

# You can get anywhere from here

I was a passenger in a van headed out before sunrise hoping to find sage grouse on their mating leks, a tour offered by the John Scharff Migratory Birding Festival in Harney County.

The man sitting next to me was from Seattle. "When you retire," he asked our Fish and Wildlife Service guide, "you'll be moving closer to the city, right? Portland, or Seattle?" Oh, no, said our driver. He loved Harney County. All this sky, the sage around us. Besides — he waved his arm — "You can get anywhere from here!"

He was talking about highways. I knew that. I live in Pendleton, and we say the same thing (Boise, Spokane, Portland, John Day? We're at the hub!). Still, I couldn't stop smiling. I'm not only a rural person but also a writer, and writers, too, believe you can get anywhere from here. It's what keeps us writing.

Headlines these days would have us

**It's harder to hate people who have feelings like your own.**

believe we fall into one of two categories: them and us. Just who is this "other?" Muslims, as we're being told? Trump supporters? Liberal "elites?" Even dry and wet side Oregonians can feel separated by more than distance.

But I've seen writing break those barriers. It isn't automatic, and it certainly isn't easy. Many drafts, much crumpled paper. Midnight oil. Don't quit your day job. All of that, and more. And yet.

"I didn't know anyone else felt like this," the woman said. She was sitting next to the classroom window in BMCC's Umatilla Hall, a middle-aged white student with tears welling in her eyes. We had been reading James Baldwin's short story "Sonny's Blues." I didn't know if she had a younger brother struggling with a heroin addiction or an African-American uncle who had been run down on a dark highway, or a beloved two-year-old daughter who had died of polio. I doubted it. But what

she had was deep.

It's April, National Poetry Month. Don't be surprised if someone tucks a poem into your pocket.

Don't worry: it's not a test. It's a connection. A glimpse into a human life that just may bring a lump to your own throat as you recognize your own feelings in someone else's words. Your own human vocabulary will expand, too, as you imagine — live, in a way — the experiences of others that are different from your own.

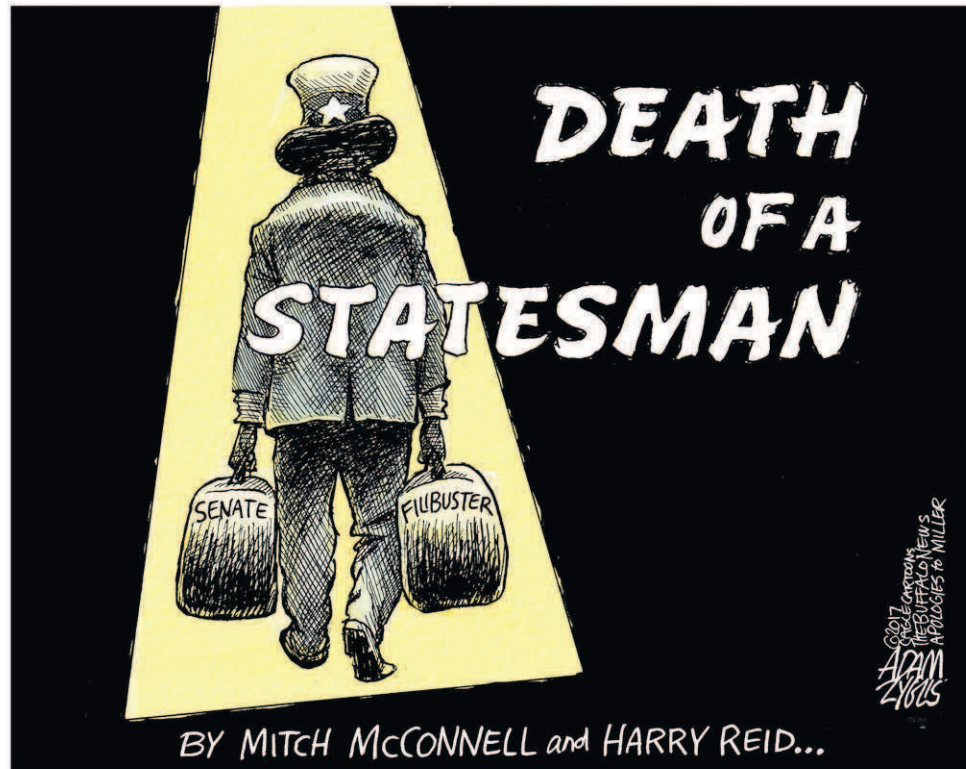
Novels will do this, too. Plays. And memoir. When we read the stories of other people's thoughtfully examined lives, no matter how different those lives are from our own, we better understand ourselves.

It's not magic. It's just the way we are. When the National Endowment for the Arts bumper stickers tell you ART WORKS, that's what they mean. Also: It's harder to hate people who have feelings like your own.

*Bette Husted is a writer and a student of T'ai Chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.*



**BETTE HUSTED**  
FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE



## Quick takes

### Wicked Kitty owner, drug dealer gets no prison time

Wow ... all I can say is ... WOW!  
— Janet McGowan Taylor

Close the doors already!  
— SPH

Amen he almost made my (breasts) off by piercing my areola instead of my nipple. Oh god the pain — had to tell my local piercer to help me get them out.  
— Kendall Wigginton

### No PERS plan yet this session

Not wise.  
— Candace Gates

Good! Leave police, teachers and firefighters retirement alone. We work hard for the day we can retire, and changing the system is breaking the promise the state made to each of us.  
— Matt Fisher

Kick the can down the road for another year.  
— Steven Pelles

Bankruptcy.  
— Arne Swanson

*One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week's takes. Tweet yours @Tim\_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.*

# State teaches how to save money

For decades, the Oregon State Treasury has excelled at investing the pensions of state workers and making sure other state agencies' banking needs are met. We are proud to do so, but we also want people to know that we manage programs to help individual Oregonians invest in their own futures.

In 2001, Treasury launched the Oregon College Savings Plan with the simple goal of helping Oregonians save to send their children and grandchildren to college or vocational school. More recently we launched the groundbreaking Oregon ABLE Savings Plan, which allows people with disabilities to save toward financial independence without risking critical public benefits. And this summer, we will begin rolling out OregonSaves, which will give all working Oregonians the opportunity to save for retirement at work.

April is Financial Literacy Month and one of the smartest money moves that Oregonians can make is to save for their own futures and the futures of their family members.

This week, staff from the Oregon College Savings Plan and Oregon ABLE Savings Plan will be in Pendleton to talk about how you can use these programs to meet your financial goals. Please join them Wednesday, April 12 at Blue Mountain Community College at 6 p.m.

When it comes to college savings

research shows that saving for college makes students three times more likely to enroll and four times more likely to graduate, regardless of the amount saved. The implication is clear: Saving specifically for higher education tells your loved ones that you believe in their future. That makes them believe it, too.

The Oregon College Saving Plan allows Oregonians to save to send their kids to any accredited university, community college or trade school

in the country. Most of the time, that money stays in the state as students opt to study closer to home. And when students graduate, they bring needed skills and knowledge to build their communities. They bring new technology to the family farm. They start businesses. They become local leaders.

Oregon College Savings Plan accounts now have \$1.5 billion in assets, including more than \$9 million already saved by Umatilla County families to help fund their higher education goals.

The tax advantages available to those saving for college is now available to people and families living with disabilities through ABLE. By saving money through ABLE, people and families with disabilities can save hundreds of thousands of dollars without losing Social Security or Medicaid eligibility. ABLE funds can be used to pay for any health, independence or quality of life improvements including housing, transportation, training and much more.



**TOBIAS READ**  
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### Free events in Pendleton

**College Savings 101**  
April 12, 6-6:45 p.m.  
Blue Mountain Community College  
Science & Tech Building, Room 214  
Pendleton

**ABC's of ABLE**  
April 12, 6:45 to 7:30 p.m.  
Blue Mountain Community College  
Science & Tech Building, Room 214  
Pendleton

Living with a disability shouldn't force a person to live in poverty to be eligible for vital benefits, like Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income.

ABLE helps people with disabilities to save money while accessing critical programs and opportunities and to fully participate in their communities. It offers their families the peace of mind that can come from knowing that money is there for expenses to come.

Big goals can often seem intimidating, but taking the first step is key. It's said that when Einstein was asked for the most powerful force in the universe, he identified compound interest. The Oregon State Treasury is working hard to make it easier for you to use that power to build the future you want for yourselves and your loved ones.

*Tobias Read is the Oregon State Treasurer.*

# We're creating a world with just us humans

We live in a time where we are heading towards a world without wildlife. We have a voice and a vote, yet we elect people who support the destruction of what makes our planet livable. But perhaps our gravest sin continues to be our treatment of wildlife. How is it that, given an earth so rich in life, humanity has chosen to kill — to destroy — the oasis we have been granted?

We live in a time of great knowledge about animals, and many people have become advocates for all species. Yet prejudice, war and social unrest make even our relationships with our fellow humans complex. Governments are already slow to act to protect the natural world. Now, consider how hard we find it to deal with species that look nothing like us, that live underwater or fly through the sky, that compete with us for food or could even make us their next meal.

Add into the mix poverty,



**STEPHEN CAPRA**  
Comment

hunger, population pressure and cultural norms, then multiply all that by corporate greed, energy development, rapid deforestation and climate change, and you begin to understand the true cycle of genocide that modern civilization is waging against wildlife — and ultimately itself.

We have a long history of destroying wildlife. The Great Plains remains for many the centerpiece of America's shame, the site of a wanton waste of wildlife, which left species like the passenger pigeon extinct and the bison all but gone. In order to destroy the Native American cultures and take control of the land, many of us saw the killing of wildlife as almost a patriotic endeavor. The aftermath of decay and dried bones scattered across a vast expanse of America marks, without question, wildlife's own "Trail of Tears."

Our growing awareness of the decimation of the West's native species eventually inspired the enactment of laws and regulations

designed to prevent such a killing spree from occurring again. Conservationists began working to make people understand the value of species that do not resemble human beings.

In 2014, the World Wildlife Fund issued a report with the Zoological Society of London, which found that a number of species of wild animals had lost half their populations in 40 years.

The culprits were many — humans killing wildlife for food in unsustainable numbers, the pollution and destruction of habitat. The report went on to point out that we are "cutting trees faster than we regrow them, catching fish faster than the oceans can restock, pumping water from rivers and aquifers faster than rainfall can replenish them, and emitting more climate-warming carbon dioxide than oceans and forests can absorb."

The most rapid decline of wildlife populations has occurred in freshwater ecosystems, where wildlife numbers have plummeted more than 75 percent since 1970.

Yet most of us continue to confront such situations with a

shrug of recognition, a new-normal sense of futility, or maybe the vague hope that science will ultimately save us from our madness.

Right now, we are witness to the last great extinction of species in our history, one that, if not stopped, will remove the final barrier to our complete isolation as humans. Think of the karma we will inherit for our refusal to share our world and to accept our responsibility to live in harmony with all species.

The shift to harmony may only be realized after the implosion of our material-based society, once we make massive shifts in our diet and break the back of the corporations that feed the sickness in our society.

But most of all, it requires leadership — placing in power people who respect all species and understand the value of a shared earth. This change will only come with basic human kindness and love. If we pass laws that end cruelty and protect more lands and more waters, we can truly embrace the concept that all life matters.

Like all politics, this shift must begin locally; like all education,

it requires great teachers who will provide the next generation the chance to get it right. What is different for wildlife today is that we are running out of time. We cannot look to make change in 20, 30 or 40 years. The change must happen now.

We are moving towards a world without wildlife, not because we want it, but because we have not accepted a formula that truly allows coexistence.

That formula will only exist when society, nations and people understand the limitations of being human — when we accept such limits on ourselves in order to share, not control, the world we live in.

The Zen of that concept is the deeper connection and relationship with species that will enrich our lives. Only then will we have finally matured as the species we call human.

*Stephen Capra is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News. He is the executive director of Bold Visions Conservation, based in New Mexico.*