

Henry George Newsletter

High School Edition



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Ranchers Ride to Defense of 'Sky Islands'

An unusual alliance of ranchers, environmentalists and government agencies is taking place in the Southwest. These three groups, once considered adversaries, have found a common cause in the protection of "sky islands", unique landscapes of richly diversified plant and animal life that rise from the desert like islands from the sea. The landscape covers nearly a million acres of ranchland, and the alliance hopes to both restore the natural health of the islands and protect them from encroaching real estate development.

The ranchers have long thought of themselves as rugged individualists in the John Wayne mold and have viewed both conservationists and Federal agencies alike as intruders on the natural preserves of their freedom. Now, with for sale signs springing up on subdivision lots and grassland shrinkage due to overgrazing and the suppression of natural processes like fire, the ranchers have begun a working relationship with their new allies. This article can be used with Land and Freedom lessons in *American History* #20, *Land: Our National Heritage* and #14, *The Homestead Act*.

Who Benefits from New Sports Complex?

When the team owners of the Cleveland Indians wanted a new sports stadium, to be subsidized by city and county taxpayers, the complex was promoted as a sure way to kick-start the city's economy. New taxes were approved, the old stadium torn down and Jacobs Field was built. The complex quickly overran its budget, to the tune of \$116 million. Two parking garages were built, again with taxpayers money, costing \$41 million and the county had to guarantee over \$100 million in additional bonds.

But Cleveland remains one of the U.S.'s poorest big cities, with a deteriorating public school system, a racially and class-divided population and an alarming crime rate. Many in the city can't afford tickets to see the Indians play in their new stadium. This article can be used with Economics lesson # 5, *Class Struggle*, also with # 15, *Taxation*.



Cartoon

Immigration has become a hot topic in this year's political campaigns. The two major parties are both proposing ways to limit legal and illegal immigration, and lately many of our society's problems are being blamed, at least in part, on immigrants. The proposals range from denying them health care to taking away their legal rights. Our nation has also for a long time been known as a nation built by immigrants, with many U.S. citizens expressing pride in their immigrant heritage. This cartoon can be used in conjunction with American History lesson #11, *Irish Immigration* and #1, *Indian Land Ownership*.

Free Materials for Teachers

The Smithsonian Office of Elementary and Secondary Education offers a booklet entitled *Beyond the Frame*, which uses a multi-cultural approach to art through the illustration of social and cultural issues. Subjects range from historical figures, such as Rosa Parks, to the art of China. Many illustrations in color. Write to: *Smithsonian Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, Arts & Industries Bld. 1163, MRC 402, Washington DC, 20560.*



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Ranchers Ride to Defense of 'Sky Islands'

-by William K. Stevens

Douglas, Arizona - Warner Glenn's dogs picked up the jaguar's scent when the big spotted cat was almost within sight of the canyon where Geronimo surrendered 110 years ago, here in one of the most unusual landscapes of North America: an archipelago of magnificent mountain forest and grasslands rising from the desert like islands from the sea. They are called sky islands, and they are home to one of the richest areas of living creatures on the continent.

Jaguars are rarely seen by people around here and when Mr. Glenn's dogs cornered the big cat after a five-mile, three-hour chase, it was the highlight of his life. Tall, lean and leathery at the age of 60, he is a fourth-generation cattle rancher who gets up at 4 a.m., wears chaps to work, is a registered Republican and displays a full-length poster of John Wayne in his living room. But Mr. Glenn is a different sort of cattleman - a cowboy environmentalist and a leader of a group of ranchers who are writing a remarkable new chapter in conservation here on the Arizona-New Mexico border.

Instead of shooting the jaguar, as ranchers have almost always done in the past, he took photographs and let him go. Since then Mr. Glenn has been as fiercely protective of the cat as of the landscape where it was tracked down. The jaguar "is here because he likes what he's found - plenty of game and not very many people, and that's the way we'd like to keep it," he said during a break in a trail ride on horseback to the top of the Peloncilla Mountains, one of the sky islands, from where he traced the cross-country route that chase had taken.

At a time when bitter conflict often convulses the range, Mr. Glenn and some of his rancher neighbors have taken the initiative in creating a working alliance with conservationists and government agencies, their former adversaries. Spurred by a common interest in improving the health of the range and preventing it from being cut up into subdivisions, the Malpai Borderlands Group, as the alliance is called, and its new allies aim to cooperate in managing nearly a million acres of ranchland, divided into more than 30 ranches, for ecological as well as economic values. Only in this way, the ranchers believe, can ranching be sustained in

the long run.

Already, the once-hostile groups are working together in a science-based effort to prevent over-grazing, restore the land scape, preserve endangered species and rejuvenate grasslands.

This distinctive alliance has been forged on behalf of an equally distinctive landscape. In all there are some 40 sky islands in southern Arizona and New Mexico and Mexico and being part of neither the Rockies nor the Sierra Madre, they are a geological and biological province all their own. Here, plants and animals from the northern U.S. and Mexico both reach the limits of their distribution. In the lower elevations, eastern species mix with western ones.

All mingle with some 60 species found nowhere else, in many instances having survived here while farther north were wiped clean of life by Ice Age glaciers. Many are rare. Isolated from similar species on other sky islands, they represent especially potent raw material for evolutionary change. This variety has turned the sky islands into "probably the richest area of this size in the U.S." biologically speaking, said Dr. Wade C. Sherbrooke, the of the American Museum of Natural History's South Western Research Station. The U.S. section of the archipelago is home to about 265 species of birds, more than 75 kinds of reptiles, as many as 120 native grasses and 90 species of mammals and much more, according to scientists. About 175 species are considered imperiled.

Biologically and climatically speaking, one can go from the desert to mountain tundra - or from Mexico to northern Canada - on a single drive of perhaps two hours along winding roads up a single sky island. The journey takes a visitor upward through distinct "stacks" of different ecological communities.

On just such a drive, accompanied by Dr. Peter Marshall, an independent ecologist who has extensively studied the sky islands, one travelled from semidesert grasslands where tarantula spiders nearly the size of a man's hand scuttled about, to the spectacularly beautiful Cave Creek Canyon, hemmed in by volcanic stone towers stained and weathered into shades of lemon, salmon, ocher and rust. There, starting just above 5,000

feet, the mountainside was dominated by a dense mixture of evergreen oaks and pines, characteristic of Mexico. Higher up, trees the trees changed gradually to towering ponderosa, a species of North American Pine, later to a high-altitude Canadian or Alaskan spruce.

For more than a century, cattle have grazed both the grassland valleys of the region and mountainside pastures up to 9,000 feet. In the late 1800s, hundreds of thousands of cattle were roaming the open range and devastating the grasslands. Today, although things are better, most ranchers find it difficult to bring the land back from that low point, said Jora Young, a Nature Conservancy official who has studied the situation for a book she is writing. The Conservancy is a key player in the Malpai conservation experiment. At the same time, natural fires have long been suppressed, allowing brush like mesquite to take over grasslands formerly swept clean by flames.

Still, the region's ecology is remarkably intact. "It's not pristine, but all the pieces are there...in the order they're supposed to be," said Ben Brown, a wildlife ecologist who is program director for the private Animus Foundation. The foundation owns the former Gray Ranch, which, with more than 300,000 acres, is the biggest chunk of Malpai group's territory.

Now the challenge is to restore natural processes like fire and, above all, to fend off creeping subdivision - which is today's chief threat in the eyes of the Malpai group. Already, real-estate development has eaten away at the Santa Catalina sky island outside Tucson and has begun to encroach on other islands farther out in the country. Real-estate development is even nibbling away at seemingly remote sky islands: "Crown Dancer Ranch Estates", reads a sign, advertising lots for sale, near the mouth of Cave Creek Canyon.

This kind of development is too close for the Malpai ranchers, whose territories include the Peloncillo and Animus sky islands, the next two over from Cave Creek Canyon. As it happens, that is also a major concern of the Nature Conservancy and other environmental groups.

-continued on back page

Who Benefits from New Sports Complex?

-by John Riley

Cleveland, Ohio - It's game night at Jacobs Field.

They've traveled downtown on the Rapid Transit, in from suburbs like Medina, Berea and Brook Park. Without stepping outside, they are flowing from Terminal Tower, the center of old Cleveland, down the half-mile covered walkway and over to the symbol of a city reborn - the \$461-million publicly owned and subsidized Gateway arena and stadium complex that's a stone's throw away from the Cuyahoga River.

All of them have tickets already; there are no tickets left for the rest of the 1996 baseball season in this Indians-crazed city. Most of the fans proudly display the team's logo somewhere on their bodies - a cap, a sweatshirt, a jacket, a T-shirt or sweatpants. And not one of them wants to hear questions about whether their new stadium was worth it.

Cleveland fans have waited a long time and now they have something to crow about - a team that is one of the best in the major leagues and a brand new stadium that any city would envy.

Indeed, if press clips were gold, Cleveland would be rolling in gold. Its brand new stadium, plus the nearby Grund Arena, home to the Cavaliers basketball team, the debut of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, have all combined to give Cleveland the image of a city on the move, a place with a future, a place that shows off the benefits of publicly underwritten stadiums to other cities.

But it is also a case study of the ongoing national debate about those public subsidies for sports stadiums - a place where despite the apparent successes, critics say, the misdirected priorities are just as apparent.

Cleveland still has a disastrously bad school system, now under state control after years of declined triggered by underfunding, even as the city and surrounding Cuyahoga County have made taxpayers pay more than \$400 million to underwrite the new sports venues.

Crime is still a problem and the police force is understaffed, even as the city fulfills a commitment to provide 50 police officers for security outside the baseball stadium every night.

And Cleveland remains, as it has long been, a racially divided, poor city - divisions that are reflected in the new baseball stadium filled with whites who can afford the luxury suites, premium suites and higher ticket prices, but relatively few blacks. In a city with 42 percent of its families under the poverty line, a city that ranks 74th among the nation's 75 biggest cities in per capita income, the taxpayers subsidize a baseball stadium for a team that pays its players an average of \$1.49 million a year.

"You've got to be able to provide a decent education, decent housing, decent opportunities for work and a fairly secure environment, none of which are looked at as high priorities here," says Norman Krumholz, a former Cleveland planning director who now teaches urban studies at Cleveland State University. "We're pumping money into something that doesn't need help, and not supporting those people [who need help]."

One of the ironies of Cleveland's sports complex is that, while it was promoted as a way to revive the urban core, voter's from the city's inner-city black wards came out heavily against the 1990 referendum supporting it. The tax increase was overwhelmingly supported by the more prosperous white suburbs.

The new stadium was a boon to the Cleveland Indians. As more fans were attracted to the new stadium, which replaced the old and dilapidated Municipal Stadium, the team was able to pay higher salaries, attracting better players and a better local television deal. But was a nice deal for the Indians also a nice deal for the taxpayers of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County?

When voters originally approved an increase in taxes in 1990 to finance the complex, they were told that it would contribute to a 50-50 public-private split on the \$344 million sports complex. As things worked out, however, voters got a more expensive project than they bargained for, and paid a higher percentage than they expected.

By the time it was finished in 1994, the price tag was over \$460 million. The taxpayers' share, depending on who is doing the calculating, ranges from 57 percent to more than 80 percent. In addition to the increased taxes, the city and

state had to chip in capital grants and low interest loans. And the city had to build two parking garages for \$41 million, and the county still had to guarantee \$120 million in additional bonds. And when it was approved, voters were assured that the project would get no tax exemptions. In the end, while property taxes were not exempted on the underlying land, the entire complex itself was exempted from property taxes. And the Gateway Development Corp., which owns the complex, claims to be operating in the red, and is unable to pay the \$660,000 annual property tax bill.

"A Disneyland for the city's elite, that's all it is," says Mark Rosentraub, an urban affairs professor at Indiana University who is writing a chapter on Cleveland for his forthcoming book on stadium construction. Indeed, it's hard to make the case that Cleveland has created an economic turnaround that benefits the whole city - the city continues to lose manufacturing jobs at an increasing rate - and daunting problems still haunt the urban core. "There are many fewer jobs today than before they built the stadium," says George Zeller, a senior researcher with Cleveland's Council on Economic Development in response to suggestions that the stadium is supposed to create new jobs. In fact, Zeller points out, there is no evidence that the complex has had any widespread economic impact.

One direct offshoot of the new sports complex is that Art Modell, the owner of the NFL team the Cleveland Browns, decided to move the team to Baltimore, a city offering one of the most lucrative stadium deals yet. The result? After public uproar, the NFL promised Cleveland an expansion team if the city would build a new stadium for it. Voters responded by agreeing to raise taxes again to help finance the \$200 million project.

-Reprinted from New York Newsday

Questions

1. How was the new stadium promoted at first?
2. What do the critics say about it?
3. Who paid for the stadium?
4. How much did taxpayers think they would pay at first?
5. How much did they have to pay in the end?
6. Who benefits from the new stadium?

This common concern was long masked by a pattern of hostility and distrust among ranchers, conservationists and Federal land managers. The basic source of the conflict is that while cattlemen have control of the ranches, the ranches themselves are pieced together from both private and public land. Typically in the West environmentalists have attacked both the ranchers and public agencies for misusing the land, while the ranchers have felt themselves losing control to outsiders.

The leaders of the Malpai group, including Warner Glenn and his wife, Wendy, and a neighbor, Bill McDonald, came to see this constant head butting as getting them nowhere. Six years ago, they began to think cooperation might be better. Mr. McDonald said to John Cook, of the Nature Conservancy, "if we don't join with the environmentalists, we're dead."

Discussions led to a cooperation among the ranchers, the Forest Service and other government agencies to use fire as a land management tool. Soon, 30 other ranchers signed on voluntarily to a fire management plan. Now, the Malpai group has set up a program called "grassbanking", in which a rancher whose grasses have been reduced by grazing and drought is can graze his cattle on another ranch while his own land recovers. In return, he signs an agreement that prohibits him from selling his land to real-estate developers.

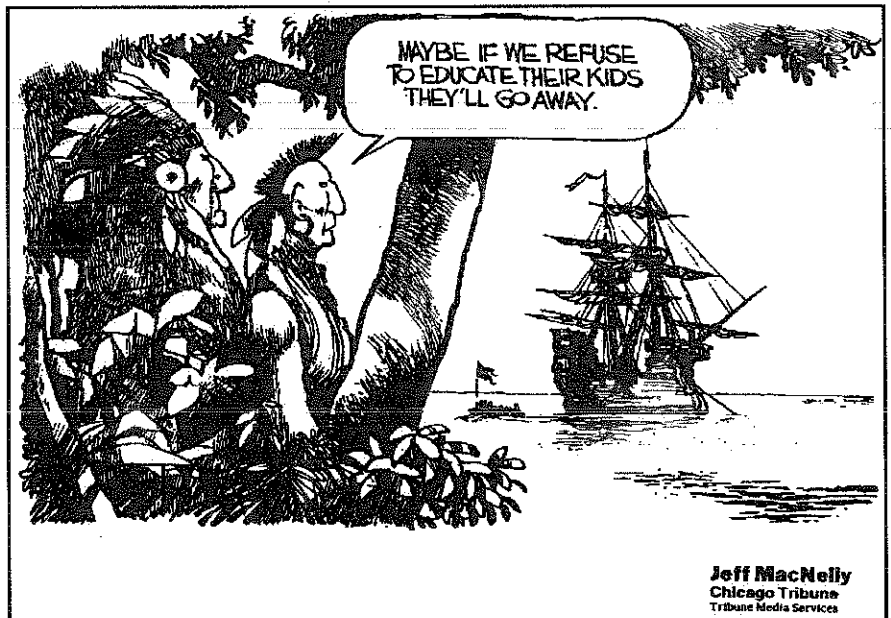
Almost from the start, the Malpai group took a step long unthinkable to many of their brethren: they invited biologists onto their land. To Warner Glen, people who refuse scientists access to their land "are dumber than a post, really, because there is some stuff we sure need to know" about the land to make good decisions about its care and use. Now, many ranchers are "charmed" by scientists able to point out the land's hidden biological treasures.

So now, ecologists are establishing monitoring plots all over the Malpai region to gauge the landscape's long-term health. Dr. Warshall says that the Malpai experiment is "in embryo" and no one can tell how it will come out. Many ranchers not involved in the plan are taking a wait and see attitude. But at least, says Dr. Warshall, a new relationship has been created among former adversaries. "The main battle is a conceptual one, it's understanding what's here biologically."

-Reprinted from the New York Times

Questions

1. What are sky islands?
2. What makes them unique?
3. What new alliance has formed to protect the islands?
4. Why is this alliance unusual?
5. Name one of the reasons the sky islands might be in danger.
6. Can you name other things conservationists do?



Cartoon Questions

1. Give a title for this cartoon.
2. What is the meaning of the cartoon?
3. How can you relate it to modern day concerns?
4. Who were the first people to settle in America?
5. What was the relationship between the first settlers and the Indians?
6. What are some of the consequences of people moving to a foreign land?

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