

Clackamas goes exploring in Eastern Oregon

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Contributing Writer

Last week, Clackamas students and staff members trekked to the Malheur Field Station near Burns, Ore. for a four-day field class led by John Snively, Bill Guthrie and part-time instructor Jennifer Porter. The trip was an activity-filled introduction to the plants, animals, birds, geology and ecology of the Oregon desert with a little orienteering thrown in for good measure.

After an early morning launch last Thursday, the group wound its way toward the field stations through the Oregon high desert, Madras, Prineville, the Painted Hills and the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. Along the way, Snively incorporated his unique "intercom lecture technique" to provide a running talk on everything from bird and plant identification to the origins of the Cascade Mountains.

The group kept their binoculars at the ready as Snively made a number of scenic stops at promising birding areas throughout the first day.

Near the John Day Monument, the group stopped to inspect roadcuts which contained 30 million-year-old plant fossils. Further on, at the John Day Visitors' Center, students and faculty were treated to a detailed lecture on the latest fossil finds in the area and enjoyed a tour of the fascinating fossil collection housed there.

The Malheur Field Station itself proved to be the ideal base for exploring the history-rich area over the next three days. Spartan but comfortable amenities included bunkhouse dormitories (males on the right, females on the left), basic meals, hot showers—provided one awoke early enough—and plenty of peace and quiet. The station itself, though often teetering on the edge of financial collapse throughout its 30-plus-year history, has managed to remain a place of special charm.

Supported in part by a consortium of Oregon colleges in-

cluding Clackamas, the Malheur Field Station is currently undergoing a renaissance of sorts with college-credit classes being offered this summer and accommodations for non-school visitors who want to enjoy the amazing array of natural history adventures right at the field station's doorstep.

Birding proved to be one of the real high points of the trip despite uncooperative and, at times, downright nasty weather. Students were required to keep birding lists, several of which included as many as 100 different sightings. Some of the more fascinating of these included greater sandhill cranes, great-horned owls, golden eagles, several species of gulls, numerous species of wrens and warblers and, perhaps the high point for diehard birders, a Krider's red-tailed hawk.

The burrowing owl, one of the most sought-after sightings of the trip, proved to be as elusive as the sunshine—despite several commando-style silent sorties into prime burrowing owl habitat.

Geology was as much a part of the trip as the birds and the group had several opportunities to read the story of the rocks in the area. Intrepid driver/instructors Snively, Porter and Guthrie braved slippery dirt roads to bring students to the very rim of the Diamond Craters area not far from the field station. The enormous volcanic eruptions which occurred in the area



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Students from a community education class inspect a rocky outcrop for fossils near Bend. The field class to Malheur Field Station, led by three Clackamas instructors, studied local flora, fauna, geology and ecology.

between 6 and 9 million years ago left spectacular craters, splatter cones, and lava fields which tell of a violent, formative history for much of south and central Oregon.

Most of the geology was viewed on foot and the hikes afforded an opportunity for students to sharpen their map, compass and GPS skills. At one point, Snively dropped two groups of students off at different points around Diamond Craters with instruction to locate and hike to a specific (and rather well-hidden) point using map, compass and GPS. Fortunately, after a false start or two, both groups successfully found their way to the appointed spot without loss of personnel.

The human history of the area was not ignored either. Snively took the group to the ranch of Peter French, now on the refuge, and told the story of a young cowboy who, before his 25th birthday had built a large, efficient and productive ranch, erected several amazing structures including the famous Round Barn, and even re-routed a good stretch of the Blitzen River. Alas, this fascinating character did not live to old age having been killed in an argument with a squatter he had thrown off his ranch.

At night, students and faculty members spent quiet time filling in the blank places in their journals and composing a daily closure of the high points. The camaraderie developed quickly and, despite the serious mission of the field trip, the social atmosphere was warm, friendly and a sharp contrast to the chilly, wet Oregon desert weather outside.

Estonia exchange: story clarification

The feature story, "Estonia exchange program enriches both lands," which ran in the Wed. May 9, 1998 issue of the *Clackamas Print* (Issue #21), has been cause for concern at the Clackamas Registrar's Office. The article contains wording which implies that Clackamas has an official foreign exchange program, when such is not yet the case.

While Clackamas and the Georg Ots Music School in Tallinn, Estonia

have been working to get such a program in place, there is still work to be done. Estonian Kairi Raud is currently here on a B1/B2 (Visitor's) visa, as a prospective student. This visa's purpose is to expose students to other cultures.

There are two other types of visas available: the F1 (International Student) visa, for those only here to study, and the J (Exchange Student) visa, for those here to study and experience cul-

ture. Raud will upgrade to a J visa when the administrative framework for a full-fledged exchange program is in place. Clackamas' administration plans to go forward with this when a new Associate Dean is hired to replace the newly-resigned Kay Davis.

It is not the *Clackamas Print's* intent to create undue friction or confusion in this process, and we are happy to offer this clarification of our previous article.

Surprises abound in the Native Garden's beauty

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Contributing Writer

If you have been walking along the south end of the garden this past week, where the cement plaza runs into the lawn, you were probably amazed at the floristic display that you saw erupting at your feet. If you haven't walked by this corner of the garden, then I suggest you do so soon, before it disappears.

What I am talking about here is the blanket of Douglas' Meadow-Foam, *Limnanthus douglasii*, that is covering the ground right now in a thick layer of jaw-dropping flowers. Throughout most of the year this plant spends its time as a

dull green low-growing herbaceous ground cover; one that we barely notice, if at all. Now, in this short window of spring, this little annual explodes into a tumbling sea of blossoms that isn't hard to miss, or admire.

The flowers sit directly above the plants foliage, not but a few inches off of the ground, and they look as though a tiny egg were cracked and left there covering the petals. Their inside is a bright orange, surrounded by a ring of white that circles around the tips of the petals. There are hundreds of these vibrant flowers packed into one small patch, so get out there while these wonderful plants are still in bloom. Have a close look at them. Their detail and beauty will astound you.

Every week the rock garden unleashes a few new surprises for us to behold. This week it seems to be the Wild Onions. In the rock garden (located just in front of the chemistry lab windows on the east side of the native garden) there are three separate species of Wild Onion, all of which are relatively easy to identify.

The flowers can be pink or white in color, and they are arranged in globe-like cluster that sit atop a single 6-12 inch green stem. Just picture a cotton ball dipped in pink and glued to the top of a slender leafless green stem. The leaves of the Wild Onion are long and slender, generally pale-green and arise individually out of the ground from the bulb, as does the flower. The one you will see in full bloom now is the Douglas' Onion, *Allium douglasii*, which has a rather

large and showy pink flower cluster.

Wild Onions have a long history of uses, both as food and medicine, that spans the planet. It is supposed that Wild Onions were cultivated by the early Egyptians. The Aztec people of Mexico used this plant as a food source, and reportedly "chewed the bulbs to relieve flatulency."

Native Americans from the Pacific Northwest dug the bulbs in the fall and then cooked them in pit ovens. The cooked bulbs were then either dried and pressed into cakes for later use, or they were eaten fresh out of the oven, which was considered a delicacy. The cooked bulbs are considerably different than the raw bulbs, both in nutritive value and in taste. The raw bulbs contain a sugar called inulin. Uncooked, this sugar is indigestible to us humans, and tastes rather bitter. But cooked, the sugar breaks down and becomes both digestible and nutritive, not to mention deliciously sweet in flavor.

Medicinally, Wild Onions are used topically on cuts and insect-bites. Several people I know claim the roots, when split open, are great rubbed on a Poison-Oak rash. They also work well as an insect repellent when rubbed on exposed body parts (but you had better be alone or with someone who really likes onions to try this one).

Onions, when ingested frequently, have also been proven to help reduce cholesterol levels in the bloodstream, but seeing as the Wild Onions bulb is so small, it is not a good idea to rely on this plant to feed you. As with any wild plants, when there is a cultivated substitute, USE IT.

Wild plants, and the entire planet in general, have suffered enough abuse from us humans in the past century. Anything that we can do to leave untouched what is left untouched, would be both the wise and responsible thing to do. Stroll around in the rainy sunshine, and absorb the vibrant green colors of springs new growth. Enjoy.



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

A colony of annually blooming Douglas' Meadow-foam thrives in its habitat, blanketing the Native Garden with beauty.