

Leave No Child Inside

The importance of connecting children and nature

My son Sylvan just turned 3 years old. He doesn't know about native plants or invasive exotic plants, though he does know the word "weed" and uses it to refer to anything green he's about to yank out of the ground.

He doesn't know about ecological restoration, trail maintenance or creating networks of native ecosystems to preserve the health of native animals, plants and local humans.

What he does know is walking, or riding in a backpack, through some of the Willamette Valley's healthiest native forests, savannas and meadows in Buford Park. He knows stopping to look at flowers and at lichen. He knows trails. He knows woodpeckers and chickadees, great blue herons and bald eagles.

He knows that we go to the South Meadow Quonset hut at Buford Park to sit on Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah's tractor (gently, no touching the buttons) and pretend to shift from low speed (the turtle) to high speed (the bunny rabbit). He knows that it's fun to stand next to the Coast Fork Willamette River at the South Meadow's rocky point bar, where there is an endless supply of rocks to throw into the river.

What you grow up with is what you consider normal. I want Sylvan, and all children, to consider it normal to go for a hike on a trail. I want them to consider it normal to throw rocks into a river. I want them to consider it normal to associate tractors with parks and restoration as well as with agriculture. I want them to see gardens as normal – not just the vegetable garden in our yard that serves a purely human purpose, but also Friends of Buford Park's giant garden, our native plant nursery, that serves the southern Willamette Valley's native ecosystems and all of the life forms on which they depend.

Sure, Sylvan won't know what an ecosystem is until he's at least 4. But when he wants to know what an ecosystem is, I won't have to explain plants, animals, forests, meadows, floodplains, rivers and rocks. All of that will already be familiar to him. He'll know about all of them from his visits to Buford Park.

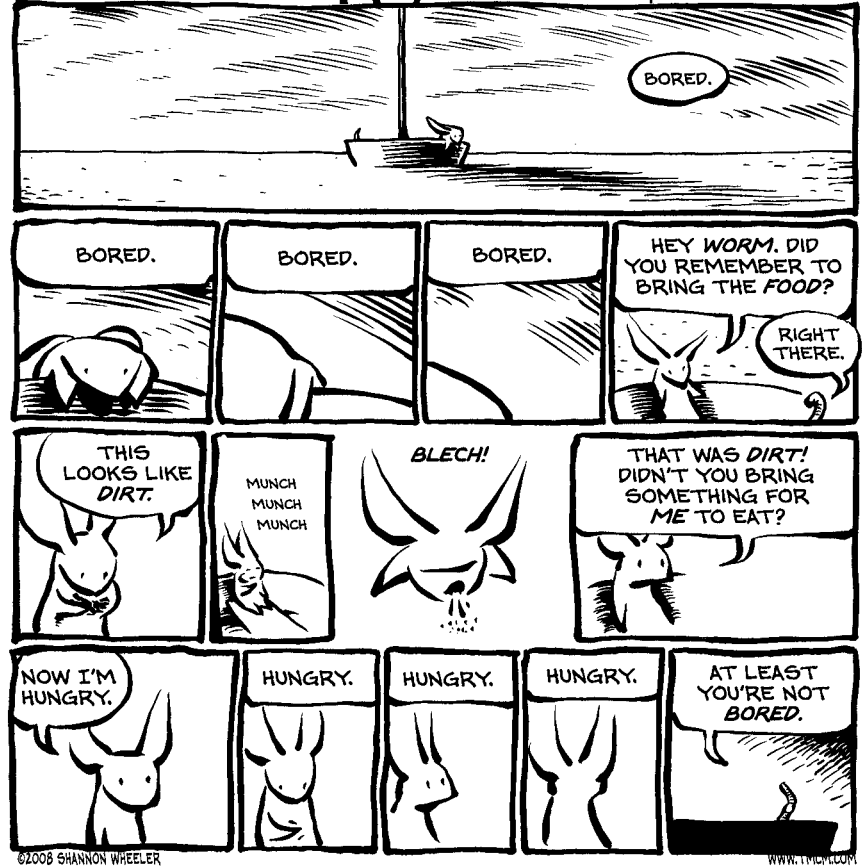
Two free events will address "Nature Deficit Disorder" and creating more opportunities for children to connect with nature. At 7 pm Thursday, Nov. 20, Martin LeBlanc, founding board member of the Children and Nature Network (childrenandnature.org), will make the keynote address "Why Leave No Child Inside?" at Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah Fall Celebration at The Shedd's Jaqua Hall (East Broadway and High Street).

From 10 am to 2 pm Saturday, Nov. 22, families and children of all ages are invited to Play in the Rain Day. Meet at Mt. Pisgah Arboretum's White Oak Pavilion for fun, youth-friendly outdoor activities, including hay rides, map and compass, campfire cookery and nature crafts. LeBlanc's visit and Play in the Rain Day are sponsored by the Youth In Nature Partnership (www.YouthInNature.org). Parking will be free for the event.

Chris Jones is president of the board of Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah



How to Be Happy (CUTIE ISLAND 12 of 8) by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GRUMPY ZERZAN

John Zerzan's grumpy remarks about the collective sigh of relief heaved by the world at Obama's victory remind me that, if memory serves, Gore was no different than W. Bush, right? So it's stupid to celebrate the end of this dark chapter because, well, everything still sucks.

Seen through this prism of pessimism, the Magna Carta was feudal protectionism for barons, Shakespeare wrote soap operas, Mozart was a royalist fop, Beethoven was deaf, the U.S. Constitution was for rich white guys, Lincoln was an opportunist, Twain a Southern apologist, Van Gogh a lunatic, Stravinsky just noisy, Duke Ellington a faux aristocrat and Shostakovich a Stalinist stooge. Baseball is a waste of time, Charley Parker, John Coltrane and Ray Charles were just heroin addicts, Hank Williams, Mahalia Jackson and Aretha Franklin all just music biz pawns (for turning their deep blues into joyous song). Martin Luther King Jr. was a philanderer, Bob Dylan a Woody Guthrie wannabe, the Beatles were the Monkees and Stevie Wonder's just a blind man in a mu-mu.

John, we may not all be as hip and arch and sarcastic as you about it, but we all know the world is going to hell on a sled, has been since the dawn of time. That needn't prevent us from appreciating the small things that make life bitter-sweet instead of just bitter. Hell, the last winning bumper sticker I had on my car before this one was "Impeach Nixon." I'm going to savor the moment.

*Billy Barnett
Eugene*

DEVIL'S STAIRCASE

Last weekend I made my first trek into the proposed Devil's Staircase Wilderness (Wassen Creek), a place that came up in your recent (11/16) interview with Congressman DeFazio. What a spot! I've hiked to almost every remote backcountry part of this state, and I haven't had my breath so completely stolen away from me in a long time.

After an epic four-hour bushwhack through thick woods and incredibly steep terrain, we descended — scratched up and fully drenched — into a towering grove of 8- to 10-foot diameter trees. There were cascading waterfalls, thickets of ferns that came up to my shoulders and wildlife that I didn't even know existed (ever seen a foot-long salamander?). It was like being in some lost and forgotten world, less than two hours from Eugene.

If you have a good GPS or if you're highly skilled with a map and compass, I highly recommend you check out this area, sandwiched between the Umpqua and Smith Rivers, for yourself. And if you make it out alive, I guarantee you'll have stories to tell your grandkids.

For those of you who are less inclined to risk it all, but who enjoy knowing that truly wild places still exist in our backyard, I encourage you to get involved and help us protect this special place forever. For pictures, info and ways to help, go to www.devilstaircasewilderness.org

There aren't many places like it left in Oregon. Oregon's congressional delegation should act to permanently protect this rare and beautiful forest forever.

*Dan Kruse
Legal Director
Cascadia Wildlands Project*

KITTY'S NO BULLY

My friends have been whining incessantly that Mayor Kitty Piercy isn't using her alleged power to control the city manager, the police chief, police department and public works. They insist that Torrey controlled them and therefore Torrey was a "more effective" mayor.

This is a bunch of arrogant, male supremacist slime and vomit.

Torrey is a member of the white, rich, male-dominant, conservative, big business elite (timber, saw mills, gravel pits, big land owners, manufacturing, media) in Lane, Linn and Douglas Counties. Kitty Piercy

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