



(click photo for larger image)

## A Quiet Pandemic - Obesity and Food Ethics

### In this issue

- **A Quiet Pandemic**
- Toyota Prius hybrid - [see it now](#)
- Grassland pictures -- [view them now](#)
- Barbara Kingsolver - about writing -- [read it now](#)
- Prior Newsletters ----- [view list now](#)
- **TIP** - If you wish to explore several of the links contained below, it may help to go to the newsletter page of the KF web site by using the blue KF link.

**KF**

### A Quiet Pandemic

In a recent e-mail from **Michael Pollan**, author of *The Botany of Desire* and multiple essays on food ethics, he suggested I may mention his forthcoming book on the "**politics, ecology and ethics of eating**". I am impressed and inspired to know that he is continuing to focus on this issue; it is the **-quiet pandemic-** of our time.

This came home to me again last week as we drove 1300 miles from Boulder, Colorado to north central Oklahoma. At every stop, in gas stations, restaurants and retail stores we were shocked at the obesity of relatively young people, especially very young women. This experience took me right back to the lecture Michael Pollan gave last October 2, at the Land Institute, titled "**The High Cost of Cheap Food**". He spoke clearly, to the point, and with humor of the use and misuse of corn, corn oil and corn syrup to fatten cows and humans.

From Michael's talk came a realization that the key to cheap soda drinks world wide is corn syrup, the key to cheap fried food world wide is corn oil and the key to cheap hamburger (from cheap, fat cows in feed lots) is corn meal. Thus, one might conclude, the vast corn monoculture driven by agribusiness has initiated a health pandemic (my wording, Michael Pollan calls it an "obesity epidemic").

And this week, for example, in the March 29 issue of the New York Times, the section on Personal Health ran an article by **Jane E. Brody** titled "**Diabetes, A Crisis in an Expanding Country**". She begins like this. "I can't understand why we still don't have a national initiative to control what is fast emerging as the most serious and costly health problem in America: excess weight". And she concludes like this. "Many changes are needed to combat this epidemic, starting with schools and parents..."

There is some very good writing on these issues, a few are listed here.

- **Link to Article** -- [Michael Pollan - The \(Agri\)Cultural Contradictions Of Obesity - NYT](#)
- **Link to Articles** - [Michael Pollan at NYT - 21 articles - 1999 to 2004](#)
- **Link to Article** -- [Jane E. Brody - 'Diabetesity'- NYT](#)
- **Book Review** --- [Michael Pollan - The Botany of Desire](#)

---

[back to top.](#)

### Toyota Prius

---



The drive to Oklahoma and back was an opportunity for a first real road test of the Toyota Prius hybrid that came to live with us last December. Short answer - it is a marvelous little car!

My list of comments:

- The Prius is a sophisticated piece of engineering. It is what they say it is, clean and debugged
- The handling is good and it rolls right along at 75 MPH with some reserve remaining
- Acceleration from a standstill is pretty good if you want it or need to use it
- We get about 40 MPG in town and about 45 MPG long distance (the window sticker says 60 MPG and 40 MPG respectively - don't believe it)
- The GPS is amazing and far smarter than some of us over 60
- Dirt roads and gravel roads have been a breeze
- The way gearing is done you can't "gun it" to get out of a snow bank or up a steep hill from dead stop. This requires some caution about parking.

- **Web Link** - Toyota Prius web page
- **Web Site** - Prius Home Page - book a test drive
- **Web Site** - Yahoo Prius E-Mail Group

---

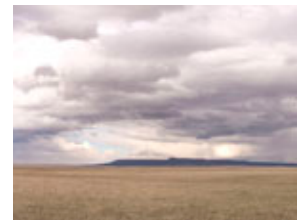
[back to top](#) . .

## Grasslands

These photographs represent two grassland regions

- Comanche National Grassland in S.E. Colorado - U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service  
440,000 acres - east to west along Colorado Hwy. 160
- Tallgrass Prairie Preserve - Osage County, Oklahoma - owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy  
2000 free roaming bison - 17 miles north west of Pawhuska, Oklahoma (in NE Oklahoma)

- **Web Site** - Comanche Grassland
- **Web Site** - Tallgrass Prairie



[Click any photo to see enlargements of this series:](#)

---

[back to top](#) . .

## Barbara Kingsolver

The quotations below are from the Introduction to:  
**Off the Beaten Path, Stories of Place**  
North Star Press  
Copyright 1998 by The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy asked writers to visit one of its preserves or write from past experience outdoors, allowing a place to trigger their imagination and make a story possible. In the Introduction Kingsolver describes her very personal writing "places" and uses that as a base to

speak of her writing habits. It makes a fitting introduction to this book of thirteen short stories.

## Knowing Our Place

"It would not be quite right to say I *have* these things. The places where I write aren't actually mine. In some file drawer we do have mortgages and deeds, pieces of paper (made of dead trees, mostly pine, I should think) which satisfy in the same way that the wren yammering his territorial song from my rain gutter has satisfied himself that all is right in *his* world. I have my ostensible claim, but the truth is these places own me: they hold my history, my passions, and my capacity for honest work. I find I do my best thinking when I am looking out over a clean plank of planet Earth. Apparently I need this starting point - the world as it appeared before people bent it to their myriad plans - in order to begin dreaming up my own myriad, imaginary hominid agendas".

"Oh, how can I say this: people need wild places. Whether or not they think they do, they *do*. They need to experience a landscape that is timeless, whose agenda moves at the pace of speciation and ice ages. To be surrounded by a singing, mating, howling commotion of other species, all of whom love their lives as much as you do, and none of whom could possibly care less about your economic status or your running-day calendar. Wilderness puts us in our place. It reminds us that our plans are small and somewhat absurd. It reminds us why in those cases in which our plans might influence many future generations, we ought to choose carefully. Looking out on a clean plank of planet Earth, we can get shaken right down to the bone by the bronze-eyed possibility of lives that are not our own".

"...For me, the genesis of fiction is tenuous and labyrinthine and inscrutable and deeply inefficient, somewhat like the U.S. government agency that issues tax refunds. I can only begin to write a story after I know what the story will be *about*. It has to be something I know to be true. Then I think about how I know it's true, by remembering events in my life that taught this truth to me..."

---

At Barbara Kingsolver's web site you will find profiles of 11 novels and 2 books of collected novels.  
■ **Web Site** - Books by Barbara Kingsolver

[back to top.](#)

## PDF Links

This is a list of prior issues of KF newsletters.  
All are available in PDF format at this link [PDF FILES](#)

[April 1, 2005 - A Quiet Pandemic, Obesity and Food Ethics](#)  
[March 25, 2005 - Special, Downsized Dreams](#)  
[March 18, 2005 - Mission, Modeling Diversity - Part V](#)  
[March 11, 2005 - Limits, Modeling Diversity - Part IV](#)  
[March 4, 2005 - Grasslands History, Modeling Diversity - Part III](#)  
[February 25, 2005 - Native Grasslands, Modeling Diversity - Part II](#)  
[February 18, 2005 - Polyculture Grains, Modeling Diversity](#)  
[February 7, 2005 - Photojournalism, A Model of Diversity](#)

George Beggs 4/2005 - [Feedback is welcome](#)