

OpeningREMARKS

PRESERVATION MATTERS

IN LATE JUNE, WHILE WALKING NEAR A bluebird box in our backyard, I heard good news: the chirping of baby birds. For weeks, we'd watched mom and dad bluebird flitting about our yard and garden, wondering whether offspring would arrive. Our question answered, it was nice to know New York's official state bird had raised a family in our yard. Decades ago, this may not have been the case as Eastern bluebird populations dropped due to a variety of causes, but conservation efforts helped revive their numbers.

As the bluebirds took to parenting, I was reading *Goodbye to a River* by John Graves, who documented his travels in a canoe in 1957 along a section of Texas's Brazos River that was slated to be dammed in several locations, forever altering the area's landscape. Mixing memoir, travel adventure, and history lessons, Graves creates an account of his journey that illuminates the importance of our understanding of place and how we coexist with the natural world.

These days—amid climate change, our insatiable appetite for natural resources, and the negative environmental consequences of shortsighted actions and inactions—it's become crucial for us to consider our interactions with the natural world if we want to ensure a hospitable planet for future generations. In this issue of the magazine, there are several examples of how positive interactions with the environment enhance understanding and respect for the world around us.

Through SU Recreation Services, for instance, students can explore the outdoors by participating

in numerous activities, from whitewater rafting to dogsledding in the Canadian wilderness, gaining valuable lessons beyond the classroom. In our "Research Snapshot," you'll learn how biology professor Susan Parks is studying the behavior of mother-calf pairs of North Atlantic right whales, an endangered species whose existence is imperiled by collisions with vessels and exposure to high-intensity sonar sounds. Parks hopes her research will provide a better understanding of the giant mammal's behavior, leading to its protection and conservation. In "Vanishing Cultures," you'll discover how Newhouse alumni Taylor Weidman G'09 and Nina Wegner G'09 have taken on the daunting task of documenting cultures on the brink of extinction—and through their nonprofit organization, the Vanishing Cultures Project, they are working to support and preserve these unique cultures and the global diversity they offer.

For millennia, indigenous peoples have lived in truly sustainable ways, and there is much we can gain from learning about their traditions and interactions with the natural world. As Wegner says, "Many of these communities understand their native plants and wildlife better than anybody else in the world, and this knowledge has proved to be invaluable to scientists and medical researchers." That thought alone makes our attention to preservation all the more important.



JAY COX
EDITOR

SYRACUSE

NANCY CANTOR, Chancellor and President

TOM WALSH G'84, Executive Vice President for Advancement and External Affairs

NICCI BROWN G'98, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; Publisher

EDITOR
Jay Cox

ART DIRECTOR & DESIGNER
Laurie Cronin '81

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
David Marc, Christine Yackel G'75

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Jennifer Merante

STUDENT INTERN
Yuhan Xu G'12

CONTRIBUTORS
Erica Blust G'94, Carol L. Boll, Aileen Gallagher '99, Kathleen Haley '92, Husna Haq '05, Brian Hudgins, Eileen T. Javis, Renée Gearhart Levy, Wendy Loughlin G'95, Paula Meseroll, Gregory M. Milonovich '94, G'96, Tom Raynor, Jim Reilly G'11, Rachel Somerstein, Brian Spector '78

WEB SITE: sumagazine.syr.edu

CHANGE OF ADDRESS ONLY: Advancement Services, 820 Comstock Avenue, Room 009, Syracuse NY 13244-5040. Telephone: 315-443-3904. Fax: 315-443-5169. E-mail: alafranc@syr.edu. For duplicate mailings, send both mailing labels to above address.

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENCE AND OTHER BUSINESS: Syracuse University Magazine, 820 Comstock Avenue, Room 308, Syracuse NY 13244-5040. Telephone: 315-443-3390; Fax: 315-443-5425. E-mail: jacox@syr.edu.

Contents © 2012 Syracuse University, except where noted. Opinions expressed in *Syracuse University Magazine* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of its editors or policies of Syracuse University.