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Winter 1991

## The Planet, 1991, Winter

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*Western Washington University*

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*the Planet*



Bellingham Speaks ■ Environmental Photography ■ New Forestry





## Eco-Briefs

### Celebrate a month for the Earth

Al Skoczenski

Western will kick off its celebration of Earth Day '91 with month-long activities beginning in early April. An all-day workshop titled "Ancient Forest Chataqua," April 7, will be a celebration and educational program dealing with our ancient forests.

A symposium on April 13 will address environmental impacts of the war in the Persian Gulf. On Saturday, April 20, the Earth Fair will feature music, information, food and arts and crafts.

The month-long celebration will also include speakers, musicians and films. Speakers will include conservation historians Al Runte and Roderick Nash; Earth First! founder Dave Foreman; and animal rights activist Ingrid Newkirk. Folk singer and activist Dana Lyons will also perform.

Look for detailed schedules on posters around campus, or contact the Environmental Center at 647-6129.

### Earth First! is back

David Duffy

Earth First! is back on campus, raring to show students and the community how to tackle local environmental issues through education and direct action.

Under the slogan, "No compromise in the defense of Mother Earth!", Earth First! has made headlines for its "ecotage" and civil disobedience aimed at industry and federal forest management.

According to Tony Van Gessel, the WWU coordinator, Earth First! is interested in identifying local environmental concerns, then dealing with them through direct action.

"Action and education go together. Education about an issue leads to action, and action is what Earth First! is all about," said Tony.

Founded in 1980, Earth First! is more of an environmental philosophy than an organization. The lack of national officers and official enrollment promotes individual dedication to the protection of natural diversity.

"Earth First! is not an organization per se, but rather a group of people who want to take action and protect the environment," said Tony.

Locally the WWU chapter of EF! offers each one of us an avenue of expression, education and action. For more information contact Tony at 734-8550.

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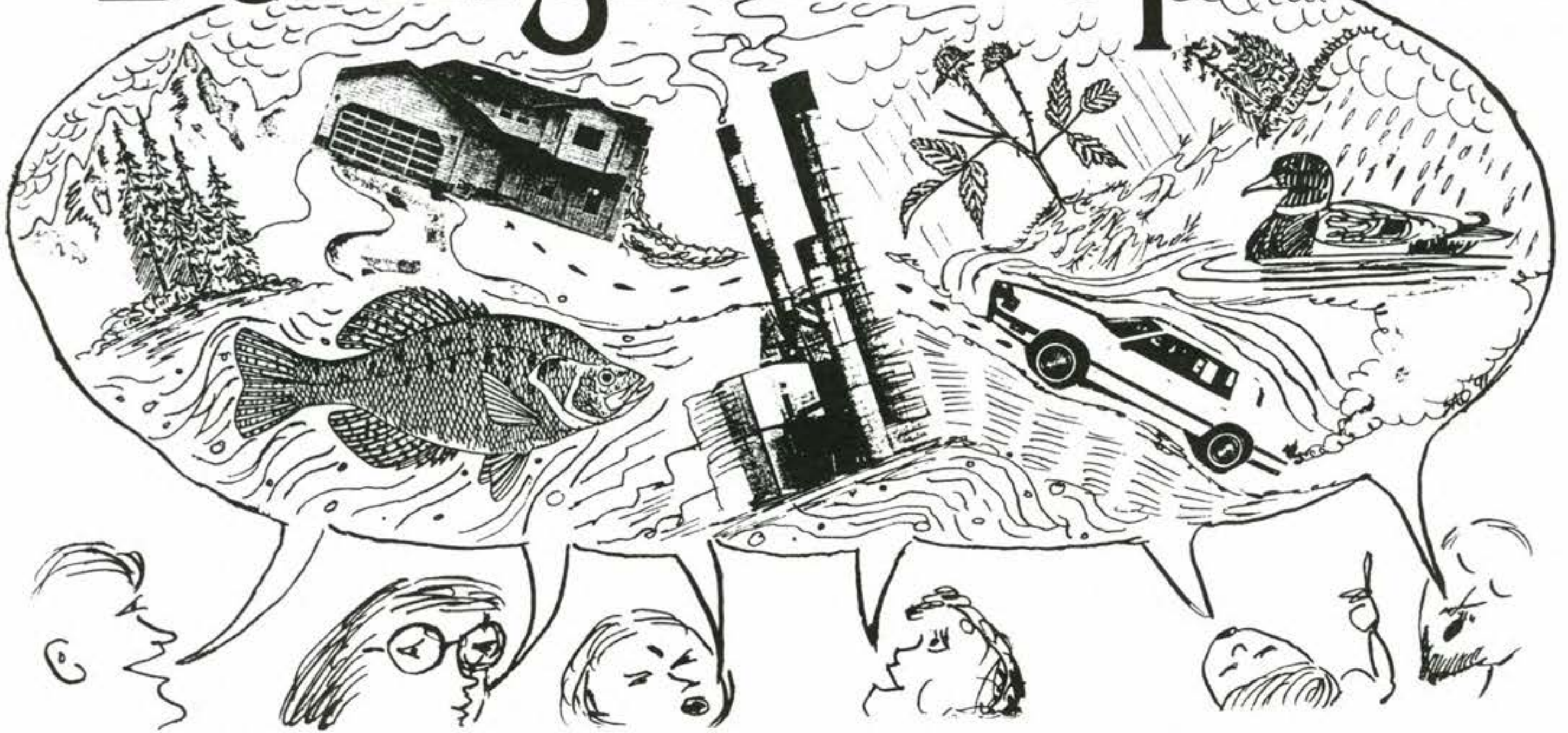
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**Front Cover:** A clear-cut on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.  
**Back Cover:** The headwaters of Connelly Creek after "development" (See story on page 6). PHOTOS: Gary Gray



# Bellingham Speaks



## 13 Local Residents View the Environment

Bellingham's future depends on the actions and attitudes of people who live here today. With this in mind, we interviewed 13 people, representing a cross-section of the community — from businesspeople to civic leaders to Western students. We asked each person an identical series of questions about the environment.

Members of our community panel included:  
**Dennis Withner**, owner of Washington Divers;

**Michael Vouri**, public affairs officer for the Whatcom Museum of History and Art;

**Dan Warner**, Whatcom County Council member and assistant professor in the College of Business, teaching business law at Western;

**Michael Longley**, student and member of Western's College Republicans;

**Jim Ashby**, manager of Bellingham Community Food Co-op;

**Jean Gorton**, vice-president of planning for The Trillium Corporation;

**Jerry Thrumer**, owner of Innovations Woodstoves and Spas;

**Eleanor Reimer**, sales representative for Muljat Realty;

**Michael Webb**, third grade teacher at Carl Cozier Elementary School;

**Reggie Reese**, bus driver for Whatcom County Transportation Authority;

**Tip Johnson**, Bellingham City Council member and owner of Fairhaven Boatworks;

**Eugene Lewis**, co-owner of Indian Street Pottery;

**Mark Aaserud**, president of Western's Associated Students.

Following are selected excerpts from our interviews.

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STORY: Ellis Baker, Donna Fairchild, Brekke Lysakker, Sara Olason, Jim Spaich, Elaine Waller

PHOTOGRAPHS: Rich Fotheringill, Gary Gray



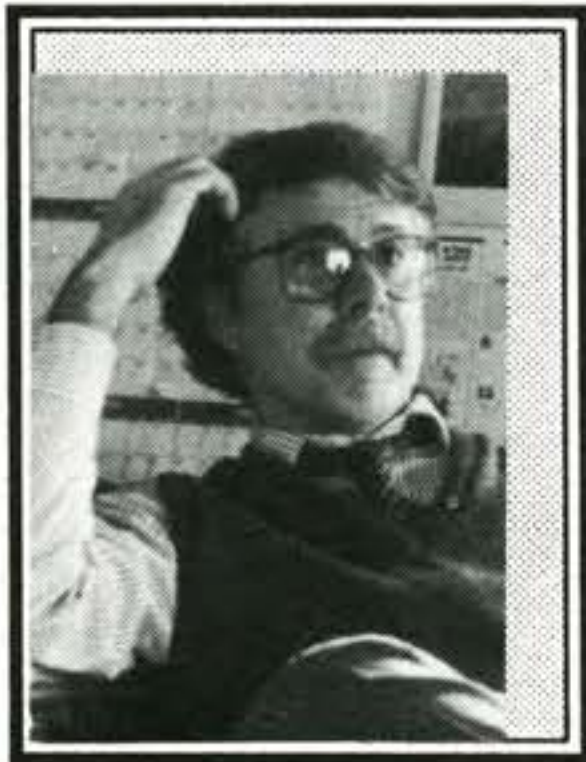
## What do you think are the top environmental issues facing the Bellingham area?

**Warner:** "Urban sprawl is my top concern."

**Johnson:** "Growth. One major result of growth is storm water problems, and resulting concern for streams and fisheries."

**Vouri:** "When I see a creek converted into a culvert, nature has lost again. I don't think strip shopping malls are the quality of growth that will pay dividends for people who live in Bellingham."

**Gorton:** "Impacts on fisheries, and planning for whole water basins. I'd like to see us resolve a system for managing watersheds with better understanding by everyone."



Michael Vouri  
Whatcom Museum

**Lewis:** "I've seen more trees cut within the past two to three years than at any other time during my residency in Bellingham."

**Withner:** "Unplanned growth. I don't want Bellingham to become another Seattle."

**Longley:** "Waste management is a top issue. Bellingham is doing a good job of promoting recycling."

**Reese:** "Air quality. I can stand at my house in Everson and see the smog going down the Georgia Straits. I can also stand on Chuckanut Mountain and see it easing up from Seattle."



Reggie Reese  
Whatcom Transportation



Jean Gorton  
Trillium Corporation

**Thramer:** "Bellingham Bay. I remember years when people were advised not to walk on the shore. It's much cleaner today but still needs attention."

**Ashby:** "I hate to think we get our drinking water out of a lake where people are waterskiing. The Lake Whatcom watershed should be more protected."

# Why We Need a Brave New World

The house is decked with expensive, electronic gadgets — stereo, big-screen TV, VCR and remote controls for security and the garage door. The garage itself is home to at least one car, a power boat, and power tools on a workbench. They're all part of the "good life."

How good is it really? Why do we pursue this "good life?"

To answer these questions, we called on Western professors David Clarke and Vernon Johnson. Clarke's classes, through Huxley College, revolve around his interest in environmental ethics, while Johnson mainly teaches classes on Africa. Both, however, consider the inquiry into social dynamics fundamental to their studies. They teach that society can't begin to solve environmental or social problems without wide public understanding of forces guiding human behavior.

In each culture, beliefs about the

nature of the world, the nature of humans and our purpose in life are shared by a majority of the people. These belief systems, or "social paradigms," which Clarke said are usually unconscious, determine social organization, social and personal goals, and the way people relate to other humans and to nature.

The industrial era set the stage for the current "dominant paradigm" in Western culture. Building the industrial system has been the motivating force in America for nearly 200 years. As a result, we continue to develop all possible technologies despite dangers such as pollution, abuse of pesticides, and war.

As Clarke puts it, "Technical development is something that has value in its own right."

In the "dominant paradigm," economic growth is the main goal in life, with priority over the well-being of humanity

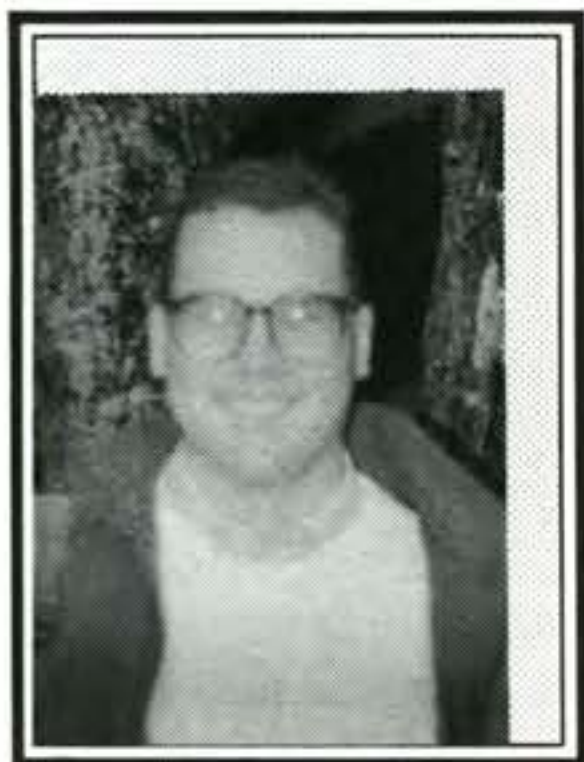


Vernon Johnson



## What do you think are the limits to growth in Bellingham?

**Webb:** "Our school is already feeling the effect of rising student numbers. We don't have book rooms. We don't

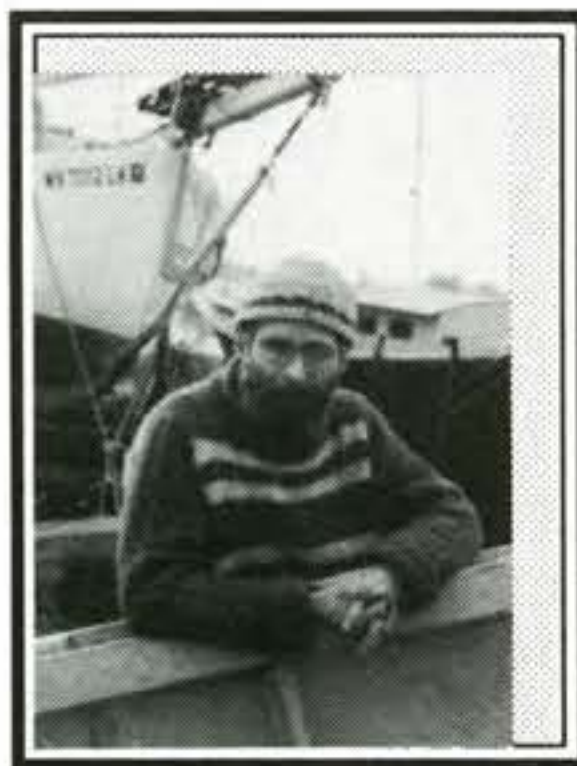


Michael Longley  
College Republicans

have a music room. We have only one special education room."

**Ashby:** "Community services, such as water and schools, limit growth. If you build a 1,400-house subdivision, and a percentage of the population has children, where are those children going to get educated? I'm in favor of planned growth, with a long-term view."

**Longley:** "Instead of placing limits on growth, we should talk about growth management. Strict management will limit growth."



Tip Johnson  
Bellingham City Council

**Johnson:** "Perceptions of people who live in cities. You may be used to a certain quality of life, with woods next door, and deer coming through, and birds. But providing that in the city is definitely at the expense of habitat for similar critters on the urban fringe and beyond."

**Aaserud:** "If we're going to expand in Bellingham, the community will make sure the environment is kept intact."

**Reese:** "Rather than believe we can control nature, we should act to limit growth when we first detect disturbance in the natural balance. Resources are finite, and there will come a time of diminishing returns."



Eugene Lewis  
Indian Street Pottery

**Gorton:** "Some growth is very healthy, because of the new people, new energy, new ideas and new employment opportunities brought to the county. We need to be sure we plan properly."

and nature as a whole. "The developer and the real estate agent who want to make a killing are thoroughly American," said Clarke. "That's the sort of thing the dominant paradigm still endorses. That's why we have to turn that around." Since economic growth has been the secret to America's prosperity, as Johnson noted, we are uncomfortable when "limits" or "controls" are mentioned.

Clarke stressed that economic growth and industrialization are possible because of our perception of nature. "The view of nature is that it is insentient and that to go at it with a bulldozer is all right."

A common argument in the "dominant paradigm" is that humanity has a divine right and duty to reign over nature. As Johnson explained, "Nature is seen as something to be acted upon and to be harnessed by us for our own benefit."

These perceptions have resulted in the disappearance of virgin forests, free running rivers, thousands of unique species, and the healthy environment we need in order to live. Our survival, and the survival of other species, requires a shift in the way we perceive ourselves, our relation to other humans, and our relation to the whole of nature. We need a "new paradigm."

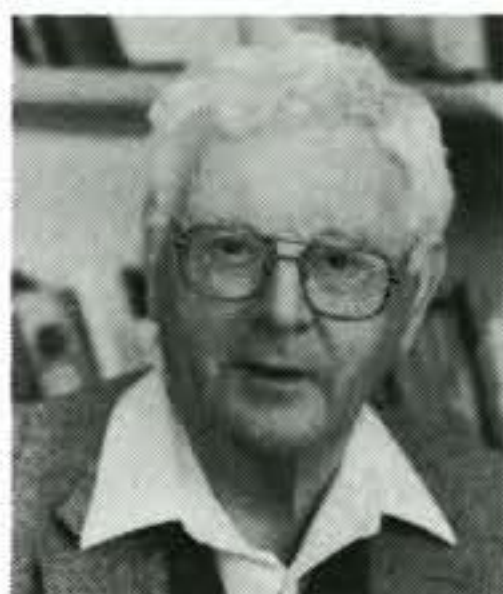
"We really should talk about a new social paradigm in which the environment is one major aspect," said Johnson. "There is evidence that people who are environmentally conscious are more compassionate toward others because they see humanity as a part of nature."

Placing a higher value on nature is a giant step in the right direction. But a fully developed new belief system must embrace a greater commitment. The health of the biosphere must be the primary concern of all people.

"The ultimate unit of life on earth, which has to be healthy, is the ecosystem," Clarke said. "The biggest ecosystem is, of course, life on earth—the whole thing. If that's shot, we're all shot. Even to save ourselves, we've got to keep the ecosystem in shape."

There are signs that a positive shift in values has already begun. Grassroots environmental and peace organizations have sprung up around the world. Their efforts are evidence that individuals are re-evaluating—and in some cases, rejecting—the "dominant paradigm."

"I think it's working through the population like a yeast," Clarke added. "What we need at some point is the invention and setting up of new social institutions to facilitate it further." —E.B., E.W.



David Clarke



**In your time in Bellingham, what have been the major effects of environmental protection?**

**Withner:** "Cleaning up of the bay has been measurable and visible. In the 70s, when I dove in the harbor, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. Now even around G-P some of the sealife has come back."

**Gorton:** "The SEPA [State Environmental Policy Act] process for project review has made everybody much more thoughtful about what they're doing."

**Webb:** "If the NOPE [Neighbors Opposing Power Encroachment] initiative hadn't passed, we could have had much higher emission power lines going right by our school. We needn't take the risk with schools."



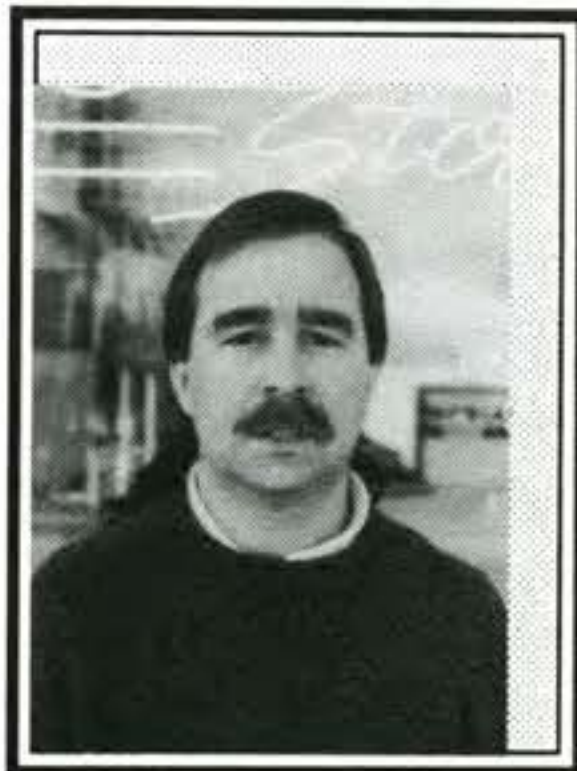
Eleanor Reimer  
Muljat Realty

stand they have to pay for new environmental regulations, and not put all the burden for 'the high cost of housing' on developers."

**Reese:** "The Citizens for Greenways initiative is a positive step toward breaking up development so we don't become a concrete stretch."

**Thrasher:** "My business was affected when the EPA clamped down on fireplace emissions three years ago. People were scared out of buying woodstoves — but with the new stoves, emissions are greatly reduced and the air looks cleaner."

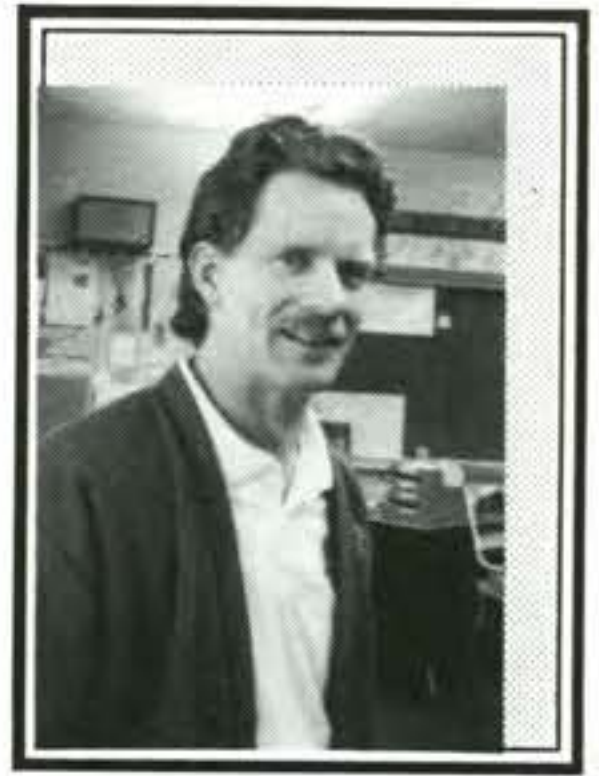
**Ashby:** "Public awareness. The environment has become a more credible issue — you're not a wacko any more if you're concerned."



Jerry Thrasher  
Innovations Woodstoves

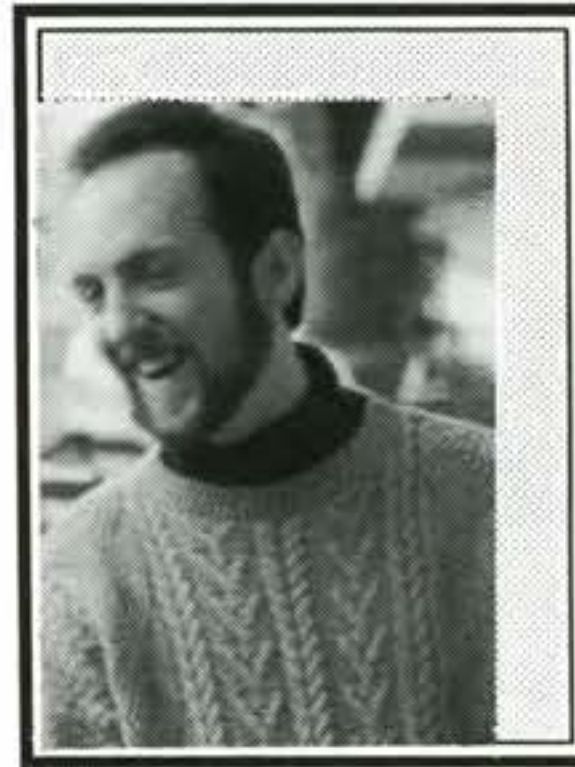
**What is your vision of Bellingham 25 years from now?**

**Webb:** "I hope we have new schools, with updated technology. One way we can educate parents is through environmentally aware children."



Michael Webb  
Carl Cozier Elementary

**Johnson:** "A reduction in land surface for automobiles, a more pedestrian-oriented city. A more localized economy, where we develop wood products instead of shipping logs in the round to Japan, where we grow vegetables for our schools instead of converting farmland into shopping malls."



Mark Aaserud  
Associated Students

**Warner:** "I don't feel very optimistic today. I think the urban area will expand — northern city limits to Ferndale, Ferndale to Blaine, and southern limits

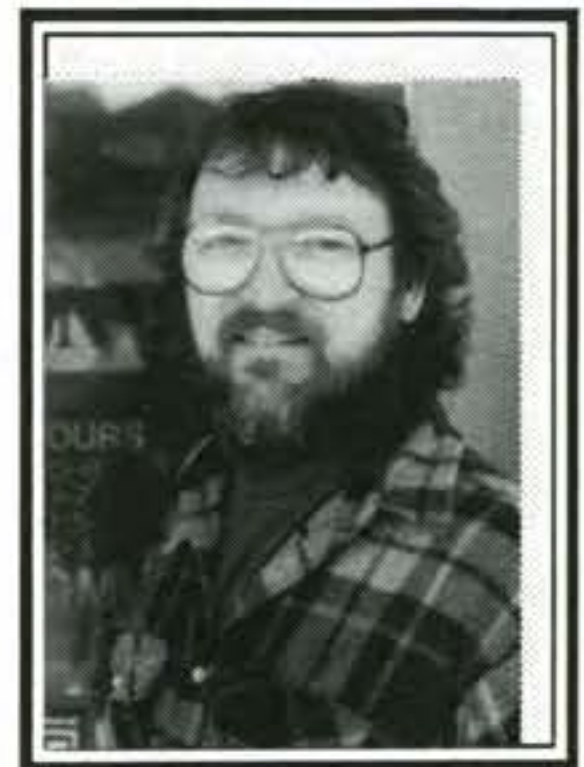
will be blocked by Chuckanut Mountain — unless we do something different. And I don't see any great interest to do anything about it."

**Gorton:** "More building may occur on the north end of the city, but changes will be gradual. Quality of life will be similar to what it is today."

**Aaserud:** "I think Western will be much bigger and have more national prestige. The campus will be expanded, yet it will maintain its naturalness and beauty."

**Lewis:** "A community in harmony with nature. I don't think strip malls are the best development."

**Reese:** "A role model for other cities. Every individual cleans up his personal act at home, in his neighborhood and town, and gets actively involved."

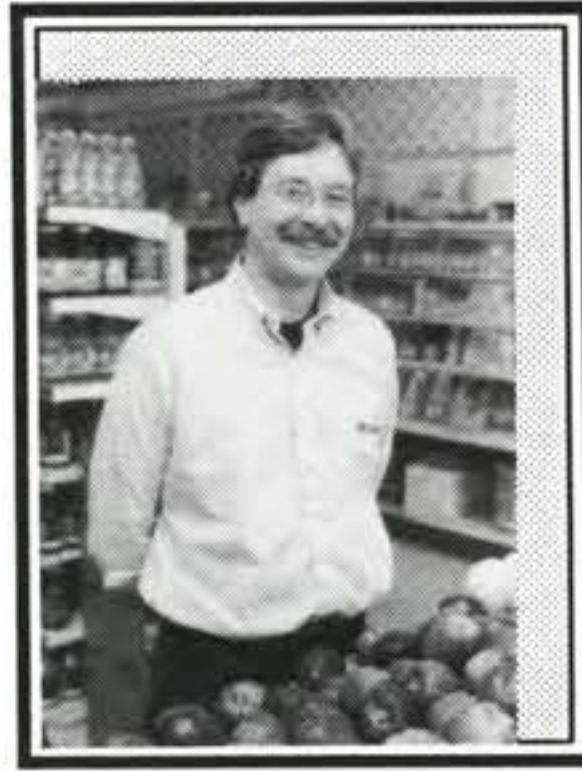


Dennis Withner  
Washington Divers



## What is the human role in nature?

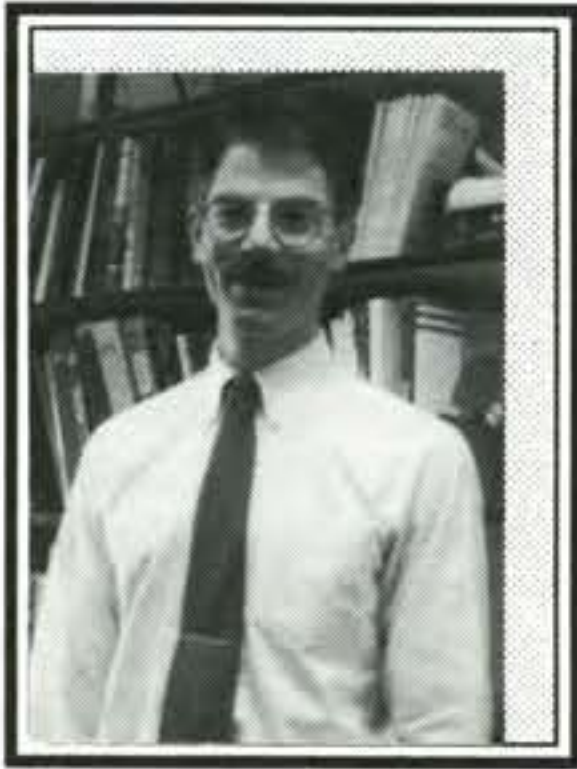
**Ashby:** "As a species, we haven't done a good job of being part of nature — we ought to be harmonious, rather than adversarial."



Jim Ashby  
Bellingham Food Co-op

**Longley:** "We need to keep nature the way it is, but in our busy lives we tend to overlook that."

**Reimer:** "Individual commitment and responsibility. A caring attitude for nature will lead to the right action."



Dan Warner  
Whatcom County Council

**Warner:** "Our goal is to fulfill ourselves and not deny other living things the same opportunity."

**Webb:** "Humans must protect the environment. I see that as my job, particularly teaching kids at school."

**Gorton:** "Man is part of the natural system. We have to be careful how we guard that system, or we'll be wiped out with the rest of it."

**Johnson:** "Hopefully human consciousness can recognize the needs of the environment and attend to them in time."

**Withner:** "To consume, and to husband and protect nature. We must think about leaving things for tomorrow."

**Aaserud:** "Just as we need certain things for existence, so does nature. We both have to live here — think of it as a living environment for both of us."

**Vouri:** "We must take a more egalitarian view of the environment, be less preoccupied with development for the few, and more concerned with preservation for the many." ■

# Let's Start Now

Bellingham faces a crossroads. Pressures on the local environment — from loss of wildlife habitat to water pollution to natural resource depletion — force us to chart the course for our community.

Members of our panel expressed a desire to preserve the quality of life we all enjoy. We believe this can happen — that Bellingham can be a model of a community in harmony with nature. But we must act now. Our proposals:

- Eliminate private transportation from downtown Bellingham. Substitute wind- or solar-powered public transportation; encourage foot and pedal power. Convert parking lots into greenbelts.
- Preserve wetlands and streams as wildlife sanctuaries — off-limits to development. Prohibit access to sensitive or recovering natural areas.
- Encourage optimum use of existing structures. Remodel older buildings for maximum energy efficiency and use of space.
- Create community gardens and composts in every neighborhood, so residents can grow their own food.
- Establish a Wild and Scenic Streams Program, which provides a quarter-mile wide, natural buffer on both sides of all streams. Restore local creeks into viable habitat for fish and other aquatic life.
- Relocate Georgia-Pacific and convert it into a paper recycling facility. Transform the G-P bayside site into a public park.
- Immediately prohibit annexation beyond present city boundaries. Prevent leap-frog development.
- Publish an independent community journal that outlines local environmental issues, and has the courage to question major political and business interests.
- Cap industrial growth. Allow no more polluting businesses. Make existing industries accountable to the public.
- Institute a local environmental protection agency to set and enforce standards. Let community members play an active role in designing and maintaining the agency.

Above all, citizen involvement and respect for individual views must prevail. Each person has a responsibility to help chart the course for Bellingham. Government and industry have an obligation to listen.

University students have a voice, too, though many assume we're just passing through. This is our community. We hope future environmental journalists, on *the Planet* or elsewhere, will continue pressing our proposals.

That's what this study is all about. Environmental consciousness is more than a fancy phrase: It's the spark that inspires individuals to action. We can set goals and work toward them. With careful planning, we can make Bellingham a model of environmental sensitivity.

Let's start now.



# The tragedy of Connelly Creek

STORY: Peter Donaldson

The narrow creek bed, filled with loose dirt and broken tree limbs, told me something was wrong. A few minutes later, my foot sank deep into the hidden mud. A creek had been buried and I was standing in the middle of it.

On this slope, where three small tributaries once converged to form the headwaters of Connelly Creek, there now was only one, and this, a trickle at best. Connelly Creek is a favorite haunt of mine and one of the few natural areas left in Bellingham — a prize that makes our city proud. It's a place where deer and coyote still travel. It's no wonder citizens fought hard to preserve it. Now its upper reaches have been filled, degrading the entire stream.

Given today's concern for the environment, and the array of rules and regulations, how could this happen?

I asked this after experiencing the tragedy of Connelly Creek and found shocking answers, almost enough to shake my faith in democracy.

The answers include:

- **An alleged violation of federal law for filling a wetland.**
- **Developers who broke development guidelines and got away with it.**
- **A planning department that promotes development instead of the environment.**
- **A city council that disregarded wrongdoings and allowed the project to continue.**

The worst of it may be that this fiasco is not an isolated incident. Wetland filling continues, in Bellingham and across the country. More than 300,000 acres of wetlands are lost every year in the United States.

On July 24, 1989 Bill Geyer, director of Bellingham's Department of Planning and Economic Development, presented the final two phases of a 47-lot development project named Wildwood Hills Subdivision to the Bellingham City Council, while concerned citizens packed city hall. The council gave "final" approval for Phase II and "preliminary" approval for Phase III, with the understanding that specific development guidelines would be followed. These included limiting land clearing to street and utility right-of-ways; leaving two lots in Phase III intact, dedicated to the city as open space; and leaving the headwaters of Connelly Creek untouched.



The author (L) interviewing Richard Hayes. PHOTO: Gary Gray

A taped transcript of the July 24 council meeting clearly shows Geyer referring to the two lots in Phase III as those intended for open space: "Phase II, 8 and 9 are lots that will be developed. Phase III, 8 and 9 are lots that would be dedicated to the city."

Months passed. The council turned to other business, but neighbors watched and grew increasingly concerned.

In March 1990 local residents Richard and Shirley Hayes, members of the Samish Neighborhood Association, noticed that the building contractors had cleared land despite the guidelines. Geyer's open space provision evidently was ignored. Richard immediately brought this to the attention of the City Council.

But from their ringside seats they subsequently watched the project go from bad to worse.

Richard and I recently stood on the crumbling edge of an artificial embankment leading down to the trickling creek, reviewing the unhappy scene. He pointed to a standing dead cedar tree. At least six feet of its trunk had been buried by fill material.

"Things like this should never happen," he said.

Later I talked with council member Betty Kiner, whose ward includes the Wildwood project. "This was the point when everything hit the fan," she conceded. "We had either been lied to, had been misinformed or both."

Kiner also told me about documents mysteriously disappearing from city files and described how the city is getting an unbuildable bog overrun with bramble bushes for open space.

According to a May 13, 1990 letter from attorney Robert Beaty, representing citizen interest, to prosecuting attorney Greg Greenan, the contractor bulldozed a swath 30 feet by almost 200 feet to install a sewer line. During the clearing, part of the creek was covered and lower sections were partially filled, causing problems for the entire stream.

A day later Dottie Ross, president of the Samish Neighborhood Association, wrote Planning Director Geyer describing abuses by the contractor. Geyer defended the fill as having been approved.

"I recognize that this area is diverse in small springs and streams," he wrote. "Unfortunately, this was approved, as the immediate neighbors requested, as a standard subdivision. No streams or steep areas were kept in designated open space. As I have tried to explain many times before, without the clustering of lots, these natural features will disappear."

Distressed about finding the creek bulldozed into



oblivion, the Hayeses turned to the Army Corps of Engineers for help. Where Geyer had failed, the Corps issued a stop-work order to the developer on October 1, 1990 for violating section 404 of the Clean Water Act. A site map drawn by the Corps shows the fill level on top of the wetland to exceed 30 feet in some areas. The Corps plans to draft a strategy that would require the developer of Wildwood to clean out the creek this spring.

On October 19, 1990, the City Council received an anguished letter from Dottie Ross. None of the development guidelines, she complained, had been met. To the contrary, the area suffered from the very problems the guidelines were meant to prevent.

She cited:

- **Clearing of the site, particularly in Phase III, extended far beyond the street and utility right-of-ways. The two open-space lots in Phase III were cleared and advertised for sale.**
- **The Connelly Creek headwaters were bulldozed and fill was dumped along remaining parts of the stream.**

When I visited the site in January, I wondered how the extensive clearing had affected neighbors living downhill from Wildwood.

Joy Hale, president of the Ridgemont Homeowner's Association, who lives downhill from Wildwood, is careful not to blame runoff problems exclusively on the Wildwood project. She is convinced, however, that the excessive clearing exacerbated an already bad problem.

"Everyone in the Ridgemont neighborhood has water problems, but burying those smaller creeks has influenced the amount of water in our yards. That water has to go somewhere."

As I learned of the damage to this once peaceful place, I asked myself: Who screwed up?

"The City Council screwed up, developers screwed up and engineering screwed up. We are all at fault here," said Kiner.

After I spent a morning with Reinhart and Dottie Ross, in the warm comfort of their hilltop home, I realized the community had learned something from Wildwood.

"It taught us all a lesson: to be alert and to be insistent," Dottie told me.

Bellingham's reaction to Wildwood mirrors a society that is reactive, not preventive. It often takes a disaster for people to wake up and act.

As a direct result of the Wildwood fiasco, the Department of Public Works has hired a development sites inspector and has allocated funds for a similar position in the planning department.

However, can two inspectors, or 50 for that matter, really understand and monitor all the projects in town?

As Bellingham stretches its fingers across steep slopes and wooded

hills, development must be watched with scrutiny. The council and city departments must be watched as well. Since residents are the only ones who know how the land looks winter, spring, summer and fall, they must do the watching. Citizens must be fully involved in decision making from the start.

Sunrise, a recent development project on East Birch Street, owned by Dave Edelstein, shows that little has changed since Wildwood. The project has split a wetland in two, paving over the middle to conveniently avoid regulations that prohibit development on wetlands larger than 10,000 square feet. Citizens fear the Department of Planning and Economic Development places priority on development and disregards planning.

The city needs to punish offenders, force developers to meet development guidelines, and recognize that city employees can't know the land from behind their desks.

Pressure to develop is coming fast. The Trillium Corporation wants to build on 645 acres of rural land outside Bellingham. Plans call for 1,935 housing units, several two-story and three-story apartment buildings and an 18-hole golf course. The city is also now considering a project that would put 1,400 housing units into the last large wooded area on the Southside.

Now, when I walk to the edge of my property, I look down on a small part of nature that once flowed free. The same creek that Wildwood buried runs along the north side of my yard.

I gaze across the street, to the wooded stream that is known as Connelly Creek, and for me, it will never be the same.

I hope that with a new commitment, putting nature first, Bellingham can step beyond the endless tracts of row houses and creeping waves of suburbia. Develop with respect, that's all I ask. ❧



Stream rehabilitation, developer-style: hay bales in Connelly Creek.

PHOTO: Gary Gray



# ENVIRONMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHY A Tool for Advocacy

STORY & PHOTOS: Gary Gray

I first met Pat O'Hara, one of the most respected photographers in the Northwest, at a photo workshop. I had just gone back to school to pursue environmental studies, but was still committed to improving and using my photography. Pat was leading the workshop with another photographer whose work I had also greatly admired, so getting into that workshop was something I could not miss.

I learned many lessons that week about fine tuning my photo technique. I also learned about Western and Huxley College (Pat worked in the Outdoor Program here). But most importantly, I found some direction.

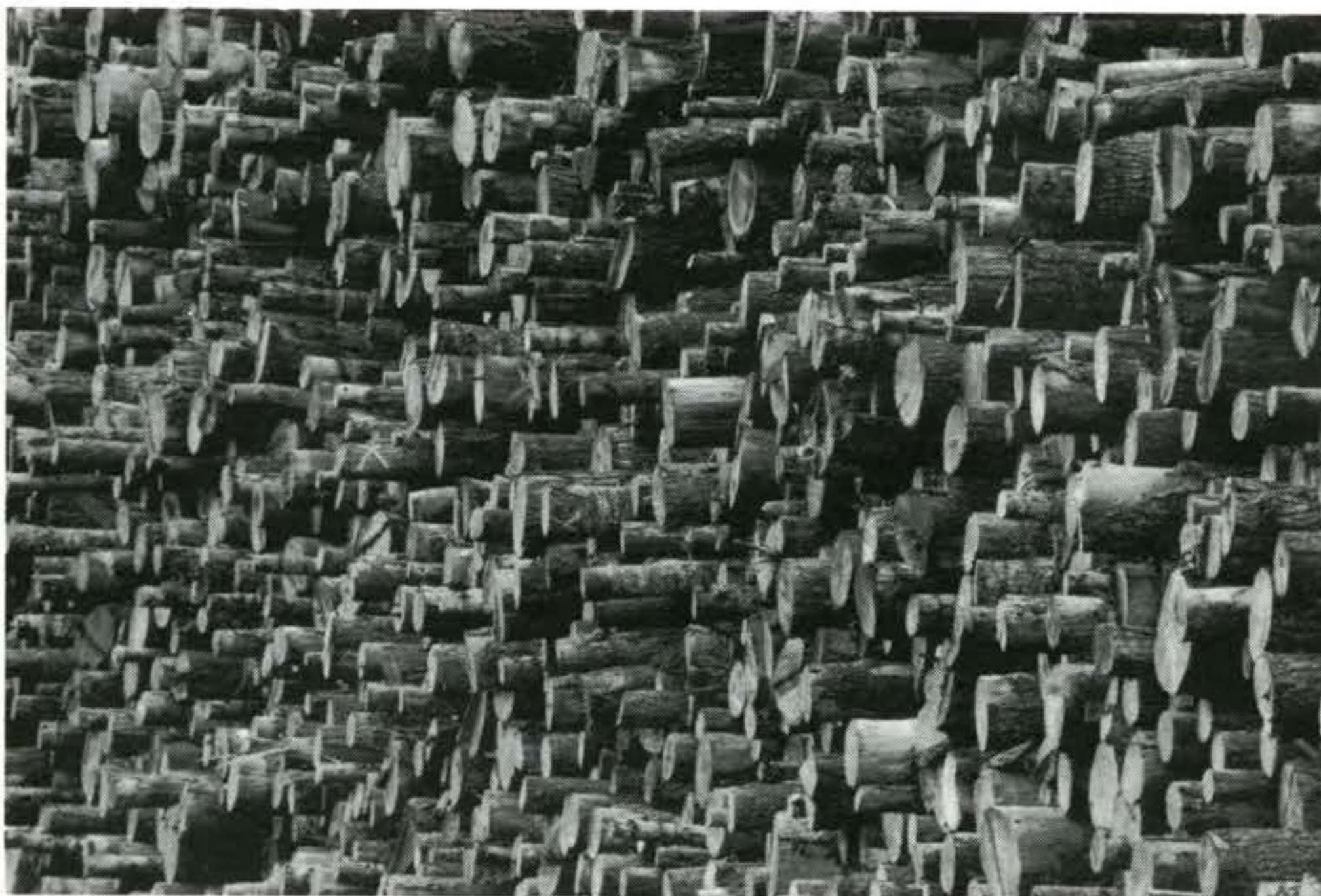
I was competent but not clearly focused on a goal. What's more, I'd felt only conflict between the demands of school and my progress as a photographer. But Pat pointed out just how useful the education would be to my sensitivity as a photographer. Suddenly it made sense. Why hadn't I seen that my love of photography could complement my determination to save the world?

I'd just made my first step toward being an environmental photographer.

Just what is "environmental photography?" Are landscape shots environmental photography? How about wildlife photographs? Clearly they can be, but I believe it depends on usage and context: Is your full-frame portrait of a mature male lion in regal repose on a grassy plain going to be used to sell the latest manly cologne, or will it grace an *Audubon* article on endangered African wildlife?

A picture may indeed be worth a thousand words; it may even be worth a thousand dollars (or more!). But will its use do something positive for environmental awareness? Therein lies the essence of environmental photography.

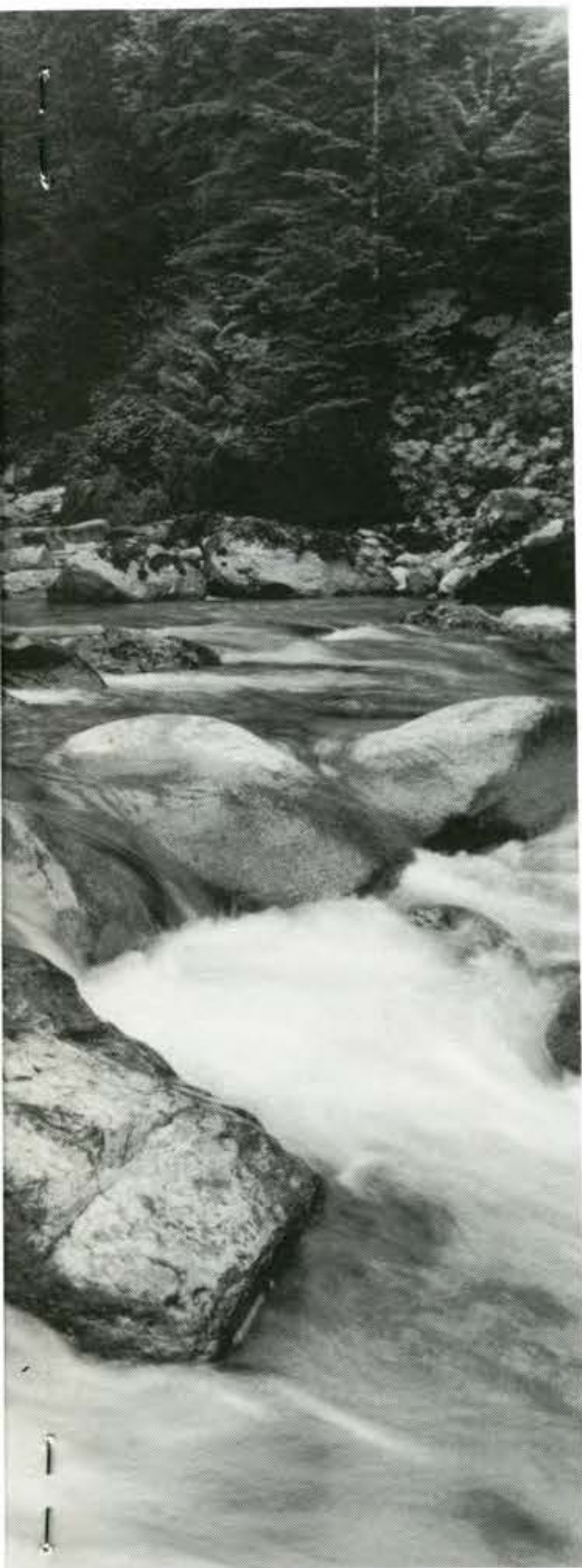
Pat O'Hara's success as a master of the natural image has allowed him enough professional freedom to pursue two book projects that were truly labors of his love for the natural world. Both books were conceived specifically to promote public and legislative awareness



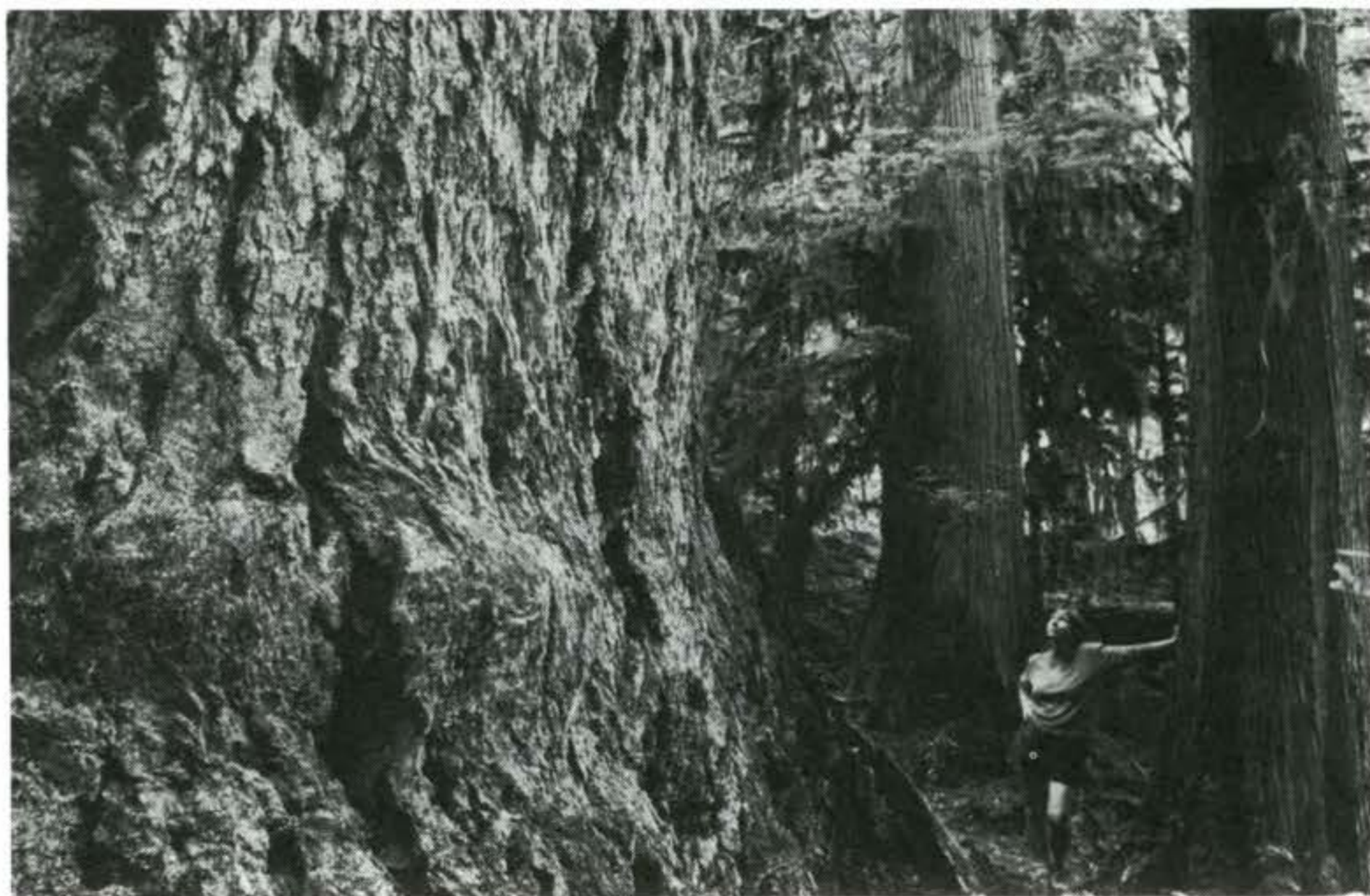
LEFT: Former Forest Dweller  
ABOVE: Noisy Creek at its source  
RIGHT: Spiritual Reflection in the water



# GRAPHY: vocacy



...llers in an Oregon Millyard.  
...it s outlet on Baker Lake.  
...the Noisy-Diobsud Wilderness.



and to help push the passage of important conservation legislation.

The first, *Washington Wilderness: The Unfinished Work*, was instrumental in the passage of the Washington Wilderness Act of 1984. *Washington's Wild Rivers: The Unfinished Work*, published last year, aims to increase awareness of how the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act works; namely, what the act permits while still keeping the states' rivers free-flowing.

Both books combine beautiful photographs of potentially threatened wildlands with descriptive and journalistic prose, a common approach in environmental photography. As everyone familiar with *National Geographic* knows, the combining of word and image almost always produces a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

The use of photography to promote conservation is not new. The great landscape photographer, Ansel Adams, for instance, used his images to lobby Congress and was pivotal in the formation of Kings Canyon National Park in 1940. Fully 70 years before that event, when even fewer people had seen any of the natural treasures of our country (and 20 years before Wyoming became a state), the photographs of William Henry Jackson were crucial in the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, the nation's first.

What is new is a generation of photographers, like O'Hara, who have grown up with a much more acute

awareness of the environmental deprivations of our species: actions that have, unfortunately, produced a bountiful supply of new subject material — environmental degradation.

Photographs of such problems often stand in stark contrast to the "pretty pictures" with which we are more familiar, yet the combination of the pretty and the profane gives a more truthful picture of today's environmental story.

Robert Glenn Ketchum is an environmental photographer who now prefers to call himself a "political activist." He resists the temptation to document only devastation, something he first encountered while shooting a book on the plight of the Tongass National Forest. Instead, he takes "beautiful photographs to create a tension with the confrontational ones." Ketchum feels he would lose viewers (thence his effectiveness) by portraying only destruction.

My favorite example of Ketchum's vision is a photograph taken in Ohio, a perfect picture-postcard scene of a sparkling brook, Brandywine Creek, cascading through a deciduous forest at the height of fall color — Sierra Club calendar material to be sure.

However, anyone tempted into the water risks violent illness, thanks to a waste dump upstream — a hideous graveyard of old tires and junk that Ketchum made sure to document. These shots are part of his coverage for a new book due out this



spring that may be a milestone in environmental photojournalism: *Overlooked in America: Some Observations on the Success and Failure of Federal Land Management*.

The Brandywine Creek photograph points out one of the major challenges of environmental photography: portraying subjects that are either subtle or invisible to the eye. As Ketchum's shot reveals, pollution need not be as obvious as an oil spill. Similarly, there is the problem of the huge scale of today's environmental woes. How, for instance, do you photograph global warming? How do you illustrate acid rain? How do you take a picture of an ecosystem?

Well, you can't, at least not in a single photograph, and this explains a growing trend toward documenting all aspects of a subject. In recent years, photo editors in the nature publications industry have largely stopped asking for specific photographs; instead, they ask to see the extent of the photographer's coverage of a story.

Complete coverage of the whole story, however, does not come easily. To paraphrase a recent profile in *American Photo* magazine, today's environmental photographers have had to become writers, researchers, historians, private detectives, and more. During Ketchum's Tongass project, he and his wife became economists, biologists and Forest Service analysts: "We turned from being art photographers to being hard-core journalists."

I've seen firsthand the amount of effort that goes into a pro's work. On a couple of backcountry photo trips for the *Wild Rivers* book, I saw Pat's backpack loaded with 30 pounds of camera gear. Where, I wondered, would the trail mix fit? And Pat was almost always the first one up and last to bed.

Such dedication reflects the commitment of the environmental photographer, and is prerequisite to success in today's highly competitive field of nature photography.

Frans Lanting is best known for wildlife photography, but the scope of his work goes well beyond that. Over the past five years Lanting has spent many months in Madagascar, documenting conflict between the island's unique ecosystem and growing human population. His images run the gamut from landscapes to wildlife, from portraits of locals to aerial photographs.

Trained as an economist and environmental planner, Lanting shows a particularly keen sensitivity to the Malagasy relationship between the natural and artificial worlds: "If you enacted a law in Madagascar that proclaimed all slash-and-burn agriculture illegal, it would be as if we outlawed the use of automobiles in this country." Such understanding is reflected in the depth of Lanting's broad coverage of the subject, as seen in his book *Madagascar: A World Out Of Time*.

These journalistic-type uses of photography are the most common. I would even argue that photography is essential to providing a clear idea of an environmental problem — the visual orientation of humans is very strong. Photographs leave far less to the viewer's imagi-

nation than words.

However, environmental photography need not always be explicit; it can be suggestive or even abstract. Richard Misrach has spent considerable time in the deserts of the Southwest, making stark, desolate images — pictures that seem to ask more questions than they answer.

His latest project is a new book called *Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West*, an exploration of a

Nevada desert illegally used by the Navy as a bombing range, and a provocative picture of our careless collective attitude toward this fragile environment. For Misrach, the desert is "a metaphor for the human and environmental condition."

Perhaps the most original (and certainly most controversial) environmental abstraction to date is

James Balog's recent project on endangered species. It has been profiled in *National Geographic* and several other publications, and is the subject of *Survivors: A New Vision of Endangered Wildlife*. Says Balog, "One of the most cherished illusions of our culture is that animals will always live contentedly in idyllic wilderness...[but] the reality of the present, not to mention the future, is radically different from this vision. Recognizing this, I have no desire to perpetuate the romantic images of traditional wildlife photography."

So he traveled 80,000 miles over two years to zoos around the world, going into considerable personal debt, producing enigmatic, studio-like portraits of "animals in exile from a lost Eden."

There is no denying the images are disturbing. By stripping away any natural setting and taking the animals completely out of "context," Balog challenges our preconceived notions, producing a razor-sharp focus on the true plight of these animals.

So strong is his conviction that Balog even goes so far as to challenge his own peers. "It's important that the modern generation of environmentally oriented photographers not go back to Yosemite and show the ninety-millionth view of Half Dome with a 25A red filter."

If indeed environmental photography is advocacy, then challenging the viewer is part of the photographer's job. It is too easy to allow increasing familiarity with today's environmental problems to dull one's sense of outrage and accept apathy. When was the last time we stopped to ponder the continued presence of Georgia-Pacific downtown, the urbanization of the Puget Sound basin, or the Douglas-fir plantations surrounding us?

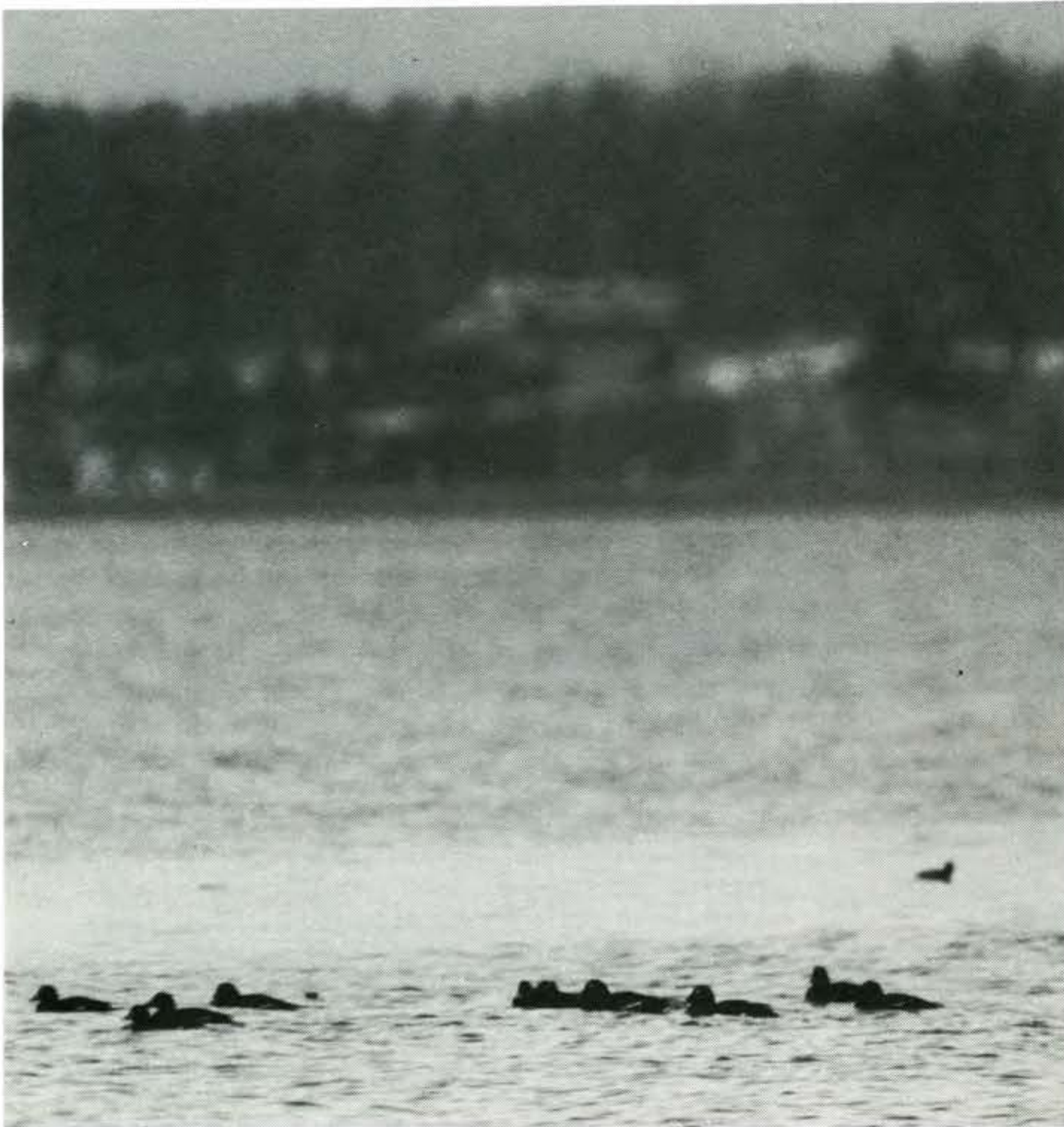
The environmental photographer's task is to reawaken the environmental consciousness we, as humans, all inherit. Whether it is Pat O'Hara enticing viewers with nature's beauty, Robert Glenn Ketchum presenting the good, bad and ugly sides of the environmental story, or James Balog directly confronting us, they are all daring us to become more aware of the natural world and our role in it. ■

**The environmental photographer's task is to reawaken the environmental consciousness we, as humans, all inherit.**



# OIL & WATER

The battle to preserve marine life starts here — in our own backyard



BIRCH BAY.

PHOTO: Gary Gray

If Cyrano de Bergerac were a duck, he'd certainly be a northern shoveler — awkward in appearance, yet certain in purpose. Northern shovelers, with their large bills, skim the water for breakfast on this pink winter morning.

I like to watch the duck traffic on Birch Bay from my house on the beach. It begins like morning rush hour with a few early risers breaking the pre-dawn silence.

STORY: Heather Harnischfeger-Smith

These early risers use no oil or gasoline to power their commute, only the power of their webbed feet. Tipping forward to feed on eel grass, American widgeons and pintails look like buoys in a tide-rip.

Recent headlines in the paper make me think about oil and other seagrass beds. I think about those in the Persian Gulf. They are home to migratory birds, too. I read that the Gulf is a rest stop for 123 species of shorebirds on the flyway between wintering grounds in Africa and summering grounds in the Soviet Union and Northern Europe. The seagrass beds are also home to fish and sea turtles, which may lose their eggs to suffocation in the war's record oil spill.

I make a wish on a falling sea star that the black hands of spilled oil in the Persian Gulf won't reach here, to the waters of Birch Bay or Bellingham Bay or the Straits of Georgia. Not that the record oil spill in the gulf would cross the Pacific Ocean, but as long as we depend on oil, we run the risk of the same environmental tragedies that struck the Middle East.

I also think about the Texaco oil spill in Anacortes in late February, when 210,000 gallons spilled — making it one of the biggest spills in Washington's history. Clean-up techniques were effective, but every oil spill is harmful. Add the damage at Anacortes to previous spills at Grays Harbor, Huntington Beach, California, and Prince William Sound, Alaska and I'm reminded the future and safety of Northwest waters can't be taken for granted.





The ARCO oil refinery near Birch Bay.

PHOTO: Gary Gray

"just miles of tundra and frozen swamp land."

People in the oil industry are taking the proper measures to prepare for a major oil spill. Local oil companies established the Clean Sound Cooperative, a response team for spills like the one in Anacortes.

Regardless of improved cleanup techniques, I like the Northern Puget Sound Sanctuary proposed by people like my friend Brandy Reed, a Huxley College student. She and Fred Felleman, conservation biologist and director of The American Oceans Campaign, are working with federal and state agencies on the proposal for the sustainability of northwest Washington waters.

As Puget Sound shows the effects of increased human population and energy production, maintaining the health of these waters is imperative.

The sanctuary proposal, which many hope will be part of the National Marine Sanctuary Program, includes the waters surrounding the San Juan Islands, north to the Canadian border and south to the tip of Whidbey Island.

Now northwest Washington faces the possibility of more oil in transit. With opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), Northwest waters could face increased oil transport by ship or the proposed Trans-Mountain Canada Pipeline.

A careful eye will also be focused on oil reserves off the west coast of Washington. Though local exploration is not imminent, the waters of Puget Sound and the Straits of Georgia are still highways for Alaskan oil.

The oil industry calls ANWR "the last major untapped oil field." The industry refers to ANWR as

As Felleman and Reed advocate, responsibility for the safety and quality of northwest Washington waters falls in the hands of everyone who uses these waters. We can no longer point fingers at one another in times of environmental impact.

Sanctuary implies refuge and protection. This gives us a chance to provide thousands of species of marine animals in northwest Washington a safe place to fly, swim, float, eat and breed. Someday we'll have a better energy policy, and transportation without oil dependence. The sanctuary proposal helps for now.

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I imagine the black brants, harlequin ducks, goldeneyes, widgeons, loons, pintails, mallards, scaups, gulls, and the eel grass and fish covered with oil. I imagine myself dressed in oil-covered foul-weather gear bathing these birds, which I've watched on countless mornings. Birds whose peace I envy.

A few mornings ago, a rare sea otter swam by with two pups, wiggling through the glassy water. They rolled and rolled as they preened their thick brown fur. Otters preen fur religiously to keep it from matting, so they can stay warm. What if, some chilly morning, those otters had fur too oily to preen?



Common Goldeneye

PHOTO: Gary Gray

I imagine orcas and migrating gray and humpback whales, harbor seals and sea lions surfacing to breathe and inhaling oil. I hope it never happens here in Birch Bay, or anywhere these whales, fish and birds call home.

A rare canvasback drake swims alone. As a diving duck, he doesn't feed in herds like the

puddle ducks. His trademark red head, with its proud forehead and elegantly sloped bill, shimmers with an icy sheen. He swims and stops, swims and stops, moving erratically — as if he's weighing his desire for a breakfast of flounder and sculpin against his instinctive worry about the soaring overhead predator, an immature bald eagle.

Like ink exploding on pink canvas, black brants lift from their salt water beds in the middle of the bay and spill onto the tideflats to browse eelgrass. I jump into the water to join the birds — a salutation for the life of the bay. I last an eternity of 10 seconds, as the ducks and brants swim away, then sit shivering on the cool sand, watching the eagle dive and scoop its breakfast from the bay.

I grab my binoculars from a log. Focusing binoculars while shivering is like swimming in 40-degree water — virtually impossible. I take a deep breath and focus.

I expect to see a starry flounder in the eagle's talons. Instead, his prey has feathers. The eagle vigorously flaps his broad wings and disappears into the fir trees. Morning has broken on Birch Bay.

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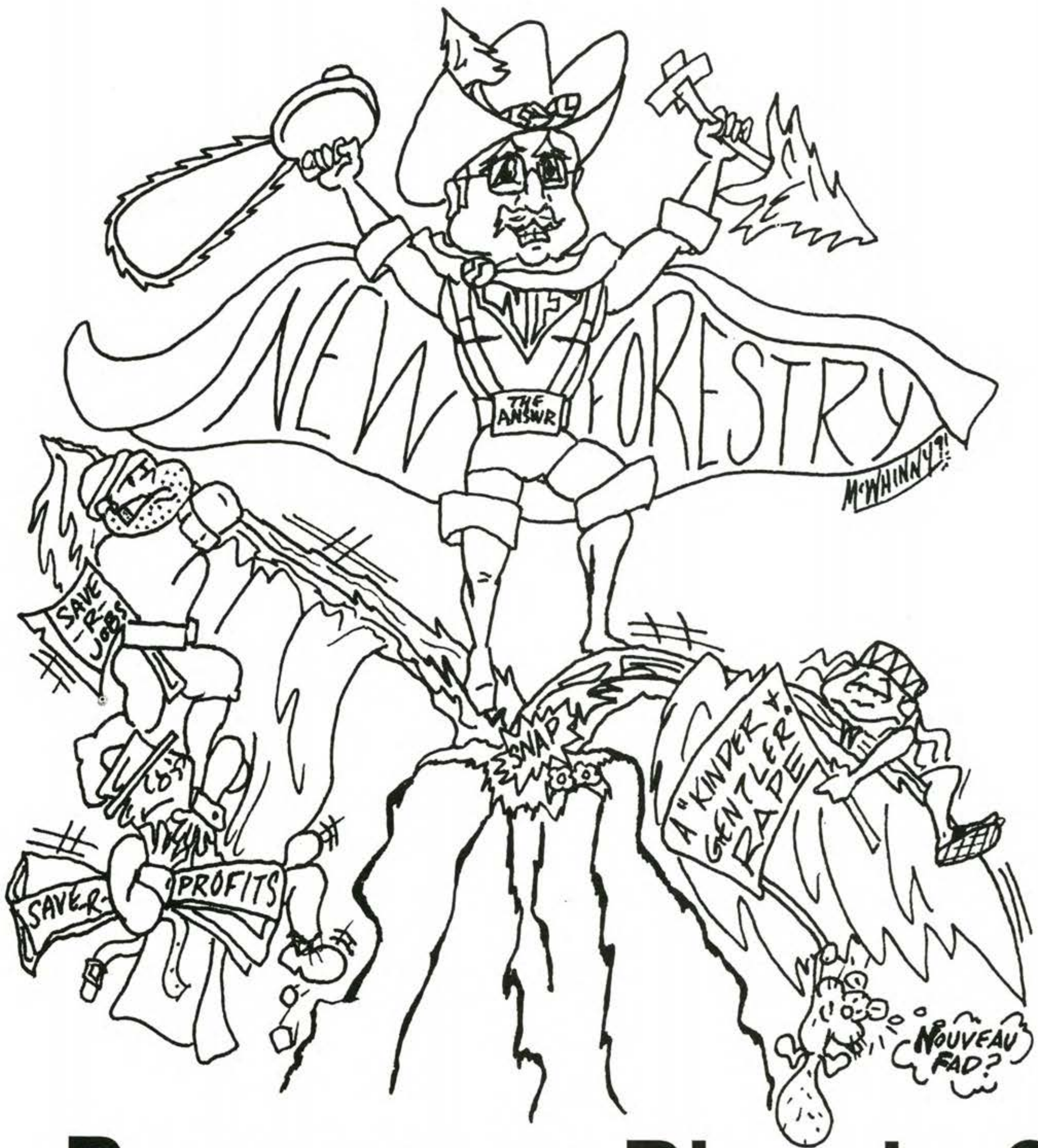
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# Panacea or Placebo?

STORY: Jenny Flynn

When I first heard of New Forestry, I was a newcomer to the Northwest and a forestry ignoramus.

From the name, I assumed it was an innovative method of growing trees. But in the course of adapting to the region, I have donned my raingear, brushed up on my silviculture, and discovered that the crop New Forestry produces best is political intrigue.



On the plane from New York to Seattle, my seatmate introduced me to the Northwest forest dispute. Later, when I read the news or ate in an Olympic Peninsula Chinese restaurant sporting a "this business is supported by timber dollars" sign, I saw forests as suppliers of wood, jobs, and profits. But when I hung around with "green people," forests appeared to be the basis of an ecosystem worth preserving. Forest use was obviously an important issue in my new home.

In the middle stood Jerry Franklin, New Forestry's leading developer and advocate, promising that these views could be practically reconciled. Intrigued, I attended a conference on New Forestry in Seattle.

Franklin is a rare master of the intellectual outdoorsman look. When I met him, he was wearing red suspenders, pressed trousers, and a country hat — a combination that left an odd impression of dignity. His intellectual aura is deserved; as a distinguished forestry scientist, a professor of forestry at the University of Washington, and the Forest Service's chief plant ecologist, he is steeped in credibility.

Appealingly reasonable, Franklin claims that New Forestry has the potential to resolve forest disputes without producing a losing side: "Today, people are looking for alternate solutions and New Forestry has elements of a win-win — a high level of ecological resources with a level of commodity production."

I walked out of that seminar dazzled by the dueling words of Franklin and other top New Forestry advocates, environmentalists, and timber industry reps. I felt confused and ignorant; I wanted to digest what I had heard, read more, and talk further with insiders. What is New Forestry, after all? My research led me to its conception 20 years ago, when Franklin and other scientists began investigating the structure and composition of old-growth forests. The scientific results, applied to the practice of cutting trees, were christened New Forestry.

The aim of New Forestry, I

discovered, is to manage commodity forests for greater habitat potential. In theory, it mimics the way nature disturbs forests with fires, wind storms, and volcanoes. It has a large grab-bag of techniques, including leaving some trees (dead and alive) after a cut and managing larger patches than in standard forestry. Franklin, echoing George Bush, likes to call it a "kinder, gentler forestry."

Kind or not, New Forestry's primary focus is still cutting down trees, and the habitat it strives for may not be viable for decades or even centuries.

Although New Foresters stress flexibility, I find it, if anything, too



Franklin, echoing George Bush, likes to call it a "kinder, gentler forestry."



indefinite. Franklin's articulate but vague definitions add to the confusion: "New Forestry is about using filters to protect, sustain, and regenerate the forest ecosystems which remain." "New Forestry is not a set of technical prescriptions; rather, it is a new way of looking at the forests holistically, and providing an arena in which all the various parties interested in the forests can communicate."

After the seminar, I spoke with Mitch Friedman, president of the Greater Ecosystem Alliance here in Bellingham. He is concerned that New Forestry is a political cure-all. He also worries that it offers a social refuge — a middle ground that makes political, but not biological, sense.

I pinpointed three bandwagon-jumpers in the New Forestry parade: the Forest Service; some timber companies, principally Plum Creek; and politicians like Rep. Jolene Unsoeld (D-Washington).

As I wanted to test Friedman's accusation, I was pleased when an instructor introduced me to John Marker, the Forest Service's director of public affairs in the Pacific Northwest. Off-duty, genuine, and affable, he agreed to an interview at my convenience.

In spite of his job title, therefore, I was surprised during the interview by his diplomatic, public relations tone. Referring frequently to "public perception" and "changing values," he did not talk in specific terms about the possible contradiction between maintaining habitat and simultaneously generating wood to be cut.

When I pressed him, he steered me toward a deeper problem: "The big issue is that this country cannot come to grips with a limited resource base. Americans don't think there is a real limit."

That "real limit" applies specifically, he says, to Forest Service resources. New Perspectives (the Forest Service's name for New Forestry techniques, combined with public outreach) is expensive and only selectively practiced. The extensive public participation the Forest Service is inviting in the planning of the Siskiyou National Forest in Southwest Oregon, for example, is still the exception.

Today, opposing forces tug at the Forest Service from within and without — loosen the pro-timber hold and protect ecological values, but still get out the cut. New Forestry's growing acceptance among Forest Service bigwigs gives lower-level employees a face-saving out. In particular, some local Forest Service managers see it as an opportunity to escape bloated sale expectations.

The Forest Service is neither an innocent bystander nor a bogeyman in the so-called spotted-owl controversy, but its actions raise some troubling questions. Why do concerned managers need to use New Forestry to get the lower cut they have wanted all along? Why is New Forestry coming from above, when an association of mostly mid- and low-level Forest Service employees already strives toward ethics and better management in forestry?

Filtering New Forestry through the Forest Service's political sieve seems to cull away concern for habitat in favor of political leverage, producing mixed results.

Most timber companies avoid New Forestry, with the exception of Plum Creek. Dave Crooker, a Plum Creek spokesperson, explains the company's reason for



"fooling with New Forestry," as he puts it: "There is, admittedly, a political reason. New Forestry offers the opportunity to compromise and still be economically effective."

Crooker unwittingly points out an important facet of the New Forestry debate — it gives the semblance of compromise. Beside this apparently reasonable third alternative, both "extremes" — the environmentalists and the timber industry — look selfish. Whether or not New Forestry is viable may be irrelevant, as long as it is perceived to be.

Some politicians have also taken up New Forestry as a cause. Last year, Rep. Jolene Unsoeld, a liberal Democrat serving in timber country, found her pro-environmental position was hurting her re-election chances. In order to bolster her image with the pro-timber segment of her constituency, she drafted a bill requiring New Forestry to be tested in spotted-owl conservation areas.

Unsoeld attempted to open up areas protected under the Endangered Species Act, ostensibly for scientific investigation to better the situation. "I want to lay the foundation for proving (New Forestry)." Beneath the rhetoric, however, her concern was to provide stopgap timber jobs and quell the voters' passionate dissatisfaction, not to prove or disprove New Forestry.

Franklin, aware that only Northwest politicians accept his ideas wholeheartedly, is able to absorb criticism and incorporate it into his arguments. He recognizes the environmentalist stance: Although New Forestry has potential in new forests, it should never be used as an excuse to cut old growth. He also sees that the industry feels New Forestry is unnecessary, but might try it on the additional old growth it cuts.

Even worse, Franklin knows, hard-line, old-school foresters welcome his altered forestry practices as enthusiastically as they do root rot. Defensive from

the sweep of controversy in what used to be their private domain of expertise, "old foresters" portray Franklin as a dogmatic overreacher, pushing New Forestry down their throats by decree.

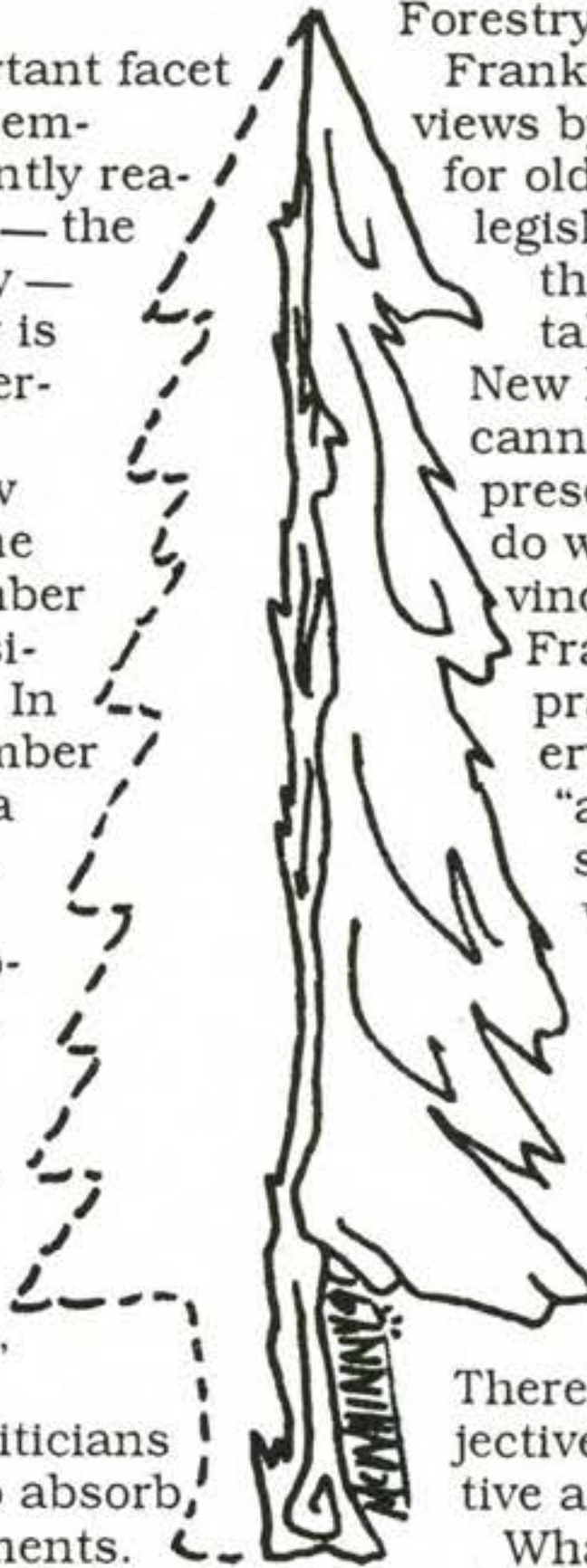
Franklin addresses the industry and old-forestry views by pointing to the growing national concern for old growth and the steam-rolling media and legislative success New Forestry has enjoyed in the past year. He counters the environmentalists in their own language, claiming that New Forestry is pro-ecology and realistic: "We cannot ensure diversity and sustainability with preservation alone. Forests will be used. How do we want them to be used?" Largely unconvinced, environmentalists are angered by Franklin's insistence that "altered forestry practices are more important than total preservation." No wonder: only an advocate of "altered forestry practices," or a politician seeking a happy medium, could be pleased with that statement.

Many environmentalists are also suspicious of Franklin's motives. Is he an industry lackey? Is New Forestry merely a kinder, gentler form of rape? Friedman convinced me that a more subtle process is going on: "He is trying too hard to find a panacea or, once proposing it, having to defend it. It has become his baby.

There's some ego in it. Jerry may still be an objective scientist, but I don't think he's an objective advocate."

What seems to be lost in this political morass is a sense of proportion. I saw no evidence that New Forestry should be used in deteriorating natural forests. The science behind it is too new. As New Forestry hydrologist Gordon Grant warned me, "It's all speculative."

The blessings of science rarely come unmixed. Last fall, Franklin told an audience at a New Forestry site in the Oregon Cascades: "We can't say for sure that these [wildlife] values will be preserved. But at






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the same time we know that old forestry doesn't work." In other words, we may not know what New Forestry will bring, but we already know that the alternative—clearcutting—is bad.

But there are other alternatives to the need for wood that New Foresters do not discuss, such as reduced consumption, recycling, and other sources of paper like non-narcotic hemp.

The people who want New Forestry to be ballooned into a cure-all are not scientists, except for a few core advocates. Instead, its greatest supporters are in Forest Service management teams, among Northwest politicians, and at the offices of Plum Creek—all of which have a large political stake in New Forestry's implementation.

I find New Forestry's vagueness disturbing. In the simplified way the public tends to see issues, Franklin and his ideas can be twisted into "Super Forester," come to save the day from environmental degradation and timber unemployment.

Time is another variable in the New Forestry question. It has been so successful, so quickly—is it a fad?

Based on what I have seen, heard, and read in the past few months, I suspect that New Forestry's advocates are in danger of obliterating their "baby" by trying to create a panacea for a complex social, economic, and biological question. If they have pinned their hopes on a passing fancy, they will suffer a significant credibility loss. Franklin and New Forestry's political advocates, all public figures, are probably the most vulnerable.

They are also potentially the most powerful if New Forestry is here to stay.

By investigating New Forestry, I have picked up a little knowledge of hydrology, habitat, and forestry management. More importantly, though, I have learned a lesson in cynicism. I now question more closely the motives that lurk behind a scientific breakthrough, a bureaucratic policy change, or a politician's about-face. I'm wary of the political quick fix, and I carry that skepticism with me whenever I pick up a newspaper or draw the voting-booth curtain.

Solutions do exist. New Forestry is certainly a contribution, but it is not The Answer. ❖



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