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Herons nest along valley rivers

By Cort Fernald
Of the Emerald

Morning sunlight sparks off the water like diamonds tossed in the air as a great blue heron suddenly snatches a fish from the river shallows and takes to wing.

The blue heron leisurely pumps its wide wings and rises above the river as the fish wriggles spasmodically, locked in the heron's beak.

At the confluence of the McKenzie and Willamette rivers, in a cove of cottonwoods near Armitage Park, the blue heron alights on a topmost limb. The large bird hops awkwardly down the limb to a stick nest where two young blue herons hungrily squawk with beaks agape.

The blue heron tears the fish to small bits for its young. They voraciously swallow and squawk even louder for more.

Other blue heron young in nests high in the cottonwood trees cry for food. Their hungered cries give testament to the population of the heronry.

The great blue herons are in their nesting cycle now, according to Herbert Wisner, senior instructor in biology and avid ornithologist. The nesting cycle began in late March and is nearly over.

The great blue herons frequently nest in the old-growth cottonwoods along the Willamette, Wisner says. "Sadly, most of the cottonwoods have been cut down," he adds.

Despite the loss of cottonwoods, Dan Gleason, who teaches summer field ornithology courses at the University, says the blue heron populations along the Willamette and McKenzie have remained relatively stable.

Blue herons usually gather in nesting groups, or colonies, Gleason says. These colonies can consist of as many as 15 to 50 birds.

Blue herons have a feeding territory encompassing many miles. They are most actively feeding in the morning.

A blue heron raises its spindly legs high and meticulously steps along the shallows of the bank. Ducks scabble in noisy clusters about the blue heron. Bicyclists stream across Knickerbocker Bridge above. The blue heron slowly searches the water for food, impervious to ducks and bikes.



Photo by Mark Pynes

Heron populations along the Willamette and McKenzie rivers remain stable although the many cottonwoods — the trees in which they nest — have been cut down.

Meeting defines KWAX snafu, station's value

By Randy Malat
Of the Emerald

Supporters of endangered species KWAX-FM, the University's radio station, are searching for ways to save it from extinction.

"We need more time to make contingency plans" for other sources of financing, station manager Janet Kenney said at a meeting attended by KWAX staffers and faculty members from a variety of departments last Thursday.

Kenney says that, in the long run, the station is more valuable to the University than the short-term relief the proposed budget cut would offer to the state's ailing economy.

Located on the top floor of Villard Hall since its inception in 1951, KWAX is a National Public Radio affiliate. Its funding comes from state and federal allocations and self-generated income. University President Paul Olum recently proposed the elimination of \$82,000 in University funds for the radio station.

"Whenever the university loses a program it suffers a double indemnity. It loses that service and it loses students that would come to the University because of that service," Carlyle Moore, a retired English professor, said.

KWAX supporters justify the station's existence on two grounds. They call it an "outreach" program that enhances the local arts community and provides a public relations/advertising tool for the University. And they point to its "educational" function, as a place where students gain valuable practical experience.

"KWAX extends the University to Bend, Salem, Roseburg, the coast. That's the kind of public exposure the University needs to be a first class school. When you cut out KWAX, you retard the progress the University has made," said Jonathan Fink, a music student and KWAX announcer.

The only station to provide primarily classical music in the area, KWAX has over 27,000 listeners. Besides its NPR news and public affairs reporting, KWAX airs concerts from the Eugene Symphony, the University School of Music, and the Oregon Bach Festival.

University students work for KWAX as interns, to receive credit toward their degrees, or for work-study money. Experience is garnered in fundraising, announcing, production, and public affairs broadcasting. KWAX shares its production facilities with the speech department and the journalism and music schools.

"Students have more responsibility on a public station than they get downtown on a commercial station," Ron Sherriffs, chair of the speech department said. Instead of doing "a lot of repetitive, fetch and carry work," he added "students can do their own writing that sometimes becomes the heart of public affairs programming."

Loren Allen, chair of KWAX's community advisory board, was unwilling to predict the outcome of the station's struggle to survive.

"We've been through this four or five times," he said. "Are we a cat with five, or six, or seven lives, or what?"

University greets new job program

University students without work-study funding may find a break from the doom and gloom of the job market with a new job development and location service specifically for them, says Emmett Williams, coordinator of the program.

The purpose of the new job service is to provide off-campus jobs for students regardless of their financial need, he says.

To be eligible for the job location and development service, undergraduate or graduate students must be enrolled in three or more credit hours at the University and must not be receiving any financial aid other than Guaranteed Student Loans, Pell or Basic Need Grants.

The job service is an off-campus opportunity for students without work-study money to gain work experience and financial assistance for school, Williams says.

"We're trying to help as many students as we can get through college," he says. "A GSL is not enough with tuition going up."

The program began a little more than a month and a half ago, and has met with favorable response from the business community and University alumni. Williams has been corresponding with. And an additional 8,000 letters have yet to be sent to the Eugene-Springfield and outlying areas.

"Many employers prefer hiring University students because they're a good product," Williams says.

Numerous skilled and unskilled jobs are available at the job service. Adding students in professional programs such as computer science, architecture or business would not only be an asset to the job service, but to the community, Williams says.

Jobs listings from within the community from baby sitting to computer science are accepted "as long as it's honest and pays," he says.

Interested employers or job seekers may contact Williams at 1511 Agate St. or at 686-3214.