

THE Joy OF THE Bloodless Hunt

The fun of getting outside and pursuing ... birds, rocks, 'shrooms and little pieces of paper

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

I once told my ex-fiancé that I was a vegetarian because I ate only what I could personally kill. He promptly bought me a shotgun and taught me how to shoot it. However, he was unable to get me to kill anything more mobile than a poorly tossed clay target. He tried — unsuccessfully — to persuade me of the joys of shooting, killing and butchering my own meals, but the closest I got to deadly force was blowing up a bottle of Coke (and then carefully cleaning up the sugary-drink-covered remains, because leave-no-trace principles apply to recreational shooting, too). Finally, a couple years ago, an avid truffle hunter explained to me how he had left the excitement of hunting animals for the more-obsessive joys of hunting elusive fungi.

It turns out there are many odd and elusive edibles and objects in Oregon that you can track down, document, write your name on or just sleep happily in the knowledge that you found them.

Welcome, reader, to this year's Outdoors Issue and the joys of no-kill hunting.

OREGON'S STATE ROCK, THE THUNDEREGG

Rock On

Local geology lovers find community in rock hunting

BY SARAROSA DAVIES

Artesia Hubbard, a University of Oregon student from Colorado, has always been a steward of the land. "I was a river baby. I was always running around in the outdoors," she says. When Hubbard arrived at UO for her freshman year, her older sister on campus told her to join the school's Geology Club.

What the music-major-turned-environmental-studies major found was not only a way for her to enjoy the outdoors, but also a community of like-minded people. Geology isn't just a passion; it's also a way for Hubbard to connect with her fellow students.

While many rock hunting enthusiasts and amateur geologists are in it for the hunt, many find themselves also enveloped in a community like the UO Geology Club.

"It's just a really, really good community of people," Hubbard said.

Her favorite form of rock is metamorphic; her favorite gem is turquoise, which is set in a ring on her finger.

"I guarantee that if you were interviewing an actual geology major that they'd say some crazy word that ends in -tite," Hubbard says.

The Geology Club participates in two to three local trips each quarter and takes one longer spring break trip to a different state. This year they went to Canyonlands National Park in Utah, just outside of Moab. But often the group stays closer to home, trekking to the Oregon Coast with pickaxes in hand to find other popular rocks.

According to Hubbard, Oregon itself is geologically interesting because of its unique coast and mountains. "Oregon is an anomaly for geology," she said. "All the mountains ... Crater Lake. It's just a great place for geology."

The coast west of Eugene is a great place to find petrified wood and fossils, but the Willamette Valley can be lacking when it comes to Oregon's state rock, the thunderegg, or the state gemstone, the sunstone.

The Springfield Thunderegg Rock Club has a 60-year history in the Eugene-Springfield area.

The club's members helped the state declare the thunderegg the Oregon state rock in 1965. The group, made up of young and old, meets at 7 pm the second Tuesday each month at Willamalane Adult Activity Center in Springfield. The group sponsors rockhounding trips and participates in rock shows.

Thundereggs, though unassuming bumpy rocks on the outside, can be cracked open to reveal a geode-like colorful interior. They are found in central and southeast Oregon and you often see them for sale in Oregon airport giftshops. Sunstones are a type of gem that sparkles at certain angles in the sun.

A couple Lane County stores specialize in rocks and gems and can help those aspiring to be amateur geologists. Though the aptly named long-running business Nelson the Rocky Feller is now closed, two other stores still serve Eugene, including Five Elements and I Love Rocks.

Five Elements Gem and Mineral, a local rock and lapidary store, sponsors trips to eastern Oregon's high desert to find sunstones and enjoy a mining experience. Mines like Richardson's Rock Ranch in Madras are popular spots for those looking to shell out some cash and try out the amateur geologist lifestyle out for the day.

Jesse Scites volunteers at I Love Rocks, the rock and gem store on Oak Street. He says the store is locally owned and all volunteer-run. Every worker donates their time, Scites mentions in an email to *Eugene Weekly*.

I Love Rocks is an unassuming storefront with brown paneling and white trim. A white sign that reads "I Love Rocks: Gems, Minerals, Fossils, and Gallery" stands outside in the yard. Inside, there are hundreds of rocks; some from nearby, some from the farthest reaches of the world like Afghanistan.

As for going out and experiencing the hunt, there's not much like it, Hubbard says. Her favorite geology experience happened recently when she found some worm track fossils during the club's spring break trip. Later on that day, Dave Blackwell, UO geology professor, showed Hubbard's group some burrow trace fossils. Finding something really old stuns Hubbard.

"It's just really awesome thinking about putting it into perspective and thinking this has literally been here for millions of years. And it's one of those things that you sit down to think about and you can't even still really comprehend it," Hubbard said. "That's the cool thing about geology; it's so incomprehensible, yet people understand perfectly." ■