

# Nature Trails

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*Bombus*. Photo by L. Ponisio

## Bees and Wildfire

**Lauren Ponisio**

Department of Biology, University of Oregon

**Friday, 15 April 2022, 7:30 p.m.**

The Eugene Natural History Society invites you to their April Zoom meeting. The Zoom session will open at 7:00. This allows everyone time to get connected and join in friendly conversation. Our meeting will begin at 7:30. Time: 15 April 2022, 07:00 p.m. Pacific Time (US and Canada). Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/97499095971?pwd=eE9sdG9hSHMvOHhIUEJuU21wT20rdz09>



Lauren Ponisio grew up in Fresno, California. As a youngster she had no concept of wild plants or wildlife. Plants, to the young Ponisio, were either agricultural crops, things in the family garden, or weeds. The idea of natural community had never entered her head. But she did grow up with a sense of the importance of bees. There was the annual almond festival, which featured lots of bees, and there was the local newspaper—*The Fresno Bee*.

Ponisio went directly from high school in Fresno to Stanford University. Already she knew she wanted to learn more about pollinators, and for her undergraduate research effort she worked with a butterfly expert. She continued this effort in her master's degree work, also at Stanford.

For her Ph.D. she went to the Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management at the

University of California, Berkeley. For her research project she worked with Claire Bremen on bee conservation. During this time Ponisio learned about the wealth of wild bee species in the world.

Following UCB, Ponisio was a postdoctoral fellow for two years at the Berkeley Institute of Data Sciences. She went from there to an Assistant Professorship at UC–Riverside. After a couple of years there she came north to her present position in the Department of Biology at the University of Oregon.

I asked her whether she considered herself an entomologist or an ecologist. Definitely a community ecologist, she answered.

Her Web site is wonderful: <http://www.ponisiolab.com/>. You can see the various members of her lab, look up her recent publications, and learn about her philosophy of research and her professional interests. You can listen to an interview she gave on Jefferson Public Radio about a topic quite similar to what she'll be talking to us about: <https://www.ijpr.org/show/the-jefferson-exchange/2021-04-09/mon-8-30-curious-bees-in-the-trees-and-elsewhere>. You can also hear her in this radio broadcast: <https://www.klcc.org/nature/2021-01-26/wildfires-open-forests-for-wildlife-and-research>.

Here's her summary of what she'll be talking to us about.

While pollinator community restoration is fairly well studied in agricultural systems, relatively little is known about maintaining community richness and health in natural habitats. Conserving these populations is critical to sustaining wild plant and animal populations that are reliant on pollination and are a possible source of pollinators for agriculture. In particular, forests are increasingly recognized as important habitat for pollinators, including bees, but we have limited knowledge of the forest management practices that promote species-rich and healthy communities. Filling this knowledge gap is especially critical given ongoing wildfire regime changes in forests in the western U.S. and the ways these changes are affecting the habitat available to support pollinators. I will review our current understanding of the effects of fire on plant–pollinator communities and ongoing projects in the lab aimed at understanding postfire community assembly and health.

Please join us at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, 15 April, to hear Lauren Ponisio's presentation, "Bees and Wildfire." The Zoom link is on the cover page.

### **ENHS Field Trip: John Day Fossil Beds, 3–5 June 2022**

**SIGNUP DEADLINE: April 25**

ENHS is excited to announce that our annual field trip will explore the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument in eastern Oregon. The Fossil Beds, up to 40 million years old, contain thousands of species, which represent a large portion of North American evolutionary history. All interested people (members or not) are welcome on this trip.

We will stay at OMSI's Hancock Field Station in cabins with bunk beds. Cost is \$120 per person for two nights of lodging and meals (breakfast and dinner). This is a fabulous opportunity to visit some of the best and most beautiful geological formations in Oregon. We plan to focus on two areas of the Fossil Beds (the Clarno and Sheep Rock units) and the Thomas Condon Paleontology Center. Ample time will be available for hiking and photography and to explore the paleontology, geology, and botany of this amazing place. See [www.nps.gov/joda](http://www.nps.gov/joda) for more information about the area.

To allow us to meet OMSI's requirements for final reservations, we must receive e-mail notice of your intent to join the trip as soon as possible and receive your full payment by 25 April, with no refunds after that date. We will not consider a person signed up for the trip until we receive full payment.

For questions, contact Judi Horstmann via e-mail ([horstmann529@comcast.net](mailto:horstmann529@comcast.net)) or call and leave a message (541-345-1264).

**The rest of this issue of *Nature Trails* is a memorial to Herb Wisner (3/24/1922–2/20/2022), beloved member of ENHS for 56 years.**

The remembrances included here are from his daughter Linda, his sons Darryl and Dave, and many friends and colleagues. And a touching poem by Herb.

This introduction of Herb was written by **Jim Kezer** for the December 1978 issue of *Nature Trails*:

Herb was born and brought up along the New Jersey shore. He started out to become an electrical engineer but after three years in the U.S. Air Force (1943–46), where he worked in meteorology and communications, he decided on a career in science education. After earning a master's degree at Syracuse University, he taught Junior and Senior High School sciences from 1950 through 1966 at a central school in Unadilla, New York, located in the south-central part of the state on the Susquehanna River. During summers Herb studied ornithology under the famous Dr. Arthur Allen at Cornell University and at Audubon Camps in Maine and Wisconsin. He was subsequently employed for nine summers as an instructor at the Wisconsin Audubon Camp.

In 1962–63 Herb came to Oregon as a member of the Academic Year Institute for High School Biology Teachers, a project funded by the National Science Foundation. His outstanding work of that year resulted in an invitation to join the UO Biology Department, to teach courses in general biology, natural history, and field ornithology. He joined the staff in 1966 and has been here since. [Herb began a phased retirement in 1986 and retired fully in 1991.]

**MUSINGS by Herb Wisner**

What if all the world were one?  
What would we do for all our fun?  
Catch an insect, watch the birds  
Climb a hill, speak silent words.  
Wade in water? Study flowers?  
Count the stars? Live all the hours  
Spent in looking, seeing, learning  
Hearing, smelling, tasting, yearning.  
All these things and many more,  
Each experience a brand new door  
To new horizons, new delights  
Knowing nature's wondrous sights.  
Knowing man and knowing beasts,  
Knowing plants, enjoying feasts  
Of satisfaction for knowledge sake.  
Knowledge? Just an unknown lake  
So vast no matter what you drink  
Is still so full of thoughts to think.  
A life is not enough of time  
To learn the meter of the rhyme.  
But learn we must, the thirst is there.  
The reasons for, the why's and where's  
The who's and what's and when's and all  
The things to know 'bout spring and fall.  
Winter, summer, up and down  
Around, behind and when we've found

An answer, then we'll climb the hill  
And sit and contemplate until  
We find we haven't learned a lot,  
We've only fired a single shot.  
So from the hill we'll hurry down  
And on the way we'll look around  
And see the story the rocks have told  
The mysteries of the past unfold.  
Before our eyes, should we discern  
We can't afford to fail to learn.  
Should we falter in the task  
Of us might not the future ask  
How can you expect much of us?  
You left your knowledge in the dust.  
You didn't try, gave up too soon  
And took the easy way to doom.  
Conform and die or learn and live  
The best advice that we can give.  
Mark it now and mind your ways.  
Go on to bigger, better days  
And study as you have before  
And learn the keys to brand new doors.  
Each open door's a brand new room  
And thoughts are windows in the gloom.  
Ideas and fancies have their place,  
They all add details to the face  
Of knowledge that we seek to find  
By sharing, showing, being kind.

**Dan Gleason**

I first met Herb when I began working as an undergraduate TA and assisted him with General Biology labs. His keen interest in and enthusiasm for nature, and especially birds, was present in all he did and I worked with him at every opportunity I could. He helped stimulate my interest in birds that would continue through my life. I began helping Herb with his Ornithology course around 1972 after I had taken the class. I continued to assist him with the course, eventually taking it over several years later after Herb retired from teaching.

We engaged in many other birding adventures, including two Breeding Bird Survey routes for USFW. The routes included 50 stops, ½ mile apart, at which you were to note all birds seen and heard for 3 minutes. The survey had to start ½ hour before official sunrise, which at that time of year (late May) meant 5:02 a.m. These routes were near Oakland, Oregon, so we had to leave Eugene early, usually just after 3:30 in the morning. Herb often supplied donuts to help us through those early mornings, and we would end with a late breakfast at the Oakland Cafe.

I have many fond memories of working with Herb in the Ornithology course. He usually organized a couple of weekend trips for the class to Central Oregon. Davis Lake was a typical destination, and we took canoes to look at the many water birds on the lake. There was always a nesting colony of Eared Grebes on the lake, and Osprey often circled overhead. A second weekend included a stop at Smith Rocks, northeast of Redmond. We once had a student who was a “gymnasium” (high school) teacher from Switzerland. During the summer he usually led climbers up the Matterhorn in the Alps. We hiked the trail along the river, listening to the Canyon Wrens and to other birds in the canyon. When we returned to the parking lot, Werner was not with us! Then we heard yodeling and looked up to see him way atop the rocks across the canyon. We hadn’t even noticed him to be missing, and he had no climbing gear! There were so many other wonderful memories from that course, and the way Herb taught it formed the basis for how I later taught the class.

Herb had a good sense of humor, as many of us know, and I had some fun one time when I had to introduce him for a talk. I invented some imaginary birds and asked Barbara to draw these goofy birds, such as the “Yellow-breasted Sapsipper,” with a straw-like beak, and the “Fork and Spoonbill,” with one mandible a spoon and the other a fork-like structure! We both had a good sense of humor and had lots of fun when teaching.

Herb’s keen interest in birds was easily seen with his many birding activities, numerous books, and his private museum he had built in his backyard. But birds were certainly not his only interest. All of the natural world was fascinating to him. He would often stop to look closely at an insect he had seen or wander briefly off the trail to examine or photograph an emerging flower. He always found a way to encourage any spark of interest any student had. His interest in the natural world was an inspiration to many students throughout the years. I have many times met former students of his who expressed fond memories of the courses they took from Herb.

### Reida Kimmel

Herb was a wonderful gardener. Whatever he planted grew and prospered in his care, and he was always very generous with his plants. He gave me many interesting and pretty starts and was always surprised whenever his gifts did not prosper on our north-facing slope 600 feet higher elevation than his home. Still, he gently persisted in giving me wonderful things. Once, many, many years ago, he came to a potluck at our farm, bringing a truly strange and glorious plant. Its strap-like leaves were green and edged with cream, and the lovely blooms were an unbelievably brilliant deep cerise. Everyone wondered what it was. Herb said, “an orchid.” “NO! NO! NO!” That cannot be an orchid, came the unanimous hue and cry. Smiling, Herb gently insisted that it was an indeed an orchid. Of course, he was right. Nowadays, *Bletilla striata* is a popular, inexpensive garden plant with cultivars available in numerous colors. But our plant is the most beautiful, thriving in a sheltered spot, spreading its territory a bit more each year, a shocking pink beauty in the front corner of our garden. This truly wonderful flower demands admiration.



So many of us hold memories of your sweet generosity living in our hearts and our gardens. Thank you, Herb.

### Albert Sisson

Herb lived a good life and captured it in a wonderful book, *My Life and Then Some*. I have fond memories of him at Unadilla Central School in New York.

I have one story about Herb, which might be a repeat, but I’m an old man and old men always repeat stories—I think it’s a rule. He was my driver’s education teacher in the Unadilla Central School. The exciting part of driver’s ed was going out in a car to practice driving with three teenage students and Herb riding shotgun. In 1957, all cars except luxury models had a standard shift, with a clutch and a shift lever. Herb’s side of the car was fitted with a dual brake pedal and clutch, the hope being that he could prevent a catastrophe or, failing that, prevent significant damage when one of us lost control starting on a hill or some other “tricky” maneuver.

We were in Sidney, NY one day when it was my turn driving. On a side street, Herb nodded and told me to drive out to Main Street. Straight ahead of us, in the direction that Herb nodded, was a short street going out to Main Street so I started in that direction. The car came to a halt with a racing motor as Herb applied his set of clutch and brakes. The short street was a one-way street in the wrong way. Legal nitpickers turned left to another side street to get to Main Street. To a proud teenager convinced that he knew all about driving, this was mortifying.

Herb claimed that he didn't remember this incident, which makes sense for a man who has more important things to remember. However, I remember it like it happened yesterday. It was most likely his revenge for all the teenage nonsense he had to endure. He didn't laugh out loud, he was too good of a teacher for that, but I know he was laughing on the inside. And now I smile every time I think about it. It's a nice memory.

He was so patient and kind. He never once got upset while we were learning to drive, which I think is truly remarkable. The world has lost a good man.

### **Dick Lamster: The Eugene Christmas Bird Count—A Herb Story**

When Herb arrived in Eugene in the 1960s he immediately began to participate in the Eugene Christmas Bird Count (CBC), and he took over as the Count's Compiler/Coordinator in 1986. He performed all the functions needed to have a successful CBC, which had grown from 53 Field Observers and 7 Home Counters to 105 Field Observers and 42 Home Counters by the time he relinquished the role in 2005.

I took over from Herb, and that first year I assembled a committee to do what Herb had been doing by himself, with help from Ruth, for the Chili Feed Countdown. Dan Gleason became the Species Compiler, Barbara Gleason became the Volunteer Coordinator, I convinced Herb to stay on as the Home Counters Coordinator, and Allison Mickel (with a crew of another three or four people) became the Chili Feed Coordinator. It took five of us to do what Herb had been doing by himself for 19 years!

Herb continued as the Home Counters Coordinator until a couple of years ago. His contribution to the Eugene CBC is immeasurable. He set in motion the basis for the CBC in the little town of Eugene, Oregon to become the ninth largest CBC in number of participants among the over 2,500 CBCs held in North America every year.

This is another example of the many remarkable things Herb accomplished in his long life.

### **Maevie Soles**

When I moved to Eugene in early 1993, I began attending Lane County Audubon Society (LCAS) bird walks and program meetings. Over time, I met most of the people associated with the local LCAS family. Herb and Ruth Wisner were two of my favorites. Each had sparkling eyes and kind-hearted, fun-loving personalities. I worked with Herb on a regular basis, especially after 2000 when I became president of the chapter. When we were planning an activity, Herb would pull out his Hallmark pocket calendar and check for his availability. His calendar was filled with activities for each day. He did keep busy!

Everything Herb did reflected his dedication to learning and teaching and his engaging personality. He never stopped learning new things and searching for ways to have a positive impact on the world and his fellow humans. Herb was truly an inspiration to me, and he was a remarkable person on many levels. On a personal note, he always supported and encouraged me in my efforts with LCAS and offered praise or problem-solving advice, depending on the situation. I lost my father to a heart attack when I was 17, and my life was deeply enriched by spending time with Herb. Through his example, he taught me about being a positive person, being tenacious about one's commitment to nature and science, and working diligently to achieve goals. He always sparkled with interest and curiosity about life and learning. He was driven to share his joy in the wonders of nature and was always fun to spend time with. When prompted he might burst into song, and more than once he led a "Happy Birthday" song at our LCAS program meetings. The LCAS feels like a family in many ways, and we will all miss Herb's steadfast, gentle guidance. Herb and Ruth glowed with humanity in its best light. Our one consolation is that they can be together again.

### **Kris Kirkeby: Herb, the Consummate Volunteer**

The first time I met Herb, shortly after moving here in 2000, we needed to check a date for something. Herb opened up his calendar book, and my eyes just about popped out of my head. That book was practically covered with inked entries of things he was going to do. That was my first hint of how much Herb was the consummate volunteer.

I served on the Lane County Audubon Society (LCAS) Board for a number of years and revamped my art/biology school curriculum to form the Audubon in the Schools program, which is still running. Herb was looking ahead to what would happen to the many and varied items in his ornithological collection. He really wanted them to be used locally. I did talk him into contributing a collection of nests that were a part of his uncle's collection to the University of Washington's Burke Museum in Seattle, but it was clear he had a hard time giving those up to a non-local place.

I did agree to come over and look at "stuff" that I could incorporate into the teaching collection for Audubon in the Schools. We went through quite a few things. And some of his nests with eggs have wowed young birders in the classroom many times. I knew that some of the things we looked at would not work for classroom use. I gently broke that



news to him. When I got home on the day he helped load up my car, as I was unloading I discovered he had sneaked in three additional items, including a rather large American Dipper nest, which was definitely too large to lug around to schools. This nest now resides in a nice acrylic case that LCAS uses in their education booth. I can just imagine his smile when my car pulled out of his driveway.

And I will miss that smile.

### **Alan Contreras**

I first met Herb Wisner in 1967, when I was 11 years old and had just discovered the world of birds. He was one of my steady mentors when I joined the ENHS board at age 16 and when I became president at age 18. In later years when I started writing bird articles and books, Herb always either had the obscure answer I needed or could find it in his library. He was many things to many people; to me he was always helpful and encouraging. It's strange to think that he is no longer here in person, yet his influence in our community will always be here.

### **Margaret Hadaway**

I first met Herb Wisner in 1983 when I was dating a long-time friend of his, Chip Jobanek. When Chip and I were married in March 1984, we were delighted that Herb and Ruth Wisner were guests at our wedding. Herb's magnificent private library and his wealth of knowledge were very helpful to Chip when he researched various articles for his book, *An Annotated Bibliography of Early Oregon Bird Literature Published Before 1935*. Herb and Ruth remained our friends for years, hosting us at their home or coming to dinner or events at our home. I appreciate the interest they took in our two children, even attending our son's wedding in June 2015. One of my enduring memories of Herb was his devotion to Ruth.

### **Charlene Larison**

I was fortunate to get a job working with Herb in the biology preparation room at the University of Oregon. Herb's breadth of knowledge and natural history expertise, along with his former teaching experience, made him an excellent fit in the prep room. In my first year Herb and I were out collecting for a flower lab. I sensed he was watching me as I headed toward a tall plant. It wasn't until my hand was halfway to the plant that he cautioned with a smile and a shake of his head that I might not want to pick that one ... it was poison oak! He had surmised that I wasn't familiar with this plant but waited until the last minute to save me.

Herb's fondness for donuts was known to all. One year, the student workers and I got the Rosebud Bakery to make him a birthday donut that was well over a foot in diameter. Herb was embarrassed, but with a red face he graciously accepted it and shared with everyone.

Not long after the loss of his wife Ruth, Herb stood up at an Audubon Society meeting and gave us this nugget: "Happiness depends upon something to do, someone to love, something to look forward to."

### **Tom Titus**

My most nerve-wracking job as ENHS president was running the monthly lectures. Herb didn't know how much I came to count on him in my early years. He was always front and center in the second row, always waving off the portable microphone, always announcing the next Lane County Audubon Society monthly speaker. Herb's stalwart expertise at the beginning of our meetings was my auditory antianxiety potion, a chance for me to breathe out some tension and continue forward with a little more grace and confidence.

### **David Wagner**

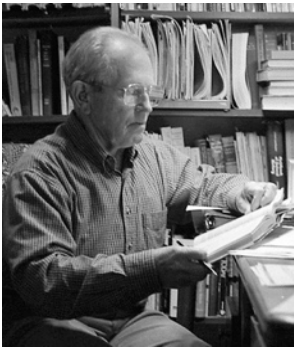
When I arrived in Eugene to manage the University of Oregon Herbarium nearly a half-century ago, two special people made me feel welcome and at home. These were not professors but brilliant instructors of natural history. Jim Kezer and Herb Wisner brought more students to love nature and appreciate biological science than I can imagine. Jim retired about the time I arrived, so I never watched him teach. However, I did have a chance to witness how Herb engaged his students. He would take his ornithology students on long, summer camping trips, and I visited his camps more than once. They made me appreciate the great value of direct experience living in the forest and exploring natural, wild lands. Those experiences gave his students a basic grounding in the science of biology that shaped lifetime careers. We hear back from them often.

### **Tom Bettman: Herb and Ruth**

Saw Herb on this bench this fall and said hello.  
He informed me it was dedicated to his wife.  
I said, "I know, Herb."



### **Patricia Johnston**



Herb and my late father, Charlie Johnston, became friends through my work as the West Eugene Wetlands (WEW) Project Manager back in the early 2000s. We were working on the design of an environmental education center within the WEW complex. Part of that vision was to incorporate Herb's extensive library into the education center. Willamette Resources and Educational Network (WREN) was formed as a 501c3 nonprofit organization to create both an environmental education program and the education center. Steve Gordan and Dan Gleason first introduced me to Herb.

Herb and my father spent many hours together cataloging Herb's library. My father took this picture of Herb with the intention that it be proudly displayed in the education center to honor Herb. Herb was a gentle soul with a generous spirit. I like to imagine my dad and Herb swapping stories yet again today.

### **Judi Horstmann**

Most of my contact with Herb entailed exchanging cordial greetings while picking up mail in the University of Oregon Biology Department office, listening to his spirited Audubon Society announcements at ENHS lectures, and attending ENHS Board meetings with him before he retired as treasurer, a position that he held for three decades. However, I remember attending a dinner/play performance at Actors Cabaret Theatre and finding Herb and Ruth at the next table, enjoying dinner and enthusiastically anticipating watching the play, which I think was *Cats*. Herb considered himself a thespian, having acted in several plays while in Unadilla, NY before the family moved to Eugene. I could tell that he really enjoyed his acting experiences, and I began to understand why his ENHS announcements were always delivered with a clear, loud, and enthusiastic voice, usually accompanied by humor. I will always remember the twinkle in his eye and smile on his face, his love for life and the natural world, and his dedicated commitment to educating and inspiring that same love in his students and colleagues.

### **Bob Fleming**

Although I enjoyed Herb's company over many years, meeting over lunch at an Indian restaurant or at Audubon meetings or on the annual Christmas Bird Count, admiring the flowers in his extensive backyard garden on Olive Street, marveling at his library and museum, or enjoying the birds coming to his feeders, I alas have no stories to share.

The best stories recount some kind of deprivation or unexpected difficulties, especially those with danger involved. Nothing like this ever arose for us. I always had such pleasant encounters with Herb because he was so knowledgeable, unassuming, and gentle and was such a good conversationalist. He was all you can ask for in a friend.

Herb, you are missed.

### **Dave Wisner: Son of a Science Teacher—Memories of Dad**

Dad filled my life with curiosity. Much of the world that was unseen by many became visible with Dad's guidance. Growing up with a dad that was a science teacher, even my science teacher, developed in me, and in many, a curious mind and a love of life (*bio*). As I mentally stream back over the past, a rush of the memories of Dad floods my mind. For me memories begin at the farm in Unadilla, a small town in upstate New York. Fifty acres of rolling land where the books and antiques would grow along with the pines and spruces planted behind our old farmhouse. This chosen land has

deep recollections of the stream that caught my rocks, the trees that felt my feet, the giant sugar maples that felt our poke as we tapped their sap, the smell of smoke as Dad and Grandpa boiled the sap down into thick liquid gold, the reds and gold of fall, the snowball forts of winter, and the daffodils of spring. Over the road was the pond, alive with tadpoles and frogs, beyond were the fields of corn, and up the hill were the springs of life. This was my world for ten wonderful years.

During these years, as each summer approached, our excitement rose. As soon as school was out, we would hop in the station wagon and travel 1200 miles to northern Wisconsin and the Audubon Camp there. Dad would teach waves of adult campers all about “Insects and Pond Life” and “Birding.” This was the grand adventure for us kids; exploring forests and fields, capturing bugs, trodding on bogs, gliding down rivers, spotting the Sandhill Cranes with “Good eyes!”, searching for agates, pressing leaves, finding skunks at the dump, swimming in the lake. This too was a child’s paradise, a place to love discovery.

After 7th grade with “Birdie” as my teacher, the call of Oregon pulled us to Eugene. Now it was the University with the Biology Department filled with jars of “things” and chemical smells and boxes of various items for the students to examine. Dad would bring home to me outdated science equipment: old telegraph clickers that I brought to life, old chemicals I’d convert into crystals, an old inverter to make the sparks fly, wires and tubes and stuff that would trigger the mind of a kid. Then off we’d go; banding with the mist nets, Krusteaz pancakes at Malheur, warblers at Cold Springs, Christmas Bird Counts, tide pool investigations, and lots of slides. Dad laid before me a world of opportunity that formed me into what I am today—a lover of science, and books, and music and art; a lover of life. He’s gone now, but he’s left me and my sister and my brother, all lovers of life and each other, and a thousand others that have discovered bits and pieces of *bio* that they’d once passed by.

### Darryl Wisner: The Gift of Curiosity



It was Einstein who said “I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.”

Out of the many gifts that my dad brought to this world, the one that I’m most thankful for is the gift of curiosity. This picture of him as a child shows him with a Cedar Waxwing sitting on his hand. The look on his face is one of sheer wonder and delight. For very nearly 100 years Dad possessed a curiosity and an inquisitive mind for our world—especially the natural world—and how it worked. He shared this curiosity with so many of us, encouraging us to explore, observe, and study, opening our minds to the beauty and magic of life.

So, from Dad, a recipe for a rich and wonderful life: Always be curious, always be learning, always be sharing. Find the wonder and delight in every moment and experience you can.

Thank you, Dad. Your son, Darryl

### Linda Wisner: Herb Wisner’s Daughter

When I was in junior high school in the small upstate New York village of Unadilla, my father taught the science classes. The kids called him “Birdie,” and I was “Li’l Chick.” They were not terms of endearment. But I was proud to be Herb’s daughter.

My introduction to birds and the natural world had come many years earlier. The first five summers of my life were spent at my father’s childhood home, a five-acre estate in New Jersey where my grandparents and great aunts and uncles ran a summer hotel in the main house. We lived in a bungalow behind the stables. And beyond the bungalow was their own private natural history museum, filled with stuffed birds, egg-filled nests, and shell and rock collections. Outside the large dining room window of my grandparent’s house, a broad platform feeder attracted dozens of birds, plus an albino squirrel. Vast gardens were all around. I was fascinated by it all.

As I turned six, we moved to a farm outside Unadilla. There dad also fed the birds. I would peer through the windows at the brilliant plumage of Baltimore Orioles clinging to orange halves. Blue Jays and Northern Cardinals added to the paintbox colors. Indoors, a taxidermied male Hooded Merganser lived in the corner of the dining room. I was forbidden to touch it, though I did manage, occasionally, to run my small fingers along the top of his feathery hood.

Out in the barn, many shelves were filled with the beginnings of Dad’s natural history library. In the yard, a large vegetable garden flourished. Wandering our 50 acres of hills, pond, woods, and creek was endlessly fascinating. Indoors and out, what interested my dad began to interest me.



We also started spending summers at the Audubon Camp of Wisconsin, where dad first taught “Insects and Pond Life,” and after a few years he began to teach adult campers about his beloved birds. With Dad’s blessing, I got to join botany field trips to floating bogs, hunt for agates, and swoop nets through the meadows to catch insects. I would make little gardens with plants I gathered from the woods, beginning to learn what it takes to garden, a skill I continue to hone and a love that I learned from my dad.

Camping in the Boundary Waters Canoe area, my bare feet would sink many inches into the lush mosses of the islands. Spruce Grouse were so tame I could almost touch them. And I learned first-hand about the leeches that swam in those waters. Natural history lessons, all.

When I was 14 we moved to Eugene, when dad took a position in the Biology Department at the University of Oregon. Though I got distracted by the high school theater department (an interest in acting also shared with my dad), I did not lose my love for what the natural world had to offer. Oregon and the West represented a whole new classroom, with ocean shores, high deserts, forests, and mountains unlike anything New York State had to offer. Our family explored it all, with Dad leading and teaching us, his bird book tucked into the back waistband of his khaki pants and binoculars around his neck.

Dad was a gentle teacher. In response to my questions of “why” and “how,” he would show me how to find out the answers for myself. Those lessons I still carry with me.

I still feed the birds, collect rocks, relish walks in the woods, create gardens, tilt my head up to watch the flocks of Canada Geese, Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, and the occasional Bald Eagle in the skies above my home on Sauvie Island. My brothers do the same where they live.

My last big project with my dad was the creation of his autobiography, *My Life and Then Some*. A book designer by profession, it made sense for me to turn his manuscript into a finished book, filled with the photos that illustrate his stories. That book helped me to know him so much better and appreciate him so much more.

I just wish he were alive to read this issue of *Nature Trails*, a publication he was a part of for decades. He would be so honored, as are we, his children. Thank you.





Wisners birding on the Oregon coast in winter.

The ENHS annual business meeting will occur at the beginning of the May 2022 meeting.

#### **ENHS Officers and Board Members 2021–2022**

President: August Jackson [augustjackson@ecolingual.com](mailto:augustjackson@ecolingual.com)

Vice President: Rebecca Hazen [rebeccahazen2011@comcast.net](mailto:rebeccahazen2011@comcast.net)

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Website Webmaster: Tim Godsil [tgodsil@uoregon.edu](mailto:tgodsil@uoregon.edu)

*Nature Trails*: Editor: John Carter [jvernoncarter@comcast.net](mailto:jvernoncarter@comcast.net); Support Staff: Ruth BreMiller, Reida Kimmel, Chuck Kimmel, Tom Titus, and Kim Wollter

#### **2021-2022 Speakers and Topics**

15 Apr. Lauren Ponisio

20 May Lauren Hallett

Bees and Wildfire

Siskiyou Plant Communities (cosponsored with the Emerald Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Oregon)