

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## Drought hammers migratory, species

*It's time for personal and agency action to save birds*

**N**ational Geographic, authoritative observer of the world's wonders, on July 16 published a sad online story detailing drought's impacts on the birds that migrate through West Coast states.

Much attention has been given to dying and struggling salmon, but *NatGeo* highlights how species without much obvious commercial value are losing a battle against bleak conditions.

"Birds Are Dying As Drought Ravages Avian Highways" ([tinyurl.com/BirdsDying](http://tinyurl.com/BirdsDying)) portrays an elaborate tapestry of life that is fading, tattering and being eaten away by big holes as vital wetlands dry up and blow away. This isn't just in California, but metastasizing up into Oregon. With 98 percent of Washington declared last week to be in severe drought, there will be fewer and fewer oases where birds, insects, amphibians or other creatures can find refuge.

The Klamath Basin in southern Oregon and northern California, described as the Everglades of the West, is a crucial link in an interconnected web of habitat essential to migratory birds and local wetland life. In 2013, a diversion of water to help salmon resulted in a short-term disaster.

"For six weeks in August and September, the refuge, which is typically filled with thousands of western sandpipers, greater white-fronted geese, snow geese and northern shovelers, stood desolate. 'It was just quiet and dusty. There was not a drop of water. It was quite a sad scene,'" a scientist told *NatGeo*. Without enough flow to flush contaminants, avian botulism killed countless birds. In 2015, the Klamath Basin wildlife refuges are again expected to dry up. Federal legislation to help the

situation is stalled in Congress, to no one's surprise.

Rebuilding tidal marsh and shallow ponds is making a noticeable difference for birds around San Francisco Bay. In our area on the Columbia River estuary, similar projects — big and small — have been completed, planned and contemplated. These will become increasingly important gathering places for birds and wildlife as inland watersheds become less reliable.

On an individual level, regional writers offer worthwhile thoughts about what we can do as landowners to mitigate the life-and-death struggles of creatures that add infinite richness to the natural world.

In her blog, Long Beach (Wash.) Peninsula garden expert Rebecca Hart urges immediate action:

"In view of record heat in the western states, please do all you can to put water out for small creatures. Weighted saucers with water — keep water in shade and refill as necessary. For bees and insects, a shallow dish with marbles for footing helps, too.

"And please join me to put out birdseed, particularly the high protein and black-oil sunflower seeds, because with the hot temps a lot of seed and food crops are burning up and blowing away. I typically don't feed until October, but I'm buying a 50-pound bag at my local best-price store, for \$19. And I will continue to put out seed until further notice."

We can personally help alleviate suffering and death. Let's do so.

## Trump imitates Amy Schumer

*Could we trust the Donald with the nuclear trigger?*

**D**onald Trump is becoming the Amy Schumer of politics. Just when you think he's broken every rule, he finds a new frontier.

Last week's big accomplishment was Trump's insult to the war record of Sen. John McCain. Trump argued that McCain was no war hero, because he was captured.

Soldiers, sailors and Marines don't get to pick the outcome of their service. The difference between life, debilitating wounds and death is often a matter of inches, seconds or hours. McCain endured five years in a North Vietnamese prison camp.

There may be gradations of accomplishment among any group of veterans, but all military service is something presidents have honored. With the all-volunteer military, the nation's unhealthy deficit is the relative lack of military service among members of the House and Senate.

Even without the presidential campaign, one could say that Donald Trump is addicted to ego feed. And a presidential campaign is a mainline fix. That explains a mea-

sure of Trump's reckless mouth.

Elections are a hiring decision. And one of the biggest factors in any hire is attitude. When the nation is hiring a president, a hugely important part of the candidate's attitude is a measured temperament. The most disturbing thing about Trump's successive slurs is his lack of a thermostat. He lacks the most basic thing in a leader or manager — a self-administered filter on his mouth.

Here is the most basic question. Could Trump be trusted in diplomatic conversation? Could he be trusted with the decision to take the nation to war? To hold the key to an atomic weapon?

*The New York Times* noted on Monday that Trump "is giving voice to a profound rage in the Republican electorate — over economic displacement, illegal immigration and America's diminished place in the world." It is that stew of resentment that reliably gives birth to demagogues.

So, is Donald Trump anything more than a demagogue?

## Hi-Ho, Lone Ranger, or Mr. President

By MAUREEN DOWD  
*New York Times News Service*

**W**ASHINGTON — In the midst of Iran mania, the president got tossed a question about Bill Cosby.

Would he revoke the Presidential Medal of Freedom given to a comedian who has been accused of subverting the free will of dozens of women, and counting?

It was a riveting moment.

It has been said that Cliff Huxtable was instrumental in paving the way for Barack Obama.

Until the nation began watching the sterling Obamas, the sterling Huxtables were the most celebrated positive image of a wholesome, engaging, upper-middle-class black family.

The president may have flashed back to another White House news conference in 2009 when he forthrightly — and correctly — accused the police of acting "stupidly" in arresting his friend Skip Gates on a suspicion of breaking into his own Cambridge, Mass., home. The backlash from the police led to Obama suffering through the inane "beer summit."

So when April Ryan of the American Urban Radio Networks asked about Cosby, Obama's lawyerly side kicked in at first. He punted, saying he did not comment on cases that could be litigated.

Then he looked down, pressed his lips together and unleashed a well-deserved hell on Cosby. Because in the sunset of his presidency, Obama's bolder side is rising. He's a lame duck who doesn't give a damn.

"If you give a woman — or a man, for that matter — without his or her knowledge, a drug, and then have sex with that person without consent, that's rape," he said.

The father of two daughters reflected genuine disgust.

With Cosby, the Charleston, S.C., eulogy with the rendition of *Amazing Grace* and the visit with felons in federal prison in Oklahoma to speak

up for that unloved constituency, and say "There but for the grace of God," the president who once tread gingerly on race has discovered a more gingery voice.

And the chorus in the land finally proclaims: "That's the man I voted for."

Daniel Patrick Moynihan used to tell colleagues that one is only president from the inauguration to the first midterm. But Obama is rewriting the book on Oval Office juice.

He has talked wistfully in private for years about "going *Bulworth*" and emulating Warren Beatty's hilariously blunt senator in that movie. Now he's doing it.

"This is the guy I know," David Axelrod told me. "He's focused on big things, speaking hard truths and damning small politics, and that is why so many of us were attracted to him from the start."

When CBS' Major Garrett grandstanded in the White House news conference, asking the president why he was content "to leave the conscience of this nation, the strength of this nation, unaccounted for in relation" to the Americans stuck in prison in Iran, Obama gave Garrett the back of his hand.

"Major," he shot back, "that's nonsense, and you should know better."

Time to dismiss the Anger Translator.

The president is far more energized than a couple years ago, when — thwarted by intransigent Republicans and the intractable Middle East — he acted as though he would like to quit, if it was a job you could stride away from.

He clearly enjoys settling into his favorite role — the man alone in the arena, disdaining the flattering rituals and back-scratching of politics, the dread drinks with Sen. McConnell and stupid golf with Speaker Boehner.

"Eight months ago, he was left



Maureen Dowd

for dead after the midterm elections," Axelrod said. "But he saw it as a liberating moment, the starting buzzer on the final quarter. And he is working down his list of things undone and knocking them out one after another. For those of us who were there from the start, it's thrilling to see."

Aside from Mitch McConnell, the happiest person last November when McConnell won was Obama because he was freed from having to humor Harry Reid and Hill Democrats.

He passed the trade bill with help from Republicans who spent years trying to hurt him and he is now teaming with the Koch brothers, who have spent a fortune trying to kill his agenda, for a criminal justice overhaul.

He brushed away the contentious politics on Cuba, the Confederate flag and Iran and said it was long past time to move on.

A few years ago, he privately fretted that he was no longer lucky. But he got lucky with the Supreme Court on health care and gay marriage.

He wrote in his memoir that from the time he was young, he learned the trick of not seeming angry so he wouldn't alarm white folks.

But now he seems eager to mix it up as he goes through his rhymes-with-bucket list. As Glenn Thrush put it in his "Meet 'Drama' Obama" piece in *Politico*, "Mr. Cool has left the building."

Obama has always radiated the smug air that he was right and any other positions were illogical. But it is gratifying when aimed at the obnoxious Republicans and more obnoxious Bibi.

Republicans were never going to go for the Iran deal. Their apocalyptic statements were written well in advance and they just had to hit "Send" followed by a fundraising appeal to Jewish donors.

Obama is gambling that he won't hurt his party and that in 10 years Iran will be a better member of the international community. But he can't do worse as an oracle of the Middle East than the conservative warmongers who ravaged the region.

## Worse than we could have imagined

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER  
*Washington Post Writers Group*

**W**ASHINGTON — When you write a column, as did I two weeks ago, headlined "The worst agreement in U.S. diplomatic history," you don't expect to revisit the issue. We had hit bottom. Or so I thought.

Then on Tuesday the final terms of the Iranian nuclear deal were published. I was wrong.

Who would have imagined we would be giving up the conventional arms and ballistic missile embargoes on Iran? In *nuclear negotiations*?

When asked at his Wednesday news conference why there is nothing in the deal about the four American hostages being held by Iran, President Obama explained that this is a separate issue, not part of nuclear talks.

Are conventional weapons not a separate issue? After all, conventional, by definition, means non-nuclear. Why are we giving up the embargoes?

Because Iran, joined by Russia — our "reset" partner — sprung the demand at the last minute, calculating that Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry were so desperate for a deal that they would cave. They did. And have convinced themselves that they scored a victory by delaying the lifting by five to eight years. (Ostensibly. The language is murky. The interval could be considerably shorter.)

Obama claimed in his Wednesday news conference that it really doesn't matter because we can always intercept Iranian arms shipments to, say, Hezbollah.

But wait. Obama has insisted

throughout that we are pursuing this Iranian diplomacy to *avoid* the use of force, yet now blithely discards a previous diplomatic achievement — the arms embargo — by suggesting, no matter, we can just shoot our way to interdiction.

Moreover, the most serious issue is not Iranian exports but Iranian imports — of sophisticated Russian and Chinese weapons. These are untouchable. We are not going to attack Russian and Chinese transports.

The net effect of this capitulation will be not only to endanger our Middle East allies now under threat from Iran and its proxies, but to endanger our own naval forces in the Persian Gulf. Imagine how Iran's acquisition of the most advanced anti-ship missiles would threaten our control over the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, waterways we have kept open for international commerce for a half-century.

The other major shock in the final deal is what happened to our insistence on "anytime, anywhere" inspections. Under the final agreement, Iran has the right to deny international inspectors access to any undeclared nuclear site. The denial is then adjudicated by a committee — on which Iran sits. It then goes through several other bodies, on all of which Iran sits. Even if the inspectors' request prevails, the approval process can take 24 days.

And what do you think will be left to be found, left unscrubbed, after 24 days? The whole process is farcical.

The action now shifts to Congress. The debate is being hailed as momentous. It is not. It's irrelevant. Congress won't get to vote on the



Charles Krauthammer

deal until September. But Obama is taking the agreement to the U.N. Security Council for approval *within days*. Approval there will cancel all previous U.N. resolutions outlawing and sanctioning Iran's nuclear activities.

Meaning: Whatever Congress ultimately does, it won't matter because the legal underpinning for the entire international sanctions regime against Iran will have been dismantled at the Security Council. Ten years of painstakingly constructed international sanctions will vanish overnight, irretrievably.

Even if Congress rejects the agreement, do you think the Europeans, the Chinese or the Russians will reinstate sanctions? The result: The United States is left isolated while the rest of the world does thriving business with Iran.

Should Congress then give up? No. Congress needs to act in order to rob this deal of, at least, its domestic legitimacy. Rejection will make little difference on the ground. But it will make it easier for a successor president to legitimately reconsider an executive agreement (Obama dare not call it a treaty — it would be instantly rejected by the Senate) that garnered such pathetically little backing in either house of Congress.

It's a future hope, but amid dire circumstances. By then, Iran will be flush with cash, legitimized as a normal international actor in good standing, recognized (as Obama once said) as "a very successful regional power." Stopping Iran from going nuclear at that point will be infinitely more difficult and risky.

Which is Obama's triumph. He has locked in his folly. He has laid down his legacy and we will have to live with the consequences for decades.

### Where to write

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