

# Old growth could be key for native songbird species



**Oregon State's Hankyu Kim set a decoy designed to trigger the territorial instinct of hermit warblers. The small songbirds will be caught, tagged and released so their movements can be tracked.**

Associated Press

**BLUE RIVER** — Hotter, drier summers are having an impact on some of the migrating songbirds that come to Oregon and Washington state to breed each spring.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports that because of rising temperatures, the areas where hermit warblers can live and find food are shrinking by up to 4 percent each year. Now researchers with Oregon State University are developing an experiment to track the tiny songbirds through the Pacific Northwest.

Oregon State researchers have already found that warbler populations declined in areas with

young forests but in some cases increased in old growth forests despite the warming climate. Researchers Hankyu Kim and Adam Hadley are conducting a new experiment to determine why the warblers are doing better in old growth areas.

Kim has gotten inside the head of the hermit warbler. He knows what makes the tiny songbird tick.

"These birds are territorial in the breeding ground, they set up their territories and they fight with each other to defend it," he said.

Kim uses a nearly invisible net strung between two fishing pools, a plastic warbler decoy and a looping bird-call recording to lure hermit warblers so they can

be captured, tagged and released. The tiny radio tag allows Kim and Hadley to track the birds through the dense forests of the Oregon Cascades.

They hope to determine how the birds use the forests and whether they use the temperature variations between the top and the bottom of the forest canopies to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Hadley says it's possible that when it's warmer, the birds stay to the bottom and more shady parts of the trees.

Learning how the birds move could help explain how warblers and other species deal with rising temperatures.

"We have these long-term population monitoring routes across the Northwest. And a surprising number of species are declining," said Oregon State professor Matt Betts. "Actually, more than about half of the species that live in a forest like this are in decline."

Earlier research by Oregon State's Betts and Sarah Frey found warblers declined in areas with young forests, including those replanted after clear cut logging. But hermit warblers are doing better in other areas.

"In landscapes that had more older forest, their population declines were lowered, or even reversed, even though the climate has been warming," Frey said.

# Jeff Carlsen to step down from conference center

## Christian conference center director steps down after 35 years

By Brenna Visser  
Cannon Beach Gazette

After more than 22 years as executive director of the Cannon Beach Christian Conference Center, Jeff Carlsen is ready to retire.

"Why now? I'm tired," he said wryly.

First as program manager and then as director, Carlsen has served in a leadership role at one of Cannon Beach's largest employers for more than 35 years, overseeing what has been a period of immense expansion and change for the 73-year-old Christian retreat.

Since he started in 1996, a staff of 22 has grown to between 70 and 150, depending on the season. Yearly guest attendance has doubled from about 7,000 to more than 15,000 people.

Carlsen has been involved with the purchase of five new properties, the building of two new structures — with the third set to be complete in 2020 — and starting a Christian preschool, an after-school program and the Christian Culinary Academy. In 2008, he faced the realities of keeping a nonprofit afloat during an economic recession.

So he's ready for his downtime, he said. At the end of the year, he will hand the organization off to Marc Hagman, who will begin as executive director starting in January.

"Even with the challenges, the ups and downs, it's been a wonderful place to be. It really is all about the people, the relationships," Carlsen said. "It's so gratifying to watch people grow. It's been a great 35 years."

### Coming to faith

Carlsen came to his faith at a time in his life not often associated with religiosity — freshman year of college.

He was studying to be a teacher at the University of Washington when an old high school friend introduced him to Christianity.



Jeff Carlsen gives a tour of the new construction at the center.

"That was back in the early '70s. It was a crazy time in this country. There were lots of people searching for answers. It took a period of time of exploring to see if it was something I believed in," Carlsen said. "And after awhile it just made sense."

It's a decision that changed his life, leading him to combine his love of faith and teaching as a program director at a Christian camp in California the following summer. That's where he met his wife, Jean. They have two children, Adam and Erin.

The Seattle native's journey to Cannon Beach began when he saw a job posting for a program manager at the conference center in 1983. He remembered being impressed by the facilities and enamored by the beauty from past conferences he had attended, and decided to make the leap from California.

When he arrived, the conference center in many ways still operated like a mom-and-pop operation, he said. Still a relatively small outfit, in the mid-1980s the camp faced financial

and cultural challenges. Much of the clientele was steady but aging, sourced mostly from the original generation that came to the conference center when it first started in 1945. Money was tight — not an unusual situation for nonprofit camps that rely heavily on volunteer labor and donations to survive.

As program director, he focused on making the center more attractive to younger families in the hopes of inspiring the next generation of guests and conference participants. With the increased efforts, over the course of two decades the budget ballooned from \$600,000 to about \$4 million a year.

### A spiritual purpose

As the institution continued to grow financially and geographically, the center continued to keep a notably low profile — sometimes so low it leaves some in the community

wondering what exactly the institution does, Carlsen admits.

To a certain extent, that's by design.

"We feel our role is to support the community in any way we can, but not to be political. It's not our calling," he said. "Our purposes are spiritual. It doesn't do any good to be divisive."

While Carlsen avoided divisiveness in a public sphere, some long-term coworkers say difficult times and moments of conflicts are where he has shined brightest as a leader.

"Whether it was hard times or good times, you always felt

respected, no matter who you were," said Sam Ortig, who has been maintenance manager for 40 years.

That served the organization well during the recession, when visitor volume dropped dramatically, leading Carlsen to implement across-the-board pay cuts to stay afloat.

"Even in '08, when we were all trying to find cuts and it was stressful, he always was reasonable," Ortig said. "He always wanted input. He was always fair."

Paul Knoch, the human resources director, recalled a time when a very difficult guest

was berating someone at the front desk. While Knoch's first inclination was to give the guy a piece of his mind, Carlsen listened and decided to upgrade the room.

"I was so frustrated," Knoch said. "But then he said 'This guy needs to be here. Let's not make his behavior distract us from why we're here, which is to serve people.'"

"His focus was solely about someone having a spiritual experience," Knoch said. "That's a good representation of who he is."

### The path forward

While the conference center is on good financial footing and seeing record attendance, Carlsen feels confident he's giving his successor a healthy institution to grow upon, he said. But the conference center will always have to be ready to evolve.

Like many other employers on the North Coast, staying fully staffed remains difficult. Part of what has kept the conference center stable has been its unique ability to house about 75 percent of its staff, mitigating the affordable housing issue most employers point to when hiring.

But between not paying comparable wages to the other businesses in town and finding workers who are professed Christians, hiring will continue to be a challenge.

The conference center, like other Christian entities, will have to adapt and evolve to stay relevant to a generation growing more secular.

"The new director gets to face that challenge," he said.

No one can predict how the center will evolve in the next 20 years. But Ortig did have some advice for Carlsen's successor.

"Copy Jeff," Ortig laughed.



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