

A fresh start, enter Wildman



By Isaac Soper
Arts & Culture Editor

Call me a treehugger. Do it, I dare you.

I won't cry, I might blush a little though, because I do love Mother Nature.

Nature has always fascinated me. Trees, rocks, animals, the sky; you name it, I love it. I can't marry nature, sadly, because she isn't human, and that apparently "isn't okay," (even though some guy in Korea married a pillow).

Sure, video games are fun. Movies and television pass the time. What do I get out of any of those activities, apart from instant gratification; maybe a little more brain-dead? With the technology we create with our minds and with our hands, we try to one-up the natural world; we try to surpass the natural laws of the universe.

We've forgotten the skills that we consider to be "primitive," that every culture before the industrial revolution considered necessary. We hide indoors, buy our groceries from stores and push a remote to start a fireplace. Granted, these luxuries are nice, and they are comfortable.

I want uncomfortable. I want something real. I want to discover myself and the world around me, and not through Google Street View.

The beauty of the natural world is that things grow and things heal. The world is a nurturing place. With some skill, food can be gathered, and even medi-

cine can be made. Did you know that tea made from blackberry leaves is good for curing colds, coughs and flus? For an herbal tea, it's not too bad either.

For a vegetarian, gathering wild edible plants can be a very fun and enlightening experience. If you have guts, it can also be an exciting experience. I call it "guerilla gathering," in which one finds edible plants in the "domesticated" world. For instance, roses are edible. Though I promise, I will only eat your roses if I am starving. But just to remind you, I am not a deer, so please don't shoot me.

The outdoors not only provide a place to eat and lick our wounds, but they give us a place to play. We can go on hikes, swim, climb and explore; nature provides a wide array of possible activities for people to do. What she lacks in technology, she makes up for in potential and diversity.

Oregon is a fantastic place to live if you have a passion for the outdoors. Where I live, I am about two hours away from the mountain in one direction and the Coast in the other direction. I can go out my back door, drive for five minutes and find a great place to go hiking or camping. If I drive for 15 minutes I can find a great fishing spot.

I become so desensitized and numb during the school year that I don't utilize my free time to enjoy the outdoors. I hide inside my bedroom, do my homework and then watch a movie. I want that to change.

I just want to be at peace with-in myself, and I don't see that happening though the mass-media forms of entertainment anymore. I feel lost a lot of the time, and maybe what I need is to become lost in the woods to find myself. I want to gather my meals from the woods, take a shower in the rain and fight for the protection and conservation of the Earth.

I want to become a Wildman. I'll still be mostly civilized—I'll shower (most of the time); maybe it'll be an alter-ego, a secret identity perhaps? Let's see where it goes from here.

Next up: Edible plants

Take a hike at the Environmental Learning Center



All photos by Isaac Soper The Clackamas Print

The Environmental Learning Center (ELC) was created out of an abandoned Smucker's jam factory. Many of the site's buildings were built from reclaimed materials, along with the Haggart observatory.

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The Environmental Learning Center is a really cool area, and being so close to class (right off of Inskeep Drive, next to Lewelling and the old Art Center) is very neat indeed. There are bathrooms near the ELC that claim they are open from dawn to

dusk, but are locked, which is disheartening.

The ELC contains some beautiful ponds, a wide array of native plants (some being edible), and quite a few wild animals as well. The ponds are habitat to quite a few ducks, turtles and bullfrogs during the springtime.

Within the trails that follow along Newell Creek, there is a

self-guided tour of the area.

Hopefully the revamping of this area will happen soon. It has much promise, but as of now it is in disarray. Much of the ELC's trails have been damaged by graffiti, a fair amount of trash and vandalism.

Being a one-minute drive or a five-minute walk from class isn't too shabby either. What the ELC lacks in upkeep, it makes up for in possibility. Hopefully, we'll see that realized in the near future. All in all, the ELC is a great little wilderness haven right here on campus, which would only improve with a bit of maintenance and upkeep.



The ELC is home to many of Oregon's native species, including box turtles, bullfrogs and ducks.

Name: Environmental Learning Center
Location: Clackamas Community College (Inskeep Drive)
Type: (Moderately) groomed trails
Length: Less than one-mile
Difficulty: Easy
Equipment needed: None

Meme of the Week:

