

UCLA

Electronic Green Journal

Title

Review: A Hole in the Wind: A Climate Scientist's Bicycle Journey Across the United States

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/09p7p1n4>

Journal

Electronic Green Journal, 1(42)

Author

Vella, Lia

Publication Date

2019

DOI

10.5070/G314241441

Copyright Information

Copyright 2019 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

**Review: A Hole in the Wind: A Climate Scientist's Bicycle Journey Across the
United States**
By David Goodrich

Reviewed by Lia Vella
U. S. National Park Service, Rapid City, South Dakota, United States

Goodrich, D. *A Hole in the Wind: A Climate Scientist's Bicycle Journey Across the United States*. New York: Pegasus, 2017. 304 pp. ISBN: 978-1681774312, cloth. US \$27.95; includes photographs; also available in paperback and Kindle edition.

When David Goodrich retired as a NOAA climate scientist in 2011, he decided to ride his bicycle across the United States from east to west. Along the way, he observed signs of climate change, met people whose lives are affected by it, and engaged students and others in formal educational presentations.

That is essentially the content of this book's blurb on the dust jacket and other promotional material. It is more or less accurate-- except that Goodrich's narrative spreads beyond his 2011 transcontinental journey. If the summary above interests you, then you should read this book. An inveterate cyclist, Goodrich has in the past twenty years embarked on other long bicycle traverses, along the historic Underground Railroad, through western South Dakota to the site of the Ghost Dance, the route of the Nez Perce flight in northern Idaho and Montana, and the trail of the Iroquois Indians along the Warriors Path. Stories from these other journeys are woven into the main narrative, until you may begin to ask, "Which bicycle trip is he talking about now?"

It should not matter which journey he is recounting. Every anecdote is engaging and relevant to the book's themes of climate and cycling. The titular journey across the entire United States (referred to in the text as "TransAm") began by dipping a tire in the Atlantic Ocean on the coast of Delaware in May and ended with a similar tire dip on the coast of Oregon in August. For much of the time in-between, Goodrich is on his own, and anecdotes from his previous and subsequent bicycle travels pepper the description of the TransAm route. The anecdotes of the TransAm trip focus on people: an asthmatic lifelong resident of Pennsylvania who describes the shale oil drilling has had on her life; a homegrown artist in Jeffrey City, Wyoming, in the "pottery studio at the end of the world," who personifies the attitude Goodrich observes in many older rural Americans, that "if we can't change it, I do not have to change." There are brief historical vignettes, perhaps a hint of the notion that climate, environment, and human affairs are more closely knit than is typically acknowledged in our society.

Hole in the Wind is an absorbing read. It has endnotes but is not particularly scholarly, examples largely consisting of Goodrich's personal experiences (a good pool, since his career in climate science was long and distinguished). This book is really for almost anyone-- a high school student interested in climate, a cycling enthusiast, an interested lay person, a climate skeptic, readers who enjoy memoirs, a resident of one of the rural areas that Goodrich visits.

In his introductory chapter, Goodrich says that the hardest days on his TransAm trip traversed the flats of Kansas, where the "big winds" and 105-degree temperatures made dehydration a "real concern", and he longed for a break-- a "hole in the wind." Like the lone cyclist on the Great Plains, our society is besieged by the implacable force of climate change. Though we may wish for a hole in that "wind", we cannot expect that force to simply stop.

Lia Vella, lia_vella@nps.gov, US National Park Service, Rapid City, South Dakota, USA.

Electronic Green Journal, Issue 42, 2019, ISSN: 1076-7975