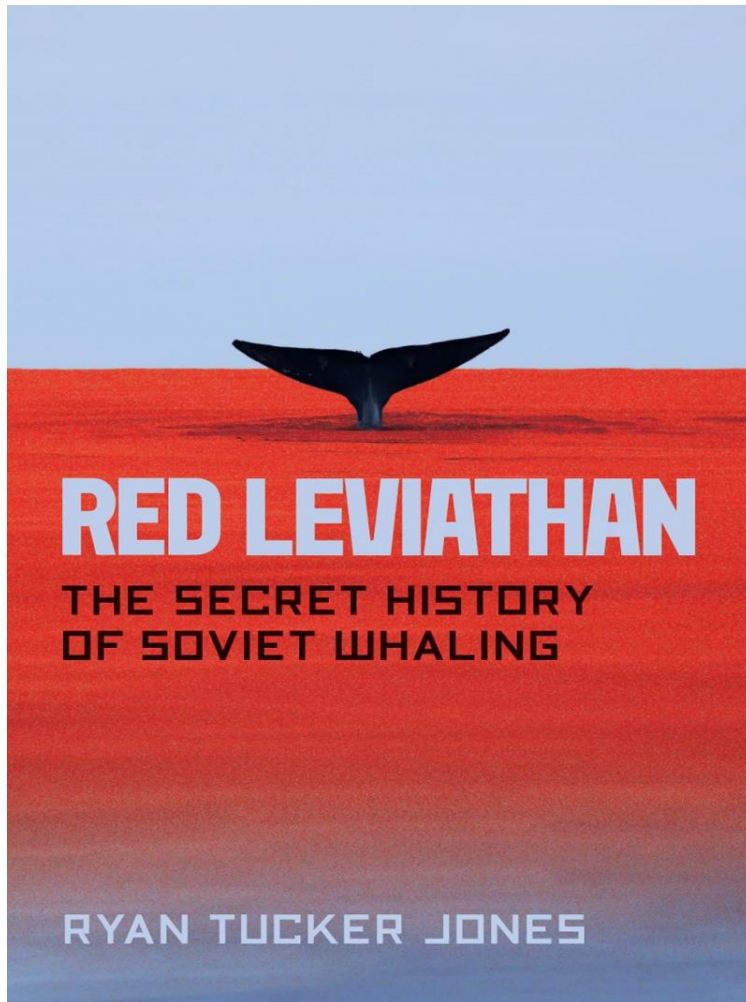


Nature Trails

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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.



How Soviet Cetologists Confronted the World's Greatest Whale Slaughter

Ryan Tucker Jones

Department of History
University of Oregon
Eugene

Friday, 16 February 2024, 7:00 pm

This month's meeting will be a hybrid of in person and real-time Zoom. The in-person lecture will be held **at our new time and room: 7:00 in 221 Allen Hall, University of Oregon campus.** The Zoom lecture link is <https://zoom.us/j/97499095971?pwd=eE9sdG9hSHMvOHhIUEJuU21wT20rdz09> or see our website at <https://eugenenaturalhistorysociety.org/>

This Month's Speaker: Ryan Tucker Jones



Though a certain vice-presidential candidate once insinuated that she could see Russia from her house, it's not often that we think about the deep ties between the Pacific Coast of North America and Russian history. These connections were dramatically illustrated when Greenpeace vessels intercepted a Soviet whaling ship 50 miles off the coast of California in the summer of 1975, publicly igniting a movement that would end with a commercial whaling moratorium just over a decade later. But the Russian Empire's influence on North America's Pacific Coast extends much further back, prior to the American Revolution.

In his PhD work at Columbia University, Ryan Tucker Jones investigated the Russian Empire's scientific exploration and exploitation of the North Pacific, including Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. Excessive hunting of the sea cow and sea otters wrought a level of environmental destruction that forced a reckoning in Russia and led to significant conservation efforts. This dissertation work morphed into Jones's first book, *Empire of Extinction: Russia and the North Pacific's Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741–1867*. The means by which Russia shaped the environmental history of the Pacific Northwest through a shared connection to the Pacific Ocean has become an enduring focus in his research.

Jones was born in Portland, raised in northern California, and pursued his undergraduate degree in history at Walla Walla University. In 1995 while studying German in Austria, Jones had his first introduction to Russian society on a trip to Moscow organized by a professor. Visiting not long after the fall of the Soviet Union, Jones was captivated by how foreign Russia felt. In 1999, he moved to Moscow, engaging his interest in Russian history. A transformative moment came when, through his archival research, Jones began to uncover deep connections between Russian history and his home in the Pacific Northwest.

William Cronon's book *Changes in the Land* was a part of what drew Jones toward environmental history. Jones says that historians had largely overlooked the relationship between the human and more-than-human world and how each had impacted the other's histories. Understanding history through the lens of the environment can help us confront modern environmental crises and develop a sense of how we may be reshaped through our reshaping of the natural world.

Working in the realm of environmental history also allowed Jones to reconnect with nature. His dissertation research brought him to the Alaskan coastline, and kayaking to view historic locations brought him in contact with some of the animals whose stories he was telling. While experiencing close-up encounters with whales, Jones was also coming across accounts of whaling in Russian archives, including the Soviet Union's illegal whaling operation, which Jones calls one of the lowest points in humankind's relationship with the oceans. This new path of research would lead to his most recent book *Red Leviathan: The Secret History of Soviet Whaling*, which tells the story of a covert Soviet whaling industry, whale scientists, and the lives of whales brought near to extinction.

Histories of whales and whaling have been central to Jones's work for the past decade. He explained that human interactions with whales are relatively well documented in historical literature, allowing some insight into the history of the world's oceans. He has taught at Appalachian State University, Idaho State University, and the University of Auckland in

New Zealand, where he investigated whaling as the first extractive industry during the British colonization of the island nation. When I asked him whether he had always planned to return to the Northwest, Jones said initially it was the opposite, that he had looked forward to living elsewhere, but over time he was drawn to return. He has been at the University of Oregon for 7 years now, where he is a Professor of History and holds the Ann Swindells Chair.

We'll hear from Jones about how the near genocide of whales in the 20th century was driven in part by a secretive Soviet industry.

A Bad Name for a Good River by John Carter

Which rivers come to mind when you think of quintessential Oregon rivers? Most of us would rattle off Willamette, North Umpqua, Rogue, Deschutes, Owyhee, and McKenzie. Maybe Illinois and Chetco. Great streams all, but they are not even a quarter of Oregon's contribution to the list of America's wild and scenic rivers. In the National System of Wild and Scenic Rivers, Oregon leads the nation. We have 69 river segments, totaling 2,424 miles, that have been granted Wild and Scenic River protection status. That's 30% of the national system and about 18% of its total river miles (www.rivers.gov>oregon). Buried in the Oregon list is a much lesser known stream, but one that occupies a prime spot in my personal list: the Malheur River. If it is possible to be grateful to a river, I am grateful to this one.



The Malheur River commences on the southern slopes of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness area, about 30 miles southeast of John Day. The river flows south at first, and its first dozen or so miles are classified Wild and Scenic. Shortly thereafter, it becomes an

Paradoxically, this industry provided Soviet whale scientists on the whaling ships with an unprecedented view of whale biology. Please join us on Friday, February 16, at 7:00 pm in 221 Allen Hall on the University of Oregon campus to hear Ryan Tucker Jones deliver his talk, "How Soviet Cetologists Confronted the World's Greatest Whale Slaughter." —August Jackson

The Zoom lecture can be accessed at <https://zoom.us/j/97499095971?pwd=eE9sdG9hSHMvOHhIUEJuU21wT20rdz09>

occasional ally of agriculture. It crosses US Highway 20 about 15 miles west of the hamlet of Juntura and continues in a south-southeasterly direction for about 10 miles. A dam on the river forms the Warm Springs Reservoir. South of the reservoir, the South Fork comes in and the river turns back to the north. A mile east of Juntura, someone with a strong arm could stand on the shoulder of US 20 and plunk a rock into the river. The North Fork Malheur, another of Oregon's Wild and Scenic rivers, joins the main stem here. At that confluence, the river begins its eastward journey. US 20 parallels the river now, as they both enter the Malheur River Canyon. My first glimpse of the river, over 75 years ago, was here, at the canyon's entrance.

The next 25 miles is one of the most spectacular drives in Oregon. I look forward to this part of the trip whenever I have occasion to take this route across the state. It cannot be considered wild because of the highway and a now-defunct railway, but it sure is scenic. The sienna-colored canyon walls reach hundreds of feet up to the rim in places. For millions of years the river has chewed its sinusoidal path through solid volcanic rock. The following is from *Roadside Geology of Oregon* (2nd ed.) by Marli Miller:

The most prominent rocks in the canyon are two sets of Miocene basalts above and below an ash-flow tuff. ... [which] has been dated at 15.4 and 16 million years. ... Before the Malheur River cut the canyon it probably meandered back and forth across a wide floodplain developed on softer rock. As it eroded into the harder basalts of the

canyon, however, it got stuck into a course it couldn't escape.

When European-Americans first arrived on the scene, Northern Paiutes had been there for eons. Their ancestors first gazed at this spectacle many thousands of years ago. The river, already ancient, must have been given a name by those people. Whatever that original name was, it had to be more appropriate than the one with which it is now saddled. Misfortune River? I admit, it does sound a little better in French than in English, but still ... The story goes that a French voyageur trapper working for the Canadian North West Company cached some beaver pelts by the river. When he returned for them, he discovered they had been purloined. Although his loss was no fault of the river, he nevertheless called it Riviere au Malheur. River of the misfortune. The name stuck, and not just to the river. There is Malheur Butte, just west of Ontario, the Sahaptin language name for which is *Patulaykaska*. There is also the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, Malheur Lake, and Malheur County. The trapper got his revenge.

My first view of the Malheur River, so long ago, was a prelude to a family visit. The river's flood plain begins a few miles west of Vale. The increasingly broad valley has fertile soil eminently suitable for farming and is provided with adequate water. The river flows east through this valley and brushes up against Vale Butte as it leaves the town and heads for its confluence with the Snake River, over by Ontario. My father grew up in this country. He graduated from Vale High School in 1928. Dad's father and stepmother had a little farm 3 miles east of Vale, bordering US 20. Dad would've crossed the river twice each school day on his saddle pony. When my parents and I drove through that magnificent canyon so long ago, we were on the way to the farm where Dad had grown up.

Some of my earliest memories are from the Carter farm. The river was a mile or so north of the farm, so no, I didn't get to play in it. But a sizeable irrigation ditch, full of Malheur River water, flowed within a few yards of the farmhouse. A sturdy bridge, capable of supporting farm machinery and thus safe for a little boy, spanned the ditch nearby. I remember

lying on the bridge, watching the water flow past and marveling at the water striders (we called them water skeeters). I had no idea, then, of how irrigation works, no idea I was watching Malheur River water.

Over 50 years later, I again began making regular visits to the farm, always taking US 20 so as to pass through the canyon. Dad's half-brother Don and his wife Equilla had taken over the farm not long after Grandpa Carter died. My brother Bill and I, both then living in the Willamette Valley, took several trips over there. We would spend a week there, hunting for deer during the days and visiting with family in the mornings and evenings. We loved to listen to their stories. Mostly Uncle Don's stories. He was a great talker, and poor Aunt Equilla had trouble getting in the occasional word. The deer hunts were really excuses for spending time with them. I cherish those visits.

They had made a fine living off their 80-acre farm, putting their two children through college and emerging debt-free in the twilight of their lives. On 80 acres, you say, in disbelief? Uncle Don told us it was timing. It could be done then; it couldn't be done now. But timing is not the sole reason for their success. They had both grown up right there; they had intimate knowledge of their land. They did most of the work themselves, they bought used machinery never bigger than they needed, and they had water from the river. Ultimately, they owed their success to the river, as did all the farms in the area.

Almost 80 years after I first saw it, I have finally come to realize how central to my life the Malheur River has been. Without the river there would have been no Vale. Without its precious water in that arid land there could have been no agriculture. My grandparents would not have had their farm. Their lives would have been different. I am grateful to the river for memories both ancient and recent. Without the Malheur River, the stream of events that had to flow just so to bring John Carter into existence would have taken a different course. I am grateful to the river for my life.

2023 Eugene Christmas Bird Count Summary

by Dick Lamster, Count Coordinator

Although the weather was not ideal, the 82nd ECBC was a great success. The 190 field observers and 101 home counters saw 133 species of birds and 66,334 individual birds. Field observers spent 273 hours looking for birds while walking 192 miles, driving 444 miles, and bicycling 9 miles.

Yes, I said 190 field observers! That is the highest number we have ever had on this CBC, breaking the old record by 26 birders! Combine that with the 101 home counters, and the total number of observers also set a new record of 291, 27 more than the previous highest number. Each year I have tried to get more people to go on the ECBC because the more eyes we have out looking for birds, the more birds we will see. I also wanted more people to enjoy birdwatching so they would perhaps work to save habitat and the environment.

The number of species seen was about average for the past 5 years, but the number of individual birds was low. We know the decreased visibility due to the heavy fog made finding birds difficult. The article in the February issue of *The Quail* (LCAS monthly publication) by Vjera Thompson goes into more depth on the birds seen. I want to share an interesting tidbit. At the end of the day for most teams, we had not seen a Western Screech-Owl. Rich Hoyer, who has been a team leader for several years but was out of the country for most of count day, was flying home and saw on e-Bird that we had not seen a Screech-Owl. He had been hearing one in the count circle for much of December, so when his plane landed at 10:30 pm he went to the area where he had been hearing the owl, heard it, and reported it to Vjera before midnight!

Marcia Maffei, Home Counter Coordinator, recruited 101 home counters this year, which is a high number considering we have had >100 home counters only six times, all in the past 8 years.

The ECBC is such a success because we have many active birders in the Eugene-Springfield area and because of the great efforts by the 26 team leaders. These leaders organize their teams and guide them all day while looking for birds. Some have been team leaders for >20

years and some even >30 years. We also had two new team leaders this year.

I want to thank the LCAS Board of Directors for sponsoring the ECBC, Vjera Thompson the Species Compiler, Marcia Maffei the Home Counter Coordinator, and all the team leaders for making the 82nd ECBC fun, educational, and exciting!

Team Leaders (by area)

- 1: Ron Renschler
- 2: Lars Norgren
- 3A: Dan and Anne Heyerly
- 3B: Darryl Wisner
- 4: Rick Ahrens
- 5A: Donna Albino
- 5B: Marcia Maffei
- 6: John Sullivan
- 7: Roger Robb
- 8: Dave Kofranek
- 9: Josh Galpern
- 10: Lars Hovde
- 11A: David Novak
- 11B: Dick Lamster
- 12A: Steve Gordon
- 12B: Pat Boleyn
- 13A: Sarah Merkle
- 13B: Holly Hartmann
- 14: Julia Siporin
- 15: Thomas Meinzen
- 16: Linda Gilbert
- 17: no leader this year
- 18: Caryn Stoess
- 19: Vjera Thompson
- 20A: Nancy Clogston
- 20B: Bruce Newhouse
- 21: Ellen Cantor



Costa's Hummingbird John Fox

Upcoming Events

(for complete listings and details, see individual websites)

- **McKenzie River Trust** <https://mckenzieriver.org/events/#event-listings> or 541-345-2799
Wednesdays, 9–11:30am. Watershed Wednesdays at Green Island. Projects include invasive species removal, habitat care, planting, and tree establishment. [Sign up](#)
Wednesdays, 14 and 21 Feb., 9–11:30am. Willamette Confluence Volunteer Project. Help tackle invasive species along the beautiful Middle Fork Willamette River! [Sign up](#)
Friday, 23 Feb., 9am–noon or 1–4 pm. Willow Harvesting at Green Island. Willows will be used to support replanting efforts at Finn Rock Reach. [Sign up](#)
Sunday, 3 Mar., 3–5pm. On This Land, Winter Reading. Join local authors and poets for an exploration of the connection between people and place. Tsunami Books, 2585 Willamette St., Eugene. Free.
- **Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter** <https://emerald.npsoregon.org/>
Monday, 19 Feb., 7–9pm. Updates on Holoparasitic Orobanchaceae in Oregon. Zoom presentation by Dr. Alison Colwell, UC Davis and Dr. Adam Schneider, University of Wisconsin–La Crosse. The nonphotosynthetic members of the parasitic plant family Orobanchaceae (primarily *Aphyllon*, *Conopholis*, and *Phelipanche*) are hard to find, largely subterranean, and often rare.
- **Mt. Pisgah Arboretum** <https://mountpisgaharboretum.com> or 541-747-3817. Mt. Pisgah Arboretum and the Howard Buford Recreation area are **currently closed** due to hazardous conditions resulting from the recent ice storms. Check their websites for updates and volunteer restoration and cleanup opportunities.
- **Lane County Audubon Society** www.laneaudubon.org or 541-485-BIRD; maeveanddick@q.com or 541-343-8664
Saturday, 17 Feb., 8:30–11am. Third Saturday Bird Walk. For more info see the website.
Tuesday, 27 Feb., 7–8:30pm. Gardening for the Bees (&Birds). Presenter: Dave Kollen, Xerces Society Ambassador. Zoom and in person at the Campbell Center, 155 High St., Eugene.
- **Nearby Nature** <https://www.nearbynature.org/> or 541-687-9699, 622 Day Island Rd., Eugene (Alton Baker Park)
Monday, Wednesday, Friday mornings. Wonder Keepers. Preschool program outdoors in our Learnscape.
Tuesdays and/or Fridays afternoons. Natural Neighbors. After-school program outdoors in our Learnscape.
- **Museum of Natural and Cultural History, University of Oregon** <https://mnch.uoregon.edu/museum-home>
Ongoing exhibits: Oregon—Where Past Is Present; Explore Oregon; Underwater Forests—Oregon’s Kelp Ecosystems.
- **WREN (Willamette Resources and Educational Network)** <https://wewetlands.org> See the website for programs and information.

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Fill out the form or go to our website (see QR code below) to join and pay by check or electronically. 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/>
and
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEr yzVh9lw9y-nLS t94BVw>





Tundra Swan, W. L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge
January 2024
Dean Walton

Golden-Crowned Sparrow, Delta Ponds,
Eugene, January 2024
Dean Walton



Malheur River
John Carter

Eugene Natural History Society
P.O. Box 5494
Eugene, OR 97405

Monthly meetings:

When: September–May: third Friday;
December: second Friday

Where: **221 Allen Hall** (UO campus) **and/or**
on Zoom at

<https://zoom.us/j/97499095971?pwd=eE9sdG9hSHMvOHhIUEJuU2lwT20rdz09>

Time: **7:00 pm**

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.

See our website for more details.

<http://eugenenaturalhistorysociety.org/>



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Nature Trails editor: Kim Wollter kwollter@comcast.net

2024 Speakers and Topics

19 Jan. John Postlethwait

16 Feb. Ryan Tucker-Jones

15 Mar. Ron Larson

19 Apr. Lincoln Best

17 May Marli Miller

An Icefish Is a Nice Fish

How Soviet Cetologists Confronted the World's Greatest Whale Slaughter

Natural History of Lake Abert

Plants and Pollinators

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

Amazing Geologic Sites in Oregon