose slowly and surfaced on March 20 when a small fissure opened on the nearby Fimmvörðuháls. It was a dwarf-like outbreak considered a “tourist-eruption.” Now we understand that the activity shifted a few kilometers west to the very crater of Eyjafjallajökull.

The present eruption changed everything. What was not expected was realized; a minor, local eruption became a global economic problem, and the shy volcano overnight became the most famous volcano in Iceland.

Dr. Haraldur Sigurdsson, an eminent professor emeritus of volcanology, puts the explosion in perspective: “What Eyjafjallajökull has done above all is to force upon us a visceral awareness of our interconnected world — woven together by the crisscrossing of airline routes. The impact of the eruption is an earth-systems science experiment in progress. It dramatically shows the links of many of the components of the earth, with impacts on the

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To strengthen the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media to advance public understanding of environmental issues

The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) is a non-profit, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of SEJ is to strengthen the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media to advance public understanding of environmental issues. As a network of journalists and academics, SEJ offers national and regional conferences, publications and online services. SEJ's membership of more than 1,500 includes journalists working for print and electronic media, educators, and students. Non-members are welcome to attend SEJ's annual conferences and to subscribe to the quarterly *SEJournal*.

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SEJournal Submission Deadlines

Spring Issue	February 1
Summer Issue	May 1
Fall Issue	August 1
Winter Issue	November 1

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ocean, atmosphere, climate and biota — and on the economy.”

How can such a relatively small eruption have such a tremendous impact? Although not fully understood yet, it has to do with the nature of the eruption, and the sophisticated technical world we live in.

In most Icelandic volcanoes, the magma is basaltic. The magma of Eyjafjallajökull, however, is andesite, and its gas content may play a leading role in how it behaves. The gas pressure in the viscous magma forced great gas bubbles to the surface and produced huge explosions, and the lava exploded into extremely fine ash when the boiling andesite magma met meltwater in the crater. The flour-like dust became airborne and stayed aloft longer than usual with far reaching effects on aviation, small and large businesses, not least of which were tourism and travel companies, affecting millions of people.

Most Icelanders are nonchalant about this eruption, although we think it an exciting and spectacular event. We are used to them, as there is a volcanic outbreak every ten years or so. Here, air and road travel has been affected by the eruption, but there is no direct threat from the volcano and no one has died or been injured. Only a few farms directly under the volcano have been damaged by the ash fall, and now that the volcanic activity has changed into a lava



PHOTO © GUDMUNDUR PÁLL ÓLAFSSON

Author and photographer Gudmundur Páll Ólafsson reporting on the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption in Iceland.

flow from the crater, volunteers are going to the region by the hundreds to help farmers to clear the ash off the farmland.

In the last few years, the active volcanic zone of Iceland has shown considerable seismic unrest. This unrest may be caused by the melting of the glaciers and gradual rise of the landmass, as is thought to have been the case when the ice cap of the last Ice Age melted. Then tremendous volcanic activity broke out. We may therefore expect intense eruptions in times to come. That is not the same as saying that the next eruption in Iceland will have an impact on aviation or climate around the world. Volcanoes are unpredictable monsters. We only know that there are larger and more powerful volcanoes in our explosive landscape than Eyjafjallajökull — some of them buried under deep layers of ice, others open to the sky — and some of these or none may burst open in the near future.

While the Eyjafjallajökull surprised us all, the fact that volcanism in Iceland can have a global effect should surprise nobody. In 1783 a 25 kilometer-long fissure named Lakagígar (The Craters of Mt. Laki) erupted and produced a sulfuric aerosol mass that affected temperatures around the globe for three years.

SEJ member Gudmundur Páll Ólafsson is a writer, naturalist and nature photographer who lives in Stykkishólmur, about 230km from the volcano. He can be reached at gpo4444@gmail.com.

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For applications and information, visit:

www.colorado.edu/journalism/cej

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Even though I'm in the middle of my mating dance (she loves this move from Saturday Night Fever) I'm going to walk over to my computer and make a donation to the new SEJ

Fund for Environmental Journalism

Why? Because Journalists struggling in the current media environment can apply for a grant from the fund to cover project-relevant travel, training, research materials, database analysis, consultants, and other direct expenses related to the applicant's reporting project or entrepreneurial venture.

Go to www.sej.org and read how it all works ... and more important, make a donation to support this new fund for environmental journalists.

(Now where IS she?)



SEJ launches new grant program for reporting projects

The Society of Environmental Journalists is launching the Fund for Environmental Journalism, a new program offering grants of up to \$2,500 to help underwrite environmental reporting projects and entrepreneurial ventures.

In an era of diminishing newsroom resources, the Fund for Environmental Journalism provides incentives and support to qualified journalists and news organizations to enhance the quantity and quality of reporting on environmental issues.

“We wanted to help somehow, without competing with our own members,” SEJ President Christy George said. “The idea that emerged from months of discussion was the Fund for Environmental Journalism.

“These grants will help environmental journalists struggling in the current media environment to redefine themselves, or their platform,” George added.

In January, the SEJ Board of Directors set aside \$10,000 to fund two rounds of grants in 2010.

Any United States, Canada or Mexico-based journalist working independently or on the staff of either a for-profit or non-profit news organization may apply for an FEJ grant. Applications for the first round of grants are due July 15, 2010. The deadline for the second round of applications is Nov. 15, 2010.

Grant money from the FEJ may be used for project-relevant travel, training, research materials, database analysis, consultants, and other direct expenses related to the applicant’s reporting project or entrepreneurial venture.

“The Fund is meant to be an incubator for new ideas, projects and training,” George said. “While the grants may not add up to a lot of dollars, each one is meant to provide that critical bit of capital needed to launch something new, or reinvent something old.”

Applicants need not be SEJ members but must meet criteria for SEJ membership. Disqualifiers include paid employment in public relations, media relations or lobbying on environment-related issues.

For more information on the Fund for Environmental Journalism and application instructions visit the Fund Overview page. (www.sej.org/initiatives/fund+for+environmental+journalism/overview)

SEJ is a non-partisan, educational membership association of more than 1,500 professional journalists, students and educators serving communities in the United States, Canada, Mexico and 27 other countries. It is dedicated to credible and robust journalism that informs and engages society on environmental issues.

Funding for the FEJ comes from SEJ’s earned income and individual donations. SEJ is a 501(c)(3) organization, so all donations are tax deductible. More information on donating to SEJ is at <http://www.sej.org>.

Important Upcoming Dates

July 31 - SEJ board meeting in Louisville, KY
Contact the SEJ office if you plan to attend.

August 16 - last day to register for the SEJ conference and get the low rate of \$190.

September 1 - Deadline for membership applications to be considered in time for conference registration as a member

September 6 - Deadline to book Hilton Garden Inn for SEJ conference.

September 11 - Deadline to book Holiday Inn for SEJ conference.

September 13 - Deadline to cancel in writing for conference registration refund less \$50 processing fee.

September 17 - Deadline to book Doubletree Hotel Missoula Edgewater

October 13-17 - SEJ's 20th annual conference opening day at the University of Montana - Missoula. Walk-in registrations welcome.

continued from page 4 **SEJ President's Report**

consider the “by journalists” part?

Watch your inbox for the “call for candidates” — due about 90 days before the election, which will be held at SEJ’s annual conference in Missoula, Montana. You’ll have about 45 days to declare your candidacy in whatever membership category you belong. Read all the fine-print here: <http://www.sej.org/about-sej/election-policies>

You’ll also need to write a ONE-PAGE candidate’s statement outlining your qualifications and goals — in other words, your platform. Think about it.

Christy George, SEJ president, is special projects producer for Oregon Public Broadcasting.

On-line journalism begins to fill the void after newspaper world's decay

By BILL DAWSON

Marla Cone had been a newspaper reporter for three decades when she resigned her job as the *Los Angeles Times*' senior environmental writer two years ago to become editor-in-chief of *Environmental Health News*. Since joining *EHN*, Cone has overseen a number of major changes at the not-for-profit online publication, including the addition of original coverage to the site's aggregation of others' coverage.

Cone worked at the *Times* for 18 years, pioneering a beat dedicated to the sustained, in-depth coverage of the risks that environmental pollutants pose to public health, wildlife and ecosystems. Her experience and expertise were highly compatible, then, with *EHN*'s self-proclaimed goals: "The mission of *Environmental Health News* is to advance the public's understanding of environmental health issues by publishing its own journalism and providing access to worldwide news about a variety of subjects related to the health of humans, wildlife and ecosystems." (Pete Myers, *EHN*'s founder and publisher, is also publisher of a companion Web site, *The Daily Climate*. Myers was instrumental in SEJ's founding.)

Cone served on SEJ's board and has received many journalistic honors. They include the Scripps Howard Meeman Award for environmental reporting, which she won two times. She is the author of *Silent Snow: The Poisoning of the Arctic*, which was published in 2005 and was a finalist for the Communication Award of the National Academies. Her research for that book was supported by a Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation, normally awarded only to scientists. She was the first teaching fellow in environmental journalism at the University of California-Berkeley, where she taught for two semesters in the Graduate School of Journalism.

Q: Why did you decide to leave the *Los Angeles Times*, where you had established yourself as one of the environment beat's most widely known and respected reporters? Was it tough to leave newspaper work?

A: The *Times* was a great newspaper, and I never envisioned leaving it. I had great freedom to write the stories that I thought were important, and I pioneered the environmental health beat. But I saw things seriously eroding there. The staff was literally cut in half. A great newspaper was being destroyed by a greedy owner. We just couldn't cover things the way we had before, or the way that our readers deserved. I really didn't want to stick around and watch it erode even more.

So when I was offered the opportunity to start up this venture at *Environmental Health News*, to run my own show, and to be at the forefront of new media and foundation-funded journalism, I



PHOTO COURTESY MARLA CONE

Marla Cone

couldn't turn it down. That's not to say that I didn't feel great sadness. I happened to be in Chicago right after I told the editor I wanted to take a buy-out, and I wandered into the *Chicago Tribune*'s lobby. I looked up and read all those great quotations about the importance of a free press, and I panicked. I thought: I've been a newspaper reporter for 30 years. How could I abandon such a great institution? But I realized that most newspapers were in disarray, and unlike many of my colleagues who left, I was able to remain a journalist.

Q: Tell me about your job at *Environmental Health News*: What are your responsibilities as editor-in-chief? Do you also oversee *The Daily Climate*? Generally speaking, what do you want *EHN* to accomplish?

A: As editor-in-chief, I am in charge of our enterprise content, which we began with my hiring in the fall of 2008. My mission is to publish stories on topics that other journalists aren't tackling. I write stories, I oversee our paid interns from Michigan State and New York University — we have four at the moment — and I assign and edit freelance stories. I work closely with Douglas Fischer, editor of *The Daily Climate*. We're a great team. Our stories run not just on our own sites, but at *Scientific American* and at various newspapers. I also oversee our aggregation to make sure that our front page reflects the best journalism of the day and that our standards remain high for posting stories. We don't simply aggregate; we hand-select the best environmental journalism for readers of Above the Fold, *EHN*'s daily email update, and environmentalhealthnews.org. I also help train our Science Fellows. This is a passion of mine, since most scientists need help communicating with the public and the press, especially now, with fewer journalists around.

Q: There's a lot of discussion about the role that nonprofit journalism organizations can play in filling some of the gaps created by cutbacks in the traditional media. Was this a motive behind adding original coverage to *EHN*?

A: Definitely. We are trying to fill the voids left in traditional media. Obviously, those voids are huge — thousands of reporters have lost their jobs. But by wisely choosing which stories to cover, we can provide the public with high-quality journalism about environmental health and climate change issues that are no longer covered by the mainstream press. Some terrific environmental journalism has come from foundation-funded media — *EHN*, ProPublica and others. The *San Francisco Chronicle* has published two of our stories (by Jane Kay) on their front page. The irony is Jane left the *Chronicle* but because of *EHN*, San

Francisco readers can still read some of her great stories. We have been able to hire many out-of-work journalists.

Q: You undoubtedly pay as much attention to news coverage of the subjects that *EHN* follows as anyone around. Please share some of your impressions about the current state of that coverage and any key trends that you see. Is my assumption correct that there's less coverage than there used to be? Any particularly telling examples of issues or subjects that aren't getting enough coverage?

A: I think both the quality and the quantity have declined. Many of the best and most experienced environmental journalists have left newspapers. And one of the areas that is the hardest hit is coverage of environmental health. It's the most difficult part of the beat, and most of it is not covered at all and the coverage that remains is pretty superficial. California has been especially hit hard with the loss of many experienced environmental writers. Air pollution there is not well-covered anymore, and that is disturbing because it ranks among California's most important issues because of the impact on health and the economy. Newspapers just don't have the staff — or frankly, the interest — to cover these issues. They think it's a luxury they can no longer afford to cover. But they're wrong. They misjudge the public's interest in the health effects of diesel exhaust in neighborhoods or chemicals in consumer products. We can't leave readers to find out about these things from inaccurate, poorly reported websites, blogs or special interests. Most specialized journalism is hurting. I think science coverage has had the most severe declines.

Then again, there has been some great stuff. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's* coverage of BPA. The *New York Times* wrote a long series on drinking water contaminants. ProPublica is doing terrific, ongoing coverage of natural gas drilling. Climate change coverage, in particular, is booming. New media outlets are starting to step in.

Q: Are there any recurring themes in the scientists' critiques of news coverage that appear in your Media Review department?

A: In most cases, it's an issue of the reporter needing to dig a bit deeper. Often, someone will write about the roots of cancer or Parkinson's, and not even mention potential environmental causes. Or they don't bother to adequately explain the health effects of mercury or PCBs in fish. It's not like this is some big, hidden secret. Most reporters seem afraid to be analytical. That's what great environmental journalism is — the ability to explain technical issues in a way that is both consumer-friendly and true to the science. And you must incorporate into your coverage all the knowledge that scientists have learned over the past few decades. For example, when you write about flame retardants, you need to say that levels of PBDEs had been doubling in American women's breast milk every five years, and that they are still hitchhiking to the Arctic and contaminating polar bears, and that they are similar to the old PCBs that left a huge, costly legacy. It's this perspective and analysis that makes coverage of these issues so powerful — whether it's old media or new media.

Q: Tell me a little about freelance opportunities at *EHN*. What kinds of people and stories are you looking for?

A: We're looking for experienced journalists who can write about environmental health and climate topics not covered well

by “mainstream” press. Our freelance topics have included gray whale migration off the Pacific coast, balsamic vinegars tainted with lead, the dangers of mercury spills in school classrooms and the push for green pharmaceuticals in Europe.

Q: Looking ahead, are there any new features or further changes being planned at *EHN*? Any initiatives aimed at getting your original coverage before a wider audience? There's talk of non-profits linking up in different ways and there have been a number of recent cases of collaboration between some new non-profits and traditional, commercial outlets. Have you been thinking about or discussing such ventures with other news organizations?

A: Our goal is to reach out to a bigger audience with our stories. We already are collaborating with other traditional media. Our articles have run in the *SF Chronicle*, the *Oakland Tribune*, *Scientific American* and the *LA Times* blog. And we have plans for much more. We are creating a wire service for our stories and developing plans to work with other foundation-funded media to distribute their stories, too. We have two new collaborative projects in the works — one with another foundation-funded journalism group and another with a traditional one — that I'm very excited about. Our biggest frustration has been breaking down the barriers of traditional media but we think we are at the tipping point for that.

Bill Dawson is assistant editor of the SEJournal.

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For reporters roving the world, do your homework and take a deep breath

By NAOMI LUBICK

PHOTO COURTESY DALE WILLMAN



"Tools of the trade and foreign currency, taken on the tacky bedspread in my hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi." Dale Willman

Dale Willman has some travel stories that might make your toes curl — like the time he unwittingly snapped photos of an army installation in Zambia and was nearly detained, an eight-hour drive from the nearest U.S. embassy, on a Friday afternoon.

Or another mistaken photo incident — this photo not actually snapped — when an airport official in Rwanda nearly confiscated his camera, long before 9/11 had made Americans leery of taking photos in airports.

Despite these negative experiences, Willman is always excited to report abroad, which he has done for CNN and CBS Radio. He recently received a Fulbright scholarship to go to Indonesia for 10 months to teach local journalists about environmental reporting; he has also taught in Zambia and Malawi.

I asked for tips from Willman and some other journalists who travel internationally to do their reporting. They all suggested that before you set off on your voyage, you have to be prepared — mentally, technically, and physically.

"You have to understand that things are off limits in other countries that you never expected," Willman said, recalling that the armed military men in Zambia accused him of being a terrorist. "It's easy to fall back on stereotypes," or the clichés that help a reporter cover breaking news fast at home, Willman added. While traveling abroad, "You have to break those habits to understand and accurately report."

But before you can report, you have to prepare to go. Willman starts with a checklist, according to what he might need from his kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and so on. He and other reporters advise packing light, and suggest using light travel backpacks and other gear that will keep you comfortable. Some little tricks also help, like stuffing socks and underwear into empty spaces in your shoes. Tightly rolling your clothes takes less room; compression straps will compact them more, Willman says. He tries to take the bare minimum, and expects to do laundry with hand soap at some point.

As a radio reporter, Willman has found he can record directly to his computer for podcasts. And as technology has shrunk, he buys smaller devices such as flip camcorders and mini audio recorders that produce relatively high-quality files. Larger flashcards to store that information also have become cheaper.

Redundancy is key, he says. Willman brings extra inexpensive thumb drives with several gigabytes of memory, and this fall, he will pass them on as gifts to the journalism students he will be teaching in Indonesia.

Willman also raves about the Kindle: the relatively light electronic reader can transport a stack of books and research papers in its compact frame. And for all of these electronics, Willman also packs extra power: converters for plugs all over the world, a rechargeable battery pack (newer chargers can handle from 100 to 250 volts), and a package of batteries he might need for his recording equipment. (One suggestion for where to find converters is travel specialty store Magellan's, www.magellans.com. I am tempted by portable solar battery chargers, which look like rollable photovoltaic sheets, but I haven't tried them myself and they remain expensive. See www.earthtechproducts.com/p2006.html.)

But it's not the technology that makes the story. Research is key for preparing to understand your destination and to cover the story, Willman said. Definitely call and email potential sources before you go, if only to confirm that they will not be on vacation when you show up.

Willman's most successful strategy: contact researchers close to home to find out if they have relationships with local research institutions or universities abroad. While searching for possible environmental stories in Malawi, Willman called a scientist at a university near his home in upstate New York. He serendipitously stumbled upon someone trying to establish a research center with local scientists in Monkey Bay, on Lake Malawi, "exactly where I was going," Willman said of one of his trips.

What made the U.S./Malawi research connection even more surprising is the fact that Monkey Bay is not exactly a bustling place. Willman emphasized that if you are traveling to such remote locations, be ready to be out of touch.

The last reporting trip abroad that I took was in relatively well-networked Spain. But when my source and I reached a remote part of the island of Mallorca, cell phone coverage was scarce, and I had no email or Internet access. But my source was plugged in with his iPhone and able to find weather information and email when he had an adequate signal.

I do not have an iPhone, and that connectivity might have

helped me: my trip ended as the eruption of the Iceland volcano Eyjafjallajökull began, diverting flights and closing airports across Europe. I did not know about it until I got to the airport the afternoon of my departure.

I was lucky — my flight took off without a hitch. But had I been stranded in Mallorca, I may have faced difficulties: I found out when I got home that my credit card company was on the verge of cutting off my card because I had neglected to alert them that I would be traveling abroad. I had extra euro notes, which came in handy, especially when I was not near an ATM or in a place where credit cards were accepted (and many places, even in developed countries, still consider credit cards outside the norm).

In isolated locations, self-reliance is important. Often you cannot rely on an embassy, so make sure you have contact information for a local person if possible. And stay calm and aware: all the skills you use to observe a story also might keep you safe. Sometimes, your journalist's eye will catch a menacing situation, giving you time to think ahead about how to defuse any difficulties. And if you can't calm things down before they happen, staying relaxed may help you deal carefully and safely with whatever comes up.

Being aware that a different culture may react to certain behaviors very differently than your own helps, as does accepting the validity of that different value system — at least for the moment. After Willman snapped his picture of the military base in Zambia, he was quickly surrounded by men in army fatigues, upset and ready to prove their power against an interloping American.

As soon as he realized he could not understand what the military men were saying, Willman quickly asked another bus passenger to be his translator. The boy was bullied by the armed men, and Willman had to step in to say forcefully that he had asked the boy to translate. It was a tough few hours, and he could barely hold back his frustration, Willman told me during a recent Skype conversation.

Eventually, his group was allowed to continue their trip to the Mfweh Preserve. When they were safely down the road, Willman couldn't help himself: He flipped the military installation an American bird, to let off some steam — but only when he was out of sight.

See more of Willman's travels at <http://fieldnotes.greenpress.com/>

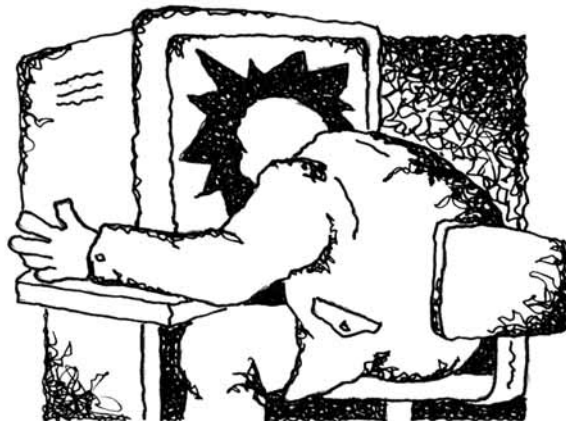
More advice from other roving reporters I queried:

- Travel insurance might be helpful if you need medical care or you need to rearrange your travel plans on short notice. You can sometimes get a basic evacuation policy from your primary health insurance, which may be worth the extra yearly fee particularly if you are traveling in a place where you do not trust local hospitals to give you adequate treatment.
- If you have prescription drugs or even vitamins that you take regularly, make sure you get extra doses. And do not check them — ever! Also, take a prescription from a doctor to use at a local pharmacy, if needed. Bring extra antibiotics, generic painkillers, diarrhea meds, etc.
- Tell your credit card companies your itinerary and for how long you will be traveling. Otherwise, they may assume your credit card has been stolen, and refuse to authorize charges.

- Learn a little of the language and do not assume that most people can speak English (unless you are heading to the UK).
- See if the local tourist office can place you in a private home, or find friends of friends to meet for coffee or a city tour. It's good to meet people outside of your work.
- Find out about the status of journalists in the country you are visiting, as some places may have different ideas about free speech and press. That could have implications for speaking to sources, taking photos and recording tape, and what kind of official documentation you might need.
- Bring business cards and a letter from your editor stating that you are a journalist, to demonstrate credibility.
- Check the status of your passport, and find out what the rules are for visas and passport validity for the country you plan to visit (sometimes your passport must have an expiration date at least six months into the future in order to be admitted to the country). Leave copies of your paperwork (passport, visa, credit cards, etc.) at home with someone you know you can reach should you need them.
- If you decide you need a translator, visit journalism job boards and your alumni organizations (college, graduate school) to see if people have contacts or have hired fixers or translators where you are going. Consider hiring a local university student, as often they have good enough language skills and interesting perspectives.
- Consider buying or renting a local cell phone, or buy a phone that can take a pre-paid local SIM card — your sources are more likely to call you back on a local number, and pay-as-you-go can be cheaper than paying overseas cell phone charges. Skype does not work in Zambia, for example, though you might be able to use it to stay in touch in places with a good Internet connection.
- You might want to bring little gifts. A geologist I know brings erasers and pencils to her field site in Nepal, as well as small plastic rulers. Willman's gift of thumbdrives may seem expensive, but it's very useful, and one of my reporter colleagues says she wishes she had a Polaroid camera, so she could snap photos and immediately share them with her subjects in Bolivia.
- Some things are going to take a lot longer than you expect, and you have to adapt to the idea that you're on a journey, not on a schedule. And remember, local customs — like siesta hour — can throw off your travel schedule or your sources' schedules.
- Take lots of photos, write down people's names, and try to record notes on local color and your thoughts on your experiences as they happen, as much as possible. You never know what might prove useful for a story once you get home, and you may not have the chance to get back to fact check the name of the local farmer you met on your way.
- Most important: ENJOY! Getting paid to travel for your work and to report abroad is an amazing benefit of being a journalist.

Freelance journalist Naomi Lubick is based in Zurich and Folsom, Calif., but is about to move to Stockholm, where she will continue to cover environmental scientists' research. She has written for Environmental Science & Technology, Nature, Science, and Earth (formerly known as Geotimes), among other publications. Read some of her published work at <http://www.naomilubick.com>, or about her reporting adventures at her blog, <http://naomilubick.wordpress.com>

Free online tools can broaden your reach and productivity



By LAURA SILVER

You're on deadline, your version of Microsoft Word crashed and won't restart. Even though you saved a backup copy of the file on a USB drive (whew, good going), you have no way to retrieve it without enlisting the help of a small army of information technology personnel — or so you think. Do you curse, sigh, try to restart the thing a half dozen times in vain and then resign yourself to asking your editor for a last-minute extension based on those dreaded, ever-lurking “technical difficulties”?

Not so fast. You have options. If you have an Internet connection, you have immediate access to a range of free tools that can serve as a backup to — or a replacement for — big name software packages. As a stand-in for Microsoft Word, try Open Office's Writer program. The download won't cost you anything and it can read from files in Microsoft Word and export files in a range of file types including .doc, .docx and .rtf. But be sure to double check the imported file for any inconsistencies, with special attention to bullets, lists, headers, footers and other instances of fancy formatting.

Not only can open-source web tools help you save face, they can also save you money and help ease you into a more tech-savvy existence.

Open Sesame — Sharing the magic behind abracadabra moments

Chances are you're already making use of some open-source tools. If you use Firefox as a browser or have looked at a WordPress blog, you've already made contact with the world of open source. Welcome.

Open source is a philosophy and a practice of sharing behind-the-scenes information on how things work. Message boards and online forums are examples of sharing information in a common space, an electronic public square. When it comes to online tools, open source means making the source code accessible, visible and available to others. It's about transparency.

I found out about the extent of open-source software a few years ago, when I was hanging out with a group of techies who spoke in computer terms that had never come up on my radar, never mind my computer screen. I was envious of my developer friends' collaboration sessions, which usually involved two humans, three computer screens and countless developers around the world who shared their knowledge, gratis. I learned to reconsider my own prejudices about computer geeks' communication skills. The ones I met have an intimate way of talking to each other and, when pressed, they converted select terms into English. Turns out their methods of collaboration — not to mention their handiwork — can be a huge boon to the less tech-minded among us. I'd

heard of Linux and Unix open-source operating systems and even knew a few people who employed these hands-on systems, but I had no idea they came with such a strong virtual community that shared advice and support.

Plus, I liked the idea of taking control of the means of production (homage to Gutenberg, anyone?) and sidestepping quasi-mandatory and costly upgrades. I wasn't ready to replace my operating system whole hog. But I was enthralled enough to download and dabble in some open-source software. It's free, as in “free speech” not as in “free beer,” as developers like to point out. You won't be charged for a download, but if you like what you find, you can make a donation to support the cause.

In the journalism world, it can seem a bit strange to borrow from other peoples' work and modify it without attribution. But open source comes with its own set of guidelines, as stipulated by the Open Source Initiative, that governs redistribution, source code, modifications, licensing and prohibits discrimination in dissemination. Read the specifics <http://www.opensource.org/docs/osd>.

Skip the small print (because there isn't any)

There are no hidden secrets or features in open-source projects, which means there is no small print — all the info is out in the open. These free downloads provide user support in the form of FAQs, online user manuals and community forums. People in the open-source community actually read this stuff — and they expect us to do the same. That means we are invited to take an active role in finding the answers to our questions and solutions to snafus. Expect a learning curve and get ready to employ your most important internal tool: an open mind.

Ready to give it a go?

Open-source software can help you:

Work with words, numbers, graphics and databases

Open Office offers functionality similar to Microsoft Office. Writer is analogous to Word, Calc is like Excel, Impress is the open-source version of Powerpoint and Base is similar to Access.

<http://why.openoffice.org/>

[screenshot of Writer:

<http://why.openoffice.org/images/writer-big.png>]

Edit photos

When my programmer friend first mentioned GIMP, I thought he was using a slur, but the name is an acronym for GNU Image Manipulation Program, based on the GNU Project launched in 1984,

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Media play key, sometimes misleading, role in public's view of climate research

By JAN KNIGHT

Facing challenges from global-warming skeptics, journalists are key players in the effort to inform the public about new and fundamental climate change, researchers concur.

But the media may also play a role in misleading the public, especially when journalists attempt a “false balance” in stories, giving equal treatment to climate science skeptics who question the validity of climate science studies.

Two other researchers suggested that the more “scientifically legitimate ‘other side’” of the climate change story is that climate change might be much worse than the majority of scientists now predict.

Several academic papers published this year focused on recent surveys showing that public faith in climate science is declining, which the authors linked to recent news reports about leaked email conversations among climate scientists and an error in a recent climate change report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Ironically, the editors of *Nature* wrote in their March 11 issue, this is occurring just as “the fundamental understanding of the climate system, although far from complete, is stronger than ever,” and they urged climate scientists to acknowledge “that their relationship with the media really matters” and to be clearer in explaining “the underlying science and the potential consequences of policy decisions” related to global warming.

In an editorial that took a more critical view of journalists, writers in the April issue of the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* (WHO) addressed the results of a January 2010 Yale survey showing that, relative to 2008, more U.S. residents believe that scientists disagree about whether global warming is occurring (40 percent in 2010, up from 33 percent in 2008) and fewer Americans believe that global warming is caused by human activities (47 percent in 2010, down from 57 percent in 2008). The results were based on a survey of 1,001 respondents age 18 and older and with a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The editorial writers, who work for the WHO Public Health and Environment Department, noted that the Yale survey results came at a time when public health experts are paying much more attention to global warming impacts, yet the survey indicated



this emphasis might be misplaced.

But, they argued, the “conclusion that climate change is happening, and

is due mainly to human activities, is based on well-established physics, supported by a large and coherent body of theoretical and observational evidence.” Further, they wrote, studies show that most climatologists publishing findings in peer-reviewed journals — 97 percent in one study — agree with these conclusions, which the writers described as “equivalent to the expert consensus that HIV causes AIDS, or that smoking is an important risk factor for lung cancer.”

As for the role of journalists, the WHO writers suggested that “opinions will vary as to how much of this disconnection between the expert assessment and public perceptions is due to failings of the scientists themselves, and how much is due to media coverage ... that provides balance mainly by giving equal weight to extreme opposing positions.”

Giving equal weight to extreme positions in news reports has been described by framing researcher Matthew Nisbet as “false balance.” As some research has shown, false balance arises when journalists, in an effort to be fair, give undue equal time to global warming skeptics who question the validity of climate science and argue that scientists widely disagree about the existence of global warming and/or its causes. Meanwhile, the views of scientists are absent from such reports.

Researchers from the Environmental Studies Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara noted that studies of news about global warming often focus on policy coverage. In their study, the California researchers took a different tack and studied only science news reports about global warming, specifically those summarizing the latest scientific research findings on the subject.

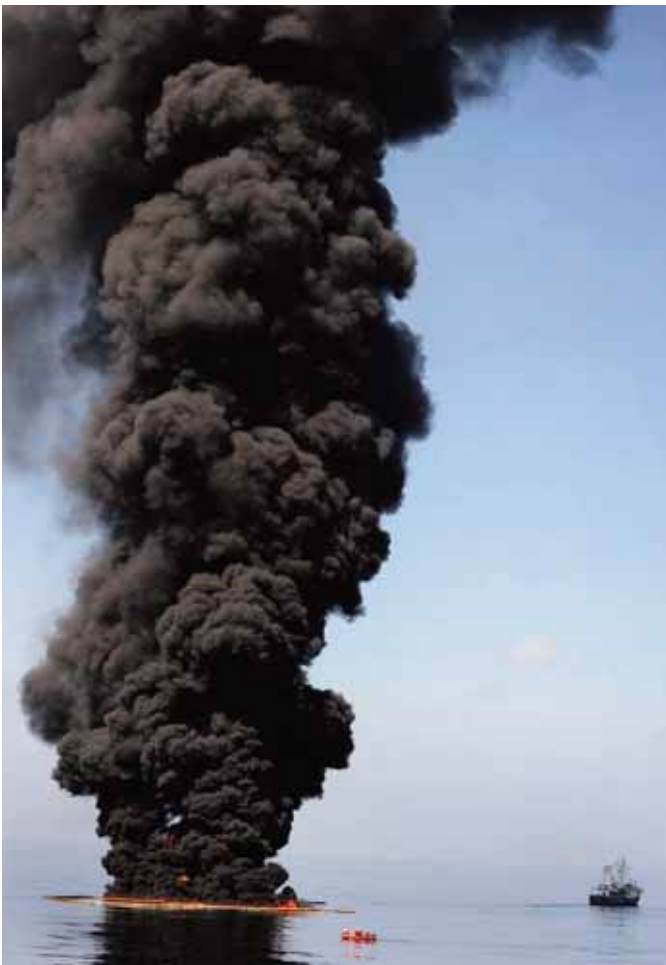
The researchers identified 137 such science news reports published during January/February and July/August from 1998 to 2002 (a time period that matched a previous study) and 2007 to 2008 (a year after the release of the IPCC’s fourth climate assessment) in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*.

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GULF *Spill*



Top: Offshore oil industry supply vessels battle the blazing remnants of the oil rig Deepwater Horizon April 21, 2010. U.S. Coast Guard photo
Below left: Dark clouds of smoke and fire emerge as oil burns during a controlled fire in the Gulf of Mexico, May 6, 2010. U.S. Navy photo by PO2 Justin Stumberg
Below right: Aircraft releases dispersant over oil from Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico on May 5, 2010. U.S. Coast Guard photo by PO3 Stephen Lehmann





Top: Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries personnel net an oiled pelican in Barataria Bay, Louisiana, June 5, 2010. U.S. Coast Guard photo by PO2 John Miller
Below right: A worker cleans up oily waste on Elmer's Island, just west of Grand Isle, Louisiana on May 21, 2010. U.S. Coast Guard photo by PO3 Patrick Kelley

As BP's disastrous Deepwater Horizon spill became America's worst-ever oil disaster, SEJ was learning of journalists having serious problems accessing areas affected by the spill and getting reliable information from BP and the Coast Guard.

Coast Guard officials reminded the approximately 20,000 people responding to the spill that journalists are allowed anywhere they are not causing a safety problem, interfering with cleanup operations or verging onto territory that is normally off-limits, such as a power plant or a prison.

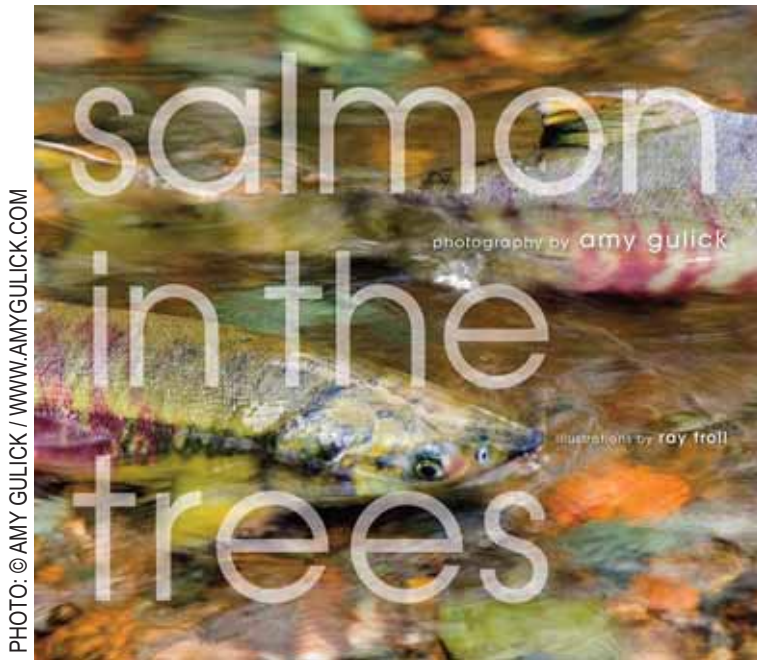
The SEJ *WatchDog Tipsheet's* all-oil-spill issue of June 2 cited eight examples of access restrictions, including an incident in which a CBS camera crew's footage showed Coast Guard officials waving away the journalists with the explanation "It's BP's rules, not ours."

The same week, SEJ President Christy George, in consultation with SEJ's FOI Task Force, contacted Coast Guard officials to express concern that journalists were experiencing unnecessary roadblocks in reporting the news.

SEJ's FOI Task Force remains vigilant. If you are having trouble with the free flow of information on the Gulf oil spill or on any other story you are covering, and believe the situation might require SEJ to speak out, please contact Task Force Chairman Ken Ward at kward@wvgazette.com or the SEJ board's liaison to the FOI Task Force, Robert McClure, at reportermcclure@aol.com.

— Robert McClure





A book's birth

The wild ride of bringing an Alaska story to full bloom as a book

Text and photographs by AMY GULICK

I'm proud to announce the birth of my beautiful new book. *Salmon in the Trees: Life in Alaska's Tongass Rain Forest* was born April 1, 2010. The new arrival has its own Web site, YouTube, and Facebook fan page. After a three-year gestation, mother and book are doing well. As a freelance photographer and writer for almost 20 years, I've published many magazine stories, but *Salmon in the Trees* is my first book. From the moment of conception, it's been a wild ride, but as a zealous new "parent," I would encourage others to take the plunge as well.

Salmon in the Trees tells the story of the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. The Tongass is the largest national forest in the United States, and it contains nearly one-third of the world's rare old-growth coastal temperate rain forest. This is a place where great numbers of grizzly bears, bald eagles, and wild salmon thrive as they have for thousands of years.

It's also a place full of controversy, divisiveness, and bitter battles. After World War II, the U.S. Congress authorized a "timber-first" policy for the Tongass, and awarded 50-year contracts to two companies to harvest trees in return for building giant pulp mills in the Southeast Alaska towns of Ketchikan and Sitka. Five decades of industrial-scale clear-cut logging claimed many of the best stands of public forest most valuable to wildlife. In 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act gave large tracts of the national forest lands back to the indigenous people of the region. The Native corporations clear-cut much of their lands as well. From 1980 to 1990, government subsidies to the tune of \$40 million a year allowed the timber companies to cut unsustainable levels of 4.5 million board feet annually.

In 1990, after a decade of activism called attention to the destruction of the ecosystem, Congress passed the Tongass Timber Reform Act, which revoked the cut levels and repealed the annual subsidy to the timber companies. Both pulp mills shuttered their operations several years later. Communities have had to rebuild themselves, and some have done a better job than others. Commercial fishing and tourism are the mainstays of the local economy. The Tongass is in a state of transition, and the decisions we make today will determine its future.

Enter the idea for the book. A decade ago, I had accompanied a research team to the Tongass and wrote/photographed a story published in *Sierra* ("Remains of the Rainforest," Nov/Dec 2001: <http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200111/good.asp>). For good reasons, but for far too long, the story of the Tongass has typically focused on what's *wrong* with the place. I decided it was time to tell the story of what's *right* about it. I contacted the original members of the research team, and they all agreed that the time was ripe for a hopeful story of the place.

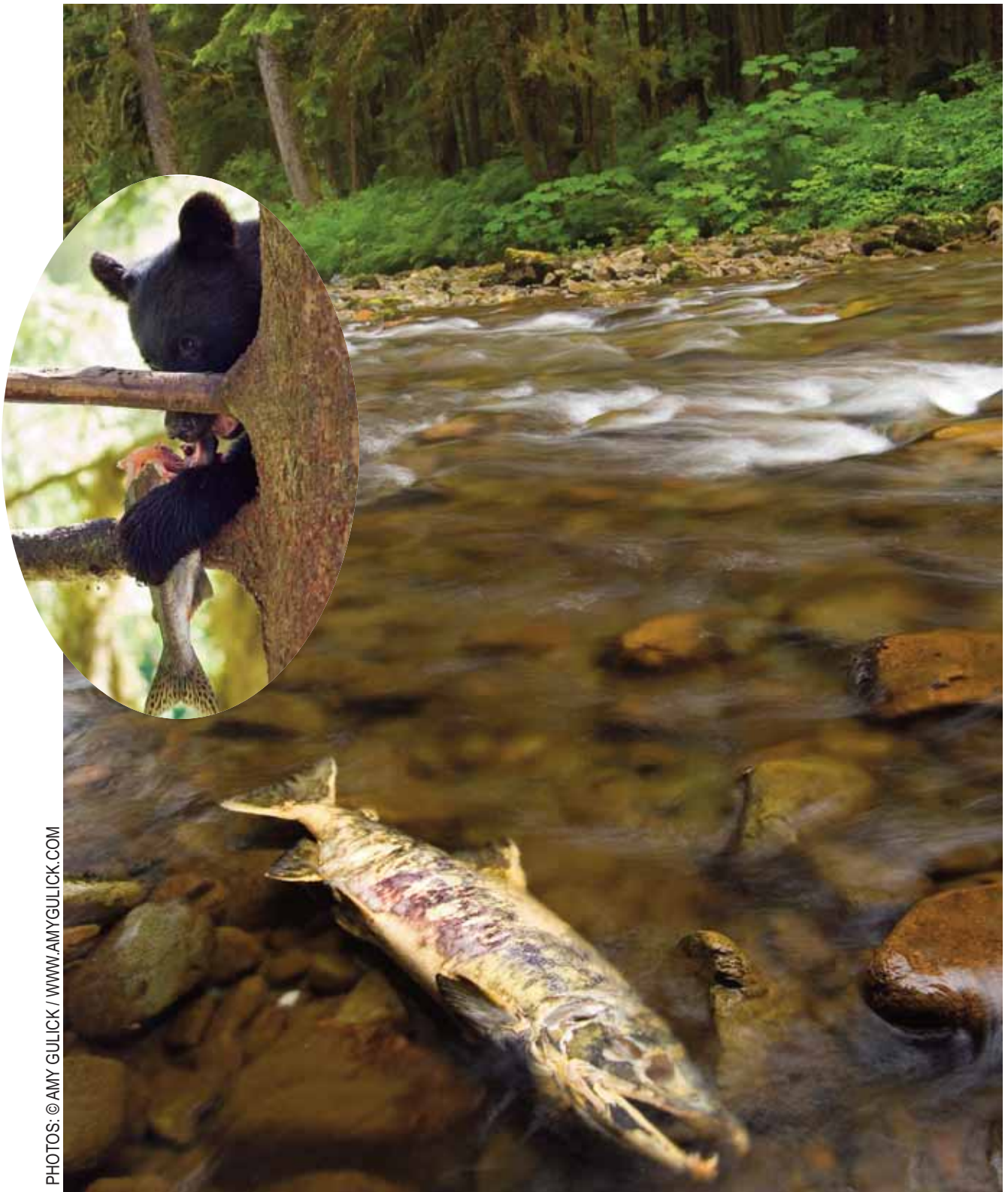
I needed a hook, one that could offer a new look at a decades-old issue and help people understand the significance of the Tongass and why it's worth preserving. I read an article that talked about scientists discovering salmon in trees in this part of the world. The concept was so unexpected that I knew if I could help people understand this one connection, then they would understand the ecology of the ecosystem. In a nutshell, the connection goes something like this: salmon are born in freshwater streams and rivers, they head out to the oceans to mature, and then they return to their birth streams as adults to spawn the



Amy Gulick

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loom



PHOTOS: © AMY GULICK / WWW.AMYGULICK.COM

After spawning, all five Pacific salmon species, like this chum salmon on Douglas Island near Juneau, naturally die, and the nutrients from their bodies enrich streams, estuaries and nearby forests. Inset: Bears are responsible for moving great quantities of salmon from the streams into the forest. Scientists have traced a marine nitrogen found in trees near salmon streams back to the fish.

next generation. When they return, there are lots of hungry animals waiting for them, including bears. Bears often carry salmon away from the streams and into the forests. Researchers say that one bear may carry 40 fish from a stream in 8 hours. With thousands of bears and millions of salmon, this adds up to a lot of

fish carcasses dragged and dropped in the forest. Over time, all of that rich fish fertilizer decomposes into the soil, and the trees absorb it through their roots. Scientists have actually been able to trace a particular form of marine nitrogen in trees near salmon streams. Remarkably, this connection between salmon and trees

still exists in much of the Tongass. And despite the clear-cut logging of the past, enough critical areas are still intact, holding the ecological integrity of the whole ecosystem together. But many of these critical areas are not protected and threats to them include continued logging, mining, industrial-scale tourism, energy development, and global climate change.

The goal of the book is to educate a broad readership about the remarkable connection between salmon and trees, and the relevance to people, both locally and globally, of the ecosystem remaining intact. In addition to providing local and sustainable jobs in commercial fishing and tourism, the Tongass also ranks among the top ten U.S. national forests for its ability to store carbon and regulate global climate. In order to elevate the credibility and visibility of the importance of the Tongass, I asked a number of noted authors to contribute their voices. Carl Safina (*Song for the Blue Ocean*), Douglas Chadwick (long-time *National*

work, which included multiple trips to various parts of the Tongass, often chartering boats and airplanes to take me to some of the more remote areas. Fundraising became a newly acquired skill for me. Luckily, my fiscal sponsor and publisher Braided River is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so all funds raised are considered tax-deductible by the Internal Revenue Service. This is an enormous advantage when approaching private foundations for funding. By law, foundations can only grant funds to registered 501(c)3 charitable organizations. Many foundations do not fund books or videos, and so I narrowed my funding search to those that historically have funded organizations working to preserve the Tongass. Fortunately, those most committed to the Tongass saw the value of a book that could highlight what makes the place special, and they agreed to fund the work. However, I would not have been able to raise a single dollar from any of these foundations without the collaboration of many conservation

PHOTO: © AMY GULICK / WWW.AMYGULICK.COM



Encompassing over 16 million acres, the Tongass National Forest in Alaska is America's biggest. It includes large tracts of the Coast Mountains and over 1,000 islands in the Alexander Archipelago. The coastal temperate rainforest of the Tongass is one of Earth's most rare and biologically rich ecosystems.

Geographic contributor, and author of *The Wolverine Way*), and Brad Matsen (*Titanic's Last Secrets*) are nationally recognized authors. Scientist John Schoen, cultural anthropologist, and Native leader Rosita Worl, and Southeast Alaska naturalist Richard Carstensen are well-known Alaskans, each noted for his/her field of specialty. Since people are such an integral part of the Tongass region, I asked local artist Ray Troll and local writer John Straley to talk about what it's like to live in the area. Ray Troll also contributed his off-beat fish illustrations, for which he's best known. Richard Nelson, a local radio voice and author, recorded an audio CD of a first-hand account of watching grizzly bears fish for salmon. I created all of the 160 photographs, and wrote 11 profiles of local people, as well as several personal essays. The final result is a rich and diverse mix of voices and visuals that bring the Tongass alive.

I didn't have to do a lot of arm twisting to convince all of the contributors to agree to participate — the Tongass pretty much sold itself. And the topic was a perfect fit for my publisher Braided River, the conservation imprint of The Mountaineers Books. But books like this are expensive to create and they don't happen without financial support. I needed to raise funds to cover my field

organizations working to preserve the Tongass. These organizations understood that the book could be used as an effective communications tool for raising awareness about the issues surrounding the Tongass. Because I agreed to incorporate the book into their public outreach efforts, these organizations provided the assurances to the foundations that their funds were being well spent.

Just like raising a child, creating a book like *Salmon in the Trees* takes a village, and collaboration became the theme throughout the entire project. And just like giving birth, the mother vows she'll never do it again. But creative urges, like biological urges, often trump rational thought. So I wouldn't be surprised if *Salmon in the Trees* has a sibling in its future.

Amy Gulick is a freelance photographer and writer. Her work has appeared in Sierra, Audubon, Outdoor Photographer, High Country News, and other publications. To see more of her work, visit www.amygulick.com. Contact her at info@amygulick.com. To learn more about Salmon in the Trees: Life in Alaska's Tongass Rain Forest (Braided River, 2010), visit www.salmoninthetrees.org.



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How the U.S. media fumbled “Climategate” and other climate coverage

By BILL DAWSON

Coverage of environmental issues is a common target of conservative commentators’ critiques of the U.S. news media.

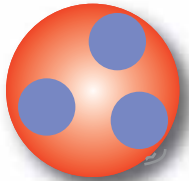
In a prominent recent case, pundits, joined by other climate-change skeptics, alleged that national media did a poor job in covering two stories related to climate science — especially compared to journalists in some other places, such as the United Kingdom.

One of those stories started last November when scientists’ emails were stolen or leaked from Britain’s Climate Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia (UEA)—a subject controversially but successfully dubbed “Climategate.”

The second story involved subsequent revelations about a few errors in the voluminous 2007 reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Did the American media fall short on these stories? To gauge expert opinion on that question, *SEJournal* surveyed four close observers and analysts of the way that climate issues are covered:

- Dan Fagin, director of the Science, Health and Environmental Reporting Program at New York University and a former president of SEJ.



- Douglas Fischer, editor of *The Daily Climate*, a Web publication that aggregates news and publishes its own reports about climate issues.

- Bud Ward, editor of *The Yale Forum on Climate Change & the Media* and a co-founder of SEJ. [Disclosure: I am a regular contributor to the *Yale Forum*.]

- Tom Yulsman, associate professor at the University of Colorado’s School of Journalism & Mass Communication and co-director of the university’s Center for Environmental Journalism.

Responses by Fagin, Fischer and Ward to a list of questions from *SEJournal* are presented first. Below that are some thoughts shared by Fischer and Yulsman, specifically addressing the performance of local and regional media.

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SEJournal: Do you think the U.S. media did fumble the ball in covering these developments, as some critics allege?

Fagin: The coverage was deplorably shallow, though this is hardly surprising in the case of television. What was more disturbing was the failure of many print outlets to get past the shouting and do real analysis of the underlying merit of the respective arguments.

The story of the hacked e-mails was absolutely worth



covering; it was a window into deep and interesting questions about why and how we are failing as a society to come to grips with our impacts on climate. Almost all of the coverage, including in print, missed the opportunity and stayed shallow, unfortunately.

Fischer: The U.S. media didn’t fumble. It never really touched the ball. This was chiefly a story covered by the British press and the blogosphere, and there were notable gaps, omissions, over-inflation and errors in that coverage. During the height of the frenzy — last fall and winter — the scientists over at RealClimate.org had what seemed like a post a week refuting some accusation or another raised by the British tabloids.

Our archives [at *The Daily Climate*] show almost 3,700 stories this year and last with the words “Climategate,” “IPCC,” “emails,” or “Anglia.” At least 600 are from U.K., with the *Guardian* writing 228 stories alone. In contrast, the AP had 132.

I’m painting with a broad brush here, but to the extent the U.S. media covers climate, it focuses on the politics and the hyper-local — the Senate climate bill, a state’s renewable energy portfolio, a local solar installation. This wasn’t a story most reporters in the U.S. felt they were comfortable wading into. I think most simply decided — wisely, in my view — to sit it out.

Ward: U.S. news media got off to a predictable start with (week-end) *New York Times* and *Washington Post* front-page stories. Pretty straight, the *Times* piece was a bit more interpretative. But the media fell too early for the “gate” suffix, as if the hacked emails fiasco could ever be on a scale with Watergate. That was an early victory for those wanting to overstate and over-interpret the meaning of the emails. And it stuck.

Newsweeklies for too long were somewhat MIA, but less so on their online posts, where some of their better early coverage was at least adequate if not outstanding. Only the AP’s review of the entire email deluge, and the reporters’ independent conclusions (matching those of most climatologists), put the mass media seriously on the story in a big way. Not surprisingly, it had the effect of somewhat shutting off the news valve on this issue while Copenhagen talks moved to center stage. As a result of this and

other aspects of the story generally (combined, again, with shrinking news hole at many local papers), the story was seldom addressed substantively beyond the national and a few larger regional dailies.

The biggest fumble was to sit back and allow “gate” to take hold and become standard. One other early misstep, in my opinion, involved too much focus on the “who” and “how” of the story — who stole or hacked the e-mails, and how — and not enough focus on the “what” — what the e-mail messages themselves actually did say ... and what they meant not only for the appearance and perception of climate change but also, and more important, for the underlying science.

SEJournal: Who did an exemplary job, if you think someone did?

Fagin: *The Guardian's* “Climate Wars” [a multi-part project], with its emphasis on annotation from qualified commenters, was an excellent if imperfect experiment, I think. The AP also distinguished itself with analytic coverage that separated spin from reality.

Fischer: The AP's **Seth Borenstein** deserves serious accolades for his sophisticated, reasoned and calm reporting on this and other efforts to undermine the accumulated body of climate science.

He debunked the cooling-trend brouhaha about a year ago by giving statisticians' blind temperature data and asking them to analyze the numbers for trends. His December analysis of the UEA emails really should have shut the door on the controversy. Alas, even the AP has only so much pull.

Ward: No one in the mass media comes close to doing as good a job as *The Economist*, particularly with its March “Spin, Science and Climate Change” cover story. Simply the best explanation of the whole climate “controversy” (in wake of CRU emails and the IPCC Himalayan glaciers-disappearing blunder) anywhere.

Bryan Walsh for *Time* online and Sharon Begley for *Newsweek* also performed credibly, though neither was out particularly early on the story and its implications.

SEJournal: What impacts of the emails/IPCC controversy have you seen, if any, on coverage?

Fagin: It has accelerated the pre-existing trend toward treating climate as a partisan/political story instead of a science and policy story. That trend obviously plays into the hands of those who believe that this issue is about ideology and not about measurable, analyzable data.

Fischer: This is where the blogosphere comes into play as a culture-changing force. The story had tremendous legs and was particularly attractive to opponents of any effort to curb greenhouse gas emissions. What this did was very effectively re-open science debate to skeptics. That door had been — rightly or wrongly — closed on the policy front. That's certainly not the case anymore.

I tend not to cover politics; I can get a bit isolated out here in Boulder. So I vividly remember being jolted into the political reality of this story when five GOP House members arrived at the Copenhagen talks last December and denounced any effort to craft a climate treaty based on “corrupt science.”

Ward: A number of developments in the past few months have had the effect of “chilling” coverage, but none more so than the continuing economic challenges impairing serious journalism overall. Barbs from Joe Romm and from RealClimate.org, the departure of [Andrew] Revkin [from his reporting job at *The New York Times*], Copenhagen shortcomings, the seeming stall on legislation in Washington, and the drawn-out and bloody health care fight, along with much of political Big Media's unquenchable thirst for Sarah Palin and for Tea Party politics, all play into how climate is covered, isn't, and how many column inches and air minutes for something as obscure as a melting planet.

The “tone” of coverage of climate has changed in lots of ways — deservedly or otherwise. Climate scientists, in large part because of impact of the CRU emails, no longer stand on a pedestal, no longer seem untouchable, above it all. They're fair game, and media are granting them fewer passes, rightly

“Those on a pedestal — particularly those who are largely responsible for putting themselves on that pedestal — are bound to fall at some point”



becoming more skepti-

cal (in the best sense of that word, not as usually applied in climate change).

Through it all, media awareness that the underlying scientific evidence remains strong. Few — other than on editorial pages or in fringe publications or on bloviating talk shows — see it differently.

SEJournal: Are there lessons for journalists in their future climate coverage?

Fagin: The lessons are all too familiar: Dig deeper, look for evidence in the form of credible data and independent experts, and resist the temptation to reduce every issue to the same tired and misleading partisan dichotomy.

Fischer: This is a tough one. The frenzy in the British press is easy to understand: A bunch of hyper-competitive tabloids chasing after a juicy story, all trying to find scoops and exclusives, gleefully pointing out errors in other coverage while making mistakes in their own. It was fascinating, in a way, to watch.

I think what you saw here was just journalism at work. These scientists had been almost canonized. The IPCC was seen as the gold standard. At the first signs of a crack in that edifice, the media pounced. That's what journalists are supposed to do. We can complain about gaps and omissions and errors, but this is just the first draft of history, after all.

As various panels and inquiries clear the email authors and the IPCC, the storyline is changing. Again, I'm painting broadly here. I do think it'll be interesting to look back in five years or so

and see what sort of impact this has had and how it all shakes out.

Ward: Those on a pedestal — particularly those who are largely responsible for putting themselves on that pedestal — are bound to fall at some point. Media should appreciate the need for heightened independence and journalistic skepticism without buying into views of “professional skeptics” — read, contrarians — above all else.

Another lesson (not easy in the current journalistic economic environment): Cover the process of science, and not simply the final peer-reviewed product, the peer-reviewed publication at the end of the scientific process. Again, not easy, or likely, in the current newsroom economic climate.

Local and regional coverage

SEJournal posed a separate set of questions about local and regional coverage to Fischer alone, specifically seeking his appraisal, based on his regular and intensive review of coverage for *The Daily Climate*’s aggregation of climate news.

Yulsman chose to offer reflections on local and regional coverage as general response to the questions listed above with question-by-question responses from Fagin, Fischer and Ward.



“... specialist reporters ... have been among the hardest hit by the layoffs that have decimated the ranks of journalists”

SEJournal: How did the emails/IPCC story play in the local/regional media, if at all?

Fischer: Unless an outlet had a scientist involved in the controversy, I’d say they ignored it. Kevin Trenberth is here in Boulder (at the National Center for Atmospheric Research) and was mentioned in many of the purloined/hacked e-mails; the local media here did a few stories on his involvement and his rebuttals.

Penn State’s Michael Mann was of course a central “Climategate” player, and the *Philly Inquirer* had a number of good stories looking at his work and involvement. But it seems most local reporters focused on their local issues and left this story for the national papers and the wires.

SEJournal: Did non-national outlets cover the issue themselves in any cases? With wire? Both?

Fischer: Barely, and invariably with wire copy. To the extent local media cover climate, it’s a local issue: a state debate on imposing a renewable fuel portfolio, a local council’s effort to reduce the city’s carbon footprint, the installation of new solar on the high school. The e-mail/IPCC story was unfolding far away on many different levels.

SEJournal: What did you see in the way of opinion pieces — editorials, op-eds, blogs — in the non-national media?

Fischer: Oh, local columnists and editors had a field day. Many followed the same storyline: The mighty climate consensus has

crumbled and is no more. I saw a few counter-pieces from local environmental groups or the Union of Concerned Scientists. But they really were blowing in the wind.

I’m not sure why local opinion writers and ed-page editors hopped on this story, but local reporters didn’t. Maybe the opinion writers sensed the pent-up frustration among those who felt “science” was imposing drastic and draconian lifestyle changes and gave them voice, whereas news reporters saw there wasn’t much of a story in those emails or didn’t have the time/energy/expertise/inclination to wade into the issue themselves.

But I’d say the benchmark piece came from Colorado’s *Grand Junction Sentinel*, where an editor posted a video of himself cutting up a store-bought cake frosted “iceberg” blue that he used to represent the “scientific consensus.” I told him the piece was a confection of half-truths and distortions, about as healthy for public debate as his store-bought, fat-laden, sugar-infused cake is for the American diet. He sent me a couple of links and told me to go do my homework. Go figure.

+++

Yulsman: I don’t have hard evidence for how Climategate played in local and regional media. But I can make the obvious observation that specialist reporters, including science and environmental reporters, have been among the hardest hit by the layoffs that have decimated the ranks of journalists. As the latest *State of the Media* report [by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism] showed, one out of three newspaper reporters have lost their jobs. So there are increasingly fewer people with the knowledge and expertise needed to fairly and accurately cover climate science and policy — both at the local/regional level and the national level.

We should also keep in mind that most people still get their news from local television. And the only people in local television who might be inclined to cover these issues, and theoretically, at least, have at least a modicum of knowledge about the issues, are meteorologists. But mostly, they spend their time telling their viewers what temperature it is outside and whether it’s raining, snowing or sunny. As if we can’t figure that out for ourselves by looking outside and going online.

So I don’t believe most Americans actually got much in the way of news about Climategate from local and regional media.

They did hear a lot about it, though. From the blogosphere.

Consider this: From Feb. 15-19 — in the aftermath of Climategate and the failed Copenhagen climate talks — global warming received 34 percent of the week’s links on the Internet. Global warming skeptics dominated the discourse, but climate activists became increasingly visible. Meanwhile, in the mainstream media, global warming was not even among the top 10 subjects. And for all of 2009, global warming received less than one percent of the entire national newshole. [Source:<http://tinyurl.com/yav896c>]

So Climategate and global warming in general have been an issue of major discourse in society. And, in fact, some major national news outlets, such as *The New York Times*, gave it quite a bit of attention (but generally screwed up the story as badly as can be imagined). But mostly, American news media seem to have all but ignored the issues.

Bill Dawson is assistant editor of the SEJournal.



Earth photographed for the first time by humans from deep space, now considered one of the 40 Greatest Nature Photographs of All Time by members of the ILCP. NASA photo by Astronaut William Anders.

Photographers name the top 40 nature images of all time

By ROGER ARCHIBALD

To observe the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, April 22nd, the International League of Conservation Photographers (www.ilcp.com) challenged its members to come up with the definitive list of the top 40 nature photographs of all time.

Describing the effort as “both an honor and a tremendous challenge,” the organization cautioned that “it may not be possible for anyone to create a definitive selection of the 40 best,” but “we decided to try anyway.”

More than a hundred of ILCP’s member photographers, all of whom devote a significant portion of their professional careers to advance conservation goals, were each asked to nominate three unranked images as their own personal choices. The organization “encouraged (them) to consider aesthetics, uniqueness, historical and scientific significance, or contribution to conservation efforts” in their selections, according to a statement, but they “were not permitted to self-nominate.”

Sixty-five members responded to the survey, cumulatively nominating approximately a hundred different images. Once all were received, determining the top 40 essentially became an exercise in numerical tabulation, according to ILCP Executive Director Justin Black, who supervised the project. While information on which pictures were the most popular was not released, Black did report that the greatest number of nominations any top 40 selection received was nine, while the least was two.

As with any such historical effort (like choosing the greatest baseball team ever), the results heavily represent contemporary photography. Altogether, the work of 25 different photographers was included in the final all-time selections, 18 of whom are still living.

Given the ILCP’s strong links with *National Geographic*, where approximately a third of their fellows have worked, it’s not surprising that about half of the top 40 photos, shot by 10 of the 25

selected photographers, had previously appeared in that magazine. Former NG contributor Jim Brandenburg topped the list with four selections, followed by Frans Lanting, Michael Nichols and Chris Johns, the current *Geographic* Editor in Chief, with three each.

Given the ILCP membership’s strong emphasis on photojournalism, Black said, “I’d have been surprised if the selections reflected more of an historic or artistic perspective.” But those genres are represented in the collection as well, including two images each by Ansel Adams and Eliot Porter, and one each by Edward Weston, George Shiras (the oldest selection at over 100 years) and Minor White, whose complex black-and-white abstract of a Utah geological formation stands in vivid contrast to much of the other included work.

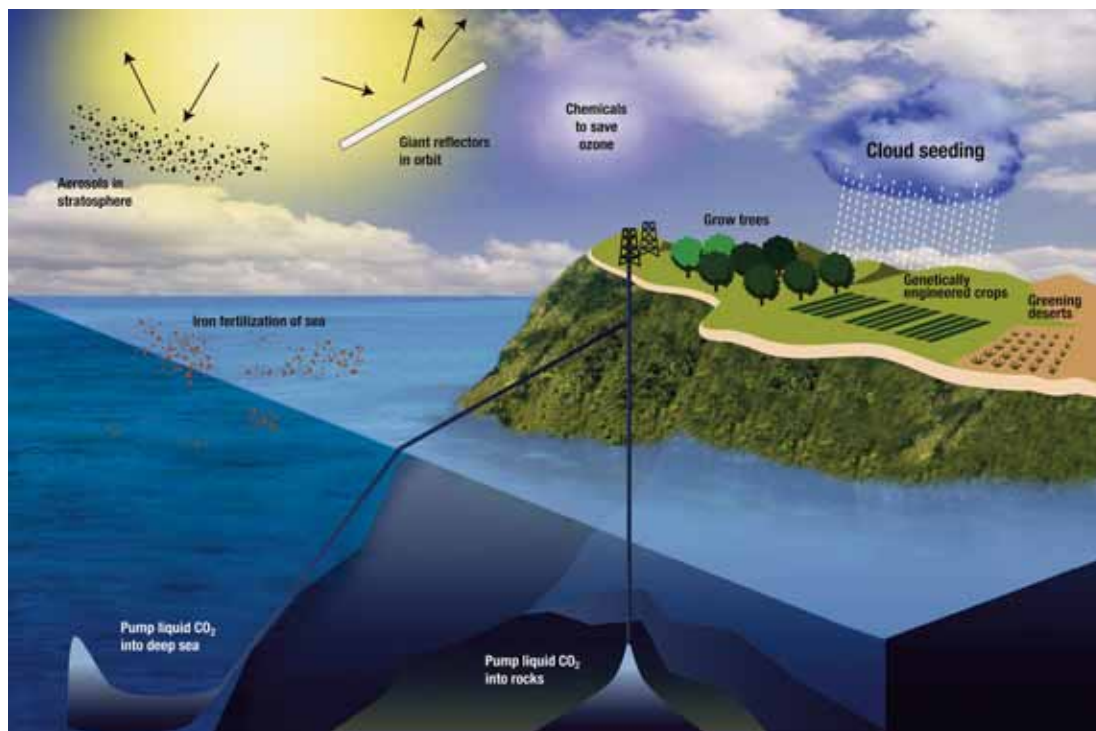
Perhaps the most unexpected image to be included in the top 40 nature photographs of all time was not taken by a working photographer at all, but rather by an astronaut. As one of the first three humans to orbit the moon aboard Apollo 8 in December, 1968, William Anders photographed the Earth half in darkness rising beyond the moon’s horizon, the first human view of the planet from distant space.

Although chosen as the greatest nature images of all time, the online picture gallery hosting them was significantly short-lived, lasting less than two months “due to licensing restrictions,” Justin Black explained. “A number of the images were from non-ILCP photographers or institutions, and display rights were granted for a limited time only.”

Nevertheless, a selection of the top 40 can still be found on the NatGeo News Watch at: <http://tinyurl.com/y57649v>, and at press time, thumbnails of all forty images were still available online at: <http://tinyurl.com/23bbp3d>.

Roger Archibald is photo editor for the SEJournal.

Can technology somehow stave off this climate mess?



A schematic representation of various geoengineering and carbon storage proposals. Diagram by Kathleen Smith / Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

By CHERYL HOGUE

Say “geoengineering” to most people, and few will know what you’re talking about. Some wrongly associate the term with geothermal energy or green engineering, according to recent survey results from the Yale Project on Climate Change. That means we environmental journalists need to explain this subject carefully to our audiences.

So what is geoengineering? Some call it a Plan B to curb climate change if societies can’t stop the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere fast enough. Or to *Hack the Planet*, as SEJ member Eli Kintisch titled his recent book on geoengineering. Some have likened it to installing a giant thermostat for Earth — and we humans would control it.

Geoengineering involves intentional human manipulation of the planet’s climate. While batted about in scientific circles for years, this idea has remained relatively quiet. Many researchers dismissed the idea, revolted by the thought of such blatant intervention in Earth’s natural systems.

Times have changed. Global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and governments aren’t finding ways to curb them — witness the failure of last December’s Copenhagen conference to produce a new climate change treaty.

At this point, relying on solely emission reductions may not

stave off serious climate change fast enough to prevent irreversible or catastrophic environmental alterations. Scientists have their own jargon for saying this: they refer to the inertia in the Earth’s climate system due to all the greenhouse gases we’ve pumped into the atmosphere.

Scientists point out that humans are already geoengineering the planet, albeit unintentionally, through our fossil fuel use and deforestation. Thus, some researchers have reluctantly embraced geoengineering as a rational preparation in the event of major changes such as release of methane from Arctic seas or land due to warming. Others are more gung-ho, seeing these technologies as an economically rational way to continue using fossil fuels — and avoiding serious emission cuts — until new energy sources are commercialized.

The research is moving forward, though still very few scientists are thinking about it. One key funder of this work is Microsoft magnate Bill Gates.

Geoengineering techniques — also known as climate intervention technologies — fall into two broad categories.

One involves deflecting incoming sunlight into space, curbing the amount of radiation that reaches the planet’s surface and provides the heat that greenhouse gases trap in the atmosphere. A

fairly inexpensive technology would be to spray sulfur dioxide gas into the stratosphere, where it would form droplets of sulfuric acid, which is highly reflective. Another would be to deploy specially equipped ships to gin up thicker, more reflective clouds over oceans. Other ideas bandied about are to launch mirrors into orbit around earth and painting roofs white, though recent reviews have panned these as either too expensive, not practical, or not very effective. Together, these sun-reflecting technologies go by the moniker “solar radiation management.”

The second category encompasses efforts to strip carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and lock it away for centuries. Some involve artificial trees that, through chemical reactions, would pull out CO2 for storage underground or in the bottom of the oceans. Another idea is for growing crops of real trees, which convert CO2 into biomass, then converting their wood into a material, called biochar, that doesn't decompose easily. Yet another proposal is to mine a mineral called serpentine, which reacts with atmospheric CO2 to form another mineral, carbonate.

Solar radiation management techniques, especially stratospheric aerosols, are expected to be fast and cheap to implement. They would require repeated application since their effects would only last for a few years and because stopping them suddenly could cause catastrophic warming. These reflective methods would do nothing about one very serious side effect of CO2 emissions — ocean acidification. And they carry serious global environmental justice implications if these technologies, as some computer models suggest, dry out sub-Saharan Africa or weaken the monsoon weather pattern that agriculture in southeastern Asia depends upon.

Carbon dioxide removal and storage would be more expensive and would take decades to make a dent in projected climate change. But these efforts are seen as having fewer potential side effects and would address ocean acidification.

Researchers are now talking about geoengineering field tests. They are crafting rules to guide their research. At the Asilomar International Conference on Climate Intervention Technologies, held in March in Pacific Grove, Calif., researchers collectively went public on geoengineering. They called for discussions among scientists, governments, and the public to ensure that research in this field is done responsibly and in a transparent fashion.

Concern about geoengineering research is emerging on the policy scene. The U.S. House of Representatives and the U.K. House of Commons are studying potential ways of governing geoengineering experiments. Environmental organizations are getting involved too. A newly formed green group, Hands Off Mother Earth, opposes geoengineering. Some more established environmental organizations haven't ruled out support for studying climate intervention techniques if they will help protect species and ecosystems from devastation due to global warming.

SEJ has long called climate change the story of the century. Geoengineering is the new twist in this story and will be a key element — for good or bad — in decades to come.

Special note: Journalists, be forewarned. There's an online site called Go Bluebird which purports to be a company developing a geoengineering technology. It's a fictional product of the Australian Broadcasting Corp., though it's based on real science. The network calls Go Bluebird an “online alternate reality drama exploring the contentious issues of geoengineering, whistleblowing and philanthrocapitalism.” A real-looking blog and tweets

are part of this drama.

Cheryl Hogue was recently assigned to cover geoengineering for Chemical & Engineering News. There, she shares the climate change beat with SEJ member Jeff Johnson. Eli Kintisch reviewed this article for scientific accuracy. His clarifications are greatly appreciated.

Sources:

U.K. Royal Society report on geoengineering, which delves into many of the technologies, via <http://royalsociety.org/Geoengineering-the-climate/>

Hack the Planet, recently released book by SEJ member Eli Kintisch of *Science* magazine, <http://hacktheplanetbook.com/>

Hands Off Mother Earth opposes geoengineering: <http://www.handsoff-motherearth.org/>

Australian Broadcasting Corporation drama: <http://www.abc.net.au/innovation/bluebird/> and its fictional Go Bluebird site: <http://gobluebird.net/default.htm>



Advertisement

Public Not Getting Truth about Global Warming

Fifty-one: percentage of greenhouse gases from humans' using animals for food (*World-Watch*, 11-12/09). **Cars:** most-talked-about source of gases.

Plants: what human beings evolved to eat.

Quadrillions: number of animals used for food by naturally herbivorous humans.

Meat and allied industries: special interests given billions of dollars' worth of training, research, and promotions by our colleges of agriculture despite global warming and other resulting ecosystem disruption.

Responsible Policies for Animals: organization working to get our universities out of the meat industry.

See: www.ExpertsOfConscience.org and www.RPAforAll.org.

Only equal individual rights of all animals can solve the big problems.

More TV meteorologists should be brought into SEJ's "Big Tent"



Bud Ward

By BUD WARD

TV meteorologists are famously at ease before the cameras, regularly making repeated weather news reports throughout the day, and generally handling the most intense, and audience-drawing, storm news with *savoir-faire*, albeit with obvious pulsing excitement in many cases.

But when they become the focus of news, things can get interesting.

Recently, more attention has focused on broadcast meteorologists and weathercasters — the distinctions are important, and will be clarified later — and their sometimes-dismissive attitudes toward climate change science.

The subject is not exactly a new one. SEJ's current president, Christy George, with her Oregon Public Broadcasting colleagues, produced in 2008 a full documentary, "Forecast Cloudy" <http://news.opb.org/forecastcloudy/>, exploring meteorologists' often divergent attitudes toward what most mainstream climatologists understand of climate science.

But that was something of an early exception. SEJ freelance writer and *SEJournal* Assistant Editor Bill Dawson that same month produced a story headlined "Why Are So Many TV Meteorologists and Weathercasters Climate 'Skeptics'?" <http://tinyurl.com/269a36x> for the online publication I edit, *The Yale Forum on Climate Change & The Media*.

More recently, *Columbia Journalism Review* in January/February of this year published "Hot Air: Why Don't TV Weathermen Believe in Climate Change?" <http://tinyurl.com/282znm> by a *Washington Monthly* editor, Charles Homans, helping to fan the fires in journalism circles.

As so often is the case, however, a piece in March by *The New York Times*' Leslie Kaufman — a straightforward news piece, "Among Weathercasters, Doubt on Warming" — provoked something of a national buzz. Suddenly, prime-time network evening news programs and late-night cable television programming showed interest, often pitching the split between climatologists and meteorologists as deeply seated battle royal. (For a riotous laugh, be sure to see Stephen Colbert's "Science Catfight" piece pitting an AccuWeather meteorologist against a Union of Concerned Scientists scientist — <http://tinyurl.com/y87weaf>.)

So, what goes?

The immediate peg for the *Times* piece by Kaufman was the

release by George Mason University researchers of a National Science Foundation-funded study of TV meteorologists' attitudes toward climate change. (The same researchers hope to soon make public their survey of local TV news directors' attitudes on the issue. Now that should be really interesting!)

Some key findings from that study, available online at <http://tinyurl.com/yhqy9e3> :

- 94 percent of 571 respondents said they work at stations having no staff covering science or environmental issues full-time.
- 87 percent of respondents said they "had in some way discussed climate change as part of their duties," many of them through off-air community presentations.
- Slightly more than one-third said they discuss climate change during on-air weathercasts, with 62 percent saying they likely will continue to do so at about the same rate and about one-quarter saying they would like to do so more frequently.
- About 54 percent said they think "global warming is happening," but only 31 percent said human activities are largely responsible. "Natural changes in the environment" were cited by 63 percent as the principal cause.
- More than one quarter "agreed with the statement by a prominent TV weathercaster [John Coleman of KUSI-TV in San Diego, whom the study did not specifically name] that 'global warming is a scam.'"

Based on an ongoing series of TV meteorologists' workshops on climate science, funded by the McCormick Foundation of Chicago and by the Grantham Foundation of Boston through grants to Yale University (and directed by the author of this column), one can draw several preliminary conclusions:

- 1) Meteorologists and weathercasters indeed appear to be disproportionately skeptical of what climate experts often consider to be well understood — that the Earth is warming and that human activities have a significant role in that warming.
- 2) That may not be so surprising. Meteorology and climatology are in fact distinctly different sciences and areas of study, despite some overlaps. Would you go to a pediatrician if what you really needed is a podiatrist? Or to an auto mechanic to fix your home's plumbing? So why go to a meteorologist for a long-term prediction, or to a climatologist for a hint about your vacation weather a

week from now?

3) While there are hard-core and highly vocal (and visible) meteorologists who are “contrarians” or die-hard “skeptics,” many more appear to be, in the context of an election, “undecided” or “independent” ... and certainly educable and open-minded.

4) There appear to be few TV meteorologists or weathercasters nationally (perhaps two dozen or so?) who are a) convinced by the scientific evidence that climate change is happening *and* that humans play a role in that warming and b) actively engaged in education and outreach — on- or off-air — in making their views known.

5) Meteorologists interested in learning more about climate change often want to better understand a few key points:

a. The differences between climate models and weather models, including strengths and limitations of each;

b. The roles of water vapor and of clouds, and the scientific understanding of each as they may affect warming;

c. Scientific understanding of the relationship between a warmer climate and serious or extreme (the term meteorologists like here is “anomalous”) weather incidents — hurricanes, floods, droughts, wild fires, etc.; and

d. The relative role of the sun and of solar radiance in warming.

By the way, meteorologists and weathercasters are not exactly alike. Weathercasters, more common in smaller market stations, may not have formal science or meteorology degrees. Meteorologists, most commonly found on TV in larger markets, have a bachelors and often a masters degree in meteorology and perhaps also some professional certification.

In addition, meteorologists are, let’s not forget, human beings, at least in so much as reporters and editors are. They don’t like being talked down to, and there’s little question that some high-powered and pedigreed climatologists can be faulted for having taken just such a condescending approach.

Another point: For many Americans, the local TV meteorologist — along with being the reason most people tune in local news in the first place — is the only “scientist” they see in a given day. They often are the brunt of criticism when they get forecasts wrong. But meteorologists tend to be trusted. As their “station scientist,” as AMS likes to describe them, that makes them potentially powerful and influential communicators, on air and off air, as climate change educators.

TV meteorologists, the focus of discussion in recent SEJ list serve discussions, should be a potential group to target for SEJ membership. While it isn’t clear just how much of SEJ’s activities may actually appeal to many time-constrained and weather-focused TV meteorologists and weathercasters, there’s little question that the organization’s extensive resources on climate change science and policy reporting should be of interest to this group.

Capturing more TV meteorologists’ attention, dues, and conference time may not be easy for SEJ’s membership committee. But both SEJ and the broadcast meteorology community could benefit from more collaboration and greater shared understanding of each other’s needs and interests.

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

Research Roundup *continued from page 15*

They found that 117 of the science news articles, or 85.4 percent, reported scientific findings that global warming effects would be worse than indicated by the scientific consensus across the years of coverage examined. Scientific consensus refers to mainstream climate change research used by the IPCC and other groups to assess scientific thinking about global warming.

Important to the researchers’ conclusions, scientific consensus on global warming often is the target of criticism by global warming skeptics, who say that the consensus exaggerates climate disruption. But, based on the findings summarized in science news articles, the consensus represented by IPCC and similar reports is “more likely to *understate* the actual degree of climate disruption taking place,” the researchers suggested.

They concluded that, “if reporters wish to discuss ‘both sides’ of the climate issue, the scientifically legitimate ‘other side’ is that, if anything, global climate disruption may prove to be significantly worse than has been suggested in scientific consensus estimates to date.”

For more information, see:

William E. Freudenburg and Violetta Muselli, “Global Warming Estimates, Media Expectations, and the Asymmetry of Scientific Challenge” in *Global Environmental Change*, in press.

Related articles:

Diarmid Campbel-Lendrum and Roberto Bertolini, “Science, Media and Public Perception: Implications for Climate and Health Policies” in *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, Volume 88, No. 4 (April 2010), p. 242.

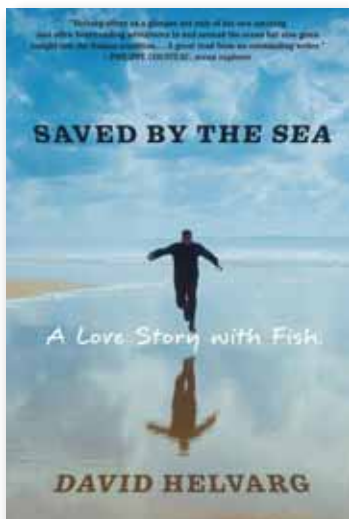
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Matthew C. Nisbet, “Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter for Public Engagement” in *Environment*, Volume 51, No. 2 (March 2009), pp. 12 – 23.

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\$25.99

Reviewed by KATHLEEN REGAN

In *Saved by the Sea*, David Helvarg has told a beautiful, sad, wonderful and hard story. Its centerpiece is the loss of loved ones — his life partner, his sister, his mother and father. But the book is not just about loss, it is also about how his viscerally deep love and knowledge of the ocean comforted him, accompanied him and strengthened him through those losses. The deeper story is that of how Helvarg resists the idea of a random, meaningless world. Instead, in the best tradition of what it is to be human, he transforms his experiences of loss into the service of his love for the sea. Along the way we learn a great deal about the ocean and possibly something about humanity.

Our need to make meaning out of our experience is essential to human nature. We tell stories — to ourselves, to others — to transform random and unpredictable events into narrative because not to do so would leave us at the mercy of an incomprehensible universe over which we have no power. Telling stories, transforming our experience, *is* our power. Good stories, compelling stories, are both intellectually honest and emotionally engaging. This one is both.

One of the book's challenges is its shifting between Helvarg's life experiences and his commentary on the sea. Every now and then this seems a little awkward, but for the most part his voice is sure. In fact, the deeper one gets into the book, the clearer it is that his love of the sea is its own real love story, just as emotionally compelling as the human relationships he describes. Emotional connections to our world can be a much stronger force for action than technical sophistication. The greatest strength of *Saved by the Sea* is how well it exemplifies the power of emotion coupled with understanding and reveals the bonds of love and affection that illuminate our connection to the physical world. A second challenge is that the book deals with substantive and emotionally heavy issues. Sometimes it seemed Helvarg could have provided more detail or moved more slowly through his story. As a reader, I wanted more time to digest what was happening in his life, more information in order to understand particular events and more opportunity to reflect more deeply on what I was being told.

Someone once told me, in response to my question about how she understood her reactions to the problem of environmental degradation, that a better kind of question would be, "What are the things in this world that you love? Who are the primary caretakers of beauty and of the things you love? What are the obstacles to your becoming more engaged?"

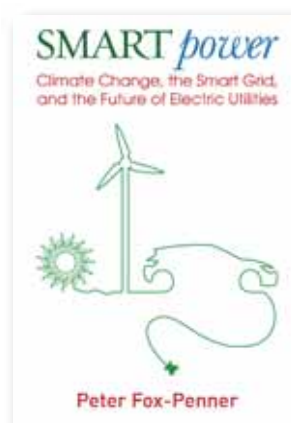
Helvarg's transformation of his own experience, and his generosity in sharing it with us, can serve as a beacon for anyone who reads it. What do we love? What are the physical things that move us? Each of us has some experience of the physical world that touches us more deeply than we can understand. Helvarg gives us a way, through his example, to harness the strength of that emotional connection in the service of protecting some part of our world. And I suspect this may, in the end, be the only way the world will be protected.

Kathleen Regan is currently a mid-life PhD student in soil biology at the University of Hohenheim, Germany, working on the question of nitrogen cycling and nitrous oxide emissions from soil.

Power industry, it's time for your makeover

Smart Power: Climate Change, the Smart Grid, and the Future of Electric Utilities

by **Peter Fox-Penner**
Island Press, \$30



Reviewed by JENNIFER WEEKS

Electric power was one of the transforming advances of the 20th century, freeing Americans from manual labor and laying the foundation for a knowledge-based economy. But the U.S. electricity industry is profoundly ill-suited to address two of today's most pressing challenges: climate change and energy security. It has a motley economic and legal structure, partly deregulated and partly run under the old utility model; the national power grid is old and under strain; and we use too much fossil fuel.

In *Smart Power*, energy consultant Peter Fox-Penner asserts that the power industry needs to completely redesign itself. In a 21st-Century power system, information and electricity will flow back and forth between utilities and customers. Generators will use more low-carbon fuels, and power companies will promote energy efficiency as intensively as they sell kilowatt-hours. The trick is getting there from here — a challenge that Fox-Penner compares to "rebuilding our entire airplane fleet, along with our runways and air traffic control system, while the planes are all up in the air filled with passengers."

To explain why it's hard to make large-scale change in the power industry, Fox-Penner provides a useful explanation of how utilities deliver electricity. The grid is designed to send power one way: from central generating stations to users. We don't have

large-scale technologies for storing electricity yet, so power has to be consumed as soon as it is generated, and the amount of power flowing into and out of the transmission grid has to be kept constantly in balance. Those features make it hard to add a lot of renewable energy and distributed generation to the system, since renewable fuels like wind and solar power are intermittent, and adding local generation sources complicates the task of balancing power in the area around them.

Making matters worse, botched attempts to deregulate electricity markets in the 1990s left the industry with a messy and complicated structure. Utilities may be publicly or privately owned, operate in deregulated or traditionally regulated states, and sell power either to other energy companies or directly to homes and businesses. All of these factors affect how they are regulated, and shape their goals and business plans.

One thing power companies agree on, however, is that we urgently need a smarter electric grid. This transition is already under way in many places. Some companies are adding sensors and phasor management units to long-distance transmission networks, so that they can detect system overloads and outages quickly and route power around them. Retail electricity providers are installing smart metering systems, which provide customers with information about how much power they use at given times and what it really costs to generate that power (not the uniform “dumb” prices per kilowatt-hour that appear on conventional electric bills). And manufacturers are designing smart appliances that will communicate directly with smart meters and thermostats to regulate home energy use, guided by limits that homeowners program into them.

Fox-Penner sees smart metering as the most transformative part of the smart grid because it makes it possible for utilities to shift to dynamic pricing — charging more for power at times when it costs more to generate, such as on hot summer afternoons when demand for air conditioning peaks. He cites studies showing that with dynamic pricing customers typically reduce their peak power use by five to twenty percent, depending on how the programs are designed. That reduces overall power costs and the need to build new generating plants and transmission lines to meet peak demand.

Utilities also need to extend the grid into new regions where renewable sources are concentrated, especially the Plains states for wind and the Southwest for solar. We still don’t have a national renewable electricity portfolio standard (RPS), but taken together, the 31 RPSs in force today will require a fivefold increase in national use of renewable power by 2030. Fox-Penner estimates that connecting up new clean electricity sources will require building 30,000 to 40,000 miles of new high-voltage transmission lines over the next 20 years. If we can’t get that done, he argues, we won’t have the supply choices we need to shrink the power sector’s carbon footprint.

In the last section of the book (which is dense but worth working through), Fox-Penner lays out two alternate business models for the utility of the future. The Smart Integrator utility operates its section of the grid, delivering electricity reliably from many different sources. It provides some basic information about energy efficiency to customers, but its core role is still to sell power.

The Energy Services utility is a very different kind of company: it works to deliver lowest-cost energy services to customers, which can mean helping them buy less power. The smart grid

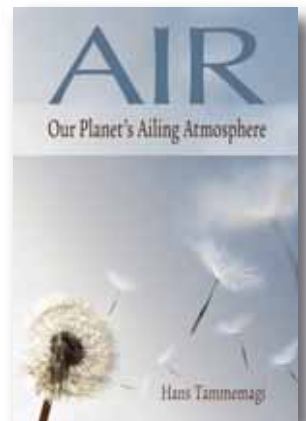
supports this approach, since utilities can use it to help customers manage and reduce their electricity use, but Fox-Penner says it’s not enough: we also need new laws and regulations that let power companies profit from saving energy. Some utilities, such as Duke Power and Austin Energy, are moving in this direction, but it requires a radical rethinking of what utilities are for — a job that falls mainly to state legislatures, governors, and public utility commissions that make the rules for the electricity industry. *Smart Power* makes clear how hard that transition will be, but also how it could pay off.

Freelancer Jennifer Weeks lives and writes in Watertown, Mass.

Fine science writing reveals the beauty of air, what we take for granted

Air Our Planet’s Ailing Atmosphere

by Hans Tammemagi
Oxford University Press, \$27.95



Reviewed by JIM MOTAVALLI

In 1944, Japanese high-altitude bombers discovered the near-magical properties of the jet stream and decided to exploit it as a weapon of war. They obtained 9,000 balloons, attached bombs to them, and set them adrift, assured by emerging science that they’d travel east across the Pacific to the west coast of the U.S. The bombs were supposed to go off on making landfall, but a fortunate miscalculation — the wet-cell batteries that powered the onboard electronics froze at six miles of altitude — meant that most of them failed. But one made it all the way to rural Bly, Oregon and killed a teacher and five kids on a Sunday school outing.

The story of those unfortunate kids, victims by chance, haunts me. It’s told in one of many informative sidebars in SEJ member Hans Tammemagi’s book about air, a substance most of us take for granted because we can’t see it or reach out and touch it. His book is probably the best that could be written about the air around us, combining a skillful and learned description of our planet’s fragile atmosphere and what lays beyond it with a detailed and angry analysis of the harm we’ve done and the peril we’re now in.

The early chapters of the book would make an elegant narration for a *National Geographic* special. Tammemagi, the environmental columnist at the *Vancouver Sun*, writes with complete authoritative command of his material. The reader discovers, for instance, that “the exosphere, which lies beyond the thermosphere, above 435 miles, is an austere region with very

sparse gases. An atom must travel several kilometers before bumping into its nearest neighbor.” I can get a vivid picture out of that.

We further learn that “the protons in the inner Van Allen belt have such high energy that they can penetrate several centimeters of lead.” And then we’re told about Van Allen, the space scientist. And about a much earlier French atmospheric pioneer, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), the first person to realize that air had mass, after carrying a barometer up a hill.

This is ace science writing, never less than elegant. Tammemagi fully reveals the beautifully complex, intricately designed collusion of gases that allows the Earth to be the only planet we know of capable of supporting complex life forms. He takes us through the scientific discoveries that taught us what we now know, and through the atmosphere’s four distinct layers into the outer reaches of space (where we don’t know much at all).

If the book had stopped there, it would probably have won some obscure but prestigious prize, earned some respectful reviews, and that would have been that. But Tammemagi wants us to know that our planet’s atmosphere is under attack, and that inspires the second part of his book — angrier, despairing of humanity’s folly and not so elegant. It’s about global warming and what caused it (mainly our insistence on burning fossil fuels), and why it took an underfunded British scientist, Joe Farman, to notice that there was a gaping hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica.

There are a lot of good books on global warming, including very alarming new ones from both Bill McKibben and James Hansen, so *Air* loses its literary distinctiveness here. Tammemagi does as good a job as anyone in explaining the science, but its complexity (warning — charts and chemical formulas coming up) may lose some readers caught up in the earlier magic.

The transportation chapter covers the important bases but also relies on many older studies. Its workman-like prose is a disappointment after what came before. The section on how a well-meaning General Motors chemist, Thomas Midgley, gave us not only lead in gasoline but also ozone-killing chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) is fascinating, but some passages are perfunctory or dated. Cars haven’t had carburetors for more than 30 years, so we can’t control evaporative emissions by sealing them up. The few paragraphs on electric cars are inadequate to such an important subject — you’d never know we were on the verge of a plug-in revolution that will put at least five new models on the road before the end of this year.

Like other writers on this terrain, Tammemagi has a nearly impossible task when it comes to finding solutions for huge, intractable problems. If electric vehicles, carbon sequestration and natural gas power plants look inadequate to the task at hand, it’s because they are. An author’s tone could get despairing at this point, but after a textbook-like middle section, Tammemagi’s style and command of telling details reasserts itself as he draws to a conclusion.

So Tammemagi says yes to smokestack scrubbers, wind turbines and photovoltaics, but like McKibben, he sees that the ultimate solution lies in curtailing economic growth, saying good-bye to fossil fuels and controlling population growth. These are enormous hurdles, so the author is forgiven for wondering if we’ll get over them in time. With a nod to Jared Diamond, he invokes the cautionary tale of the Easter Islanders who overshot their

carrying capacity, carrying out an environmental holocaust to build graven images (the skyscrapers of their day?) that ultimately fell into ruin along with their civilization.

Despite minor shortcomings, you’ll want to keep a copy of *Air* handy. It’s a major reference work for reporters covering the biggest story of the millennium.

Jim Motavalli is a regular blogger, mostly on clean cars, for NPR's Car Talk, The New York Times, CBS Interactive, Mother Nature Network, AOL and Hearst's Daily Green. He is working on a book about electric vehicles for Rodale.

Reporter’s Toolbox *continued from page 14*

and though the name makes me uncomfortable, it is a lot cheaper than Photoshop and a viable alternative.

<http://www.gimp.org/>

Watch, manage and organize videos

Miro works like an Internet TV and video manager. It brings together shows from around the web and allows you to create a feed as on Tivo. Miro can handle most major video formats including MPEG, Quicktime, Flash and YouTube.

<http://www.getmiro.com/>

[screenshot: <http://www.getmiro.com/download/screenshots/>]

Make vector illustrations

Inkscape is similar to Illustrator, Corel Draw and Freehand and allows users to make vector graphics — especially suited for logos, images with text and technical illustrations — which maintain sharpness regardless of their physical dimensions.

<http://www.inkscape.org/>

[screenshots:

<http://www.inkscape.org/screenshots/index.php?lang=en>]

Send faxes

Fax Zero lets you send up to two free faxes in the U.S. from your computer each day (it includes an ad on the cover page and limits each document to three pages) and has bailed me out several times when I needed to “fax” back a signed contract without access to a fax machine. <http://faxzero.com/>

Open wider

To learn more about how open source works and who makes it work, check out OSS Watch — Open Source Software Advisory Service

<http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/beginners.xml>

Or find a group of open-source aficionados in your neck of the woods. <http://opensource.meetup.com/>

Or bone up on a topic of your choice at the Open Courseware Consortium. <http://www.ocwconsortium.org>

Laura Silver's writing on culture and the environment has appeared in the New York Times, National Public Radio and Popular Science. She can be reached at laurasilver@mac.com



TV gigs, scholarships and new blogs among new accomplishments

By JUDY FAHYS

While many SEJers chased the Deepwater Horizon spill and its widespread consequences as summer was poised to begin, several members provided updates on impressive projects. The new ventures included fellowships, online gigs, television and more.

Suzanne Bohan and **Sandy Kleffman** of the Bay Area News Group (which includes the *San Jose Mercury News*, *Contra Costa Times* and *Oakland Tribune*) have been awarded the Edgar A. Poe Award for excellence in coverage of news of national or regional significance.

The awards were presented at the annual fundraising dinner of the White House Correspondents' Association at the Washington Hilton Hotel. President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama greeted and congratulated the winners.

Bohan and Kleffman's four-part series, entitled "Shortened Lives: Where You Live Matters," was cited by the judges as "well-reported stories (that) offer unique and valuable lessons for public health policy."

"Through extensive use of county health records, Bohan and Kleffman stand conventional wisdom on its head, providing powerful evidence that variations in disease rates and life expectancies between neighborhoods in Alameda County, Calif., are not — as widely assumed — the result of poor people making bad choices about diet and exercise. Rather the discrepancies stem from multiple forces that deny those living in poor communities access to the basic resources necessary to engage in a healthy lifestyle, however great their desire to do so. These powerful and poignant stories provide ... strong evidence that blaming the victims is not a substitute for dealing seriously with the underlying causes of the health care crisis."

Dale Willman told about an exciting year ahead as a Fulbright Scholar, which will have him teaching and conducting

research in Indonesia during the 2010-2011 academic year.

Willman will teach environmental journalism and new media courses at Universitas Padjadjaran in Bandung, Indonesia. He will also research noted naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace and Wallace's work in what was then known as the Malay Archipelago. That research will take Willman to a number of remote locations around the island nation.

Willman has conducted trainings over the past two years for journalists in Indonesia. In addition to his teaching and research, he will continue his consulting work with 68H, the nation's only non-government country-wide radio network. 68H also owns Jakarta's 'Green Radio,' one of the world's first radio stations to produce 24-hour environmental programming.

Willman will be working with 68H to implement the usage of FrontlineSMS, a text messaging software package that he has been using successfully with journalists in Zambia and Malawi. Frontline provides journalists with an additional tool that can be used to better communicate with the communities they serve.

Craig Saunders has begun a new, part-time gig as an instructor in the publishing program at Ryerson University in Toronto. He previously taught at George Brown College, where he developed Canada's first course blending conventional and on-screen proofreading.

Jim Motavalli is the new blogger at NPR's Car Talk (with Click and Clack), and (with SEJ's **Sally Deneen**) will co-author a new column on green washing for AOL.

Motavalli is also a regular online writer for the *New York Times*, CBS Moneywatch, Hearst's Daily Green and Mother Nature Network. Rodale is publishing his forthcoming book on electric cars.

High Country News' editor-in-chief, **Jonathan Thompson**, is resigning to pursue other adventures. To fill his position, the nonprofit newsmagazine performed an extensive search and decided ultimately to promote from within.

Jodi Peterson, associate editor, who's been with *HCN* since 2005, is now managing editor. She'll oversee the editorial staff and the content of the magazine and Web site, hcn.org.

Working closely with her is *HCN's* senior editor **Ray Ring**, also the co-chair of this year's SEJ conference. Ray first started writing for *HCN* 25 years ago and has generated a long string of award-winning feature stories. He will oversee the feature story lineup and write occasional stories and columns.

Assistant editor **Sarah Gilman** is *HCN's* new associate editor. She will continue to oversee the front section of the magazine, and she will also take on more longer editing and writing assignments.

Terri Hansen reported that she was a 2009 National Press Foundation Fellow, as well as a 2010 Association of Health Care Journalists Fellow.

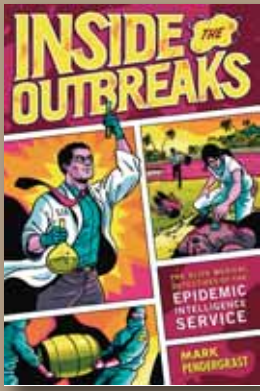
Joe Roman is a founding editor of *Solutions*, a new, bimonthly publication that started in January. It is a hybrid academic and popular journal that showcases ideas for solving the world's environmental, social and political problems.

The journal brings cutting-edge ideas from academics and professionals to an audience of policy makers, business leaders and engaged members of the public. You can see it online at: <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/>

Judy Fahys is environment reporter at The Salt Lake Tribune.

New Books from SEJ Members 2009-2010

Members - To advertise your 2009-2010 book in the next four issues of SEJournal, email the SEJ office at linda.knouse@sejhg.org for an order form.



Inside the Outbreaks

by *Mark Pendergrast*

The Epidemic Intelligence Service has battled everything from smallpox and zoonoses to pesticides, lead poisoning, emerging diseases, and the health impacts of climate change. *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*



Air

Our Planet's Ailing Atmosphere

by *Hans Tammemagi*

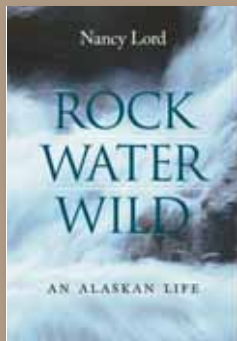
This evocative book describes the complex & vital ocean of gases surrounding us and its steady degeneration. Solutions are proposed. *Oxford Univ. Press*



Primitive

by *Mark Nykanen*

A model and her estranged activist daughter get caught up in the "war on terror" and global warming. marknykanen.com *Bell Bridge Books*



Rock, Water, Wild: An Alaskan Life

by *Nancy Lord*

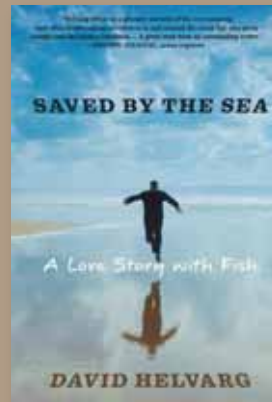
Alaska's writer laureate journeys among salmon, bears, glaciers and languages into fresh understandings of our connections to the natural world. *Univ. of Nebraska Press*



Human Scale

by *Kitty Beer*

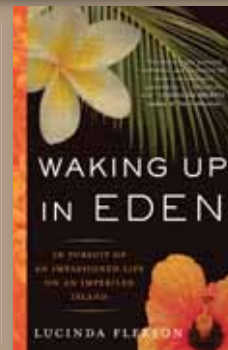
It's 2062. Boston is mostly under water. Vita must confront her husband and battle to save her daughter while falling in love with an enigmatic spy. *Plain View Press*



Saved by the Sea A Love Story with Fish

by *David Helvarg*

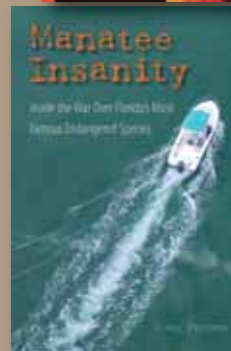
David Helvarg has lived a life often as endangered as the ocean he now works to protect. *Saved by the Sea* is their story. *St. Martin's Press*



Waking Up In Eden: in Pursuit of an Impassioned Life on an Imperiled Island

by *Lucinda Fleson*

A journalist reports on Hawaii, the plant crisis, the National Tropical Botanical Garden's rescue efforts and its mysterious, hidden history. *Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill*



Manatee Insanity

by *Craig Pittman*

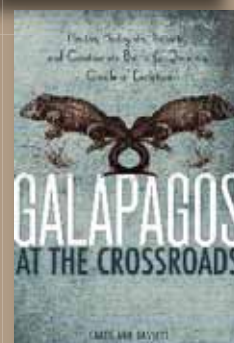
Loveable or loathed? Craig Pittman explores the uncertain fate of this unique species with an abiding interest and more than a touch of whimsy. *University Press of Florida*



2045 A Story of Our Future

by *Peter Seidel*

Carl awakens from a 35-year coma into a world where global warming, water shortages, overpopulation and mass starvation reign. *Prometheus Books*



Galapagos at the Crossroads: Pirates, Biologists, Tourists & Creationists Battle for Darwin's Cradle of Evolution

by *Carol Ann Bassett*

An eloquent narrative that explores a collision of economics, politics and the environment in one of the world's last Edens. *National Geographic Books*

The monetary rewards of being Sea Sick.

\$75,000 Grantham Prize honors Alanna Mitchell,
author of *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*.



Published in
Canada by
McClelland &
Stewart Ltd.

The **Metcalf Institute** for Marine & Environmental Reporting is proud to announce the winner of **The Grantham Prize** for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment for 2010. Alanna Mitchell's book *Sea Sick* is an exceptional work that intertwines ocean science and investigative journalism, producing a vivid report on the state of the global oceans.

Congratulations also to the 2010 recipients of the \$5,000 **Awards of Special Merit**:

Dan Egan, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, for his ongoing environmental coverage of the Great Lakes

Cleo Paskal, author of *Global Warring*, published by Key Porter Books

The team led by **Hedrick Smith** for the PBS Frontline documentary *Poisoned Waters*

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LEFT, USDA-FOREST SERVICE; RIGHT, © AMY GULICK / WWW.AMYGULICK.COM

Working by hand with cross-cut saws in 1941 (left), loggers laboriously felled a giant Sitka spruce in Southeast Alaska's Tongass National Forest, a job that could take many hours. With the introduction of powered chainsaws, clear-cutting became the most efficient way to log a forest, but it exacts an ecological toll. Even-aged new growth can create a closed canopy (right), shading out undergrowth and wildlife food supply, while delaying by centuries the restoration of old-growth forest characteristics to a clear-cut area. From *Salmon in the Trees: Life in Alaska's Tongass Rain Forest*, by SEJ member Amy Gulick (Braided River-The Mountaineers Books, 2010). See the author's related story on page 18.