

Nature Trails

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Sue Beilke, with a Western painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*).

Ms. Susan Beilke, Wildlife Biologist
Northwest Ecological Research Institute

“Native Turtles of Oregon; How these Ancient Species Are Faring in
Modern Times”

Friday, 19 March 2010, 7:30pm, Room 100,
Willamette Hall, UO Campus

Here's a recipe for making a wildlife biologist: pick parents who own a dairy farm and have a strong conservation ethic. Let part of the farm remain as a woodland, another part a swamp. Put in a perennial stream running through the middle. Pick up all the rocks in the fields and build stone hedgerows that provide cover for snakes, birds, rabbits, foxes, and other little critters. Put snapping turtles and Eastern painted turtles in the swamp. Sprinkle the fields with fireflies on summer evenings. Add two sisters. Stir. Stand back. Voila: Sue Beilke.

The farm is in southeastern Wisconsin, near the town of Theresa. From her early childhood Sue was into biology, and especially loved turtles. She also had a thing for horses, though. After high school in Hartford, just down the road, she started in a pre-veterinary program. Since Wisconsin has no vet school she was looking at going to Minnesota and needed money. Her experience with and love of horses, besides pointing her toward becoming a large-animal vet, was providing her a job as she worked on her pre-vet program. But it led to a fork in her road: her employers offered her a full-time job training and showing horses, and she took it. Seven years later, another fork: she left the stables and followed another of her loves. For the next five years she was the lead singer in several bands, including one that did USO tours (She does not know any turtle songs, unfortunately).

At this point she decided it was time to get serious so she moved west. After a brief stint at Evergreen College she moved to Portland and finished her biology degree at Portland State University.

In 1987 she began working with the US Forest Service, doing Spotted Owl and Western Grey Squirrel surveys among other projects. Ever the adventurer, she took a 3-month leave from the USFS after answering an ad put out by Whale Aid, in Hawaii. They were looking for a naturalist to volunteer to help with a humpback whale study. When she called they told her she was the only person from the west coast who had expressed an interest, which she found hard to believe. They told her to come, and come she did. Beilke spent three months on a boat documenting cow/calf interactions, male whale songs, and other interesting behavior. She had several close

encounters of the whale kind. Then it was back to Oregon and a few more years with the USFS.

With the listing of the Spotted Owl and declining logging, in 1992 she and other biologists with the Forest Service were laid off. There followed a couple of short contracting ventures, one with the US Fish and Wildlife dealing with the aftermath of a large oil spill into Yoncalla Creek, which included surveys and rescue of a large number of Western Pond Turtles. The other was with The Nature Conservancy, off and on for a couple of years, which included conducting wildlife surveys and habitat assessments in the Eugene area. In 1996, Sue had the opportunity to go to Costa Rica and volunteer to help monitor nesting Leatherback sea turtles along the Caribbean. This adventure allowed her to work with a unique and vanishing species, the largest of all the sea turtles, several of which she observed were over 1,000 lbs. and 8' in length.

In 1993 Beilke began working for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, where she remains, doing mitigation and habitat restoration work. Her independent research on Oregon's native turtles began in 1995, with the long-term goal of contributing to the knowledge and conservation of both native turtle species. She has become an expert in the ecology of the Western painted turtle—with a particular emphasis on nesting ecology.

Beilke is a co-author on an article on roads and their detrimental effects on turtle populations. She works with several local organizations, including the Oregon Native Turtles Working Group and the Northwest Ecological Research Institute, both being organizations devoted to alerting the public, including landowners and recreational users of waterways, to ways they can maximize the potential for survival of our two native turtle species.

We are fortunate that this passionate advocate for these wonderful native animals will be speaking to us this month. Please join us on Friday the 19th at 7:30pm in Room 100, Willamette Hall, on the U of O campus, to hear Ms. Susan Beilke speak on "Native Turtles of Oregon; How these Ancient Species Are Faring in Modern Times."

John Carter

A Good Turtle Book.

This winter I read a beautiful and insightful book by turtle researcher David Carroll: **Swampwalker's Journal, A Wetlands Year** [ISBN13:978-0-618-12727-5, paperback, available through Amazon.com]. Carroll takes us quite literally, in every season, into various wetlands, deep ponds, wooded swamps, seasonal swamps, and all the other imaginable kinds of wetlands to be found in his small corner of New Hampshire. He is mostly concerned with the many species of turtles in these habitats, but we also learn about amphibians, trees, woody and herbivorous wetland vegetation, and the threats that these critical habitats and their rich faunal array face in the modern world, where roads and homes take precedence over life. Carroll is a wonderful artist. Even if you did not read a word of the book, you would want to spend time with his glorious illustrations. There is even a map to draw you into his wetland world, as clever and enchanting as the map inside the cover of my ancient copy of Winnie the Pooh. Carroll has also written three other books about turtles, which I am sure are equally fascinating. Even if you are not already a turtle enthusiast, you will surely be one after becoming acquainted with Carroll's work. Reviewed by Reida Kimmel

Drifts of Astrantias by Reida Kimmel

The world has turned and is exploding into spring. On this sunny day, the crocus flowers are open and filled with many busy honeybees. Our snowbells are lovely. In the woods, grouse flowers cover the mossy ground. Hounds tongue and spring beauty (*Claytonia*) are just starting to flower. At the pond a single male red winged blackbird has been calling for several days, and there are four small Northwest salamander [*Ambistoma gracile*] egg masses attached to sunken branches on the far side of the pond. The robins have returned and our resident pair of red-tailed hawks is courting, soaring gracefully on the thermals above our valley. Who could want for more!

This, of course, is the time of year when I linger longingly over garden catalogs and review my garden notes. From years ago: "Strive for a more cottage garden look. Get *Osmanthus*, Exbury azaleas, more roses". For more than a decade, I have spent many joyous hours pouring over the

pages of English Garden, Pacific Horticulture, and the English edition of Country Living. In the magazines, Lady Montfort-Gowdowning is able to achieve her horticultural miracles with the aid of only one gardener, usually pictured as a burly Scotsman dedicated to laboring well into the wee hours to achieve the glorious balance of hot and cool colours in the perennial bed. Drifts of astrantias line the parterres. Roses drape gracefully against the honey-coloured walls. The box balls and topiary are smooth as eggs. I want it! Though normally a thrifty person, I have sought out and purchased many plants, and as a result, I have bought, planted, and killed: two star magnolias, six or ten roses, three rhododendrons, one dogwood, one golden rain tree, one sugar maple, two *Osmanthus delavi*, and countless other smaller and less expensive victims. But this year I am going clean, end, finis, caput! No more daydreams! Under the well-composted top soil I have created lie many feet of dense, pale-colored clay, called coyote clay and considered good soil for growing Douglas firs, though too dense and fine to use for making pottery. To add to this drainage problem, our beautiful narrow valley sees less than an hour of sunshine a day during the winter months. Plants that survive our dry windy summers just die of despair in the winter. The survivors are usually thugs, like woodruff and Japanese anemones. And then there are the deer, munching rose and dahlia leaves, gladiola flowers, and entire patches of iberis. In the magazines only four or five years suffice for a garden to achieve a rich, mature look. It takes the plants I start that long to settle in and commit to life, should they be so inclined. I should not complain. My neighbor planted a small grove of Douglas firs by his driveway about eighteen years ago, and they are still not as tall as I am.

This winter I began yet another attempt to create a lovely garden in the center of our driveway. All but the four tallest roses went away to better homes. I moved large and small sword ferns and a red flowering currant into the garden, hauled loads of wood chips to acidify the soil, and purchased pretty wildlings like Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) and coast huckleberry. I had lots of help from my crew of sturdy gardeners. The puppy dug holes, always in inappropriate places. The chickens fluffed up the wood chips, and the dear horses provided mountains of compostable materials. In the future I will replace any plants

that die with natives. I am not planning to plant any more annuals or tender, deer-fodder perennials in this garden, though there will always be a place for spring bulbs. Bulbs sleep during the darkest days and prefer dry summer soils. I will just have to give up that dream of constant vibrant color to fill the summer days with joy. It's the right thing to do, planting water-wise, wildlife friendly, native plants. It's merely a simple matter of retraining my aesthetics to appreciate a different, subtler, kind of beauty.

But then, there in the Breck's catalogue...I've never seen them for sale in America before! *Astrantias*! They like shade. What if? Drifts of *astrantias* against the dark brown wall...

President's Corner

Chorusing

by Tom Titus

Late one February at least one lifetime ago, warm rain was falling as I walked hand-in-hand with my three-year-old daughter across the vast expanse of an empty asphalt parking lot behind our house in St Louis. The odor of rotting leaves and swampy lowlands rode in on the wet air. The aroma stole into my nostrils, unlocking a small room in my consciousness that had been closed for a very long time, creating a jolt of energy that rippled down my spine. Laurel looked up with dark chocolate eyes and said "What Dad?" It was the smell of chorus frogs breeding in a dying Oregon winter.

We've been back in Oregon for fifteen years, and I still love chorus frogs. Most years they begin calling in earnest after the first warm rains of late January or early February, an audible reminder that another winter is finally passing. This year the deep freeze in early December gave way to an unusually warm January, and the frogs have been trilling throughout. The males are to blame for that divine racket. They have more endurance than a prize bull, calling night after night well into May or for as long as they have the spunk to keep it up. In the world of chorus frogs the longer a male can carry on calling, the more mates he is likely to acquire, and more offspring is the ticket to success in the Darwinian casino. This year the frogs have had to work overtime, and I feel a little sorry for them.

I love the phone calls that come in summer. Distraught people want to rescue tadpoles from

drying ditches and puddles and horse tracks and cast off tires and every other thing that once held even a little water during the late winter rains. Chorus frogs are amazingly resourceful in utilizing temporary water for breeding. They get away with this by having a larval period that is short and supple. Warming water, disappearing food, and crowding—all symptoms of a drying pond—tell them that it's time to get out of Dodge and can trigger metamorphosis. This flexibility has limits, however, and breeding pairs often deposit eggs in water that is too transient to carry the tadpoles through to terrestrial freedom. There is a cost to this mistake. The "sins of the fathers" (and mothers) really are visited on the offspring because every summer tadpoles die by the millions. But this also reduces the number of poor-decision-making genes. I explain this as gently as I can to would-be chorus frog rescuers and then advise them to grab a bucket and move the tads to the nearest permanent water. I'm such a sucker.

I love chorus frogs because they seem to be able get along with us. They readily adopt human-made bodies of water for breeding and for the rest of the year manage to survive in the remnants of terrestrial refugia available to them. Late last fall, a lone male called from the green wall of laurel in my backyard, perhaps warming up for a virtuoso performance in January. Yet our presence has certainly extracted a high price. Every spring, the horsetails that sprout in my front garden remind me that not very long ago, before the time of concrete and asphalt suburbs, Amazon Creek meandered freely among the willows and cottonwoods across this small valley. Closing my eyes I imagine the throbbing pandemonium of late winter, when thousands of male frogs made their way down from the forested hills to spend their spring vying for mates in once vast wetlands. I wonder whether it is psychologically healthy to identify so intensely with our place that we no longer *love* where we are so much as we *become* it. Such powerful identification in a time of rapid ecological change leaves one extremely vulnerable to loss.

These days I'll trade vulnerability for sprouting camas, blooming Indian plum, and frog calls that mark the fading pulse of winter, the quickening of spring. Leaving work, I bicycle south into the near darkness of a February evening, sky still lit with a hopeful trace of gray sunset. Cool air courses

across my cheeks while high over my left shoulder a three-quarter moon burns through broken clouds with cool intensity. A din of chorus frogs becomes audible from a shallow pond ten blocks south. Their mass trilling grows in intensity on my right as I pedal toward them and reaches its crescendo after I cross busy Hilyard Street. Turning away from the pond, I pass the troll-like shadows of willow clumps along Amazon Creek. The frog chorus recedes quickly into the night. Naked limbs of Oregon ash are

backlit by halogen streetlights and self-absorbed evening traffic. A homeless couple talks loudly from the blackness near the creek while an invisible killdeer circles above, crying repeatedly perhaps also wondering where it will sleep. Turning onto my own street, a neighbor calls out a greeting from her unlit porch. A familiar bump marks the entry into my driveway. The garage door sticks from winter humidity, then a warm house, the aroma of cooking food, my wife. I am home.

Out and About



Punchbowl Falls, Sweet Creek

Just south of Mapleton, the Sweet Creek Trail takes you to eight different types of waterfalls within one mile of the trailhead.

Go in the spring when the water is in peak flow and enjoy the many wildflowers, mosses and lichens that thrive in this wonderful old growth forest.

*Want more information about this location?
Contact Dave Stone at 683-6127*

Opal Creek Ancient Forest Field Trip, 4-6 June. Our count now stands at 25, closing in on a full house of 32. Costs remain as outlined last month: \$70/person for lodging, and if you want them to feed you, \$80/person for meals. Deadline for registration and deposit is now 16 April. Details, including information on activities, can be found on our website: <http://biology.uoregon.edu/enhs/>. To register for the trip, make your check (nonrefundable) for \$70 per person payable to the Eugene Natural History Society and send to: **Judi Horstmann, Treasurer, Eugene Natural History Society, PO Box 3082, Eugene OR 97403 (or give it to her at the 16 April meeting).**

The controversial topic of nuclear power arose during our March meeting. Those wishing to educate themselves further on this issue are encouraged to read A. Lovins's article "Four Nuclear Myths: A commentary on Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Discipline* and on similar writings", published 13 October 2009 by Rocky Mountain Institute and available on the web at http://www.rmi.org/rmi/Library/2009-09_FourNuclearMyths. You may remember Brand as the founder and editor of *Whole Earth Catalog*. The nuclear chapter in *Whole Earth Discipline* would provide access to the viewpoint of an environmentalist who has become pro-nuclear-power.

Events of Interest in the Community

Lane County Audubon Society

Tuesday, 23 March, 7:30pm. "The Intertwine: Integrating the Built and Natural Environments in the Portland Metropolitan Region." Eugene Garden Club, 1645 High St
Mike Houck, Executive Director of the Urban Greenspaces Institute and Urban Naturalist, Audubon Society of Portland, will describe an initiative to create in the Portland-Vancouver region the world's greatest system of parks, trails, and natural areas.

Mount Pisgah Arboretum

34901 Frank Parrish Rd., Eugene, 97405. Located off I-5 Exit 189, 15 minutes southeast of Eugene. Call Peg Douthit-Jackson at 541-747-1504 or email mtpisgjp@efn.org for more information or to sign up for any of the following Arboretum activities.

Saturday, 13 March, 10am-noon. Signs of Spring Walk. Join Rhoda Love on an easy Winter Arboretum Walk to search for the signs of spring. Rain or Shine. Meet at the Arboretum Visitors Center. Fee: \$5.

Saturday, 13 March, 5pm. Life in the World's Tallest Trees. An Evening with Stephen Sillett and Robert Van Pelt. 180 PLC, UO Campus (14th and Kincaid). These renowned forest canopy scientists, featured in the cover story of last October's National Geographic magazine, are coming to Eugene to talk about their latest research in the world's tallest forests. This breathtaking presentation about life hundreds of feet in the air will make you appreciate big trees in a new way. This event is sponsored by: Mount Pisgah Arboretum, UO Outdoor Program, Eugene Tree Foundation, Pacific NW Chapter ISA, and the City of Eugene. Cost: \$7 general admission, \$5 members of Mount Pisgah Arboretum, the UO Outdoor Program and U of O students. A limited number of tickets will be at the door starting at 4pm. Advanced tickets available at: <http://bigtreeseugene.eventbrite.com>. You can also reserve tickets online for a dinner reception with the speakers at Laurelwood Golf Course after the presentation.

Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter

Monday, 15 March, 7:30 pm. "Wildflowers of the Marys Peak Meadows." Steve Carpenter speaks on plant ecology, botanic history, geology, and weather of Marys Peak, the highest promontory of the Coast Range. EWEB Training Room at 500 E. 4th Ave. Call 541-746-9478.

WREN For more on these activities call 541-683-6494 or email info@wewetlands.org.

Saturday, 3 April, 10am-11:30am. Eggs and Nests. Discover the beauty and wonder of wetland bird nests and eggs! During the program, participants have the opportunity to paint an egg to take home. Suggested Donation: \$5/WREN member and \$7/non-member. Meet at the West Eugene Wetlands Yurt, 751 S. Danebo Ave. in Eugene.

North American Butterfly Association

Monday, 5 April, 7pm refreshments, 7:30pm presentation. Life Histories of Cascadia Butterflies. EWEB Training Center 500 4th St., Eugene. Professor David James, an entomologist for OSU at Yakima, and his colleague Dave Nunnallee have completed the rearing and life histories of 160 species of Washington butterflies. OSU press will publish this tremendous contribution to the study of NW butterflies. James, in his presentation, will provide an overview of the forthcoming book.

Nearby Nature

Pre-registration required and space is limited for these programs. Call 541-687-9699, email info@nearbynature.org, or go to <http://www.nearbynature.org/programs/registration-forms>.

Monday-Friday, 22-26 March, 8:30am-3:30pm. Spring Break Daycamp: Undercover Creatures. Use your nature detective skills to find out who's hiding in the trees, fields, and ponds of Alton Baker Park. Collect bugs, search for animal signs, help green up the garden, and create critter crafts. Discover animals in art on a field trip to the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art! Ages 6-9. \$180 members/\$215 non-members.

Saturday, 17 April, 12-2pm. I Spy Spring! Alton Baker Park. Join Nearby Nature as we celebrate spring...and put out the welcome mat for summer! Stop by the Learnscape and our Yurt in Alton Baker Park anytime between noon and 2 pm to meet live reptiles and amphibians from the Oregon Herpetological Society as well as Frannie our costumed Pacific tree frog! We'll also have crafts, garden activities, and a fun raffle. Information about our summer daycamps will be available and some of our instructors will on site to answer questions. FREE! (Note: Stop by the Science Factory on the same day from 10 am to 1 pm for info about their summer programs.)

Monday, 26 April. Track Town Pizza Pie Benefit Day. Join us at Track Town Pizza at 1809 Franklin Blvd. for a Nearby Nature PIE DAY in support of Nearby Nature's Scholarship Fund! All day long, Track Town will donate 50% of the cost of your pizza, salad, or soup order (not delivery items) to Nearby Nature if you bring in your special coupon. Scholarships help families pay for daycamps, No School Days, service learning projects, and other fun adventures! Important: Pizza coupons will not be available at the restaurant—you must bring your coupon with you. Click <http://www.nearbynature.org/membership/coupons-for-benefit-days> to get a copy from our website. Make copies and share with friends! Email us at info@nearbynature.org if you can't read our attachment and we'll send you a copy.

ENHS bike path work party. Sunday, 21 March. Meet at 10 am on North Bank Bike Path under the north end of Ferry Street Bridge, or in the parking lot in front of McMenamins North Bank restaurant off Centennial Loop. Families welcome; nature study entertainment provided. Bring gloves and be clothed for the weather. Work usually lasts until about noon, after which many of us stay for lunch and conversation at McMenamins. Contact for info: David Wagner 541-344-3327.

We welcome new members! To join ENHS, fill out the form below. You will receive *Nature Trails* through December of next year. Membership payments allow us to give modest honoraria to our speakers, as well as to pay for the publication and mailing of *Nature Trails*.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mail checks to **Eugene Natural History Society
P.O. Box 3082, Eugene OR 97403**

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

E-mail (optional) _____

City _____ State & Zip _____

ANNUAL DUES:	Contributing	20.00
	Family	15.00
	Individual	10.00
	Life Membership	300.00

Generosity is Appreciated

Do you have any special experience in natural history? _____

Would you like to organize/lead field trips? _____

Teach informal classes? _____ Work on committees? _____ What natural history topics interest you for future talks? _____

Eugene Natural History Society
P.O. Box 3082
Eugene, Oregon 97403

ENHS Schedule of Speakers and Topics 2009-2010

19 March - Sue Beilke – Herpetologist: “Native Turtles of Oregon; How these Ancient Species Are Faring in Modern Times”

16 April - Dean Walton -- Ecologist, Science Librarian: "Freshwater Tidal Swamps of the Atlantic Coast"

21 May - Pat Kennedy – Ecologist: "Can Cows and Birds Coexist in NE Oregon?"

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