Nature Trails

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The Eugene Natural History Society is based out of the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya peoples, most of whom are citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. These Indigenous people stewarded this land for millennia and continue to play an active role in local communities. We commit to supporting the many Tribes and Indigenous scholars and organizations working to shape the future of these lands and waters that we mutually cherish.

Quartz Creek restoration. *MRT*

The Audacity of Perpetuity: Land and Water Conservation in Uncertain Times

Joe Moll

Executive Director
McKenzie River Trust, Eugene

Friday, 19 September 2025, 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 **7:00** in **221 Allen Hall, University of Oregon campus. Snacks provided!** The Zoom lecture link is https://zoom.us/j/97499095971?pwd=eE9sdG9hSHMvOHhIUEJuU21wT20rdz09 or see our website at https://eugenenaturalhistorysociety.org/

This Month's Speaker: Joe Moll

Joe Moll's gravitation toward conservation began on a 5-acre woodlot near his suburban home in Louisville, Kentucky. He remembers a violent windstorm in 1973 that toppled many of the old hardwoods, some 4 feet in diameter. The fallen trees were left untouched, transforming the space into a playground of forts and hidey holes for the neighborhood kids. His family assured that his outdoor experiences went further afield. Camping trips took them to the forests of Daniel Boone National Forest in eastern Kentucky. His mom and dad were enthusiastic bass fishers who regularly took him on excursions to local lakes and streams. Joe remembers watching the television show *Wild Kingdom* with his parents. He dreamed of owning a bass boat. Subscribed to *Sports Illustrated.*

These were but a few of the formative encounters that led Joe to enter Transylvania University in Lexington on a biology track. He took a college field biology course from botanist, writer, and Indigenous philosopher Robin Kimmerer early in her academic career. Just when his childhood, college education, and career possibilities were beginning to unfold in a predictable way, Joe made things interesting. During his sophomore year he began dabbling in other majors, moving from English to philosophy and even computer science.

Finally, he was forced to declare a major and chose economics, where his interests tended toward resources and policy issues. He became intensely interested in acid rain, which at the time was one of the foremost environmental issues confronting eastern forests. Thanks to the influence of a literature professor from South Africa, the economic calculus of goods and production became intercalated with natural philosophy through writers and poets such as Gary Snyder, Kenneth Rexroth, Thomas Merton, Marge Piercy, and Annie Dillard. Farmer, poet, and novelist Wendell Berry lived 30 miles away.

In the meantime, a local Toyota factory was being built, an event seemingly incongruous with the story of a young college student searching for direction. But Toyota was offering study abroad scholarships, and Joe was awarded one. He was drawn to the Indigenous Japanese religion Shinto and the philosophy of oneness with the natural world that it embodied. After his junior year he traveled to Nagoya, a large city on the Japanese Island of Honshu that ironically had been a major bombing target during World War II owing to its chemical manufacturing facilities. This trip would begin a long love affair with Japan, both literally and figuratively.

After returning to Transylvania University and finishing his economics degree, Joe went to work for an American bank focusing on Japanese corporate relations. But a corporate career wasn't in his bloodstream. He quit the job and returned to Japan to teach English as a second language. There, he also learned to play bluegrass and drink bourbon with Japanese musicians. One can only wonder why these pursuits required that he travel so far from Kentucky!

After 2 years of teaching English, Joe returned to the United States. But this time his life began to move decidedly westward. He traveled with his brother to Moab, Utah and backpacked in The Maze in Canyonlands National Park. Eventually he landed a job with the Canyonlands Natural History Association at Arches National Park. For a time he dreamed of a job at the bourgeoning Rodale Press. But Joe was smitten with the west, and his heart never strayed far from conservation biology.

The University of Montana School of Forestry admitted Joe into their master's degree program, where he began studying grizzly bears. A classmate introduced him to her husband who was a coordinator for the grizzly bear recovery program. When the coordinator learned that Joe was conversive in Japanese language and culture, he immediately steered him toward studying human-bear interactions in Japan. In 1986, Joe returned to Japan, this time to the northernmost island of Hokkaido, home to a large population

of both people and brown bears. There he met Kana, the woman who would become his wife. Three children later, his life was inextricably tied to Japan.

After completing his M.S. degree, Joe entered the Ph.D. program at Montana and returned to Japan for 2 more years of fieldwork on bear-human encounters. However, he now had more compelling motivations than pursuing a life in academia. He needed a job to support a young family and took employment with the State of Montana working on grizzly bear recovery. This led eventually to work in the private conservation sector as a fundraiser with The Nature Conservancy. During his tenure with TNC in Montana, he met Charlie Quinn, who held an identical position with TNC in Eugene. The stars began to point toward the Emerald City.

It isn't necessary to believe in destiny, although it sure looked a lot like it when Joe landed his current position as executive director of McKenzie River Trust. Charlie Quinn had notified Joe about the job opening. The exiting MRT executive director had taken a liking to Joe's application and placed him high on the list. The search committee then offered the job to two other people. Both candidates declined. The exiting director persisted with Joe's application. By happenstance Joe was traveling through Eugene, and in a move with low risk and high potential, the search committee agreed to interview him because it would cost them nothing to bring him to town. The deal was done. Joe and his family moved to Eugene in the dead of winter in 2005.

Perhaps there is no such thing as the perfect person for a job. Yet Joe comes pretty close. The broad swath of his experiences bass fishing on farm properties in Kentucky, studying economics, traveling to Japan, researching human-bear interactions, raising money for TNC, and reading widely have formed him into a practical, less strident, incentives-based conservationist. Joe can talk to anyone about almost anything. He is capable of both unassailable eloquence and spit-and-kick-the-dirt banter, sometimes in the same conversation. Fishing, hunting, music, literature, water management, writing, running, brown bears, and bourbon are all within his purview. Listen carefully and you'll still hear a trace of that smooth Kentucky accent. There was an instance years ago when Joe nearly talked too much. He told a disparaging Grateful Dead joke to the president of the MRT board of directors without realizing that the president was a huge Dead fan. They both joke that it almost cost him his job.

It's a good thing they got past it. When Joe took the reins at MRT they had one other paid employee and only a handful of properties, which included Green Island, their showcase restoration project at the confluence of the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers. After 20 years under his leadership, MRT has grown to 21 paid staff and owns 32 properties totaling about 5,000 acres, with a similar number of acres managed as conservation easements. In short, Joe has led MRT into becoming one of the premier conservation organizations in our region.

To experience Joe's brand of eloquence firsthand, join the Eugene Natural History Society at 7 p.m. in 221 Allen Hall on the University of Oregon campus when he speaks on "The Audacity of Perpetuity: Land and Water Conservation in Uncertain Times." Joe summarized his talk with these words: "Across the last 100 years of habitat conservation in the United States, conservation practices, law, and philosophy have assumed significant levels of predictive certainty, even to the point of promising protection 'forever'. Changes in climate, governance, and cultural attitudes are calling these assumptions to question, particularly that issue of perpetuity. I'll describe how land conservation organizations, government agencies, human communities, and critters are wrestling with and trying to adapt to these changes with creativity, courage, and humility."

Come in person if you can; there will be cookies! Otherwise, join us on Zoom at https://zoom.us/j/97499095971?pwd=eE9sdG9hSHMvOHhIUEJuU21wT20rdz09 —Tom Titus

FIELD TRIP: Saturday, 20 September, 10–noon. Join Joe on a tour of the Finn Rock Reach and Quartz Creek restoration sites. Walking will be limited. Meet at the Finn Rock Boat Landing. For carpooling, meet at the NE corner of the South Eugene High School parking lot at 9am.

Salmon Rebuilding Their Lost World

by Reida Kimmel

Recently Chuck and I watched an utterly amazing film published by the *Washington Post* on 8 August 2025 documenting the kayak journey down the entirety of the Klamath River by 15 and sometimes up to 120 teenage members of the numerous tribes that have called the Klamath River their home for thousands of years. Framed by gorgeous scenery, the video shows the remaining two dams just below Klamath Lake that the travelers had to portage around and the newly freed river, often flowing quiet and calm and at other times challenging the young kayakers with class four and five rapids, the hardest possible to navigate. The videos of the teens maneuvering rapids, flipping over and over before recovering, are breath taking. Dreadful currents between close high rocks were nearly fatal for one skilled and fearless paddler. These young people were reclaiming their river, showing that it was once again open to tribal peoples and the fish that had maintained their lives, cultural, material, and spiritual, for millennia. It was a very spiritual journey for the paddlers and for their families. For a century, elders had held onto their traditional culture and knowledge of the river. Now they were passing all they had preserved to the next generation, who were ever so prepared to be the strong leaders of their tribes.

We were also introduced to restoration efforts along the exposed, denuded banks of the river. Tribal members planted trees and spread seeds of native plants and grasses, trying to create new habitat on the river's devastated shores for the salmon they hoped would come. Fossil DNA tells us that 5,000 years ago Chinook salmon travelled far from the sea to spawn and die in tributaries above Klamath Lake. Would they return to the upper Klamath again? Indeed, the salmon had already begun to arrive, and the kayakers saw them in the newly freed river! How wonderful it would be if the remaining two dams were removed and all of Klamath Lake and the hundreds of miles of habitat above it were again open for fish. Surely there can be ways to provide water for both farms and wildlife from the less toxic lake.

Soon after the dams were removed in November 2024, biologists recorded a salmon in the river where months before there had been no access. What kind of a salmon? Possibly a fall Chinook. They come in strong, meaty, and fat, prepared to speed immediately far upriver and breed. Their fry will stay in the gentle waters where they hatched until they travel downstream to sea as juveniles with their distinctive parr marks. Two other important salmon species will breed in the Klamath and its tributaries: the coho, which is listed as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and by the State of California, and the spring Chinook, which is listed as endangered by the State of California. Spring Chinook are the most prized of all by the tribal peoples. The run begins as early as late winter and the Chinook, or "kings," come in from the sea very fat and delicious, the year's first fish to feed the hungry people. Spring Chinook are the richest in fat and flesh because they will spend the whole summer gathered in quiet pools, not feeding, waiting for the fall rains to fill the little creeks where they prefer to build their redds. For coho, after years of decline all up and down the west coast, this species is surprising everyone by making modest but steady population gains. They are now in the upper Klamath basin for the first time in 60 years.

All of Oregon's salmon species lay their eggs in the fall, and after hatching and wintering in the quiet protected waters where they were born, the little fish are known as parr, which is also the name of the camouflaging vertical stripes that

Chinook salmon.. *Tim Giraudier*

mark them. Each species can be identified by its characteristic species-specific patterning. Some Chinook parr spend only a few months in their natal freshwater, and others dally up to a couple of years before going to sea. All coho spend almost half their lives, 18 months, in freshwater. Both fall and spring Chinook thrive best when ocean temperatures are cool. They require more food when temperatures are warmer, and food in warmer seas may be scarcer. All Chinook require cold water refugia for their eggs to hatch and survive. But the coho's requirements are more flexible. They can tolerate warmer ocean conditions and often breed closer to the sea. Opening more coastal stream habitat may benefit this endangered species the most.

All the wild salmon that breed in Oregon are in varying degrees of trouble and face similar threats. There are numerous dams and culverts in Oregon that could be removed, but these are not the only problems. Blocked or destroyed habitat and poor and even toxic water quality are always threats. The hatcheries themselves are hugely destructive. Wild fish are often overwhelmed by hatchery fish. Breeding with hatchery fish results in less resilient offspring, and the wild fish lose their only chance to pass on their genes. With so few wild fish available to breed successfully, genetic diversity is being affected.

Perhaps we will not see another monumental river restoration like that on the Klamath in the near future, but if we look up and down the state, we see projects that have had major impacts and other planned projects that could open many miles of new habitat for salmon and steelhead and reverse the declines in wild fish. Watershed councils, nonprofit organizations, tribes, and local concerned citizens can still achieve great things even in the face of being deserted by the government.

On remote Tioga Creek in the Coos River basin, the Wild Salmon Center designed and built a creative ladder of pools and passages opening up miles of breeding habitat for coho and other salmonids. The removal of five dams on the Rogue River opened 500 miles of historic habitat; spawning immediately increased for coho and Chinook where the Savage Rapids and Gold Ray dams had previously blocked passage. Tribe-sponsored habitat improvement projects are in process all along our coast, the most monumental being east of Florence where the McKenzie River Trust and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw are restoring haich ikt'at'uu, a former ranch, making it into a tidal wetland refuge with miles of fish and wildlife habitat, building community and working to create regional climate resiliency.

Some needed changes seem hopeless. The Winchester Dam on the North Umpqua River should come down. It serves no useful purpose yet has won the right in federal court to continue to exist. Ugly politics are involved. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife calls it the worst constructed obstacle to fish on any river in Oregon. The Native Fish Council has not given up hope, and the dam's removal is its top priority. The salmon population on the North Umpqua at an historic low, yet recreational and commercial fishing continues apace. ODFW closed the fishing season in August. They should never have opened it, most experts say. Because of the dam, most fish spawn in the lower reaches of the river or in the South Umpqua River.

Many doable projects are waiting in the most improbable places. In Monroe, there is a "run of the river" dam built to slow the flow of the Long Tom River, which had been channelized to facilitate drainage and agriculture. Much of the lower Long Tom is already providing crucial habitat for endangered wild spring Chinook that hatch in rivers such as the McKenzie and the Middle Fork Willamette and find the Long Tom's warmer, slower, and clay-silted waters a good place to hide and grow before migrating to the ocean. The Long Tom Watershed Council has worked for years to improve habitat for fish on the upper Long Tom, but the dam in Monroe must be circumvented or removed to reopen anadromous fish habitat all the way to the Coast Range. The funding and support are there. Who knows, perhaps someday the Fern Ridge dams can be modified, allowing the Long Tom to regain its tributaries, Coyote Creek and Spencer Creek. Fish habitat right at my own front door!

'Tis the Season by Reida Kimmel

Fall is finally approaching, and thoughts can turn to hopes of walks in the cool woods, mushrooms, mosses, and salmon. The coastal rivers host the return of coho salmon from late September into early January. The runs differ from one waterway to another, but we can hope that there will be greater numbers of coho returning than we have seen in years. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has information about where to go to watch fish on the various river systems of western Oregon. Check out their article "See Salmon Spawn," 30 September 2024 (https://myodfw.com/articles/see-salmon-spawn), for a large number of possible places to look for spawning fish. I have excerpted a few sites that seem accessible as well as offering rewarding trips to the woods. Remember, actually seeing spawning salmon is not guaranteed.

Whittaker Creek on the Siuslaw, accessed from the campground, is a comfortable place to watch.

On the North Fork Alsea River, there is a trail along the river at Clemens Park. You might even see a few Chinook.

Farther from home, in the Coos River system, Tioga Creek can be accessed from Middle Creek Road above Fairview. The creek boasts hundreds of miles of salmon habitat, some newly opened by the construction of a natural ladder and pool system that will enable salmon to travel farther upstream than ever before. I want to see that! The Millicoma Interpretive Center is near Allegany, east of Coos Bay. From the Center, there is great viewing for a few miles up the road. Drive slowly; the fish can be visible even from the road.

Coastal coho salmon. *Tom & Pat Leeson*

It is still summer, and the little creeks are too dry to access, but the sanctuary for summer steelhead on Steamboat Creek on the North Umpqua River offers spectacular fish viewing. There is hardly a more beautiful site than the protected pool where steelhead and sometimes spring Chinook wait for the fall rains and spawning time. Protected in perpetuity, the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area "is a place where people can rebuild their souls." Trails along Steamboat Creek will get you to the water's edge where you can sit for hours and watch fish navigating the rapids.

Fingers crossed for rain!

A Note to Our Members Regarding Dues

The ENHS Board has reluctantly decided to raise membership dues. We realize that for some members, these are tough times and many prices are increasing. Unfortunately our costs also are increasing, and we can no longer meet our financial obligations with our previous dues structure (we have not raised dues since 2011). Our greatest expense after speaker honoraria is printing and mailing of *Nature Trails,* so please consider going paperless. Electronic *NT* documents are sent via email and include color photos and live links and can be printed at home. We thank you for your understanding.

Annual dues for ENHS membership are payable in September. Keep your copies of *NT* coming and support our efforts to provide fascinating natural history presentations every month and occasional field trips. A pre-addressed envelope is enclosed with this issue for your convenience. You can also renew and pay electronically at https://eugenenaturalhistorysociety.org/join/annual-membership-payment/.

Volunteers needed for ENHS booth at the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum Mushroom Festival
Sunday, 26 October, 10am–5pm

See announcement in the calendar below. No experience necessary; you will be paired with a trained volunteer. Booth sitting is a great way to learn interesting things and meet interesting people! We usually work in 3-hour shifts, but other time slots are possible. Contact Kim Wollter to sign up: kwollter@comcast.net

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
  Second Saturdays, Mar.–Dec., 8am–4pm. Living River Exploration Day at Green Island. We open the gates to this conservation area and welcome our community to explore this special place. Free, no preregistration.
  Thursday, 25 Sept., 9am–noon. United Way Day of Caring at Green Island. Pull scotch broom and other invasive plants around a beautifully restored gravel pond. **Sign up**
  Saturday, 27 Sept., 10am–noon. Save the Oregon Dunes. Celebrate Public Lands Day by removing invasive Scotch broom at the Oregon Dunes Day Use Area, Gardiner. No preregistration needed.
- **Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter** https://emerald.npsoregon.org/
  Monday, 15 Sept., 7–9pm. The ODA Native Plant Conservation Program. Join Dani Marshall, who will discuss this program and the Oregon Native Seed Collective. Amazon Community Center, 2700 Hilyard St., Eugene.
- **Mt. Pisgah Arboretum** https://mountpisgaharboretum.com or 541-747-3817.
  Saturday, 20 Sept., 9:30am–12:30pm. Trees & Forests: Carbon Pools. Part of the Forest Ecology Workshop Series with Rich Kelly.
  Wednesday, 24 Sept., 4:30–6pm. Equinox Watercolor and Creative Writing Workshop. Celebrate the autumn equinox with a creative and reflective family-friendly workshop lead by Clara-Julia Peru. $20 members; $30 nonmembers.
  Thursday, 25 Sept., 9am–noon. United Way Day of Caring. Sign up by following the link below and searching for "Mount Pisgah Arboretum." Register here.
  Sunday, 26 Oct., 10am–5pm. 2025 Mushroom Festival. Attendance is limited; tickets go on sale 26 Sept.
- **Coast to Cascades Bird Alliance** www.laneaudubon.org or 541-485-BIRD; maeveanddick@q.com or 541-343-8664
  Saturday, 20 Sept., 8–11am. Bird Walk. For all participants. For more info, contact tolalla@gmail.com.
  Tuesday, 23 Sept., 7–8:30pm. Habitat Haven. Presenter: Barbara Bryson. Zoom and in person, Campbell Community Center, 155 High St., Eugene.
  Friday, 26 Sept., sunset. Goodbye to Vaux Swifts. Meet at the Agate Hall chimney, 17th & Agate, Eugene.
- **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; Capturing the Cosmos: Images from the James Webb Telescope.
  Thursday, 2 Oct., 6–7pm. Uncovering Oregon History with the Chinese Diaspora Project. Join archaeologist Chelsea Rose for highlight of recent projects showcasing the impact of the Chinese immigrant community in early statehood.
  Monday, 13 Oct., 10am–5pm. Indigenous Peoples' Day. Come celebrate 14,000+ years of Native culture in Oregon. Free admission in honor of the day.
- **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.

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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=eE9sdG9hSHMvOHhIUEJuU21wT20rdz09
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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2025–2026 Speakers and Topics

19 Sept.	**Joe Moll**	**The Audacity of Perpetuity: Land and Water Conservation in Uncertain Times**
17 Oct.	**Jamie Cornelius**	**How Birds Adapt to Changing Environments**
21 Nov.	**Matt Betts**	**Research Projects at the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest**
12 Dec.	**Paul Bannick**	**A Year in the Life of North American Woodpeckers** (cosponsored with the Coast to Cascades Bird Alliance)
16 Jan.	**Marie Tosa**	**Spotted Skunks**
20 Feb.	**Leif Karlstrom**	**Giant Aquifer of the Cascades**
20 Mar.	**Anne Thompson**	**Marine Microbiology and Ecology**
17 Apr.	**Heron Brae**	**Oak Savannah Communities** (cosponsored with the Emerald Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Oregon)
15 May	**Samantha Hopkins**	**The Relationships among Paleontology, Climate Change, and Extinction**