

2 new books offer an invitation to the parks

By Brad Tyer, High Country News

The National Park Service's 2016 centennial got off to a rocky start when militants occupied Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and Yosemite changed the names of well-loved landmarks.

More in line with the message, surely, are two well-timed new books.

"A Thinking Person's Guide to America's National Parks" is an almost painfully earnest re-assessment of the national park system at the century mark. Its 23 chapters dissect the parks – why, and for whom, they exist.

But for anyone already invested, "A Thinking Person's Guide" makes an excellent armchair roadmap to the Park Service's more than 400 sites and its many priorities and pursuits, which range from community farming partnerships within the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve on Whidbey Island, Wash., to the Kaibab Paiute Tribe's leadership in preserving dark skies at Arizona's Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument.

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