



Jan. 30, 2021

To the judges:

The Sacramento Bee's five-part series, "Nothing Wild," comes from a deeply personal place for reporter Ryan Sabalow. He has explored the vast landscapes of far Northern California since childhood, marveling at the complex relationship between wild animals and the human inhabitants who have hunted and lived on the land for centuries. For years, he'd wanted to explore how the natural world can survive in a state now populated with 40 million people and ruled by a complex maze of bureaucracies and laws. His series sounds an alarm about the dire state of California's last remaining wild spaces and offers solutions to preserve what's left from disaster.

"Nothing Wild" is the culmination of years of reporting on California's environment. For this series, Sabalow interviewed dozens of environmental activists, ranchers, scientists, government officials, hunters and conservationists from these rural areas. He spearheaded a legal fight that dislodged six explosive search warrants targeting a rancher's property that had been kept secret from the public. He scoured research papers and obscure government reports. He embedded himself in these communities to hear their stories, and to see for himself how mismanagement and neglect were forcing many species nearer to extinction.

The result was a personal introductory column and four thoroughly reported and detailed stories that explore how romantic notions about wild horses have created dire unintended consequences for a fragile ecosystem; how bureaucratic infighting over water rights has caused tens of thousands of birds to die miserable deaths every year; how climate change and invasive grasses are causing catastrophic wildfires; and how the reemergence of wild wolves in California has stirred up a contentious, no-win war with cattle ranchers and environmentalists.

We are proud of this series and Sabalow's work, along with arresting images by visual journalists Daniel Kim, Xavier Mascareñas and Lezlie Sterling. Thank you for considering this important series.

Regards,

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