

Rachael Stevie, Staff Planner  
Kittitas County Development Services  
411 N. Ruby St, Suite 2 Ellensburg, WA 98926

Re: LP-21-00001, Bull Ranch Long Plat, Lathrop Development Co, Inc; % Steven Lathrop

April 16, 2021

Dear Ms. Stevie,

I am a resident of the Gregory Place/Roy Street neighborhood, directly adjacent to the Bull Ranch Long Plat development. I am writing to register my thoughts on environmental impact and possible mitigation as the project goes forward.

I have enclosed both a calendar and a copy of an essay I wrote. The calendar is one we produce yearly for family and friends, featuring the view from our second story living room, and showcasing the tree that grows at the edge of the Lathrop property. Folks love our seasonal photos so much that the tree has its own Instagram account followed by viewers worldwide ([www.instagram.com/its\\_me\\_i\\_am\\_a\\_tree](http://www.instagram.com/its_me_i_am_a_tree)) It is our hope that the tree may remain in place, as it sits slightly down a small bluff above Lower Lyle Creek.

The essay tells the story of goose hunters in the field beyond the tree, and shares my deep love for this area and the wildlife who visit it. In the eight years we have lived here, we have observed deer, Canada geese, Great Blue Herons, Mallard ducks, muskrat, wild turkeys, hawks, falcons, eagles, raccoons, and Red and Yellow headed blackbirds enjoying the field, ditch, creek, and of course, the tree.

My husband reasonably points out that our neighborhood spoiled someone's view when it was built in 1978, and it is the way of progress that we will now lose the view exactly as we have enjoyed it. If the planned homes are single story, we will still have a nice view of the hills and the entrance to the Yakima canyon. It will be wonderful if the developer considers adding green space or a riparian buffer that will provide the local wildlife a chance to still be a part of this landscape, and perhaps delight the residents of the 138 new homes, as well.

Thank you for your attention to the enclosed materials, and for the opportunity to contribute comments.

Sincerely,



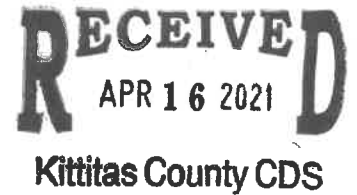
Robyn Hull Arango  
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rabsgurl@gmail.com

**RECEIVED**  
APR 16 2021  
Kittitas County CDS

Robyn Arango

Writing Circle

Essay, January 8, 2019



### I'll Fly Away

Do geese really mate for life? This thought haunts me. I'm probably anthropomorphizing, but it seems that a commitment like that includes a caring feeling for your partner. Seasons of nesting, mating, migrating in formation- would your bond be closer than creatures who only hook up to impregnate?

It's late fall, and the lowering sky is steel-colored. Frost has come, and leaves have fallen, and the field that stretches southeast at the same level as my second-story great room has been plowed and planted with winter wheat. Beyond the skeletal tree that dominates my view, the curving furrows stretch away, not yet the stubbly pale green that will seem so incongruous when the first snow falls.

This is the third season the geese have slept in the field. They started coming last fall, and returned in the spring. My husband says Canada Geese don't even migrate south of here anymore, with the moderating climate and plentiful habitat. Nevertheless, these geese were gone from the field in the dead of winter.

It's not my field. And, of course, they are not my geese. Yet, I felt a sense of kinship with them when I heard them returning.

When I was a child, every male in my family hunted for game and birds. We all fished, dug clams, and dropped and hauled in crab pots. Kids were taught to clean crabs, gut fish, and "pick" geese and ducks,

meaning that we stripped feathers from the bird's skins, usually in Grandpa's basement. Downy feathers billowed every time the door opened, swirling like snow around our feet.

Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner at my grandparents' house was usually goose or duck back then. It was good luck if you were the first person to spit a piece of bird shot onto your plate, with a pinging sound heard 'round the table. Grandpas, uncles, dads and cousins told stories of bird hunts, usually with funny adventures thrown in: while setting up blinds and deploying decoys, someone fell asleep, spilled hot coffee from a thermos, or pitched out of a boat into freezing water.

It seemed that hunting always involved getting up in the dead of night, brewing coffee and grabbing waxed paper-wrapped sandwiches assembled the night before. I would wake to see them going; they smelled of damp wool and gun oil, and their voices were hushed and tense with anticipation.

I am a hypocrite. I love eating meat, but I know that if I had to provide it for myself, I would probably become a vegetarian. Well, a pescatarian. What's that Nirvana line? "It's okay to eat fish, 'cuz they don't have any feelings". Maybe, in a survival situation, I would surprise myself. So far, the only thing I've enjoyed killing is caterpillars, and that was really just a creepy phase in fourth grade.

The geese assemble in the late afternoon. First, I hear a far-off, musical, *h-ronk*, rising and falling. They come in strings of maybe six to twelve individuals, from all points of the compass. Are they coming from different areas to congregate at dusk, or are they being careful, splitting up to approach from varied directions, circling first to check for danger? The honking grows louder as they swoop in formation, one end of the line swinging in faster, like a line of ice skaters making a whip, to land simultaneously, feet lowered, magnificent wings flapping forward in great arcs to slow, and make a perfect touch down.

Once on the ground, the geese resemble church ladies coming together after the service, checking in, sharing a bit of news or gossip, moving between groups until they settle in to a low, buzzing chorus. I scan the field with binoculars, finding juveniles and the occasional pair of snow geese, standing out sharply against the patterns of pale ecru and charcoal gray. There are always sentries; their heads raised high above the group, scanning the sky and horizon.

A new line comes in from the canyon, impossibly small, like grains of pepper in the sky; then growing in size and sound, following the flight path of the Life Flight helicopters that pass over our house to land on the hospital roof.

I'm thrilled by this daily spectacle, scheming to get upstairs early to watch them come. In my early youth, I learned from Grandfather to look for wildlife- "See the deer? Right side, going in to the trees..." He sharpened my vision for herons standing tall in marshes, spotted fawns frozen beside their mothers, bald eagles soaring and circling above the beach. I was so proud when I could spot an animal and point it out to him.

One early summer, I journeyed with Grandpa to Alaska on his commercial fishing boat. The seven day trip, chronicled in my diary, is mostly a daily list of wildlife sightings: pods of rising killer whales, porpoise playing in the wake of the bow, and one evening, a seal in a bay that Grandpa shot after we anchored. On principle, he said. They ruin fishing nets and steal fish. We were hundreds of miles from the fishing grounds and didn't even have nets on the boat yet. I was tearful and angry, hating him in that moment.

These days, I try to point out creatures I see to my stepchildren, but they weren't raised with the desire or ability to scan the roadside for long stretches at a time. They are busy with movie screens, iPods, and snacks, and they miss it every time. "Look, an elk!" Their heads come up too slowly, unsure where to

focus. "Wha...?"

I invite my friend for a cozy Sunday afternoon at the jigsaw puzzle table, and I share how much it fills my heart when the geese arrive, as they surely will in the next half hour. Moments later, I am startled to see six camo-clad hunters trudging down the ditch between the fields, weighed down with bags of decoys, guns, and backpacks. My heart sinks and a churning dread fills my belly. I know the landowner gives permission to hunt- in past years, men have parked on the roadside and walked to the southern end of the field, where a copse of trees circles a small pond. From that distance, I could hear the shots that presumably brought down ducks, but it was out of my line of vision.

These guys are close- maybe twenty yards from the edge of the bluff, across the creek that flows between my backyard and the field behind. They are young, in their late teens and early twenties. Once they unburden themselves, they are goofy and animated, slapping one another on the back and laughing. They are having a great time together. And they know the flocks' routine as well as I do. They quickly set a few decoys in the field, and deploy a clever device that resembles a goose's wings on a pole. One guy moves the pole up and down, and it perfectly simulates the braking, landing flap of a goose alighting.

The men hunker down in the ditch in a line, their tan-colored camouflage blending perfectly with the old, dry grass and dirty field furrows. Their timing is perfect, and it's only a few minutes before a string of geese approaches, honking and circling. They are cautious, but look! Already a line of comrades has settled, and one of us is flapping down to join them!

I'm torn between admiration for mans' ingenuity and horror at the thought of "my" geese being drawn in to sure death. Suzanne and I become a little goofy ourselves, running out on the balcony, shouting for

the dogs to come out and bark, hoping to scare off the first wave of approaching honkers. They have become comfortable, knowing my barking dog can't advance beyond his fence. I feel complicit in the human ruse, as though I invited them and then helped to deceive them.

I know there are millions of Canada geese. In some places they are invasive, wintering over, fouling land and water with their feces; a nuisance. There's a battle inside me between cold rationality and a protective sentimentality. These geese feel like friends, or at least daily companions. Of course, they don't feel anything for me. Here's another thing: I have an intense dislike of being fooled. I hate surprise parties. I feel off-balance and vulnerable when I find a secret has been kept from me. I can feel that I am projecting onto these unsuspecting birds. "They will make fools of you! The secret is these birds on the ground aren't real. Don't fall for the trick!", my soul is shouting.

It's inevitable. The string of geese circle lower, flying over the ditch, and the men rise in formation and fire. BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM! Two of eight geese thud limply to the frozen ground. The remaining geese call to one another in a higher-pitched, questioning tone. They rise, and four of them head west in escape. Two rise even higher and circle, honking. Are the lifeless birds their mates? Do they hope the dead will rise, or are they saying goodbye? Do they linger, unable to move on in the face of loss? Are they now widows and widowers who will unbalance the string in formation?

In Native American tradition an animal is thanked and honored when its life is taken to sustain man. Does this make killing nobler? The young hunters, hunkered down after their shots, now leap quickly from the ditch to grab the corpses before another string arrives. The cycle repeats four, five, six times, until 20 dead geese have been gathered. The hunters are giddy with excitement, and in the modern white man tradition, pose for grinning selfies in the dry grass with one another and their victims.

It is over. The sky is empty. Maybe the survivors spread the word to incoming fellows; maybe they just know, but no more geese approach this field, nor will they for months to come. The winter wheat is growing, but the field is silent and empty. So is the place in my heart that held childlike awe for the arrival of the flock each evening.

As I walked a week ago, I heard a faint honking high above. I craned my neck and shaded my eyes with my hand to see three huge vees of geese, heading southeast, with their proud necks straight and strong, dark wings moving in steady strokes, calling as they made minor adjustments in formation. With their feet tucked tight, and their pale breasts shining, they were slowly lowering, looking for a place to land.



it's me, i'm a tree  
a year in the life







# January

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8 New Year's Day	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						



# February

# 2021

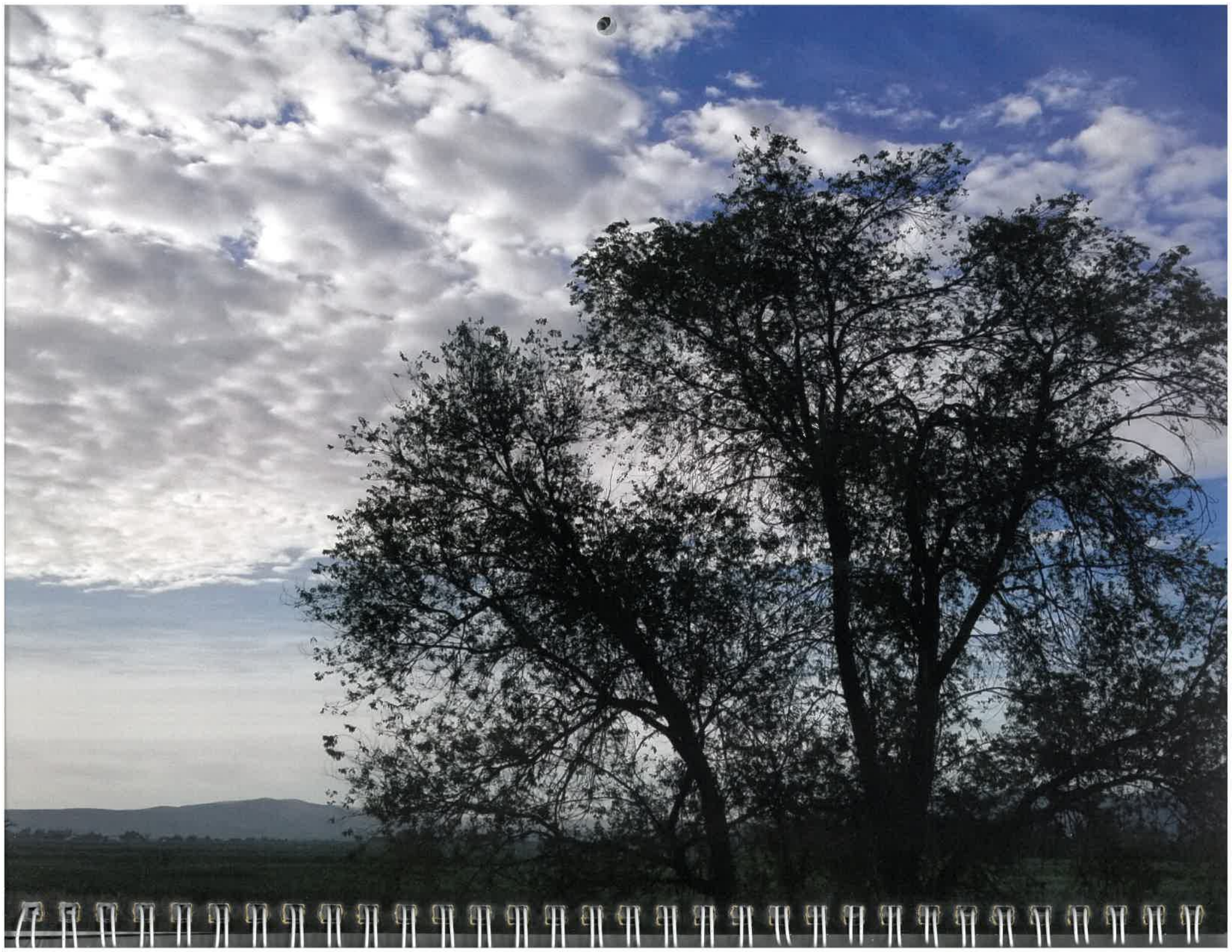
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Valentine's Day	President's Day					
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	1	2	3	4	5	6



# March

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Daylight Savings begins			St. Patrick's Day			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Passover begins						



# April

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
					Good Friday	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Easter						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
		Ramadan begins				
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1





# May

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Mother's Day				Eid al-Fitr		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					
	Memorial Day					



# June

# 2021

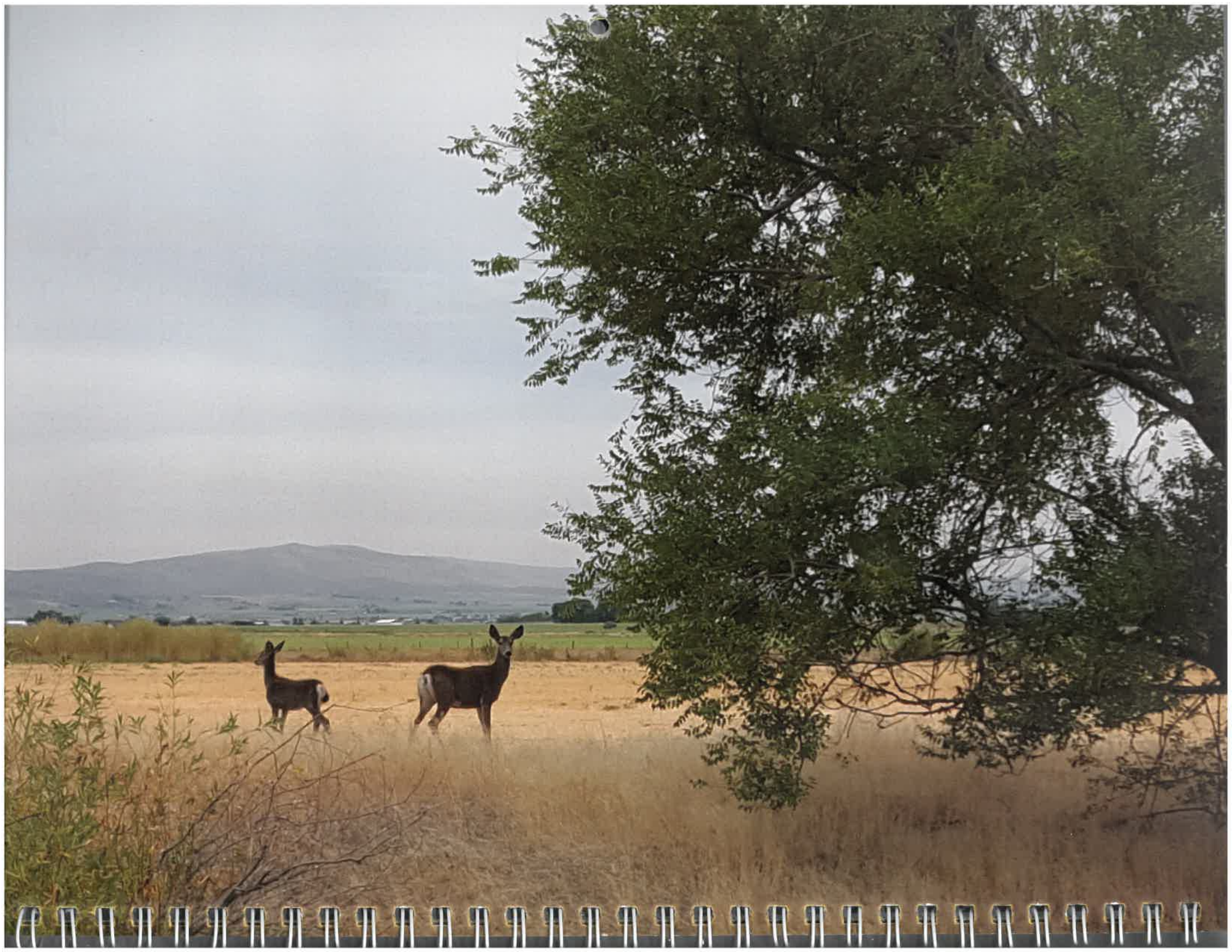
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Father's Day						
27	28	29	30	1	2	3



# July

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4 Independence Day	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 Eid al-Adha	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

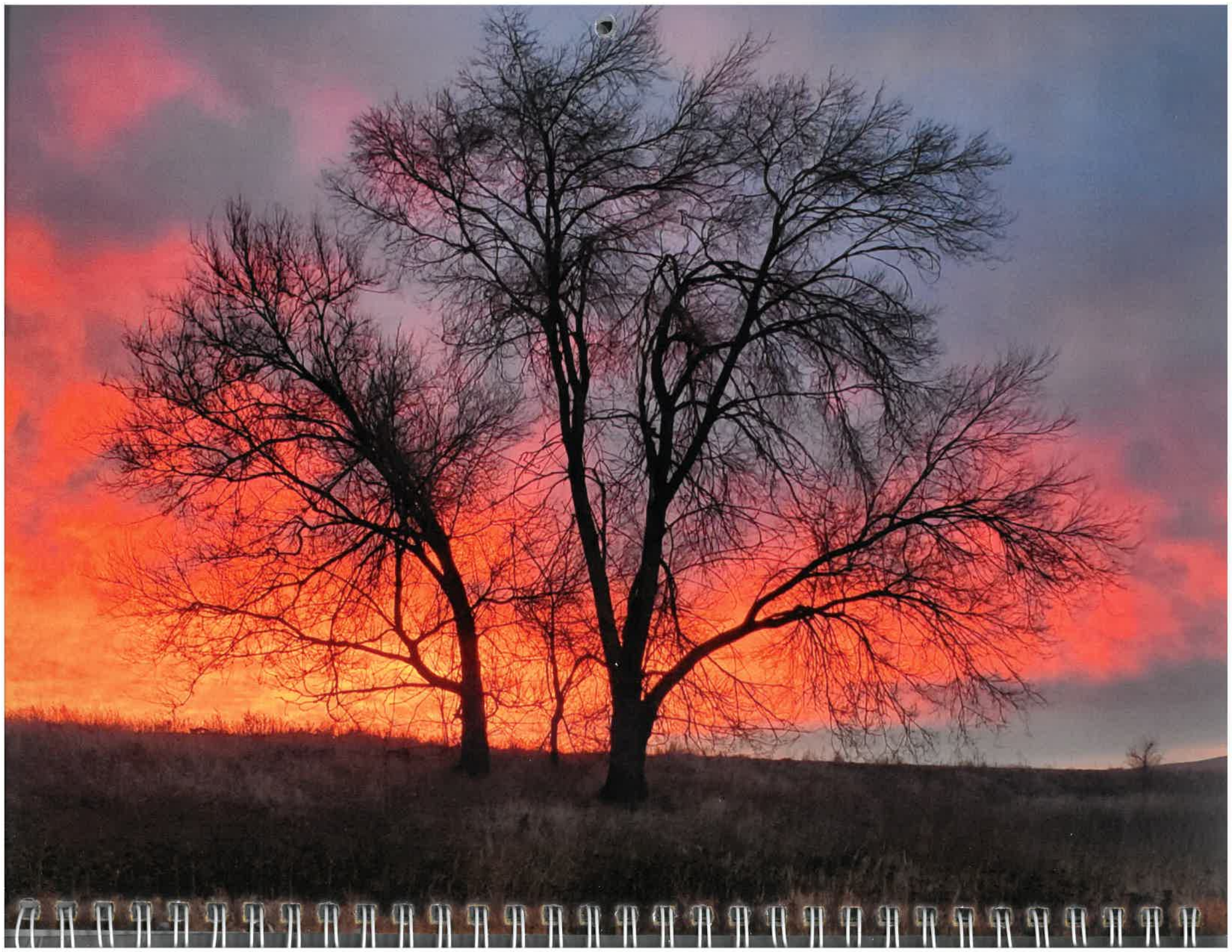


# August

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4





# September

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Labor Day	Rosh Hashanah begins				
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
				Yom Kippur		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2



# October

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Columbus Day					
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						
Halloween						



# November

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Daylight Savings ends				Veterans Day		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
				Thanksgiving		
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
	Hanukkah begins					



# December

# 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1 Christmas Day
Kwanzaa begins					New Year's Eve	