



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROO VANDEGRIFT

LOCAL SCIENTIST CREATES KICKSTARTER TO FUND RESEARCH

Roo Vandegrift studies fungi. He recently received his Ph.D. from the University of Oregon and, like hundreds of other scientists, he is in need of money to fund his research.

Scientists usually apply for federal grants, but in Vandegrift's case, he created a Kickstarter campaign for his research on fungi and climate change in Central America.

Vandegrift says there has been an increase in the number of researchers and, according to the National Science Foundation, federal funding for scientific research has declined. Researchers have to compete for grants with funds generally going to the "sexier," more transformative sciences with greater impact, like the medical sciences.

When scientists receive grants, Vandegrift says, the universities usually take a percentage of the money to help keep facilities and programs running. By using a crowdfunding source, Vandegrift says he hopes to demonstrate how important basic sciences are, such as taxonomy, which involves classifying plants and animals based on their similarities.

"The alpha taxonomists are nearing retirement, or nearing death," Vandegrift says, "and there's nobody to replace them because there hasn't been money to train replacements."

Vandegrift's goal is to create a book that helps identify various species of *Xylaria*, wood decay fungi, commonly known as "Dead Man's Fingers." According to his Kickstarter, "these are some of the most common wood decay fungi in the tropics, which makes them very important to global carbon cycling, and thus climate change."

Crowdfunding for scientific research has not been very successful traditionally since the rewards are more societal and not individual. "Taxonomy might be unique," Vandegrift says. "Because of the graphic nature of taxonomy, and because of the tangible outputs of taxonomic research, I think it has the potential to be the exception to the rule."

Taxonomic research generally includes multiple graphics and pictures documenting the various species within a genus. "Graphics projects do really well with crowdfunding because people like pretty pictures," Vandegrift notes. Thus, the rewards for pledges to his Kickstarter include items with varying images of *Xylaria*.

"We're not saying donate to help science," Vandegrift says. "We're saying buy something that you might have wanted anyway and help science ... We're using the strength of the art to support the strength of the science."

If this crowdfunding project succeeds, Vandegrift says he hopes it will send a message to the federal agencies creating scientific grants of the importance of funding basic sciences.

"If it can work for this project," Vandegrift says, "it could be a model for other researchers working on other groups of organisms."

So far, Vandegrift has raised \$7,607 of his \$67,000 goal, with a deadline of July 23. Find Vandegrift's Kickstarter at kickstarter.com/projects/werdnus/xylaria-of-the-cloud-forests-of-ecuador. ■

SLANT

- The Portland daily newspaper is not known for its affection for the University of Oregon, but President Michael Schill clearly won over reporter Andrew Theen for his page one story in the July 1 *Oregonian*. It's a good read, portraying the new pres as a smart, very hardworking, skilled fundraiser who truly intends to lift the academic side of the university. The closing sentence quotes a former colleague who says, "I think Oregon got really lucky."

- If you watched *The West Wing*, then you know that Friday is "Take Out the Trash Day." Government officials save potentially embarrassing stories for release on Friday in hopes they won't get much attention over the weekend. On July 1, shortly after 4 pm on the Friday before a holiday weekend, the city of Eugene sent out a press release saying the "general contractor for the Eugene City Hall project received the construction bids and provided an overview to city staff. Unfortunately, the bids have come in higher than the previous estimates." According to the press release, "it appears likely that the cost would exceed the estimates provided at a recent work session by somewhere between \$1.5 million and \$2.5 million." The city calls the future City Hall a "civic legacy project, planned to last 50 years or more," but we are still scratching our heads as to why the city tore down the legacy of our last City Hall with apparently no real plan or budget in place to replace it. Saving and redesigning our historic City Hall would have been a legacy. This is a boondoggle.

- July 4 weekend was clash of the events here in the Eug. Was it too much for our fair city? We have heard rumors that the Oregon Bach Festival had unsold tickets, that there were seats open at the Olympic Trials track and field events and that Fourth of July stalwart Art and the Vineyard had lower attendance. With Oregon County Fair on the horizon, we're wondering if we need to do a little better planning when it comes to inundating Lane County with things to do all in one month? Despite the rumors, every attempt we made to eat out was met with long lines at local eateries, so we're hoping the food scene benefitted!

- We commented in Slant last week on *The Register-Guard's* peculiar focus on a crime that no one is sure happened — alleged tree spiking at a mill in Noti. No spikes have been found, and local Earth First! group Cascadia Forest Defenders has told the *R-G* that "CFD does not encourage, condone or commit acts of senseless sabotage." Yet the *R-G* promptly came out with another story. What gives?

- People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. *EW* makes its share of typos, but the *R-G's* July 1 headline, "50 Percent Chance of Dangerous Air Bag Rapture" had us giggling. Jesus, take the wheel, there's been an air bag rapture. Almost as fun as the *East Oregonian's* now infamous "Amphibious Pitcher Makes Debut" (ambidextrous, oops).



- Hollis Shostrom and his company Perpetual Motion Design have a fundraiser at gofundme.com/pmdeugene. Shostrom says he is raising money for the design of innovative new wheelchairs including the construction of his own chair. Email pmdeugene@gmail.com for more info.

- Paul Moore of Arriving by Bike tells *EW* that according to Bicycle Retailer and Industry News (BRAIN) "Interbike has announced the first round of IB Award nominees for product, retailer and triathlon categories, including the bicycle retailer nominees." Online voting has begun, and IB Awards will be held during September's Interbike expo in Las Vegas. The retailer nominations were determined by an open industry online ballot then vetted by the BRAIN editorial staff. Categories for the retailer awards include Best Urban/Lifestyle Shop, Best Mountain Bike Shop, Best

Women's/Female Friendly Shop and 2016 Retailer of the Year. Arriving by Bike is up for Best Urban/Lifestyle Shop, which "recognizes the specialty retailer that features the best selection, product mix and knowledgeable staff in the urban and lifestyle category. This shop appeals to commuters and recreational riders." Arriving by Bike is up against bike shops from across the country. Voting closes July 29; go to surveymonkey.com/r/2016IB AwardsBallot to vote.

- Home Instead's Let's Talk about Driving program is designed to help keep Eugene seniors safer on the road, the senior home health care service says. According to Home Instead, "A recent study found that when seniors stop driving, they run the risk of social isolation." The free program can be found at LetsTalkAboutDriving.com. Home Instead says, "The program encourages adult children to start the conversation about driving with their aging parents — and possibly find alternatives to quitting driving altogether."