Nature Trails

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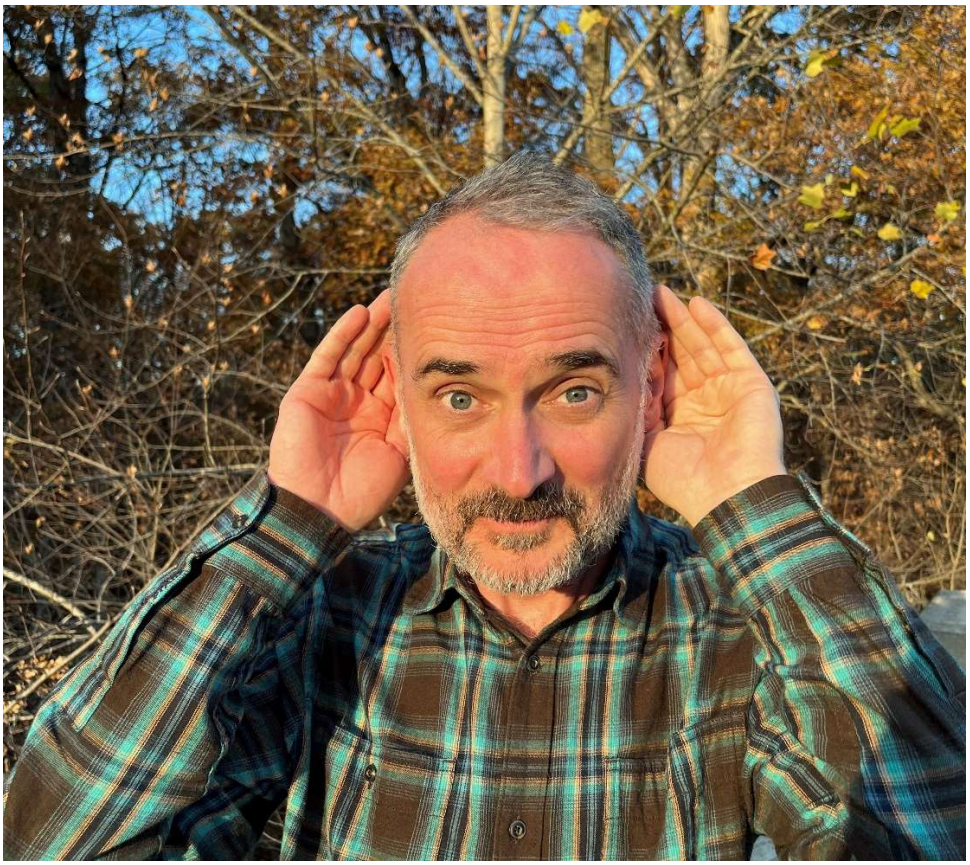
The Eugene Natural History Society is based out of the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya peoples who stewarded this land for millennia. Today most Kalapuya people are citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and continue to play an active role in local communities and in the stewardship of this land.



Sounds Wild and Broken: What Listening Can Teach Us About Ecology, Evolution, and Ethics

David George Haskell

Integrated Program in the Environment,
The University of the South, Sewanee, TN

Friday, 21 April 2023, 7:30 pm

This month's meeting will be a hybrid of in person and real-time Zoom. The in-person lecture will be held in **room 221 Allen Hall, University of Oregon campus.** Parking is across Franklin Blvd, north on Onyx St to the parking lot. For the link to the Zoom lecture, see our website at https://eugenenaturalhistorysociety.org/ or click here: https://zoom.us/j/97499095971?pwd=eE9sdG9hSHMvOHhIUEJuU21wT20rdz09

Expansive. This adjective best describes biologist and environmental writer David George Haskell. In an era that presses most scientists into becoming increasingly specialized, David has taken the opposite tack. His writing has anchored us in the tangible reality of a single tree, using it as a point of departure to describe a universe within and without. The poetic description of a red crossbill singing in the Colorado mountains kicks off an exploration into the sonic interplay between landscapes and animals. Evolutionary biology is the backdrop for fearless inquiries into our ethical responsibility for conserving millions of years of accumulated diversity, which is now threatened by human-induced extinction. The depth and breadth of David's writing elicits the sound of a sharp inhalation.

David's early years contained all the elements necessary for an extraordinary career. When asked *where are you from?* he startled a bit. The short answer might be "many places." He was born in London to scientist parents; his mother was a biologist who later worked with refugees, and his father was a physicist working on space science missions. When the family moved to Paris, young David got his literal and metaphorical hands dirty by poking around in ponds and growing food in the garden. His young brain was embossed with the sonic imprint of a Eurasian blackbird singing in their apartment garden. David remarked on his sharp recollection of that blackbird: "This is a reminder that we all carry within us dormant sensory memory, an internal compass waiting to be revived." His path as an evolutionary biologist began in high school and continues today. "Most of my writing is still heavily influenced by evolutionary thinking. One of the great challenges left in the Darwinian revolution is, I think, how do we integrate evolutionary thinking and ethical discernment?"

From Paris, David returned to the U.K. for an undergraduate degree in zoology from Oxford. He then dispersed westward to the United States for graduate school in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell, where he studied the effect of nest predation on the evolution of begging calls in nestling wood warblers. Somewhat paradoxically, he also worked on foraging behavior in ferrets. David credits his graduate experience at Cornell with teaching him the art of fine-grained listening; he "began to understand that we can not only identify birds and other species by ear but tune into their behaviors, their culture, and even their individual personalities by listening to their sounds. This was like adding a whole new dimension to my life, a huge expansion of the richness of everyday life." There is that idea again: *expansion*. Decades later, his graduate experience seems like a youthful harbinger of his latest book, *Sounds Wild and Broken: Sonic Marvels, Evolution's Creativity, and the Crisis of Sensory Extinction*.

David has now lived in the U.S. for about three decades and has resided in Colorado, Georgia, Maine, and New York. Most of his time has been spent in Tennessee, where he has been on faculty at University of the South in Sewanee, TN since 1996 and is now the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies. The high value that David places on education and outreach is manifest in his teaching and public presentations. His early courses had traditional titles such as Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, but recent teaching emphasizes the written word, especially environmental writing. His commitment and expertise have resulted in several educational awards, including a Faculty Award for Excellence in Scholarship/Creative Production and the Carnegie-CASE Professor of the Year for Tennessee. David shares the spoken word far beyond the halls of University of the South; his CV includes over 260 presentations for schools, nature centers, museums, and nonprofit organizations; over 30 radio and podcast interviews for such stations as NPR, ABC, BBC, and Sirius; five documentary film appearances; and a 2018 TEDx talk.

David's writing outlets are diverse. His CV lists 24 peer-reviewed scientific publications, and he is first author on most of them. His literary output borders on astonishing and comprises nearly 60 contributions to journals, essay collections, newspapers, magazines, and radio shows. His publications appear in diverse outlets, some of which are very well known (*The New York Times, The Guardian,* and *Orion Magazine*) and others more specialized (*Undark, Northern Woodlands,* and *Largehearted Boy*).

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of David's writing career is his books, of which he currently has four titles. *The Forest Unseen: A Year's Watch in Nature* (2012, Viking) was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and a PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award and won the Best Book Award from the National Academies, the National Outdoor Book Award, and the Reed Environmental Writing Award. *The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature's Great Connectors* (2017, Viking) won a John Burroughs Medal and an Iris Book Award. His latest book, *Sounds Wild and Broken* (2022, Viking), has so far been selected as an Editor's Choice at *The New York Times* and is a finalist for another PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award.

Following that abbreviated romp through David George Haskell's life and career, you'll understand why his presentation, cosponsored by the Eugene Natural History Society and the Native Plant Society of Oregon, promises to be outstanding. As a Fellow of the Linnean Society and a Guggenheim Fellow, David might command thousands of dollars for his appearances. However, he has requested that we convert our usual honorarium into a stack of 20 books to be given away at his lecture. For the first time, we will be hosting a raffle! With a small apology to our Zoom participants, an opportunity to take home a signed copy of *Sounds Wild and Broken* requires that you be in attendance on **21 April at 7:30 pm in 221 Allen Hall on the University of Oregon campus.** Whether or not you receive one of these 21 free books, you'll win by attending this outstanding talk: "Sounds Wild and Broken: What Listening Can Teach Us About Ecology, Evolution, and Ethics."

—Tom Titus

What's in Your Flowerpot?

by Stanley K. Sessions

A major part of the blame for why I am so fixated on salamanders can be laid at the feet of long-time ENHS member and University of Oregon emeritus professor Chuck Kimmel. Way back in the 1970s, as a struggling undergraduate, I heard from a friend of a friend that Chuck was looking for a new lab assistant. One day I wandered up to his lab and offered my assistance. Actually, I think I offered my body to science (which is a reflection of how well my undergraduate experience was going). Chuck put me in charge of a pan of axolotl larvae (*Ambystoma mexicanum,* a Mexican species of neotenic and permanently aquatic salamander that grows to a large size but otherwise retains larval characteristics into adulthood). And that's how it started for me.

He liked the way I came in every day to check on the larvae and kept them clean and well fed; so, after about a week he offered me a job! What happened next was the beginning of a long and wonderful journey. Chuck first expanded my responsibilities to cover an entire room of adult and larval axolotls, a room known as the Toadery. He also taught me all kinds of basic laboratory techniques, including tissue culture, histology, electron microscopy, and even microsurgery.

I was soon introduced to Chuck's colleague at the UO, James Kezer. I first encountered Jim, a salamander cytogeneticist and teacher extraordinaire, when he gave a guest lecture in an evolution course taught by the renowned geneticist Edward Novitski. I was soon working on salamander chromosomes at every opportunity in a tiny lab in the old science building.

When Jim (age 70 and recently retired) began planning a trip to Mexico to collect salamanders for his cytogenetic research, Chuck convinced him to take me along. Chuck had previously travelled there with Jim, and we were learning that southeastern Mexico was a hotspot of diversity for neotropical bolitoglossines, members of the family Plethodontidae, which are lungless salamanders that account for about half of all living salamanders in the world. We also learned that the world's expert on these salamanders was David B. Wake, Director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (MVZ) at University of California–Berkeley. I met Dave during my Mexican plethodontid salamander adventures with Jim, and he later invited me to apply to graduate school at Berkeley, which I did. After doing my Ph.D. research with Dave on (you guessed it!) salamanders and finishing two postdoctoral research fellowships, I took my one and only academic job at tiny Hartwick College

in upstate New York, where I worked for 30 years teaching and doing research on (you guessed it!) salamanders!

Fast forward to today (and getting back finally to the flowerpots). One of my former Hartwick students, Jessica Henderson (who now works as an environmental consultant for Pacific Gas and Electric), sent me a voice message about a friend of hers who had found some plethodontid salamanders in a residential area of southwestern Portland, OR. That was not surprising because several species of plethodontids are found in the Portland area, but the photos she sent looked like bolitoglossine plethodontids. Although the vast majority of bolitoglossines are found in Mexico and Central America, one bolitoglossine species is found in the foothills of the northern Cascades, the Oregon slender salamander (*Batrachoseps wrighti*), but these have never been found that far west. I had to go up to Portland to check it out.

I met my colleague Mike Murphy, a bird ecologist at Portland State University, and he and his wife Karmel went with me to the locality. Within minutes we found one of the salamanders, and it was indeed a *Batrachoseps* but not *B. wrighti*. I stared at it in disbelief, wondering whether we had discovered a new species! I contacted a *Batrachoseps* expert, Elizabeth Jockusch, one of my academic siblings from the Wake lab and now working at University of Connecticut. Elizabeth quickly put me in touch with one of her colleagues, Lauren Chan, who was working on (surprise!) invasive *Batrachoseps* in Oregon and Washington.

Lauren told me she had already found populations of the California slender salamander (*B. attenuatus*) in residential areas of Portland and Seattle. Her DNA work indicated that they all originated from the Bay Area of California. Our locality was new for her, so we arranged to meet there. We found a likely garden plot with lots of chunks of wood lying about. When we knocked on the door to ask for permission to investigate, we were joined by the entire family, laughing and hunting for salamanders. As usual, the kids knew exactly where to find them, and soon we had a sample of 10 adult salamanders. Yes, they were *B. attenuatus,* obviously thriving in their new environment. Lauren snipped off some tail tips (which quickly grow back, no harm done) for DNA analysis. She will be able to determine whether these salamanders spread from other localities in Portland or represent an independent invasion. Assuming they are unlikely to have any serious environmental impacts, we released them.

But how did they get there? As with many invasive species (and even invasive microbes such as HIV and COVID-19), we know where they came from but we're not sure how. We think these salamanders were transported from the Bay Area to Portland and Seattle in potted plants. If this hypothesis is supported by more data, then the California slender salamander may be spreading all up and down the coast of western North America. Are they in Eugene? We don't know! Next time you buy potted plants from the nursery you might want to investigate: What's in your flowerpot?

Young helper with *B. attenuatus* (photo by Lauren Chan)

Nesting by Cynthia Pappas

Near to the house, the bluebirds—Mr. and Mrs.—sit atop the nesting box they have claimed. From here they go out on forays, gathering straw from the barn to build their nest. I put out dog hair from the dryer lint tray that they can use to add softness. A violet-green swallow takes some immediately to add to the nest he's building.

This chilly morning, after the frost has melted, I weed the asparagus patch and the artichokes. Kneeling down, I almost plant my knee in coyote scat. What are the coyotes doing in the asparagus bed? Are coyotes omnivores? I

don't think so, but I will have to look this up when I go back inside. As I weed, I hear a rattling call in the cedar tree near the garden. It sounds similar to a Bullock's oriole, but the first week in April seems awfully early for its return. I run in the house and grab my binoculars. I hear the call again and am able to see movement in the tree. I zero in on the bird, and I see a huge white eye ring and a belly of soft yellow feathers. Not an oriole; it appears to be a vireo. I check our yard bird list to determine which vireos we've had. Cassin's vireo was passing through on 11 April 2008, and the description in the bird book matches the prominent white eye ring. How fun to witness this early visitor. Then I doubt myself, thinking it might be a golden-crowned kinglet instead. But it was bigger than a kinglet. My yard is a living world, constantly in flux. I am along for the ride.

At sunset our prayer flags that fly on the tall copper pole are still. The wind blew earlier when we were trying to cover the transplants with garden cloth. The fabric billowed up like a hot air balloon filling with gas. My husband, George, and I muscled the cloth to the ground and covered the edges with soil to weigh it down to protect the tender broccoli transplants, which we raised from seed, from the forecasted low of 27°. I'm hoping we haven't planted too early. We tend to rush getting our garden in because after the long winter we relish connecting with the soil. It's such good therapy.

Lily of the Valley pips spear the soil in the shade bed, readying themselves for a Mother's Day bouquet. They always remind me of Mom. Did she grow them in her flower garden? Maybe she wore this scent? I can't remember, which upsets me. These memories have become more important to me as I've aged. Will my kids remember the flowers I grew?

As I reach into the herb bed to pick rosemary for our roasted vegetable dinner, a spotted towhee flies out of the tangle. Good thing I haven't yet raked the leaves from this bed; I might have disturbed her nest.

A new day and yet another place that needs my ministrations. Today I'm weeding under the currant bush in the planting bed by the rock wall. As my head is buried deep under the creamy flower clusters, I hear the unmistakable *chick* of a hummingbird. I raise my head slowly so I don't startle it. A four-inch male Anna's hummingbird is feeding on the nectar, its bill entering each tiny bell-shaped flower. His stunning fuchsia sequined gorget flashes in the sun.

Now in mid-April it has warmed enough this past week that we actually have to water the garden. Astonishing. I'm watering the seeds we've planted and hope they haven't withered in this unseasonal warmth. I look out toward the pasture and my gaze is caught up short by a large gray bird perched on the fence. Its back is angled toward me so I can see the pointed shape of its beak. The bird has the *jizz* of a flycatcher. I think it might be a Say's phoebe. It is silent so I can't identify it by voice.

All pretense at watering has fallen away; I am intent on the bird. I catch some yellow on its lower belly. Not a Say's phoebe because the belly would be faded rose. A western kingbird? This early in April? I doubt myself. I look down at the watering can. When I look back up, the bird is gone. I run inside to check my yard bird list. We've only seen kingbirds here four times in 30 years, so this feels unlikely somehow. The earliest sighting was 30 April 2013. I realize the bird is passing through, heading east, where we will see them in droves in late May at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge when we visit for the spring migration.

These birding moments telescope or maybe expand, seeming much longer. Even though time feels suspended, the sightings often are only as long as it takes the bird to alight and depart. So many species seem early this spring. What are they asking of us? How will we respond?

The red-hot poker plant (*Kniphofia*) has formed buds so the Bullock's oriole's return can't be too far off. In a week it will be Mother's Day, and George has given me an early gift of an oriole feeder. I hang the enticing jelly and orange tray near the poker plant.

The broccoli is almost ready to harvest. Nesting season is in full swing. George and I sit on the deck in the late afternoon after a day spent tending the garden; binoculars in hand, always. We hear the unmistakable *ick* call of a black-headed grosbeak. I spot the Mrs. in the garden collecting twigs for her nest. Mr. is at the feeder. I'm delighted that so many birds have chosen to nest on our farm.

I see a raptor helicoptering over the pasture, attempting to hover, beating its wings furiously. I've seen kites and kestrels do this but never a red-tailed hawk. The hawk's rufous tail feathers are fanned out to create as much loft as possible. Then it drops precipitously and lands on a vole. It flies with the prey in its talons toward its nest and its mate. Returning in the blink of an eye, the hawk repeats the helicoptering posture. The second try is unsuccessful, and he flies to perch in the top of the cedar tree in the middle of the field. Ever watchful.

George lowers his binoculars, looks at me, and says, "Who needs Netflix?"

It is mid-May now, and we're dining on broccoli quiche. I tick through the nesting species on our farm, those who call our place home, saying each name aloud, relishing such abundance: American goldfinch, American kestrel, American robin, Anna's hummingbird, black phoebe, black-capped chickadee, black-headed grosbeak, California quail, Canada geese, common yellowthroat, golden-crowned kinglet, great blue heron, great horned owl, hooded merganser, house finch, house wren, killdeer, mourning dove, northern flicker, olive-sided flycatcher, pileated woodpecker, red-tailed hawk, red-breasted sapsucker, rufous hummingbird, song sparrow, spotted towhee, Swainson's thrush, tree swallow, violet-green swallow, warbling vireo, western bluebird, western scrub jay, western wood pewee, white-breasted nuthatch.

Indeed, who needs Netflix?

Selected Events of Interest

(for complete listings and details, see individual websites)

ENHS will not be sponsoring a field trip this spring. Check back next spring!

- **McKenzie River Trust** https://mckenzieriver.org/events/#event-listings or 541-345-2799
  Wednesdays, 9–11:30 am. Watershed Wednesdays at Green Island. Projects include invasive species removal, habitat care, planting, and tree establishment. Sign up
  First Fridays, 9:30 am. Friends of Finn Rock Reach. Help restore habitat in the middle McKenzie River area. Details for each project are available upon sign-up.
  Second Saturdays, 8:00am–4:00pm. Living River Exploration Days at Green Island. Connect with nature in this special habitat for beaver, river otter, and >150 species of birds.
  Saturday, 21 Apr., 9:30am–12:30pm. Earth Day work party at Green Island. Help plant native trees and shrubs.
  Saturday, 21 Apr., 11am–5pm. Earth Day Celebration at the EWEB River Edge Public Plaza. Celebrate with MRT staff and Board members!
- **Lane County Audubon Society** www.laneaudubon.org or 541-485-BIRD; maeveanddick@q.com or 541.343.8664
  Saturday, 15 Apr., 8:30am. Third Saturday Bird Walk, with Gerry Meenaghan. Approximately 2 miles around Lane Community College and its sewage ponds. Meet at the entrance to Building 16.
  Tuesday, 25 Apr., 7pm. Secrets of the Belted Kingfisher, with Marina Richie. Campbell Center, 155 High St., Eugene. In person and Zoom. Marina with take us on a head-first dive into the world of the kingfisher, including excerpts from her award-winning book *Halcyon Journey: In Search of the Belted Kingfisher*.
  Wednesdays, 26 Apr. and 10 May, 12–2pm. Annual Eugene Bee count. Rasor Park (April) and Westmoreland Park (May). LCAS is a member of the Pollinator Protection Committee working with the Eugene Bee City USA project.
  Friday, 28 Apr., sunset. Vaux's Happening. Welcome the Vaux's swifts back to their resting roost at the chimney of Agate Hall on the UO campus, 17th Ave. and Agate St., as they migrate north and east.
- **Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter** https://emerald.npsoregon.org/.
  Saturday, 15 Apr., 1–2pm. Museum of Natural and Cultural History Native Plant Garden. University of Oregon campus. Leader: Jill Paulson. Sign-up is not needed, and the tour is free to NPSO members.
  Saturday, 15 Apr., 9am–3pm. Brice Creek Trail Hike. Leader: Bruce Waugh. Meet at South Eugene High School for carpooling. The walk is 3 miles round trip on an easy to moderate trail. Bring lunch, water, boots, and rain gear.
- **Mt. Pisgah Arboretum** https://mountpisgaharboretum.com/festivals-events or 541-747-3817
  Saturday, 15 Apr., 10am–12pm. Birds and Nests Family Walk. Arboretum Education Building. Leader: Sara Spoden. Walk fee $5, free for Arboretum members; don't forget your parking pass. Space is limited; preregistration required.
  Saturday, 22 Apr., beginning 9am. Earth Day Events. Seven work parties (with refreshments and snacks) and three guided nature walks. Don't forget your parking pass. Sign up here!
  Sunday, 23 Apr., 9am–1pm. Mindful Meanderings. Leader: Julia Siporin. Attune your senses to the natural world using various sensory awareness practices and guided mindfulness-based meditations. Bring something to sit on such as a mat or small folding chair. Fee $5, free for Arboretum members. Space is limited; preregistration required.

Saturday, 29 Apr., 10–11am. New Members Walk. Join Leisha Wood for an introduction to the trails and exhibits at the Arboretum. Meet at the Education Building. Free for Arboretum members; don't forget your parking pass. Space is limited; preregistration required.

Sunday, 30 Apr., 10am–1pm. Birds, Bees, Butterflies and Blooms Walk. Leaders: Peg Boulay and Bruce Newhouse. Meet at the Education Building. Fee $5, free for Arboretum members. Don't forget your parking pass.

Sunday, 21 May, 10am–5pm. Wildflower and Music Festival. View hundreds of species of local wildflowers on display in the Arboretum's White Oak Pavilion. Enjoy guided nature walks, live music, local food, and arts and crafts vendors. Attendance is limited, and tickets must be purchased in advance. https://mountpisgaharboretum.org/festivals-events/wildflower-music-festival/

- **Nearby Nature** https://www.nearbynature.org/ or 541-687-9699, 622 Day Island Rd., Eugene (Alton Baker Park)
  Monday, Wednesday, Friday mornings. Wonder Keepers. Outdoors in our Learnscape and in Alton Baker Park.
  Tuesdays and/or Fridays. Natural Neighbors. Outdoors in our Learnscape and in Alton Baker Park.
  Saturday, 22 Apr., 8am–5pm. Earth Day Park Cleanup with SOLVE. Help with the annual cleanup of Alton Baker Park.
  Saturday, 29 Apr., 10am–noon. 8th Annual Newt Quest. Be a citizen scientist by helping count all the newts in Tugman Park's creek, Eugene. Leader: Tom Titus. $8/family, free for NN members. Pre-register online.
- **Museum of Natural and Cultural History, University of Oregon** https://mnch.uoregon.edu/museum-home
  Thursday, 20 Apr., 6–7:30pm. Climate Change, Dynamic Landscapes, and Evolution. Panel discussion.
  Saturday, 22 Apr., 10am–5pm. Earth Day Celebration. Special walks and talks at noon, 1, 2, and 3pm, plus cupcakes!
  Tuesday, 25 Apr., 4–6pm. Native Ecologies. Panel discussion focusing on Indigenous histories and approaches to fire management and ecological stewardship. The discussion is tied to the opening reception for the "Ghost Forest" exhibit being shown in Lawrence Hall, 24 Apr. to 4 May.
  Friday, 5 May, 10am–5pm. Free Friday at the Museum. MNCH offers free admission on the first Friday of each month.
  Saturday, 13 May, 10am–4pm. Family Day: STEM Is for Everyone! Explore the museum, learn about STEM careers.
- **Friends of Buford Park and Mt. Pisgah** https://www.bufordpark.org/ or 541-344-8450
  Wednesday, 3 May, 4–6pm. Trails, Fire and Fuels Tour. Leader: Jason Blazar. Moderate walking. Meet at Mt. Pisgah southeast parking lot by 3:45pm. Space limited; preregistration required.
  Saturday, 13 May, 7:30–11am. Prairie–Savanna–Woodland Restoration Tour. Leader: Jason Blazar. Easy walking. Meet at Mt. Pisgah southeast parking lot by 7:15am. Space limited; preregistration required.
- **WREN (Willamette Resources and Educational Network)** https://wewetlands.org
  See the website for programs and information.

Meeting location this month is 221 Allen Hall on the UO campus.
From the UO Physical Plant lot, cross Franklin Blvd. and walk toward Willamette Hall. At the south end of the courtyard, turn right and walk past the south side of Cascade and Pacific Halls. Allen Hall is west of Pacific Hall. Enter through the SW door, walk up a half-flight of stairs, go through the door, walk to the central corridor, and turn left to Allen 221.

Parking for UO events is available at the UO Physical Plant lot: From Franklin, turn north onto Onyx, go 1 block to the lot. After 6pm, it's open to the public.

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*. Find us at:
http://eugenenaturalhistorysociety.org/ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEryzVh9lw9y-nLS_t94BVw

MEMBERSHIP FORM
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I (we) prefer electronic copies of *NT* rather than paper copies. ___Yes ___No

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ANNUAL DUES:

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Make checks payable to ENHS
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The Eugene Natural History Society meets on the third Friday, September through May, except in December when the meeting is on the second Friday. Meetings are at 7:30 pm and/or on Zoom. Locations are noted in *Nature Trails* and on our website: https://blogs.uoregon.edu/enhsuoregon/

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

ENHS
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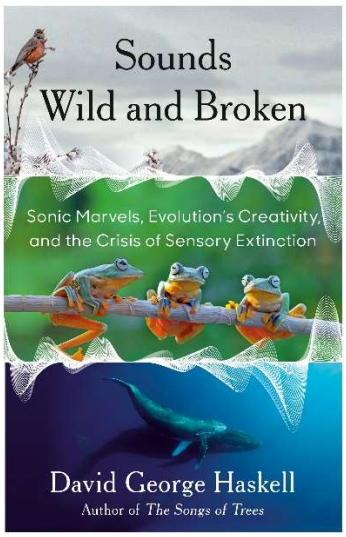

This month, in-person meeting attendees will have an opportunity to **win a signed copy of *Sounds Wild and Broken*.**

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2023 Speakers and Topics

19 May **Jamie Bowles** Sierra Nevada Red Foxes