

# Pollinator Ecology course at Siskiyou Field Institute

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Want to get outside in a beautiful location this summer? Do something by yourself or with the family? Oh, and learn something too? Then an adult education course at the Siskiyou Field Institute is the thing for you.

First, to view the catalogue and see what courses there are in the balance of June through November go to: <http://www.thesfi.org/index.asp>

Now, let me tell you about the course I took in May - Pollinator Ecology. While I know a lot about pollinators, the course was more about the needs of the plants and their evolution to get those needs met than those doing the pollinating; lots for me to learn.

Each course is presented by a different expert. Pollinator Ecology (PE) was presented by August Jackson, the interpretation coordinator at the Mount Pisgah Arboretum in Eugene. While some courses are all outdoors, PE began inside with a lecture/Power Point presentation. It may sound dry, but the presentation was chock full of gorgeous photos of native plants and

pretty pollinators, mostly flies and bees.

**Fun fact:** flies are actually responsible for 33 percent of all pollination worldwide. Because most bees can't fly if it's below 60° or overcast or rainy and because this is Oregon – the bulk of early spring blossoms depend on flies. Bumblebees are some of the first bees out buzzing around so additionally many spring blooms have evolved just for the big buzzers.

One example is larkspur, which keeps its nectar way down inside so only bumblebees have tongues (which are actually proboscis, more like straws than tongues) long enough to get it. Getting that nectar, and pollinating as they do, is not easy, and bumblebees have to learn how to do it. Lucky bumbles can watch other bees and learn that way, while those without mentors have to get to that nectar by trial and error. It's a time investment, so once a bee has cracked the nectar code, it will keep going back to the same type of flower to save learning about another type as long as it can.

Some flowers are more cooperative and signal to bees, "No nectar here." Houndstongue, for

example, blooms bright blue but turns pink once pollinated. Savvy bees can see that only the blue flowers will have nectar and pollen left and bypass the pink.

This color change can evolve over time as a permanent change to attract different pollinators too. If you're familiar with our awesome native snowy thistle and its unique red bloom then you've seen this in action (if you aren't - Google it!). Red attracts hummingbirds versus bees, flies, wasps and other pollinators.

If you need another reason to go exploring outdoors this summer, head up to Crater Lake in July or early August to see the cliff penstemon (*penstemon rupicola*). Historically, a blue bloom, the Crater Lake species is growing pinker on its way to red as the years go by because for that flower, hummingbirds will do a better job of pollination.

You can even take a Siskiyou Field Institute course (or two!) at Crater Lake. Both the Geology of Crater Lake and Birds & Botany of Crater Lake are offered in July and August. Go check out that website today; learning has never been so much fun.



(Photo by Christy Solo, Illinois Valley News)

Paper mining bee in a California poppy

## Advisability of having bikes during dire emergencies: by Flo C. Blake

Flo Blake interviewed a true expert—her stepson Greg—for his advice on how we might handle crisis situations we could face following earthquakes.

Greg Blake started working (after school) at age 15 in the bicycle industry, wrenching at a New York bike shop, learning mechanics, sales, and repair. Moving up to running a warranty department, he spent 20 years working with the brand "Mongoose," which eventually became part of Pacific Cycle, the largest bicycle distributor in America. His background in the industry ranges from design/engineering to marketing and distribution. Now a free agent with over 30 year's experience, Greg travels to Europe and Asia annually attending bicycle trade shows, visiting factories and offering his expertise to fledgling businesses.

When approached with the premise of bicycles' possible functions during potential disasters, the concept intrigued him. "We hope any such emergencies would be brief," he said. "But with floods, earthquakes, or violent storms, significant time may pass before clear roads, gasoline, and electricity are restored. Will vital supplies hold out?"

The bicycle represents a simple yet brilliant idea. Over the past 100 years, little has changed in the basic two-wheeled "safety bicycle." Its efficiency

and usefulness remain relevant. Requiring virtually no external power source, a bike can navigate over more aggressive terrain than comparable transportation methods. Unlike horses, bikes require zero need to be fed, rested, or watered.

Imagine encountering a scenario of trees or downed power lines on the road. You could lift your bicycle and carry it over most obstacles (while being duly vigilant around downed power lines and poles). Also, after days or weeks without power, dwindling supplies of gas or electricity would obviously run out.

The bicycle is the best preparation for a calamity (along with safe water, canned food, lighter, flashlights etc.). A bike can also help with traveling to check on loved ones, picking up necessities and in-person communicating.

Bicycles range in price, quality, ability and weight. However, we're not talking about racing; rather about practical survival.

Ideally, the bicycle should handle both road and off-road conditions. A narrow, tired road bike isn't ideal (although better than nothing). A mountain bike or bicycle with wider knobby tires is the best bet. Light weight (aluminum) certainly helps, should you need to carry it over obstacles or through narrow

corridors between buildings.

Locally, we can find bicycles through certain stores, or "big box" retailers. Prices for new bikes range upward from about \$120. We may also find used ones in thrift shops, garage sales or online.

In terms of emergencies, both flashlights and bicycles require periodic attention. If bicycles sit idle in our garages for long time periods, the tires may run low on air pressure. A hand or foot-operated air pump needs no electricity or gas to inflate tires. Additionally, a basic complement of tools goes a long way during prolonged power outages. Depending on the bicycle itself, an open-end or crescent wrench, "Allen" or hex keys (typically metric) Phillips and flathead screwdrivers, a patch kit, and a spare inner tube (or two) is advisable. Since you won't be looking up "how to fix my bike" on YouTube, prepare for maintenance plus changing bicycle's tube/tires. Preferably learn in advance via local bike experts, online tutorials or applicable library books.

Finally, consider a hand-freeing backpack to bridge the gap between two-foot and two-wheeled travel during unexpected or challenging-events.

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