

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Finding common cause against bullies

Democratic U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, of Illinois, and Republican U.S. Sen. Margaret Chase Smith, of Maine, served more than a half-century apart. They found common cause last week.

In different eras, both women responded eloquently to male bullies whose name-calling and smears had silenced many big strong men of their era. Smith was the first woman elected to both the U.S. House and Senate, and she was the lone female in the Senate of 1950.

Reading Duckworth's response to Fox News' Tucker Carlson — who had labeled her a "coward," a "fraud" and a "moron" — was a somewhat updated version of Smith's "Declaration of Conscience" speech of June 1, 1950. In her argument to senators, Smith did not mention the name of Sen.

Joseph McCarthy. But her declaration of conscience was all about how the Wisconsin demagogue had silenced her party.

Both of these women senators seized the high ground during perilous political moments that were tearing America apart. Smith spoke on the Senate floor as the McCarthy era was ramping up. Sen. McCarthy's staple product was unproven claims that unnamed Americans in agencies such as the State Department were communists.

Carlson smeared Duckworth for her willingness to consider questions that had been raised about the monumental status of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in the national discussions following the killing of George Floyd and other blacks at the hands of police.

Duckworth responded in an opinion article in The New York Times.

Recounting her family's long history as soldiers — leading to her own combat experience as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot in 2004 in Iraq — Duckworth said that soldier patriots fight to preserve the freedom of speech that Carlson enjoys. "Our founders' refusal to blindly follow their leader was what I was reflecting on this Fourth of July weekend, when some on the far right started attacking me for suggesting that all Americans should be heard, even those whose opinions differ from our own," the senator wrote.

Addressing the Senate, Margaret



U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, shown here in January, is a Democrat who represents Illinois.



U.S. Sen. Margaret Chase Smith, shown here in 1950, was a Republican who represented Maine.

BOTH OF THESE WOMEN SENATORS SEIZED THE HIGH GROUND DURING PERILOUS POLITICAL MOMENTS THAT WERE TEARING AMERICA APART.

Chase Smith said: "Those of us who shout the loudest about Americanism in making character assassinations are all too frequently those who, by our own words and acts, ignore some of the basic principles of Americanism —
"The right to criticize.
"The right to hold unpopular beliefs.
"The right to protest.
"The right of independent thought."

Six male Republican senators signed Sen. Smith's declaration. One of them was Wayne Morse, of Oregon. Three years later, Morse would leave the Republican Party to become an independent. In 1955, he became a Democrat. Duckworth said that Americans should know "that attacks from self-serving, insecure men who can't tell the difference between true patriotism and hate-

ful nationalism will never diminish my love for this country — or my willingness to sacrifice for it so they don't have to."
Making reference to her legs that were lost in combat, the senator said: "These titanium legs don't buckle."
Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

GUEST COLUMN

Denialism and tragic consequences



TANYA KADI
TERRIE BAY POWERS
KATHLEEN ZUNKEL

One of the many joys of volunteering at the Wildlife Center of the North Coast is getting up close and personal with the patients we care for, the amazing array of birds who grace our Pacific and Columbia shores.

Of course, the ones we tend are sick or injured, often the victims of microplastic ingestion, lead ingestion, gunshots, fishing line and hook entanglements, boat and vehicular run-ins, or even mass starvation as our oceans and waterways warm, depleting natural food stocks.

Over time, as we tend to these birds — eagles, pelicans, murres, cormorants and puffins, to name a few — we are struck by their distinct personalities and awed by their intelligence and will to survive.

Unfortunately, many die despite our efforts. But ask any one of us volunteers what keeps us going and we will resoundingly tell you it is the day we release those few beautiful survivors back into their habitat, watch them take wing and embrace the wild life again.

It is truly a soulful, emotional experience.

And this is why the June 25 article in The Astorian, "Federal rule would take aim at cormorants," is beyond disturbing to us.

Double-crested cormorants are among the most persecuted wild birds in the United States, and we have a particularly sordid, tragic history here in our community.

During the years 2013 through 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, scape-



Hundreds of cormorants nest on the Astoria Bridge.

goating hungry cormorants for our alarming salmon decline, permitted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its contractors to engage in the shooting slaughter of thousands of cormorant nesting pairs and the destruction of thousands of nests of the world's largest double-crested cormorant colony — East Sand Island in the Columbia River estuary.

Fleeing the ensuing carnage, many of the birds abandoned the island for safer stretches of the estuary, including the sanctuary of the Astoria Bridge.

And now new challenges emerge: nesting cormorants and guano accumulation are making federally-required bridge inspections and maintenance "tricky," according to our state Department of Transportation, and possible "solutions" are being sought. Meanwhile, a proposed federal rule looms which would permit state wildlife agencies to kill dou-

ble-crested cormorants in areas under their jurisdiction where it might have been limited or prohibited before.

This new rule, which is out for comment through Monday, would allow the killing of close to 9,000 cormorants each year west of the Rockies. And Portland Audubon believes that expansion of these lethal management guidelines could "plunge the western population into decline."

So here we stand at the intersection of cormorants, denialism and tragic consequences. As our complicated environmental threats mount unabated, we human beings continue to slap the easy button for answers to problems we engineer and then find we have created more havoc in the process of solving.

Damming up our river systems for hydroelectric power, clearcutting forests which sequester carbon and unfettered

HOW TO COMMENT

Comments on a proposed federal rule on cormorants are open until Monday.

• **Online:** www.regulations.gov — Docket No. FWS-HQ-MB-2019-0103

• **By mail:** Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-HQ-MB-2019-0103, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS:PRB (JAO/3W), 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA., 22041-3803

burning of fossil fuels releasing carbon into our atmosphere have caused our climate and waterways to warm to unsustainable levels. Our fish and wildlife cannot thrive in these conditions. Humans cannot thrive over time in these conditions.

Until we are willing to take action on these destructive root causes, the continued slaughter of cormorants will not result in rebuilding fish stocks. Our denial of these root causes will not bring our salmon bounty back. Our denial will only further the tragic consequences of annihilating whatever we see as an inconvenient or competing interest. And what are the moral and ethical implications of that?

While the Department of Transportation is still assessing the state's long-term plan for addressing the cormorant's "seasonal takeover of the bridge," we wildlife volunteers fear that the lure of easy and cheap solutions to the so-called "cormorant problem" here might stoke interest in this proposed U.S. Fish and Wildlife rule.

We fear this rule could ignite another local slaughter of these maligned and persecuted birds.

We ask you to please weigh in on this important issue before the comment date deadline of Monday, and we urge you to adopt the "no action alternative."

Kathleen Zunkel, Tanya Kadi and Terrie Bay Powers are volunteers with the Wildlife Center of the North Coast.