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(cover) Patagonia Climbing Ambassador Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll on Mirror Wall, a massive granite shield in the Scoresby Sund fjord, Greenland. Previous expeditions to Mirror Wall used helicopters for the approach. Sean and team arrived by boat and walked 10 days through the valley to get to the route. **Ben Ditto**

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Spring 2024

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The 46-foot *Cornelia* weaves its way through a labyrinth of ice after crossing the Denmark Strait. This was Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll's fourth sailing-climbing expedition to Greenland. **Ben Ditto**

Contents

Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll keeps a cool head on big expeditions, even when a large ice floe sets itself down on the anchor and starts scraping against the hull of their ship, *Cornelia*. (In the end, the tide and current took care of it.) Ben Ditto

The Wall as a Mirror

Giving failure a chance in Greenland.

Words and captions by **Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll**

Photos by **Ben Ditto**

It's hard to let go. We were just over halfway up a king line on a nearly 4,000-foot wall, but it felt like we were really close. An obvious crack system seemed to lead all the way to the top, a mere 98 feet above us. But, this was it. This is the game we play. There was nothing more to try.

We had started the expedition two months earlier. Our climbing team consisted of me; Nicolas Favresse, whom I have been adventuring with for more than 25 years; climber-photographer Ben Ditto, who had been part of two of our previous sailing and climbing expeditions; and Franco Cookson, a bold headpoint climber with no sailing or big-wall experience but who was very keen to try both. We had 7 days of preparing the boat in Scotland, 16 days of sailing (most of which I spent vomiting), 5 days in the Faroe Islands waiting for a storm to pass, 14 days in Iceland waiting for the pack ice in Eastern Greenland to clear, 10 days of hiking back and forth carrying heavy loads over endless moraine and treacherous glacier, then 9 days of physically and mentally draining climbing, wrestling with loose rock, perilous skyhooks and massive runouts.

Our objective was the Mirror Wall, a massive shield of shining granite standing proud in a sea of ice, deep inside the fjord of Scoresby Sund on the east coast of Greenland. Even though our approach was long, involved and arduous, we enjoyed every second of it.

That we had made it this far was astounding. There had been many moments of uncertainty that put us on the verge of bailing. As we were meandering our way through steep waves of grey scree and opalescent walls of ice on our very first day of hiking toward the Mirror Wall, a big granite block slid from under Nico's foot. He fell into a pool of icy water and found himself with a deep gash on his upper shin. Anywhere else this would have been minor, just a matter of a few stitches and letting it heal. But here, days away from the nearest medical facility, the possibility of infection was very serious. Nico had put a lot of effort into preparing for this trip, and it seemed that his expedition was over before we had even gotten to see the Mirror Wall. However, Nico accepted his fate with good spirits and returned to

Nico Favresse, Ben Ditto, Franco Cookson and I spent 10 days on the Mirror Wall before choosing to let the impossible live on.

the boat to recover from his injury as the three of us continued ferrying gear and food to the base of the wall. Ten days later, just as we were ready to start climbing, Nico's wound had healed enough that he decided it was worth taking the risk to join us. However, after two days of intense effort hauling heavy, nearly 220-pound bags up the wall, his wound started showing signs of infection. He was forced to start antibiotics and avoid exerting himself by staying at the portaledge camp, cooking, reading and playing music.

The rest of us slowly continued fighting upward, with several days of complex route-finding that felt like nine-hour games of chess to progress just 131 feet. After getting past some of the blankest sections of the wall, we finally arrived at a right-facing dihedral, one of the rare distinct features on the first half of the face. We expected straightforward climbing—instead, the corner was completely closed, with no possibilities for pitons or beaks, and the rock was flaky, exfoliating and sandy. Using friction with my palms and feet on opposing sides of the dihedral, I pushed my way upward for about 65 feet. With skepticism, I placed a skyhook onto a razor's edge and, holding my breath, slowly added weight to it.

Time always seems to stand still as you commit to a skyhook. It will either hold and you will hang like a sack of potatoes, or before you know it the hook will ping off, or the edge will break and you will be flying through the air. This time it held. Hanging off one point of contact on a 4-millimeter-wide edge, I carefully placed the hand drill against the rock surface and started whacking it with the hammer. An hour later, I clipped the rope into the safety of a bolt.

Thirteen feet higher I could see a flake that would clearly take a cam. Up I went, pushing the two walls apart, gritty rock crackling under my feet. It was precarious, insecure climbing with no pulling, only pushing, farther and farther away from the bolt. The flake was near, but just out of reach to my right. I scanned the surface.

Just give me something, I thought, *a foothold, a razor, a crystal, anything.* There was nothing.

With no option to go right, I continued stemming higher, away from the flake and the bolt. Grunting for courage, I pushed deeper and deeper into a dark sea of uncertainty until, paralyzed by fear, I couldn't go any higher. My calves were screaming, my body shaking. I looked up but there was nothing to aim for. I looked down and the bolt was far away. I heard myself scream as I flew through the air until the rope caught me almost 33 feet below.

Here, we're at advanced base camp and doing recon of the glacier beneath the Mirror Wall. When I first saw the wall, it ignited a spark in my chest.

For two days I tried this section, taking frightening fall after fall. On one, I hit the wall and hyperextended my right foot, leaving my ankle swollen and blue. Luckily it was just a little painful, not debilitating. I tried aid climbing, but any edge would break as soon as I tried to put weight on the skyhook. Copperheads refused to stick to the soft sandy rock, and peckers would just bounce back. We were running out of options.

Maybe if I placed two bolts in a row I could reach the flake? I thought. Or maybe it would be just out of reach and then I would have to place another bolt. And maybe a little higher up there would be another blank, featureless section that is just a little longer than the last one, and we would have to place an even longer bolt ladder. We didn't know.

We've always tried to avoid placing bolts whenever possible. Most of our first ascents don't have any bolts. But even though there are edges for free climbing on Mirror Wall, it's mostly void of cracks and seams, offering very limited natural protection. We knew we would have to place bolts to make it to the summit.

In his 1971 essay "The Murder of the Impossible," Reinhold Messner writes, "a combination of bolts and single mindedness will get you up anything." With a bolt ladder and a bolt at every arm's reach, you can manage your way up the smoothest of rock faces. But to us, it makes no sense to force an illogical route up a blank face. Standing at the base of the Mirror Wall, we decided we would not place a bolt from a bolt. There had to be a certain distance between bolts, with either free climbing or difficult aid climbing between them. Maybe this is rather subjective and very dependent on skill, strength and courage. But a line must be drawn if you don't want to murder the impossible. In some ways, the impossible is what makes climbing worthwhile. The fact that you won't be able to climb all the walls, that some will always keep you dreaming.

Climbing, like life, is a game with values. These values are arbitrary, pure convention, made up. But they are what give climbing its essence. It cannot be the summit above all. You have to keep the challenge alive. You have to give failure a chance, too.

The approach was as magical as the wall itself. Some sections felt like walking through a Salvador Dalí painting.

While walking through a narrow gully on the first day of our approach, I heard a loud splash behind me. I turned around and saw Nico had fallen into a deep pool of icy water and was getting pulled down by his heavy pack. I was worried he would drown, but he managed to pull himself out quickly. “OK, let’s keep walking to avoid getting cold!” he said, which was quickly followed by, “Oh shit, I’m bleeding.” The gash on his shin went down to the bone.

From shore to the base of the Mirror Wall, it’s almost 19 miles of crevasse-strewn glaciers, sandy desert and never-ending moraine. It took us around 10 days of laborious route-finding to carry our heavy loads of gear and food back and forth from the boat to the climb.

The first time we stood below the Mirror Wall, we were smacked in the face by the challenge ahead. It was clear that this was going to be the most ambitious climb we had ever attempted. There were no obvious crack systems or lines of weakness, just a big, steep, featureless shield of granite. We had dreamed about this face for months, and it had taken so much time and effort to get here. We weren't going to walk away. With a mix of fear and excitement, we committed to a line. It's better to live with the courage to try than with the fear of failure.

(above) Preparing for another day of vertical exploration. The Mirror Wall is north facing, and it's in the Arctic, so it's twice as cold!

(right) The highpoint. After having climbed almost 1,000 feet of blank, featureless-looking rock, we arrived in this cul-de-sac—a dihedral that proved too difficult for our free-climbing and aid-climbing skills. We were almost 100 feet away from a crack system that seemed to lead to the summit. Unwilling to place a bolt ladder, it was time to let go and go down.

(left) Respite from hanging in my harness for nine hours. In the bottom-center of the picture, nearly 1,000 feet lower, you can see our pink and yellow portaledges set up next to a ledge about 1,300 feet up the wall. Each day, we would fix static ropes from there, ascend the ropes to our highpoint, try and push it higher, then zip down to our portaledge camp at the end of the day.

(right) Our attempt on the Mirror Wall consisted of a mix of hard aid climbing and free climbing. Here, I'm making a nest of bird-beak pitons before committing to some difficult free climbing.

A moment of relaxation and recharging. Our portaledge jam band consisted of Nico on the guitar, Franco on the Buddhist chants and me on the tin whistle.

This wall offered very little opportunity for natural protection, like camming devices, nuts or pitons, so there were some massive runouts.

The Aesthetics *of* Bouldering

Some of the best boulders are about the approach.

Words by **Katie Lamb**

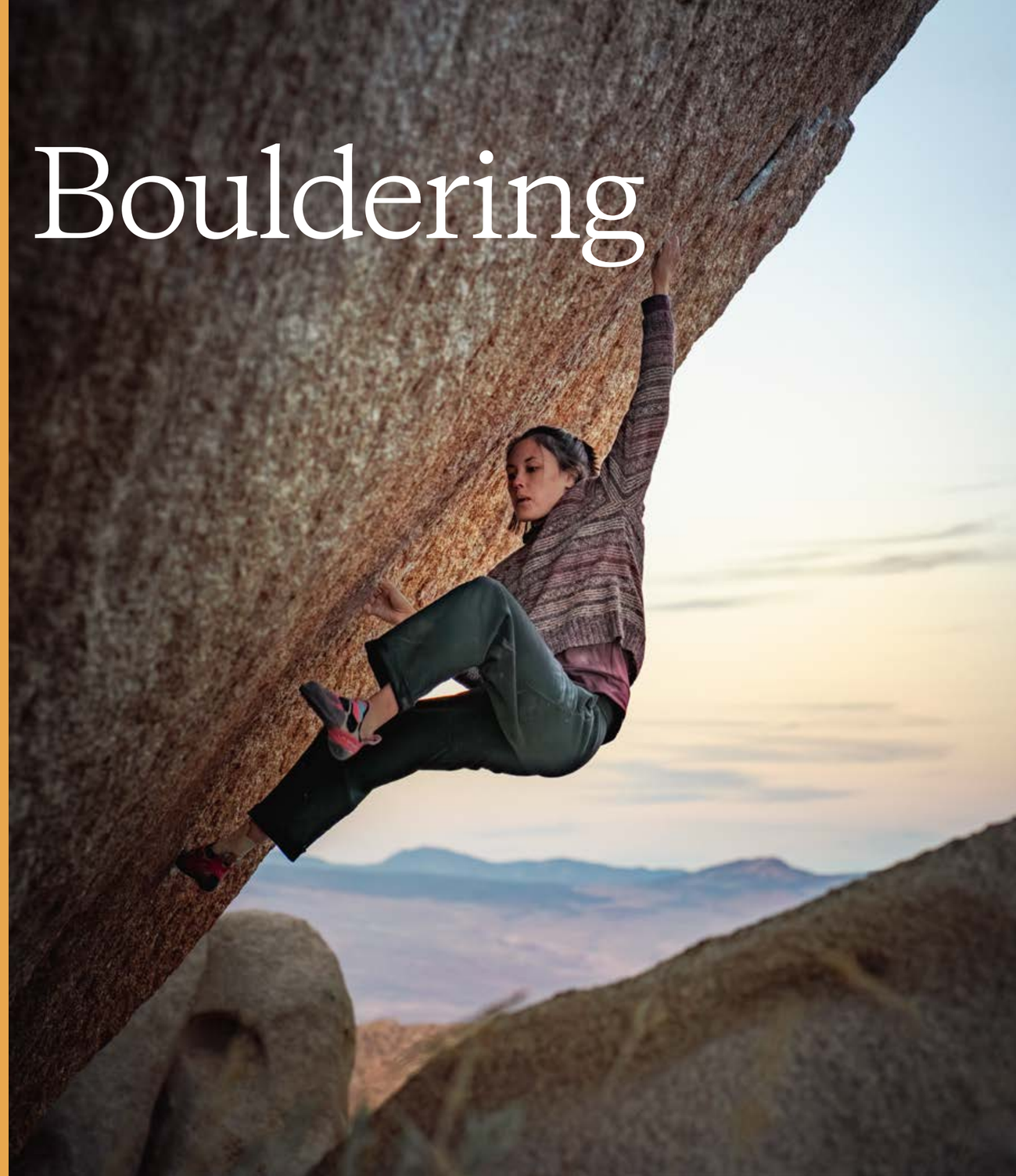
Photos by **Eric Bissell**

On long climbing days, I play a game where I imagine what it would be like to be an ant. I look at all the pebbles strewn across the forest floor, at the golf ball-sized rocks that would be highballs, and I envy the ants for having boulder field upon boulder field to choose from. I pick up a quartz crystal from the ground and imagine the sequence I would use to squeeze up the impeccable rock with my six spindly legs. This type of boulder would be an absolute rarity for humans, a collector's item, the holy grail of bouldering. But for ants, it's just another rock. The colonies stream purposefully around it without a flick of an antenna.

But I've come to realize that when living at human scale, it's good that not all boulders are worthy of attention. We still have a lot of rock to choose from, and maybe some innate human instinct makes me want to climb the boulders that stop me in my tracks because they are beautiful or tall or a particular shape. After picking my way through a boulder field or weaving through densely wooded forests, I turn the corner to find the one that's been sitting there the whole time, begging to be climbed. It may stand against a mountain backdrop, the crown jewel among a cluster of smaller, less auspicious boulders. Or maybe it's tucked into a desert canyon, with a single trail of features meandering to the lip, high enough that I have to crane my neck to speculate how the top will play out. It's a sacred moment to see an exquisite boulder for the first time. My heart rate quickens, and I'm already planning what it will take to climb it.

It's even more enticing when such a diamond in the rough sits on the precipice of what's physically possible for me to climb. Upon first attempts, the movements feel completely foreign. After some time, the sequence remains cryptic but offers enough of a hint to keep me working on the problem and coming back with a more creative solution.

Once a season, I'll dedicate myself to one of the boulders that scores big on both aesthetic value and physical difficulty. If I'm lucky, I'll have the privilege to turn the lip and complete my story with it. Regardless, it's the time spent on these sublime boulders that has offered me the most lasting lessons and provided the ultimate gift of spending crisp, clear days in good company. A handful of problems stand out, where the right combination of place and people yielded the manifestation of my ant daydream.



Patagonia Climbing Ambassador Katie Lamb on The Swarm (V13) in Bishop, California.

Grow a Spine

My partner Keenan and I skateboarded down the path and crossed the river on a fallen log, then scampered back upstream to the pentagonal boulder nestled by the river as Half Dome loomed above. We realized that our perception had been distorted; the arête was not an arête at all, but a feature that puckered out of the center of a vertical wall of granite.

"It's a spine!" Keenan exclaimed, running his hand over the start of the featured vertebra, just incut enough for us to grip. When we found a couple footholds the width of dimes, the same thought dawned on us—"I think it goes!"

It was the spring of 2023 when Keenan and I had stopped to stare across Tenaya Creek at the huge boulder on the opposite bank. The forest in Yosemite Valley was lush after one of the wettest winters in history and water gushed from the faucets of waterfalls that had previously dried up. The boulder was completely blank aside from a single feature. A couple passersby also stopped to look, thinking we'd seen notable wildlife, not realizing they had front-row seats to an undone trailside project (later, Keenan and I tossed around the name "Tourist Trap"). While many come to Yosemite hoping to see a bear, we were interrupting the flow of foot traffic for our own version of a rare sighting.

Together, Keenan and I figured out how to maneuver between the delicate positions up to the precarious moves on the headwall, 25 feet above. There's beauty in the uncertainty of sussing out sequences that have never been done before. Bouldering seems like an individual pursuit, but the process of collaborating on something totally unknown with a partner is a special kind of togetherness I haven't found elsewhere.

When we had pieced it together, I had a few nervous slips on the opening moves before Keenan and I were able to climb it back to back, amassing a small crowd of gaping tourists on the opposite side of the river, who had just crossed out a new notable wildlife sighting on their Yosemite bingo scorecards.

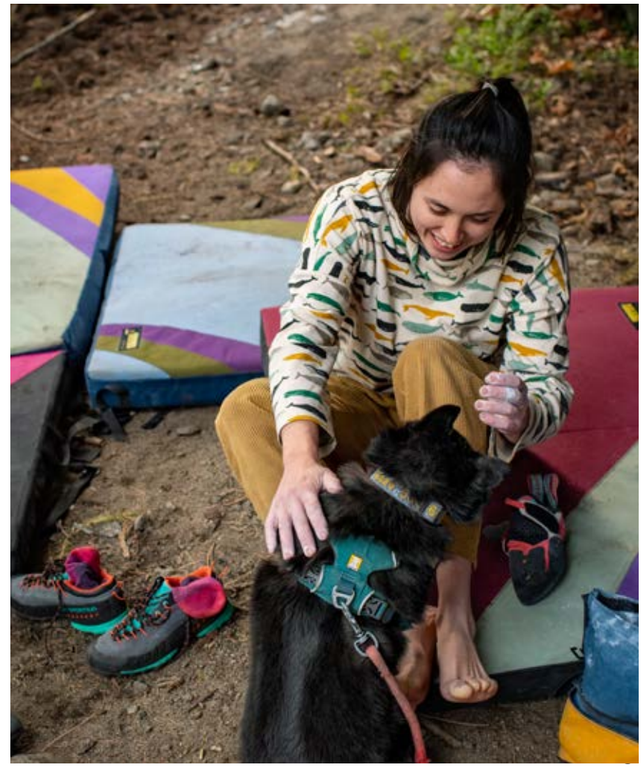
Katie gets the first ascent of Grow a Spine near Tenaya Creek in Yosemite National Park, California.

The Penrose Step

In my late teens and early 20s, I'd made it a tradition to spend my birthday in British Columbia before heading south to California for the start of the school year. On one of these trips, I stopped in Leavenworth, Washington, a Bavarian-themed town in the rain shadow of the Cascades, and looked at The Penrose Step for the first time. I immediately ruled out its unlikely ladder-like connection of holds as something that would be possible for me to climb.

Five years after first seeing the boulder, I came back to Washington in the springtime to visit family. I had started a job but still felt incompetent at it, and I felt a similar frustration with the boulder I'd been trying in Yosemite that winter, returning again and again but making little progress. There were a fortuitous couple days of clear weather, and I went to try The Penrose Step with low expectations. The Bavarian kitsch of Leavenworth was more jarring than it had been in the summer, a sad imitation of the alpine paradise it strived to be but fell short of.

The nearby Wenatchee River was roaring after the wet winter, and the noise focused me. The forested valley felt alive and real around me, a sharp contrast to downtown Leavenworth. I spent two days trying the boulder, learning to tune out my doubts and the time pressure of an impending storm and to be confident in the task at hand. The climbing felt intuitive as I flowed through the sloping shelves and finger-pad edges.



(left) After an unexpected mid-spring blizzard, Katie shoveled snow off The Penrose Step and climbed it during a two-day window of dry weather. Her brother, Andy, spots from below.

(right) Post-send pets make the work worth it.

Photos by Keenan Takahashi

The Eleventh Hour

One of my favorite things about alpine bouldering is being able to find cooler temps even in summer. It was September and hotter than hell in Bishop, California, so my climbing friends and I escaped into the mountains where a pocket of cool, sinking air offered respite from the desert heat below. The Eleventh Hour is like a ship's prow cresting out of a sea of talus, and the sound of glacial runoff underneath the rocky layer adds to the feeling of approaching a carved-out hull. The white granite looks like marble, with clean lines that make for intricate, 3D climbing. The aspens were a wave of yellow ochre, sharp against the white granite talus. I spent a few solitary hours dialing in a sequence that required more pushing with my palms and toes than pulling with my arms and fingers. When the group rejoined me, I tried it from the ground, coming tantalizingly close to the top before the fear crept in. I felt my body teeter unsteadily and jumped down from high off the deck.

When I hiked back to the Eleventh Hour two years later, I felt not just cooler temps, but cooler nerves. I was confident in my feet on the small edges, and even when I felt unstable, I knew that I was capable of moving through it. I danced through the final slab, and when I reached a hand up to pull myself over the sharp lip, I knew that I was now the climber I once wished I could be.

Katie on the Eleventh Hour (V11), the crown jewel of a zone called "Heaven" in the high country above Bishop's Buttermilks.

The Wrong Green

All dams are dirty. Efforts to make them better only make things worse.

Words by **Steven Hawley**

All summer long, Lake Billy Chinook is as green as the Chicago River on Saint Patrick's Day. Unlike the annual prank bestowed upon the Windy City in celebration of the luck of the Irish, the viridescence of the big reservoir behind Round Butte Dam on central Oregon's Deschutes River is a murky sign of misfortune, pooling behind a dam the state's largest utility corporation insists is a source of clean energy.

In 1955, just as America's dam-building frenzy was reaching a fevered pitch, Oregon attempted to dampen the rush. It took the Federal Power Commission to court over federal permits to dam the Deschutes, contesting the first of what would eventually be three dams that cut off access for salmon and steelhead throughout most of the Deschutes Basin. The state won the first round of the legal battle. Utility interests appealed. The case wound up in the US Supreme Court. The ensuing decision, along with the 1964 construction of Round Butte Dam and abandoned efforts to maintain migrating fish populations, condemned the lion's share of this desert watershed to a salmon-less purgatory. Portland General Electric (PGE) now sends power from the project over the Cascade Mountains into the populous Willamette Valley.

PGE and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation co-own these three dams, and the complexities they created. Three rivers feed Lake Billy Chinook. The Crooked and Middle Deschutes are dirty from upstream farms, while the Metolius is as clean and cold as any river comes. Let's talk about the dirtier pair—the Crooked and the Middle Deschutes—first. A reservoir is a hydrological heat sink. Add fertilizer to this heat and you make an underwater greenhouse. Agricultural runoff, rich in phosphorous and nitrogen, continues the work of its green miracle-making, once entrained in an aquatic environment. Blooms of algae and other photosynthesizing plant invaders, some of them toxic, often ensue. Warm, dammed, polluted water leads to a shamrock-hued toxic stew that spews tons of methane emissions and further drives the climate crisis.

Now let's talk about the clean river. For 50 years, after the dam's construction, the saving grace of the last free-flowing 100 miles of the Deschutes River was the Metolius, the purest of those three sister rivers. Due to a magical combination of faulting, volcanism and subsequent prodigious groundwater movement, this river runs with such icy, clear effervescence, your first inclination is to add an olive or a lime rather than a trout fly to it. It pours itself into the larger vessel of the Deschutes, just upstream of the stale, noxious cocktail of Lake Billy Chinook.

Here's the science behind that Metolius grace: cold water condenses and is heavier

Located at the confluence of the Deschutes, Crooked and Metolius rivers, Lake Billy Chinook was created by the construction of the Round Butte Dam in 1964. The lake experiences toxin-producing harmful algal blooms due to stagnant conditions, high levels of nutrients due to agricultural runoff and warming water. Oregon. **Michael Peterson**

Spring-fed and crystal clear, the Metolius River flows 29 miles from its headwaters to Lake Billy Chinook. Designated a National Wild and Scenic River in 1988, this tributary of the Deschutes is home to notoriously tricky-to-catch rainbow trout, along with bull trout, kokanee salmon and mountain whitefish. **Mike Putnam**

than warm water. For 50 years, despite the dams, the lower Deschutes River was one of the nation's premier trout fishing streams. The Metolius's year-round, 50-degree flow sank to the bottom of the reservoir, whereupon the dam's outflow valve sent this pure goodness downstream. Anyone who remembers the Deschutes prior to 2010 can recall the result: a river so clear that when you floated at 5 miles an hour over its boulder-strewn bed, you could give in to the sensation you were flying. The fishing was so good, to begin to describe it here would be to give it short shrift.

In 2005, PGE was granted a 50-year license to continue operating its Deschutes dams. To fulfill a long-neglected requirement to provide fish passage, the company went all in for a combination of techno-fix and slick marketing. On its website, PGE claims its hydropower is "emissions free" despite research to the contrary. A growing body of scientific research strongly suggests reservoirs, including PGE's, invariably emit greenhouse gas in the form of methane. Methane is significantly more destructive than carbon dioxide as it's 28 times as potent at trapping heat in the atmosphere. According to the EPA, reservoirs with poor water quality in the form of algal blooms tend to produce more methane. And for years, Lake Billy Chinook has spawned harmful algae. PGE and the hydropower industry have pushed a false narrative for decades that dams are an economically viable energy source. They are not.

For the real fish tale, consider its solution for salmon and steelhead. PGE and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs spent about $110 million on a Rube Goldberg contraption called a Selective Water Withdrawal Tower. Pitched to stakeholders as the thing that would allow PGE to manage the Deschutes "as if the dams weren't there," the Tower, for eight months out of the year, mainlines that sickly green water from the surface of the reservoir into the previously pristine lower 100 free-flowing miles of the Deschutes. The results are a menacing reminder that the dams are still very much there.

The shift from clean cold water from the depths of the reservoir to warm, dirty surface water was done in the name of restoring fish passage—which has been a dismal failure. In all 14 years of operation, the Tower project has facilitated passage above these dams of barely 2,000 steelhead, Chinook and sockeye salmon. Divide this number by the cost of the Tower, and these have to be some of the most expensive salmon on Earth.

For all the money and technical expertise spent on the Tower, salmon reintroduction above this dam is still a trap-and-haul program. Fish are siphoned into tanker trucks, driven around the dam and pumped back into the river. Migration aid that includes semitrucks is a travesty. We don't put sandhill cranes on passenger jets to get them from marsh to tundra and back.

In 2023, only 19 spring Chinook returned above project. Worse, a recent joint study between Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife suggests the dirty water contaminating the lower river has furnished it with a manifold increase in a parasite known as *Ceratonova shasta* that's deadly to spring Chinook. The Tower intended to save salmon is killing them.

As the communications manager for the Deschutes River Alliance, what gives me hope is that every failure of a project like this is a reminder that fish mitigation is not the same as fish and river restoration. Utilities' raison d'être is not saving fish. Generally, they've sucked at it.

"Mitigation" connotes a mindset. It is "the action of reducing the severity, seriousness or painfulness of something." It implies a docile tolerance for destructive practices that are killing us and the things we love. Where rivers and fish are concerned, we need to recognize—and more importantly, act upon—the knowledge that all dams are dirty. And that "mitigating" for any kind of pollution while doing nothing to eliminate the cause is a kind of insanity. The best hatchery is a healthy river system.

Another thing that gives me hope is the growing inventory of water projects—dam removals being the ne plus ultra of river restoration—that have restored so much more than a riverine ecosystem: the reconstruction of a half mile of Klamath River channel as part of the spine-tingling removal of four dams there. The first harvest of salmon out of the Elwha, post dam removal. These projects, and hundreds of others like them, are the result of decades of organizing. They have restored faith in nature to be resilient in the face of even the deadliest threats. They have just as importantly restored an old, familiar, vital sort of faith humans desperately need to have in one another.

For me, one of the themes of the spring season is redemption. Of all the jubilance I've witnessed in a quarter-century of writing about all manner of things related to water, I don't conjure the image of a white-water rapid or a big fish, but a face.

A geomorphic cousin of the Metolius is the White Salmon River, a few miles from my house. In 2011, Condit Dam was removed, and among the celebratory crowd was Yakama Elder and then-Columbia Inter-Tribal Police Chief Davis Washines. A photographer snapped a picture of him the instant the White Salmon burst forth from the hole that was blown in the base of that dam. The photo depicts Mr. Washines with his head buried in his hand. "I shed a few tears," recalled Mr. Washines over the phone. "I was seeing a river free, that hadn't been seen that way since my grandfather and great-grandfather saw it. It felt like opening a gate and watching a herd of horses run free."

As I've watched the White Salmon welcome a steadily increasing number of trees along its banks, insects in the trees and fish in the river, I think of that picture, and of Mr. Washines. When my home waters on the Deschutes are finally free, in the same dam-less wild way that so moved him, doubtless I'll shed tears of joy and redemption. And I wish that burst of joy for everyone who loves a beleaguered river.

> "I was seeing a river free, that hadn't been seen that way since my grandfather and great-grandfather saw it. It felt like opening a gate and watching a herd of horses run free."
>
> —YAKAMA ELDER DAVIS WASHINES

Salmon selfie. Ten years after the completion of the Elwha River dam removal project, steelhead and salmon—such as this adult and juvenile Chinook—are successfully reclaiming their historic spawning grounds. **John McMillan**

Find *Cracked* by Steven Hawley

for THE LOVE *of* DIRT

Words by **Sakeus Bankson**

Photos by **Ken Etzel**

If you get your nose close enough, ponderosa pine bark smells like vanilla. Or butterscotch, depending on the tree.

Washington is famous for its pine trees. It's portrayed as a land of constant water and ever-present green, which, in mountain biking terms, translates to a land of perfect trails and perfect dirt in perfect forests. And that's true … or at least for the state's West Side.

(far left) Elliott Milner isn't much of a rock climber, but Beacon Hill's trail builders provided other ways to get to the top for those willing to step things up.

(left) Artist and athlete Brooklyn Bell is a born-and-raised Washingtonian, and her flowing and playful style works as well with the West Side's verdant greenery as the East Side's subtler palette.

(above) In both his skiing and mountain biking, Carston Oliver is so calculated that he makes even the trickiest features look casual—and makes smiling with a mouth guard look comfortable.

the SPECIMENS *of* BEACON HILL

Spokane, on the far eastern edge of the state, is not famous for its pines or perfect mountain biking. It's famous for apple trees and college basketball. Like much of the state's eastern two-thirds, it's a half-dozen inches of annual precip away from a desert. The forests are sparse and scattered, the hillsides a mix of sunbaked dirt, crunchy grass and a patchwork of scratchy shrubs. The terrain is craggy rather than steep, where it's not expansive, horizon-wide farmland more akin to the Midwest. The trails are dustier, more likely sand than loam, and speckled with fist-sized pine cones.

That austerity is why some Western Washingtonians consider it the "boring side" of the state; for East Siders, the modest palette just highlights the subtle details. On the East Side, you can see the landscape's bones.

Lime and yellow and orange patches of lichen announce the rare island of granite, which, in turn, hints at the story of two apocalyptic floods: the first, a roiling wave of fire and lava, left behind the area's iconic hexagonal basalt columns; the second, a wall of ice and water, carved that basalt into deep gorges and scattered the leftovers across hundreds of miles.

"I'm generally bad at drawing boundaries between different riding styles," Carston Oliver admits. "I just try to find the fun on whatever bike, terrain or 'type' of ride I'm on."

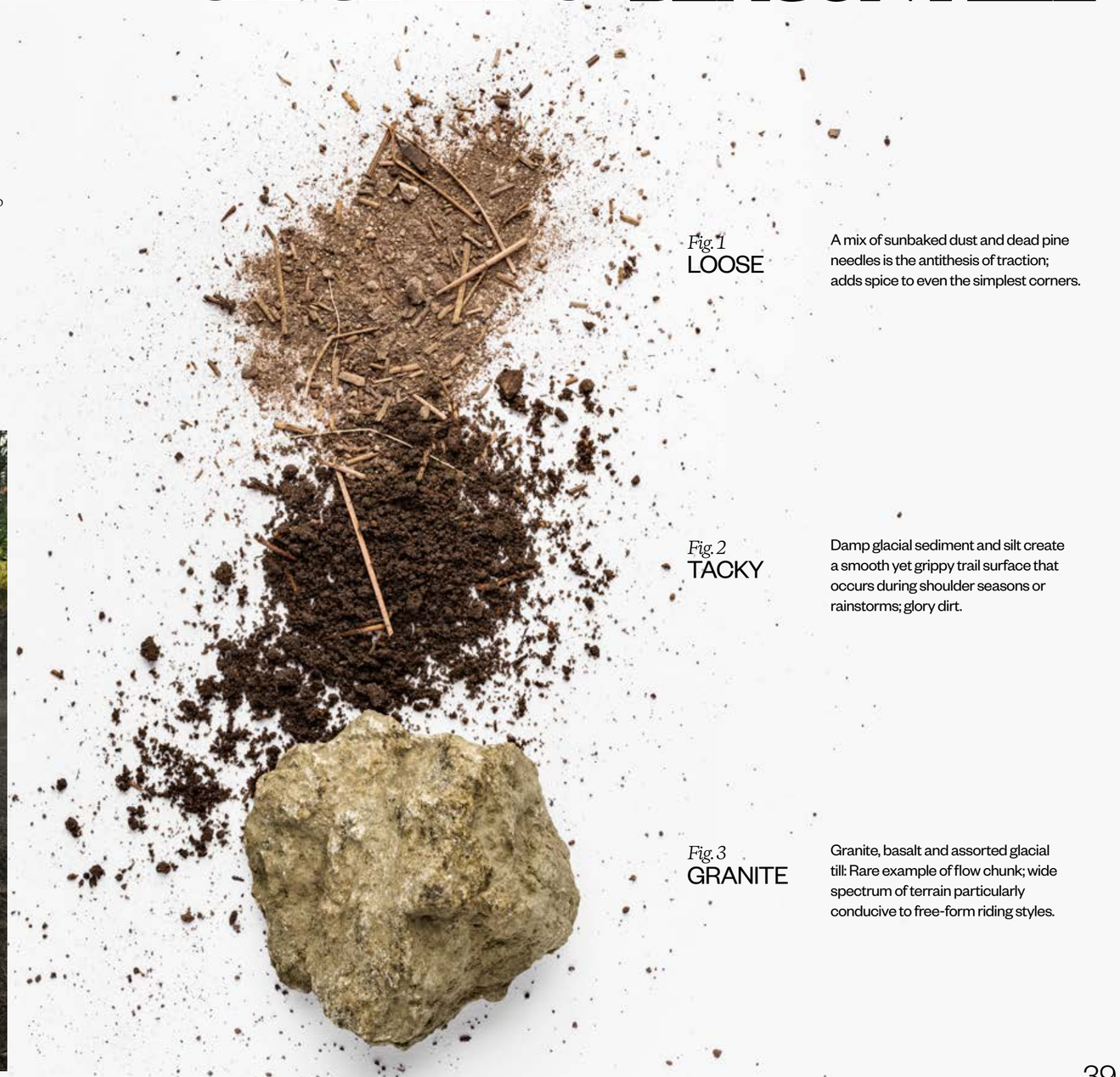


Fig. 1
LOOSE

A mix of sunbaked dust and dead pine needles is the antithesis of traction; adds spice to even the simplest corners.

Fig. 2
TACKY

Damp glacial sediment and silt create a smooth yet grippy trail surface that occurs during shoulder seasons or rainstorms; glory dirt.

Fig. 3
GRANITE

Granite, basalt and assorted glacial till: Rare example of flow chunk; wide spectrum of terrain particularly conducive to free-form riding styles.

Don't let Beacon Hill's modest vertical relief fool you; the knoll is actually part of the same continental plate as the Rocky Mountains, an island of ancient granite rising above the basalt lava flows that buried the area millions of years before. Brooklyn puts her tires on some deep history on Beacon's upper reaches.

And, when the still-damp soil meets the full brunt of Eastern Washington sunshine, there is no better place to ride a bike. For a few weeks each spring, those bones are covered in a riot of color that's both delicate and dramatic. The streams surge with snowmelt, shimmering ribbons of liquid life in a still-slumbering desert.

(top) A blank canvas takes many forms.

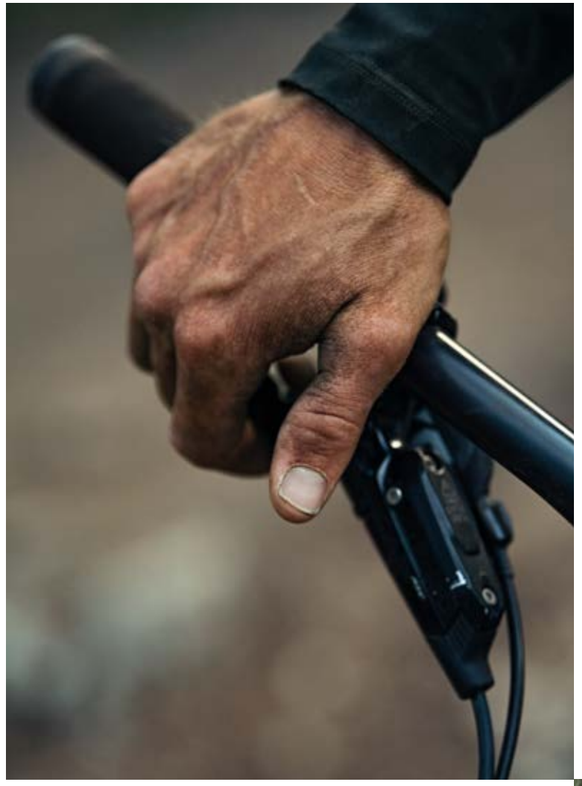
(bottom) "Bikes are instruments, riders are musicians, and we all play them differently. The basic goal is to be good at playing your instrument, but some people just love playing for the sake of playing." —Elliott Milner

(right) Arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*) is loved for its fuzzy mint leaves and vibrant sunflowers, but the plant's name comes from the balsam-scented resin in its taproot, which can reach as deep as 9 feet and be used as a coffee substitute.

Waves of grass sheath the hillsides like green lace, spotted with yellow and purple polka dots of balsamroot and lupine. The spice of sage and fir blend with the vanilla-butterscotch of ponderosa, an intoxicating concoction that embodies spring.

What you draw isn't the point.

the POINT *is the* DRAWING ITSELF



(above) Dirty hands are signs of a good time.

(right) Riding behind Elliott is like bike jazz; he's constantly improvising with a trail's textures and subtleties, and you never know what he's going to do next—you just know it's going to be interesting.

(far right) True skill isn't riding difficult lines; it's making those lines look easy. Carston styles Beacon Hill's biggest feature, a 15-foot drop with a dubious landing.

The landscape's frugality only serves to highlight the nuances of each, distilling the experience rather than obscuring or diluting it behind a wall of green. Glimpses of other trails through the ponderosa are just visible enough to pique curiosity. Maybe the next lap you'll find where they go.

Or the lap after that.

The Skeleton in Our Closet

Our Black Hole® duffels have been a lot of places since they were first released in the early ’90s. They’ve weathered the snowiest mountains, thickest jungles, hottest deserts and most chaotic city streets, traveling on all manner of air, water, land and animal transport with a sheeny flair.

But that iconic, glossy exterior is also the bag’s dirtiest secret.

The material in question is TPU, short for thermoplastic polyurethane, and it’s this flexible plastic coating that makes Black Hole fabric so resistant to water, abrasion and general abuse. It’s not the main ingredient—think weatherproof paint applied to an already sturdy house—yet it makes up nearly half the fabric’s weight. And, until recently, there was no recycled alternative.

“It was that one skeleton in the closet,” says equipment designer Evan Daniel.

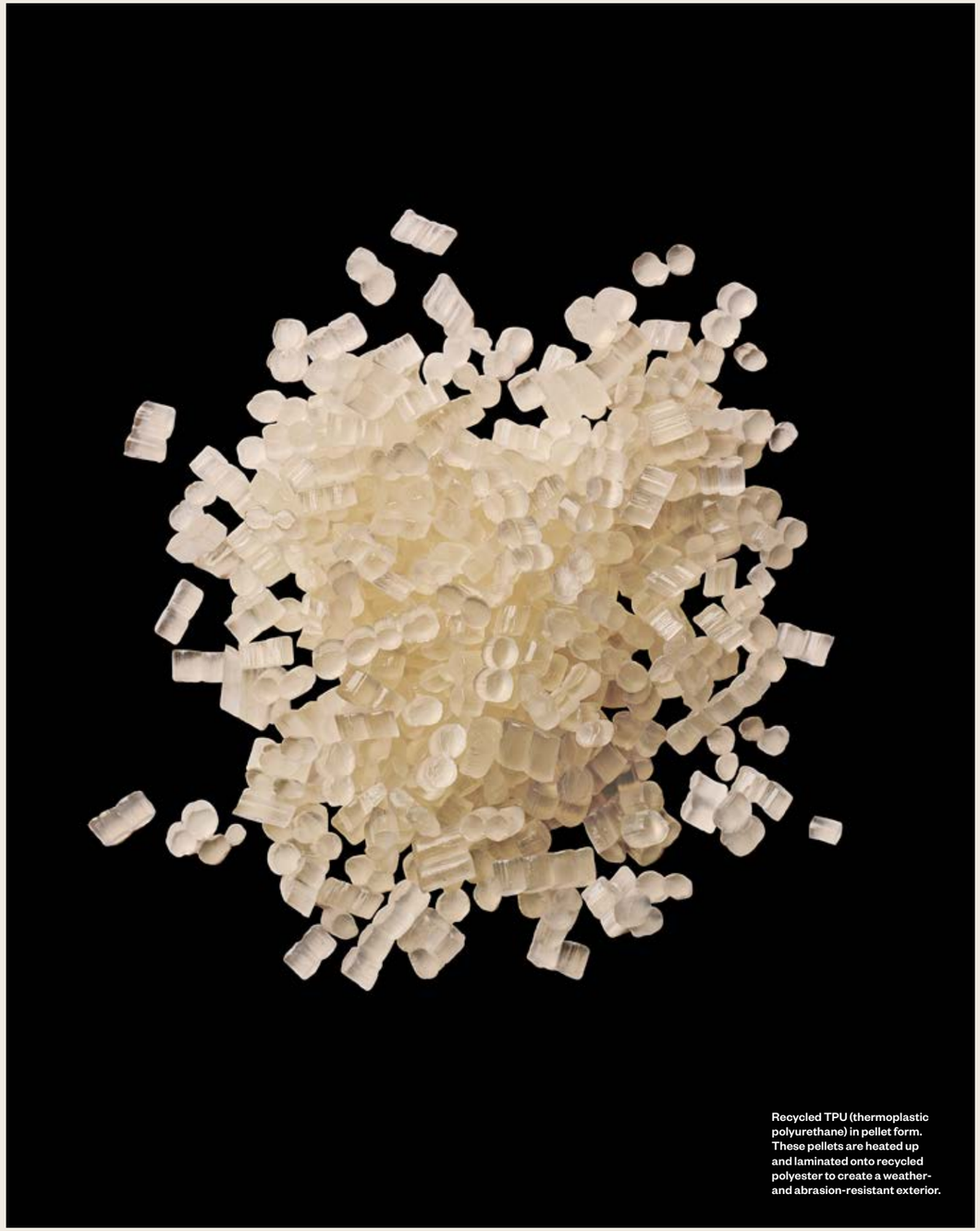
We’ve been using recycled materials for the body fabric, webbing and daisy-chain loops of our Black Hole bags since 2018, and had been considering similar options for TPU since 2016. We knew the material was out there and knew it could repurpose a lot of waste: For every 1,000 pounds of virgin TPU created, 75 pounds are thrown out. But we were less certain if we could make the swap and preserve the renowned Black Hole sturdiness.

“Everything was telling us not to do recycled TPU,” Daniel says. “Doing the right thing often causes headaches later.”

So, we started slowly. We experimented with the new material in the lab. We took one

Material

Recycled TPU



Recycled TPU (thermoplastic polyurethane) in pellet form. These pellets are heated up and laminated onto recycled polyester to create a weather- and abrasion-resistant exterior.

duffel on climbing trips in Colorado and California, and then chucked it out of a bush plane onto an Alaskan glacier. With each test, we made tweaks and adjustments until we were sure the recycled fabric—which has a matte finish instead of the classic gloss—matched its predecessor's unwavering durability.

"There's no 'blue bin' for recycled TPU," Daniel says. "And when you're dealing with trash, there's lots of things you can't control. It's like a puzzle to solve."

Solve we did. We began using recycled TPU for select Black Hole bags in Fall 2022—an industry first. For Spring 2024, we're proud to say we've expanded its use to all Black Hole duffels, and when we update our rolling duffels in Fall 2024, the entire line will be made with recycled TPU.

The new Black Hole bags may not have their iconic shine, but that's just fine with us. Traveling is easier without a skeleton in your duffel.

Find the Black Hole® Collection

Keeping Pace

Words by **Lisa Jhung**

Photos by **Brendan Davis**

One runner gets her fix helping others chase their dreams, again and again.

Tom's body had been seizing up for hours when he first went down. He was around 85 miles into the 2001 Western States 100-mile endurance run; I'd been running with him for about the last 20. After more than 24 hours on the trail, his muscles had tightened up so much that he listed to the left. Every time he hit a rock, root or rut that challenged his footing, his balance would falter. He'd fall over. I'd pick him up and pull on his right arm, tugging it downward toward the ground to straighten him out. On we'd go.

A mutual friend had connected us. Tom needed a pacer: someone to run with him for a portion of the race, to keep him eating, drinking and moving efficiently, and to distract him with good company and bad jokes. I needed long mileage days to train for a multi-day adventure race later that summer. The fact that we were 34 years apart—I was 29 and Tom was 64—and we barely knew each other was irrelevant.

Pacers do much more than just keep their runners moving. Case in point: Lisa Jhung executes an all-important watermelon handoff to Amy Markovich at the Never Summer 100K.

I waited for Tom at the mile 62 Foresthill aid station, worried that my nagging patellar tendonitis would get in Tom's way, that it would slow us down or force me to bail before I could hand him off to the next pacer. But as we kicked up brown dust in the night, my pain, and the awkwardness of being new running partners, quickly dissipated.

The longer Tom and I ran, the less I felt my own body. My knee pain was gone. I was wholly focused on my job, having Tom run straight through aid stations while I refilled his water bottles, grabbed some snacks and caught back up with him. Dangerously close to missing the cutoffs, he couldn't afford to graze. I calculated times in my head, did math while we ran and encouraged him to shuffle a little faster to get to the next aid station so they wouldn't pull him from the course. This was his third try at Western States, and I could feel how badly he wanted to finish. If I could have given him the left side of my body, I would have.

We both cried when he missed the race cutoff at mile 94. But on the flight home, I'm sure I grinned as I rested my head against the window. I'd found a new way to experience the sport I loved. I vowed to play the role again.

***

My next opportunity came three summers later. I'd be pacing for my new friend Darcy, who intimidated me though not on purpose. We met when she kicked my ass at a winter adventure race. I had subsequently moved to her hometown of Boulder, Colorado. We'd run together a few times since then, but I was certain these afternoon jaunts were her second outing of the day.

She picked me up at mile 76 of the Leadville 100, sometime after dark. She was in third place. I'd be pacing her all the way into the finish and nervously hoped I'd be able to keep up. Every time we'd leave an aid station I'd stress: Did I fill her hydration enough? Did she have enough food? Did I correctly calculate the number of miles before the next refill station?

"Can I have my gloves?" she asked when the high-mountain air turned freezing in the night. Without breaking stride, I slung around her pack that I'd been carrying and dug through the gear stashed inside. Found one glove. Phew. Handed it to her. After fumbling around for what seemed like forever—I was a bumbling new employee—I found the other and helped her put it on.

We ran the perimeter of Turquoise Lake, catching glimpses of moonlight glistening on the water through tall pines. I ran in front, leading the way into the night. As we began the 3.5-mile climb into town, I heard the sounds of a generator off in the distance: the finish line. Turning around to check on Darcy, I saw two headlamps behind us. I was certain I heard female voices.

What I was getting in return was far greater: friendship, community, a sense of purpose, an opportunity to step outside myself and be a part of something bigger.

It was impossible not to be moved—and impossible not to want to do it again.

Runners enter trail races as individuals, but they finish them as a team. While Markovich (right) swaps empty bottles for full ones, Jhung (left) swaps out her shoes and Markovich's mother (top) takes snack orders.

Pacing, I realized, made me feel good ... The kind of community I found as part of Brad's team was exactly what I needed. I felt whole, balanced and useful.

"I think we're being chased," I told her. She didn't respond.

I looked back again. Then again.

"You gotta stop doing that," she said. I was annoying her. But I decided that if I were her, I'd want me to be annoying. I'd deal with the consequences later.

I kept checking back, kept pushing the pace. She likely didn't need me to do this. But I did, and she held.

After the race, there was a chunk of time where I wasn't sure if she'd ask me to go on runs with her in the afternoons anymore. I wondered if I'd need to find some other new people in town. That maybe I'd blown it as a friend, though I was sure I'd nailed it as a pacer. As it turned out, time and miles were all we needed to solidify what would become a deep bond.

I don't believe in karma. I wasn't pacing Tom or Darcy to have the favor returned another time. I may have been giving them fuel, emotional support, a backside to follow or a lit path from my headlamp behind them, but what I was getting in return was far greater: friendship, community, a sense of purpose, an opportunity to step outside myself and be a part of something bigger. It was impossible not to be moved—and impossible not to want to do it again.

***

A couple of years ago, I was back in Leadville for another 14-mile pacing job, this time for my friend and neighbor Brad. His family and I worried about him as night descended across the high-mountain valley of Twin Lakes, mile 62 of the 100-mile course. It was 9 p.m., and Brad had been running for 19 hours. We knew he was somewhere between the 12,600-foot summit of Hope Pass that loomed miles above us, and the campground parking lot where we mulled about nervously, waiting.

Much had happened in the years since I'd last been at Leadville. For starters, a pandemic had set in. Just before that, my father and mother had passed away within three months of each other. As I'd struggled with grief and the overwhelming task of sorting affairs, a wise friend told me to do something nice for someone else. "Sometimes that can make you feel better about your own situation," they said. I did, and it did.

Pacing, I realized, made me feel good. By this point in my life—raising two kids but still craving adventure, both parents gone and left with an ache that can be hard to fill—the kind of community I found as part of Brad's team was exactly what I needed. I felt whole, balanced and useful. Almost 20 years after pacing Darcy at this very race, I had come to realize that helping someone else achieve their goals could be more rewarding than achieving my own.

When a bobbing headlamp illuminated his sweaty face at 9:30 p.m., we guided Brad into the crew pit we'd set up—a camp chair, cooler, stove and plastic bins full of meticulously organized fuel and gear. We sat him down. Changed his socks. Fed him ramen. Minutes before 10 p.m., the cutoff for leaving Twin Lakes, he rose and ran to the cheers and cowbells of the assembled crowd.

For the first 62 miles of this 100-mile race, Brad had run alone. Now he had me. I took his pack and threw it over my own. Back in a familiar role, I assessed how he was moving as we clamored up a short, steep climb and onto the singletrack of the Colorado Trail. A full moon danced above aspen leaves, lighting an otherwise inky, near-midnight sky. We shuffled along into the darkness, our steps a rhythmic background soundtrack to the tales Brad shared from his race up until this point. We settled in as partners.

I took my job seriously. Every 45 minutes, I'd firmly but kindly hand him a gel packet that I'd opened with my teeth, make sure he finished it, then take the trash from him. Every 30 minutes, I'd give him a salt tab and a drag from my hydration hose or his soft flask to wash it down. When I sipped my own water, I made sure he took some long sips of his own. Shuffle the downhills and flats; power hike the ups. Encourage him. Stay positive. Be good company. Fourteen miles and five hours later, around 3 a.m., I handed Brad off to his next pacer. We'd made up 45 minutes. I fell asleep content.

Because ultramarathons are ridiculously hard, Brad unfortunately dropped out a few miles from the finish that year. But the following August, he was back. And so was I.

We waited again at Twin Lakes. I spent the day in my two-person tent: read, ate, napped, wrote and napped some more, despite it being the middle of the day and very loud. Amid the busy scene—every runner's support crew and pacers, dogs, generators and announcers—I cocooned.

I'd gotten good at compartmentalizing. The last few years my parents were alive, they'd lived in a memory-care facility in San Diego, California. I'd be all-in when I was with them, then jump in the ocean and have a burrito and a beer to recover from the emotional mess. Back home in Boulder, I'd attempt to put it all out of my mind.

That entire day leading up to pacing Brad, I conserved my energy and rested up—focused on myself. When it was go-time, I put on my headlamp, grabbed some extra snacks from the aid station for both of us and caught up to him at the top of the same steep hill we'd started on together the year before.

Fourteen miles later, at 2 a.m., I passed him off to his next pacer—Darcy. Six or so hours after that, we all screamed with joy when we saw Brad cresting toward the finish line.

No sun? No problem—especially when you have a pacer to keep you energized with stories and jokes as you face down dark hours on the trail. Jhung and Markovich cruise from day to night.

Tossing the Dye

"In the early 1980s, we made another important shift. At a time when all outdoor products were tan, forest green, or, at the most colorful, rust, we drenched the Patagonia line in vivid color. We introduced cobalt, teal, French red, mango, sea foam, and iced mocha. Patagonia clothing, still rugged, moved beyond bland-looking to blasphemous. And it worked. The rest of the industry spent the better part of a decade catching up."

Yvon Chouinard, *Let My People Go Surfing*

In 2023, to mark our 50th year, we remade some of our most iconic, colorful styles using undyed natural fibers. We're always asking ourselves: How can we make products that cause the least amount of harm to the planet? The Natural Icons collection was born from this question.

BORN BEAUTIFUL

Since the colorful '80s, we've made sure the dyes we use aren't toxic and the dye houses do not pollute local waterways. But dyeing still requires energy and water that could be saved by leaving a fabric au naturel. Which got us thinking: What color is cotton, anyway?

White cotton was never the only option, but it was the most popular and became commonplace after the invention of the cotton-spinning machine, which allowed US plantations to meet a booming global appetite. The cotton gin made slavery more efficient—and as a result, more lucrative, allowing plantation owners to pump more white cotton into the economy than ever before.

Color-grown cotton, on the other hand, dates back 4,300 years to a region in the Andes, where Indigenous peoples cultivated shades of yellow, tan, green and brown. Today's conventionally grown white cotton relies on pesticides and requires more irrigation than heirloom

Undyed Cotton

The cotton fiber transforms into a robust, soft material that ages gracefully with a unique, beautiful birch white patina. Why bleach it? The most simple product is always the most timeless, and simplicity starts with materials.

color-grown varieties, according to industry advocates such as the Organic Trade Association and Textile Exchange. Although, color-grown varieties do present some difficulties.

"The biggest risk for our quality team [with regard to undyed cotton] is color matching," says Carrie Childs, design director for Patagonia Sportswear. "Since we're using fibers from different crops in different parts of the world, the undyed color is not the same shade for each garment. We want to celebrate the variations as part of nature."

But, people want their options, and we knew releasing undyed cotton into an outdoor clothing market saturated with every shade of every color was a gamble. Still, Childs and her team believed cotton was "born beautiful," and by May 2023 the numbers confirmed they'd bet well: The undyed Men's Funhoggers™ Shorts and undyed Funhoggers™ Anorak were our two best-selling direct-to-consumer styles.

Perhaps people seek simplicity in a complex world; maybe they appreciate the saved water and energy, or how undyed cotton clothes hold their color longer.

"We're looking at making undyed the new normal for our lighter-colored naturals," Childs says. "We're exploring undyed synthetics, too."

Don't worry, you'll still find our products in Surfboard Yellow, Tidepool Blue and Coho Coral, and we continue to explore less energy-intensive dyeing techniques and natural dyes. But naked cotton is a color, too, and it was born beautiful.

Find the Funhoggers™ Anorak

Funhoggers™ Anorak

1974 *on the* PCT

A look back in time at one of the most iconic trails in the US.

Words by **Carrie Beck**

Photos courtesy of **Jean Audet and Ric Beck**

I'm not sure I fully understand my parents' motivations for thru-hiking both the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail. My mother (the first woman to complete both trails) downplays the accomplishment and implies that it was a frivolous endeavor. I suppose it might have seemed that way at the time, in the midst of social upheaval and the Vietnam War. But to me, it has always seemed an incredible achievement.

I can listen to my parents' tales of the trails for hours, enjoying details about their quirky companions, close calls and food obsessions (Kraft mac and cheese was like gold). These stories, and the thousands of photos documenting them, fed my early love of hiking and backpacking. When I took my first multiday backpacking trip at age 15, I carried my mother's external-frame Kelty pack from the '70s and wore a pair of her Patagonia hiking shorts from the same era. Many years later, my gear has changed, but my love of spending time in the backcountry endures.

Defining experiences in the mountains can have an impact far beyond us; they can ripple out into the next generation and set others on a path to find their own stories. This is what the trails have done for my family—and what I hope my parents' old photos will do for you, too.

Jean Audet picks her way along a rare section of dry rock amid a snowy year in the High Sierra. During the spring of 1974, snowpack in these mountains reached up to 20 feet. Audet, Ric Beck and company often hiked early in the morning when the snow was still hard enough to walk on.

(*left*) To navigate the many stream crossings along the PCT, Audet and Beck would often take off their boots and wade across "in stocking feet," which produced better grip than going barefoot. Here, trail friend Jon Rose wades across California's Salmon River. "Jon always carried a dozen eggs in his pack," says Audet. "And when he hiked the Appalachian Trail, he wore Birkenstock sandals."

(*above*) Once a trail friend, always a trail friend. Audet and Beck met Billy Taylor (pictured) on the Appalachian Trail in 1972. Two years later, to their surprise, they spotted his name just ahead of theirs in a gear-shop logbook. Eventually, the groups overlapped and hiked the rest of the way together. "No one had 'trail names' in 1974," says Audet. "We were a small community of hikers and seldom met others while out on the trail. In the end, only 12 people completed the PCT in 1974." Audet was the only woman in that group.

(*right*) Tip for thru-hiking on a budget: Hot sidewalk makes a pretty good replacement for a few spins in the dryer. Beck (left) and Jim Eilerston keep watch outside a laundromat in Mojave, California, while plotting the group's next move. The top priorities while in town were always to collect food boxes from the post office, find a motel and a shower, and then head to the nearest bar for "real" food.

(*above*) Eilerston models his finest trail craftsmanship. "He took a couple lenses from his single reflex camera and fashioned these sunglasses using a Grape Nuts box and some string," says Audet. A goofy-looking, but essential, tool for preventing snow blindness while hiking through the Sierra.

(*right*) On the PCT, long-handled ice axes were useful for more than snow safety. "We delighted in using our ice axes as rudders when doing a standing glissade on the descent from the high passes," says Audet. "The ice axe also made an excellent prop for standing up our packs at stops and a great tool to dig with for bathroom breaks."

(*above*) A view with a room: Audet preps dinner (Kraft mac, undoubtedly) at a camp in the High Sierra. "When the weather was good, we always slept out under the stars," she says.

(*right*) Audet and Beck started the PCT at the Mexico border on March 31, 1974, and reached the end of the trail in Canada on September 26, 1974. The weather was cold and just beginning to snow, and Audet remembers feeling mixed emotions—excitement to return home, sadness that the experience was over. "It was a journey with lots of memories," Audet says. "Some good and some not so good, but always interesting."

Phunhoggin'

fun hog (noun) fun hogs (pl)
fun hoggin' (verb); alt. phun hog:

any of a genus (*phunhoggopithecus*) of burrowing, climbing, amphibious mammals found at the crags, pointbreaks, trails, alpine peaks, deserts, jungles and watering holes of Pangea. Solitary and social by turns, they tend to show up wherever stoke energy is high, appearing out of the salt mist of big swells and from splitter cracks in perfect sandstone, or somehow waiting and ready at the top of a line, no skintracks in sight. First recorded sighting: 1968 in Argentina. Yvon Chouinard, Dick Dorworth, Doug Tompkins, Chris Jones and Lito Tejada-Flores held a "Viva Los Fun Hogs" banner on the summit of Cerro Fitz Roy. At least one local was overheard asking, "Who are these 'sporting porks'?" Evoking the Tao, fun hogs merely point the way, though not the easiest way, and are always under their own power. True to their name, they'll squeal you into a set wave, hooves raised in a V—they're happy to let you lead the route and give you first tracks. But if you hesitate on the drop, they'll hog it all. Mating habits are similar to those of mushrooms, sending contagious spores of endorphins, laughter and life energy on the wind. Drum circles, eating the bait and alpine-lake dips followed by long naps on sunbaked granite slabs keep fun hogs nourished and ready for all the phun ahead.

Boulder, Colorado, and bodysurfing at California's Trancas Beach led **Mike Rogers** to Patagonia in 1986 where he illustrated badgers, hangdogs and now phunhogs. He lives with his wife, Deirdre, in Prescott, Arizona.

A captain's log from the biggest swell to hit O'ahu's outer reefs in recent memory.

A BUN-DANCE AND THE JANUARY SWELL BENDER OF 2023

Too far inside, too far outside, too much in the channel or, worst-case scenario, too deep. **Daniel Russo**

Words by **Liam Wilmott**

"LARGE SUMS *of* MONEY COME TO *me* EASILY *in* INCREASING QUANTITIES *from* MULTIPLE SOURCES ON *a* CONTINUOUS BASIS IN *the* BEST INTEREST *of* ALL THAT I GET *to* KEEP, USE, GIVE *and* SPEND JOYOUSLY."

JANUARY 1, 2023

On New Year's Day, my girlfriend, "Mahina the Magic Manifester," told me that this would be a banger of a year for people with the sun in Capricorn, particularly if you were lucky enough to be born on January 16 at 2:43 a.m., like I was. Why? Because there's a powerful Libra moon and an ascending Sagittarius in our wheel, der.

Which, according to astrological wizardry, means, drumroll … we get double dessert!

JANUARY 27, 2023

(AFTER THE SWELL SETTLES)

I watch the boys leave for the airport.

The back of Mahina's truck is sagging under seven huge board bags. Anthony "Kingy" King and Hayden "Haydo" Blair's silhouetted heads bob through the rear window as they wait for a break in the traffic. They're probably having Mahina repeat "The Abundance Mantra"—the one she shared with me back on New Year's Day.

I pull out my phone and read the text again.

Large sums of money, eh? I smile to myself and put my phone back in my pocket. I can't believe it, but really, I can. I have to. It's real.

It hasn't even been a week since the North Shore was gifted with the clacker of all swells. We can say without a doubt that January 22 will go down as the greatest Eddie Aikau Big Wave Invitational to date and a historic day of surfing on O'ahu for so many reasons.

It's been a good run and Haydo, particularly, is urgent to believe in manifesting now.

JANUARY 21, 2023

I pick up Kingy and Haydo from Honolulu airport after their red-eye from Sydney, Australia. We load their boards on my van, and they hop in, giddy with gold fever.

"What's the latest on the swell, mate?" asks Kingy before the car door shuts. It always throws me a little to hear thick Australian accents again.

I tell them the swell hasn't yet shown on the buoy, but it will. I give them everything else I know and eye them for any nervous tics or red flags. They're frothy but not hyper. I've seen their Instagrams and know of their abilities, but I don't know how well that will translate to the outer reefs of O'ahu. As Mike Tyson once said, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth."

They pepper me from all angles on the freeway. I don't have much to tell them, and it's not because I am being tight-lipped; I just don't know. So I dance around the specifics and do my best to sound like I've lived here for 22 years.

Honestly, surfing hasn't been on my radar lately. I've been nursing a sus back for months, and I gave my stomach an all-access pass to the fridge through the Christmas holiday. Plus, I've been spending too much time thinking about the fallout from my divorce that happened over a year ago.

We drive north along the H-2. The Saturday lunchtime traffic flows easy, and we settle into the 30 minutes of asphalt in front of us. The radio plays beneath the board straps humming along on the roof. I don't know Haydo that well. But I do know he's an Ulladulla boy come Cronulla charger. I met him briefly a few winters back when Wildcat (my uncle) tipped him onto me. I lent him my red 10'6" so he could catch some big waves. He's got graying brown hair and a Colgate commercial smile, and we have many mutual friends. He's wearing a baggy white T-shirt over trendy, comfy blue shorts—

Waves so good you want to give them a great big hug! **Daniel Russo**

(top) Kingy and I get our equipment dialed. *(bottom)* A couple of big boards and one huge board wait for the storm. **Liam Wilmott Collection**

every bit of his exposed skin seems like it's been dipped in honey. He's too handsome to be working down in the Western Australian coal mines. My best guess is Haydo's 5'10", 160 pounds, and it occurs to me that I could easily pull him from the sea if he were unconscious.

It's good to see Kingy. He's got the same messy mop of blond hair and piercing blue eyes I remember. He's a solid unit who moves in gentle sequences. But you can't let his easygoing nature fool you. Even though he's the oldest of us, the guy has dormant loose energy. He's a lifeguard captain on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and has contributed to the BWRAG (Big Wave Risk Assessment Group) courses over the years. I've surfed with him at Cloudbreak a bunch, and I know he's got what it takes. Not that I can talk, but Kingy looks like he's been spending more time behind the desk than in the water, and I wouldn't fancy seeing him (or myself) in a pair of Budgy Smugglers. I can't help but think of the three of us "butt to nut" on my Jet Ski tomorrow. I wonder if my Nimble Sparrow will have the wings to get us out of a tight spot.

We reach the open plains of Central O'ahu, the urban sprawl fades back and the head-high fields of California grass blur green alongside us. We roll the windows down. The air's fresh and clear. We've been banking light and variable breezes lately, and the island has a sense of peace about it that only comes with the sustained absence of brutal trade winds.

Internally, I'm praying they hadn't wasted their money by coming. Yes, the Eddie had been called "on," but it had also been called "on" then "off" just a week before. During the "almost" Eddie swell, the buoy readings hadn't reached or sustained 20 feet at 20 seconds—readings needed for the comp to run—and I fear that might happen again.

When the boys bring up paddling the outer-reef waves tomorrow, I play it cool, saying stuff like: "We'll just wake up and see what the buoys say. If the wave breaks here, don't be there. If you pull four canisters, you get benched for a spell."

Personally, I'm not even sure where my true North Star on big waves is currently, and because of that, I didn't track this swell like I usually would. And now, at the front of my mind is the fact that I was about to take out two inexperienced outer-reef guys, whom I hadn't trained with, and they would be under my watch. We have seven kids between us, and I can feel the load of responsibility to our families. Of my regular crew, Nick Christensen was out injured, but

WHAT *if* IT'S 20-FOOT-PLUS!? DO I EVEN WANT *to* SURF WITHOUT *the* CREW I TRUST WATCHING *my* BACK?

his brother Kohl, "Big Ben" Wilkinson and Ramón Navarro would all be at the Eddie.

What if it's 20-foot-plus!? Do I even want to surf without the crew I trust watching my back?

We get to my place and unload the luggage and boards in the carport. Haydo and Kingy show off their "big" boards to me. But when I pull out my 11'0" Arakawa, aka the Juan Juan, for show-and-tell, an audible scratching of heads breaks their silence.

"Fark'n have a go at the size of it!" says Kingy, stepping back to stare at the 11-foot gun.

"I can't even get me arm around her!" adds Haydo as he wrestles with the board.

We lay our boards side by side in the yard and take them in. Two toothpicks and a telephone pole. I offer Kingy the Juan Juan for tomorrow and he accepts.

We run errands in Hale'iwa, and the boys are quick to get their wallets out for my lunch and petrol. I wave it away a couple times, but eventually cave. To refuse would fly in the face of "The Abundance Mantra."

Will come to me easily … I remember and bite into a carne asada burrito.

We wash the flight off at Army Beach. Under a cloudless sky, Kingy grabs two nicely ridden barrels and wins the "heat." Haydo gets a couple, but mostly spends his time enjoying the sun and staring out over the horizon; I can tell his mind is on tomorrow. There was no way, especially in all that bright sunlight, we could have known Haydo is cursed.

In the surf, they want to know more about the outer reefs and the specific target venue for tomorrow—a wave only Haydo had surfed once before. I found myself downplaying the expectations, trying to get them to be present with the current moment and leave tomorrow's swell for tomorrow. Maybe it's for my own good.

The Aussie boys borrow the Rolex (my gold 2001 Toyota Tacoma) and get squared away at Mahina's joint after our session. I spend my alone time at home refreshing the buoy readings, hoping to see it start climbing. At 5 p.m., it's still a lackluster 6 feet at 12 seconds. It takes a swell 8 to 10 hours to arrive at our shore. At this rate, it could be flat at daybreak tomorrow.

I'm having flashbacks to the outer-reef session I had during the "almost" Eddie swell last week. The readings were, on average, 16 feet at 17 seconds, and it wasn't quite 20-foot on the outer reefs. The "almost" Eddie swell arrived like it was drunk, leaning with a wonk and unsteadiness as it stumbled down the footpath. I had hoped it would sober up by the evening, but it still looked sideways. I felt out my back and gambled I could get one sneaky big wave before dark. My plan failed immediately. Caught inside, I got a one-way ticket on a hypoxic carnival ride as four waves detonated on my head. Underwater in the black of the squeezing ocean, I pulled all my canisters like a panicking puppeteer until I was safely swallowing the urge to vomit when I got on the back of the ski.

The boys show up back at my place around dusk. The swell still hasn't shown on the buoys, but we prepare our equipment anyway—fuel, water, sunscreen, VHF radio, tourniquets, extra leashes, spare CO_2 canisters for our inflation vests. I like how we're gelling as a team. I charge up my Sony camera, and even though I don't have a water housing, I figure I'll bring it in a dry bag, maybe snap a few pics of the lads if I get a chance between doing safety. What could go wrong?

The last few months I've found myself continually valuing my possessions, keeping a ledger of their worth in my head in case I need to liquidate anything in a pinch. It's like a knee-jerk reaction to not knowing where my next paycheck is coming from, which has never been my style, and I've found it exhausting.

I got the Nimble Sparrow back a few days before. The mechanic, Bruce the Big Bastard, had kitted my ski out with a new twin-impeller, new seats, new wire harness, bilge pump, fresh battery and an oil change, plus added pontoons and a sled. He'd had it for months and I had to near throw a tantrum to get it back. My checkbook was still in shock.

$Juan Juan, $Nimble Sparrow, $Sony camera … Tomorrow's ledger is creeping high in the risk column.

In increasing quantities, from multiple sources … I calm myself.

Above every material possession is a fear that things might not go well tomorrow, and the Nimble Sparrow, I know, is crucial to that. I cross my fingers it will work, like Triple B promised it would.

At 6 p.m., buoy 1 pops: 10 feet at 17 seconds. High fives all the way around and a wave of relief washes over us—some swell is on its way! We finish our prep with renewed enthusiasm, order pizzas and have an early dinner. By 10 p.m., I'm turning out the lights and see the buoys have climbed to 22.3 feet at 17.4 seconds.

JESUS H. CHRIST.

That's above Eddie readings. I swallow the urge to Google flights to England and fall asleep.

JANUARY 22, 2023

At 4 a.m., I wake up for a whiz and check the buoys.

It's 27.6 feet at 19 seconds! *My goodness, what are we about to get into?*

I get out of bed and turn the lights on.

27.6 FEET *at* 19 SECONDS! MY GOODNESS, WHAT ARE *we* ABOUT *to* GET INTO?

We're at the harbor in the dark. And before the Eddie Aikau Big Wave Invitational is called a "go" down at Waimea, we're in the water. It's 15- to 20-foot and rapidly on the rise. I ferry the boys out from Lanikai Beach and drop them in the channel. Then I end up bringing other mates out: Dusty, Big Strong Tom and that annoying guy from Jocko's who's a little less annoying only because there are way more annoying people who surf there now. I get handed surfers I don't even know: Nick and Dusty's mate, Eli, from Kaua'i, with his 16-year-old son; Oli, a one-legged dude from Oz; some Tahitian kid; Kipp Caddy from Cronulla, plus his mate from Portugal, who Kipp tells me "is the real deal" as he helps himself onto my sled. I'm burning gas at an alarming rate and by virtue of giving assistance, have assumed loads more responsibility. At the very least, Bruce the Big Bastard was right about my ski—it feels supercharged.

Around 8:15 a.m., an under-gunned old dude squeezes out through the channel wearing boardshorts and no vest. I watch him nab one of the early rides of the day right back to shore. By 9 a.m., there's 25-plus people playing cat and mouse. A wave just north of 20 feet mops them up—tallying off the first broken boards and leashes of the day.

This is the first sign of Haydo's black cloud. The set snapped his brand-new Kirk Bierke gun, stripping the fiberglass naked. Then Kingy breaks the leash on the Juan Juan as he swims under, and I watch my beloved board go over the falls. Dollar signs flash in my vision.

On a continuous basis … I reassure myself.

There were three waves in that set. Between the first and second wave, Haydo and Kingy pop up, bug-eyed and board-less next to each other, staring down another massive wave. "We're in a shit spot here!" said Haydo, sounding a little alarmed. "I KNOW!" deadpanned the Sunny Coast lifeguard before he took off doing his fastest freestyle. I was told later that that made Haydo laugh so hard he had trouble holding his breath when the third wave broke on his head.

After the set, it takes me about 20 minutes to locate Haydo. I'd only seen the front half of his shredded purple board in the melee. I was told he was safe, but I'm a little alarmed I haven't seen him while pulling people to the beach and locating boards. When I finally find him, he's bobbing out at sea, calm and collected. I apologize and rush him to shore to grab the backup board from the car, my friend Tevita's brand-new 10'4" Christenson. I say a silent prayer. I'd forgotten to ask if we could use it.

At 10:30 a.m., we're regrouped back in the lineup.

We watch underground chargers like Mo Freitas, Noa Ginella and Kaiwi Berry grab multiple nuggets. Kipp's mate, the "real-deal" Portuguese charger, slipped on a drop and did back spins down the face. We didn't see him in the lineup again. There's a woman out. She's wearing a silver helmet and the sun's bouncing off her noggin like a mirror. Between waves, I play with settings on my camera and manage a few rushed photos between rescues. The wind comes on, boards are breaking, and people come and go. The Gudauskas bros show up as I get caught inside, drowning my camera and nearly losing my ski after trying to bunny-hop a closeout.

When I surface, I hear Mo screaming, "GET ON IT, LIAM! GET ON IT!" I scramble up the sled with my soaking-wet dry bag and U-bolt back to the beach with my tail between my legs. Back out in the channel, I watch Guilherme Tâmega steal the show with three of the gnarliest rides I've ever seen. Poetry in motion.

I'm low on gas by lunchtime and head in thinking about some of the other teams' lack of safety protocol. They were getting riders out but some of the drivers were too scared or inexperienced to go into the impact zone. I should have sounded them.

I find Oli the one-legged Aussie legend on the inside. He busted his rib and is coughing up blood. Then I grab Dane Gudauskas who's one-and-done after a thick lip busted his shoulder. I drop them both back to the lifeguard tower.

As the day draws out, my crew starts to lose their heads. By now, the sets are consistently 25-foot with a 30-footer every hour. They've both only managed to catch one wave. Kingy wore a lip on his head and spent two canisters in the impact zone. My board was still intact, though. We have a good laugh after he pops his last two canisters accidentally in the shore break.

"That's me! Four canisters! I'm done!" he says.

Kingy comes back out on the Juan Juan but retires himself to the channel, dodging closeouts with the ski. Kipp had gotten two waves earlier, and I'm surprised to learn he's still out with us. Meanwhile, Haydo wants nothing more than to get the monkey off his back and has taken to sitting underneath everyone, dodging Mack Trucks on a borrowed board, trying to line up a nugget. It takes a lot of fucking willpower to stay in the danger zone that long, let me tell ya.

At 3 p.m., the set of the day comes through. I've got Kipp on the back of my ski. He's knackered. I'd heard about Kipp from Wildcat for years, so it's good to put a face to his name. We're outside the lineup, having a casual chat as he fixes his board to the sled, when a set stands up. Even though we were 100 yards out from the pack, it looks like it's going to break on us.

Surely there's another, bigger one behind this forerunner. **Liam Wilmott Collection**

Kingy on his first and only descent of the day. **Hank Foto**

"Haydo's in there!" cries Kipp as his head swivels around and I start motoring toward him.

As the first 30-foot wave lifts underneath us, we see everyone inside scrambling. Behind them, all alone, is Haydo, long stroking into the shadow of a giant. He surfaces after the first wave, Tevita's board is a goner, and he wears two more 30-footers on the head.

It was the biggest set of the day. My friend said he saw a tourist family in a hatchback car get barreled on Kamehameha Highway. It also pushed so much water into the corner of Lanikai that for 10 minutes it reversed the shoreline current.

A refill of fuel, Mr. Dark Cloud stubbing his toe, a greasy hamburger and two hours later, we finally locate Tevita's board. The lifeguards found it smashed up against the rocks at Jocko's. Every fin is busted, the nose is smooshed, and the bottom looks like it had been through a cheese grater.

After we recover what was left of Tevita's board, I take Haydo for a joyride on the ski to Waimea, hoping to lift the little fella's spirits. The Eddie is over, and Big Ben is out. He was an alternate in the event and missed out on his dream of surfing it again. When the last heat ended, he paddled out and surfed maxed-out Waimea Bay alone. He's as pure as they come. From the lineup, we hear the crowd roar as a young local lifeguard by the name of Luke Shepardson is crowned winner of the Eddie. We watch Ben ride two waves beautifully before we slowly make our way back to Hale'iwa.

On the way back, outside Alligators, a set of giant dinosaur swells comes broadside to us. Haydo and I respectfully stop and watch them pass. They stretched impossibly from Lanikai to outside Ke Iki—three of them, moving together at a slow and unstoppable gait. They are incomprehensible in mass; we gawk at them like they're prehistoric beasts. Even though these swells are rare and last merely hours, there's something ancient about them. They put into perspective how insignificant our time on Earth really is.

JANUARY 23, 2023

The morning after, Haydo, Kingy and I sit around my little table, drinking coffee, laughing and reliving the day. The memory card from my ruined camera survived. I drop the images to the boys, and we pore over those few photos like they were much-needed proof that yesterday had actually happened.

"That's Laura Enever," said Haydo, and I instantly remember seeing her sitting on the beach in the early morning fog, waiting for a ride out.

"I reckon she'd buy that, eh," he adds.

JANUARY 27, 2023 (AGAIN)

On Friday, we're in my dusty carport and Kingy lashes the final strap across the seven board bags in Mahina's truck bed. It hasn't even been a week since they landed.

The boys hand me a roll of bills. "For everything," they say.

In the best interest of all ...

We hug and I say thank you. We take a group picture, and it's that awkward moment when things must end. But then my phone pings. It's a text message from someone in Laura's camp. They want to do a buyout of the photo of Laura. I immediately share the news with our team, and we high-five and jump like donkeys in the dirt together. Mahina gives me a look, and I end up babbling about the astrological ace up my sleeve before she gives the boys a crash course in "The Abundance Mantra" on the drive.

FEBRUARY 2023

The January 22 swell bender of 2023 has long sunk into the sands of many shores, and life has returned to its regular routine on the rock. As I've been writing this, there's been days of rain and onshore winds. But there are still lingering signs of the 22's swell when you go about town: yellow streamers of caution tape at the beach, banks of sand and debris along Kam Highway, celebratory posts of Luke Shepardson on social media.

All said and done, we survived the January 22 swell. Haydo and Kingy rode only one wave each. We snapped four leg ropes, demolished two boards and drowned an expensive camera. I considered it a success as we had not totaled the Nimble Sparrow and no one was injured.

Even though it's gone, we know it will be back someday. Until then, the energy will flow in our blood and bone waiting for its return, when we can roll the dice once again.

How Wetsuits Learn

"We're about 12 years into using Yulex® natural rubber, and, wow, it's been a bumpy ride," says wetsuit developer Hub Hubbard (his real name is John but—unless you're a cop—don't call him that). Yulex is the neoprene alternative in our wetsuits, and it's been our goal to get the surf industry behind what is—bumps aside—a better material: Yulex is sourced from the sap of hevea trees.

Neoprene, whether produced from oil or the "green" alternative limestone, is made using a chemical called chloroprene, which the EPA designated a "likely human carcinogen" in 2010. Limestone-based neoprene is slightly less harmful than its oil-based counterpart. However, limestone is a non-renewable resource with a harmful mining process and can't be considered "eco-friendly" either.

There is only one chloroprene plant in the US, located in the largely Black community of LaPlace, Louisiana. Owned by the Japanese chemical company Denka, it's one of many factories along a heavily industrialized stretch of the Mississippi River referred to as "Cancer Alley" for the area's staggering cancer rates.

Unfortunately, the surf industry is notoriously slow to adapt, and neoprene has been the major ingredient in wetsuits since Jack O'Neill first developed them back in the 1950s. Our venture in Yulex has been one of constant learning, and now over a decade into it, we've nursed our fair share of hangovers. When we first offered Yulex to the

This is what our wetsuits are made of: 100% neoprene-free Yulex® natural rubber derived from the sap of hevea trees.

wetsuit market, we were laughed at. “We took it to Outdoor Retailer [an industry event] and were like, ‘Hey, look what we got,’” says Hub. “Everyone was like, ‘Sorry—for one, it’s not our idea, so it sucks’ … and two, admittedly, it wasn’t ready yet.”

Our first Yulex suits were criticized for being too stiff and tight—a tough swallow in an industry that’s constantly searching for the most flexible materials. Over the years, we’ve also had zipper-slider failures, zipper corrosion issues, ankle-cuff blowouts and improperly glued seams.

“We’ve made mistakes, the factories made mistakes, our suppliers made mistakes,” says wetsuit developer Andrew Reinhart, who, like Hub, has been a part of our foray into alternative materials for wetsuits since day one. “When we first brought it to the Fair Trade Certified™ factory that produces our wetsuits, they had been making neoprene wetsuits for decades. We hadn’t realized that there were so many extra steps for them to make Yulex wetsuits up to our quality. There were all these things we didn’t know.”

But, in the same way our conversion to organic cotton was a bumpy process in the ’90s, Yulex as a material is becoming more commonplace. Yulex wetsuits are now as comfortable, flexible and functional as neoprene. Our long-term partnerships with suppliers and the wetsuit factory were key to getting our Yulex wetsuits to this point.

Our on-site wetsuit repair team at Patagonia headquarters in Ventura, California, has played a vital role in this. Working alongside our design team, they compared notes on our most common repairs and quality issues and updated the suits accordingly. “That’s always been the goal of the wetsuit repair facility: to integrate repair into the design process,” says Andrew. “Getting that direct feedback in-house is a perk of it, whether it’s zippers or blown-out knee pads.”

With our headquarters and wetsuit design studio located less than a mile from the nearest surf spot, testing that direct feedback is as simple as heading out into the backyard.

“We surf, adjust, surf, adjust, then send it out to the factory,” says Hub.

Learn More

Men’s R3® Yulex® Regulator® Front-Zip Full Suit

Stories We Wear

Three Patagonia ambassadors tell us about their favorite pieces and the memories they spark.

Anne Gilbert Chase in her 7-year-old Micro Puff® Jacket. Through all the scuffs and scrapes, it's nothing that some strategically placed patches couldn't fix. **Jason Thompson**

“It’s really becoming more patches than jacket.”

by Anne Gilbert Chase

I spend so much time in the mountains that I really know what my kit is. If I know something works, I’m gonna stick with it because it’s one less thing I have to worry about. I can focus on everything else that is more important.

This Micro Puff® Jacket came to me as a sales sample in 2017. As ambassadors, we get samples ahead of time to make sure that the gear is what it needs to be. I thought it looked like a cool jacket with that bright red color and the blue zipper. I wore it a little bit on day trips, and it kept me warm but it was also breathable.

Now, it’s probably the piece that I’ve taken on the most trips—to Pakistan and Nepal and India and Alaska and Canada. I took it on the Slovak Direct, which is a big route on the south face of Denali that my partner and I climbed. We tried it the first time and got weathered off, and then we went back and did it the second time. I mean, Denali is almost 21,000 feet, and it’s cold. Normally, you would bring the Grade VII Down Parka or something quite large, but I decided to bring the Micro Puff. I shivered pretty much the entire time. But looking back on it, I’m like, “Wow, I can’t believe I actually climbed that thing with not much of a jacket.”

I sometimes literally live in this Micro Puff. In Alaska, I didn’t take it off for the three days that we spent on the wall. Since I’ve had it, I’ve probably washed it maybe four times. I air it out instead. But I definitely pay attention to how I pack it. I try not to put it next to cams or pins or sharp things, and I don’t strap it to the outside of a pack. I don’t want to add any more stress to the jacket than what I already put on it. That it’s maintained for all these years is awesome.

I’ve done all the repairs, which are pretty minor—rips from climbing and brushing up against the rock. Patches work great for that. Last fall in Nepal, I spent maybe an hour putting more on it. It’s really becoming more patches than jacket.

With certain pieces—this being one—every time I see a photo of myself in it, memories come back of that climb or trip. Those trips, especially when they’re successful and you’ve had an awesome climb, it’s such a huge feeling. But it goes away so quickly. That jacket brings me right back to awesome memories. I’ll wear that jacket until it literally falls apart. I just can’t let it go. It’s like a security blanket.

“[My jacket] doesn’t just go on the really big trips,” Anne says. “It also goes on home adventures—all the trips that I find really inspiring and cool. And if I have it on to the grocery store, I definitely wear it with pride.” **Jason Thompson**

“It’s not just my running bra. It’s my everything … it has my memories.”

by Jenn Shelton

For Jenn Shelton, all previous sports bras were “a girdle with two straps.” Enter the Crossover Bra. Its tight cross and lower cut meant more air circulation and less “uni-boob box.” **Ash Adams**

It’s such a universal thing for every woman to have her favorite sports bra. It’s your buddy. A sports bra is the most intimate thing we put on. It tells us things like, “Oh, it’s tight today—I’m about to start my period.”

The Crossover Bra is my ride or die. I don’t have a stronger connection with any other piece. Sports bras are this funny love-hate relationship because it’s been with you through everything, but also it’s really uncomfortable at the end of the day. After a race, it’s the first thing I take off. Before my shoes, it’s like, get this wet thing off me. You want your shoes off or to wash your face? No, it’s always—get my bra off. Your sports bra is kind of like your first toddler.

I cool off from my neck, so I really need bras with a tight cross. I’ve had this one for 15 years—maybe more. My boobs were the one area of my body that didn’t get bigger in my metamorphosis from elite runner to single mom, so it still fits like when I was 25 and running up mountains for the majority of my waking hours.

It’s frayed near the sternum, so I just put tape on it. It’s got holes, too, but if someone said you can only keep one piece of gear, I’d keep this sports bra. Patagonia doesn’t make it anymore, and it has my memories.

When I was in my third trimester, I hiked two fourteeners—I don’t know if I would do that again—but a mile in, I couldn’t breathe. I was bigger, so it felt tight. Also, when you’re pregnant, you lose lung capacity every day. This was very low into the hike, so I took it off and went without a bra, which sucks, too, especially when you have huge pregnancy boobs. My friend who was hiking with me offered to carry it. I said, “No, I’m not going up this mountain without her. She’s going with me.” I just carried it.

This bra has done basically every run and every ski with me. It’s been to Japan. It’s been up Kilimanjaro. It’s been up Mont Blanc. It’s been in hospital beds when I broke my legs. They want to cut off your clothes in the hospital, but I told them, “My leg’s broken—you’re not gonna cut this bra off.” It’s been to Olympic Trials. I’ve worn it to weddings. It’s not just my running bra. It’s my everything.

It was designed by my good friend, too—Jenny Jurek, who used to be a designer at Patagonia. She made it with me in mind. At least she said she did!

This bra felt like my first victory with the designers. When I started on the ambassador team, it was all male voices. New product-design meetings are long days, and you talk about all this product and get drowned out by the boys. When sports bras came up, they were like, “Well, we don’t want to waste time, so we’ll do that at lunch.” So Krissy Moehl and I would skip lunch to talk sports bras. I got someone to take this piece seriously! Now the boys love talking sports bras because who doesn’t like discussing boobs?

“When you can have whatever new great thing you want, you realize even more the relationships you’ve formed with the old stuff,” Jenn says. “It’s almost not as exciting to try new stuff. It’s more exciting to know, ‘This is the one that’s been with me.’” **Ash Adams**

“Why use more materials when you already have something?”

by Eddie Taylor

I’ve always been raised to buy what you need and don’t buy any more than that. I didn’t grow up with a lot of brand-name things, and when I got into climbing, I just kind of wore what I had and didn’t buy any fancy clothes. But friends told me, “The Patagonia stuff—if you buy it once, you don’t need to ever buy it again because if it gets broken, they’ll repair it. And they put a lot of time and research into everything they do.”

I ended up buying one thing, the R1® Hoody, in maybe 2014. It was the first piece I bought of any brand-name clothing—climbing or not climbing. The first four years I had it, it was the only thing I climbed in. It was warm and light. I wash it when it smells and then wear it a lot. I don’t do anything special to care for it. The idea that you can buy one thing and it should last you a much longer time is the reason why I started using and buying Patagonia products.

I did my first big wall in that R1, which was Mount Watkins in Yosemite. I had it on for Bugaboo Spire. I brought it when I went to South America for the first time and climbed Aconcagua. It got really, really ripped when we were doing a linkup in Castle Valley in Utah. We climbed Fine Jade, the Kor-Ingalls Route and Honeymoon Chimney. I pulled my phone out to take a picture, and when I went to put it back in, I saw the zipper had broken because I could barely fit in this chimney. I had been flying up and down it to the point where I broke the zipper. Worn Wear fixed it twice for me, and it’s been going strong ever since.

I have new R1s, but this one fits better and I like the color. I’m not really that sentimental or attached to things. But at the same time, if I already have something, there’s no point getting something new. Why use more materials when you already have something?

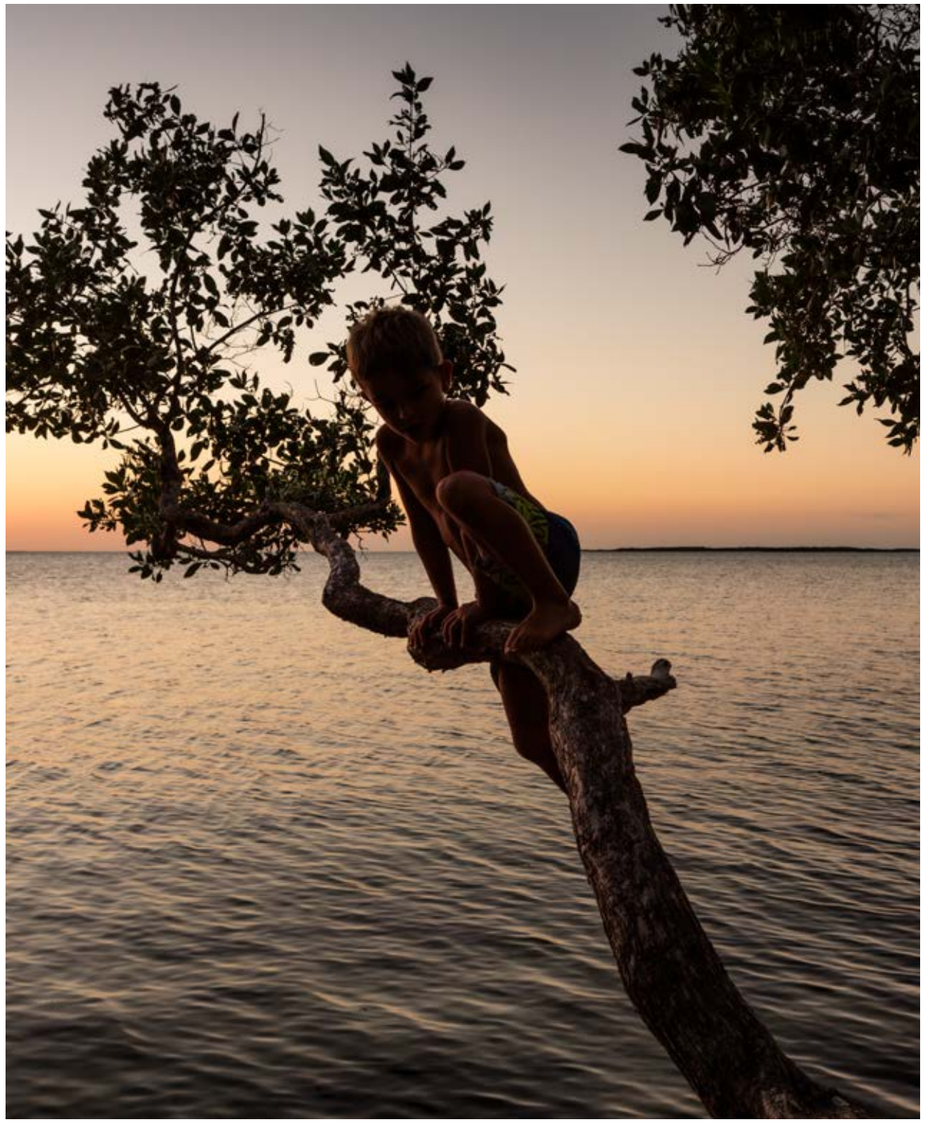
Eddie Taylor’s shopping mantra is simple: “I already have it. So why get a new one?” **James Lucas**

Young Voices

on an Old Earth

Youth writers from all over the world are being compelled by the nonprofit Write the World to tell the rest of us through poetry, prose and more what living on a planet in climate crisis is like for them. The Harvard-founded organization, which helps young people ages 13 to 19 develop their writing skills through monthly contests, workshops and creating community, has published multiple journals of collected writing, worked with Public Radio International on featured pieces, held over 100 writing contests and published more than 200,000 written works. Their most recent Climate Writing Awards received entries from young people in 33 countries. Here's a small collection of some of our favorites, new and old, from the next generation of writer-activists.

This planet's old glaciers are always changing, but at this moment in time, it's so rapid the human eye has taken note. Included in the following collection of writing from young people all over our beautiful world is a piece about the disappearance of this melting glacier—the Aletsch—as seen from Jungfraujoch, Switzerland. Yang Lin



An image from *FloodZone*, an expansive photographic project reflecting and responding to rising sea levels. "Living in Miami is bittersweet: It looks and feels like a paradise," says photographer Anastasia Samoylova, "But the only secure roots belong to mangrove trees." **Anastasia Samoylova**

Excerpt from "Prayer to a Sinking City"

On a uniquely cool October evening, I perch on the brick wall surrounding my family's little concrete yard. Sunset is fading quietly into dusk as cool clouds ripple across the sky. A lighter rests by my side and a small white candle balances on the ledge, its flame weakly protesting the dying light. I have brought the candle outside because there is a wordless prayer I want to give to this city, because as cars drone past and green anoles slink up wood fences and the leaves of plantain trees rustle and whisper century-old stories into the heavy, humid air I can hear a prayer rising up towards the darkening sky, a mounting begging, and I see a child running and running with arms outstretched as if chasing a distant song on the wind but stumbling and falling at last into the rhythmic lull of waves. And I pray the child will learn to swim. And I hope my candle speaks to this city who dances in the rain, in a language that my human voice cannot contain, and I hope that my candle is a lullaby in that racing night …

And tomorrow again the sinking city wakes.

—Olivia Lyman, United States

The Weight of the Tide

Where the soft waters lap
against crumpled plastic bottles
the sea birds flap away,
happy to nick a glossy red
chocolate wrapper from the fresh trove
the waves have washed up today.
The higher it flies the less and less
the red looks like a warning.
On another bright shore
flies gather in their black suits
to lay to rest the stingray
wrapped in the very knot and choke
of its death, the orange shroud
of a fishing net. By noon
the buzz of mourning grows loud
enough to drown the sea.
Farther out in the ocean
just beneath the glittering waves
a jellyfish, translucent blue,
pulses past a plastic bag.
Lit by the sun, its divine form
glistens like an angel descending,
and the hungry turtle prays
to make no mistake.
The only fate of every
silver wave is to empty itself
in lone revolt, to come back down
to its water. But look what
rallied waves do, how the moon-drawn
tide protests the shore and to gift
the dawn a pristine beach,
watch how it shapes the sands.

—Sasindie Subasinghe, Sri Lanka

The impacts of climate change are at the door of those barely contributing to overall emissions. Countless homes in Kerala, a southwestern coastal state of India, are now unlivable due to encroached seas. The situation necessitates a massive exodus of people in search of safer places to live. **KR Sunil**

When viewed from a perch at night, the Queen's Necklace in Mumbai, also known as Marine Drive, resembles a string of pearls in a necklace. It's an iconic location and hosts all walks of life along its promenade. India. **Avani Rai**

In My City

In my city
If you lie on the roof
of a sixty-something skyscraper
and stargaze you'd have proof
from the stars, stray and ablaze
that you are still as insignificant.

In my city
If you drive on the bridge over the sea
that separates cities and mountains
you'd see and wonder at the waves,
whelming and wanton, and not at
the beams that hold up the bridge.

In my city
If you walk along and look at the coast
from your house of wood and metal and brick
you'd want to boast
that the water tries to worship and lick
your feet and your hands and your soul.

In my city
If you notice the electric tower rising
in the skies across the highway,
the lonely street you'd recognize
an emerald creeper climbing, not discreet,
unaware of electricity, but thriving on it.

In my city
If you stand on the beach and see
the sun drowning in the sea
and behind you there is a row
of commercial buildings
you'd agree that the dying, red sunlight
seems to be gilding the glass windows
and the metal girders.

—Vani Dadoo, India

Smokey skies, a setting sun and the deep red earth of Arnhem Land—a moment when poetic musings are born. Northern Territory, Australia. **Renae Saxby**

To Everyone

(and the future most likely)

Hear the clock ticking down the hours
Until the end's upon the flowers
And all the grass that takes this world
Stop writing, leave yourself unheard.

The rhythm, rhyme, that surely stop
We're looking past the wretched clocks
And know we're diving into hell
Sit down and just enjoy the bells.

You think this poem will preserve the breeze
Preserve the dark and oaky trees
The snakes that like to bicker, hiss
We're stopping you, please don't do this.

Write your emotions, fears, beliefs
Engrave them onto paper sheets
Fight the abyss others often gaze
Enjoy the light these stars have made.

—Ryder Kereopa, Australia

Photographic essayist Matt Eich works on long-form projects related to memory, family, community and the American condition. Above, a road in Madison, Virginia, from his series *Bird Song Over Black Water*. **Matt Eich**

Excerpt from “Dream for Saplings”

Beside my old farmhouse there are two towering maples. Their planting marked a marriage now forgotten, a symbol of unknown love. As a child, I devoted endless hours to climbing their branches, and still I find nothing more perfect than lying beneath them, looking up to where the leaves are verdant suggestions and catbirds leap and trill. It’s good, life in their shadow.

We are meant to be with
those greater than ourselves.

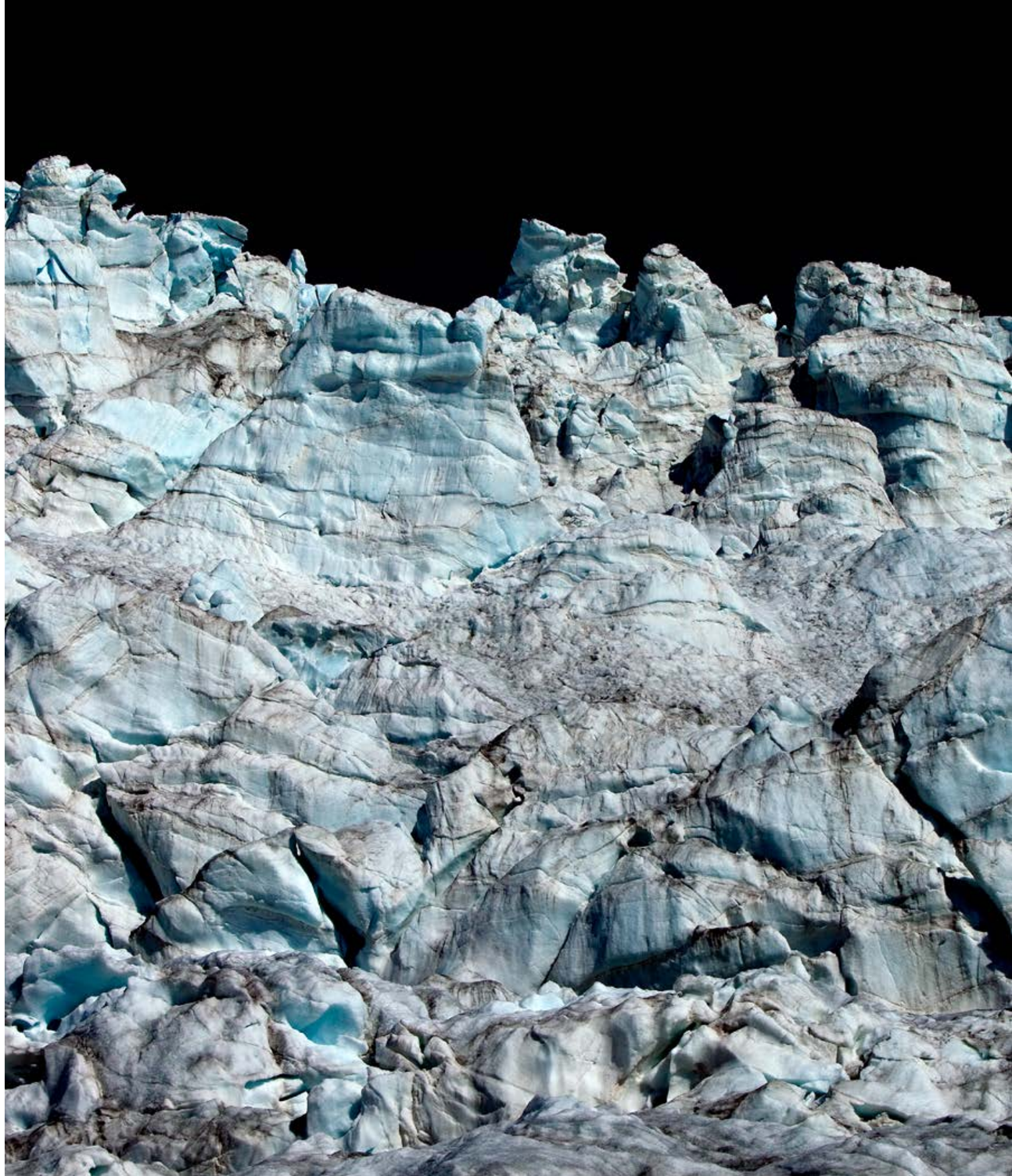
—Davin Faris, United States

Aletsch

The air of change has a sharp tongue.
It shatters my breath, draws ghosts
in between my lips.
Thoughts freeze
and melt on my thumbs,
sliding over smooth stone.
The sunlight is bitter,
so the clouds chew it up
and spit it into something grey, painless.
I do not ask the glacier
how death feels.
No white to wave a white flag.
The ice weaves a tapestry out of the sky.
Thread thins at the seams
of the future.
A patch of rock stings like pink flesh,
glistens with clear water—
an absent wound.
I do not ask how painful it will be.
Instead I watch the wind whisk through Aletsch,
aching to be as beautiful.
A glove over the valley,
crystal train on the mountain.
I memorize every step,
how far it falls into the snow.

Each one a faint pulse, a whisper of a dream
to wake up your heart of stone.

—Divya Venkat Sridhar, Switzerland



Saying goodbye to the largest glacier in the Alps. Since the early 1900s, the Aletsch Glacier has lost nearly 20 percent of its mass. Switzerland. **Davor Rostuhar**

Are We Doing Enough on Climate?

Carbon neutral isn't good enough. Here's what we're doing instead.

Words by **Vincent Stanley**

A photograph we saw the other day shook us up, a shot of an empty shed near the boiler room of a mill that makes our fabric. We were told that every morning a dump truck tips a load of coal into that shed. By the end of the day, that coal has been burned. A part of that load will be embedded in the clothes we sell.

Whenever we do the right thing—switch from conventional to organic cotton in sportswear, or neoprene to Yulex® natural rubber in wetsuits—we learn, eventually, that it turns out to be not enough. You can rid cotton cultivation of organophosphates, but until you adopt regenerative growing practices, you still have a thirsty plant that degrades its soil.

But that first step of saying *no* to bad chemicals is important. It opens your eyes to what needs to be done next.

It has taken us a decade and a half to account for our industrial impacts, not just in what we do, but what our suppliers do in our name: how they pay and treat their workers, clean their water, process chemicals or discharge emissions.

Activities that produce our clothes generate about 225,000 metric tons of CO_2e annually, the equivalent of driving nearly 50,000 gasoline-powered cars for one year. Only 4 percent of emissions are due to transportation; 91 percent are generated at the raw-material stage. Fifty-two percent start at the mills, mostly in the process of turning yarn into fabric.

Why so much? A single freight-train carload of coal weighs about 100 tons and generates twice its weight in carbon dioxide, or 200 tons of CO_2. And that tonnage is not hypothetical; it is real, and it is additive. About 80 percent of the fuel burned in Patagonia's supply chain is natural gas, which also releases greenhouse gases. The sky is heavier every day with what we burn.

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In 2018, Patagonia set a goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2025. We worked hard to develop 100 percent recycled polyester and recycled nylon that offer the same high performance as synthetics using oil out of the well.

But achieving carbon neutrality as soon as 2025 would also have required the purchase of carbon "offsets" to support tree planting or wetland conservation—activities that don't reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (Offsets have become rightly controversial as a rich-world financial instrument realized in poor countries without engagement or consent.) We have decided against

Across, under or through? Anne Gilbert Chase en route to the Pigeon-Howser col. The Bugaboos, Canada. **Mikey Schaefer**

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On farms using regenerative agricultural methods, like the Pratibha cotton farm in India, marigolds are often intercropped with cotton to help manage pests. **Hashim Badani**

purchasing offsets to reduce our emissions responsibility. Which leaves us with the burden of fossil fuels.

To limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, global greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 45 percent by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. (Net zero means reducing as much carbon generated by the company's supply chain as we can; it is a more direct goal than buying offsets to achieve neutrality.)

To reduce emissions, Patagonia needs to do business with mills fueled by renewable electricity. There aren't many of those. So we need to help our own trusted suppliers make the switch from fossil fuels to renewables.

We began a pilot project this year to fund a thorough energy and carbon audit with three partners that will help us identify the best potential facilities for conversion. This will be followed by an engineering feasibility study, identifying our financial contribution, and agreeing on verification for carbon removal and accounting.

Verified measurement and assessment of progress will be critical to our ability to expand the program. We hope to take on a major new project each year. Each would reduce our emissions by about 10 percent, the goal being to reduce current emissions by 55 percent by 2030 and 90 percent by 2040, in line with the Science-Based Targets initiative.

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For much of our 50-year history Patagonia has discovered time and again, often by stumbling into things, that something we did we weren't proud of could be reduced or eliminated by changing our ways. We would take the first step, then another.

Over time we have learned to spot the signs of harm earlier—and in something as mundane as a snapshot of an empty, coal-stained shed. We have become more proactive and deliberative. By working with mills to switch from fossil fuels to renewables, we hope to produce credible emissions reductions at a steady pace, help decouple business growth from our overall footprint, and create a model program that can be adopted by other partners—and the apparel industry as a whole.

Boiling our sky in the soup of our own emissions is the starkest threat humans face. Global warming threatens the ability of all animal species, including our own, to source our food. It drives the poorest people in the most damaged places to leave home on foot or by boat. And we face related problems of equal magnitude: the accelerated loss of species that depend on one another, viability of the soil, a shortage of water.

Electrification of economic activity is key to cleaning up Patagonia's own mess—and that of all business. But there is also much else we see as necessary. Product quality, durability and repairability are essential to increasing the utility of what we make and reducing its footprint. Well-made products should outlast their usefulness for their original owner (and serve a second or third). And at the end of its usefulness, a product should be broken down to make something new rather than thrown away.

Another kind of circularity—one business's waste becoming another's feedstock—will become increasingly important to the conservation of resources, particularly in the world of the built environment, plastics and packaging, and water use.

Nature-based solutions (regenerative organic agriculture, agroforestry, wetlands conservation) won't reduce factory emissions, but they can help us in every other way to help save our home planet—as habitat for all life and for human beings. Environmental impact—including pollution and greenhouse gas emissions—are determined at the design and production stages. But damage is felt in a particular place—in the forest, the soil in your garden, the river that runs through your town. It is essential for Patagonia, as a business, to work with our customers and larger communities as citizens to defend the health of the living place against abstract justifications for tangible harm.

The Haisla Nation leader Gerald Amos has said, "The most important right we have is the right to be responsible." This defines responsibility not as a burden to be reduced or discharged more efficiently, but as human agency, volition, spark—the right to respond to what we cherish, what we see, what concerns us. It may be difficult not to turn a blind eye to so bright a sun as the environmental crisis. But, having the right to be responsible, it is impossible for human beings to look away.

We can reclaim our right to love and inhabit our home planet, not abandon its fate to those we view as more settled in their power than ourselves. We have a decade or so to get past that deadening impulse before the shit hits the fan. It's time to roll up our sleeves and act.

Free the Snake

When a dam comes down, it's cause for celebration. In the 10 years since our film *DamNation* exposed just how expensive, inefficient and devastating dams can be, we've actually had a fair amount to celebrate: More than 600 dams have met the proverbial wrecking ball. Dam removal on the Klamath River, in Oregon and California, will soon restore over 400 miles of free-flowing salmon habitat. There's always more to do, though, starting with debunking the myth of dams, and hydropower, as climate solutions. They're not. And this spring, Patagonia and friends will again campaign to remove the four lowest dams on the Snake River in Washington state.

Gary Woodcock navigates the locks at the Snake River's Lower Granite Dam in his Salish Flathead cedar dugout. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation ancestral lands, Washington. Ben Herndon