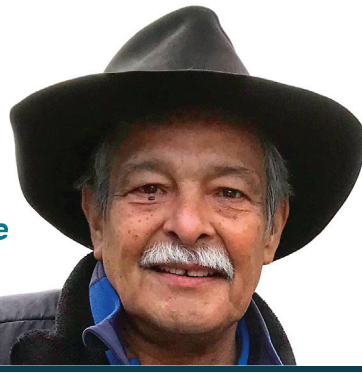


THE ANGLER'S LOG

THE best fishing guide for the southern Willamette Valley



BEST BET

Isolating from others, of course. Let's stay the course, whether we're fishing from the shore or on the water. Be sure to physically distance from others in the outdoors.

Frank Armendariz is an expert Oregon river guide and veteran outdoorsman • frank@rivertrailoutfitters.com

Often mention the agencies and some of the individuals who work essentially behind the scenes to manage and enhance the many fisheries Oregon has been blessed with. Given the demands we place on our forest lands, our rivers and other natural areas. It becomes a challenging balance between our need for forest products, hydroelectric power and our rapidly expanding population,

reflected in the growth and development of our urban communities. While still maintaining healthy habitats for fish and other wildlife and preserving the uniquely Oregonian cultural history of "hunting and gathering".

As an angler, river guide and outfitter, I have always viewed these resource managers as partners. They work at maintaining the vital natural components of

our cultural history and current economy and we pay for those efforts through our purchase of licenses and tags. Even with the public's contribution, it is a daunting job and everyone I have ever been in contact with, who fills those roles, takes their work deeply to heart. Many of them are actually your neighbors, live in our communities and care as deeply about our future and our environment as any of us.

Emma Garner is one of those individuals, a fisheries biologist who works out of the Springfield office of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. In light of "social distancing" I sent Emma several questions; here are her responses. I was inspired and thankful for Emma's enthusiasm and commitment to her career as a fish biologist for Oregon. And that became clear in the answers she gave me ...

A lifelong connection

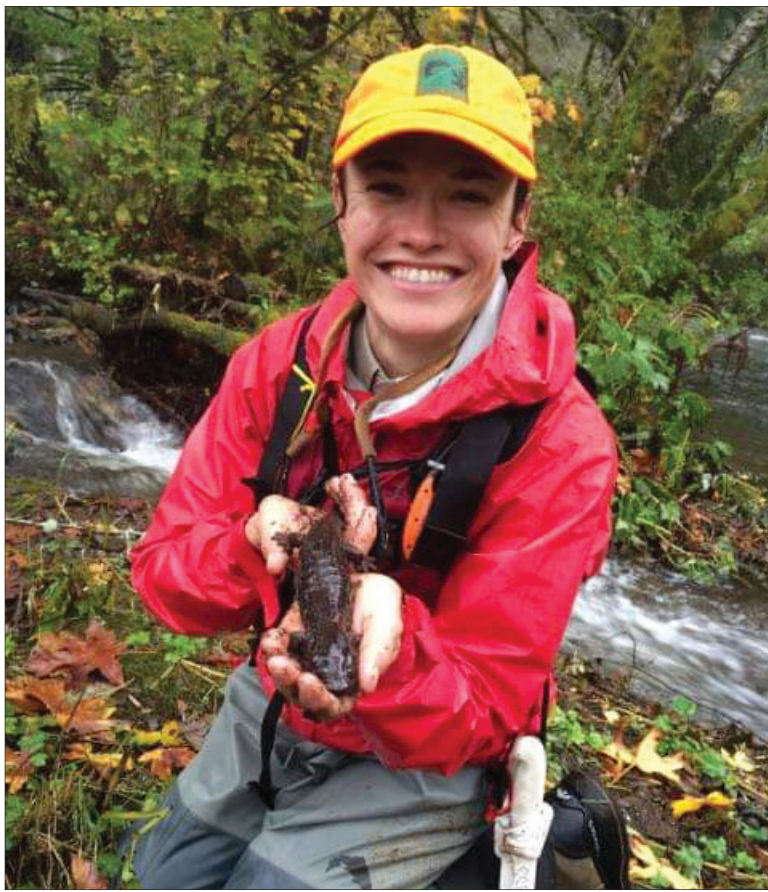
PART I

Question: Emma, what is your exact title and would you please tell me in as much detail possible about your responsibilities as a Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife employee and how long you have been with the department.

Answer: I am the District Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) Biologist in Springfield. I work with district staff on the fish management side but most of my duties target STEP goals, which direct my attention to education, outreach, and community engagement. I work with many formal and informal educators, supporting their programs by providing presentations, guiding hands-on activities, and leading outdoor lessons. All of my work focuses on native fish, their habitat, and their biological needs. I also organize community-fishing events, provide presentations to local groups, work with nonprofits on their outreach goals, and do my best to support community needs and interests in fisheries.

Working with the community is a big part of what I do. When we focus our district efforts on species management or research, I create a way for folks outside of the agency to participate through volunteer work. Volunteers have been a major part of our work including: Pacific Lamprey monitoring, sampling trout in the High Lakes, Rainbow Trout spawning ground surveys, and habitat work. There is a lot of variety in the work I do!

I have been the Springfield STEP Biologist for just over 1.5 years. Before starting with STEP, I was the Project Biologist/Crew Lead on the mid-coast where I worked with an ODFW research project that monitored fall Chinook and winter Steelhead. I have been with ODFW since 2011. Most of my time (2011-2017) was spent on the research side. During those years, I worked seasonally on jobs lasting



anywhere between 2 and 6 months. Seasonal work can require a lot of moving as you change your location to find work. You experience a lot of variety in the work you do. I have had the pleasure of working with projects focused on: coastal salmon spawning, pre/post habitat restoration surveys, monitoring Oregon Chub populations, Redband Trout surveys on the Deschutes, and Bull Trout relocation in the Metolius and Clackamas Basins.

Q: May I ask a little about your early life? Where you were born, what it was like growing up where you lived and was there anything in your youth that you could share that put you on your life's path?

A: Oregon is an incredible state, years of seasonal work created opportunities for me to connect to it in ways I never would have experienced

otherwise. However, the state has always carried a big piece of my heart as I was born and raised in the Willamette Valley.

For a short while, up to second grade, I lived in Corvallis. Corvallis has a beautiful natural area called Bald Hill Park. It provides miles of trails for biking and hiking. There is a 3.5-mile tributary to Mary's River called Oak Creek; it flows from Bald Hill out to campus. Up until we moved, my family lived in a small house nestled up between Oak Creek and Bald Hill. I spent all my free time exploring trails and the creek. I would hike the creek out to the recreation area or follow it as far into town as I could. It made a huge impact on me as a child and blossomed my love for the outdoors. After moving to Philomath, I continued to explore every natural space near my home. My family did not go camping or take many trips to outdoor rec sites. I connected to nature through my own adven-

tures in the creeks and fields near my neighborhood. I raised frogs from tadpoles, watched birds gather around piles of seeds I left for them, kept an eye on bird nests I found in nearby trees, and followed snakes through the grass. While I didn't know at the time I would be a fish biologist, I have a distinct memory of being in sixth grade and declaring that I wanted to be an "environmental ecologist." I think I liked the idea because I knew it meant I would get to work outside and for a sixth-grader it was a big word that made me feel smart. I maintained that passion and directed my focus to those studies all the way through high school and into college where I had more control over how I explored what it meant to be a biologist.

Q: Can you tell me about your educational background, college and when did you decide to be a fish biologist? Was it your first career choice?

A: The fall after graduation, I started college at Oregon State University where I earned a bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife. My connection to streams was still with me and influenced my focus toward freshwater habitat conservation. I still was not fully fish-focused but I was getting close! After graduating, I worked as a forest

technician on a project evaluating the impact of wildfires on upland forest stands. After about 1.5 years, I had the opportunity to apply my degree more directly to my work. I was offered a job with ODFW as a seasonal technician monitoring spawning salmon on the north coast. This was my first job with the agency and was a launching pad for my work with fish. I redirected my focus and I never looked back!

Q: Did you face any challenges on your career path and how did you overcome those?

A: I think challenges come with every path we take in life and are heavily influenced by who we are and our own experience and history. I faced many on my path to where I am today and I still face them. Building a network of mentors and support helped me build confidence in my voice and my own power to move past those struggles. It took me awhile to find my network but I am grateful for everyone who has been and who is a part of it. As I continued my work, my confidence in who I was as a biologist also grew. I deserved the path I was carving for myself and finding that trust and confidence in myself as a biologist made facing challenges a little easier. They still pop up and on some days I jump those hurdles myself, on other days I lean on the support of my network.



Emma Garner has spent her career with the ODFW. She said all of her work focuses on native fish, their habitat, and their biological needs.

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