

CARLTON M. CAVES
(505) 350-8963
ccaves@unm.edu

KAREN L. KAHN
(505) 235-8619
kkahn@modrall.com

JEREMY K. CAVES
(505) 263-1241
jeremy.caves@gmail.com

ELEANOR M. CAVES
(505) 239-5931
eleanor.caves@gmail.com

22 EAGLE NEST COURT NE
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87122-2025
(505) 856-6522

2013 September 1

A New Mexico Diary

Friday, 2012 February 10: Jeremy joins the New Mexico club as he becomes a California resident. Venturing to the California DMV to get a California drivers license, since his New Mexico license expires this month, he finds the office surprisingly efficient. Before he knows it, he has paid, taken the written test, and been fingerprinted and photographed. The clerk who graded the test informs him he has passed, asks for his New Mexico license, looks at it and her computer screen, and informs him that he will have to take the road test, just to make sure he actually knows how to drive. By way of explanation, she adds, "It's because your old license is from out of country." Taken aback, Jeremy eventually replies, "Oh. . . . No, New Mexico is actually part of the United States." Blank stare. Jeremy expands, "Really. It's just east of Arizona." The clerk is flustered, but recovers sufficiently to blame the episode on the person who processed Jeremy initially, who is said to have entered his information incorrectly.

An historical note: Every New Mexican eventually joins the club. Carl joined 20 years ago as the family transitioned from Southern California to New Mexico. He and his PhD student, Shang Song, were mailing boxes of work-related material to UNM from the post office across the street from Carl's office at the University of Southern California. Shang returned from the post office with a sheaf of forms for Carl to sign. After signing half a dozen, Carl paused to examine one of the forms and discovered they were customs declarations.

Sunday, 2012 February 12: Eleanor takes a morning train from Cambridge to London and meets Uncle Kenny and Aunt Mary for a day of celebration of Kenny's 60th birthday. The party begins with lunch at a sushi restaurant in Kensington called Yashin, whose schtick is the absence of soy sauce. The hole is filled by all sorts of inventive sauces and marinades, and the sushi is delicious. After lunch, the group saunters through Hyde Park, past the enormous Albert Memorial, and across Kensington Road to Royal Albert Hall for a matinee performance of a show called Totem by the Cirque du Soleil troupe. Themed on the evolution of mankind, the show is a magnificent example of what a circus ought to be. After the performance, the group adjourns to nearby Launceston Place for a three-course dinner. Eleanor starts with poached duck egg on toast with a truffle sauce, continues to a main of spinach and ricotta tortellini, and finishes with an apple tart accompanied by fresh clotted cream. Farcate, Kenny and Mary head back to Tackley, and Eleanor takes the train to Cambridge, arriving at her Downing College room at midnight after a very full day.

Friday, 2012 February 24: Eleanor turns 23 and celebrates with a birthday pot luck hosted by friends Alyssa Read and Brett Kennedy at their off-college Downing housing. The 25 attendees are an international potpourri, and thus so is the food. Everyone is asked to bring either a vegetarian dish from their home country, a dessert, or drinks. Eleanor and visiting friend Kate Lewis, whom she met at Woods Hole last summer, make jalapeño diego quiche, rice and black-bean salad, and a lemon cheesecake. Others bring halloumi cheese bread (Cyprus), mac 'n' cheese (America), manchego cheese (Spain), and Dutch brussels sprouts (Holland). With all the emphasis on food, Eleanor receives some chocolate, a cupcake cookbook, and a cookbook provocatively titled *100 Reasons to Love British Food*.

Sunday, 2012 March 4: Karen, Janet Gaines, and Rachel Grey snowshoe along the trails at the Enchanted Forest, outside Red River. The day is sunny and warm, the sky is the deep blue of the Rockies, and the snow is deep.

Sunday, 2012 March 11: Carl, arrived in Brisbane a week ago, pedals along the Kedron Brook Trail, through the Boondall Wetlands, and on to the Pacific at Shorncliffe. He is rewarded by a sighting of a Brahminy kite patrolling the shoreline at Cabbage Tree Head.

Roque Sanchez gives Jeremy and Karen Leu a personal tour of the White House in the afternoon. Roque is a White House intern, with an office in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building across the street from the White House, where he works for the Office of Climate Change and Energy (part of the Domestic Policy Council). President Obama not being in, Jeremy and Karen get a glimpse of the Oval Office; Jeremy is impressed by the framed photos on the wall, taken by the White House photographer, which show the President doing the official things a President does. The Roosevelt Room, a meeting room near the Oval Office, displays a grand set of portraits of former presidents. Jeremy's chief impression is how small the West Wing is and how low the ceilings are, perhaps what is to be expected for what is, after all, government work.

Sunday, 2012 March 18: We all hook up by Skype—10:45 pm in Cambridge, 4:45 pm in Albuquerque, 3:45 pm in Palo Alto, and 8:45 am (Monday) in Brisbane—for an hour-and-twenty-minute conversation, to exchange recent experiences and to discuss plans for the summer. It now appears that we might all be able to meet in Europe in the latter half of July, with Jeremy coming from field work in Mongolia and Karen and Carl flying from Albuquerque.

Saturday, 2012 March 24: Jeremy and three friends, Mandy McLean, Dana Thomas, and Mollie Petit, fellow Stanford graduate students, are in the middle of a week-long trip to the Owens Valley and Death Valley. Today they climb 11,331-foot Telescope Peak, the high point of the Panamint Range, which bounds Death Valley on the west. It's a spectacular day, high clouds shielding the party from direct sunlight as they wend their way up the mountain to the snow-covered reaches just below the peak. From the top, they gaze down into the furnace of Badwater Basin, below sea level, and then turn around to view Mt. Whitney, the highest point in the contiguous 48.

Friday, 2012 March 30: Eleanor and nine friends from Downing College enjoy a dinner of cheese fondue at the source. They are in Chamonix in the French Alps, in the shadow of massive Mont Blanc, participating in the Cambridge Graduate Union spring skiing trip. They arrived a week ago, having taken a bus to Dover, a ferry across the Channel, and another bus to Chamonix. All the skiing here is above tree line, in big bowls on the north side of Mont Blanc, with grand views of the Chamonix valley and into Switzerland. The weather has been ridiculously warm, and the group has generally been in T-shirts as they explore the slopes of the four Chamonix ski areas. Downhill skiing has an uphill side, of course, and Eleanor has been introduced to the button lift, a sort of frisbee that you sit on, with a pole between your legs, as you are dragged up the slope. Tonight there is traditional fondue in a pot and a raclette, a big slab of firm cheese, melting under a heat lamp as you scrape away the melted top and eat your way into the cheese beneath. The group returns to Cambridge on Sunday.

Sunday, 2012 April 8: Eleanor and Kate Lewis, now a future graduate student in Jeremy's department at Stanford, find themselves strolling around Riga on a sunny early spring day. In Uppsala on Thursday, they boarded a cruise ship in Stockholm on Friday afternoon for the overnight cruise to Riga. For the Swedes on the boat, this is a booze cruise, a way to get alcohol without paying import taxes, and they don't even bother to get off the ship in Latvia. Eleanor and Kate did get off to spend a couple of days in Riga, but encountered a blizzard; they used yesterday for indoor activities, visiting the National History Museum of Latvia, located in Riga Castle, and spending the evening at an Irish pub. Today dawns bright and sunny, but still quite cold. They explore what turns out to be a very nice city, despite the Latvian jokes found on the internet, a typical one of which follows.

First Latvian: What is one potato say to other potato?

Second Latvian: I am not know.

First Latvian: Premise is ridiculous! No one have two potato.

Tuesday, 2012 April 10: Eleanor and Kate flew back to England yesterday, but arrived late, missed all the convenient buses from Heathrow to Cambridge, and ended up on the red-eye, which deposits them in Cambridge at 3:45 am this morning, fortunately not far from Eleanor's room in Downing College.

Wednesday, 2012 May 16: Eleanor presents her research to 45 people, a mixture of fellows and graduate students at Downing College. This event, held once per term, gives three graduate students a chance to give a talk. Eleanor volunteers. Her talk on the relation between parasitic birds and their hosts, investigated using data she collected from an enormous Zambian egg collection last October, is well received, and the experience builds her confidence that her research is on the right track.

Sunday, 2012 May 20: An excited group of about 30 crowds the decks and west-facing windows at the Kahn-Caves house, all peering through Karen-supplied solar glasses to watch the Moon crawl across the face of the Sun in an annular eclipse. Albuquerque is the only major city in the world in the path of greatest obscuration, which is

only about as wide as the city—the east Asian cities that witnessed the start of the eclipse in the morning typically were plagued by cloud cover—and it is the last chance, as the four-minute period when the Sun embraces the Moon begins at 7:30 pm, just half an hour short of sunset. Some people ended up at Karen's party because she had prudently ordered 80 pairs of protective glasses and had the only remaining ones in Albuquerque. Conditions are perfect, the atmosphere is festive, and everyone gets a good look at a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon.

Sunday, 2012 May 27: At Elanora Park, on the coast just south of the Port of Brisbane, Carl scares up coveys of brown quail, watches a brahminy kite and a square-tailed kite float high above, and enjoys the sight of hundreds of black-winged stilts in a shallow slough, each poking at its reflection, bobbing up and down like an old-fashioned oil derrick. The highlight is a pair of red-backed fairy-wrens flitting through a tree just ten feet away, their long tails held vertically and flicking from side to side as they forage. The female is a drab brown; the male is black with an incandescent red back that flashes like a taillight as it reflects the Sun. The day is warm and sunny—a bit above 70°F—but it's almost winter, and the days are getting short. Time to go home, which Carl will do next weekend.

Sunday, 2012 June 3: Karen and Carl watch quietly from the front deck, through eclipse-acquired solar glasses, as Venus makes a stately transit across the face of the Sun. Jeremy does the same in Palo Alto, using glasses Karen sent him for the eclipse. Eleanor, in Cambridge, misses out, but it's just as well she didn't have the opportunity to try, because the fickle English weather, turned foul for the Queen's Jubilee yesterday, would only have disappointed.

Thursday, 2012 June 14: Eleanor and her South African boyfriend, Stu Scott, who is getting an LLM (Masters in Law) degree at Cambridge, dance away the wee hours at the Christ College May Ball. May Ball is the biggest social event of the year—black tie, food, drink, dancing all night—and despite the name, always held in June (this is Cambridge, after all, so don't ask questions). The lavish entertainment is not cheap: a ticket is typically £130. Downing College puts on a May Ball only every other year. This not being the year, Eleanor went to the Jesus College event last night and, with Stu, the Christ College May Ball tonight. Eleanor didn't make it to the end at Jesus, but this morning she survives until the aptly named survivors photo at 5:30 am.

Wednesday, 2012 June 20: Jeremy awakens to a day in the Gobi Desert. As an ephemeral rainstorm sweeps through, he steps out of the tent to find the rising Sun creating the most spectacular double rainbow he's ever seen: full bows, arching horizon to horizon, big in the way that only the rising or setting Sun makes possible.

Jeremy arrived in Mongolia a week ago with fellow graduate student Hari Mix, Rocky Mountain College professor Derek Sjoström, and his undergraduate student Jobe Traywick, and he plans to be in Mongolia till mid-July. Yesterday the party descended into the Nemegt Basin, a desolate landscape of rocks and sand and scattered shrubs, but one of the best, if largely unexplored dinosaur localities in the Gobi. This party is not, however, looking for old bones; they have come all this way to collect samples from the matrix that surrounds the bones, paleosols (buried soils) going back 70 million years, prominently exposed here in low cliffs and holding oxygen isotopes that can provide evidence of paleo-precipitation. The group's arrival yesterday evoked the typical Gobi greeting, winds kicking up a mild sandstorm. This morning's rainbow is the redemption.

Saturday, 2012 June 30: Stu receives his LLM degree in a Downing College ceremony held at the University's Senate House. The Master of Downing College presides, wearing an outfit apparently modeled on Santa Claus, red velvet cape with white trim and matching red hat. The Master's grey beard completes the costume. The Downing Praelector, a Fellow of the College, descends from the stage, allows four degree recipients to grab the fingers of his right hand, and pulls the quartet onto the stage. Each recipient kneels in front of the Master, who awards the degree in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. After attending a May Ball at Christ College, atheist Stu can hardly complain, and hey, since the whole ceremony is in Latin, who would know? After the degree is awarded, the Praelector helps the graduate to stand without tripping on his robes, and then the graduate exits the ceremony for good.

Wednesday, 2012 July 4: A big black bear has been roaming the neighborhood, seen mainly in nighttime photos captured by neighbor Kate Fry's wildlife camera. This morning brings new evidence. Carl's bear-proof bird feeder, which towers above the back yard beyond the back deck, performs admirably, except for one flaw. The bear makes no progress in bending the sturdy steel shaft, as happened several times with a previous version of the feeder. Absent that, the four feeders, perched twelve feet off the ground, remain well out of even a big bear's reach, but the bear shakes the whole structure so violently that all four feeders jump out of the half-inch-deep indentations they sit in and fall to the ground. The bear enjoys a snack of thistle and sunflower seed, sugar water, and peanuts. Carl surrenders, deciding reluctantly to abandon bird feeding till after the upcoming trip to Europe.

Saturday, 2012 July 14: Karen and Carl fly into London Heathrow early in the morning, take a bus to Cambridge, and meet Eleanor at the bus stop, a short walk from her room at Downing College. After a pot-luck birthday lunch for a friend of Eleanor's in the Middle Combination Room at Downing College, Eleanor, Karen, and Carl search, as rain falls in torrents, for a cheap, compact, cute, but not too cute umbrella for Carl. What better place than England to look, but the search is in vain. Fortunately, the Sun emerges as the group walks along the flooded Cam to Grantchester for a satisfying dinner at a pub called The Green Man. Last visited by the three of us (plus Jeremy) in 1999, when it served a quesadilla that left Eleanor in tears, The Green Man has since transformed itself into an exemplar of modern British cuisine. (Jeremy was disappointed in 1999, too; having ordered a hamburger with chili, he expected New Mexico green chile, but got Texas chili and beans instead.) The only downside is that the Sun's presence is too fitful to overcome a cool breeze, forcing us to retreat from the patio to the interior to enjoy the dinner.

Sunday, 2012 July 15: Jeremy stands where dinosaurs dominated and walks to where they were no more (not quite true, of course, since birds are flying dinosaurs, but fortunately not as threatening as *T. rex*). Jeremy is attending the 9th Urbino Summer School on Paleoclimatology, a three-week course intended to provide the approximately 60 students with a wide background on paleoclimate methods and the newest research. Today the entire group visits two of the most famous geologic sites in the world: the Cretaceous-Tertiary (K-T) boundary at Gubbio and the Bonarelli Horizon. At Gubbio the Alvarezes collected the rocks that showed that the dinosaurs were done in by a large meteorite; Jeremy crosses from the Age of Dinosaurs to the other side, where our mammal ancestors found their main chance and took it. Nearby, in a large quarry, a thin black line, the Bonarelli Horizon, strikes dramatically across white limestone. The Bonarelli witnesses to one of the most enigmatic events in Earth history, a period 93 million years ago when large portions of the world's oceans somehow lost all their oxygen.

As rain continues in Cambridge, Carl folds on cuteness and buys a cheap, compact, plain black umbrella.

Wednesday, 2012 July 18: Eleanor has been grouching about the dismal, cool, wet English summer, and after yet more rain today, Karen and Carl begin to appreciate her complaints. Rüdiger and Dorothee Schack join us in late afternoon, and Rüdiger confirms that May and June were the wettest on record for southern England. The party enjoys a walk in the Backs during a brief period of sunshine, followed by dinner at the Pizza Express across the street from the entrance to Downing College. Fortified with rain gear and umbrellas, we join about a hundred others for a spirited, bawdy enactment of *The Taming of the Shrew* outdoors in the Downing College garden. Several rain showers and two great claps of thunder punctuate the performance.

Saturday, 2012 July 21: Eleanor, Karen, and Carl take the train from Leuchars to Edinburgh after a morning with the Tyack family—Peter, Paula, Nik, and Eliza—at their home outside St. Andrews. Nik was one of Eleanor's fellow students at Pomona College, and Eleanor worked on Peter's pilot-whale project last summer at Woods Hole and on the Costa del Sol. Breakfast, featuring fresh strawberries and a very tasty frittata, is followed by a delightful ramble through the sunny Scottish countryside near the Tyack house. Taking us to the train, Peter tells us that he finds the 90-minute ride to Edinburgh one of the most restful things he does. We step onto the train and are submerged in the chaos of a loud, train-wide celebration; everybody else on the train, it seems, is headed to the Madonna concert in Edinburgh this evening. We stand with our bags all the way to Edinburgh, trying to enjoy the celebration, but not really knowing how. Madonna fits into the gap between our two generations.

Monday, 2012 July 23: Eleanor, Karen, and Carl flew to Shetland yesterday from Edinburgh, landing at Sumburgh Airport in the middle of a gale. They rented a car, drove the 25 miles to Lerwick, the major settlement in Shetland, and checked into Islesburgh House Hostel, where they have a small room with two bunk beds—and a shower and WC, each in its own tiny room. Today is overcast and windy, with intermittent rain, as we tour the spectacular south of Mainland Shetland. We visit Sumburgh Head, the southernmost point on Mainland Shetland, where thousands of Atlantic puffins, fulmars, kittiwakes, and common guillemots (common murre) nest in cavities in the spectacular sea cliffs and on the rocks below. We tour the ruined brochs and Norse stone structures at Jarlshof and Old Scatness. An excellent audio tour guides us through Jarlshof. At Old Scatness, one of the archaeologists explains the history—and some of the mysteries—of the structures that have been unearthed there.

In late afternoon, we cross a tombolo—a narrow sand spit, in this case about 50 m wide and 600 m long—that connects the west coast of Mainland Shetland to St. Ninian's Isle and climb onto the island's rolling, treeless, grass-covered moor. The sea is never distant, pounding the island at the base of spectacular cliffs. Sheep and rabbits are the island's chief occupants—there is something vaguely unfair about leaving such beauty to sheep and rabbits—but the cliffs provide nesting space for puffins, fulmars, and kittiwakes, and oystercatchers rear their

young in depressions in the moor, rising in alarm at our approach. Halfway across the island, we encounter a sheep trapped between an open gate and the fence the gate is tied to. A wooden post blocks the gap between the gate and the fence. It is easy for a sheep to slip past the post into the gap and apparently not so easy for a frightened sheep to back out past the post. The trapped sheep bleats in panic as we approach, but discussion does not produce a consensus for rescuing it. On our return from the ocean side of the island, however, further discussion prompts an attempt at the sheep's release. Carl pulls the gate away from fence. The terrified sheep, scared by Carl's presence, retreats further into the gap, away from its escape route, but Karen and Eleanor, apparently as threatening as Carl, chase it in the right direction, and it scampers away. We are grateful for the British laws that allow us to ramble across this spectacular domain without fear of being shot by a landowner or some self-appointed vigilante.

Tuesday, 2012 July 24: Awakening to a day of bright sunshine and a stiff wind from the south, we drive to the Eshaness Lighthouse on the Northmavine coast of Mainland Shetland and walk north along the spectacular sea coast, a wonderland of high sea cliffs and big stacks of equal height sitting just off the cliffs, all riddled with caves, arches, blowholes, and deep inlets called gjos. Enormous waves pour in relentlessly from the North Atlantic and shatter violently on the stacks and rocks and cliffs, producing geysers of spray—and mist that blows to the top of the 50-meter cliffs. We walk north past the massive Moo Stack and the Villians of Ure, a sequence of rocks and small stacks, to the Head of Stanshi, where we enjoy a lunch of crackers, Red Leicester cheese, and apples, and watch seals frolic in a chaos of waves and rocks and spray where it looks as though any creature, no matter how skilled a swimmer, would be smashed against the rocks. On our return, we peer into a deep gloop, called the Hols o Scraada, where surf pours into a deep inlet through a subterranean connection to the ocean. We see whooper swans floating placidly on the Loch of Houlland and walk across the exposed ruins of a broch on the loch's western shore. As the temperature hits 60°F near the end of walk and the wind abates just a bit, Karen puts on sunglasses, and Carl strips down to a T-shirt, the first occasion for these two actions since leaving Albuquerque.

Wednesday, 2012 July 25: At 10:00 pm, as dusk settles in, Eleanor, Karen, and Carl join a 20-minute boat ride from Leebitten to Mousa, a small island off the east coast of Mainland Shetland, and walk to the Broch of Mousa, the largest and best preserved of the hundreds of brochs in Shetland. The cylindrical broch, built around 100 BCE simply by piling up the island's plentiful rocks, stands about 13 m high and is about equally wide at its base. Impressive though the broch is, our main objective—and the reason for a visit after dark—is to see the European storm petrels return to their nests. The adult petrels stay out at sea catching fish until after dark, when they come in to the crevices in the broch (and on the beaches) to feed their young, which sit huddled and hungry all day waiting for the adults to return. Storm petrels are the smallest of pelagic species, about the size of a sparrow. They wait till after dark to visit their young to avoid predation by great skuas and gulls—and at this time of year, that means between 10:30 pm and 3:30 am. Hannah Watson, Eleanor's friend from her summer on the Farallones in 2010 and now a PhD student at the University of Glasgow, is one of the two guides who meet the tour group that disembarks on Mousa. Hannah is on Mousa to study the storm petrels, and we enjoy a private commentary as the group walks along the rocky beach to the broch and waits for the petrels to appear. Sure enough, when it finally gets dark enough, the adult petrels arrive, fluttering into their crevices as adults and chicks call quietly to one another.

Thursday, 2012 July 26: We drive to Unst, the northernmost major island in Shetland, and make our way to Hermaness National Nature Reserve, a mile-wide promontory extending north-south between the Atlantic and Burra Firth, itself a narrow inlet between the high sea cliffs of Hermaness on the west and the rounded summit of Saxa Vord on the east. We climb steeply from the Firth onto a moor of blanket bog, its surface dotted with wee tarns and covered with bog cotton, the cottony tufts flying in the breeze like a million tiny white flags. Great skuas, the B-52s of the bird world, cruise the skies, as their nearly grown chicks squat on the ground below. Each adult is a potential dive bomber, which we guard against by pointing our hiking sticks skyward, like jousting sticks. A snipe performs its distinctive display flight, circling high on rapid wing beats and then diving, its tail feathers vibrating to produce the odd drumming that attracted our attention to it. As we reach the Atlantic side, the moor ends abruptly in 100-meter cliffs. A series of tall stacks stand just off shore, seemingly snow-capped, but actually covered by the white of tens of thousands of nesting gannets standing on their own white guano. Gannets lift and swirl, filling the air above the stacks and the ocean beyond. Nesting puffins inhabit the shoreline cliffs. Some creep onto the grass at the top of the cliffs, seemingly to give us a better look. Karen is a puffin pushover, every one evoking the response, "Aren't they cute?" As we make our way north along the cliffs, the lighthouse

on Muckle Flugga comes into view, and just beyond it, at latitude 60° 52' North, Out Stack, the northernmost point in the the British Isles. On our return, we hear and then spot a Eurasian golden plover, our only sighting of this magnificent bird, with its speckled golden back and black face and breast.

Friday, 2012 July 27: On a morning of gale-force winds and stinging rain, we trudge up a hill to the nearly bare serpentine at the Keene of Hamar, part of a rare exposure of ophiolite dredged up from the upper mantle—where's our geologist when we need him? Scattered tiny plants poke out of the serpentine. At the top, where there could be a magnificent view, the winds blow us right back to our waiting car for the drive to the ferry from Unst to Yell, the middle island of Shetland. Just after we sit down to lunch at the Wind Dog Cafe, blue sky shows through, the Sun emerges, and the winds calm. We drive along the bucolic coast of southeast Yell to the ferry stop at Ulsta, for the ride to Mainland Shetland at Toft. Sure enough, just as we arrive at the ferry stop, a ferry shuts its gates and departs, just as has happened for all four of our ferry trips since leaving Mainland Shetland. And, just like the other three times, we spend the delay fruitlessly scanning the shoreline for sea otters, which we are repeatedly assured spend most of their time frolicking around the ferry terminals.

After checking into the Spiggie Hotel, near the south end of Mainland Shetland, we take an evening stroll down the hill to the north shore of the Loch of Spiggie, looking without success for red-necked loons. Proceeding north through low dunes to Scousburgh Beach, we find a Scottish family enjoying the surf in sunny, but considerably cooler and windier conditions than would induce us to plunge in. Walking west on the beach, we notice arctic terns hovering and plunging, obviously fishing in the surf. Soon adult terns, black caps, red bills and legs, and long tail streamers, are hovering over us, screaming *tir-rick, tir-rick* as loudly as they can. It doesn't take long to spot the reason for their alarm. Half a dozen juveniles, clearly distinguishable by their white foreheads, patterned wings, and black bills, sit on the beach, begging for the fish caught by the adults. After a good look, we retreat to the hotel for a leisurely dinner in the Spiggie's restaurant. Joined by Hannah Watson, we sit in the restaurant's bay window, enjoying an excellent dinner, including our only exposure to real haggis, and an outstanding westerly view as the Sun sinks behind clouds and finally sets after 10 pm. This is our last night in Shetland. We will be sad to leave tomorrow, but duty calls Carl to southern Germany to give lectures at a summer school.

Saturday, 2012 August 4: Eleanor, Jeremy, Karen, and Carl, together with friend Ivan Deutsch, take four trains from Vienna to Puchberg am Schneeberg, about 40 miles southwest of Vienna. After purchasing a lunch of cheese, salami, and bread, we take the cog railway up the steep slope to Hochschneeberg, which lies on the flank of Schneeberg, at 2,076 m the highest peak in Lower Austria (6,811 feet, about 600 feet higher than our Albuquerque house) and the easternmost 2k-meter peak in the Alps. The short walk from Hochschneeberg to the summit is entirely above tree line. The summit affords magnificent views in all directions and has a summit hut where, following local custom, we partake of mid-day beers.

Eleanor, Karen, and Carl arrived in Vienna on Tuesday afternoon, after spending a few days in southern Germany, and Jeremy arrived on Wednesday, coming from his summer school in Urbino, Italy. Though we all travel abroad more than is strictly necessary, this marks the first time the four of us have been together outside the US since our 2004 trip to Australia. After returning to Vienna, the whole party has dinner at an Italian restaurant across the street from our hotel, the Drei Kronen; the dinner, the best we've had in Vienna, provides a relaxing close to a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Sunday, 2012 August 5: Eleanor leaves early in the morning for Cambridge, to prepare for a conference in Lund next Saturday, and Jeremy, Karen, Carl, and Ivan spend the day energetically touring a selection of Vienna's great museums. In late afternoon, they take the U-Bahn and bus 94A to Kahlenberg, west of the city in the Wienerwald. The day ends with a pleasant dinner at Café Restaurant Kahlenberg, which is perched on the edge of a cliff well above the city. The party sits at the edge of the patio, with a grand view of Vienna below and to Slovakia beyond, despite the haze of a hot summer day. As dusk descends, the temperature falls gratifyingly, and the lights of the city twinkle below. The party enjoys the original Budweiser, which is brewed in the Czech town of České Budějovice (Budweis in German); it is not hard to discern the antecedents of America's Bud.

Monday, 2012 August 6: Jeremy, Karen, and Carl enjoy a leisurely bicycle ride along the Danube east of Vienna, riding about halfway to Bratislava before turning around to return to Vienna. It is a very hot and humid day, and the bike ride is comparable to a mid-summer ride along the Mississippi in Louisiana, just outside the first levee, so you see mainly farms and not much of the river. As they near the end of the ride, however, the trail, hugging the river, passes an endless mile or so of nude beach, where the qualifications seem to be age, wrinkles, and obesity, and the absence of tan lines suggests that the participants are regulars.

After returning the rented bikes, we board the U2 line at Donaustadtbrücke for the return to the city center.

As the train leaves Messe station, there is a loud explosion in the car just in the front of us. Two further bangs, accompanied by a fireworks show of sparks, ensue before reaching Prater station. Smoke pours out of the train as we disembark, and the smell of ozone fills the air. Thankfully, it wasn't a terrorist attack, which these days is one's first thought. The enforced stop dumps us into the Viennesse Prater, the amusement park that houses the famous Riesenrad, the Giant Ferris Wheel, built in 1897, which played an important role in *The Third Man*. We wander the park, enjoying the *gemütlichkeit* and ultimately choosing to have dinner at an inexpensive Doner Kebap place near the entrance, where item 6 on the menu receives the unfortunate translation, "5 crap pieces." We return to the city on the U1 line to Schwedenplatz and walk across the city center to the hotel, stopping at a favorite place called Eis for a final, but by no means first, taste of their sought-after ice cream.

Jeremy leaves tomorrow morning for Cambridge, where he will visit Eleanor for a few days before visiting Iceland briefly on his return to the US. Karen and Carl are scheduled to fly back to Albuquerque on Wednesday after a rewarding summer vacation.

Thursday, 2012 August 16: Jeremy and his new girlfriend Maria, a paleoclimate PhD student at the University of Utrecht whom Jeremy met in Urbino, stand atop the newest piece of land on Earth, a sizzling hot bulge of rock, spewing steam and wedged between two glaciers. They have just completed the 15-km hike, often enveloped in a storm of glacial flour, to the top of Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull, made famous by its eruption beneath a glacier in 2010 that stranded tens of thousands of air passengers on both sides of the North Atlantic. The amount of lava erupted then was relatively small, but the eruption is so recent that the ground remains hot. Maria and Jeremy wear parkas, wool hats, and gloves, but the ground is too hot to spend any time without shoes and not much time with them.

Friday, 2012 August 31: Eleanor turns in her Masters thesis and now must await the defense in October. She celebrates this evening at a Downing College mini-ball put on by the Downing Middle Combination Room committee, which is actually the graduate-student committee, but named in the typical Cambridge tradition in which history always trumps edification. Five members of Eleanor's research group come to help her celebrate. The ball has an Alice-in-Wonderland theme and meets all the Cambridge criteria for a ball, including being black-tie. Indeed, it is mini only in that it ends at 2 am instead of the 6 am required of a May Ball. The organizers, including Eleanor, are up till 3 am cleaning up and putting things away.

Sunday, 2012 September 2: Carl, on a dawn ramble around his garden to see what's dying of thirst, moves up a short, narrow passage between low shrubs and huddles beneath a juniper as he moves a hose end. Stooping to exit along the same route, he finds himself, mid-stride, staring straight down at a snake, tightly coiled and motionless. Tipped off by the deadly triangular head, he lengthens stride to avoid treading on the snake. Good move. Though the rattle is hidden, the triangular head and the diamonds on the back, neatly outlined in black and white, scream western diamondback rattler. The snake is beautiful and superbly camouflaged—and menacing in the way only poisonous snakes can be. At the end of the day, as sunset approaches, Carl returns from a bike ride to find the snake in the same place in the same position, not having moved a muscle all day.

Friday, 2012 September 14: Jeremy is in the middle of his sole Stanford teaching responsibility, helping to lead a class on the Geology of the Rocky Mountains with his PhD supervisor, Page Chamberlain. The class spends nearly three weeks in the central Rockies in September, before Stanford's fall quarter begins. Already the group has spent a week exploring the Wind River Range in western Wyoming. Now enjoying two days off in Jackson and lured by the nearby Tetons, Jeremy convinces three students to attempt a climb of Middle Teton, the only one of the big-three Teton peaks not considered technical, though it is plenty rugged at the top. The party begins the hike at Lupine Meadows, which is bathed in sunlight filtered to blood-red by a pall of smoke from the summer's endless fires. Near the entrance to Garnet Canyon, the group breaks out of the smoke to find the Teton range soaring far above the smoke-filled valley. Though nobody makes it to the top, Jeremy and Erin Antono persist as far as the saddle between Middle and South Teton, rewarded by grand views despite the smoke.

Saturday, 2012 September 15: Eleanor is in the last weekend of nearly two weeks in South Africa visiting Stu Scott. After an initial period in Joburg, where Stu lives, the two traveled on Thursday to Cape Town, where they have been staying in the surfing suburb of Muizenburg. Today Eleanor and Stu explore Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens, which sits at the eastern foot of Table Mountain. They encounter a group of birders peering through a scope at a nearby tree and trying to identify the very large owl the scope renders in fine detail. Stu, not a birder and thus free not to look through the scope, notices a sign with a prominent heading, "Can you spot the nesting Spotted Eagle Owl?" He tentatively suggests, "Perhaps it's an eagle owl." Not surprisingly, he is right. Eleanor and Stu celebrate this twitching triumph by taking the cable car to the top of Table Mountain. Eleanor

declares Cape Town to have the most stunning setting of any city in the world.

Sunday, 2012 September 16: Eleanor and Stu spend this evening with Claire Spottiswoode, Eleanor's Master's supervisor at Cambridge, who is South African. The group strolls around the vineyards at Groot Constantia and then proceeds to dinner at a famous Ethiopian restaurant called Addis in Cape. Their native-Ethiopian waiter guides them through the courses of a traditional Ethiopian feast, capped by a coffee ceremony featuring—you guessed it—Ethiopian coffee. Eleanor ranks the dinner among the best five of her life. She flies back to England on Monday evening.

Friday, 2012 September 28: Carl rides home from work along the Tramway bike trail. Clouds cover the sky, and a curtain of rain veils the northernmost ramparts of the Sandias. As the Sun sinks from view, the western sky flares orange, red, and pink, the curtain leaks blood, and the Sandias, north to south along their entire length, glow a red so deep that one seems to be staring straight into the ashes of the primeval fire. The fire dwindles. The colors fade. The black of night descends.

The Earth has been staging shows like this since long before it had creatures with eyes to see. Moreover, it is likely there are billions of similar worlds in the Galaxy, all putting on shows of comparable or greater magnificence. Our own world and the shows it stages, no matter how striking, fade into insignificance beside this cosmic profligacy. Yet there is something special about Earth, special precisely because it matters only to us: this tiny Earth is ours, the only world we've got. A spectacular sunset is not a message from God or the cosmos, but rather a prompt to write a memo to ourselves: Here is beauty. It is ours. Treasure it. Care for it. Could it be that natural selection on a galactic scale favors intelligent species that can regard a spectacular sunset as a reminder to take care of the stage?

Wednesday, 2012 October 10: As balloons fill the dawn sky in Albuquerque, Carl answers a Skype call from Eleanor. She looks and sounds excited—and rightly so, because she has just passed her *viva voce*, *viva* for short, at Cambridge, with flying colors. "Viva voce," a Latin phrase meaning "with living voice," is usually interpreted these days as "by word of mouth." Here it refers to what, at English-speaking universities, is called a thesis defense (fortunately, Eleanor did not have to defend in Latin). The examiners complimented her Masters thesis as one of the best they have seen, close to PhD level, and advised her to divide it into several papers for publication. When Carl asks why she doesn't stay to get a Cambridge PhD, she replies that despite her fondness for Cambridge, she couldn't handle another two years of English weather. She flies to Washington on Friday.

Sunday, 2012 October 14: Autumn is in full swing, and in New Mexico that means gold. Karen and friend Paula Kahn stroll among the yellow of cottonwoods in the Rio Grande bosque. Carl heads the other direction, cycling from the house to 10,600-foot Sandia Crest through the yellow profusion and musky odor of chamisa in bloom and up to the brilliant gold of aspen shining amid the deep green of conifers. At 76 miles and 5,400 feet of gain, it's the longest and most tiring bike ride he has ever done.

Sunday, 2012 October 21: As the Sun flares above the canyon walls, Karen and Carl walk from the rim of Canyon de Chelly to the canyon floor at the White House Ruin. They spent the last two days touring the canyon with friends Janet and Barry Gaines and Paula and Marc Kahn. After driving from Albuquerque on Friday, they visited the south rim pullouts, peering from above into the canyon, with its Anasazi ruins and Navajo hogans and farms. Yesterday, the group joined an open-air truck tour of both the main canyons, del Muerto and de Chelly, on a perfect day of blue skies without a cloud and cottonwoods clad in green and gold, shining against the deep red of the sheer canyon walls. This morning is cool as Karen and Carl, the first to trod this trail today, descend the 800 feet to the canyon floor, reveling in the filtered light and the utter silence of a desert dawn.

Sunday, 2012 November 4: Maria and Jeremy wander through the parks surrounding Sansoucci, the palace built by Frederick the Great of Prussia as a Potsdam get-away from court life in Berlin. It is a typical, late autumn day in northern Europe, the skies overcast with occasional hints of blue, the last remnants of fall foliage gracing the groves and paths of the park. As they walk up a hill called the Ruinenberg, they encounter the faux Roman ruins Frederick had constructed to hide an enormous water tank he hoped (in vain) would supply water for the Sansoucci water works. The ruins are now being reconstructed, having themselves fallen into ruin since the 18th Century. Continuing their walk, Maria and Jeremy visit Schloss Cecilienhof, the palace where Truman, Churchill, and Stalin met in July 1945 to divvy up Europe after the end of the European portion of World War II.

On an ordinary autumn day—blue skies and relentless sunshine, the only distinguishing feature being that it is 10°F warmer than it deserves to be—Eleanor, Karen, and Carl walk up the La Luz Trail from the back door of the house to the upper station of the Sandia Peak Tram. Eleanor, back in Albuquerque since October 18, asked to do the trail before she departs for a couple of weeks further west on Thursday. The cottonwoods are as golden

as they get, the aspen, their autumn display pretty much finished, have left a golden carpet on the rock slide, and the views are as good as you might hope when you ascend 4,000 feet in just nine miles.

Monday, November 19: Jeremy and Eleanor, along with Stanford friends Dan Ibarra, Mandy McLean, Kate Lewis, and Ryan Boesch, follow the wide contour of the Tonto Platform. Slit down the middle by the 1,200-foot-deep Inner Gorge of the Grand Canyon, the Platform is creased along its length by side canyons of varying size carved by creeks making their way to the Colorado. Yesterday the group descended along Grandview Trail to a camp at Grapevine Creek, one of the few perennial water sources in this part of the Canyon. Today, under the crystalline autumn sunshine of the Southwest, the group walks twelve miles along the Tonto to their second campsite, near the tip of a broad, flat tongue extending north toward the river between two of those creases. Tomorrow it's up the Kaibab Trail and out.

Wednesday, 2012 November 21: Jeremy, Eleanor, and Kate catch the Southwest Chief for Albuquerque (and Thanksgiving) at its convenient 4:50 am stop at Williams Junction. Getting to Williams Junction is unnerving. The three show up at the Grand Canyon Railway Hotel in Williams at 4:00 am. Herded into a van on a moonless night, they are driven deep into the dense pine forest to a clearing that is distinguished by railroad tracks (good sign), a tiny concrete boarding platform, and a single light. They wait. Sure enough, the Southwest Chief roars up. They board and step off the train in downtown Albuquerque in late morning, just in time for lunch at the Slate Street Cafe with Karen and Carl.

Monday, 2012 December 10: Eleanor is in South Africa again. After spending time in Joburg, Eleanor and Stu are now in the final of three days in Kruger National Park, the premier South African park for wildlife and, especially, the African megafauna. They have seen elephants, rhinos, giraffes, zebras, a pride of lions sauntering down the road, impala by the thousands, warthogs, baboons, one hyena, wild dogs, monkeys, loads of birds, and chameleons. The highlight was spotting a troop of about fifteen wild dogs yesterday evening. Eleanor and Stu joined a guided nighttime tour, which left from the Phalaborwa Gate, one of the central entrance gates to the enormous park and the gate next to their bed-and-breakfast. The tour group settled into a capacious jeep, meant to be big enough to face down male elephants threatening to charge, and proceeded into the park. Just at dusk, the first of the wild dogs appeared at the top of a hill. The guide drove up the hill, turned off the engine, and coasted down the hill, the wild dogs running alongside. The dogs are beautifully colored in a sort of army-camo pattern of brown, black, and white. They are swift, but silent, flowing across the landscape like a single organism. The jeep stayed with the dogs for twenty minutes or so, till the dogs exited into the bush to hunt. Part of the treat was that there only about 200 wild dogs in the entire 20,000 square kilometers of the park.

Thursday, 2012 December 20: Jeremy is driving from Stanford to Albuquerque over six days with his now-acknowledged girlfriend Maria. They have stopped at Deep Creek Hot Springs, Joshua Tree National Monument, and Tucson, and are now staying at a small B&B outside Portal, Arizona, at the entrance to Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains. Yesterday, on their only full day on the east side of the range, they hiked five miles to Horseshoe Pass, encountering not a single person, except a Customs and Border Protection officer who enquired if they had seen any of his "customers."

This morning, as Jeremy and Maria eat breakfast before driving to White Sands, Jeremy engages the B&B's two proprietors in a conversation that plunges straight down Alice's rabbit hole. Jeremy, mentioning his field research in Mongolia, expresses his surprise that Mongolians still revere Genghis Khan more than 700 years after his death. The husband, not to be outdone, asserts that Americans revere—don't even try guessing—Charlemagne. Jeremy counters that most Americans have never even heard of Charlemagne, to which the husband responds incoherently, "You're right. Your generation can't even remember who its parents are." Later on, the wife joins the exchange, wistfully recalling her years as a PhD student and her ability to take classes on whatever subject she pleased. Lest we think the forgetful generation can enjoy a comparable idyll, she adds petulantly, "But that's all over now with Obamacare."

Friday, 2012 December 28: Snow drifts down, sparkling in the late afternoon sunshine, as Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl, along with cousins Kevin, Jeff, and Josie and Josie's boyfriend Andrew, repeatedly ski the bowls and runs off McConkey's and Pioneer lifts at Park City. Every member of the group can find a route down that suits his ability, ambition, and late-afternoon energy level. Every lift ride is a brief, restorative passage through a winter wonderland.

Jeremy and Eleanor turned up in Albuquerque a week ago, Jeremy arriving with Maria after their tour of the Southwest and Eleanor flying in from South Africa. The whole family flew to Salt Lake on Christmas and drove to Park City on Wednesday in a nauseatingly green rented Jeep—no puzzle how Thrifty ended up with this one—

after an heroic morning of shopping at the Salt Lake Costco to supply the skiing party for a week. As dusk comes on today, the skiing group joins the rest of the party—Karen, Maria, Doug, Sherry, Meredid, Elise, and Sherry's sister Debbie—in the condo at the foot of the slopes for a splendid dinner followed by a gift exchange.

Friday, 2013 January 25: Carl is based in Santa Barbara for six weeks at the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics, Eleanor is footloose to travel as she pleases, and Karen is in California for a week to see the rest of the family. The three drove from Santa Barbara to Palo Alto yesterday to join forces with Jeremy, and all four enjoyed dinner in downtown Palo Alto at La Strada Ristorante Italiano with cousin Jeff, Eleanor's friend Kate Lewis, and Karen's friend from long ago in Chicago, Anne Rosenthal, and her husband Jeff.

This morning Eleanor, Karen, and Carl make their way to Point Reyes National Seashore and set out at mid-day on the Tomales Point Trail from Pierce Point Ranch along the narrow Tomales finger of the Point Reyes peninsula. Blustery at the beginning, the weather gives way to Sun filtered through high clouds. It's reminiscent of Shetland: grass-covered terrain with shrubs and trees restricted to creek beds, sea cliffs and offshore rocks blasted by the Pacific, tule elk instead of sheep littering the landscape, and American kestrels hovering and stooping to catch mice instead of cruising great skuas. The San Andreas fault runs directly up Tomales Bay, which separates the peninsula from the mainland; the fault will inevitably strike, probably during this century, moving the peninsula ten meters north relative to the mainland.

Monday, 2013 January 28: Returning to Santa Barbara, Eleanor and Carl stop at Pinnacles National Park to walk to the park's pinnacle in the hopes of seeing a California condor. They see three, including a juvenile perched on the park's highest point.

Sunday, 2013 February 17: Eleanor arrived at Duke on Thursday for a weekend of interviews. Fresh from interviewing at Princeton last weekend and at UT Austin during the week, she has met Sönke Johnsen, her prospective Duke PhD advisor, and even though it has been unseasonably cold and overcast, even snowing a bit, she is now pretty much decided on Duke.

Thursday, 2013 February 28: Pausing on the long drive from Santa Barbara to Albuquerque, Carl this morning bikes the 45-mile River Mountains Loop Trail east of Las Vegas. Rounding the River Mountains on the north, the trail descends to skirt the shores of Lake Mead and then climbs to re-enter the Vegas basin through Railroad Pass. The view of the city is impressive, hinting that there might be a real city here somewhere. The bike trail is world class, free of slots, and nearly devoid of cyclists.

Wednesday, 2013 March 20: Jeremy passes his PhD qualifying exam and officially changes status from "PhD Candidate Candidate" to simply "PhD Candidate." The exam consists of a 30-minute presentation, after which four Stanford professors, including Page, question Jeremy for two-and-a-quarter hours about his proposed PhD research. It is a lively discussion, and Jeremy only wishes it had lasted longer. He now has a few years to knock that last "Candidate" off his status.

Thursday, 2013 March 21: Eleanor, friend Rose Stanley from Woods Hole, twelve other students, and three instructors from the National Outdoor Leadership School have been kayaking along the coast of Baja California del Sur. Today they pull their kayaks out of the water for the last time, load themselves and their equipment into vans, and drive along the coast they have spent 21 days exploring, arriving in just two-and-a-half hours at NOLS Mexico headquarters. There, at Playa El Coyote, the sparkling waters of Bahía de Concepción spread in front of them, they enjoy a last, celebratory meal of home-cooked Mexican food, recalling the highlights of their adventure: camping on the beach, spotting an octopus in a tide pool, learning to cook cinnamon rolls and calzones on a whisper-lite stove, and buying a goat from a local rancher to slaughter, cook, and eat. Kayaking occupied about half the days, and the off-days were spent hiking, snorkeling, learning to cook camp food, and interacting with the (very few) fishermen and yachters who ply this coast. Temperatures were warm, and the Sun shone brightly as they paddled placidly along the interface between the clear blue dome of tropical sky and the pellucid blue of tropical water.

Wednesday, 2013 April 3: Eleanor and Rose, not sated on Latin America, find themselves in Playa Gigante, a small beach resort on a very long Pacific beach in Nicaragua. They are here partly to meet up with Rose's brother Max and three of his compadres, who are taking a break in the middle of a cycling adventure from Juneau, Rose's hometown, to the southern tip of Chile. Today Eleanor tries her hand at paddle-boarding. She stands on a large surfboard, propelling herself with a long paddle, and experiences the Zen of exploring the rocky coast in peace and tranquility. Eleanor and Rose have been in Nicaragua for a week. They spent the first four days in San Juan del Sur, a tourist town just down the coast, where they were caught up in Semana Santa, the less-than-holy week

of nonstop partying before Easter. They plan five days here at Playa Gigante and then three days with Max in Granada, a colonial town on Lake Nicaragua, after which Eleanor flies to Albuquerque next Tuesday.

As the Sun rises in Brisbane tomorrow, Carl, in Australia for a month, opens his laptop and immediately finds a Skype instant message from Eleanor, checking her e-mail in Nicaragua: "DAD! I GOT THE NDSEG!" The National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship (NDSEG) is a three-year award, with a handsome stipend, to do doctoral work in one of fifteen disciplines of importance to the Department of Defense. The following exchange of Skype IMs ensues:

Carl: Well, that's spectacular. When do you have to report to Afghanistan?

Eleanor: Ha ha ha ha. Jeremy [in the Netherlands] made almost exactly the same joke.

Carl: Like father, like son.

The NDSEG is awarded annually to 200 prospective PhD students. Eleanor will use her fellowship to pursue a PhD in behavioral ecology at Duke University.

Saturday, 2013 May 4: Carl and Eleanor arrive at Daisy Hill Koala Preserve in southeast Brisbane in late afternoon, after a morning of birding at Oxley Creek Common and lunch at Brisbane's West End Farmers Market. Like almost all visitors to Daisy Hill, they see no koalas, except those in captivity at the visitors center, but as they conclude a brief circuit through the eucalypt forest, Eleanor spots a Pacific baza at the top of the canopy. Hawk though it is, the baza eschews its brethren's stern demeanor, opting instead to dress as a clown: broad breast boldly barred in horizontal stripes of orange and white, barred tail, and a tiny crest on top of a small grey head. The baza flits about in the canopy, harassed by noisy miners, as Eleanor and Carl follow its peregrinations as best they can by looking straight up through their binoculars.

Eleanor arrived in Brisbane yesterday, on the first leg of an around-the-world tour that will take her from Australia to South Africa, England, Iceland, and finally back to America.

Sunday, 2013 May 12: At Lake Bindegolly National Park, Eleanor and Carl stare through a storm of flies to view flocks of crimson chats and zebra finches. Eleanor and Carl, along with Rüdiger Schack, have spent the last two days at the Bowra Bird Sanctuary, not far outside Cunnamulla, a small town 500 miles west of Brisbane. Touring the vast Bowra property, they have sighted flocks of the impressive Major Mitchell's cockatoo, chestnut-crowned and Hall's babbler, and the red-capped robin, which flits around like a tiny crimson light bulb, rivalling the colors of the American vermilion flycatcher. Today the group travels another 100 miles west to Lake Bindegolly, only to find the lake shrunk to a puddle and the flies out in force. Soon Rüdiger and Carl each have a hundred flies on their backs—Eleanor somehow misses out on this—and the flies buzz maddeningly about their faces. Eleanor pulls off one of her two shirts and wraps it around her head like a veil, only the eyes showing. At Eleanor's suggestion, Carl zips off his pants legs, handing one to Rüdiger, and they use these, together with their hats, to provide inadequate, but welcome protection. The group strolls across the bottom of the lake, which is host to the flocks of crimson chats and zebra finches. Eventually the flies win, and the party retreats to their rented SUV for lunch. After terminating the flies that accompany them into the car, they eat sandwiches of havarti, artichoke hearts, and avocados and wonder about the sanity of a lone truck driver who eats his lunch at a nearby picnic table.

After returning to the Shearer's Quarters at Bowra in late afternoon, Carl and Eleanor take a late afternoon walk in the nearby woods, where they spot a spiny-cheeked honeyeater and a diamond dove, both lifers for Carl and numbers 99 and 100 on Eleanor's list for her two-week Australian visit. She leaves Wednesday evening for a night in Sydney and then on to Johannesburg.

The Outback west of Brisbane is not at all what was anticipated. The towns do run through an expected sequence: Toowoomba, a small, Anglicized city 80 miles west of Brisbane, where restaurants serve risotto and macchiatos; Goondiwindi, a charming country town 125 miles further on, which has good pubs and a specialty shop that serves macchiatos and sells lemon-myrtle-infused olive oil; St. George, a center of cotton production another 125 miles west, rawer than Goondiwindi, but still providing espressos and flat whites; Cunnamulla, 200 miles further on, where amenities become scarce, and the grocery store has a limited selection of fruits and vegetables. By the time the party reaches Eulo, 30 miles west of Cunnamulla on the way to Lake Bindegolly, the Outback triumphs: the residents are loud or drunk or both and display a surly contempt for outsiders, exemplified by the hotel-owner/bartender at the Eulo Queen Hotel, whose response to a request for a flat white, "You can make that yourself, mate," refers apparently to the instant coffee and hot water in a room adjacent to the bar.

What is unexpected is the scenery. Pastoral tableaux are interspersed with forest all the way to Goondiwindi and then give way to the expected desolation, interrupted only by an extensive cotton-growing area east of St. George. Desolate though it is, however, it is nothing like the apocalyptic starkness depicted in Australian movies and

imagined by coastal Aussies. Instead, it is a sere, grey, uninterrupted forest, extending all the way to Cunnamulla, out of which kangaroos hop and emus stride, to be mowed down in appalling numbers by the road trains and other vehicles barreling down the highway.

Saturday, 2013 May 18: Eleanor is back in South Africa, and she and Stu are in Port Elizabeth, attending the wedding of Stu's friend Nolu, a member of the !Xhosa people, as is her new husband. Yesterday's celebrations resembled a western wedding, with a long church service, all in !Xhosa, followed by a hotel reception. Today is reserved for traditional festivities. The day begins with a car procession from Nolu's house to her husband's house, at which point Nolu is bundled up in a blanket and rushed into a neighbor's house so no one can see her. The families of the bride and groom then commence a long bartering session, which amounts to the paying of a dowry. The day includes a lot of bartering, singing and dancing, Nolu's changing outfits four times, and plenty of eating. Stu, as a friend of the bride, participates in slaughtering a sheep, and the group dines in the evening on a cow slaughtered yesterday by the groom's family. Eleanor and Stu make up a third of the white contingent, out of perhaps 200 guests overall. Almost the entire celebration is in !Xhosa, which leaves Eleanor and Stu a bit in the dark, although they can generally get a running account from English speakers in the crowd. Tomorrow, Eleanor and Stu head to the nearby resort town of Knysna for three days, and after that, it's back to Joburg, from which Eleanor will fly to England on June 4.

Sunday, 2013 May 19: Jeremy has just finished a six-week tenure in Frankfurt with his advisor Page, who is enjoying the perquisites of a German Humboldt Fellowship, and fellow graduate student Matt Winnick; the three have spent most of their time visiting research groups across Europe and discussing the future focus of the Chamberlain group's research. For the next two-and-a-half months, Jeremy will be residing in Utrecht with Maria. Today Jeremy and Maria, along with fellow paleoclimatologist Katharina Methner, take a tour of the Frankfurt Airport. Jeremy and Maria are the only couple on the bus without some kids. Just in case their relationship doesn't work out, the Frankfurt Airport offers a complementary tour for singles, complete with bar stops in the terminal.

Thursday, 2013 May 30: It's pouring rain at UQ. Shielded by his Cambridge umbrella, Carl strolls to Mr. Beans for a flat white. He comes upon a brush turkey, a bird ubiquitous in Brisbane, a bit smaller than an American wild turkey, black with a vertical tail, a bare red head like a vulture, yellow neck ring, and a habit of building an enormous pile of leaves in which the male incubates the eggs. The turkey, with nary a drop of water on it, is standing serenely beneath a very big, low branch of an enormous tree. Happy in its private shelter, the turkey doesn't budge as Carl walks close enough to lay a hand on it. Carl returns to Albuquerque next Tuesday.

Friday, 2013 May 31: Eleanor's first scientific paper is published. Jeremy's first is accepted for publication.

Wednesday, 2013 June 5: Jeremy and Maria are in the middle of a week-long tour of Switzerland; yesterday, to sate Jeremy's appetite for trains, they took six different trains and a bus across the Alps to reach the small town of Medeglia, which is just north of Lugano. Today, accompanied by Maria's friend Franzi Peters, they are hiking a part of the Lugano Loop above Lake Lugano. As they hike along the highest ridge on the Loop, enveloped in thick fog, Italy lies on one side, and Switzerland on the other. The Swiss valley below echoes with intermittent gunfire and artillery, the Swiss Army training to fend off—what, exactly? It's good to be prepared, and the Swiss have always been prepared to defend themselves, but we can count it a major blessing that after a century of transformation in the Europe they sit in the center of, their training seems like an anachronism.

Tuesday, 2013 June 18: Eleanor tops off two weeks in England by attending the Downing College May Ball, which is themed Eastern Odyssey. She spends the night dancing in a silent disco, watching comedy shows, and eating at eastern-themed eateries, feasting on sushi, Thai, Chinese, and Indian food. Highlights of this Ball include bumper cars, a relaxation tent with many different types of tea—well, it is Britain—and a spectacular fireworks display. During her brief stay in England, Eleanor spent three days in Falmouth visiting friends and enjoying the seashore, two days with Uncle Kenny and Aunt Mary in Tackley, and the rest of the time in Cambridge, working on submitting a chapter from her Master's thesis for publication and formatting two other chapters to be submitted.

Saturday, 2013 June 22: All four of us, plus Doug and Sherry, arrived in Iceland on Thursday. The four of us spent Friday exploring the thermal areas and sea cliffs on the Reykjanes Peninsula southwest of Reykjavík, while Doug and Sherry sampled life in the city. Today we all drive to the Westfjords (Vesturferðir), a claw that juts out from Iceland's northwest coast. Glaciation dissected the basalt plateau of the Westfjords into a complex of steep-sided valleys that become narrow fjords and broad bays, filled by the North Atlantic at the end of the last Ice Age.

After a relaxing soak in the thermal hot tub at Laugar, followed by a picnic lunch, we take a gravel road up and over the spine of the Westfjords, finding a desolate landscape of grey rocks, snow fields, tarns, and plants an inch high. Descending to sea level at the big bay Ísafjardardjúp, we wind in and out of its fjords and finally arrive in early evening at Ísafjörður, the only town of any size in the Westfjords. Sitting on a natural pier that extends into the middle of the fjord Skutulsfjörður, Ísafjörður, where we will base ourselves for the next three days, has a definite feel of being near the end of the world. Partly this is due to the absence of darkness: at just above 66° North, the Sun sets at 1:00 am and rises again at 2:00 am, never getting far enough below the horizon to produce anything approaching darkness. End of the world or not, some in our party find this gratifying and others disconcerting.

Monday, 2013 June 24: We enjoy a lunch of peanut-butter and rhubarb-jam sandwiches after walking to the end of the world. Yesterday we hiked up the valley behind Ísafjörður to get the lay of the land. Today we drive to the peninsula south of the fjord Dýrafjörður. We start our venture properly with a break for coffee in Þingeyri, drive to the end of the two-wheel-drive road, and then continue walking along the sea cliff. Common eiders litter the shoreline of the fjord below. In the paleosols exposed in the cliff wall, Jeremy finds remains of ancient trees, buried under a lava flow millions of years ago. He claims—and he is our trip geologist—you could throw these on a fire, and they would burn.

At the tip of the peninsula, we find the perfect spot for a late lunch in a sheltered nook of a rocky point that sticks into the ocean. The North Atlantic and the sea cliffs of the peninsula on the other side of Dýrafjörður are spread out before us under a sky of scattered clouds and dazzling blue. The high promontory of Helgafell, its cliffs thick with nesting fulmars, towers 1,900 feet behind us. Sparkling pools occupy small embayments in the basaltic point on both sides of our lunch nook. An otter pokes its head out of the rocks. The site has a tropical feel under the bright sunshine, but stepping out of our nook for the return walk, we are quickly disabused of that notion. The stiff wind makes it seem even colder than the temperature of 55°F. We return to our mini-van with a new birding slogan echoing in our heads: “Eider otter fulmar confident about id’ing Icelandic birds.”

Tuesday, 2013 June 25: Now we’re really at the end of the world. On another pretty day, the Sun competing with fitful clouds, we munch a lunch of cheese and spinach/rocket on rye bread on a perch above Ísafjardardjúp as it meets the North Atlantic. Just a few feet away, a dizzyingly vertical cliff plunges 1,300 feet into the bay. To get here, we took an hour-long ferry ride to Aðalvík Bay at the far end of the Hornstrandir Peninsula, the northwesternmost extension of Iceland and the most isolated wilderness area in Europe. At Jeremy’s instruction, we marched directly up the hill behind the small settlement at Aðalvík to the top of the cliffs to enjoy our lunch. As we make a leisurely descent along the cliffs from our lofty lunch site, the rocky terrain is sometimes bare and sometimes covered with hummocky grasses or a spongy mixture of plants a few inches high. We peer across the deep blue waters of the bay Jökulfirður to the glacier Drangajökull, which squats on the horizon, its white dome merging nearly seamlessly with clouds above. We encounter a pair of rock ptarmigans, the male’s red cap the only departure from the speckled brown camouflage of their summer plumage. As we walk across a series of snowfields, the afternoon warms to above 60°F. Eleanor strips to a tank top, and Jeremy and Carl to shorts and a T-shirt.

We rejoin the standard trail in mid-afternoon and realize with some trepidation that we are well behind schedule to catch the one ferry back to Ísafjörður. Shifting into high gear, we hoof it across snowfields, ford a foot-deep creek without pausing to take our shoes off, and finally trudge along a long beach to Hesteyri, a community of half a dozen isolated structures, arriving minutes before our ferry pulls in at 6:30 pm.

Thursday, 2013 June 27: Yesterday we drove across northern Iceland to Lake Mývatn, a center of birding and geothermal activity. This morning we tour the geothermal sites just east of Mývatn. At Námafjall, a place of steaming, sulfurous vents and boiling mud pots, we climb a steep trail to the crest of the mid-Atlantic ridge and walk along its length, the European plate to the east and the North American plate on the west. In the afternoon we search for harlequin ducks on the Laxá River as it pours out of Mývatn at its southwest corner. We spot six drakes in their spectacular breeding plumage, which fully merits the harlequin designation. We search for gyrfalcon among the volcanic spires and pillars at Dimmuborgir, but find only guano-stained rocks that signal an unoccupied roost. We enjoy an excellent dinner at the Vogafjós Cowshed Restaurant, where you can view the cows being milked as you eat, and then move on to Jarðböðin Nature Baths for an hour-long soak in the hot mineral waters as light rain falls both on us and on the towels we unwisely left on a table next to the thermal pool.

Friday, 2013 June 28: An early afternoon of whale watching in a high-speed boat out of Húsavík—we chase three humpback whales as they surface and display their tail flukes—gives way to an evening exploring along the

west side of the river Jökulsá á Fjöllum, which originates in the Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Europe, and drains a considerable portion of central Iceland. We walk among the weird volcanic formations at Hljóðaklettar, have a picnic dinner, and then move on to the big waterfalls, Dettifoss and Selfoss. At 300-foot-wide Dettifoss, the biggest fall in Europe, dirty water roars over a precipice, abruptly dropping 150 feet. The drop kicks up a veil of spray that ascends high above the fall, sprinkling those on the upper canyon rim and soaking Jeremy, Eleanor, and Carl, who venture to the verge of the precipice on the lower rim. The low Sun makes a splendid rainbow in the spray, with a bow of more than 180°. At nearly 10:00 pm, the Sun still shining brightly, we turn on to the Ring Road (Hringvegur) from the north and return to our lodging near Mývatn.

Saturday, 2013 June 29: Leaving Mývatn at 8:00 am, we take up where we left off yesterday, turning south from the Hringvegur for a drive into Iceland's central highlands along the west side of Jökulsá á Fjöllum. Our guide, Sigurður Erlingsson (Siggi) of Saga Travel, is at the wheel of a Super Jeep that is ready for the rough roads, stream crossings, and snowfields that lie between us and our destination, the caldera called Askja.

As we turn off the Hringvegur, the national mountain, Herðubreið, comes into view, with the enormous white dome of Vatnajökull looming behind it on the horizon. Flat-topped Herðubreið has a frosting of snow on the top and sheer sides that end in a skirt of talus. When wearing its nearly perennial crown of clouds, it appears to be topped by an additional generous helping of whipped cream. We proceed across a desolation of black basalt, some old, some new, passing big, dirty waterfalls and wide wetlands. Beyond Herðubreið the landscape is strewn with buff-colored pumice, which drifts into piles that have the look, feel, and heft of popcorn. Siggi is a masterful guide, capable and knowledgeable, with an infectious enthusiasm for every aspect of his country.

At Askja, the Sun shines out of a clear, blue sky. We drive on deep snow across the outer of Askja's three nested calderas to the lip of the middle caldera. While Albuquerque broils under highs above 100°F, we trudge a mile and a half across a snowfield to the inner caldera, where we find sulfurous Viti, a deep crater with a witch's brew steaming in the cauldron at the bottom. Next to Viti is a large, clear lake, Öskjuvatn, still largely frozen over despite tiny hot springs along its edge. After enjoying the spectacular scene, we trudge back across the snowfield to begin our return.

We make our way back to the Hringvegur along the east side of the big river, stopping at a farm called Mödrudalur for a dinner of lamb stew with a rhubarb dessert and reaching Mývatn at nearly 10:00 pm. The tour is punctuated by two sightings of a gyrfalcon, the first perched far away on the rim of a crumbling, ancient crater just after we leave the Hringvegur in the morning and the second on top of a small pile of cinders right next to the Hringvegur in the evening. Gyrfalcons are rare enough—fewer than a thousand in Iceland—and the two sites are close enough that the two sightings could easily be the same bird.

Sunday, 2013 June 30: After a morning of birding at Mývatn, we drive to Seyðisfjörður in Iceland's Eastfjords. We drop Jeremy at the airport in Egilsstaðir to catch a 7:25 pm flight to Reykjavík, from which he will return to Europe. As we leave him at 5:00 pm, he appears to be the only person in the airport, and we all hope somebody shows up to fly him to Reykjavík.

Under steely grey skies, the remaining five of us drive up and over a 2,000-foot divide into the narrow gap of the fjord Seyðisfjörður. At the top of the divide, it's still winter. The temperature drops to 35°F, snow lines the road, and the top of a ski resort looks as though it could still be operating. On the other side, we drop precipitately into the narrow gap of the fjord. The eponymous town sits at the end of the fjord and appears far below us like a tiny model of a tiny Icelandic village. As we descend, we pass the obligatory golf course, crammed into the narrow glacial valley. The temperature increases to 48°F. The fjord's steep, basaltic walls are covered with waterfalls, more than enough to allow every resident of Seyðisfjörður to claim one for himself. We enjoy an excellent dinner at our hotel and regret that we have only one night to spend in this undeniably scenic place.

Tuesday, 2013 July 2: We're in the southwest of Iceland, and today we take the ferry to Heimaey, famous for the 1973 lava flow that buried many houses and expanded the island. The lava, cooled and shaped by a continuous bombardment of sea water from fire hoses, ended up improving the harbor, which is a crucial shipping point for Iceland's economy. The day is sunny and bright, so after lunch, we do some birding along the sea cliffs on the west side of the island. On the short walk out of the neat, prosperous-looking town, we are attracted to the wool sweaters displayed outside the home of a local craftperson and arrange to return at 4:00 pm for a closer look. We pass the golf course, nestled in a small valley fronting the cliffs and beneath the hulk of the volcano Blátindur. We see puffins and fulmars nesting on the cliffs, as eiders, gannets, great skuas, kittiwakes, and arctic terns frolic along the cliffs and in the sea below.

On our return, we are invited into the craftperson's living room to view the collection of sweaters. Friends of

hers from Wisconsin materialize to welcome our Wisconsin contingent. With advice from a roomful of people, Doug decides on a wool sweater and then confronts a situation we have not encountered in Iceland: he can't pay with a credit card; the craftsperson only deals in cash. Pooling all the Icelandic krónur we are carrying, we come within a dollar or so of the price, and the deal is consummated.

As the ferry docks at Landeyjahöfn on the mainland, Eleanor spots a razorbill foraging in the clear water next to the boat. We all linger as the ferry empties to watch the razorbill dive and forage, maneuvering underwater like a penguin.

Wednesday, 2013 July 3: As our Icelandic saga draws to a close, the five of us enjoy drinks at the glass-clad Harpa, Reykjavík's impressive new concert hall and meeting center, and review our impressions of Iceland. The Sun sets, but not while we're awake, and it never gets dark. Visibility of a hundred miles and more and no billboards—yay!—to mar the view. More golf courses than are strictly necessary and in the most unlikely places. Fields of blue-purple lupines, introduced from Alaska, extending to the horizon and beyond. Cliffs of black basalt facing the ocean and lining fjords and glacial valleys, sometimes standing straight and tall like the prow of a battleship, sometimes terraced like a multi-layered chocolate cake. Ubiquitous free wi-fi. Always friendly locals, surprisingly patient with the onslaught of visitors who, in summer, can nearly outnumber the locals. A country where they arrange to have bright sunshine when you are doing something outdoors and to rain mainly when you are driving from one location to another.

Thursday, 2013 July 4: Doug and Sherry leave for Wisconsin early in the morning, leaving Eleanor, Karen, and Carl to do some last-minute shopping in Reykjavík before their afternoon departures. Karen stocks up on chocolate-covered licorice, not because she likes it—she emphatically doesn't—but as novelties for the homebound who might. After two weeks of pondering, Eleanor buys a stuffed razorbill, her favorite bird, its pure-white breast contrasting with wings and back that are the velvet black of a moonless summer night. At Keflavík in the late afternoon, Eleanor departs for London, from which she will complete her round-the-world trip by returning to Albuquerque tomorrow, and Karen and Carl shortly thereafter board an Iceland Air jet for Denver.

Sunday, 2013 July 14: We have been hosting Stu Scott in Albuquerque for a week, but today Eleanor and Stu take off early in the morning along I-40 West. They stumble around the Painted Desert for about half an hour in the intense mid-day heat, managing to view some nice pieces of petrified wood, and arrive at the day's prime destination, the Grand Canyon, in late afternoon in the middle of a monsoonal thunderstorm. Waiting out the rain at one of the lookouts, they enjoy a dinner of pasta salad in the car. Finally, the rain stops, the clouds lift, and Stu gets his first glimpse of the Canyon, a major objective of his trip to the United States. Continuing to the South Rim Visitor Center, Eleanor and Stu walk among the nearby lookout points and reap the reward of the monsoonal rainfall, a full double rainbow arching from the north rim to the south rim. They make camp and go to sleep, ready for a brief look at the Canyon tomorrow morning before resuming the long drive to Los Angeles, where Stu's sister and her family live.

Friday, 2013 July 19: Jeremy and Maria are spending the week with Maria's family on Insel Rügen, Germany's largest island, just off the Baltic coast. Today Maria and Jeremy, accompanied by Maria's Filipino brother-in-law Naphtali and his 75-year-old mother, Elsa, visit Prora, an enormous resort complex constructed by the Nazis as a holiday camp for German workers. Planned in the Nazi aesthetic in which immensity always trumped other considerations, the resort was never completed and was used variously after the war by the Soviet Army, the East German military, a military school after unification, and as housing for asylum seekers from the Balkans. Standing on the beach, with the crumbling concrete structure stretching to the horizon in both directions, Jeremy ponders the paths that have brought these four people here—a Jewish-American, a former East German, and two Filipinos, one old enough to remember her brothers burying alive a crashed Japanese bomber pilot. Having spent nearly four months in Europe, traveling easily by train across borders, sipping cappuccinos in picturesque sidewalk cafés, and meeting a melting pot of nationalities, Jeremy, like most of us, finds it easy to forget the violence that has shaken this continent for much of its history. There are reminders, however, and this site is one of them. They whisper a warning not to go there again.

Sunday, 2013 July 21: The scene from the back deck. A lone male rufous hummingbird, making his usual three-week stop in Albuquerque to refuel during migration from British Columbia to southern Mexico, flies circles around the resident broad-tailed hummingbirds, chasing them all away from the feeder. A bobcat marches across the back yard, a rabbit drooping from its mouth. Hungry bears have been reported all around the neighborhood, but we haven't seen one yet.

Monday, 2013 July 29: Jeremy and Maria are visiting Kenny and Mary at their home in Tackley. Arrived by ferry from Rotterdam on Saturday, Maria and Jeremy are spending a long weekend in England, partly to see relatives, partly for Jeremy to renew his EU tourist visa, and partly so Jeremy can take a final high-speed train ride on the Eurostar back to Brussels. Today, Kenny leads them on a walk to Woodstock (no relation either to Snoopy or the famous happening), where they are caught unprepared in a series of thunderous downpours that remind Jeremy of New Mexico's monsoonal thunderstorms. Thoroughly soaked, the group reaches its objective: high tea at the Grand Café in Oxford, which proudly proclaims that it is located on the site of the oldest coffeehouse in England. The Café puts antiquity aside for its scones and clotted cream, which are fresh and delicious, and Maria, in particular, relishes this true English tradition.

Saturday, 2013 August 10: Eleanor and Karen hit the road just before 7:00 am for the long, multi-day drive to Durham, North Carolina, where Eleanor will set herself up for her new life as a PhD student at Duke.

Wednesday, 2013 August 14: As Carl stumbles into the kitchen at 6:00 am to prepare breakfast, a small black bear ambles across the back deck and vanishes into the arroyo on the south side of the house.

Best Wishes,

Eleanor

Jeremy

Karen

Carl

CMC/TEX

P.S. The photos show

Karen snowshoeing in the Enchanted Forest;

Karen and Carl pausing on the ascent of the La Luz Trail;

a puffin at Sumburgh Head;

Eleanor and Karen on the cliffs at Hermaness National Nature Reserve on Unst;

Eleanor, Karen, and Ivan Deutsch on the cog railway from Puchberg to Hochschneeberg;

Jeremy skipping across the cog railway tracks with a just-acquired pastry;

Carl and Eleanor near the top of Schneeberg;

Karen, Jeremy, and Ivan enjoying pre-dinner drinks at the Café Restaurant Kahlenberg;

Carl and Eleanor in fly-avoidance gear at Lake Bindigolly;

Carl, Sherry, Doug, Jeremy, Eleanor, and Karen above Aðalvík Bay;

Jeremy and Eleanor in a heroic pose on the cliff overlooking Ísafjardardjúp;

Eleanor, Karen, Jeremy, and Carl in Askja's middle caldera;

Karen surveying a minor waterfall during our return from Askja;

Eleanor birding on Heimaey;

and the rattlesnake in the yard.