

Nature Trails

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Marine Birds: Ocean Wanderers

Dr. Jan Hodder,

Oregon Institute of Marine Biology

**Friday, 9 December 2011, 7:30pm, Room 100
Willamette Hall, UO Campus**

Jan Hodder is a native of the UK, growing up in southern England on a farm in Dorset, ten miles from the ocean. Spending time as a youngster on the beaches close to her home as well as on Guernsey (her mother's family came from there) and the Isle of Man led to her love of the marine environment. Her B.Sc. degree, awarded with honors from the University of Liverpool, was in marine biology. Hodder came to the U.S. as a Rotary International Scholar at the University of Oregon. She earned her Ph.D. in 1986, under Paul Rudy, then OIMB's Director, working on a problem in estuarine biology. Immediately thereafter she began her own career at OIMB.

Hodder's knowledge of the marine environment is both wide and deep, evidenced by the variety of research subjects on which she has worked, written and spoken publicly about. Her research interests include the ecology of marine birds and mammals and the biological consequences of introduced species. That marvelous tome *Birds of Oregon: a General Reference*, has descriptions of 14 marine birds written by Hodder.

But what really floats her boat, for which she has earned a just degree of fame, is working on how best to impart knowledge of the oceans to students, to teachers, and to the public. One of the ways she does this is through the NSF-funded OIMB Graduate Fellows in K-12 Project, on which she was a Principal Investigator. A second way is through another NSF-funded project that helps scientists develop effective outreach projects from their research interests: from 2007 to now Hodder has served as Director of the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) Pacific Partnerships, which connects marine stations in Oregon, Washington, California, and Hawaii. The goal of this project is to provide links between researchers who are generating knowledge about the ocean and community-college faculty who can use the information in their courses, as well as volunteers who can then help the public learn about the ocean. COSEE-PP (www.coseepacificpartnerships.org/) has been supported by the National Science Foundation.



Hodder wrote the proposal for the 2007-2012 grant, which was funded for over \$2.5 million. One of the products of that grant is the curriculum for the coastal ecoregion of the Oregon Master Naturalist Program (<http://oregonmasternaturalist.org/>), whose mission is "to develop a statewide corps of knowledgeable, skilled, and dedicated volunteers who enrich their communities and enhance public awareness of Oregon's natural resources through conservation education, scientific inquiry, and stewardship activities." It's now a going concern.

Hodder has been the Academic Program Coordinator at OIMB since 1986. Now an Associate Professor, she teaches courses, both at OIMB and at the U of O, on birds and mammals and marine environmental issues. She was presented with the Biology Teaching Recognition Award for 2011;

essentially that's like being crowned teacher of the year. While she does not direct graduate student research projects she has been on numerous graduate-student thesis committees. She does take undergraduates under her wing to help with her own research. ...Hodder's talk will focus on the importance of islands to marine birds and some of the remarkable biology we are learning about the life styles and interactions of these animals using modern biological techniques. We know she is a gifted teacher. She is

also locally renowned for her photographic skills. And who among us is not uplifted by seeing marine birds? So, great topic, excellent speaker, stunning visuals. How can we lose? Make sure you come to hear Dr. Jan Hodder's talk *Marine Birds: Ocean Wanderers*, on Friday, 9 December, at 7:30 pm in Room 100 Willamette Hall on the U of O Campus.

John Carter

President's Corner

The Energy of Winter

By Tom A. Titus

November was a benign beginning to the Pacific Northwest rainy season. But this morning a large winter storm creeps toward our coast, a pinwheel of gray meteorological energy inhaling moisture from the Pacific Ocean, exhaling premonitory southwest winds sending the colors of fall skittering in hasty retreat across my yard. My immediate future is obvious. This evening I will leave my building, don raingear, fire up bike lights, and ride into darkness bucking a headwind carrying slanting rain into my face. I'll awaken in the middle of the night to the thrumming rain, listen intently, imagine each drop plopping on each remaining leaf and each blade of grass, until the intimacy of falling water becomes a stream that carries me back to sleep.

Rain. Darkness. These are the twin forces of our winter, the dark matter of life in the Pacific Northwest. People who thrive here during these six months of abbreviated day length and attenuated sunshine—those who really *live* rather than muddle along, staring at puddles, counting the days until spring—these people have somehow learned to harness the energy of winter. Their strategies vary with the person. Some draw inward into a self-imposed moratorium on the outpouring of energy that usually accompanies longer, warmer days. Their lives mirror the ever-shortening days preceding the Solstice that contract and turn downward like the winding of a clock spring. Their summer garden is tucked into bed, the pantry is stocked, and a stack of books is piled on the end table. For them winter is a recharging of batteries, the accumulation of potential energy. Other folks transduce the inclement weather into adrenalin and action. When a deluge hits, my dad will pull on rain gear and rubber boots, grab a shovel, and wade into the tempest, ostensibly to make sure the cloudy gray runoff streaming off the hillside behind his house isn't misbehaving and running down a roadbed. Mostly he just loves to be out in blowing rain. These strategies aren't mutually exclusive—regionally well-adjusted people often flow from one of these quantum states to the other depending on both their own internal environment and the forces immediately surrounding them.

Winter inevitably results in introspection. Questions coalesce like drops on bare alder twigs. These fall on still water, rippling outward in concentric rings, one nested within the other, their number and size determined by the energy that created them and the dimensions of the pond on

which they formed. Can we learn to thrive in our place, revel in all of the changing seasons, even the wet darkness of our winter? Or are we simply stuck with the strategy that has been dealt each of us by genetics and acculturation? The vast expanse of human history shows that dispersal and adaptation to new bioregions are hallmarks of human evolution; moreover, in some instances failure to adapt has doomed people to local extinction. Modern sociology also corroborates our adaptability. My wife Kim moved from sunny southern California to soggy Humboldt County, immediately fell in love with rain, and never looked longingly back. This adaptability is not a trifling issue. If we can learn to love all the facets of our place, then perhaps we, the Eugene Natural History Society, might choose to contribute to this process. I smile to think that as a local grassroots society we might positively influence our community in this way, rather than offering expensive, fossil-fueled getaways to the tropics or southern hemisphere.

A larger question pushes against our coastline, new weather sending out exploratory breezes, awaiting our embrace ... or escape. Should we be building a bigger tent, opening a larger umbrella to encompass those in the community who may not necessarily share all of the values that most of us think of as "appropriate" for a local conservation organization? I was struck nearly to tears by the film *Green Fire!* The producers gathered, within the context of Aldo Leopold's life and all of its seeming contradictions, a broad swath of people under the common banner of "conservationist." They were ranchers, writers, teachers, scientists, and artists who in some fundamental way espoused Leopold's Land Ethic. Is there additional common ground that we might search out, speakers and activities that would bring more people together as conservationists and further natural history education in our area? Officially it costs only ten bucks and some ink on a membership form to join ENHS. Yet all groups self-select to some extent, either consciously or not, with language and attitudes. This is the way groups of people come together and stay connected, the nature of human culture. We are tribal animals. But the primary mission of our Society is natural history education, so perhaps we should guard against exclusivity. As an example, the current state of affairs in our biosphere makes it very easy to find problems associated with ecosystems that are strained beyond their capacity because of the negative influence of humans. But there are people who are in constructive motion, and we might do well to seek them out as examples of

how humans might reintegrate themselves in ecologically positive ways.

Regardless of our choices, some version of a future reaches downward into the stream of time. Earth will revolve around Sun, spinning on her tilted axis. Days will shorten and temperatures will drop. Storms will roll in and rain will fall. All of these things will

happen with or without us. These things will happen whether we or our children or our children's children are here watching, listening, thinking, and deciding on how we might flow with the energy of winter.

Uncommon Visitors and Everyday Delights

By Reida Kimmel

Even an armchair birder like me can find her emotions running a gamut from heartbreak to total elation. We can become so involved in the lives of tiny creatures that for the most part are totally unaware of our existence. Any bird that actually notices me can wind me all around its tiny toes. I was digging in the garden on the fifteenth of November. An oddly familiar, but nonetheless strange sound kept buzzing by my ears. By my ears! It can't be! But it was. A very hungry male Rufous hummingbird was demanding that I fill a feeder, immediately!



Photo by Vic Shuman

I know hummingbirds overwinter in Eugene, but here on our north-facing slope a thousand feet above sea level, such a thing is unheard of. The hummingbird stayed all that windy rainy week darting back and forth across the porch from the Akebia vine to the freshly filled feeder. A female joined him. The vines on the porch and the evergreen shrubs in the yard provide ample shelter. I think they may stay for a while longer.

Much is changing in our local environment because hundreds of acres of trees, sixty years old and older, are being clearcut above Fox Hollow valley every year. Most of the older forest south of us is gone. And so are the ravens. Happily, the resident pileated woodpecker has not deserted us. In fact he has started a new project in one of our big oak trees. We almost never see grouse any more. There are more crows, and for the first time we had cow birds this summer. They rode around on the horses' backs [Cute!] and raised a brood. We do not know whose nest they parasitized. I am afraid that as our woodlands become more fragmented, cowbirds will be able to penetrate the fringes of our frayed forests easily, parasitizing many more nests of our woodland birds.

We had at least four pairs of black-headed grosbeaks, a pair of evening grosbeaks, and countless house finches and goldfinches breeding near our house this summer. This beautiful wealth of finches demanded three feeders full of sunflower seeds every day. Lucky the barn swallows don't need to be fed. Nine or more pairs nested in our outbuildings. Several nests were perfect for viewing, and others were hidden deep in the rafters, their presence betrayed only by the little mountains of poop on the barn floor. Nesting started late and continued well into the fall. The last families stayed until mid-September. We were very grateful to have the swallows' help keeping the fly population under control for those extra weeks during our warm fall.

Dick Lamster and Maeve Sowles, our neighbors who keep such wonderful records of their nesting birds, say that this was not a good year, though not the worst in spite of so many sad circumstances. The late spring delayed nesting, and the food source – the insect population – was late to emerge because of the cold. Only one bluebird pair nested, but that pair did manage to fledge two young. As always, house wrens were murderous, and took an especial toll on the black-capped chickadee nests. Dick remarked that the wintering habitat for our migratory birds, in South and Central America and in our own South, is being developed, degraded, and poisoned with chemicals, and that everywhere bird watchers are noting fewer birds returning north to nest.

A cold and wet spring, a too-dry fall, habitat degradation everywhere – is there any good news anywhere? Well yes, at least in this neighborhood. Our neighbors on the hill, the Hicks family, had a pair of Vaux swifts successfully nest in their abandoned chimney. Meg said the birds were hard to see. They just zoomed into the chimney and popped out again only to disappear high in the sky. But Ted installed an infrared camera in the old fireplace, and they watched the swifts bring in stuff for a nest and later could see the hungry babies with wide-open mouths. The Hicks hope the swifts will return year after year. Hollow trees and chimneys that swifts can use for nesting are in short supply. Swift populations

everywhere are in decline. Many swifts may roost in a chimney like the famous Condon School chimney, but only one pair per chimney will nest. In the July-August issue of Audubon magazine, High Hopes, by Frank Graham Jr., tells the story of one Texas couple's success in building towers to attract nesting swifts. The towers are gorgeous. I'd love to have one in my yard. If you are interested in a unique garden sculpture that will do a struggling species a lot of

good, visit audubonmagazine.org/web/swifftowers, where you can get information on how to build several of the Kyles' clever designs. It may be more work than filling feeders and cooking up sugar water, but, well, you know, there's nothing we won't do for those birds.

Out and About

"Out & about" is a periodical encouragement to Eugene Natural History Society members to get out and experience our magnificent Oregon.



Great Blue Heron, practically everywhere, year-round

OK, lots of birds head south for the winter, but it turns out, this is south for many species. Go out to Kirk Pond, just south of Fern Ridge dam, and look for bald eagles, great egrets and ducks galore.

Even better, join a Christmas Bird Count team and see more birds than you ever imagined in the winter right in the Valley. Lane County Audubon Society sends many such teams out to count birds on the first Sunday of January every year. Call 541-485-bird

In the web version of NT (Go to <http://biology.uoregon.edu/enhs/> and click on Newsletter) the Out and About photos are in color (the cover photo is, too). But note: the current issue of NT doesn't appear on the website until after the meeting.

If you are an ENHS member who currently receives NT through the mail and you wish to begin receiving it electronically, contact Ruth Bremiller at brem@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Events of Interest in the Community

Lane County Audubon Society

LCAS has no December meeting, but they cosponsor the ENHS December meeting, which is always bird-related, the introduction to which is on page 2 of this newsletter.

Mount Pisgah Arboretum

34901 Frank Parrish Rd., Eugene, 97405. Located off I-5 Exit 189, 15 minutes southeast of Eugene. Call Peg Douthit-Jackson at 541-747-1504, email mtpisgjp@efn.org, or look at <http://mountpisgaharboretum.org/> to find out about current Arboretum activities.

Nearby Nature

Saturday, 10 December, 1-3 pm. Nearby Nature Quest -- Tall Tree Trek. Learn all about our community's tall trees on a Family Nature Quest in Hendricks Park. Meet outside the Francis M. Wilkins Shelter. FREE for members. \$2/person, \$5/family for non-members. Pre-register: 541-687-9699. For details call 541-687-9699 or email info@nearbynature.org.

Museum of Natural and Cultural History

Free Admission Wednesday

Wednesday, 7 December, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm. Little Wonders: Stories and Activities for Preschoolers.

This month the book is *Animals in Winter*, by Henrietta Bancroft and Richard G. Van Gelder. Animals in the winter do many things to survive and stay warm. Learn about the fox, woodchuck and pica, and make your own winter habitat. Free admission.

Friday, 16 December, 5-8 pm. Winter Solstice Celebration – 10th Anniversary. The theme of the evening is animals in winter. Storyteller Brenda Brainard, a member of Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, will share tales of beavers and coyotes; Dick Lamster, former president of the Audubon Society of Lane County, will give a presentation on birds in winter; and MNCH educational staff will debut their new marionettes for a performance on the theme for children. Other performers include local tenor saxophonist Joe Manis, the Northwest Suzuki Institute, and Eugene Taiko Artist Susan Pavel will lead a discussion and weaving demonstration near her work in the MNCH's Galleria. Food will be available for purchase in the museum and cookies and cider will be served in the Many Nations Longhouse. A full schedule of events can be found at <http://natural-history.uoregon.edu>. Memberships will be offered for half price during this event. Consider one for a gift! *Free with three non-perishable food items or a cash donation to FOOD for Lane County. Help fill the FOOD for Lane County cupboards.*

Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter

For information on current activities contact ngap@emeraldnpsoregon.org or look at <http://emerald.npsoregon.org/>

Monday, 19 December, 7:30 pm. Holiday Social and Slide Show. Bring 10 to 12 slides (traditional or digital) and a snack to share if you wish. Location: EWEB Training Room, 500 E. 4th Ave., Eugene. For information call 541-345-5531.

WREN

For information about upcoming events call 541-338-7047 or email info@wewetlands.org. You can also go to their website: <http://www.wewetlands.org/>

Tuesday, 13 December, 9-10 am. Wetland Wander. Meet at the Checkermallow Access. Checkermallow Access connects directly to the Fern Ridge Path and Meadowlark Prairie.

Emerald Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society

Call Tanya at 541-937-1401 with questions about future programs, or look at <http://nargsemerald.org/calendar>

North American Butterfly Association, Eugene/Springfield Chapter

Monday, 5 December, 7 pm – refreshments; 7:30 pm – presentation: Basic Butterfly Biogeography. Jonathan Pelham, Curatorial Associate of Lepidoptera at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle, Washington, will discuss where butterflies occur and the reasons for their distribution patterns. EWEB Training Center at 500 4th Ave., Eugene. FREE, all are welcome.

We welcome new members! To join ENHS, fill out the form below. You will receive *Nature Trails* through December of next year. Membership payments allow us to give modest honoraria to our speakers, as well as to pay for the publication and mailing of *Nature Trails*.

Our web address: <http://biology.uoregon.edu/enhs/>

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State & Zip _____ Phone _____

E-mail (if you want to receive announcements) _____

I (we) prefer electronic copies of NT rather than paper copies. ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, email address (if different from the one above): _____

ANNUAL DUES:	Contributing	20.00
	Family	15.00
	Individual	10.00
	Life Membership	300.00
	Contribution	_____

Make checks payable to: The Eugene Natural History Society
P.O. Box 5494, Eugene OR 97405

Annual dues for renewing members are payable in September. Memberships run from September to September. Generosity is encouraged and appreciated.

The following information is voluntary, but appreciated:

Would you like to: ___lead field trips ___teach informal classes ___work on committees?

What would you like to hear a talk on? _____

Do you have special experience in natural history: _____

INTERESTS: ___Archaeology___Astronomy ___Bird Study ___Botany ___Conservation ___Geology ___History of Science ___Herpetology ___Meteorology ___Mosses & Lichens ___Mushrooms ___Nature Walks ___Wildflowers ___Zoology ___Other_____



Photo by D. Beghtel, The Oregonian

Pelicans compete with gulls for fish scraps on the Pacific Seafood Company dock in Newport. The flocks of about 20,000 brown pelicans that live on the Oregon Coast in the summer usually fly south before winter. But during the past three years, they've lingered. Quote and photo from Oregonlive.com.



Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*)
Photo from Oregon Coastal Atlas



Pigeon Guillemot (*Cepphus columba*)
Photo from Oregon Coastal Atlas



Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*)
Photo from Oregon Coastal Atlas



Tufted puffin (*Fratercula cirrhata*)
Photo from Oregon Coastal Atlas

ENHS Schedule of Speakers and Topics for 2011-2012

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|---|
| 9 Dec. 2011 | – Jan Hodder | – Marine Birds: Ocean Wanderers |
| 20 Jan. 2012 | – Pat O'Grady | – Sheep Mountain Clovis Site Archeology |
| 17 Feb. 2012 | – Greta Binford | – Evolution of Spider Venom |
| 16 Mar. 2012 | – Gordon Grant | – Willamette River Hydrology |
| 20 Apr. 2012 | – Deanna Kingston | – Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Inupiat |
| 18 May 2012 | – Robert M. Pyle | – Butterflies |

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