

Use of dyes may keep wildlife from oil spills

By E.G. WHITE-SWIFT
Of the Emerald

University of Rhode Island (URI) students has found a possible new use of dyes: preventing wildlife from saturating their feathers

DUCKS AVOID ORANGE: An SOS study completed recently by

SWOMSI settles into temporary home

Until its move is completed, the Southwest Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (SWOMSI), is at temporary quarters in Springfield.

The museum moved to this location so funds from the sale of the old building could be used in the construction of a new museum complex in Alton Baker Park. Ground-breaking for the new science facility at Alton Baker Park is scheduled for June.

The project is sponsored by a coalition of SWOMSI, the University, Lane Community College, Lane Intermediary Education Department, 4-J School District and Lane County. Together they form the Cooperative Museum Commission that is funded with a federal grant. More funding is being sought for development of the facility.

The plans include access by foot, bike paths and water. They call for division of the planetarium and the museum of science and technology from the natural history museum. The project should be complete in 14 months, according to Flora Anderson, acting director of SWOMSI.

An open house is scheduled Saturday, June 11, at the museum's temporary headquarters, 480 Shelly St., Springfield.

Volunteers are at work painting, setting up exhibits and preparing the three main sections of the facility. The three areas include exhibits of science and technology, natural history and the planetarium.

There are also special traveling exhibits from various technological groups like NASA and the National Bureau of Standards. June's exhibit entitled "A Walk Through Time," will open the museum at its new location.

In addition, SWOMSI will continue its "Kaleidoscope" series at its new location. "Something Fishy," a talk to be presented by Weyerhaeuser fisheries biologist Robert Anderson will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday. He will answer questions from amateur naturalists and experienced fishers.

CSPA majors fear loss of credits

Students majoring in social work today challenged James Kelly, community service and public affairs (CSPA) dean, to tell them whether or not accreditation for social service degrees would be lost before they had a chance to graduate.

Kelly said CSPA faculty voted to recommend 12-6 to integrate the current social service program into the regular CSPA curriculum as a way of cutting expenses in a meeting with Kelly. The dean added that integration would not necessarily mean losing accreditation, scheduled for review in November.

Kelly said CSPA faculty voted to recommend 12-6 to integrate the the dean said he would again meet with CSPA faculty to test their commitment to an accredited social service program.

Currently social service degrees are offered through a structure autonomous from regular CSPA administration. Kelly said that with a 50 per cent budget loss projected for CSPA over the next three years, "cooperation and collaboration" is the only feasible way of keeping social service in CSPA.

CSPA students with majors in areas other than social service have received assurance from University Pres. William Boyd that all current commitments to them will be kept through graduation.

These commitments will be kept, Boyd says, by delaying the heaviest cutbacks for two years or more and using faculty from other departments and schools to teach courses now offered strictly by CSPA faculty.

in oil spills.

According to data obtained during a three-month study of duck reaction to colored water, student researchers found that ducks, under test situations, avoid orange colored water. The URI students postulate that if an oil spill can be dyed with a key avoidance color following the mishap, an inexpensive and readily applicable technique for keeping waterfowl out of oil-contaminated waters may be developed.

Techniques used to herd birds away from oil spills in the past have had varying rates of success. In some instances hazing practices have actually intensified the problem by causing the birds to dive under the oiled water, rather than lift off and fly away from the disturbance.

Frequently spills occur during pre-dawn hours, amidst raging storms or in heavy fog. By the time rescue operations can be fully activated, many waterfowl species have already come in contact with the oil-coated waters.

The study was performed under a Student Originated Studies (SOS) grant from the National Science Foundation. During the study period, seven undergraduate students tested the willingness of domestic mallard ducks to swim through various colors of water in order to reach a food pen located in the center of a test pool.

Each of the 100 test ducks were deprived of food for periods of

from 24 to 48 hours. Eight different food dyes were used to color the water, including black, yellow, red, green, blue, orange, violet and indigo.

Results from the study indicate that the ducks were unaffected by black, blue and green colored



water. Yellow, violet and indigo colors elicited a more or less neutral reaction. But when it came to orange, the birds became much more reluctant to enter the water.

Some of the ducks would pace back and forth along the edges of the pool; others would quack and exhibit similar signs of distress. A small portion of the birds avoided the water (and the food) completely.

Surprisingly enough, the birds made a beeline for red-colored water. The researchers discovered that the mallards had developed a positive association with red as chicks. Since the farm from which the experimental ducks were originally purchased had used red-colored watering pans, the color

cue was well imprinted before the students had acquired the birds.

It is still unclear why the birds reacted so adversely to the orange color. Dr. Frank Heppner, associate professor of zoology and adviser to the study group, theorizes that "it may be associated with some concrete thing in their evolutionary past such as poisonous vegetation. For example, the toxic organisms responsible for red tide blooms often give water an orange-red hue."

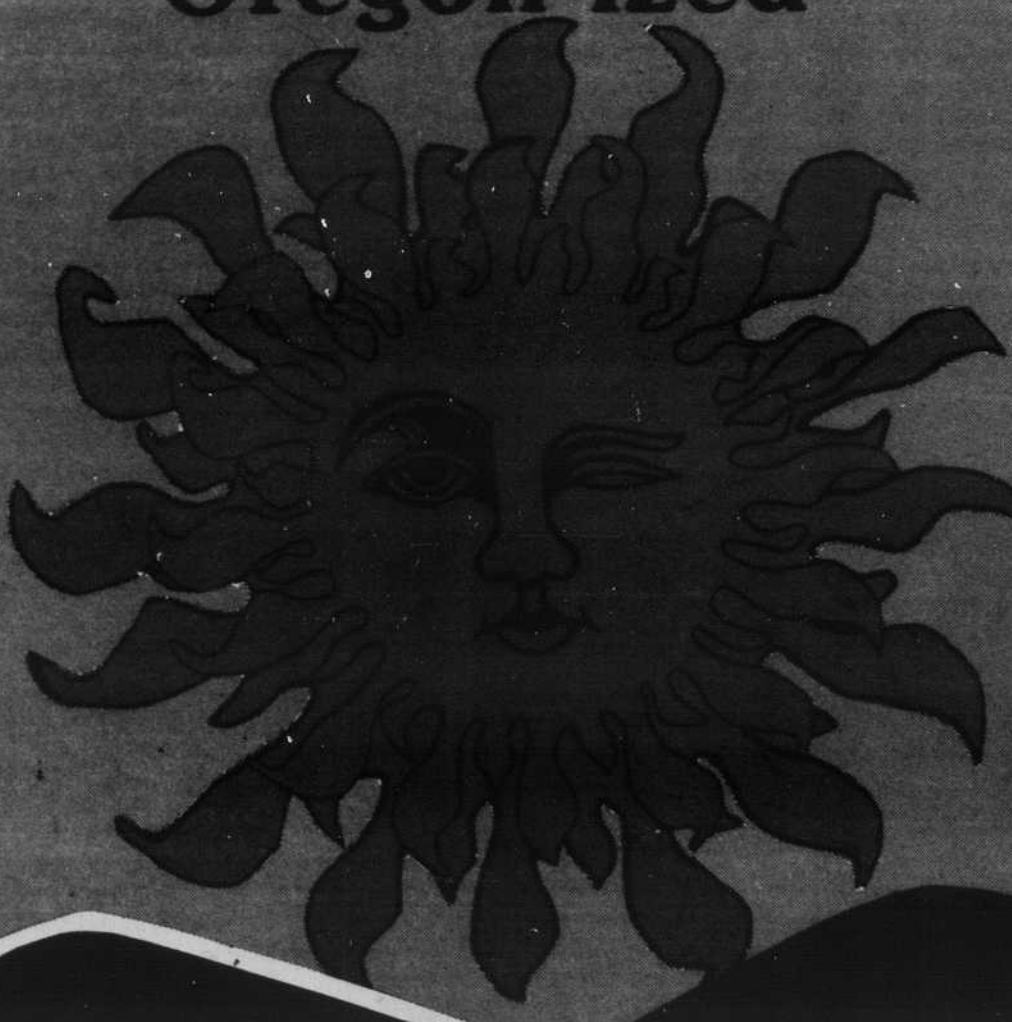
ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM: Oregonians will have a chance to tell the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) what they think about environmental issues at an "American Environmental Forum" scheduled in Portland June 15.

The forum in Portland will be one of a series of regional forums open to anyone who wishes to speak out on environmental issues that are of a major concern.

The forum, to be held in the auditorium of Lincoln Hall on the campus of Portland State University from 7 to 10:30 p.m., was scheduled by the EPA's new administrator Douglas Costle as a follow-up to Pres. Carter's directive that policy-makers in the federal government work more closely with the American public.

52 WEEKS IS ENOUGH: This is the last installment of environmental footnotes from this typewriter. As a friend, J.L. Bohman said to me at the edge of the Alvord Desert last weekend, "As the lake goes, so goes the chub."

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