

# *Nature Trails*

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The Sombrero Galaxy, M104, one of many images that will be presented.

## **A Story of Constellations**

Larry Deckman, A.A.A

(Avid Amateur Astronomer)

**Friday, 18 November 2011, 7:30pm, Room 100  
Willamette Hall, UO Campus**

How long does a foreigner have to reside here before he becomes a naturalized Oregonian? A cursory search of state law reveals no statute bearing on the question, but even the most hard-hearted native would have to admit that four decades suffices. So even though our November speaker, Larry Deckman, spent his first 17 years in Los Angeles, his decision to come to Eugene in 1971 and the tenacity he has shown by sticking it out for 40 years erases that early blight and qualifies him for citizenship.

Newly graduated from high school at age 17, Deckman was on the ivy-league track. But a chance encounter altered his path, to our eventual benefit. While still in LA he had a conversation with a Nabisco delivery man (because he was dressed totally in white, Deckman playfully referred to him as an ‘angel of light’) who said Eugene, Oregon, was the perfect place – for reasons we all know: mountains, ocean, rivers, etc. – and that Deckman needed to pursue his education at the University of Oregon. Taking the angel’s message to heart he applied, was accepted, and made the trek here on his own.

Deckman’s love of nature stemmed from its absence in his early life. Growing up in the artificiality of LA, he knew he was missing something. Not long after arriving in Eugene a neighbor introduced him to astronomy by loaning him a small telescope. The relative lack of city light at night in Eugene as compared to LA meant he could see a lot more here. He was quickly hooked, and has become an avid, knowledgeable amateur astronomer.

After finishing his B.S. in World Religions he took some time off to pursue his inventive bent. The man keeps coming up with ideas and then converting them into products that educate those who buy them and also provide him with royalties. The *Star Finder* and the *Pocket Star Finder* are great tools for finding constellations and have sold nationwide for years. And then there are his glow-in-the-dark maps entitled *Constellations of the Northern Hemisphere* and *Constellations of the Southern Hemisphere*, constellation posters, constellation greeting cards, and – still in development – a new card game called *Oxygin*. Several of his products have been marketed in places like the Hayden Planetarium, Nature Company, and the Smithsonian Institution.

He eventually went back to school, getting his law degree from the U of O in 1985. He has practiced law here in Eugene ever since. He does what he calls ‘preventive law’, drawing analogy to preventive

medicine. He concentrates on wills, trusts, business matters, and helping people stay out of the tangle of the legal system.

Deckman is enthusiastic, period. He’s enthusiastic about astronomy, law, public libraries, books, philosophy, forests, education – you name it (He asked me what I used to do and got enthusiastic about that!). He backs up this enthusiasm with action. He is well known in our area for sharing his knowledge about the stars and planets. Case in point: he has given his program *A Journey to the Outskirts of the Universe* several times in the area, most recently on 7 March 2011 at the Eugene Public Library. Speaking of the Library, he has been on the board of the Eugene Public Library Foundation for many years and for the past two years has been its President. He also served for several years on the board of the Native Forest Council. And as I mentioned above, essentially all of his inventions have an educational objective.

Since his wife, an educator and author, hails from New York, not far from the six million acre Adirondack Park, you can understand Deckman’s penchant for hiking in that part of the country. But he also has several favorite places in rural Oregon. In fact, he is so taken with the area around Pine Mountain (there’s an observatory on top of it) that at one point he seriously considered buying property around Brothers.

I asked him whether new technologies have cleaned up the atmosphere so stargazing is better now than it was

when he started. He said no, the increase in human population overwhelms any technological gains regarding the atmosphere. More people equals more light at night and more pollutants (If you are curious about light pollution, check out [www.gibbard.org/~scg/world-light-polution.html](http://www.gibbard.org/~scg/world-light-polution.html)). This is part of the reason why the Hubble is in space and the new Very Large Telescope is on a mountain in the Atacama Desert in Northern Chile.

In his talk Deckman will draw on images from NASA, the Hubble telescope, and other such spectacular sources. He gave me this thumbnail sketch of his talk: "In 1930, the entire sky was divided into 88 constellation regions, largely based on Eurasian perspectives dating back over the past 10,000 years. Today these 88 regions are used planet-wide. This program will familiarize you with the star patterns visible in the sky, and suggest some of the ancient mnemonic tales used by our very distant



ancestors. Interspersed with the presentation will be stunning celestial images from the various sky regions we visit." Those of us who heard him in January of 2007 will second me when I say that his

photos will indeed be stunning and his presentation learned and charming. Do not miss this. Come to Room 100 Willamette Hall, U of O campus, at 7:30 pm on 18 November 2011 to see and hear *A Story of Constellations*.  
John Carter

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## President's Corner

**A Fence Lizard in Fall** By Tom A. Titus  
In Fall I sometimes wish I were a fence lizard.



I'd sleep late into morning, then blink one bronze eye open, peel back my nictitating membrane like a window shade, take a quick peek through the crack in the wall of the porch on

the south side of the old house, check for yellow sun slanting through yellow apple leaves pouring onto yellow grass gently warming yellow air trickling over my prickly scales, feel my blood moving around just enough so that I could stick my head out for an exploratory look, cocking side to side, making sure that pesky garter snake wasn't hanging about. Then I'd ease out onto one of those cinder blocks sitting in a sunlit spot but not yet quite warm, hold my coal black body off the cool cement, catch some rays, feel my heart pump a little more quickly, moving my blood around a little faster, and when the temperature was just right I'd settle my belly down until the grooves between my scales melded with the rough surface, and the warm brick and I would be one.

In my warm lizard body I'd have some time on my tiny, clawed hands. Even after sleeping in. I'd be soaking up the last sun and the last golden fat from that last summer grasshopper eaten only yesterday. I wouldn't be wondering if the pantry had enough pears, peaches, tomatoes, tuna, applesauce, huckleberry jam, elderberry juice, apple cider, peace of mind bottled in clear glass.

If I were a fence lizard in fall I'd be content to know every inch of my porch on the south side of the old house. Over summer I would have etched into my small lizard brain every scratchy toehold on every piece of leftover firewood and every old board with every perfect angle for bathing in the sun swinging steadily across green fir tops. I wouldn't be

frantically figuring out one more fall trip before the rains, some quick pass through some place just because I'd never been there before, empty promises to return when I had more time to slow down and really enjoy it. More time really to know my space, find my place. More time to live.

If I were a fence lizard in fall my reproductive responsibilities would have been met. I wouldn't be seething with hormones doing frenzied pushups to impress that perfect someone with my belly patches bright as the deepest summer sky. I wouldn't be dragging around an abdomen swollen with eggs. All that would have been handled. Those fertile white pearls with leather skins and yellow yolks laid in warm garden soil just inside the deer fence would have hatched into itsy bitsy lizards now finding their own small way in the large world. There'd be no kids with college bills and car insurance and can't you just get your butt over to the career center because no one wants you to move back here especially you. But you can. If you need to. Nope. Nobody would be moving back into my crack in the wall of the porch on the south side of the old house.

If I were a fence lizard in fall and woke in my crack to the vibrating rain thrumming on the metal roof, if I blinked one bronze eye open and saw steel water streaming from battleship clouds, running over broken brown shingles, I'd take the day off. I wouldn't rise in the dark. Make coffee. Open the door. Pick up a plastic bag newspaper full of crazy otherworldly stuff: people killing each other, politicians eating one another, perfect economic storms, perilous real storms lashing out and who can blame them, power-crazed dictators killing more people. I'd just listen to the rain pounding in my small eardrums, feel the cold dampness slipping between my scales, slowing my heart. Then I'd scrunch myself a little deeper into my crack in the wall.

And if the rain kept thrumming and the cold seeped in until my heart had nearly stopped, I'd close my bronze eyes and sleep. Ride it out. Because if anybody knows anything, then surely a lizard knows that someday the sun will shine again and air laden with warmth and blooming growing things will percolate back into my crack in the wall of the porch on the south side of the old house.

## Sculpin Hunting by Reida Kimmel

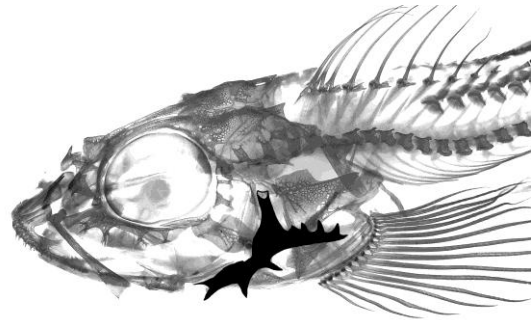
If you have ever gone 'tidepooling' or sat staring into a quiet rocky pool in a coastal stream, you have almost certainly seen sculpins, and probably looked away because they seemed so common and dull. Fishermen call these little fish, only about four inches long, 'bullheads' and use them for bait. At first glance, the sculpins in the tidepools and the sculpins in the creeks look like the same species. But they are not. There are so many different sculpins, worldwide over seven hundred species of sculpins belonging to one hundred forty nine genera and grouped in eleven families! Some species are quite large. The cabezon grows to over three feet in length and weighs thirty pounds. Cabezons are rather sedentary near-shore dwellers along our coast, feeding on mollusks and small fish. They are delicious. The fishermen, so inventive, call cabezons 'bullheads' too.

Many different species of saltwater sculpins reproduce in the tidepools all along the coast. Their eggs, deposited amongst the rocks, barnacles and mussels, are adhesive – essential given the tidal currents. Most of Oregon's coastal streams support four or more species of freshwater sculpins, all small. In Knowles Creek alone there are six species. Rock Creek is unique in that there is only one species, *Cottus perplexus*, living there. Freshwater sculpins lay their eggs in late winter or spring and attach the clusters to the undersides of sturdy-sized rocks. Egg hunting in those cold, fast-flowing creeks is daunting.

I had the pleasure of caring for a tidepool sculpin (*Oligocottus maculosus*) last winter. My husband Chuck wants to use sculpin larvae for research, and we had to find out if sculpins could survive in captivity. "Sculpie" did more than survive; he, or she, thrived, charming everyone who saw him. The tank had rocks and shells collected from his home tidepool. He rested in these shelters, changing color slightly to match his surroundings. His body color patterns and little spines, his wonderful long pectoral fins and his elaborate gill covers were so pretty. "Sculpie" was responsive, active and not a bit shy. I missed him when we took him back to his home.

Why go to the trouble of studying yet another species of lab animal? For Chuck, those wonderful gill covers are the answer. The gill-cover supporting bone, which opens and closes the flap over the gills, expelling water, is called the opercle. It is in close association with other bones that are capable of movement and cause the lower jaw to open. One bone lying beside the opercle does not move. This bone, the pre-opercle, provides strength and stability. In most fish the pre-opercle bone has a very simple

L-shape. This is nearly the case in fresh-water sculpins, but their pre-opercle has a series of tiny spines along the 'L'. Marine sculpins, however, have evolved an elaborate, rather antler-shaped spine that can cause quite a prick when you pick the fish up. (See the illustration, a bone preparation in which pre-opercle of a sculpin is colored black.) Chuck studies



Sculpin skull with the spiny pre-opercle emphasized. From a color photo on Leo Smith's Field Museum web site. See <http://homepage.mac.com/wmleosmith/>

bone development and growth. The gill-cover bones of a fish are on the surface, easily studied with molecular dyes and time-lapse photography. How, why, and when do these unusual shapes come to be? That is his question. Chuck thinks that the antler forms very late in fish's development by a process of 'bone remodeling', common in growing humans but not at all common in fish. He is also intrigued by an evolutionary question. The fresh-water forms likely evolved from the marine species. The loss of elaborate bone and spine characters is also the case in freshwater versus marine, ancestral, sticklebacks. Environmental factors as well as genetics must influence this evolution.

Establishing a new research animal is not an easy thing. Chuck wanted the sculpin eggs to study bone development over time. A group lab effort at Cape Arago last February netted several gravid females, one of which laid eggs back in the lab. But the eggs failed to hatch; they rotted because we did not really know how to care for them. Perhaps the way to study comparative bone development in marine and freshwater species was simply to net juveniles from tidepools and streams every few weeks from spring through fall. By accident we found that the very easily accessible tidepools at Ona Beach near Seal Rock were just swarming with baby tidepool sculpins. Three passes with my tiny net, and I had a dozen babies, more than enough. A flash of bright



green in the net revealed not algae, but an adorable lime-green fluffy sculpin. I couldn't wait to go hunting again, in spite of the fact that it also meant a much more chilly and laborious trek with net through Rock Creek. A month later, armed with nets and high hopes, we went to the beach. The high September tides had brought in so much sand that most of the tidepools were buried and there was not a fish to be seen. Where did they go? Was this normal? How

could such tiny creatures find food and shelter out there in the waves? Well, no one knows very much about exactly where the larval sculpins go when they let themselves be carried out to sea, but the phenomenon is perfectly normal, and amazingly, probably by scent, those who survive know exactly where home is and return to their natal pool. Now that's incredibly amazing!

## Out and About

*"Out & about" is a periodical encouragement to Eugene Natural History Society members to get out and experience our magnificent Oregon.*



### ***Hylocomium splendens* at Fall Creek**

Get down! Get way down on the ground and enter the fascinating, miniature world of moss. Bring a hand lens to examine the delicate features of any moss you find in the woods. This moss, also called "stair-step moss", grows a new frond each year, so you can count the fronds and determine its age. While you're down there, check out the lichens, those strange "plants" that combine algae and fungus in one package.

Get Dave Wagner's annual Nature Calendar and learn more about mosses and other special residents of the natural world.

[www.web.mac.com/davidwagner](http://www.web.mac.com/davidwagner)

Out and About is a regular contribution from David Stone. Thanks, Dave, for your wonderful photos (in the web version of NT the photos are in color).

## Events of Interest in the Community

### **Lane County Audubon Society**

**Tuesday, 22 November, 7:30 pm. Birds of Ireland.** Susan O'Donohoe, a visiting biologist from Ireland, will talk about birds in her country. She will also discuss results of MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) Program studies she has been working on in Oregon forests. Look at the online version of The Quail for more information. <http://www.laneaudubon.org/thequail.htm>

### **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, email [mtpisgip@efn.org](mailto:mtpisgip@efn.org), or look at <http://mountpisgaharboretum.org/> to find out about current Arboretum activities.

**Saturday, 12 November. Play in the Rain Day.** Looking for something fun and *free* to do with your family on a rainy (or perhaps even sunny) Saturday in November? Visit Mount Pisgah Arboretum for our community's fourth annual Play in the Rain Day. Visitors will discover how fun, easy, and rewarding it is to spend time outdoors in nature—in ALL kinds of weather. More than 1,000 people attended last year. Play in the Rain Day will happen rain or shine, so dress for the weather. For more information, call Liz Karas at 541-349-5055, ext. 201, or Peg Douthit-Jackson at 541-747-1504, or Chris Orsinger at 541-344-8350, or visit [www.youthinnature.org](http://www.youthinnature.org).

The Youth in Nature Partnership is a collaboration of non-profit and governmental organizations committed to increasing opportunities for youth to spend time in nature. Its members include the Bureau of Land Management, the City of Eugene, Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah, Nearby Nature, Northwest Youth Corps, Mount Pisgah Arboretum, Willamalane Park and Recreation District, the United States Forest Service, and Willamette Resources & Educational Network (WREN). From nature education to service learning to just plain fun – each member organization values the wonder of nature and the ways it inspires children.

### **Nearby Nature**

**Sunday 20 November, 1-3 pm. Nearby Nature Quest -- Beavers and Ducks.** Enjoy a Family Nature Quest in Alton Baker Park. Learn about the beavers and ducks that hang out in our park all year long! Meet in the [Leanscape](#) outside the [Alton Baker Park Host Residence](#) (between the Community Gardens and the dog run). FREE for members. \$2/person, \$5/family for non-members. Pre-register: 541-687-9699.

**Saturday, 10 December, 1-3 pm. Nearby Nature Quest -- Tall Tree Trek.** Learn all about our community's tall trees on a Family Nature Quest in Hendricks Park. Meet outside the Francis M. Wilkins Shelter. FREE for members. \$2/person, \$5/family for non-members. Pre-register: 541-687-9699.

For details on either of these events call 541-687-9699 or email [info@nearbynature.org](mailto:info@nearbynature.org).

### **Museum of Natural and Cultural History**

#### **Free Admission Wednesday**

**Wednesdays, 16, 23, and 30 November, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm.**

#### **Little Wonders: Stories and Activities for Preschoolers**

**Wednesday, 7 December, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm.** This month the book is *Animals in Winter*, by Henrietta Bancroft and Richard G. Van Gelder. Animals in the winter do many things to survive and stay warm. Learn about the fox, woodchuck and pica, and make your own winter habitat. Free admission.

### **Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter**

For information on current activities contact [ngap@emeraldnpsoregon.org](mailto:ngap@emeraldnpsoregon.org) or look at <http://emerald.npsoregon.org/>

**Monday, 21 November, 7:30 pm. History of the Oregon Flora Project.** Dr. Stephen Meyers, taxonomic director of the Oregon Flora Project, will present a short history of the Project, including events and details that some of us are not aware of, and a summary of current work being accomplished. He will also discuss future plans, with an emphasis on the online presence and the upcoming book *The Flora of Oregon*. Location: EWEB Training Room 500, E. 4th Ave., Eugene.

### **WREN**

For information about upcoming events call 541-338-7047 or email [info@wewetlands.org](mailto:info@wewetlands.org). You can also go to their website: <http://www.wewetlands.org/> WREN is a sponsor of Play in the Rain Day. Details are above, under the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum section.

### **Emerald Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society**

Call Tanya at 541-937-1401 with questions about future programs, or look at <http://nargsemerald.org/calendar>

ENHS thanks the volunteers who spent time in our booth at the Mushroom Festival: Reida Kimmel, John Sundquist, Connie Wagner, Joan Ojerio, John Carter, Kris Kirkeby, Judi Horstmann, Tasker Houston, Rebecca Hazen, and Herb Wisner. Thank you Andrew Sermak for bringing some of your salamanders. They got lots of attention! And thank you, Dave Wagner, for putting the booth up, taking it down, and storing it.

**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*. Our web address: <http://biology.uoregon.edu/enhs/>**

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail (if you want to receive announcements) \_\_\_\_\_  
 I (we) prefer electronic copies of NT rather than paper copies. \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No  
 If yes, email address (if different from the one above): \_\_\_\_\_

**ANNUAL DUES:**

Contributing	20.00
Family	15.00
Individual	10.00
Life Membership	300.00
Contribution	_____

**Annual dues for renewing members are payable in September. Memberships run from September to September. Generosity is encouraged and appreciated.**

Make checks payable to: The Eugene Natural History Society  
 P.O. Box 5494, Eugene OR 97405

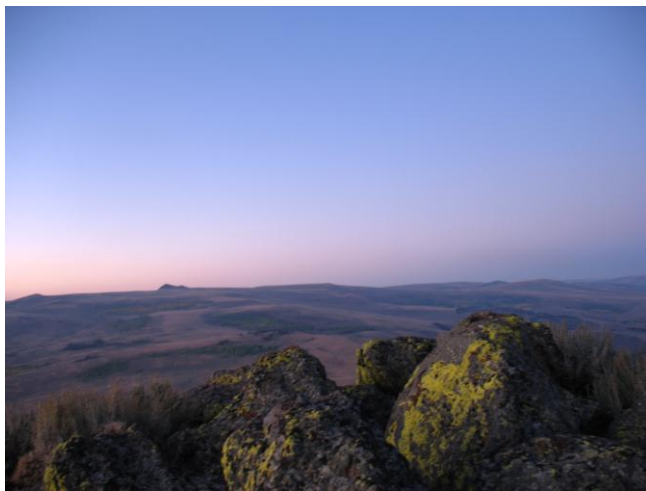
The following information is voluntary, but appreciated:

Would you like to: \_\_\_lead field trips \_\_\_teach informal classes \_\_\_work on committees?

What would you like to hear a talk on? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have special experience in natural history: \_\_\_\_\_

INTERESTS: \_\_\_Archaeology\_\_\_Astronomy \_\_\_Bird Study \_\_\_Botany \_\_\_Conservation \_\_\_Geology \_\_\_History of Science \_\_\_Herpetology \_\_\_Meteorology \_\_\_Mosses & Lichens \_\_\_Mushrooms \_\_\_Nature Walks \_\_\_Wildflowers \_\_\_Zoology \_\_\_Other \_\_\_\_\_



Dawn atop Adams Butte in the Hart Mountain Antelope Reserve.



Aspen groves in the HMAR.



Wetlands on west side of HMAR.



Very Large Array, a radio astronomy observatory located near Socorro, New Mexico.



Moonset over ESO's Very Large Telescope.

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## ENHS Schedule of Speakers and Topics for 2011-2012

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|---------------------|-------------------|---|
| <b>18 Nov. 2011</b> | – Larry Deckman   | – A Story of Constellations                   |
| <b>9 Dec. 2011</b>  | – Jan Hodder      | – Sea Birds                                   |
| <b>20 Jan. 2012</b> | – Pat O'Grady     | – Sheep Mountain Clovis Site Archeology       |
| <b>17 Feb. 2012</b> | – Greta Binford   | – Evolution of Spider Venom                   |
| <b>16 Mar. 2012</b> | – Gordon Grant    | – Willamette River Hydrology                  |
| <b>20 Apr. 2012</b> | – Deanna Kingston | – Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Inupiat |
| <b>18 May 2012</b>  | – Robert M. Pyle  | – Butterflies                                 |

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