

Wild Alford Lures EOSC Classes

Harney County, Oregon - Ralph Lewis discovered a bra-bush and David Kerley trapped a pair of whiskers. The two men made their finds in southeast Oregon, where they had brought their students to see the massive Alford Desert region during Fall Term classes.

Lewis teaches "Land Use and Environmental Studies" and Kerley teaches biology. Both are professors at Eastern Oregon State College in La Grande.

Lewis' find marked one of the lighter moments of the four-day trip. It was merely an undergarment neatly placed on a stand of sagebrush where no humans could be found for miles around. Apparently its owner thought it no longer necessary in a wilderness area.

Kerley's discovery was somewhat predictable, though the label makes little sense except to biology students who are familiar with the generic name "Peromyscus," which identifies common deer mice.

In southeast Oregon a person can travel for hours and not encounter other humans. Harney County, which covers most of the area, is larger than Connecticut, Delaware, and Rhode Island combined with a population under 8,000 who live primarily in the Burns and Hines areas. A traveler is bound to see more wildlife than people. There are few trees in the Alford area, but lots of vegetation, and the contours are endless.

The major purpose of the EOSC field trips is to give students a real look at what they study in the classroom. In southeast Oregon geography students can see how grazing affects the balance between grassland and sagebrush. They can see wild horse herds adapting to the natural environment. They can examine the processes of erosion.

More importantly, they can learn to develop an open mind about natural beauty. "Most people think only green trees, forested mountains, and lakes are beautiful," professor Lewis comments. "But it's a matter of definition. A person could write about Mount Hood in a way that makes it appear ugly."

"It's very important for people going into environmental studies," he emphasizes, "to have an open mind." "The attitudes toward landscape," he notes, "affect land use and development." Several of his students will complete their degrees in Community Service.

In addition to the Alford, the students explored Catlow Valley, Arock, the Owyhee River, geothermal spots, and Bog Hot Springs in Nevada. They also descended Steens Mountain, a hike of over 5000 feet.

Each student supplied their own gear and paid expenses. "It's worthwhile to point out," Lewis noted, "that the students pay their own way. There are no allowances in the institutional budget for field trips."

Professor Kerley's biology club students examined many of the same areas, plus the Malheur Wildlife Refuge. They found greasewood, three varieties of sagebrush, horse brush, black-tailed jack rabbits, mountain cotton tail rabbits, antelope ground squirrels, hawks, golden eagles, prairie falcons, ravens, horned larks, Townsend solitaires, and western rattlesnakes. And, of course, they captured "Peromyscus maniculatus," the deer mice.

Nor do field trips completely abandon civilization. Saturday night in Demio Junction, Nevada, for example, is a lively place. From what appears to be out of nowhere, folks congregate to have dinner, buy groceries, fill the gas tank, play the slot machines or some pool, enjoy a favorite beverage, or watch television. It's remarkable to see that all of these things happen in the same building. Only the gas pumps are outside.

After the trip is completed, the return to La Grande and its visible human population accentuates the difference between the two worlds that the students know. Many of the group already anticipate the next visit back to the wilds.

They find the whole experience of exploring south east Oregon very rewarding. It is quiet there. Only nature speaks.

They noted the alkaline desert lake beds, and gauged the water Ph balance to be about 8. Normal drinking water is usually 6 or 7.

Southeast Oregon is a special place for most of the EOSC students who visit there. While most of the groups who make the tour are science majors, they would like to draw others to the richness they believe they have found. That includes students and faculty in humanities fields.

"I could stare out at the land time after time and

never get tired of it," reflects Steve Carper, a bio/chem sophomore from La Grande. "If we could just get others fired up about the place, they'd see how beautiful it is."

If professor Kerley has anything to say about it, more and more of the campus community will eventually see the area. He sets out every year to convert faculty and students alike.

"About once a month," his students say, "he gives us the lecture about getting involved in college activities."

Those who follow his advice seem glad they did. They return to the area after they've studied it just for the pleasure of enjoying its solitude and wildness. They

know all the spots by name, and keep an eye out for new and different kinds of birds, reptiles, mammals, and plants. Their camping trips, however, are not intended to seem primitive. The students transport gear by car, store perishables in coolers, and perhaps even hunt if game looks plentiful.

Naturally, cameras and binoculars are standard equipment.

Geothermal springs, too, are a great treat. A person can soak off the desert dust in waters of 90 degrees.

The smallest continent is the Australian mainland, with an area of about 2,940,000 square miles.

Physical Education Classes Scheduled

Four physical education classes will be offered through the Community Education Division at Treasure Valley Community College winter quarter. All of the classes are offered evenings and are geared for the adult population. Each class carries one hour of physical education credit.

Two dance classes, Intermediate Ballroom Dancing, and Intermediate Square Dancing, will be offered

Tuesdays and Thursdays, respectively. The beginning class is a pre-requisite in each for each course.

Ballroom Dancing will feature instruction in the fox trot, waltz, polka, tango and other dances. Luella DuBoise is the instructor. Classes will be held in Room 10, Weese Building, from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. The first class meets January 10.

Square Dancing will meet from 8:00 to 10:40 in Room 10, Weese Building, beginning January 5. Neil Pettersen will help students master the 50 basic steps of the dance.

Burton Grover will conduct a class in Tae Kwon Do Karate, Tuesdays from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. in the TVCC

Wrestling Room, gymnasium. The first class is scheduled January 10.

Cross Country Skiing will be offered January 4 through January 31, snow conditions permitting. Earl McCollum will assist students not only in the techniques of the sport, but also in such areas as proper equipment, survival, and first aid. McCollum recently attended an extensive workshop in cross country skiing and will be sharing this information with students. A long time skiing enthusiast, McCollum also has extensive training in first aid and wilderness survival skills. The class will be offered on campus from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., Tuesdays through Thursdays.



Meal Site Menu
 Friday, December 30 - Turkey, chop suey, rice, pickled beets, apricots & fortune cookies
 Monday, January 2 - No meal served due to holiday.

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