



In his book *The River Why*, David James Duncan revisits the stream of his youth and ascends its downstream course to the headwaters. Like a poisoned angle worm, the scourged little creek creeps sluggishly through industrial parks and shopping centers, a repository for bottles, cans, grass clippings, and urban detritus of every shape and description. The headwaters disappear beneath the foundation of a Benjamin Franklin Savings and Loan building in a shopping mall. Duncan leaves, his memories brutalized by harsh contemporary facts.

The stream which flowed through my childhood has fared somewhat better. Elk Creek (Ecola Creek) still slips briskly by stands of mature red alder; its clay and gravel bed cuts through moss and fern-rich banks where aged cedars, sitka spruce, and hemlocks shade pools and riffles.

Granted, gyppo logging shows, the Van Vleet Co., Crown Zellerbach, Cavenham Corporation, shake bolt cutters, and others have slashed, dragged, sliced, gouged, and mutilated the fine stands of succession forest. This year the sawing and removal has begun again in earnest, but the forty-odd years of industrial harvest rotation have left some stream cover and riparian integrity.

The potential listing of the coho salmon as an endangered species has focused keen attention on coastal streams. Governor Kitzhaber and the current legislature have approved a Coastal Salmon Recovery Initiative (C.S.R.I.), which will attempt to monitor the condition of dwindling salmon stocks and strive to improve habitat and fish numbers. Co-incident with the creation of the CSRI Initiative has been the establishment of watershed councils in communities along the coast. Our own Ecola Creek Awareness Project is one such council activity. Composed of what Jerome Arnold, a Cannon Beach member, describes as "stakeholders," this advisory group will play a significant role in assessing stream health, and the concomitant status of potential coho stock recovery. The membership includes representatives from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the City of Cannon Beach, landowners, timber companies, and interested parties.

"It's a co-operative effort," Jerome has told me. "We are concerned with Elk Creek's habitat and condition throughout the creek's system, from ridgetop to ridgetop. We are looking at the whole system, and the assessment is not specie specific. We're looking at the coho and steelhead stocks, invertebrates and other creatures and vegetation, right down to the micro-organisms."

Volunteers have been playing a major part in local stream analysis. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

had no funding available for wild steelhead nest surveys this spring. Three local citizens, Jerome Arnold, Chris McGowan, and Ron Logan counted these steelhead nests, called "redds," from March to May this year. Fish biologist Walt Weber of O.D.F.W. joined them on these outings providing training and expertise necessary in gathering workable data. The count occurred on a two-mile stretch of the North Fork of Elk Creek in an area closed to angling. Weber's critique of the stream's health was "very good." He indicated that the stream might be used as a coastal model for stream restoration in the years to come.

During the spring count the participants noted considerable numbers of small coho fry trapped in what Walt Weber termed "stranding pools." In these small eddies and pools at the margin of the stream numerous young fish stage and prepare for their trip to sea away from the swift current. From past data, Weber said they stand a 20% better chance of surviving than those fry that don't spend their early lives there. The hitch is that these one- to four- inch fish grow very rapidly during the early summer, just as the stream level drops and the pools dry up, leaving these young stranded. Jerome, Chris McGowan, and Ron Logan have spent many hours this year netting and replacing trapped fry under the direction of Walt Weber.

The health of Elk Creek is our mutual concern as citizens of Cannon Beach. In September or early October, Dr. Carr from the University of Washington will be in Cannon Beach to present a lecture and training session focusing on biological diversity in stream beds and indices of stream well-being. I hope a great number of our residents will attend and participate at some level.

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From the Lower Left Corner (of Washington State) by Victoria Stoppello

The last time I stayed overnight at the Moby Dick Hotel would have been at this time of year forty years ago, when I came with my mother to go clam digging. Perhaps that's why I went to sleep so immediately and so soundly, not waking once, with no apparent dreams. Perhaps I put my scent on the place and a part of my subconscious that records and interprets everything olfactory tells me it's okay here. Maybe it was being in my friends' house, even though it is really a hotel.

From forty years ago I have only two distinct memories: the raccoon that lived on a long chain under a big spruce behind the hotel, and the breakfast scene. The dining room was packed with people, warm and a bit humid, colorful in a way that little girls and I to this day still like.

Not frilly, but little touches that say pretty is also part of a meal. Food was served family style. You shared a table with other guests. Platters of eggs, breakfast meats and pancakes kept coming. But the one touch that has become my own habit was that the syrup and butter were warmed and came to the table in little pitchers, a detail that kept your pancakes hot. As a ten year old, I felt this was elegant treatment.

It is razor clam season right now--spring's exceptionally low tides. I'm alone in the dining room, footsteps moving upstairs, but no one in the public rooms. Rain sheets down outside. Weather that would cause clam diggers to gnash their teeth, at least us neophytes--raindrops on the sand look too similar to clam holes.

The sprayers are gnashing their teeth this morning as well. This particular run of low tides was supposed to provide an opportunity to test a new pesticide for ghost shrimp. The weather is against them. A downpour probably isn't a good testing condition, nor is wind higher than ten miles an hour.

They're probably gnashing their teeth for another reason. Their project leader, Alan, in giving notice to adjacent property owners, coincidentally ran head on into the owners of Moby Dick--and perhaps more importantly, into a small but committed group of their supporters. Truly an accident that we were all there, but an extra ten people of diverse backgrounds and interests probably made a difference in Alan's thinking.

Luckily he had the authority to cancel the spraying off Moby Dick's shores, at some risk to himself. The project is part of research work he is doing in hopes of attaining tenure at Washington State University. Plus the irritation of those of us who feel it's okay to put one more chemical in Willapa Bay.

The irony is that Alan needs a spot with few chemicals on it in order to conduct an accurate test. He seems to sincerely believe the chemical he wants to test will make things better--it's less toxic and less persistent than the Carbaryl and Sevin the oyster growers use now, sometimes with permits, sometimes not. He's probably right, but in the immediate situation, he would have made things worse for this little plot of ground, this strip of mudflats where Fritz and Edward are attempting to grow their oysters as free of chemicals as possible.

I sympathize with Alan--he ran right into a buzz saw. Ignorant of the politics surrounding pesticides in this area, he showed up and there we were. He was doing a routine part of his job, no longer routine. Faced with needling, debate, and a challenge to act on different principles, he acknowledged the different value systems present. He realized Fritz and Edward weren't totally alone, and he had it pointed out that he was "set up"--perhaps unintentionally.

Alan's field contacts knew the test plot was adjacent to Moby Dick's oyster beds. They told him the sentiments of the Moby Dick's people, but only vaguely. Hard to say what this meant. Sometimes I see conspiracy where there is only stupidity. Sometimes I see malice where there is only indifference.

In any case, what I did see yesterday was people in dialog, strong feelings expressed, and Alan making an assessment of his options, exploring the grey area between "just doing his job" and "doing the right thing." He relented and moved the test site. I appreciated his honesty about his dilemma, his intellectual honesty about not being able to promise that his chemical was 100% safe. Most of all, I appreciated his courage to stay and talk, when he was outnumbered. Most of us would have retreated behind a wall of arrogance or invective, and he did neither.

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Two by Arthur Bloch
Murphy's Law; "If anything can go wrong, it will."

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