

2021

Surviving the Apple Fire

Keegan Ibanez
kti2@humboldt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/humboldtgeographic>



Part of the [Environmental Studies Commons](#), and the [Spatial Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

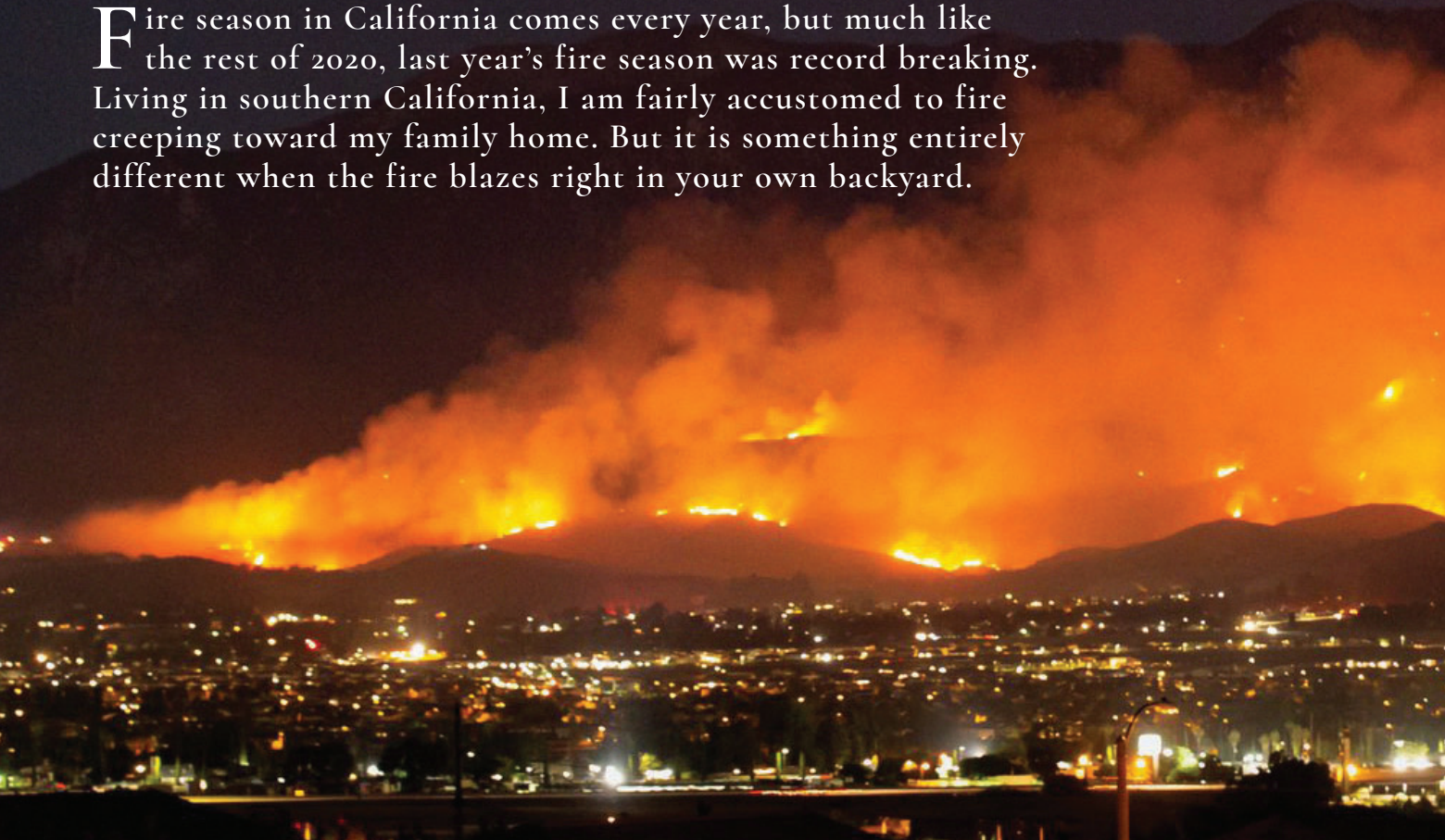
Ibanez, Keegan (2021) "Surviving the Apple Fire," *Humboldt Geographic*: Vol. 2 , Article 32.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/humboldtgeographic/vol2/iss1/32>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Humboldt Geographic by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. For more information, please contact kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu.

Surviving the Apple Fire

Keegan Ibanez

Fire season in California comes every year, but much like the rest of 2020, last year's fire season was record breaking. Living in southern California, I am fairly accustomed to fire creeping toward my family home. But it is something entirely different when the fire blazes right in your own backyard.



The Apple Fire was started in Oak Glen around 5 p.m. on July 31, 2020, by a vehicle that blew some burning carbon out of its tail pipe. Within two hours, the fire had grown to 350 acres and required immediate evacuations in the Cherry Valley area. By 9 p.m., my neighborhood was given the mandatory evacuations as the fire was burning out of control and heading straight for us.

My family and I decided to stick it out and wait until the last possible moment to leave. We had our horse trailer ready and I had taken our dogs and cats to a friend in case we had to make a rapid escape. By 11 p.m. on August 1, the fire made its way to the top of our

neighborhood and was less than a mile away from our home. We could see the bulldozers at the crest of the hill laboring to keep the flames away from homes and other structures.

We woke up the next morning and saw the fire had been pushed north of our neighborhood thanks to the hard work of all the emergency personnel. Though narrowly missing our neighborhood, the Apple Fire grew to 13,000 acres overnight, making its way up the San Geronio Pass and into the San Bernardino National Forest. Firefighters faced difficulties combating the conflagration due to topography of the burn area and the red flag conditions.



By August 6, the Apple Fire surpassed 28,000 acres, but it was beginning to slow down thanks to the efforts of firefighters on the ground.

Around 3 p.m. on the day of the fire, I talked to my mom. We knew there was fire in the area, but assumed it wouldn't directly impact us. Six hours later, while at a friend's house 30 minutes away, I received a call about the mandatory evacuation for my neighborhood. I grabbed my keys and headed home, knowing it was going to be difficult to move against the flow of evacuation.

Just minutes from home, I encountered the police checkpoint and learned the road was closed. I frantically told them that my house is up the hill, that I needed to

help my family evacuate. After a few anxious moments, they confirmed my information waived me through.

The drive up to my house was like a scene out of a terrifying movie. To the left of our narrow two-lane road, the canyon below was beginning to burn. It looked like a scene out of Mordor. But I could tell I still had time to get home and help my family. When I returned home, my mother was outside talking to the fire fighters, trying to figure out the next steps. We decided I would be responsible for our dogs and cats, electing to wait just a bit longer. We knew we would not be allowed back up to the house until the roads reopened, which could be up to a week or more.

*After Apple:
The remains
of the author's
neighborhood
(photo by author).*



Upon discovering the Apple Fire had missed our house, I felt an outpouring of relief. Thanks to the front line fire workers, the fire got pushed back and around the neighborhood. I knew their work was not finished, but were it not for them, my family home would have been literally toast.

*After Apple:
Fire-scorched earth
(photo by author).*

