

# pointswest

SPRING 2021

## BLACK COWBOYS *in America*



# FROM THE DESK OF THE WEST

**REBECCA WEST**

*Executive Director and CEO*

I remember the moment I entered the Center's front doors as an intern. After driving two days from Oregon in really bad weather (it was late October), the front desk



misunderstood my jumbled introduction and handed me a job application. "No, I already have a job here. I'm the new intern!" From there a lasting bond was formed.

Fast forward to 2021.

And the question, "What's next, and by the way, what is your vision?" My vision is grounded in practical terms, yet driven by the creative potential of what we have at the Center, in Cody, and in Wyoming. First, we need to focus on stability. We are fortunate and have been able to re-open and stay open as we navigate the pandemic, but the work of enduring, pivoting, planning, and ultimately thriving in difficult times has just begun. Every day I marvel at the talent and persistence of an incredible staff, and board, who have worked tirelessly during this time.

We will provide greater accessibility to our collections and to the experiences and knowledge they provide. Whether it's virtual or in-person, we will continue to share stories of the American West with current audiences and broaden our reach to those we've yet to reach, or who cannot reach us easily.

Finally, we will continue to grow our relationship with our local and regional neighbors. These are the communities and the people who have supported us from the very beginning. I too, have felt the embrace of different communities over the years and am dedicated to offering diverse, culturally rich, and engaging programs.

We need to start our renewed growth from within with an eye to what we have here right now – collections, people, arts, knowledge, traditions, history, and museums – and the power and future potential of these amazing assets.

Twenty-five years or so later, I am well aware that the six-month internship went a little long. Regardless, I am thrilled to be on this journey with all of you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca West".

Rebecca West



16

## spring wings

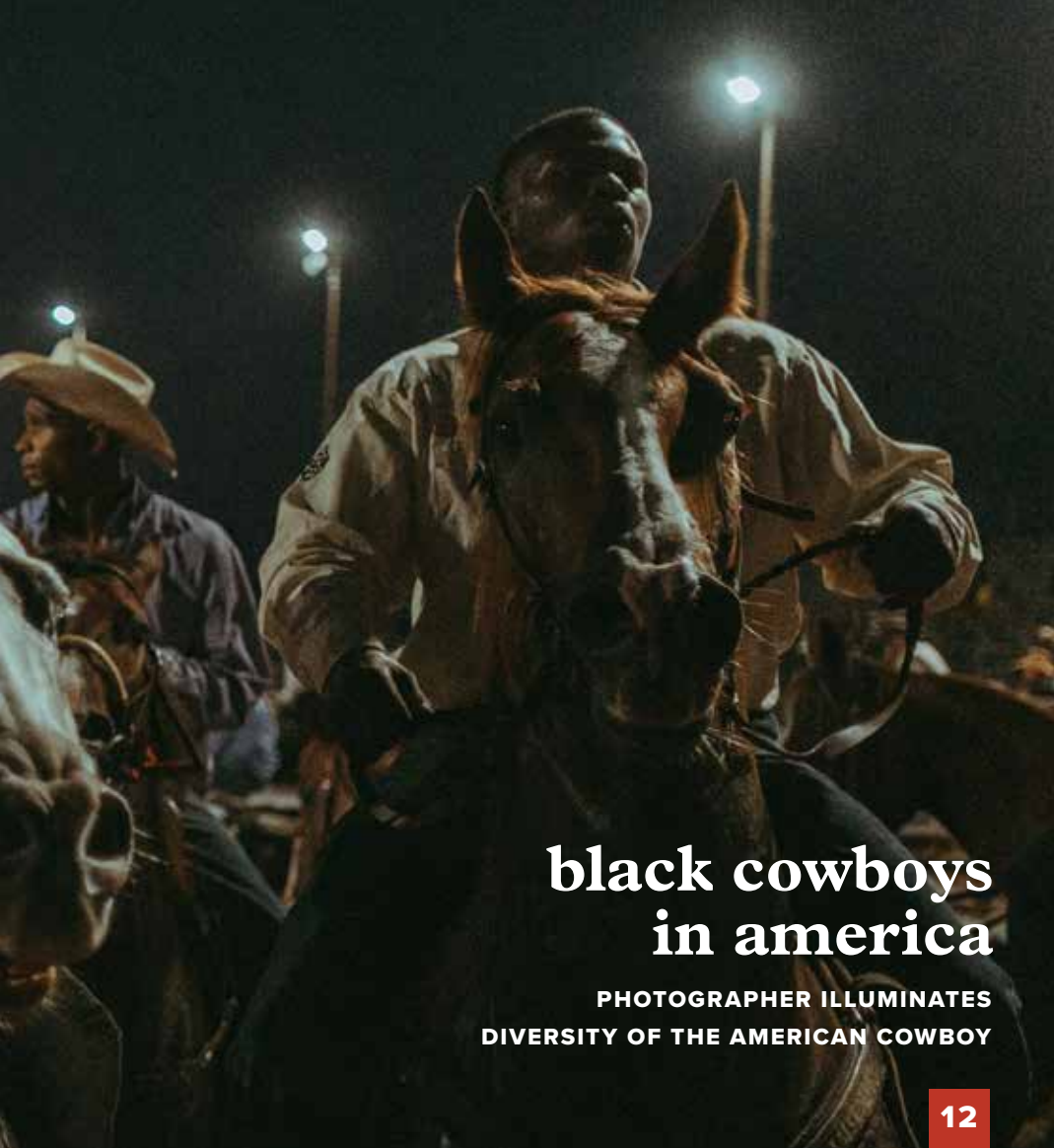
**BIRDS FLOCK TO  
YELLOWSTONE  
REGION**



2 • pointswest







# black cowboys in america

PHOTOGRAPHER ILLUMINATES  
DIVERSITY OF THE AMERICAN COWBOY

12

## departments

### 4 THE WAY WEST

Grizzly Bear Safety

### 5 BEST OF MY WEST

Finding Hidden Gems

### 6 RELOADED

Roscoe's Elise

### 7 POINTS WEST MARKET

Must-Have Western Decor

### 20 ADOPT A RAPTOR

Adopt Your Favorite Bird Online

### 21 MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Members for Life

### 22 IN THE NEWS

Center Announces New Director

### 23 HOW I GOT THAT SHOT

Bald Eagle in Flight

## ABOUT THE COVER |

Photographer Ivan B. McClellan highlights the diversity of cowboys in America with his special exhibition *Eight Seconds: Black Cowboys in America*. Cover image: Three Kings: Joshua Williams, Julian Ward, Napoleon Brown, Okmulgee, OK.

*Points West* is dedicated to connecting people to the stories of the American West as the quarterly membership magazine of the private, nonprofit Buffalo Bill Center of the West.

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**BUFFALO BILL  
CENTER  
OF THE WEST**



Smithsonian  
Affiliate



8

## expanded horizons

PROMOTING DIVERSITY  
IN THE WHITNEY



## HOW TO STAY SAFE IN GRIZZLY COUNTRY

A grizzly bear moves through timber near Swan Lake in Yellowstone National Park. (NPS photo by Neal Herbert)

Outdoors enthusiasts flock to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to see abundant wildlife populations, for great fishing opportunities, and to enjoy vast, wide-open spaces offering a diverse array of habitats scattered across remote and wild landscapes.

Which is, of course, also why grizzly bears love it here.

Linda Veress, a public information specialist at Yellowstone National Park, says spring is a time to be especially vigilant in grizzly country, as hungry bruins are eating everything they can after coming out of winter hibernation. But anyone sharing the woods with bears should follow a few basic precautions year-round to stay safe.

Statistically, bear encounters resulting in injuries “are actually really rare,” Veress said, but it’s best to be prepared.

When hiking or recreating in bear country, “people should learn about any area closures and stay away from those spots,” she said. “Do a little research online in advance.”

Hiking or recreating in groups of three or more is helpful, along with making noise, especially when in places with low visibility.

“People should also buy some bear spray and know how to use it,” said Veress. “Using bear spray during an encounter can be nerve-wracking. So have it accessible and somewhere where you can get to it quickly.”

Don’t wear headphones, be alert to sounds around you, and stay on maintained trails, Veress said.

Avoid carcasses and cubs. “Those are always going to be encounters you want to be extra careful about,” she said. “Bears are very protective of their cubs and their food sources.”

If you spot a bear, try to avoid letting it see you, and take a wide path around it. If it sees you, don’t run, as that may trigger an instinctual predatory response. Instead, back away slowly.

If a predatory or curious bear follows you, move away, have your bear spray ready, and shout and throw rocks or sticks to deter it. Find a vehicle or structure if possible. If it charges, stand your ground and use your bear spray.

If knocked down, get in the fetal position and cover your head and neck. Use your backpack as a shield and play dead, Veress said. “Most bears will usually leave if they see you’re not a threat.”

But if a bear continues its aggressions or

ever attacks you in your tent, fight back.

In camp, keeping food and other scented items like toothpaste or bug spray in a vehicle or locked, bear-proof container is the best way to avoid negative encounters. Feeding bears is illegal and bad for bears, Veress said.

“If a bear gets a food reward around people, they might associate humans with food,” she said. “We’re trying to avoid a habituated bear that loses its fear of people.”

Regulations in Yellowstone—and common-sense guidelines throughout the region—dictate keeping 100 yards from bears and wolves, and 25 yards from other wildlife. Binoculars and spotting scopes are the best way to view grizzlies.

“A grizzly bear can run 35 mph,” she said. “You’re not going to outrun it.”

*Linda Veress is a public information specialist for Yellowstone National Park. Since 1990, she has lived and worked in National Park Service units in Yosemite, Denali, Mount Rainier, Grand Canyon, Olympic, and many other beautiful and inspiring places.*





## Finding Hidden Gems

BY HUNTER OLD ELK



My perfect day in Cody starts with a triple-shot caramel latte from **THE STATION**. Keeping its Americana roots, The Station's atmosphere is set in a once-operational auto shop and gas station. It's operated by Cody Coffee Roasters, a local company serving ethically sourced coffee and crepes.

Feeling energized, I load up my dogs Dottie and Cooper, for a leisure walk. We drive six miles west of Cody headed toward Yellowstone National Park. Off U.S. Highway 14 is a hidden gem called Hayden Arch Bridge. Three miles round-trip, the paved road connects to the base of the **BUFFALO BILL DAM**, providing a close-up view of the Shoshone River. Dottie and Cooper enjoy the vibrant sounds of the river, which can be almost deafening when the dam is releasing water at maximum capacity. A magnificent place for reflection, I like to give thanks for the sacredness of water and its impact on our landscape.

After walking up a hunger, it's lunchtime. To avoid the Cody crowds, I like to stop at one of the food trucks parked throughout Cody. **ROSA'S AND RUBEN'S** is my favorite for authentic Mexican fare. They are usually parked near the Burger King along Mountain View Drive. Try the pork tamale plate with green sauce. If that's not your scene, try **FAT RACKS**, a Texas barbecue truck that is transitioning to a stationary location near Sheridan Avenue and 15th Street. The stuffed baked potato can feed two.

After lunch, I am ready to check out the downtown shops. Cody is a hub for western art and cowboy fashion. Combining my passion for contemporary Native American cultures and western fashion, I enjoy finding unique, handcrafted pieces of clothing and jewelry. I seek out locally owned, small businesses like **CUSTOM COWBOY**, at Sheridan Avenue and 13th Street. They have great western clothing and hats that I like to pair with something I made myself from raw stones I purchase from **ROCKSTAR COWGIRL**, on the same block. Or I will use stones and materials from Indigenous artists from the nearby Crow and Wind River reservations.

Outfit complete, it's time to check out the night scene. Soaking up the first few days of warm weather, I like to meet friends at the **CHAMBERLIN INN** on 12th Street. Their secret garden is the perfect place to have a craft cocktail and listen to local music. Two blocks away, a great way to finish off the night is with wood-fired Neapolitan pizzas at **TRAILHEAD BAR AND GRILL** on Beck Avenue.



*Hunter Old Elk (Apsaalooke/Yakama) is the curatorial assistant for the Plains Indian Museum. Between fly fishing and creating art, she enjoys social justice and activism.*



# ROSCOE'S ELSIE

BY RUFFIN PREVOST

CODY, Wyo. — To many hunters, collectors, and gun enthusiasts, L.C. Smith shotguns represent the pinnacle of American manufacturing resulting from a lost golden age of gunsmiths that will never be repeated.

For me, it was always just the brand of a durable old double-barreled shotgun that my great-grandfather had owned before it was passed down to me.

But when I realized about a decade ago that the Cody Firearms Museum might have the factory records for the 20 gauge that I occasionally used for bird hunting, I decided to learn more about its history.

Lyman Cornelius Smith gained control in 1880 of a New York gun company that he had previously run with his brother and others, including W.H. Baker and Company. The company would change hands several more times, but the skilled workers and modern factory endured, as did the L.C. Smith brand.

Since the mid-1970s, the Cody Firearms Museum has acquired a large collection of gun factory records, including 350,000 L.C. Smith records.

The archive is one of the largest of its kind in the world, said Jesi Bennett, a firearms records specialist who helps collectors and enthusiasts document their guns' histories.

I knew my "Elsie," as some collectors call them, dated back to my great-grandfather, Roscoe Prevost, but didn't have a good idea of how old it was.

Turns out it was manufactured in 1924, and Roscoe eventually acquired two more L.C. Smiths, a 12 gauge and a 16 gauge.

A field grade L.C. Smith like mine would have sold for about \$45 in 1924, or \$622 in today's dollars.

If the guns had a flaw, it was their weak stocks, which were vulnerable to cracking or breaking where the wood is joined to the receiver. My uncle told me how Roscoe went bird hunting several times a month, even into his 70s, before dying at age 92 in 1973. While hunting quail one day, my uncle recalled, Roscoe slipped and broke the stock on his "sweet 16."

Roscoe had a local furniture maker restock that gun, which may also be who worked on my Elsie, which has the name H. Hartley inscribed inside the forearm, along with the date 1956, showing when its stocks were replaced.

The metal had also been refinished, and the job was done well, but was not immaculate.

Collectors will say the fixes made to my 97-year-old gun make it less valuable. But after learning its full history, Roscoe's Elsie is pretty close to priceless as far as I'm concerned.



*Ruffin Prevost is a freelance writer from Cody, Wyoming, and editor of Points West. He operates the Yellowstone Gate website and covers Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park for the Reuters global news service.*

Danny Michael, Associate Curator for the Cody Firearms Museum, compares the author's 1924 L.C. Smith (bottom) shotgun to an earlier model Baker shotgun from the CFM collection.



# must-have westerndecor

## Bear & Eagle Sculpture

*Who's Fish* by Jeff Fleming  
9"W x 18"H  
\$249.99

## Elk Sculpture

*Royal Battle* by Jeff Fleming  
16.75"W x 7"H  
\$279.99

## Coffee Mug

Copper Glazed  
\$22.99

## Custom End Table

Locally Hand-Crafted  
32"L x 20"W x 30"H  
\$549.99

## Table Runner

Leather with Turquoise  
40"L x 20"W  
\$499.99

## Spalted Maple Burl Bowl

Locally Hand-Crafted  
by Matt King  
\$3,240.00

## Canoe Coffee Table

Artful Glass Top by Dean Dunlap  
54" x 17" x 19"H  
\$699.99

## Books

*Men to Match My Mountains* \$17.95  
*Lewis & Clark An Illustrated History* \$29.95  
*Best of Proctor's West* \$25.00  
*Drawn to Yellowstone* \$25.00  
*Invisible Boundaries* \$24.95  
*Complete Collection Charles Fritz* \$34.95  
*Art Of William Raney* \$59.95  
*Center Of The West* \$24.95

## Hand-Turned Maple Burl Bowl

Locally Hand-Crafted  
by Matt King (On Floor)  
\$1,499.99

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MARKET

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# EXPANDED HORIZONS

A new introductory area to the Whitney Western Art Museum offers visitors context, varied perspectives, and questions to consider.



## PROMOTING DIVERSITY IN THE WHITNEY



BY KAREN B. MCWHORTER

When visitors enter the Whitney Western Art Museum, they encounter an eye-catching red wall with large-print text. The text provides an overview of the Whitney's history, answers frequently asked questions, and poses several more.

This introductory area was installed during the Covid-19 pandemic amidst growing international dialogue about social justice. These dual crises inevitably and indelibly affected museums around the world. For most institutions, the pandemic necessitated a shift from primarily connecting with audiences in-person to increasingly connecting with them online. Normally bustling museums closed, their galleries lying dormant—or so it would seem. But behind the scenes, many museum workers seized the opportunity to accelerate their reimagining of physical and digital spaces and programs, with a focus on issues of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

The Center of the West is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), a non-profit organization that promotes industry standards and best practices including the advancement of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in museums.

In pursuit of that goal, Center staff has lately devoted more time and attention to the ongoing process of updating the interpretation of art throughout the museum complex. The new, red-walled introductory area in the Whitney is one result of these efforts. The space invites reflection before exploring the gallery. It addresses the creators and subjects of western American art and the museum's changing role in promoting the diversity of the American West and the art it inspires.

The Whitney has also shifted its collecting focus to prioritize the acquisition of historically marginalized artists and subjects. The museum recently added two significant artworks, and both are now on display.

A hauntingly beautiful portrait titled *Naomi* (2020) by June Glasson is part of the artist's *Mountain Drag* series, in which she paints models in "western" costumes with props of their choosing. Many of Glasson's subjects are contemporary women who dress in outfits parodying those of nineteenth-century mountain men. In a label accompanying the painting, visitors are asked to consider how men and women are typically depicted in western American art, and how Glasson's work might challenge us to reconsider traditional representations of gender.

*Naomi* (2020) by June Glasson depicts a contemporary female model parodying a nineteenth-century mountain man.





Artist Julie Buffalohead (Ponca Tribe, Oklahoma) uses an approachable, whimsical aesthetic for her *White Buffalo Reborn* (2018). She employs tropes drawn from Native storytelling traditions to convey subtly subversive but critically important messages about Native experience. According to the artist, “The Buffalo is symbolic to many Indian peoples. There is a Lakota story about the White Buffalo Woman who comes to bring the tribe to be reborn. This is a prophecy story about leading the tribe to a harmonious way of life... To me, in this painting, the White Buffalo is symbolic in this way, but [also] in the context of the Standing Rock protests... The word RESIST has been spray-painted on the Buffalo, demonstrating that through this activism, perhaps a harmony can be achieved eventually.”

Thought-provoking contemporary art like the work of Glasson and Buffalohead can encourage more nuanced understandings of western American art. So can the ways in which art is interpreted, and how it is exhibited. Art is often grouped with works from the same era, which can help illuminate political, socioeconomic, and cultural climates to which artists have variously responded. Art can also be grouped together around a theme. With the latter approach, art from across time periods might be paired to emphasize the works’ similarities or differences. The Whitney uses both approaches to spark conversations about timely topics.

Because interpretive and exhibition strategies may be subtle, they may not always be apparent. But on your next visit to the Whitney,

consider taking a closer look at the art itself, how it’s presented, and what facts, perspectives, and opinions accompany it. Perhaps most importantly, consider what is not on view. Whose stories are being told? Whose are not, but ought to be?

Each painting and sculpture in the Whitney shares a story about the American West from a unique perspective. Artists are the storytellers, and their backgrounds, lived experiences, prevailing cultural attitudes, and patrons shaped their work.

Though women artists are represented in the Whitney, most artwork there was created by men. And while some work by Native artists and artists of color is included in the museum’s holdings, most was produced by artists of European descent. This is generally the case with predominantly historical western American art collections – they lack representation of a robustly diverse range of creators.

By virtue of their race, color, and sex—and often, their station—some artists were afforded distinct privileges. Typically, white, male artists met with fewer barriers to success. And, more often than others, white, male artists have been glorified posthumously by critics, scholars, galleries, and museums, including the Whitney.

Since the late 1950s, the staff and board of the Center have cultivated the Whitney’s collection, developing a strength in art made in or inspired by the Northern Plains and Rocky Mountains dating from the 1830s to the present. Hundreds of artists are represented, each contributing their own individual perspectives on the subject of “the American West” as a

place and an idea. Styles and media run the gamut. And among the collections are superb examples of work by Native artists and women artists. But the Whitney’s holdings are still disproportionately composed of artworks made by white, male artists and such a presentation can belie the diversity and complexity of the West, past and present.

One can objectively appreciate the talent and creativity of artists like Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, Frederic Remington, or Charles M. Russell – they earned critical acclaim with hard work and undeniable skill. But, they also had a competitive advantage. The Whitney has long celebrated the contributions of these and other artists, and will continue to. The Whitney will also continue to acknowledge the historical context in which these artists worked as distinctly different than today. Alongside these efforts, museum staff can address historical inequities and broaden the range of points of view represented in the Whitney.

To amplify marginalized stories and storytellers, it’s important to explicitly acknowledge their marginalization or absence. Through





in-gallery interpretation and public communications, the Whitney staff is working to call attention to notable absences among the permanent collection, especially the scarcity of artwork by and about women, artists of color, Native artists, and those who identify as LGBTQ. Some gaps in the collection can't be easily filled but they can be confronted and questioned through interpretation.

The Whitney is diversifying its slate of interpreters by inviting more and different voices to provide insights about and around the collection. Historically, labels and other written content in the gallery have been authored by a mostly in-house team of curators and educators. Their expertise will continue to be valued and included. But, when possible, quotes from others will also be shared: first-person perspectives from artists themselves, the sentiments of artists' peers and sometimes their subjects, and public perspectives both past and present. This way, the Whitney can share more multifaceted stories of the American West in art.

When you have the chance to visit the Whitney again, feel free to connect with the collections however you prefer. Peruse labels



and other interpretive offerings, or ponder the ways in which objects are presented. And if you're so inclined, consider grappling with the same significant questions inspiring museum staff across the industry who, energized by empathy and curiosity, are seeking new, expanded horizons for western American art.



*Karen B. McWhorter is the Scarlett Curator of Western American Art for the Whitney Western Art Museum. Her areas of expertise include nineteenth-century American art, contemporary western American artists, and topics in museum studies.*

**ABOVE** Artist Julie Buffalohead (Ponca Tribe, Oklahoma) addresses the symbolic significance of bison in her *White Buffalo Reborn* (2018).

**LEFT** Another new interpretive area in the Whitney Western Art Museum confronts issues of identity and stereotyping in western American art depicting Native subjects.

**TOP LEFT** Since its founding, the Whitney Western Art Museum has collected work by Native artists. Whitney Curator Karen B. McWhorter highlights (left to right) T.C. Cannon's *Buffalo Medicine Keeper* (ca. 1974), Arthur Amiotte's *The Visitors from Oklahoma* (1996), and David P. Bradley's *Tonto's Dream* (2013).









Country Boyz Pony Express Team, Okmulgee OK

# BLACK COWBOYS

*in America*

**Photographer illuminates diversity  
of the American Cowboy**

**BY TESSA BAKER**

**PHOTOS BY IVAN MCCLELLAN**

In the landscape of the Old West, roots run deep for cowboys of color. Historians estimate that one out of every four cowboys was Black, but modern portrayals of the American icon rarely reflect such diversity.

"The image that we have of a cowboy is pretty universal — it's John Wayne, it's the Marlboro Man, it's Buffalo Bill," said photographer Ivan McClellan. "It's all of these images that have sort of permeated media and permeated, I think, our subconscious."

In his debut solo exhibition, *Eight Seconds: Black Cowboys in America*, McClellan illuminates the icon's different races, cultures, and genders.

"It's not my goal at all to replace the image of the white cowboy," McClellan said.

"I think it's exactly the way it should be, and I think that it has a lot of honor and a lot of esteem behind it. I just want people to know that that's not the end of the story."

By digging a little deeper, you find rich interpretations of the archetype and an expansive culture, he said.

To elevate the stories of cowboys and cowgirls of color, McClellan created the Eight Seconds project, with the support and encouragement of his wife, Heather. As he shared his stunning photographs, McClellan gained a strong following online and caught the attention of major western brands, such as Wrangler, as well as galleries and museums.

While his work has been displayed across the country, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West is the first to host a solo exhibition featuring McClellan's images. Displayed in the Center's Duncan Special Exhibition Gallery, the show runs from May 7 through January 7, 2022.

It's fitting to debut the exhibit in Cody, Wyoming.

"We love our rodeo. We call ourselves the Rodeo Capital of the World, but many of us, especially visitors, know little about the rodeo of the country and the world," said Rebecca West, the Center's Executive Director and CEO. "And this is what we're trying to do, is to show another aspect."

## EXHIBITION

**Eight Seconds: Black Cowboys in America** is on view in the Center of the West's Anne & Charles Duncan Special Exhibition Gallery through January 7, 2022.

.Kortnee Solomon, Hempstead, TX



### 'A TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENT'

McClellan attended his first Black rodeo in 2015, discovering a world that left him captivated.

The photojournalist calls that sweltering August day in Oklahoma “a transformative moment.” For McClellan, a native of Kansas City, Kansas, the experience shifted the narrative of his home “from a place of poverty and violence to one of ownership and pride.”

While people of color are often presented as “victims, criminals, rappers, or athletes” in media portrayals, McClellan said he realized that “I come from a place where Black folks work the land, tend to animals, rope, ride horses, and identify as cowboys.”

Since that 2015 event, he's traveled from his home in Portland, Oregon, to rodeos in Texas, Arizona, and elsewhere.

He sees rodeo as an extension of a culture and way of life.

“Rodeo is kind of like church — churches are, intentionally or not, very tribal,” McClellan said. “You have white churches, you have Black churches, you have Greek Orthodox churches, you have Mexican churches. They're very centered around the culture.”

Each rodeo is a distinctive event, reflecting the cowboys' culture.

“At a Black rodeo, you'll hear tons of hip hop, you'll see the Pan-African flag flown and waved,” he said. “You'll see long acrylic nails, you'll see guys riding their horses in Jordans. It's just ex-

tremely different than what you're kind of used to.”

McClellan's rodeo images bring him joy, taking him back to moments he cherishes and people he's befriended.

“It's just a delight. That's the thing that I want people to get out of [the exhibition], is that delight and that joy,” he said. “And then, you know, I'm just hoping that people start to question their perceptions about things.”

*Eight Seconds* spotlights the visual impact of McClellan's images, West said, accompanied by his written words.

“Our new mission statement is: ‘Connecting people to the stories of the American West,’ and his stories that go with the photographs are very strong,” she said.

Interpretive elements also explore people's perceptions of cowboys and rodeo.

“Not so much [to] challenge them to change that, but at least to have them consider that it might be very different in terms of race, gender, culture, and ethnicities than they might have thought before,” West said.

Under the Center's strategic plan, it strives to provide diverse content and reach different audiences, she said.

The show also includes images by Ken Blackbird of Cody, highlighting a Native photographer's view on Native rodeo.

“This just opens a whole new world to people's vision of the cowboy,” West said.



Demond Haynes, Crosby, TX



Clarke & April, Cornelius, OR



Chcotah Roughrider, Okmulgee, OK



## CULTURAL SHIFTS

For McClellan, the cowboys and cowgirls he photographs are more than subjects existing for a moment in his camera's lens — they're people he cares about and stays in touch with, long after a rodeo wraps up.

"I started going to individuals' ranches and houses, and riding with people and getting to know them more intimately, doing multiple shoots over a period of time with folks," he said. "I'm really getting embedded in these communities in a more significant way."

One of the cowboys he's gotten to know is legendary bull rider Charles "Charlie" Sampson. In 1982, Sampson won the bull riding championship, becoming the first African American to win a world title in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

Like bull rider Myrtis Dightman, who broke the color barrier at the National Finals Rodeo in 1964, Sampson has been compared to Jackie Robinson, as the two cowboys faced challenges similar to the baseball legend.

Despite numerous injuries — including breaking every bone in his face except his nose during a rodeo in front of former President Ronald Reagan — Sampson has carried on. At the age of 63, he's still competing, now as a team roper.

People ask why more Black cowboys and cowgirls haven't competed in the PRCA or made it to the NFR.

"We're in 2021, and there's never been a Black female barrel racer who's competed in the National Finals Rodeo," McClellan said.

It's largely owing to a lack of sponsorships and resources, he said.

"To compete in pro rodeo, it's super expensive," McClellan said.

A good horse costs thousands of dollars, then there's a truck, trailer, barn, arena, and pasture, plus rodeo entry fees and travel costs, as well as housing.

"And you have to do that with no job, because you're traveling the majority of the year," McClellan said.

Athletes must have tens of thousands in cash, and the only way to get that kind of money is through sponsors, who "haven't traditionally worked with Black folks or made that a priority," he said.

But things are changing.

Since McClellan photographed his first Black rodeo, he has seen the culture shift.

"When I started this five years ago, nobody was interested in my photos, let alone brands, because it was just too exotic," McClellan said.

"It really took until last year with the unrest around George Floyd and Breonna Taylor for a lot of brands to start to pay attention."

While he's glad to partner with brands to create work spotlighting cowboys and cowgirls of color, "I'm really devastated that it took what it took to get there."

Businesses have recognized they need to create a more varied image for their brand for financial survival, he said.

"I think that it's a long time coming, and I've seen brands be really convicted and really committed to changing and telling a different story," he said.

For rodeo competitors, it may lead to more sponsorships and opportunities. McClellan has seen several people he's worked with go on and get sponsorships out of their photo shoots.

"That's going to start to transform that entire rodeo landscape," he said.



*Tessa Baker is a freelance writer with 15 years of experience in journalism. She lives in Powell, Wyoming, and enjoys everyday adventures with her husband and 2-year-old son.*

A pair of sandhill cranes take flight. The tallest bird in the Greater Yellowstone Region, cranes have a distinctive call and bright red forehead. Photo by Rob Koelling



# spring **WINGS**

## BIRDS FLOCK TO YELLOWSTONE REGION





## PEOPLE OFTEN THINK BIRDS HAVE TO MIGRATE BECAUSE IT GETS SO COLD, BUT THAT'S REALLY NOT IT. IN FACT, MANY BIRDS ARE EQUIPPED TO HANDLE COLD TEMPERATURES.

— MELISSA HILL —

BY MICHAELA JONES

If you have a tendency to gaze longingly out the window on a warm spring day, you've likely noticed bluebirds on fenceposts and robins on branches. But there are also the birds flying overhead, sometimes traveling in flocks and other times solo. Wings outstretched, they soar through the air, using the earth's magnetic field as their compass. In a fleeting thought, you may have even wondered where these small travelers were going and why.

Each spring, birds cover hundreds—and in some cases thousands—of miles before reaching their destination. Much like tourists and locals who flock to Yellowstone National Park as it reopens each spring, many bird species have their own motivations for traveling to and through the region around America's first national park.

More than three hundred bird species have been spotted in Yellowstone, including raptors, songbirds, waterfowl, and shorebirds. Of those species, about half stay in the park to build nests and fledge their young.

Spring is an especially good time for bird watching in Yellowstone, as tourist crowds are light and a wide range of winged visitors are active.

There are a few things you can do to increase your chances of seeing some of these magnificent feathered creatures during their great migration to and through the landscapes in and around the park.

"It's important to do a little bit of research before you go," said Melissa Hill, Live Raptor Program Manager at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. Setting intentions and having a general idea of what to look for is a great place to start, she explained.

Migration brings many birds back to the park following their winter travels south, while others are simply passing through on their way to nesting destinations farther north.

"People often think birds have to migrate because it gets so cold, but that's really not it. In fact, many birds are equipped to handle cold temperatures," Hill said.

Species like snowy owls, bald eagles, and great horned owls can handle wind chills as low as 20 or 30 degrees below zero because they have very little exposed skin. Unlike humans, these birds are less likely to suffer frostbite or hypothermia due to their excellent insulation.

But despite their ability to survive frigid weather, the insects that serve as their main food source eventually begin their own migrations south and become sparse or disappear altogether as cooler temperatures set in.

Birds like the peregrine falcon, which can typically be seen in Yellowstone from March through October, require a diet made up of other smaller birds that consume insects, meaning the falcons must also migrate and follow these insect eaters.

Spring brings abundant birds, but fall is also "a good time to see migrations in Yellowstone," Hill said. The Hayden Valley, which is centrally located in the park, is her go-to spot.

"Because of the open fields, that's a good spot to see golden eagles and Swainson's hawks before they leave (for winter). That's also where red-tailed hawks will be easiest to see." In places closer to the river, visitors may also spot great blue herons, wading in shallow waters, stalking their prey.

For optimal birding, Hill recommends bringing a scope, binoculars, or a camera with a long lens, and picking a nice spot to sit quietly and wait for birds. Similar to observing any other type of animal, it's important to keep chatter to a minimum, make little noise, and stay at least 25 yards away at all times.



The harlequin duck is named for its distinctive color scheme, and is a favorite among photographers shooting near LeHardy Rapids in Yellowstone National Park. Photo by Rob Koelling



Two great blue herons show off their plumage at a nesting site.  
Photo by Rob Koelling

After exploring the Hayden Valley, longtime birder and Powell, Wyoming-based photographer Rob Koelling encourages visitors to travel a few miles south, along the Yellowstone River, to visit the Le-Hardy Rapids and catch a glimpse of the harlequin ducks.

Identifiable by their small bills, short necks and striking plumage, the ducks temporarily reside at the rapids in the early part of May to enjoy the fast-moving water.

"All along the Yellowstone River is a good place to plant yourself and watch for bald eagles that soar through there," Koelling said.

Additionally, sandhill cranes—which can often be heard before being seen—are not to be missed when they arrive to nest in Yellowstone each summer. With their unmistakable red crown, the sandhill crane is the tallest bird in the park, standing at about four feet tall, with a wingspan of approximately six-and-a-half feet. Look for them in both open wetlands or dry meadows in the park.

For an up-close and personal experience with some amazing birds, the Draper Museum Raptor Experience at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West is a live, year-round education program that allows visitors to view some of Wyoming's most recognized birds of prey.

All birds housed at the Center have been previously injured while in the wild and would otherwise be unable to survive on their own. The Raptor Experience currently includes a bald eagle, short-eared



An American kestrel keeps watch atop a fencepost. Kestrels are the region's smallest raptor, and often hunt by perching and scanning for prey.  
Photo by Rob Koelling





Volunteer Lisa Marks shows off Isiam, a red-tailed hawk, during an educational raptor program at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West.

owl, golden eagle, great horned owl, red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon, turkey vulture, saw-whet owl, eastern screech owl, Swainson's hawk, and two American kestrels. Details on each bird are available at [center-of-the-west.org/raptors](http://center-of-the-west.org/raptors).

Staffers at the Center strive to replicate a life in the wild for the raptors as closely as possible, but certain precautions are put in place to protect the birds.

"When your wing is damaged or you can't see well, it makes it really hard to catch live prey," Hill said. "Rather than risk them hurting themselves while trying to catch their dinner, we don't ever feed them anything that's alive."

When caring for 12 birds, feedings at the Center are no small feat. Just in 2020, the raptors consumed 5,100 mice, 735 chicks, 250 quail, 500 small rats, 1,293 rats of various sizes, 67 rabbits, plus an abundance of fish.

Each raptor, with its unique adaptations, has a variety of abilities that consistently surprise visitors. Peregrine falcons are celebrated because they can dive at speeds of more than two hundred mph, and golden eagles can take down a pronghorn antelope. But other raptor species are sometimes less admired, in part because they are misunderstood.

For instance, turkey vultures—with their six-foot wingspan, iconic bald head, and the ability to send acidic vomit sailing up to 10 feet—are not always cast in the best light or viewed as a symbol of beau-

ty. In reality, though, turkey vultures are incredible creatures, Hill explained. Not only are these birds beneficial for the environment, but they act as nature's clean-up crew by disposing of carcasses that would otherwise be breeding grounds for disease.

Migratory raptors, unlike songbirds and waterfowl, tend to be solo travelers. Though one may see hundreds of raptors at a migratory hotspot, they're not necessarily traveling together, Hill noted. Instead, they're all using the same flyway, and when the winds work in their favor, they're able to conserve energy.

"They're all just trying to make their way, and they happen to be stopping at the same hotel," Hill explained.

So whether you start your spring bird-watching journey at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Yellowstone National Park, or your own backyard, there's sure to be a species to capture your interest.

"When it comes to bird watching, they can be anywhere and everywhere," Koelling said. "You really just have to pay attention, because you never know what you'll run across. Sometimes all it takes is getting away from the crowds."



Cody native Michaela Jones is the communications/social media specialist at Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, cooking, and paddle boarding.

**R**elaxing with Raptors is a live raptor education program that allows the Buffalo Bill Center of the West to share some of our area's most spectacular wild animals with visitors. You can help us sustain this unique feature through our Adopt-a-Raptor program.

Donations help us feed and care for our amazing birds, allowing you to play a role in our commitment to keep our flock of a dozen birds healthy with the highest quality food, vitamins, housing, and medical care—for the rest of their lives.

Just keeping Suli, our turkey vulture, fed each month costs approximately \$75. That covers 30 mice, 20 medium rats, 10 chicks, one rabbit, and nearly a pound of venison, elk, or bison meat.

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Amelia



Hayabusa



Jade



Hayden



Kateri



Monte

# adopt a raptor

ADOPTION LEVEL BENEFITS	\$25	\$50	\$100	\$250	\$500+
Certificate, photo of bird, <i>Talon Tidbit</i> fact sheet	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bookmark, small raptor plush		✓	✓	✓	✓
Raptor Experience sticker, baseball cap			✓	✓	✓
Personal tour of raptor facility for up to four people				✓	✓
Buffalo Bill Center of the West family membership, <i>Talon Art</i> painting					✓





# Little Red Corvette

## Local partnership yields ideal raffle car

BY SPENCER SMITH

For each of the past 20 years, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West has given away a dream car to one lucky winner. The annual fundraiser has become one of the most anticipated traditions of the Patrons Ball, an annual September gala that serves as a key Center fundraiser and major regional social event. Attendees watch with anticipation as a drum full of raffle tickets spins, the winning ticket is drawn, and the lucky new car owner is announced.

The Center purchased a brand new 2002 Ford Thunderbird for its first car raffle in 2001, and new cars were raffled for the next three years as well. But in 2005, when a 1940 Ford Coupe was donated to the Center, classic cars became the new raffle prize of choice. American muscle cars from the 1950s through the 1970s were among the top offerings through the years.

Over the past couple of years, the Center has conducted research and forged a new local partnership that we are certain will result in one of the most popular car raffles yet: a red, convertible 1959 Chevrolet Corvette.

We asked ticket purchasers what cars they were most interested in, with a goal of delivering those top choices as raffle prizes. A first-generation Corvette topped the list, with other popular options including a classic truck from 1930 – 1960, a mid-1960s Chevy Chevelle and a Ford Mustang Fastback from 1965 – 1970.



Brett Whitlock

We tasked Whitlock Motors, a Cody, Wyoming, pre-owned and used car specialist, with locating a Corvette, a vehicle we knew would be a tough find. Since 2019, Whitlock Motors has partnered with the Center to locate and prepare a car for the annual raffle that benefits our general operations.

Whitlock Motors owner Brett Whitlock found our Corvette in Belfry, Montana, a rural farm town of fewer than 300, located 50 miles north of Cody. The car had been in Montana for at least 40 years, being previously owned by a Billings, Montana, banker who acquired it after a tenant had fallen behind on bills in the 1980s.

We are excited to buy a local car, after previously searching nationally through a range of online markets. Though this year's Corvette has previously undergone a major restoration, Whitlock Motors still worked through the entire vehicle, bumper-to-bumper, cleaning, restoring, and repairing it to mint condition.

The Center values our partnership with Whitlock Motors and appreciates the efforts they put in to make the car great for us and the next owner.

"The museum is a large part of our community and we want to do our part to help," said Brett Whitlock.

If you've dreamed of owning your own little red Corvette, \$20 is all it takes for your ticket to ride. Tickets can be purchased in person or online at [centerofthewest.org/car-raffle](http://centerofthewest.org/car-raffle).

*Spencer Smith is the Database Manager for the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. His interests include hiking, photography and a newfound love of classic American muscle cars.*

**Raffle tickets for a 1959 Chevrolet Corvette convertible are available for \$20 each or six for \$100.**



**"The most important feature of the museum is that it tells stories that no one else tells."**

- BILL & KAREN HAYES

## Members for Life

In a year when many museums across the country shuttered their doors permanently, we at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West found ourselves buoyed by the stalwart support and engagement of so many of our members. We wish to recognize those of you celebrating your 40th and 45th "member-versary" with the Center in 2021. "The Center has much to offer to everyone...not only historical facts, but spiritually as well," said 40-year member Phyllis Preator. We couldn't agree more!

### 45 years

- Rosalie Christie
- P.H. Mildner

- Lee & Margaret Molesworth
- Phyllis Preator
- Gary & Marilynne Quinlan

### 40 years

- Elizabeth Carlin
- Linda Cody
- Bill & Karen Hayes
- Donald & Lela Herigstad
- David B. Laird Jr.
- Bud & Mary Linton

- David A. Sanders
- John & Kathleen Shwartz
- Greg & Rebecca Watson
- Richard Wilson & Harriet Bloom-Wilson
- Y-Tex Corporation

We're honored that you have supported us for four decades or more, and we're energized for the work ahead. We look forward to seeing you at the Center with your friends and families soon. In the meantime, please keep in touch. We appreciate you!





## REBECCA WEST NAMED HEAD OF CENTER OF THE WEST

The Buffalo Bill Center of the West Board of Trustees Executive Director Exploratory Task Force and the Board's Executive Committee recently announced the promotion of Rebecca West to the position of Executive Director and CEO of the Center of the West.

A longtime Center of the West staff member, West most recently served as the Collier-Read Director of Curatorial, Education and Museum Services Division. Also, she was Curator of the Plains Indian Museum and Department Head of the Buffalo Bill Museum.

"It's a great opportunity to promote one of our own," said Board Chairman Bill Shiebler. "Her long-term experience with the Center, her deep educational background, her experience on the Management Team, and her excellent reputation among her peers are all tremendous positives that make her a great fit to lead the Center."

West began her long career with the Center in 1994 as an intern working as an associate researcher. She has since been promoted several times and has served in a wide range of roles across the Center.

"The past year has been a challenging one for museums around the world, and the Center of the West is no exception," West said. "I have been fortunate to learn and mature under some of the best and brightest people who have worked here. I am honored to take on this role and look forward to working with our tremendous staff to address not only our current challenges, but also some wonderful opportunities for the Center and the community."

A longtime resident of Cody, West's interests include skiing, running, fly fishing and a professional involvement in fostering strong relationships with Native communities, as well as working for broad access to collections, and advocacy for the arts through Center programs and outreach.

West and her husband, Chuck Hulbert, are both longtime Cody residents. Their son, Charlie, is a freshman at Cody High School, and their daughter, Sara, is graduating from the University of Montana with a degree in resource conservation.

West began her new role in April.

# Back in the Saddle

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### ART SHOW & SALE SEPTEMBER 14-18

The Buffalo Bill Art Show & Sale features more than one hundred of the West's premier artists all at the prestigious Buffalo Bill Center of the West. For more information contact Kathy Thompson, Art Show Director, 307-587-5002, [bbas@codychamber.org](mailto:bbas@codychamber.org) or [buffalobillartshow.org](http://buffalobillartshow.org)

### BY WESTERN HANDS SEPTEMBER 13-18

Invitational Design Exhibition celebrating decorative and functional art influenced by the American West. For more information contact Mary Sims, 307-586-1755, [admin@bywesternhands.org](mailto:admin@bywesternhands.org) or [bywesternhands.org](http://bywesternhands.org).

### PATRONS BALL SEPTEMBER 18

An elegant, black-tie gala at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West where patrons dine in the Center's museums and dance the night away to live music. For more information contact Rebecca Taggart, Patrons Ball Coordinator, 307-578-4025, [rebeccat@centerofthewest.org](mailto:rebeccat@centerofthewest.org) or [centerofthewest.org](http://centerofthewest.org).

*Rendezvous*  
ROYALE

**BUFFALO BILL  
CENTER  
OF THE WEST**

**BUFFALO BILL  
ART SHOW & SALE**  
Cody, Wyoming

**WESTERN  
HANDS**





# Bald Eagle in Flight



## DETAILS

### SHOT WITH NIKON D850

**LENS:** Nikon 500mm 5.6

**EXPOSURE:** 1/3200 at f 5.6

**ISO:** 1800

### SHARE YOUR PHOTOS WITH US FOR THIS FEATURE!

SEND HI-RES IMAGE AND  
400-WORD STORY TO  
[EDITOR@CENTEROFTHEWEST.ORG](mailto:EDITOR@CENTEROFTHEWEST.ORG).

### BY ROB KOELLING

New York photographer Jay Maisel has a bit of advice that I try to keep in mind whenever I am out shooting photos: always look behind you. This is easier said than done, especially when I am focused on a particular animal or scene.

In December 2019, I drove up the North Fork Highway, which stretches between Cody and the East Entrance to Yellowstone National Park. My friend John Campbell, a retired biologist, was with me. We had gone up to watch the bighorn sheep during the rut.

The highway runs alongside the North Fork of the Shoshone River, and we soon found a herd of sheep near a spot where we could pull over and watch. I was facing away from the river, and was photographing some rams when John said, "Did you notice the bald eagle on the river?" I had not.

My view of the eagle was not good, so I drove up until I found a pull-off where I could turn around, then I drove back toward the eagle. Once I was off the road, I changed my camera settings to ones I thought would work for a bird in flight on a cloudy and dark winter afternoon.

A note on equipment: it does make a difference. The lens I use is very light and maneuverable, which allows for fast panning. The camera has a large sensor, which allows the image to be cropped in without too much loss of quality, and for a fast burst mode.

I have my best luck in photographing a bird in flight right in the first three or four seconds after it launches. Because birds are moving their slowest at liftoff and their wings and feathers are spread for maximum lift, it is easier to lock in a focus. Often, an eagle will give a few clues that it is about to launch, such as shifting its weight or relieving itself.

This bald eagle was perched on a scenic dead tree branch over the river. Once he began to open his wings, I started firing. I shoot in burst mode, which on my camera is 9 frames per second. Luck plays a big role in my bird photography. I was fortunate that this eagle flew slightly toward me, and I was able to get this image.

*Rob Koelling is a retired Professor of English at Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming. He spends most of his time chasing birds in Northwest Wyoming.*





# WIN ME!

## DRAWING AT THE 2021 PATRONS BALL



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