

Nature Trails

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Anise Swallowtail. Photo by Thea Linnaea Pyle

The Natural History of Butterflies

Robert Michael Pyle

Lepidopterist, Author, Conservationist

Grays River, Washington

**Friday, 18 May 2012, 7:30pm, Room 100
Willamette Hall, UO Campus**

Robert Michael Pyle made a life-changing decision over 30 years ago. He moved from Portland, Oregon, to the unincorporated rural village of Grays River, in the southwestern corner of Washington. Pyle wanted to make his living as a writer, and he thought that living the simple life would improve his writing. Thea joined him there in 1984. They married and have made a go of it ever since. He says they never quite got away from the graduate-student lifestyle, which, as many of us remember, encourages frugality. It's fair to say he has been living on his wits, since they make do on the proceeds from his writing, lectures, and teaching. When asked for advice he tells aspiring writers to keep their needs simple. Good advice for all of us.

Pyle grew up in Aurora, Colorado, just east of Denver, where he was born in 1947. *The Thunder Tree: Lessons from An Urban Wildland*, which he said was artistically the most difficult of all 16 books that he has authored and which was re-issued by Oregon State University Press in 1910, deals with an old irrigation ditch that runs through Denver and Aurora. It was his escape as a child, the place where this city kid could commune with nature, and his experiences along it helped steer him toward lepidoptery. He first became interested in butterflies at age 11; before that he had squandered his allowance on seashells. Butterflies, he discovered, were a more suitable hobby for a Colorado boy.

A teacher at Aurora High School who was an enthusiastic naturalist encouraged the young Pyle to follow his passion. The Pyles will go back to Colorado this year, almost 50 years later, and will reunite with this special person for a long-planned field trip. Another early influence with a remarkable twist: as a boy Pyle met Charles Remington, considered the father of modern lepidoptery. Many years later, when Pyle went to Yale for graduate studies, Remington became his thesis advisor.

After high school Pyle moved to Seattle to enroll in the University of Washington, from which he obtained both his B.S. and M.S. degrees in natural history. One of his mentors there was the zoologist Frank Richardson, aka 'The Birdman'.

From UW he went to Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, where he obtained his Ph.D.

in 1976 under Remington's direction. Pyle has been called a latter-day Leopold for his conservation ethic, so it is worth noting that Aldo Leopold also graduated from Yale's School of Forestry, more than 100 years ago.

Although fulfilling, the three years he spent in Portland working for The Nature Conservancy as the Northwest Land Steward were stressful and didn't allow him the time or energy to write. He had hoped to be able to make it as a writer after finishing at Yale, and so in 1978 made the courageous move to Grays River, leaving TNC and Portland behind. At first he and his wife needed more income and he took a job with the World Wildlife Fund to develop an invertebrate data book. For the next three years he commuted between Grays River and Cambridge, England: six months here, six months there. He went completely free-lance in 1982 (Their 1982 Honda, ever faithful if now a little rusty, has over 408,000 miles on it and still gets over 40 mpg).

Pyle founded the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation in 1971, while on a Fulbright Fellowship in England. His last two books, *Mariposa Road* and *Sky Time in Grays River: Living For Keeps in a Forgotten Place*, were finalists for the Washington State Book Award, which he has won three times. *Sky Time* also won the 2007 National Outdoor Book Award. He won the John Burroughs Medal for Distinguished Nature Writing in 1987 for *Wintergreen*. *Where Bigfoot Walks: Crossing the Dark Divide*, published in 1995, was written with a Guggenheim Fellowship. It would seem an outlier from its outrageous (his word) subject matter, but in other ways it is in line with the body of his work; it is about getting into nature, and paying close attention. A parallel could be drawn between it and his *Chasing Monarchs: Migrating with the Butterflies of Passage* in that they both involve a chase and a mystery. "The main difference," Pyle says, "is that I saw monarchs a little more than I saw bigfoot."

Pyle has been dedicated to butterflies, but in a larger sense he is a naturalist and conservationist. His effectiveness in this larger domain cannot be overestimated. In 1997 he received a Distinguished Service Award from the Society for Conservation Biology.

Pyle's lecture, "The Natural History of Butterflies," is co-sponsored by the Eugene – Springfield Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association and the Eugene Natural History Society. In his talk he will give us an overview of who and what butterflies are and what they need. He will touch on rarity: why are

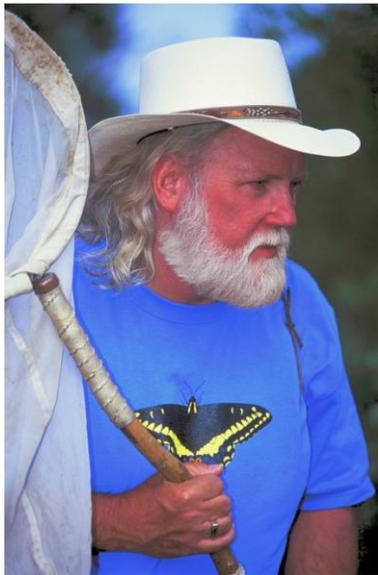


Photo by Eddie Rivers

some butterflies rare, and others not? That topic will bring him to conservation: what is happening in conservation? Why should we have to conserve one particular species, but not others? He will touch on butterfly lore, history and lifeways, and how we can bring these delicate creatures into our lives.

Robert Michael Pyle is a world-renowned figure, and we are honored and most fortunate to have the opportunity to hear him speak and interact with him. I urge you all to attend his talk, at 7:30 pm on Friday, 18 May, in room 100 Willamette Hall on the U of O campus. Come early if you want to sit down.

John Carter

Pyle will lead a field trip on Saturday, 19 May, the day after his talk. Meet at the visitor center at Mt. Pisgah Arboretum at 11 am. Bring a lunch, water, good walking shoes, and binoculars.

Slug Queen by Reida Kimmel

A mollusk of a strange sort, *Ariolimax columbianus*, called the banana slug for the yellow coloration common in the southern part of its range, inhabits the moist forests of the Pacific Northwest from Sitka Alaska to Santa Cruz, California, where it is the local university's mascot. A year ago, on my walks through the wet hills, I noticed that there were scores of tiny, obviously very young, banana slugs. Then I did not see them again until October. When the land becomes dry, banana slugs disappear, shrinking their bodies and hiding in the earth or under leaf piles until the rains return. They cannot function in a dry environment because they need water to keep their soft naked bodies moist and to manufacture the slime on which they glide along the forest floor propelled by their muscular "foot". After the rains began in the fall the slugs reappeared, more numerous than the migrating newts so characteristic of the season. It was a slug winter and a slug spring.

I've always had a great appreciation for these khaki colored, black spotted creatures that grind up leaf litter, carve into mushrooms and dispose of dog poop so efficiently. If I found a banana slug in my potted plants or my garden, I carried it to the fence and deposited it

in the pasture. These slugs, unlike garden slugs, their invasive little cousins, are natural and beautiful. And quite weird. The four retractable "horns" – really tentacles – on their heads are sense organs. The longer pair can detect movement and light, while the other pair detects chemicals like odors. Banana slugs are hermaphroditic, both male and female, so mating is very efficient: two batches of eggs, two of sperm, two hatches, requiring only two parents. Their penises are huge. Each partner chews off that of the other at the conclusion of mating.

I can tolerate the silver trails on the walls of our house, the prematurely short lifespan of primroses and pansies on the deck, but this year some members of the slimy tribe went too far. Two, I hope only two, sort of middle-sized banana slugs smuggled themselves into my greenhouse, probably in a bucket of potting soil. In only one night, one slug ate several dozen basil seedlings, six eggplants and almost half of my young sweet peppers. The other slug was apprehended making free with my sweet smelling over-wintered pansies and petunias. I confess. I have now murdered two banana slugs.

President's Corner

Track Town Osprey Tom A. Titus

The contrast has been a bit startling. I left Antarctica, a hard-edged landscape of black rock, white snow, and blue ice teetering on the edge of winter, and returned to unbridled spring: new leaves unfurling like small green prayer flags, white fawn lilies and trilliums in green moss, and weather as wet and sunny and mild and hopeful and soft as a baby's bottom. Honestly, I'm having difficulty squaring up these two realities and can't remember a spring when I've been so conflicted. About nearly everything. So of course this was the spring that the Hayward Field ospreys temporarily dominated my consciousness.

Last year I enjoyed watching the osprey couple weave their jumble of sticks on the flood lights above the Bowerman Center, loved trying to guess what sort of fish were being transported to the chicks, and watched the chicks grow and fledge and soar on new feathers in their late-summer family flights. But this April the University of Oregon Athletic Department (AD) decided that the Hayward Field ospreys had to move. The AD did some things right. They contacted the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife who told them that removal of the nest was legal provided there were no eggs. They consulted with local bird biologists who told them that if they were going to remove the nest they should do it immediately to give the ospreys a chance to nest successfully elsewhere. But the AD

was far more culpable with regard to their handling of these ospreys than the Register Guard article on 28 April indicated. The AD knew years ago that the Olympic Trials were coming. Because they removed last year's nest, presumably they had determined then that the ospreys were a problem. A cursory Internet investigation would have told them that the birds would return to that same pole this year. A nesting deterrent could have been built as soon as the birds had vacated last fall. Instead the AD waited to act until late April after the osprey had spent nearly two months reconstructing their nest, the female had been inseminated, and their chances of successful relocation were small.

Some ornithologists felt that the long-term hubbub around the Olympic Trials would cause the birds to abandon their nest when the chicks were young. Others with experience in all things osprey thought that this pair had already proven its resilience by occupying the nest through multiday track events last year and pointed to innumerable other examples of urban ospreys nesting in close proximity to ongoing human disturbance. I recommended letting the birds nest through this season and placing a debris net around the pole to ensure that no one was hit by a loose stick or piece of falling fish, an opinion that was supported by others with considerably more osprey experience. These recommendations didn't warrant even a return email. Inherent in my strategy was the risk that the parents would abandon the newly hatched chicks later in the summer. I'm forced to ask myself a hard question: was my desire to let the birds nest and make their own decision about whether to stick it out for the summer motivated by what was best for the birds or what was best for osprey watchers around the University of Oregon, or both? There is no certainty here. Biologists have differing opinions, too.

I have no romantic illusions about the interface between wild nature and domesticated humans. I grew up in rural Lane County with skunks and raccoons and red-tailed hawks making off with chickens and ducks. More recently, bears have destroyed my beehives and deer have chewed my garden to nubbins. I have been angry. The entire wild animal/human animal affair is messy. It's messy because biology is messy, psychology is messier, and sociology is messier still. There is no possible way to stir together this messiness—all the animal eating and procreation and the human self-centered self-indulgent self-righteous emotion—and expect anything but a mess. This is the reality.

Nevertheless, this issue is worthy of our scrutiny. From the perspective of population biology, is it critical that the Hayward Field ospreys nest

successfully this season? Probably not. Ospreys were positively impacted by the U.S. ban on domestic DDT use in 1972, and by 2001 there were 234 nesting pairs along the Willamette River between Eugene and Portland. From a purely human perspective we might ask whether people derive any tangible benefit from having ospreys at Hayward Field. Are the birds of any positive economic utility? Are they a danger to humans? Probably none of the above. But these arguments miss a larger point, one that is not based strictly on avian biology or legality or the rights of people versus other animals. To my mind the bigger issue that needs serious pondering is the interaction between domesticated humans and wild nature. Is there something special about cultivating wildness in places that are not inherently wild, especially those places where humans are often present in large numbers?

Many track fans at Hayward Field love those ospreys. This fascinates me. We are awestruck, bowled over, captivated, delighted, enthralled, fascinated by wild things. They stir up deep feelings that we don't understand. Witness gobsmacked crowds in Manhattan lining up to watch Pale Male, the resident Red-tail hawk. I don't know why this is so, but choose to believe that our wonderment with wildness is a product of our evolutionary history, a throwback to our untamed past when humans were intimately entwined with the rest of nature. We find birds of prey especially charismatic, perhaps because we respect them as fellow occupants at the upper levels of the food web.

Regardless of the ultimate causes of our fascination with wildness, the Hayward Field ospreys remind us of the world outside our contrived universe, the one that cycles through seasons with no regard to human well-being. Perhaps having ospreys in a public space caused a few more people to appreciate birds of prey, or openly to discourage the persecution of predators, or to value the close proximity of the Willamette Greenway. Maybe a few more kids got excited about natural history. Maybe a handful of folks saw the osprey family wheeling and chirping, soaring in their white-on-black tuxedos against a blue sky of late summer and in a small moment of awareness realized that humans are not the self-appointed pinnacle of biological evolution. People are really good at building light poles; ospreys might be better at using them.

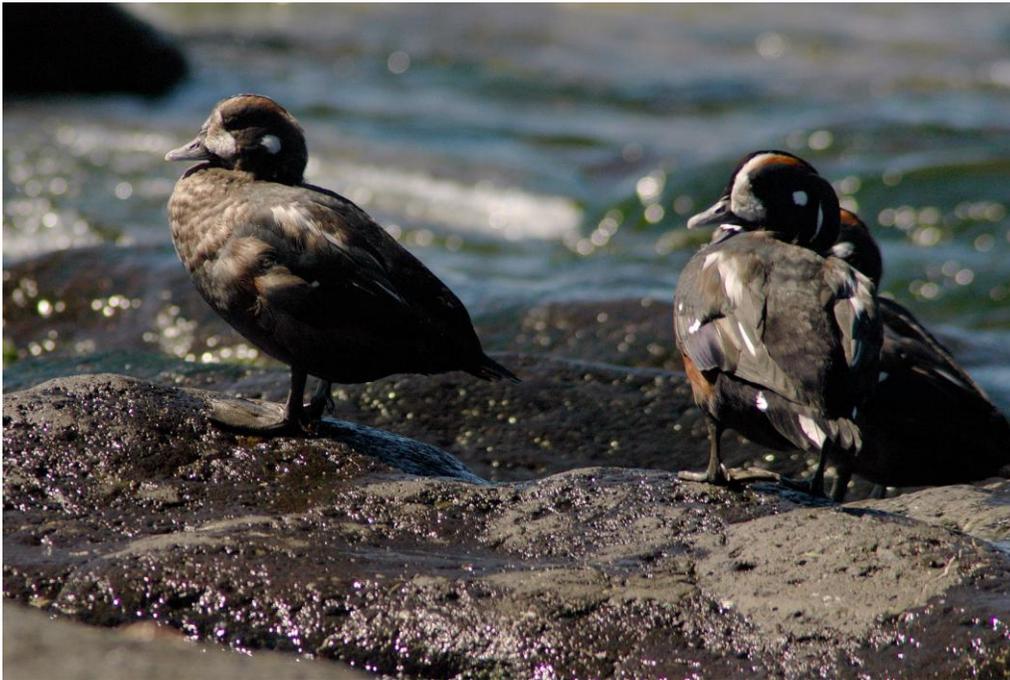
Usually I'm not overly sentimental. But every noon I run from Hayward Field, and all last week I looked upward to the top of that light pole and saw the bird proofing, shifted my gaze to the tops of the surrounding lights, panned out into the open sky searching with open eyes and open ears. There was nothing.

I miss those birds.

Reminder: the May meeting is the annual business meeting and members will be asked to vote on whether to accept the slate of officers and at-large Board members.

Out and About

“Out & about” is a periodical encouragement to Eugene Natural History Society members to get out and experience our magnificent Oregon. Photos and descriptions provided by David Stone.



Harlequin Ducks

Have you seen these colorful ducks? No, they're not wood ducks, common locally in Delta Ponds. They are far more elusive, spending most of the year in remote mountain streams. In the spring, however, they come down out of the mountains for a short time to breed. Look for them in fast moving, frothy streams, and even in the surf where such streams empty in the ocean. Try Bob Creek, 20 miles north of Florence, on Mother's Day weekend.

The MPA Wildflower Festival is on Sunday, 20 May, from 10 am to 5 pm (see the Events Calendar below for more detail), and ENHS will have its booth there, as usual. If you are willing to booth-sit for a couple of hours, either contact a board member or, if you're at the May meeting, sign up.

Events of Interest in the Community

Lane County Audubon Society

Saturday, 12 May, 9 am-1 pm. Wings and Wine Festival. Birding and Educational Events at Perkins Peninsula Park. Bird viewing at various Fern Ridge Lake locations.

Tuesday, 22 May, 7:30 pm. Ten Years of Recording Birdsong in Oregon and Beyond, by Arch McCallum. McCallum will share recordings of land birds from every corner of the state. Eugene Garden Club, 1645 High Street, Eugene.

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://mountpishgaharboretum.org/> to find out about current Arboretum activities.

Sunday, 20 May, 10 am – 5 pm. Wildflower and Music Festival. For the 32nd year, staff at Mount Pisgah Arboretum invite the community to our spring festival for a day of wildflowers, music, food, crafts, and fun! You don't have to be a plant expert to have a wonderful time. The festival is loaded with fun things to do, for everyone in the family. As many as 400 wildflowers will be on display, from asters to violets. Flowers are collected and organized for attendees to get a close look. Top botanists of the region will be on hand to answer questions. There will be live music all day long, with seven different groups, each on stage for an hour. A wide variety of plants, baked goods, and arts and crafts will be on sale, with proceeds supporting the Arboretum's work in habitat restoration and environmental education. Nature Tour Guides will weave folks through the trails, providing more information about the Arboretum's ecology and history. Bring the entire family (except the dog) to enjoy the festival as well as explore nearby nature trails. Free Parking. Cost: Suggested donation: \$5 per person; kids under 12 free.

Nearby Nature

Saturday, 12 May. Nearby Nature Quest: Mighty Mamas. Celebrate Mother's Day with a family-paced nature adventure in Alton Baker Park. Learn about mamas in nature – from birds to bees to beavers! FREE for members. \$2/person, \$5/family for non-members. Pre-registration required: 541-687-9699.

Go to the website (<http://www.nearbynature.org/>) for activities in June and throughout the summer.

University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History, 1680 E. 15th Ave.

Free Admission Wednesdays, 11 am – 5 pm.

Fridays, 1 pm and 3 pm, Guided Tours.

Ongoing Exhibits:

We Are Still Here – Gordon Bettles and the Many Nations Longhouse

Out in Space Back in Time: Images from the Hubble Telescope

The Art of Nature by Becky Uhler

Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter

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

Monday, 21 May, 7:30 pm. A Botanical Life, by Rhoda Love. EWEB Training Room 500 E. 4th Avenue, Eugene.

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/>

Saturday, 19 May 19, 10 am - 2 pm. WREN's Family Exploration Day. Stewart Pond. Free.

Saturday, 26 May 26, 10 am - 2 pm. WREN's 6th Annual Walkin' & Rollin' Fern Ridge Bike Path. Between Bailey Hill Rd. and Greenhill Rd. Free.

Tuesday, 12 June 12, 9-10:30 am. Wetland Wander Checkermallow Access. Meet at the turnout located on the south side of Royal Ave., approximately 1/4 mile east of the intersection of Royal Ave. and Greenhill Rd. Free.

North American Butterfly Association – Eugene-Springfield Chapter

Friday, 18 May, 7:30 pm. The Natural History of Butterflies, by R.M. Pyle. NABA and ENHS are cosponsors of Pyle's visit. See the introduction on pp. 2-3.

Cascade Raptor Center

Sunday, 27 May, noon - 4 pm. Birds in Springtime. Nest Building and egg decorating. For children 4-11 accompanied by an adult. Fee.

ENHS is a co-sponsor of the 19 June visit to Eugene by **Terry Tempest Williams**. She will be here as a part of her book tour, publicizing her newest book *When Women Were Birds*. Place: 150 Columbia Hall (NE corner of 13th and University). University of Oregon Campus. Time: 7:30 pm. Pass the word.

ANNUAL ENHS POTLUCK PICNIC, Saturday 9 June, 2:00 pm, rain or shine.

Once again the Kimmels are hosting the ENHS potluck picnic at the farm on Fox Hollow Road. Just bring a favorite dish or beverage to share and come prepared to watch some birds, walk around the wild area and the pond, pat the horses, socialize with the critters, or best of all, to sit outside or by the woodstove chatting with friends, old and new.

Here are directions to the farm, 30306 Fox Hollow Road.

If you are driving south on Hilyard St., ¼ mi after passing the 30th St. light, [see the Dari Mart] go left on W. Amazon Dr. [This turn is the next light after E. Amazon Dr. Both intersect Fox Hollow actually.] Go ¾ mi. [see Calvary Chapel which looks like a warehouse]. Turn right [approximately west] on Fox Hollow Road. Ignoring the street numbers, drive through suburbia into the countryside. In 4.7 miles you will see S. Willamette St. coming in on the right. *Drive on. In another 1.9 miles there will be a fire station on your right, and Macbeth Road will join Fox Hollow Road from the right. Bear left, [southwest] staying on Fox Hollow. The road will curve downhill in a southerly and southwesterly direction.

In 1.1 more miles you will see our mailbox on the right [Kimmel, 30306]. Turn left into our driveway and park by the barn, the garage, the front walk or on the grass beside the driveway.

You have now gone 8.7 miles from the intersection of 30th and Hilyard. The entire road is paved. *If you are coming from Willamette St, just follow S. Willamette out into the country past Spencer's Butte Park to the stop sign and junction with Fox Hollow Road and follow the directions from *

If you are coming from West Eugene, go on Bailey Hill Road to Lorane Highway and turn left on Lorane Highway at Twin Oaks Church, just after Twin Oaks School. Go east on Lorane Highway to Macbeth Road, just past the Grange. Turn Right. Go 3.68 miles to the end of MacBeth, and turn right onto Fox Hollow. Go southwest down hill for 1.1 miles and turn left at our driveway.

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	_____

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

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

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_____

ENHS Schedule of Speakers and Topics for 2011-2012 and for 2012-2013

18 May 2012	– Robert M. Pyle	– The Natural History of Butterflies
21 Sept. 2012	– Tom A. Titus	– The Wet, the Dry, and the Indifferent: Amphibian and Reptile Diversity at the Center of the Universe
19 Oct. 2012	– Craig Young	– The Deep Ocean
16 Nov. 2012	– Jim Reichman	– Pocket Gophers
14 Dec. 2012	– David Craig	– Avian predator ecology
18 Jan. 2013	– Marge Helzer	– Rimrock Draw Shelter Archaeology
15 Feb. 2013	– Ray Lowe	– Restoration of Bandon Marsh
15 Mar. 2013	– Gail Baker	– Australian Botany
19 Apr. 2013	– Josh Roering	– Eel River Pleistocene Lake
17 May 2013	– Jason Dunham	– Bull Trout

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Pale Tiger Swallowtail
Photo by Thea Linnaea Pyle