

Nature Trails

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OUR MARCH MEETING IS CANCELLED

Here is an announcement from Lane County Public Health, put out on Wednesday, 11 March 2020: “Residents who are who are 60 or more years old, and residents who have pre-existing cardio or respiratory conditions, or are immune-compromised are urged to avoid large gatherings,” the news release read. “Examples of pre-existing conditions include asthma, cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Large gatherings include church services, movies, concerts and performances or similar events. We urge residents who meet the criteria above to be cautious about attending any event that brings large groups of people together in a confined area.”

Because many of our members are 60 years old or older the ENHS board feels it would be improper to ignore this announcement and hold our March meeting. We also recieved this message 11 March at 4:22 pm from from UO President Michael Schill: “Effective Sunday, March 15, the UO will cancel nonessential events and gatherings of more than 50 people.” We will determine whether to maintain our schedule in April and May based on the status of the disease spread and directives from our public health authorities.

We will place announcements on our website, which is undergoing change:

The Eugene Natural History Society website has moved to a new host at: <http://eugenenaturalhistorysociety.org/>
This is a new site under old management. Changes and improvements to the site will be ongoing. If you have any questions or concerns please let Tim Godsil know at tgodsil@gmail.com

Accepting Changes By Reida Kimmel

I have lived here in Fox Hollow for fifty years. Except for guns, loggers, and motorcycles, it's a quiet place and still pretty wild, but the landscape has changed and changed again over the decades. Our first explorations took us through salvage-logged old forests, huge stumps torn from the earth, roots writhing as if crying "Too young to die." But over the years we watched a new forest grow, healthy young firs, until about ten years ago, when the trees became forty years old. The loggers returned to harvest the crop, and the land was laid bare. A tiny grove of truly ancient trees still remains atop a small acreage of unlogged BLM land to help us imagine what the land was like a century ago. The droughts of the past five years made Douglas-firs very susceptible to disease. We have been lucky so far, but on dryer properties many trees have died, often whole groves of them. The dead and many of their healthy brethren have been logged. Probably, as the West Coast becomes hotter and dryer, ponderosa pines, and sequoia will dominate the forests of our future.

Habitat loss due to logging and population growth has meant many changes in the animals we see. When the earth is not sterilized by herbicides, early-stage regrowth after a fire or logging provides the richest forage for wildlife. Deer and turkeys are abundant here. Occasionally bobcats and bears appear in the neighborhood. We know there are cougars; sightings are not uncommon, nor are losses of small livestock. However, some formerly rather common vertebrates—rabbits, porcupines, grouse, skunks, and rattlesnakes—have simply disappeared.

Last summer we enjoyed hosting a large flock of California Quail, several mothers and broods hanging out together, mostly on the driveway and the access road next door. Open areas with low brush and grasses were favorite feeding places. The quail with their bobbing topknots made a pretty sight. It had been years since quail had visited, and never have we seen such a large flock.

My little patch of earth has celebrated the mild winter by supporting our first ever overwintering Red-winged Blackbird. He has called and sung beautifully all winter and now has been joined by another male, smaller, with no red showing on his wings and capable of only a "chip chip" call. We took advantage of the pond's low water level and cut back the red-twig dogwoods. They had fallen over, mostly into the water, after last year's snow. This spring they will send up bright new red shoots, contrasting beautifully with the yellow stems and bright catkins of the big willows.

As they fly "inland" to enjoy our bird feeders, the blackbirds pass right by the Chickapecker, or is it

Chickapeckers? Since last spring when we first heard what we assumed was the unwelcome sound of mice enjoying themselves in the walls of the house, there has been a chickadee on the bamboo pole along the west side of our deck pecking insects, we presume, from the stems of the *Akibia* vine supported by the pole. The bird is, like the majority of our chickadees, a Chestnut-backed Chickadee and quite calm about the presence of people and dogs. We have never seen more than one bird on the perch. Hence the singular "Chickapecker."

We lived here, elevation 1000 feet in the foothills of the Coast Range, for nearly forty years before hummingbirds ever wintered here, but now there are one or two Anna's Hummingbirds using the feeder all year. If it is empty or frozen, I am pursued and buzzed until I do my duty. The tiny flies that emerge from trees and shrubs every warm or sunny day can provide protein, but the sugar-water feeders are life support for these tiny birds.

Cold winters used to bring Varied Thrushes to our yard where they scratched in the duff under bushes like happy chickens. They were abundant in the hills south of the house, as were Gray Jays, but the woods are gone. It must be the loss of habitat that has caused us to lose visits from these two beloved species that inhabit the Coast Range all year.

This winter has brought a different bird bonanza. Not long after the summer birds—goldfinches and Black-headed Grosbeaks—departed and the barn was emptied of the hordes of Barn Swallows and their multiple broods, we began to have visits from a large mixed flock of chickadees, both Black-capped and Chestnut-backed, accompanied by a very few Golden-crowned Kinglets, which of course never used the feeders. The resident pair of nuthatches fed with the chickadees, and four to six Spotted Towhees cleaned up under the feeders. September was very mild and softly wet. There was plenty of forage everywhere for small seed eaters, but "our" birds loved their sunflower seeds. We have four tube feeders. We were filling them every other day. Then came the return of the goldfinches, approximately twelve of them, all in winter drab, all voracious. We filled the feeders daily. It was not until November that the goldfinches departed. The chickadee mob is still with us. I love these little birds. I could watch them endlessly, but I long for the Bushtits. They never visit unless it is very cold. One can always hope. We have two suet feeders hung and are awaiting a visit.

It is a myth that towhees and juncos are totally ground feeders. Both utilize our feeders and the suet holders very efficiently. Normally we have many juncos in all the seasons except summer, when they

disappear for breeding. They do not go far. I can hear their clicking conversations in the bushes when I walk behind our property. In the fall dozens of juncos return to clean up the seeds in the driveway and the riding arena, but the winter population is smaller. A few weeks ago, however, a large contingent arrived and have become a major presence at the feeders. There is considerable aggression amongst the juncos, I presume between males thinking about the breeding season. It is a mistake to think of juncos as just dull common little birds. The tiny birds have big stories to tell. All the color morphs, from the Slate-colored Juncos of the East to our Oregon Juncos with their

black or grey heads and rosy buff body markings, are the same species, though possibly in the process of speciating. Eastern juncos migrate. Called “snow birds” by upper Midwesterners, they come south to our northern states from Canada every winter. Western juncos do not migrate, or just a little bit, from campuses and suburbs to the hills to breed.

The earth is changing. Maybe we can avoid disaster. Maybe not. But there are still so many things in the natural world to give joy. Let’s appreciate them more than ever.

Spring Again By August Jackson

The creek is roaring—a disagreement loud enough to cancel the background noise of the interstate as water and earth renegotiate terms following a prolonged dry season. The land is long on memory and quick to share every twist and turn of past seasons’ grievances but long on hubris, too. In the end water has its way. Cheerful, liquid thrushsong emanates from clumps of mistletoe on arching creekside oak boughs as the first flock of Western Bluebirds arrives, carrying winter on their wings and summer-sky blues on their backs and contributing a little brightness to the progressively waning light of approaching solstice.

Three Decembers and three Black Phoebes and the same one I assume and would know if I had taken the time to introduce myself. The same one, I assume, because they’re not quite yet common here in any month. Around the time home became my parents’ house, a Dark-eyed Junco with a patch of leucistic white on the left cheek began to visit the scratched-bare ground below the feeders in the winter. We’d both return every winter break—me from college and him out of nowhere, and onward as my winter break transformed to a couple of paid days off to visit with family, until he did as well as Juncos can do and didn’t show any longer. His predictable presence was a comfort in changing times as the phoebe is now, though the phoebe represents a change for all of us and not just a personal transition. A Black Phoebe wasn’t likely to survive a winter this far north twenty years ago.

I’m building a frog pond in my front yard. On densely overcast nights when the streetlights reflect off the low gray ceiling, so does the din of chorus frogs in a canal a quarter mile away. But their calls don’t reach in through open bedroom windows to drown out the sounds of Pioneer Parkway meeting Centennial. I grew up with winter frog song, and

there’s nothing like it, particularly when short dark days necessitate a reacquaintance with the simple pleasures. So the kids across the street will grow up with that sound too. The days are warming, and tadpoles will be hatching soon and a month or two later dying by the thousands in shallow ditches that might have supported them through their final metamorphosis last spring, but not this year. My motives aren’t strictly altruistic, but I’ll move several dozens of these destined-to-die pollywogs into my monkey-wrenched frog pond built through filtering out all but the heavy clay from the soil in a corner of my yard. I’m grateful for my landlord.

The disembodied croaking of chorus frogs on damp January nights finds new home in the throats of Sandhill Cranes on sunny February afternoons. As the orderly V-flock hits a pocket of warm air rising off the hillside, seventy lanky dinosaurs disarray into a multi-layered cluster, kettling for a moment before sailing off again in a roughly northbound line. Mount Pisgah is both landmark and elevator. For these cranes it has been, perhaps, for millennia.



Photo by A. Jackson

On an early March afternoon, I leave my office early enough to give myself two hours of warm sunlight. Mount Pisgah is staircase and sanctuary. In fifteen minutes,

I'm on a seldom-used trail and I won't see another person for an hour. I still move about as fast as I used to, but even on a good day, I have to push through a chronic illness that feels like carrying a fifty-pound pack on toothpick legs and has my heart racing just the same. I can't pull this off all the time, and half the time that I can it still feels like hell until I beat down my body's protestations. *Save it for tomorrow morning.* The trail is muddy and incised and is a

temporary creekbed in several spots where it interrupts water seeping from the hillside. A few more switchbacks before the trail levels out for a good while and my heart rate levels out and my footsteps mix with the fresh tracks of a young cougar. I peel off my shoes and stuff my socks in a pocket. Simple pleasures. I've made it through another winter too.

ENHS Field Trip to John Day Fossil Beds, 29–31 May. SIGNUP DEADLINE: 26 March, 2020

Our annual field trip will explore the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument in eastern Oregon. The beds, up to 40 million years old, have revealed thousands of species, which represent a large portion of North American evolutionary history. We will stay at OMSI's Hancock Field Station in cabins with bunk beds. Cost is \$110 per person for 2 night's room plus meals. This is a fabulous opportunity to visit some of the best and most beautiful geological formations in Oregon. We encourage you to attend.

We plan to focus on two areas of the Fossil Beds, the Clarno and Sheep Rock Units, and will visit the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center. Nick Famoso, UO PhD and head paleontologist at the Paleontology Center, will be our guide on Saturday. There will be ample time for exploring paleontology, geology, and botany and for photography and hiking. Check out www.nps.gov/joda for more information about the area.

To help us meet OMSI's requirements for final reservations, we **must receive email notice of your intent to join the trip ASAP and receive your full payment by 26 March**, with no refunds after that date. Note that we will not consider a person as signed up for the trip until we receive full payment. For questions, call Judi Horstmann 541-345-1264 or email her at horstmann529@comcast.net Send payment to: ENHS, PO Box 5494, Eugene, OR 97405.

Events of Interest in the Community

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ANY OF THE EVENTS IN THIS LIST YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE ORGANIZATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE EVENT HAS BEEN CANCELLED

McKenzie River Trust

Friday, 3 April, 10 a.m. to noon. Ethnobotany Tour of Waite Ranch. Join McKenzie River Trust, the [Siuslaw Watershed Council](#), and Ashely Russell for an ethnobotany tour at [Waite Ranch](#). Russell is the Water Protection Specialist for the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. She is a Coos (Miluk) Tribal Member and has been recognized for her knowledge of culturally significant species, including Tribal first foods and weaving materials. In 2010, MRT bought the Waite property, intending to restore it to its historic ecological state as a tidal wetland by re-establishing full tidal exchange to the property. MRT has partnered with the Siuslaw Watershed Council to manage Waite Ranch's restoration. For a map and to register go to <https://www.mckenzie-river.org/events/list/ethnobotany-tour-of-waite-ranch/>

Lane County Audubon Society

Saturday, 21 March, 8 a.m. Third Saturday Bird Walk. The walk will take place at Finley Wildlife Refuge and be led by Caryn Stoess and Duncan Evered. The exact meeting place at Finley is to be determined. Details will be posted on the LCAS Facebook page: [facebook.com/pages/Lane-County-Audubon-Society/330177413824](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lane-County-Audubon-Society/330177413824), and on the website: laneaudubon.org.

Tuesday, 24 March, 7 p.m. All Tied Up in Knots: Seven Years with *Calidris canutus*. In a slide show of her original paintings, Janet Essley explores the fascinating life cycle of the Red Knot, their long-distance migrations, their amazing physiology, and the conservation challenges they face. This medium-sized sandpiper is a regular guest along the Oregon Coast during its spring and fall migrations. Eugene Garden Club, 1645 High St.

Mt. Pisgah Arboretum (all these MPA events will occur rain or shine; meet at the Arboretum Visitor Center, and don't forget your parking pass)

Friday, 27 March, 10 a.m. to noon. Wildflower Walk. Join Arboretum Interpretation Coordinator August Jackson on a walk exploring the Arboretum's early spring wildflowers. Learn the identification and natural history of up to 20 native wildflowers. Perfect for beginning and intermediate plant enthusiasts. Leave with a greater understanding and appreciation of the Willamette Valley's native flora, and learn the keys to identifying some of Oregon's most common wildflowers. \$5, members free.

Saturday, 11 April, 10 a.m. to noon. Ethnobotany Walk. How did indigenous residents of the Willamette Valley view the plants that provided them with food, shelter, medicine, and spiritual knowledge? Join us for an easy walk exploring the

historical relationships between people and plants at MPA. Led by anthropologist Madronna Holden. \$5, members free.
Sunday, 12 April, 8 to 11 a.m. Bird Walk. Join Julia Siporin and Joni Dawning for another monthly bird walk intended for people with all levels of birding experience. We'll use vocalizations, habitat, and behavior clues for identification of our spring migrants and year-round residents. Come discover the Arboretum's avian diversity. Please bring binoculars. Option to continue the walk until noon for those who are interested. \$5, members free.

Friends of Buford Park and Mt. Pisgah

Monday Morning Regulars. 9 a.m. to noon. Contact volunteer@bufordpark.org for more information.

Tuesdays and Thursdays Nursery Work. 9 a.m. to noon. Meet and work at the Native Plant Nursery at Buford Park. Enter Buford Park from Seavey Loop Road. Turn LEFT after crossing the bridge and drive ¼ mile to the nursery.

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

Go to https://mnch.uoregon.edu/files/2020-01/WinSpr2020Guide_FINAL_OPT.pdf for a listing of MNCH's events.

Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter

Monday, 16 March, 7 p.m. Return to Crete: Wildflowers and History on a Mediterranean Island. MEETING CANCELLED.

Saturday, 4 April, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Field Trip: Sweet Creek Falls. Look for early wildflowers with Marty Stein and Armand Rebishke of Siuslaw National Forest. Meet at South Eugene High School at 8:30 or Mapleton AlphaBits at 9:30 for carpooling.

Nearby Nature

Saturday, 14 March, 1 to 3 p.m. Citizen Science Saturday: Wildflower Wander. Help catalog the amazing diversity of spring wildflowers blooming right in the heart of Eugene. Learn about and take pictures of all that you see as you wander through Alton Baker Park's Wildflower Hollow and beyond. Open to all but designed for adult participants. If you have a smartphone or a camera, bring one to take pictures. Smartphone users please load the iNaturalist app onto your phone if possible. Members free, non-members \$7. Meet outside Nearby Nature's Yurt in Alton Baker Park.

Thursday, 26 March, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. No-School-Day Adventure: Incredible Journeys. Adventure there and back again as we soar across countries and swim between hemispheres. Play migration games, hear incredible stories of strength and skill, design a kite, do a feeder watch, and observe awesome ospreys! \$50 members/\$60 non-members. Scholarships available. Ages 6–9, maximum of 12 kids. After-care 3–4 p.m. Outdoors in Alton Baker Park. Register online or call 541-687-9699.

Friday, 27 March, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. No-School-Day Adventure: Puddle Power. Ponder the power of water with us as we play Mountain Melt, build in our stream table, weave a river's web of life, make mud pies, and build like beavers. \$50 members/\$60 non-members. Scholarships available. 6–9, maximum of 12 kids. After-care 3–4 p.m. Outdoors in Alton Baker Park, Learnscape, 622 Day Island Road. Register online or call 541-687-9699.

WREN (Willamette Resources and Educational Network)

For WREN's upcoming events go to <http://wewwild.blogspot.com/>

ENHS welcomes new members! To join, fill out the form below. Membership payments allow us to give modest honoraria to our speakers and 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: Family \$25.00
Individual 15.00
Life Membership 300.00
Contribution _____

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

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

ENHS. Officers and Board Members 2019–2020

President: Dean Walton dpwalton@uoregon.edu 541-346-2871

Vice President: Rebecca Hazen rebeccahazen2011@comcast.net

Immediate Past President: Tom Titus tomtitus@tomtitus.com

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Treasurer: Judi Horstmann horstmann529@comcast.net

Board: Ruth BreMiller, John Carter, Tim Godsil, August Jackson, Phil Johnson, Reida Kimmel, Kris Kirkeby,

Dave Wagner, and Kim Wollter. Herb Wisner, emeritus

Website Webmaster: Tim Godsil tgodsil@uoregon.edu

Nature Trails: Editor: John Carter jvernoncarter@comcast.net; Support Staff: Ruth BreMiller, Reida Kimmel, Kim Wollter

2019–2020 Speakers and Topics

17 Apr.	John Bishop	The Weevil Empire: How Insects Rule Plant Succession at Mount St. Helens and Other Stories from the Pumice Plain
15 May	David Wagner	Mosses, Liverworts, and Hornworts