

Zoology teacher makes others rebuild rode

From Death Valley trips to the Bird Identification class, Instructor Jennifer Bown has made a career playing outside

Jess Sheppard

The Clackamas Print

The outdoors is a passion for Life Science Instructor Jennifer Bown.

"There's incredible environment, incredible things around us, and we don't even pay attention to them," Bown said.

Bown, who was born and raised in Reno, Nev., considers the Pacific Northwest to be a paradise.

"You've got the Coast over here, the mountain right there. You've got the Gorge," she explained. "You guys have got everything, and I'm not leaving."

"You try bird-watching in Nevada - it's hard," she continued. "You'd be lucky to get 20 bird species."

Bown is an extremely active outdoors enthusiast. She, her husband and their soon-to-be three-year-old daughter spend each time of year differently.

"It depends on the season," she said. "In the winter, I snow ski. Most of this last season

was spent teaching my daughter how to snow ski."

"Then, I rock climb in the off-season and wind surf in the summer," she added. "That's what our vacations center around."

But although she enjoys the Northwest, she can still appreciate the desert. She takes her students in Natural History of the Southwest Desert on a nine-day field trip to Death Valley each year.

"I try to teach as many field-based things as I can," she said. "That's kinda where my passion is."

These field sessions are featured in many of Bown's classes.

Her bird identification course, for example, takes an annual four-day trip to Malheur National Forest in eastern Oregon. Bird Identification is a spring class, and usually this is one of the last field trips of the term.

Individuals enrolled in Natural History of the Oregon Coast - which is only offered in the winter - go on regular

hikes at the beach on weekends.

Class projects are another part of some of her courses, particularly zoology.

"They're (the zoology students) rebuilding the skeleton of a rodent," Bown said. "They've extracted all the bones out of owl pellets. They actually have to identify each one of the bones and put them in the right placement."

In addition, zoology students make molds of animal footprints out of plaster.

"You get to work more hands-on," said student Amanda Stutz. "And she (Bown) knows if you don't get it - she can tell just by looking, and she'll help you through it."

Journaling is the main bulk of work for Bird Identification. Students describe and/or draw the birds they see in the field.

"We start with backyard birds, big birds that don't move around a lot," Bown said. "Geese and ducks are always good to start with."

As a personal project, Bown is in the process of setting up a cold saltwater tank. When

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Instructor Jennifer Bown examines the pond near the Center filled with plant and wildlife, such as frogs.

completed, it will mimic the ecosystem of a tidal pool.

She plans to collect animals from the coast for the project and has recently been granted the permits to do so.

Bown left Nevada in 1995 to take a job in Oregon.

"Way back in 1995, I applied for a position (at Clackamas)," she recalled. "I didn't get it, but they brought me up as a sabbatical replacement for a year, and I've stayed ever since. I was fortunate in 2003 to get on full-time, finally."

Before coming to the col-

lege, she taught

Community College six years. In total, teaching science when she was a college running labs.

"I love science. I'm excited about want to get even excited about it."

Her enthusiasm go unnoticed, said Butler, a student zoology class.

"You can tell she does," Butler

Home-schoolers bring a unique look to the campus life

Kenton Benfield

The Clackamas Print

Some say that community college is just like high school but with more studying. For a significant minority of students, the similarity may not be so obvious.

Home-schooled youth have, in certain cases, never received a public education, but rather were taught by their parents or through alternative programs. Clackamas Community College is some students' first official scholastic experience.

While the registrar's office does not track the exact statistics, a noteworthy number of previously home-schooled individuals take courses on campus.

Much is owed to the efforts of Clackamas Middle College (CMC), a charter high school located in the parking lot of the Haggen food market across the street from the college.

CMC "is a program designed around allowing students an opportunity to work towards high school completion, while also allowing them the opportunity to attend community colleges in the State of Oregon," said Michael Ferber, CMC College Extended Options Program counselor.

The programs offered at CMC can be customized to suit students' goals and needs, which often vary with home-schooling and the results of placement tests.

CMC caters to anyone who has yet to complete high school and is under the age of 21 - it does much more than help the home-schooled. Anyone seeking to complete a diploma and transition into college can make use of its free services.

So why are CMC and other institutions like it necessary?

The education that a student may have received from home-schooling is not officially accredited by the United States Department of Education. In order for the learning to count, placement tests must be administered, and any gaps in academic proficiency must be filled before earning a diploma.

Currently, approximately 116 students attend the college via the College Extended Options Program at CMC. A large percentage of them have some sort of background in home-schooling and are working for a high school diploma while enrolled at Clackamas.

"I would imagine you (the college) have a pretty

significant number of home-school kids, more than probably what the community college even realizes," Ferber said.

This "off the radar" approach - in both the home-schooling itself and CMC-styled programs - has, historically, led to the development of stereotypes regarding the academic, social and personality traits of home-schooled students.

Katie Wilson, who graduated from Clackamas last spring after attending for four years, was completely home-schooled until the age of 16. The college was her first official school.

"Clackamas was kind of like my high school (or) first two years of college," she said. "I guess there is kind of like a stereotype of a home-schooled kid who doesn't know how to do anything (socially) and never shuts up and everything. I don't think people realized most of the time that I was home-schooled."

Transitioning from a home setting to a public setting can be a culture shock.

"Just getting used to people was very interesting," Wilson said. "I lived in a very social environment - it was not like just me and my family - but still, coming to Clackamas was a big shift. It was a cultural shift in a lot of ways."

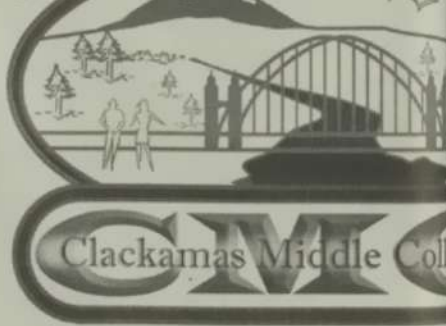
When general academic proficiency and intellect are considered, however, the stereotypes generally hold true, says student Derek Weaver.

"As for developing your creative, artistic skills and your personality, nothing compares to home-schooling," Weaver said.

Even the summer term schedule of classes features a previously home-schooled student, Jedidah Jackson, on the cover. Jackson was home-schooled for 12 years before attending the college and will transfer to Portland State University in the fall.

Although these students have had a somewhat unique upbringing, Clackamas presents them with an opportunity to break into the wider world of academics.

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