

New in Town: *Bones, Birds and Bug Eyes*

By Shannon Romtvedt

"Let's pretend," said my five year old niece while we were 'fishing' out of Rock Creek. "Let's pretend that I am seven and you are my mother." Our sticks were fishing poles and we pulled up debris with a triumphant "I caught one!" Yet the real stretch of the imagination was two years and a fuzzy line in the family tree. I tried to up the stakes and point to the fairy-filled forest across the creek. She shot me down with a shake of her curls.

My niece is the coolest kid I know, so I'd been anticipating her approval of my new home. She did not disappoint. I found myself living the excitement all over again with a second pair of blue eyes. After some quality time by the "big river" and a rest in the hammock, my troop (sister, niece, my husband, and I) headed out for a day trip to town.

First stop for the grownups: fuel for the journey. We chose the Black Bear to keep our options open; one person's pre-outing coffee is another per-

son's beer. My niece, however, was less interested in beverage selections. One step in the front door and it was love at first sight; all she could talk about was skeletons. She pointed to the skeletons on the ceiling and asked how they got up there and what they were doing. She then named the skeletons sitting at the table and helped them with their conversation. Her first choice was to sit with them, but she settled for a booth close by. It was all she could do to obey the phrase, *Do Not Touch*.

With some effort, we exited the café and my niece said goodbyes to her new group of friends. It was a gorgeous sunny day, perfect for a visit to a park, or in this case, two. The steam engine was the first stop for the kiddo. Oregon-American Locomotive No. 102 sans blue paint and a smile is a real life version of Thomas the Tank Engine. Thomas was pushed aside for puffed sleeves and pink princesses a couple years back, but the girl still likes her trains. It was a good learning experience for both of us to read about the No. 102 and its neighbor, the old steam tractor.

After ogling the engine, we crossed the street to the play park with the big "what's that?" My husband described how the cement depression she was pointing to transforms into a swimming pool and fills up with water. My niece decided she would come back for a sleepover sometime when the pool works again.

Thankfully, the swings and the play structure were "working" and we spent a good deal of time climbing up the leaves into the tree house. After zipping down the slide, my niece and husband fashioned frizzed hair and threatened Mommy and Auntie with a vicious shock. I'm not sure who invented that game but I'm not a fan.

Before heading home, we had to make one last stop at the pet store. I'm not sure how anyone visiting downtown Vernonia with a child could pass the store without being pulled inside. A step or two in the door and I immediately found myself within the gaze of a giant, white bird. He looked to be the guardian of the establishment. Walking past what we later learned to be a Moluccan

Cockatoo, my niece pointed out the inhabitants of various tanks and cages as we made our way through Creatures.

Turning a corner near the back, the adults stopped short of exotic birdville. The kiddo, on the other hand, fearlessly adventured among the formidable beaks and talons, towing her mother along to examine the waterfall. I loved the scene but got the heebeegeebees, feeling like we were being watched with the intensity of too many eyes.

The parrot muttered as we flocked to the front desk and asked if the bird room was safe for a five-year-old. The answer was wavering between "maybe" and "I personally wouldn't risk it," so we took up the generous offer to watch the chameleon eat crickets with her tremendous tongue. Ten minutes tracking subtle shifts and rapid eye movements rewarded us with an awesome sight. The lizard's tongue leisurely emerged and leapt quickly cross-cage with a snap, retract, crunch. My niece was bug-eyed. It was a perfect finale to a memorable day.

Got Water?

By Jessica Jensen Jones

If you look around these days, it is hard to miss the increased and frantic attention to the state of the world's water. In the last six months the subject of water has been featured in just about every major news outlet in North America and the world and is currently National Geographic's cover story. To learn more about National Geographic's April issue, "Our Thirsty World", please go to <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com>. You can also receive a free download of this issue by going to <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/zinio/freshwater>. This media however is only reminding us of what most of us already were aware of because of decades of water conservation campaigns: The world's water supply is shrinking and the water that's left is pretty polluted.

We, the users of the water have taken for grant-

ed two things: The keepers of the water and the quantity of the water. We've trusted that the keepers of the water will keep the water clean and we've trusted that the availability of the water is eternal and sustainable. For thousands of years this resource has been used for assistance with cleaning, cooling, breeding, distributing, transporting, power creation, agriculture, art, food, ice and of course, for drinking. Whatever way you look at it, this resource is more precious than gold, more precious even, than oil. Today, when I googled "water is more precious than gold", I got more than a million links from every kind of website imaginable. Water is the world's newest rock star. It's ascent to respect is a long time coming, a prisoner released after spending all her life in behind bars for a crime she didn't commit.

This monthly column will focus on what people in the upper Nehalem valley are doing and can do to increase the quality of our streams and rivers with the goal of protecting the health of the citizens. Water, clean water, is necessary for optimal human health. The

Nehalem Valley is a region rich in this natural resource. How rich? Here's a few reasons...The Nehalem River, Rock Creek and Bear Creeks, Coal Creek, Kenusky Creek, Pebble Creek, Fall Creek, Dog Creek, Crooked Creek, Deer Creek, Oak Ranch Creek, Little Clatskanie River, North Fork Nehalem River, Cronin Creek, Weed Creek, Deep Creek, Humbug, East Humbug and West Humbug Rivers, Buster Creek, North F Rock Creek, SF Rock Creek, Youngs River, SF Klaskanine River, Fishhawk Lake Creek, Fork Creeks. Have I missed any?

This coming Earth Day, I urge you to consider your favorite river or creek and come by the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council booth during Make Vernonia Shine. Information about keeping your watershed healthy, local scientific publications and grant opportunities for riparian projects will be available. Be sure to ask about the 2010 Nehalem Watershed Photo Drive, where the UNWC is asking citizens to help with documenting the state of the river where they either live or play.

Intruder Alert: The Internet of Today

By Burt Tschache

We made it through Y2K and with the standardization of the 802.11b wireless technology in 1999, also known as Wi-Fi, the Internet we know today becomes more recognizable. Although the wireless providers predict they will take over transmission from standard copper wire and fiber optics, they still have a ways to go, with speed, security and physical impediments the major issues.

The Internet speed keeps increasing as new technologies and standards allow for faster and denser transmission of packets (remember those from August, 2009?). There is a constant motivation to increase speed with more of the world connecting to the Web. Worldwide communication is a wonderful facility to have at your fingertips and one of the great boons of the Web.

Security has become the major issue with so much of the world linked together in cyberspace. Innumerable security breaches have exposed personal information, proprietary corporate information and governmental/infrastructure information to people that would make ill usage of such. Worse yet are the compulsions developed from too much com-

puting. People can spend too much time on the Internet and that becomes their entire life, sometimes to the detriment of their physical and mental health.

The Internet has so much great information and is one of the most effective research tools around, but it also contains much misinformation and disinformation and therein is another big problem. There needs to be a way to separate the online wheat from the chaff and we all need continual honing of our BS detectors.

Scam artists, fanatics, perverts and other disruptive sorts have Web access and keeping them at bay is a full-time job for many. The intentional deceptions perpetrated upon our youth is the main reason many security packages and even operating systems have Parental Controls as a part of their package. Before the Internet, these people could be run out of town or locked up. Now, they can be anywhere in the world. That makes locating them a bit more difficult. Some countries even encourage misdeeds on the Internet although they would never admit to it.

Before we all throw our hands up in despair, let us remember that the Internet is a tool. A tool can be used

correctly or incorrectly. We use the tool for our purposes and not the other way around. I am going to tell you something that you will not hear from many other computer professionals. Take a break, go outside and get some fresh air. Breathe deeply. Take a walk. The Internet will still be there when you get back and you will have a clearer mind for viewing.

America has weight and fitness problems, much of this occurring since the advent of computing and the Internet. I do not think that this is a coincidence. The more time spent sitting at the computer means the less time spent in more physically-challenging, active pursuits.

Do not get me wrong here. I love the Internet and all the good it has done for us. I also believe in the necessity of a balanced life. Life is a balance of body, mind and soul. If any one of these is out of balance, all of them are. So get your information, do your shopping or whatever, on the Web, then get out of that chair, and do something active. Your body, mind and soul will thank you for it. Be safe out there.

Next Month – My Mea Culpa
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2010 Vernonia Lake Trout Stocking by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

April 12 3,000 Rainbow
April 26 2,500 Rainbow

Stocking dates subject to change without notice
Free Fishing weekend is June 12-13th, 2010

