

How to See a Rain Forest

Photographer shares how to think about nature with the eyes of a child

By Katherine Lacaze
For Seaside Signal

“It’s not what you look at it, it’s what you see.” That was the message local nature photographer and educator Neal Maine shared with listeners during his discussion on “How to See a Rain Forest” at the Seaside Public Library March 16.

Maine’s presentation was the third installment of the North Coast Land Conservancy and Necanicum Watershed Council’s seventh annual “Listening to the Land Series,” incorporating a central theme of water.

Over the past few decades, Maine said, he has made it his mission to encourage the public to re-establish a connectivity to the natural world, and experience it through a process of observing, seeing as if for the first time and continually seeking an elusive horizon of understanding.

‘The wonder of it all’

While a biology teacher at Seaside High School, Maine had his students dissect frogs. At the end of the process, he instructed them to put the frogs’ still beating hearts into a saline solution, several per petri dish. The hearts continue beating even when removed from the amphibians, but an even more fascinating phenomenon is they begin to beat together after four or five minutes. At that point, Maine said, his classroom “would go stone-cold silent” at “the wonder of it all and how nature comes together.” He encouraged his students to relish that sense of awe at the often inexplicable natural world.

“Really there isn’t a great explanation for why all those hearts start beating together, but they do,” Maine said. “That’s our task tonight, to ask, ‘why are the hearts beating?’”



Naturalist and photographer Neal Maine, of PacificLight Images, speaks to a full house at Seaside Public Library about “How To See a Rainforest” during the third installment of the North Coast Land Conservancy and Necanicum Watershed Council’s seventh annual Listening to the Land speaker series.

Maine took the audience on a visual journey, using several pieces of his nature photography to illustrate the points he made. The discussion focused on temperate coniferous rain forests, one of the ecosystems found abundantly in the region, in addition to other ecological systems such as coastal wetlands, estuaries and systems near the shore like the surf zone and dunes.

Finding a consistent definition for “forest” is challenging, but Maine said it is not important when talking about the art of observation. The definition can be subjective since people individually look at and experience nature.

That may seem antithetical to scientific discipline, but the art of natural history, Maine said, allows for emotional reaction: it combines what people know

scientifically and “then how we feel about it all.”

“What we look with is everything,” Maine said, adding a warning against being trapped in language and definition. “A more appropriate natural history view is really there aren’t boundaries.”

Get out there and see’

What are some methods to practice an intentional focused attentiveness that allows one to holistically experience the coniferous forest, from trees with individual characteristics and features, to the wildlife, lichens, bugs, fungi and microorganisms in the soil and everything else that drives life?

“What happens when you put your natural history hat on is that you end up asking nature a lot of questions, rather than getting answers,” Maine said.

For instance, how does one look at something like water running downstream and consider it as an integral part of entire working water cycle that gives it relevance?

How can a little seed carry the information necessary to create a 350-foot-tall, 6-foot-wide spruce tree?

Why does a beaver pass up a dozen other trees before choosing one to fell?

“The excitement is just almost being befuddled by it all — that is, you’re receiving so much information you’re processing that you kind of say, ‘Wow, I’m tired. It’s hard work walking in that forest,’” Maine said.

The bottom line, he said, “is just get out there and see.”

During the next Listening to the Land program, botanist Kathleen Sayce will be discussing “Into the Fens: Exploring the Clatsop Plains Wetland.” The program is 6 p.m. April 20 at the Seaside library.

District denies CBA approval

**Academy from Page 1A
Conditions unmet**

The conditions, which were to be met by this month, were intended to ensure that the academy would be “financially, structurally and academically ready” to open in the fall.

Hull had asked the district for a time extension or to “simply remove” the three requirements.

The district refused an extension or to modify or eliminate the conditions.

One condition required the school have “all the money they need for the 2016-17 school year” in the bank, as well as a 10-percent contingency, amounting to a little more than \$450,000.

The academy had \$145,798 by March 1, falling more than \$300,000 short.

Although the district would have helped Cannon Beach Academy with operational costs, the charter school needed upfront funds because the district relies on Clatsop County property tax payments, most of which come in November, Dougherty and Roley wrote.

The charter school also fell short on enrollment. The district required a minimum of 22 enrolled students in both kindergarten and first-grade classes.

Sixteen first-graders were enrolled as of March 1.

The academy did not provide information on how many prospective kindergarten students were planning to attend.

Dougherty and Roley said without enough students, the district would be unable to make necessary adjustments in programs, class size and staffing.

Cannon Beach Academy met the condition of providing a Common Core instructional plan. However, it lacked a state-approved English language learners program, the letter read. The program the school proposed to use was outdated. All charter schools are required to use programs approved by the state.

The vision

Cannon Beach Elementary closed in 2013 for finan-



Ryan Hull, president of the Cannon Beach Academy’s board of directors, speaks at a Seaside School District meeting in August.

cial reasons and fears for student safety. The building, now shuttered, lies in the tsunami inundation zone.

In 2013, community residents sought to bring a charter school to Cannon Beach, with the goal of hosting kindergarteners through fifth-graders.

The school planned to open in fall at a temporary location at 171 Sunset Blvd., in a vacated space that once housed the Cannon Beach Athletic Club.

Last week, the Cannon Beach Design Review Board approved the academy’s application for “major modifications” to the existing building, to convert the space into a charter school.

The school seeks to eventually settle into a permanent site south of town and east of U.S. Highway 101.

The district has denied the academy’s proposal several times, citing lack of an adequate location and not enough startup funds.

In October, the Seaside School District board of directors unanimously approved a three-year contract with Cannon Beach Academy. Under the district’s conditions, the charter school would serve at least 44 kindergarten and first-grade students its first year. More grades could be added over time.

In October, Hull said none of the conditions were unreasonable.

“I think we can achieve every condition imposed,” he said at the time.

Annual egg hunt ‘was really fun’

Egg Hunt from Page 1A

and used the hoods for carrying eggs.

Jocelyn Fifield, of Hillsboro, who participated with the 9-to-10-year-old age group, said her strategy going into the hunt was “looking for huge clusters.” With mu She ended up with 13 eggs.

She was visiting Seaside with her family, including her brothers, 9-year-olds Christian Fifield and Skylar Richard, and her sisters, 6-year-old Cassidy Fifield and infant Tobé Fifield.

While the individual hunts for the five different age groups — 0-to-2-year-olds, 3-to-4-year-olds, 5-to-6-year-olds, 7-to-8-year-olds and 9-to-10-year-olds — each went really quick, according to the children, they enjoyed participating.

Cassidy Fifield said she found it challenging using only her arms to carry multiple plastic eggs, but overall, the event “was really fun.”

The free community egg hunt, hosted each year by the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District, is a staple in the Seaside community. This year, the recreation district partnered with the Oregon

College Savings Plan, Lum’s Auto Center and the Seaside American Legion for the event.

More than 6,000 brightly colored eggs, filled with candy and other tiny items, were scattered across different hunt areas at Broadway Field and Broadway Park. The youngest age group could use parental help and baskets or bags. The 3- and 4-year-olds also could use a carrying device, but no help. The older children were on their own.

An egg holding a golden ticket was hidden in each hunt area, and the winner received a special Easter basket.

The egg hunt was well attended by hundreds of children, both from the local area and those visiting from out of town. As in years past, the Easter Bunny was on hand to help preside over the festivities and take photos with the kids.

Across the street from the egg hunt, the Seaside American Legion hosted a pancake brunch at its facility. In the afternoon, the recreation district put on the Aquatic Treasure Dive — an annual accompaniment to the egg hunt for children ages 7 to 17 — at Sunset Pool.



Kylee Turner, 9, of Oregon City, makes a mad dash to collect eggs during Seaside’s annual Community Egg Hunt, held March 26 at Broadway Field.

Birds lose nest to storm

Osprey from Page 1A

yet been sighted. Although they go their separate ways after mating season, they re-join each other in the spring. Ospreys mate for life.

A joint fundraising effort by the city, the Necanicum Watershed Council and local donors raised enough money to buy and install a camera over the nest in 2013. The webcam proved popular, as observers watched osprey hatchlings emerge from eggs, fledge and fly away. The pole is already being missed, Maine said.

“There’s a large contingent of people who are really anxious about it,” he added. “We definitely have to replace it.”

Melyssa Graeper, coordinator of the Necanicum Watershed Council, said the goal is to install a new pole in April.

“We have had a breeding pair there since we installed the pole,” Graeper said. “The birds will come back and see that the nest is gone, but that is not unusual.”

The fine feathered fowl most likely will rebuild the nest, she said. But another fundraising effort will be needed to purchase and install a better camera.

“We’re trying to figure out how much it will cost us and who wants to be involved,” Graeper said. The Seaside Visitors Bureau, Seaside School District and the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District may be asked to participate, she added.

Costs could range from \$3,000 to \$13,000, Graeper said. Adding to the expense could be adding a hard-wired connection from the camera to the computer. This will provide more ability to focus and turn the camera, which proved to be challenges with the former wireless connection.

Funds from a raffle during the watershed’s 10th annual Bird Day, April 2, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday in the Bob Chisholm Community Center will go toward the osprey project, Graeper said.



This pole snapped in a storm, causing the destruction of the osprey nest.

UGB talks tabled

UGB from Page 1A

is zoned and annexed into the city when landowners outside the boundary choose.

The consequences of using a 14- versus 20-year urban growth boundary expansion time line would vary, said Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development Rural Policy Analyst Sadie Carney.

“The 14-year ‘simplified’ process is intended to be much easier for cities to employ and less likely to be appealed,” Carney said.

New urban growth boundary rules went into effect in January, authorizing small cities under 10,000 to use a simplified evaluation.

The Seaside Planning Commission made its decision to table future urban growth boundary discussions March 1 as members prepared to consider expansion areas south and east of the city limits with 200 acres of land for development.

This had been the amount

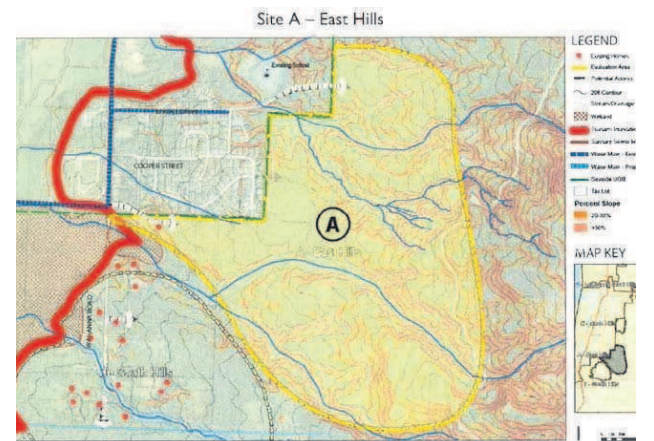
of land needed as suggested in a final report prepared by the consultant HLB Otak and delivered to the city in February. The report considered a 20-year urban projection.

The analysis showed the growth boundary would require about 197 additional acres to satisfy the city’s projected population.

Using a 14-year span, the amount of land required would be scaled back nearly 30 percent, to 137.5 acres, to satisfy the city’s projected population, according to Otak.

“The Planning Commission was interested in using a kind of throttled back population figure rather than using the full 20-year that was part of their original projection,” Cupples said.

Commissioners were concerned they were taking “a big bite of the land,” Cupples said. “One of our planning commissioners said, ‘I’d feel more comfortable looking at an estimated 14 rather than 20.’”



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The East Hills site, among those discussed by city officials for future growth in Seaside.