

Claiborne Ashby

October 5, 2025

Good morning,

First, an update on the butterfly paintings — they're not quite ready to fly. I ran into some technical challenges that I'm still sorting out. I'll keep you posted on those.

Now, let's talk about salmon. Nature is a great teacher, and the salmon (and all the animals, really) are teaching us by disappearing. I read a great book on the global history of salmon, and it helped me understand the mindset of the early settlers to this continent. It seems the salmon are telling us it's time to shift out of that old mindset.

Keep scrolling for the **blog post**.

And then scroll further for the **Doctrine of Discovery** and **Sirga the Lioness**.

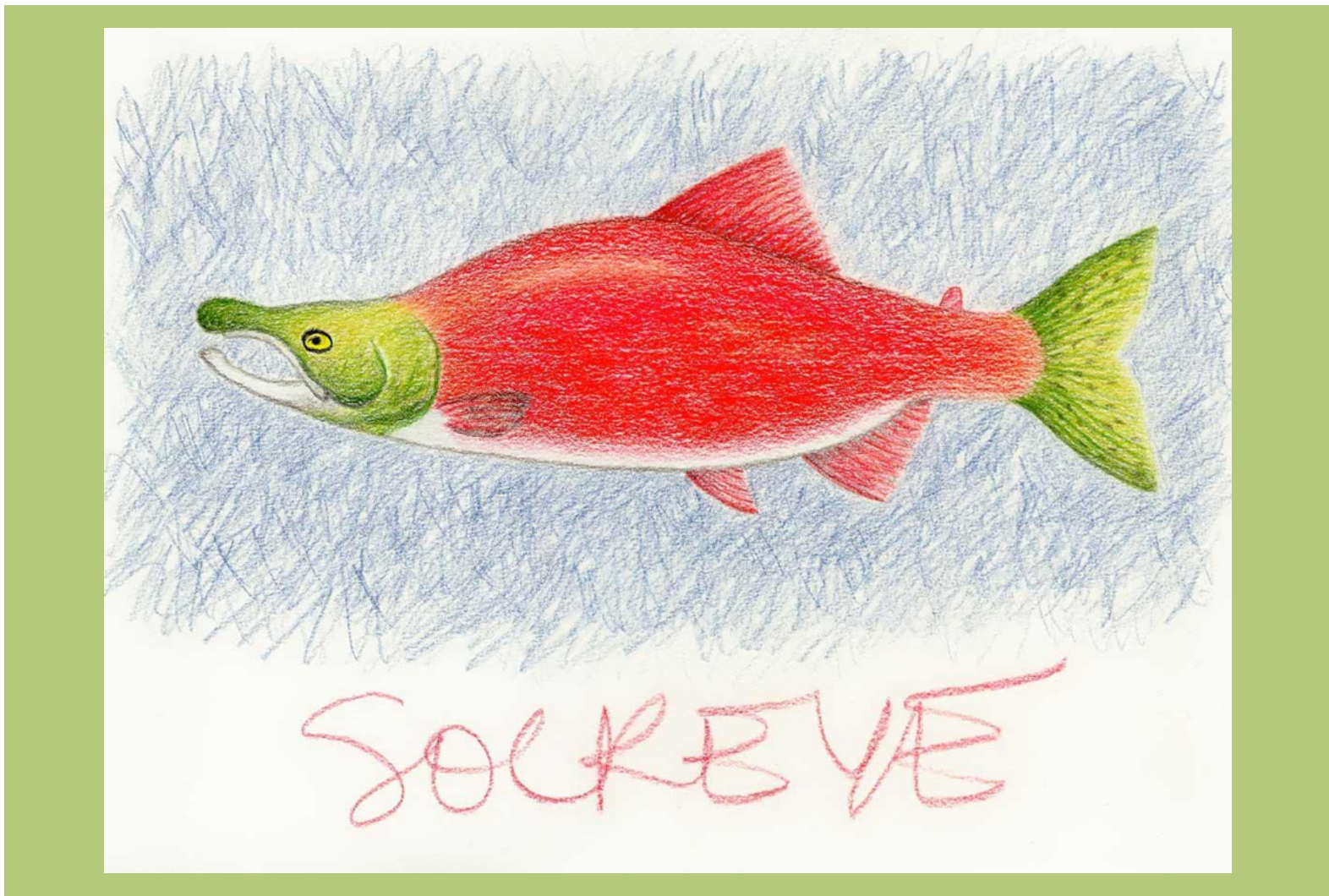
Hope you enjoy your Sunday.

xo,

Clay

On the Blog

They Never Meant to Save Nature



Wild salmon used to run in rivers all over northern Europe. They swam up American rivers throughout New England and the Pacific Northwest. Atlantic, coho, king, steelhead, sockeye, pink, chum — they migrated in numbers we can't even fathom today.

But then the Industrial Revolution happened and people chose development over salmon. They cleared forests, trampled riverbanks, drained wetlands, irrigated land, overfished, built dams, and dumped chemicals, sewage, and sawdust into the rivers. All the while, the wild salmon returns grew smaller and smaller.

In his book, *Salmon*, Mark Kurlansky discusses the global history of salmon and how saving them is the same as saving ourselves. He writes about the beginnings of North American settlement and makes an interesting point I hadn't considered before:

When the Europeans came to North America, they had already decimated their own salmon rivers. They then did the exact same thing to the rivers along the East Coast. And when those rivers died, they moved on to the West Coast and followed the same pattern.

Why didn't they ever figure out how to maintain the rivers?

READ THE REST ON THE BLOG

Links & Notes

Doctrine of Discovery:

Since Indigenous Peoples' / Columbus Day is next week . . .

I learned about the Doctrine of Discovery while listening to a talk given by a Native American attorney. Apparently this is something very familiar to Native people, but it was news to me.

Here's the short version:

In the 1400s, the pope issued a decree that said all lands not occupied by Christians were available to be claimed. He gave European countries the Church's blessing to go out and take ownership of (i.e., seize and conquer) lands that were already occupied by indigenous people. And he said it was okay to subjugate those people — because they weren't Christian.

This is how the United States came to be.

In 1823, the religious Doctrine of Discovery made its way into a Supreme Court decision and is now firmly entrenched in our legal system. As recently as 2018, the pope's decree was used by the Supreme Court to affirm that Native people do not own any land; they only occupy it.

Two years ago, the Catholic Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, but it's still in effect.

The heart of the Native peoples' struggle to stand up for themselves today, is that the white man, on the pope's authority, decided his Creator was greater than their Creator.

Lion Love:

If you aren't already following [@sirgathelioness](#) or [@valgruener](#) on Instagram, I highly recommend. Val is a German man who adopted a lion cub in Botswana and devoted his life to her. He documents their life in the Kalahari Desert on IG. I find his mission to care for Sirga and the other wildlife around them very inspiring.

(I follow both accounts but prefer [@valgruener](#).)

In the Studio

The butterfly paintings are not quite ready to fly. I ran into some technical challenges that I'm still sorting out. I'll let you know when I release them.

Why is it that everything takes longer than you think it will?



You received this email because you signed up at [claiborneashby.com](#).

Somewhere, USA

[Unsubscribe](#) or [Manage Preferences](#)