

Modern ski bum adapts to a housing crisis

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Ninety-nine percent of the species to live on Earth are extinct. Meteors. Over-hunting. Low sex drive. Extinction has taken many forms over the years, but the uncontested winner is habitat loss. Enter the modern Lake Tahoe ski bum.

Shackled with an incompatible ratio between median income and median home price, the modern ski bum's diminishing habitat is fueling an extinction that could mean the end of the ski town as we know it. (At least low sex drive isn't the issue.)

The caveat to calling out extinction in this case, however, is defining the culture that is threatened. A bum is commonly viewed as existing on society's periphery; their time spent goes by relatively unnoticed. But in ski towns this has never been the case.

Here, the ski bum has always been the protagonist, a cultural icon exemplify the reason we all shovel our way through Sierra winters and make the sacrifices necessary to live in a mountain town. But are we losing this unspoken hero? As ski towns become increasingly gentrified, the ski bum has two choices common in the natural world: disappear, or adapt and evolve. To find out which, we spoke with a handful of local icons to define this endangered culture, and how it's holding on.

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