



It's All About Eels ...

Submitted by the Siletz Tribal Arts and Heritage Society

In 1996, *Skakol: The Decline of the Siletz Lamprey Eel Population During the 20th Century*, an eel study about the decline of the eel on the Siletz River, was published. It consists of 19 oral interviews with Siletz, Ore., residents, mostly Tribal. The interviews were conducted by Siletz Tribal members. The study was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation to the College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon State University, and the NAMS program. CTSI assisted with the cost of publication.

The following interview with Tribal elder Nellie Orton was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at her home in Toledo, Ore., on July 10, 1991. Nellie was born in Siletz on March 6, 1913. She was a Tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

I've lived here all my life, I was born here. Since 1951 we moved over here because our house burned down. Because Sonny (son, Charles Orton) was only 10 years old.

In what year were you born?

I was born in 1913

What area of Siletz Valley did you grow up in?

Down there by the Grange Hall (Siletz Grange Hall on Metcalf Road) ... my dad owned all that land there where the Grange Hall is. He had a house there. That is where we used to live. It is where those government buildings sit now. He used to have a house there. He never sold any of that land, he just sold that little piece of the Grange Hall. He owned clear down to the Gibson berry patch.

How far back do you remember fishing on the Siletz?

Well, I know I have been fishing ever since I could remember, since I was a kid, you know. I know Charles (husband) used to set net all the time, long time ago.

Did you ever fish for eels yourself on the Siletz?

Not really, but I watched them hook eels. I never hooked or anything. I have picked up the eels as they are being thrown on the bank and put them into a gunny sack. They told me to put sand on your hands so you can pick them, they are so slimy.



Courtesy photo from Kay Steele and Danielle Billmyre

Nellie and Charles Orton

Can you remember where the traditional eel hooking grounds were?

Just about any place a person wants to build himself a platform or had a good riffle, you know. Everyone had their own place to eel wherever it was the closest to them, you know. So we never really had no special place, each family had their own

fishing holes. When we lived in Siletz we fished down there where the Old Mill site was, you know, they have a park there today. There is a good riffle down below there. My dad owned land on the other side so they built a platform, then they hooked eels and fished from that, you know. You had to go across in a boat to get to the platform. Just about everybody had their own eel stand ... each one had their own so when they want to go hook eels they could, you know. Here lately they have been hooking off the bank up by Logsdens Rock Creek.

What year do you think they started hooking up in the Rock Creek?

It was when my kids were small. Jimmy (grandson, Jimmy Pyle) would be 40. He was just a little fellow going up there hooking eels. They would take the kids along to pick up the eels and put them into bags, you know.

Was this at the Rock Creek area?

Yeah, Rock Creek, uh huh. People would build a big fire on the bank and one kind of close to the water so they can see the eels. Then they, more or less, they feel

See Eels on page 8

2022 Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians Memorial Day Ceremony

May 30, 2022
11 a.m.
Government Hill
Siletz, Oregon

Procession to Veterans Memorial – Honor Guard
and Dancing Again Singers

The Lord's Prayer – Siletz Royalty
Welcome – Tribal Council Chairman Delores Pigsley
Memorial Day Address – William "Buster" Lane
Presentation of Flowers
Gun Salute – Honor Guard – Taps

Closing – Dancing Again Singers

Due to COVID-19, social distancing protocols will be in place.
The community center remains closed.
The restrooms at the comfort station near the pow-wow grounds will be open.

CLASS OF '22 GRADUATES & FAMILIES

Send your graduate info to
PIAS@ctsi.nsn.us to be included in
the July issue of Siletz News!

Please Include:

- ◆ Student's name
- ◆ School graduating from
 - ◆ Degree(s) earned if a college grad
- ◆ Date of graduation
- ◆ Plans after graduation
- ◆ Photo of student