

Nature Trails

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Female wolf howling for a mate in Yellowstone National Park. Photo by Rick Lamplugh

A Winter's Immersion in Wild Yellowstone Rick Lamplugh, Wolf Advocate and Author

**Friday, 19 September 2014, 7:30pm, Room 100
Willamette Hall, UO Campus**

Rick Lamplugh and his wife Mary Strickroth spent the winters of 2012, 2013 and 2014 working and playing in Yellowstone National Park. Not just anywhere in the Park, but in what many consider the best part, the northeast corner. They were volunteers for the Yellowstone Association Institute, headquartered in the heart of the Lamar River Valley, Yellowstone's wolf country, at the Lamar Buffalo Ranch. In winters the Institute conducts classes led by experts of various disciplines. The couple's duties revolved around these classes: they drove 14-passenger buses along the snow-covered road that goes west to Mammoth and east to Silver Gate and Cooke City, directed by whichever expert happened to be leading the tour of the day. They set up the spotting scopes at the pullouts to assist in viewing what was on stage, as it were. The huge bonus that accrued to their work was the opportunity to see whatever was on offer, and to hear learned expositions on a variety of topics. One of the lessons – surprisingly interesting – was simply on snow.

But many of these free lessons had to do with the wildlife present in this lesser visited section of the Park. Bison and wolves were the big two, but several other species made regular appearances. Lamplugh said he heard more than one person, when asked what had been seen on a particular outing, say, "Only a coyote." He considers coyotes fascinating, certainly more adaptable and probably more intelligent than wolves, and feels that they deserve more respect. Learning how adult coyotes rear a family led him to think that they could teach adult human parents a few lessons.

Lamplugh is a writer. Some of his nonfiction focuses on his struggle to deal with aging, physical decline, and mortality. Three such essays have been published in the literary journals *Phoebe*, *Soundings Review*, and *Feathered Flounder*. The essay *Bus Driver in The Temple of Wolves* about his and his wife's winter experiences in Yellowstone National Park won the 2012 Jim Stone Grand Prize for Non-Fiction.

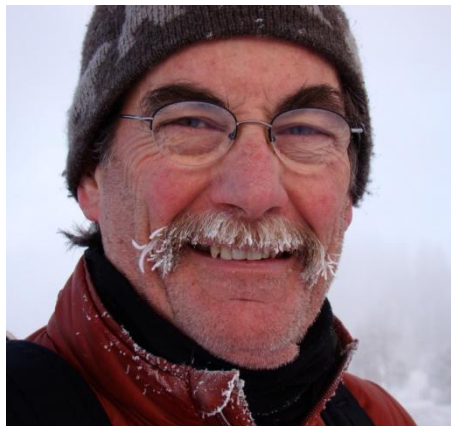
One of Lamplugh's books is *Job Search That Works*. He wrote, produced and hosted *Work in Oregon*, a public radio series. From these two titles one might deduce that Lamplugh was not always cavorting in the wild outdoors. He worked as a vocational rehabilitation consultant for 26 years for a private company in the Corvallis area, finally retiring from that position in 2010. Going further back, Lamplugh grew up around Baltimore, Maryland. He

attended Towson University there, obtaining a B.S. in psychology in 1976. His love of the outdoors has been self-generated. After his military experience in the late '60's and early '70's he started hiking and backpacking with friends. But the big change came in the late '70's when he moved to Oregon, which as we all know has a wealth of outdoor opportunities for those inclined. After this move he enrolled in the Graduate School at Oregon State University and received an MBA. As he began to realize that eventually he would get too old and feeble to climb mountains and go on long bicycle treks and backpack in the wilderness his adventurous spirit intensified. Now that he is retired Lamplugh has more time not only for the adventures but also for writing about them.

Lamplugh's wildlife interests go beyond the Yellowstone ecosystem. He is an advocate for wolves and coyotes, and makes the case for the necessity of predators in a healthy ecosystem. He is vitally interested in coexisting with wolves and the various

methods being tested to keep them from being exterminated yet again. Through electronic media he is interacting with persons all around the world about the plight of wolves in their respective countries.

Lamplugh has hiked the wild areas in Yellowstone National Park for many years, using designated backcountry campsites as staging areas for treks. Only in the last three years, though, did he



and his wife experience Yellowstone's grandeur in the winter. His most well known book, *In The Temple of Wolves: A Winter's Immersion in Wild Yellowstone*, will be the basis of Lamplugh's presentation, which takes place on Friday, 19 September, at 7:30 pm in room 100, Willamette Hall, on the U of O campus. We will see videos with original images from the book, and hear readings – one accompanied by a recorded original piano composition – from several chapters, including *How Death Feeds Life*, *The Kill*, *The Trophic and Cash Cascades*, and *The Bison's Last Ride*.

I asked Rick if he had any good stories I could put in his introduction. He said yes, he had a favorite wolf story, a favorite coyote story, and a favorite bison story, but I would have to go to the talk to hear them. You will too. This presentation promises to be a great kickoff to a fine 2014-2015 series. I hope to see you there. John Carter

Heat Wave by Reida Kimmel When I think of this summer, all I can remember is one miserably hot day after another. Though there were some cool and even damp days, our summer saw the longest ever recorded spells of hot days and warm nights during July and August. I loathe hot weather, and long at all seasons for clouds and rain. I have been almost as unpleasant as the weather, complaining endlessly. But by necessity I spend a great deal of time outdoors gardening and doing the usual farm chores. There is usually something interesting, beautiful, or amusing that can make me forget my sweaty brow, at least for a little while.

Our native trees and shrubs were undamaged by December's record cold. The flowering currants bloomed lavishly, and our yard and garden filled with more hummingbirds than usual. It is an amazing year for Douglas fir cones. The squirrels and chipmunks will be well fed this winter. Elderberries, both blue and red, are fruiting heavily, as are the Nootka roses, hawthorns, and mountain ash trees. In the past decade we have seen the proliferation of several species of shrubs that used to be uncommon in our neighborhood: flowering currants, cascara (*Rhamnus purshiana*), elderberries, and hawthorns, all welcome for the bird food they provide. The currants are undoubtedly offspring of plantings we made in the yard. Who knows where the others came from. The hawthorns appear to be hybrids. I have been told that that is the case with most volunteer hawthorns these days.

The garden was magnificent this year. My only regret is that I did not plant eggplant. I am convinced that it was the warm nights more than the hot days that really helped the vegetables to grow and mature so much earlier this year. The flowers have been even more wonderful than the early corn and tomatoes, and with the flowers came the insects. It's been a superb year for butterflies, swallowtails in particular. In the spring we were very concerned that there were no pollinators. At least there were no honeybees and few bumblebees. Little flies, mason bees and other unidentifiable species did the job, and we have plenty of fruit. But by July there were bumblebees everywhere and the honeybee population had grown huge. Weeding and deadheading amidst the noisy bees is sensuous, dizzying, and a little bit thrilling. But the bees are peaceful and completely absorbed with gathering pollen and nectar. I have never been stung. Clouds of a thousand or more honeybees can cover the tall clump of goldenrod that is so stunning in late August. I do not know if these are wild bees, or if they come from the local, but not close, domestic hives. I grow great clusters of plants that bees love: oregano, marjoram, basil, goldenrod,

sedum, and thyme. Recently I learned that the nectar from these flowers makes rather horrid dark honey, but that this nectar is important because it provides winter food for the bees. Humans prefer, and harvest, the light honey from early blooming wildflowers and blackberries. As the goldenrod and sedum flowers age, the bees desert them and a whole new, very diverse, population of insects forage on the blooms: little flies, small Polistes hornets, and tiny dusky orange butterflies. Bald-faced hornets cruise the blossoms looking for tasty victims.

Once again we have had mid-summer visitations from another predator, a bobcat. As usual he or she carried off chickens in broad daylight even though we were outside. We could deduce just what happened by the trail of feathers leading through the field down into the woods along the dry creek. The chickens were out and about. Their door was open. The cat dragged a pullet out of the house. The second, our oldest hen, a great layer, was outside when she was nabbed. The next day, after we had shut the proverbial barn door for the foreseeable future, Chuck saw the bobcat, a very handsome animal, as it was sauntering through the pasture, checking out the chickens' wire pen in hopes of another easy meal. Like the hornets, the bobcat belongs here, more than we do. So we will shut up our chickens and worry about our cats, at least for the next few months.

A record number of barn swallows came to nest in our outbuildings this year. They gathered muddy sand from our arena for their nests and lined them with chicken feathers. Some nests were old 'fixer-uppers'. Others were new. A few were in annoying places like the one over the cold frame where I grow lettuce all summer. A few were badly attached and fell down. We tied these to posts where the parents could see them, and in two cases the nestlings survived and fledged. Sadly several dozen unfledged babies departed from their nests and did not survive. This is a very unusual event. The worst episodes coincided with the hottest weather. Many nests were attached to the beams supporting the roof, which gets incredibly hot. Audubon's Dick Lamster suggested that perhaps the nests were harboring biting insects and the babies left the nests trying to escape the discomfort. He told us to destroy all the old nests this fall to get rid of potential pests. Happily, in spite of the tragedies, all the swallows that nested raised at least one brood of three or four babies and many pairs successfully raised two families.

Every summer sees me worrying about our wonderful shallow well. We are stingy with water, and use soaker hoses. All our plumbing is low water use. We even save our dishwater for watering. A far

greater worry, as it is in all rural areas, is fire. We take a great risk by having tall trees so close to the house. But besides being beautiful, they are our air-conditioning, keeping our house unusually cool much of the day. We live with the choices we have made, and hope to escape disaster for another year. What will other years bring? Is this summer, and the two

dry winters that preceded it, the beginning of the new warm world climate for Oregon? Or do we have a few more years of grace to make changes, aesthetic, life-style and gardening choices that would better suit our changing environment. Yes I have plenty to think about when I'm wandering in the woods and fields, or canning my beautiful fruits and vegetables.

Summer of Songs By Tom A. Titus

Like most folks I find myself tripping into fall wistful and wondering where summer went. I doubt this is an issue in places like Florida or southern California. But in western Oregon winter rainstorms and a dearth of light follow our long days filled with sunshine. So we place a premium on summer, and watching it slip away can be challenging. So I took a break from the September madness of freezing and canning and drying to form a small retrospective on a summer that's now fading quickly in our rearview mirror. When I stop, wrap my arms around the dying season, and hold it for a moment, it begins to develop a more substantive form. This summer, like every other summer now passed, is a unique collection of small melodies that together form a large piece of music with a clear ebb and flow.

In late June the crescendo of resident birdsong that began in spring continues at its peak. I decided that my amphibian and reptile students needed something extra to keep them out of the bingo parlors, so I added a new twist to this year's curriculum: they were to spend at least 30 minutes alone (the horror!) and write a creative introspective piece on the experience (gasp!). To kick things off, I offered to pen my own reflection and read it in class before theirs was due. After sending them out on an old growth trail at H. J. Andrews Experimental Forest, I wandered off the road, found a decaying log still wet from the previous evening's rain, planted my bottom on it, and became uncharacteristically quiet. Moisture soaked into the seat of my pants. Birdsong floated in. There was the insistent mewing of a Red-breasted Nuthatch, the upwardly spiraling burble of a Swainson's Thrush. I wrote about growing and pressing against an old skin that needed shedding, about becoming someone shiny and new and fresh in this damaged world. Their papers came in and I dreaded grading them. But procrastination doesn't work in a four-week summer course, and when I began to read I couldn't stop. I was overcome by the music of their words, humbled by their honest anger and hope for the future. That morning I returned their reflections with gratitude for what they had shared.

Another of my summer privileges is staying overnight at the old cabin in the Coast Range. A

morning on the front porch with strong coffee and my journal is fertile ground for growing all kinds of thoughts. People do not impose themselves on this process. However, the birds are free to interrupt at any time, and often I give myself over to them, my notes becoming liberally punctuated by bird names and songs. On a July morning a rare mist hung from the mountains across the valley, and the symphony of summer residents had begun to wane. Yet Band-tailed Pigeons were still whooping from the northern ridge, an energetic House Wren chattered from atop the woodpile and then flitted by and disappeared into a gap between weathered boards of a falling down shed, and an Olive-sided Flycatcher belted out his "quick-three-beers" from a fir at the edge of the browning meadow. A family of Barn Swallows that nest every year in the open garage were flying in fluttering chattering arcs against the overcast, when they were joined by a group of Violet-green Swallows. The Barn Swallows were having none of this violation of their summer airspace and a dogfight ensued as they went after the Violet-greens like tiny fork-tailed fighter jets. I stopped writing and stared upward with curious fascination. Who would prevail in this aerial altercation? After a few minutes the home team with the funny tails won out, and the Violet-greens fluttered off to search for insects in more congenial surroundings.

July waned and the chorus of feathered reptiles wound down. A question materialized: do snakes sing? Besides the intense buzzing of a rattlesnake discovered by one of my ophidiophobic herpetology students, perhaps not, unless we significantly loosen our definition of music. The summer had some rough edges, and a friend had recently told me that I needed to relax. So on an afternoon in the Coast Range I breathed in the overcast, holding it just long enough to smooth my rumpled diaphragm, then trudged toward the spring to fill a bottle for the trip home. Stretched in the dry meadow near the edge of the forest was a ringneck snake with olive back and bright orange collar, his belly the color of a summer sunset, twelve small inches of serpent absolutely singing with color. Because the ringneck is my second favorite snake behind the slow and stately rubber boa, I had to have a portrait. But snakes don't

live for photo ops, and when I reached to corral him he bolted, his coral red tail corkscrewing repeatedly, screaming, "Mister take this piece and leave my head and handsome collar be!" But I was as bent on getting his picture as he was on escape, and my arms were longer and faster. Finally, after ducking under one boot and then the other, he cowered into a sweet little bundle of snake. I choked down a lot of self-loathing and then took one of the finest snake pictures that I own. Placing him gently at the base of a tree, I finished my trek to the spring for a little water and a lot of absolution for my sins.

At the shriveled September end of summer, the morning music is stillness. My grandson had flown, the moon of his white hair rising on glinting aluminum into an eastbound sky, leaving me his freshly made crater, crumbling sides seeking some

new angle of repose. I filled the hole as best I could with time at the cabin. All that remained of the Barn Swallow clan in the garage was a pile of guano on a wood table directly beneath a muddy cup glued to the rafter, a minor inconvenience for their summer gifts of swooping, chattering, and mosquito eating. In the afternoon I looked up to see that the family of Violet-green Swallows had silently declared victory, filling the blue airspace now empty of Barn Swallows. Darkness came. There was the pulsing stridulation of cricket song. Their music inspired a gentle tapping of fingers, the beginning of a growing insistence, anticipation of the rains that will bring us salmon song, mushroom song, and a chorus of hopeful greens.



Ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus*)

Photo by Tom Titus

Events of Interest in the Community

Lane County Audubon Society

You can access the current issue of *The Quail*, LCAS's excellent newsletter, from their website: <http://www.laneaudubon.org/>. A summary of their upcoming monthly meeting can be found there, as well as many other interesting avian tidbits.

Saturday, 20 September, 8 am-noon. Third Saturday Bird Walk. Site and leader to be determined.

Tuesday, 23 September, 7:30 pm. Birding in Bolivia: From Lowlands to Highlands. Dennis Arendt will report on a birding trip he, Kit Larsen, Jim Regali and Roger Robb took in Bolivia in November 2013. They began in the eastern lowlands in the large city of Santa Cruz, then went to Cerro Tunari near Cochabamba, the flat Altiplano near Oruro, and tall peaks around La Paz and Lake Titicaca. Expect spectacular photographs and stories. 1645 High St., Eugene.

Mt. Pisgah Arboretum

Sunday, 14 September, 9:30 am-12:30 pm. Back to Basics- Field Sketching Workshop. Join Natural Science Illustrator Kris Kirkeby for a sketching workshop. Learn to capture images of your nature walks quickly using simple drawings to record those memories. Kris will provide tips for setting up your composition, learning how to emphasize the focus of your sketch and some easy ways to do a bit of shading in your field sketches. Use these techniques when you're out with groups who are always urging you to 'hurry up' as you pause to do a little sketching! Members: \$25, Non-members: \$30. Registration required. Call (541)747-3817 to register.

Saturday, 20 September, 12pm-2pm Herbalism Walk. Join herbalist and survivalist Anna Bradley for a look at our native and non-native helpful plants. We will cover plant uses ranging from medicine and food, to utilitarian and quick first aid. We will also cover any hazards and learn how to ID the harmful or poisonous plants in our area. Meet at the Arboretum Visitor Center. \$5, members free.

Sunday, 21 September, 8-10:30 am. Fall Bird Walk. Join Nature Guide Chris Roth and Julia Siporin for another monthly bird walk intended for people with all levels of birding experience, beginner to advanced. We'll use vocalizations, habitat, and behavior clues for identification of early-fall residents and migrants. Come discover or rediscover the Arboretum's avian diversity. Please bring binoculars. Option to continue the walk until noon for those who are interested. Meet at the Arboretum Visitor Center. \$5, members free.

Tuesday, 23 September, 10 am-noon. Fall Fruits and their Dispersal Ecology. Fall fruits are a joy to explore at Mt Pisgah Arboretum because they occur in such variety and beauty. Join botanist Gail Baker on this walk for all knowledge levels. You'll define a true fruit, botanically speaking, observe their diversity and learn about how their colors, textures, sizes, ripening times and chemistry influence how their cargos, the seeds, are dispersed. Meet at the Arboretum Visitor Center. \$5, members free.

Saturday, 27 September, noon-2pm. Baby and Family Walk at the Arboretum. Learn about the many carrier options available these days with Erin Gilliam of The Babywearing Network. Try out a carrier and find the best fit for you and your child during a walk on the Arboretum trails with Jenny Laxton, the Arboretum Education Program Coordinator. Meet at the Arboretum Visitor Center. \$8 per family, members free.

Friends of Buford Park and Mt. Pisgah

Mondays, 15, 22, 29 September, 9 am-noon. Morning Regulars. Monday Morning Regulars work on habitat restoration projects wherever they are most needed each week. Their work includes working in our native plant nursery as well as planting native species and removing invasive species around Buford Park. Contact volunteer@bufordpark.org for more information.

Saturday, 4 October, 10 am-noon. Great Willamette Cleanup. We will meet at Turtle Flats, near the confluence of the Coast and Middle Forks of the Willamette River, to clean up both habitat and trash. Contact volunteer@bufordpark.org for more details, including on the party afterwards.

Nearby Nature Go to <http://www.nearbynature.org/events> for information on NN activities, or call 541-687-9699.

Wednesday, 17 September, 9 am-noon. Day of Caring Restoration Celebration. Meet at the Water Wise Garden patio outside the Alton Baker Park Host Residence. Wear work clothes and bring a water bottle. Please call 541-687-9699 or email info@nearbynature.org to let us know you're coming.

Saturday, 27 September, 9 am-noon. Restoration Celebration with SOLVE. Help with litter patrol in Alton Baker Park in partnership with SOLVE's Beach and Riverside Cleanup. Meet outside the Alton Baker Park Host Residence. Wear work clothes and bring a water bottle. To register as an individual or a group, go to <http://www.solveoregon.org/get-involved/events/nearby-nature-alton-baker-park-cleanup>.

Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter

Thursday, 18 September, 7 pm (new time!). Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, the Gold Standard for Protecting Our Most Important Natural Treasures. Bridget Callahan, wilderness campaign organizer at Oregon Wild, will tell us how this landmark offers a special opportunity to celebrate past victories, consider the value of Wilderness, and explore current campaigns to expand Wilderness protections in Oregon. We will highlight the Crater Lake Wilderness proposal, and explore the Kalmiopsis wildlands, both of which are currently threatened by logging, mining, and off-road vehicles. Meeting location: Conference Room at Lane County Mental Health, see above for directions. For more information call 541-349-9999. Conference Room at Lane County Mental Health, 2411 MLK Blvd.

North American Butterfly Association, Eugene-Springfield Chapter

Monday, 13 October, 7 pm. Our first Fall/Winter/Spring lecture. Jim and Sue Anderson will give the presentation, at the Eugene Garden Club, 1645 High St.

The University of Oregon's Museum of Natural and Cultural History

Exhibit Hours: Tuesday through Sunday, 11 am-5 pm

Current Exhibits

- Explore Oregon: 300 million years of Northwest natural history.
- Site Seeing: Snapshots of Historical Archaeology in Oregon.
- Oregon - Where Past is Present. 15,000 years of Northwest cultural history and 200 million years of geology.
- Highlights of the Jensen Arctic Collection.

WREN (Willamette Resources and Educational Network)

Thursday, 18 September, 6-7:30 pm. Volunteer Meet & Greet. WREN has opportunities for college students looking to fulfill requirements for graduation, as well as unpaid internships. Eugene Public Library, 100 W. 10th Ave., Singer Room.

We welcome new members! To join ENHS, fill out the form below. 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: _____



Moonrise from Lamar Buffalo Ranch, YNP
Photo by Rick Lamplugh



Searching for mountain lion sign in YNP
Photo by R. Lamplugh

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P.O. Box 5494
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If you now receive NT through the mail and you wish to begin receiving it electronically, contact Ruth BreMiller at brem@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Dues are due.

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ENHS Schedule of Speakers and Topics for 2013-2014 and for 2014-2015

- 19 Sept. 2014** – Rick Lamplugh A Winter's Immersion in Wild Yellowstone
17 Oct. 2014 – R. M. Pyle – From Ancient Capitol to South of the Clouds: Butterflies and Others in Wild China (joint with NABA Eugene-Springfield Chapter)
21 Nov. 2014 – George Wuerthner – Praise the Dead: the Ecological Role of Dead Trees
12 Dec. 2014 – John Marzluff – Welcome to Subirdia
16 Jan. 2015 – James Cassidy – Soil: What it is and How it Works!
20 Feb. 2015 – Shelly Miller – Native Freshwater Mussels in the Pacific Northwest
20 Mar. 2015 – Paul Engelmeyer – Conservation strategies: seabirds and forage fish
17 April 2015 – Marli Miller – Roadside Geology of Oregon: Some Highlights
15 May 2015 – Pat Orm – Wings in the Night: A Glimpse into the Mysterious World of Bats