

Ancient Forest Hiking Guide

LOCAL AUTHOR AND ENVIRONMENTALIST DISCUSSES HER NEW BOOK

By Camilla Mortensen

The copy of *Oregon's Ancient Forests: A Hiking Guide* sitting on a table at the *Eugene Weekly* office has been well-thumbed through since the book's author, Chandra LeGue, dropped it off a couple weeks ago. If you live in Lane County, chances are you hike or that you seriously wish you could hike more often and the *EW* staffers who linger over its pages are no different. Everybody likes a hiking book.

Oregon's Ancient Forests has the features of a modern hiking guide — GPS coordinates, directions to the trailhead, permit information, etc. But it also has an advocacy message, focusing on forest ecology, whether areas are protected and how to get involved.

Although there are several excellent volumes out there, Oregon was due for a new hiking guide, and the fact this one was written by a female hiker and environmentalist puts *Oregon's Ancient Forests* high on the must-buy list. LeGue is the western Oregon field coordinator for the environmental group Oregon Wild and says she was inspired to write the book because “the work Oregon Wild does to protect and restore forests inspires me every day.”

She was further inspired by fellow Oregon Wild staffer and forest advocate Wendell Wood's 1991 book *A Walking Guide to Oregon's Ancient Forests*. “I wanted to give Wendell's book a modern overhaul, address what

has changed and inspire a new generation of Oregonians to care about protecting these forests,” she says.

If you are new to hiking, LeGue says there are several hikes that are “easy to get to from Eugene and are great for beginners.” She notes in particular the Delta Old Growth Nature Trail, between Blue River and McKenzie Bridge. “It's just a half-mile flat loop that leaves from the Delta Campground,” she says, “and has towering Douglas-fir trees, twisted ancient cedars and a lush understory. It's simply lovely and accessible year round.”

The guide focuses on ancient forests — which LeGue defines “as being largely unchanged by humans for a long time,” and, she says, unfortunately we have “destroyed and fragmented so many of the ancient forests that once covered half of Oregon.”

What we have left filters and cools our water, takes carbon out of the atmosphere and stores it, and provides home for wildlife. But LeGue cautions the forests “are still threatened by extractive interests. Many people take for granted that these forests, primarily found today

on public land, are saved and protected, but in fact they still need our help.” ■

Chandra LeGue discusses ancient forests and some of the hikes in her book 7 pm Tuesday, Aug. 13, at WildCraft Cider Works 232 Lincoln Street, presented by REI Eugene. The event is free, and \$1 from every pint will be donated to Oregon Wild. For more information go to oregonwild.org, email cl@oregonwild.org, or call 541-344-0675. The book is available through Oregon Wild, Amazon.com and wherever books are sold.



CHANDRA LEGUE HIKES THE SALMON RIVER TRAIL

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