

Nature Trails

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Art by Jack DeLap

Welcome to Subirdia

John M. Marzluff

James W. Ridgeway Professor of Forest Sciences, School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, College of The Environment, University of Washington

Co-Sponsored by the Lane County Audubon Society

**Friday, 12 December 2014, 7:30pm, Room 100
Willamette Hall, UO Campus**

Far from the stereotypical reclusive scientist, uninterested in whether the public knows anything about his work, John Marzluff is open, witty, and eager to make his bird research understood by all. His research has been the focus of articles in the *New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Audubon*, *Boys Life*, *The Seattle Times*, and *National Wildlife*. PBS's NATURE featured his raven research in its production, "Ravens," and his crow research in the film documentary, "A Murder of Crows." If you check out his TED talk at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fiAoqws9g>, in which he captivates his audience while educating them about how smart corvids are, you'll understand why our board is so excited that he will be speaking to us again. His presentation promises to be every bit as good as his 2009 talk, which several of us missed because of icy road conditions.

Marzluff was born in California, but most of his formative years were in Kansas. His high-school biology teacher in Lawrence, who took his classes on many field trips, turned Marzluff on to wildlife science. The University of Montana's strength in wildlife biology drew him there for his undergraduate studies. His graduate (Northern Arizona University) and initial post-doctoral (University of Vermont) research focused on the social behavior and ecology of jays and ravens. He studied Pinyon Jays for his PhD thesis project (one of his five books is entitled *The Pinyon Jay*). Late in his thesis work a crow came to a nest he was monitoring and ate most of the chicks (an astonishingly original excuse; "My dog ate my homework" cannot compare. He says that roughly half of an avian researcher's study subjects are eaten before the study is complete.). And so began his interest in crows. He continues to investigate the intriguing behavior of crows, ravens, and jays, and brings his behavioral approach to pressing conservation issues including raptor management, management of pest species, and assessment of nest predation. He has led studies on the effects of military training on falcons and eagles in southwestern Idaho, the effects of timber harvest, recreation, and forest fragmentation on goshawks and marbled murrelets in western Washington and Oregon, conservation strategies for Pacific Island crows, and the effects of urbanization on songbirds in the Seattle area. In 1997, after six years in Idaho, Marzluff became a faculty member at the University of Washington, where he now holds an endowed chair: the James W. Ridgeway Professorship of Forest Sciences. His classes at UW include Ornithology, Governance and Conservation of Rare Species, Field Research in Yellowstone, and Natural and Cultural History of Costa Rica. Together with his

teaching and research efforts, Marzluff has mentored over 30 graduate students.

Even though he is an increasingly recognized public figure, Marzluff is still at heart the ever-inquisitive science geek. Not content simply to recount the amazing abilities of his birds, he is gaining an understanding of how they do what they do. The titles of some of his recent papers – such as *Distinct Neural Circuits Underlie Assessment of a Diversity of Natural Dangers by American Crows* – reveal that his interests now include neurobiology. Marzluff has authored over 135 articles on various aspects of bird behavior and wildlife management. He has edited and co-authored treatises such as *Avian Ecology and Conservation in an Urbanizing World*; *Radio-telemetry and Animal Populations*; *Avian Conservation: Research and Management*; and *Urban Ecology: An International Perspective on the Interaction Between Humans and Nature*. He is an editor for *Ecological Applications*. He leads the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Recovery Team for the critically endangered Mariana Crow, and is a Fellow of the American Ornithologist's Union. *In the Company of Crows and Ravens*, co-authored by Marzluff and Tony Angell, won the 2006 Washington State Book Award for general nonfiction. *Gifts of the Crow: How Perception, Emotion and Thought Allow Smart Birds to Behave Like Humans*, again by Marzluff and Angell, appeared in 2013, and *Welcome to Subirdia: Sharing Our Neighborhoods with Wrens, Robins, Woodpeckers, and Other Wildlife*, written by Marzluff and beautifully illustrated by artist and colleague Jack DeLap, just appeared.

Welcome to Subirdia will provide the content of Marzluff's presentation to us. He will reveal that "our suburbs and city parks are often remarkably rich in bird diversity—holding more species than either wilderness areas or urban centers. Suburbs may even help to prevent loss of species in the face of human impacts such as climate change." He will remind us of how we affect the animal life that surrounds us. Drawing on examples from across the country and around the world he will show how "some birds are adapting and thriving in moderately urban ecosystems, often evolving before our eyes. Business parks and vacant lots are home to rare and fragile species." Our gardens and parks are valuable habitats for many birds, and "Our birdfeeders, ornamental ponds and fountains, and nesting boxes bolster populations and help some species to flourish."

Marzluff will remind us that just as we affect them, birds shape our culture, commerce, and quality of life. When we make an effort to enhance bird habitat we cultivate communities that value nature, are

attractive and exciting places to live and work, and that improve our mental and physical health.

Subirdia is not a total feel-good story, however. Birds that cannot adapt to the pressures of human development must retreat to our limited wilderness areas or become scarce.

But in *Welcome to Subirdia* Marzluff gives us something to celebrate. “The herons in our urban streams, the barn owls whose shrieks wake us in our city neighborhoods, the woodpeckers that nest in our wooded parks, and the chickadees [and juncos and nuthatches and warblers and...] that entertain us at our birdfeeders can motivate us to seek a future filled with birds. The ways we manage our property, plan our towns, and think about the nonhuman residents of

our ecosystems can make a difference for our children and grandchildren.”

The Lane County Audubon Society is co-sponsoring this lecture. Both LCAS and ENHS urge you to take advantage of this opportunity. Please come, and invite your friends and neighbors, to hear Professor John Marzluff present “Welcome to Subirdia”, at 7:30pm on Friday, 12 December 2014, in Room 100 Willamette Hall, University of Oregon Campus. After his talk the University Bookstore will be providing a book table and John will sign copies of his books. If the weather cooperates the room will be jammed, so come early if you want to sit down.
John Carter

Letting Go By Tom A. Titus

Winter has fallen like heavy dark drapes. A chill in the back office has driven me to the front room and the warm black iron of the woodstove. Flames dance in the darkness of early morning. I am, like many of you, drawn to fire.

Fire was on my mind last November when my brothers and I were scheduled for our regular autumn backcountry trip deep into the maw of Hells Canyon. Last August the youngest of my three siblings took Mom and Dad to visit Pittsburg Landing on the Idaho side of the canyon, a rare point of entry for vehicles. In the 100-degree heat they saw an orange glow lighting the evening sky north of Somers Point on the Oregon side, a fast-burning range fire that transformed the blonde bunchgrass ridges reaching downward toward Snake River into rumpled heaps of brooding, smoking blackness. But when November came we knew no other place, no other way, and returned to the blackened chasm with few expectations about what the scorched landscape would offer. When we crested the ridge above Snake River on the drive down to Pittsburg Landing, I could see the wide sweep of the Oregon canyonside. Black ridges were interspersed with basalt bluffs, harshly gray and vertical. But beneath the somber darkness another color was emerging—a pervasive green.

Fire is a lazy hell. Climbing the steep trail up Pittsburg Creek, I could see that the flames had run only when chased by wind. They rushed quickly over and along the ridges, torching dry grass and shrubs on the surface, leaving rocky outcrops and moist windless draws unscathed. Ponderosa pine that form the green fingers of forest in the side canyons were blackened at their bases but still very much alive despite the burned underbrush and needle duff on the forest floor. Signs of regeneration were already

apparent. New leaves of wild rose and Oregon grape hugged the charred ground. Two green inches of new growth had pushed upward from the black nubbins of bunchgrass, and was the source of the verdant hue of the canyon. Although the fire was now two months dead, the rippling wind remained, groaning ceaselessly across those greening ridges.

Elk herds chased the fire that was chased by wind. In late afternoon they moved from their midday beds in forested draws and canyons onto open ridges, grazing on new bunchgrass shoots. They fed into darkness, then reversed course sometime in the middle of the night to begin grazing back toward their bedding areas in the trees. Their beige rumps were prominent against the backdrop of burned bunchgrass. We didn't count them, but there must have been at least 200 in the area where we camped. Their numbers had not changed from past years, even only two months post-fire. The fall rut was over, and the herd bulls had disappeared, having left their harems to gather in bachelor groups in quieter places. White elk bones lay in stark repose against black ash, most of them scattered by scavengers. Fire is too lazy to burn bones.

Predators chased the elk that chased the fire that was chased by the moaning wind. While we watched deer and elk graze along the ridges of Salt Creek, three lonely miles from our campfire, an early dusk stalked us. From the canyon rim a chorus of wolves rose on the near-full moon. One of the howls was a particularly deep-throated and business-like bass. I don't know why they sang. But from inside my chest their howling seemed aloof. The Imnaha Pack was not serenading me. I was being *told*. Something shifted and I became small and soft and sank downward into that web of eaters and eaten.

By next evening the wolves had descended from the upper rim into Salt Creek. The elk were gone; they are paranoid and smart and mobile and don't like wolves. Who can blame the elk? Wolves eat them. My brothers want to eat the elk too, so they don't like wolves either. Neither the wolves nor the elk like us, because we are either predators or competitors, depending upon which of our fellow beings we are engaging in conversation. For some reason I like all of it—wind and fire and elk and wolves. I like my brothers, too. I'm not sure how I ended up the congenial one.

In camp, a wild river of night wind poured over the high rim, flowing down Cougar Creek, rippling across the exposed ridges of my cheeks, chasing me deeper into my sleeping bag. Elk chirped to one another on the ridge above. From deep in the bottom of my bag, deep in the deepest river gorge in North America, I wondered if becoming an affable participant in what little is left of the wild world comes from a willingness to cede control. It's easy to berate this compelling need to run things. We harness the wind. We control fire. We control wolves. We control elk and deer herds. Or at least we try. All of this seems ridiculous, to the point that the only thing that seems out of control is our attempt to

domesticate the biosphere to the level that we ourselves have become domesticated.

From my warm living room, self-righteousness shudders and fades. The fire burning behind a glass window is a piece of oak from a tree felled to protect a house and then cut to firewood lengths with a chainsaw and split with a gasoline-powered hydraulic machine into pieces that are now neatly stacked in the driveway and covered with a petroleum-based plastic tarp that came in a shipping container on a boat from China. What could be simpler? Now here we are at the turn of another winter Solstice, an astronomical reality that couldn't care less whether we, as individuals or as a species, continue into the future. Our unbidden presence in this, the right-here-and-right-now, has depended to some degree on controlling a universe of wildness agnostic to our existence. Control is part of our animal need to persist and has served us well. But this compulsion to be constantly in command, even the illusion of it, seems to extinguish some piece of my animal nature. So I'll follow the music of untamed wind, the rejuvenation of wildfire, the nobility of an elk herd, the ego-crumbling chorus of wolves. Sometimes I just need to let go.

A Plea For The Planet by Reida Kimmel

Its cover a collage of the 314 species of American birds at risk of extinction by 2080, the September-October issue of *Audubon Magazine* is dedicated to the effects of climate change on birds and the earth. Climate change results in loss of habitat and disruptions in the food chain. It is exacerbated by ongoing increased human disturbances. Lest anyone forget that birds are real warm and beautiful living things, the names of the possibly doomed species are printed in alphabetical order above every page of the magazine.

We are aware that the ranges of many birds are shifting northward and that they are often breeding as much as three weeks earlier. They are adapting, we think. But if the insects, nectar or seeds they need to feed their young are not in synchrony with this changed breeding schedule, the babies will not survive. If grassland birds move north to keep within a suitable temperature range, and they move into a boreal region, where will they find food? This will be the fate of the Bobolink. Canada's boreal forests cannot evolve

into grasslands quickly, nor will the thin acidic northern soils miraculously become rich enough to support prairies. Seabirds have more freedom, perhaps, but when the seas that feed them become too warm or less saline, the populations of their preferred foods will crash. Without the rich and oily fish that provide the nourishment they and their young need, they will starve. This could be the fate of the pigeon guillemot, the northern fulmar, the rhinoceros auklet and the northern gannet. In Eastern North America, the coastal climate will become warmer and wetter. Many warblers, including the Cerulean warbler, will not be able to breed in that increasingly subtropical habitat. Only the Appalachians can offer refuge, but housing development and strip mining are huge threats.

That leads us to the enormous issue of "habitat loss". Those simple words hide so much complexity. With a world population of ten billion in 2080, where will there be room for open spaces, native prairies, and extensive natural woodlands? In the past decade, by developing the Bakken oilfields, the Canadian

tar sands, the natural gas wells of Pennsylvania, Wyoming and so many other places, we have destroyed what had been some of our continent's best habitat. Prairies, abandoned farmlands, and woods have always been home to many familiar and well-loved species, and refuges for rarities as well. They were often the wildlife corridors so necessary for preserving genetic diversity and species fitness. The many thousands of small lakes and prairie potholes in North Dakota are famous for being our best breeding habitat for waterfowl. For over a century, farming and land drainage have reduced prairie wetland habitat.



Cropland acreage continues to increase at an alarming rate, while the oil boom has already got over eight thousand hydraulic fracturing oil wells in operation. *Audubon* says that another forty thousand could be added in the next twenty or thirty years. Habitat for migratory birds is doubly threatened, with winter ranges in Central and South America being logged, converted to industrial croplands, and populated ever more densely. Pesticides are used extensively, including pesticides banned in the United States for decades.

Perhaps these far away places seem remote and easy to ignore when Oregon is such a perfect place. Or is it? Certainly the weather has been very strange for years. Just recently we've experienced the coldest winter weather, the hottest summer month, and the second driest year. Weather is not climate, but Oregon is changing. Here in Western Oregon, our nights, both in winter and summer, are generally warmer. Ocean acidification due to increased CO₂ is reflected in the thin fragile shells of the mussels we eat. The habitat loss since the 1960s in just the southern Willamette Valley is really striking. Eugene stretches from Coburg to

Cottage Grove. The habitat-rich but unprofitable farms of Creswell, Pleasant Hill and Cottage Grove have been replaced by housing. Pesticide use is rampant. The industrial forestlands are sprayed about three times for every area harvested and planted. I can practically guarantee that on a springtime drive on minor highways to Corvallis or Lebanon you will see planes spraying herbicides on the fields. And where are the meadowlarks that used to be so common? Mint fields, formerly weeded by flocks of domestic geese, are cleansed by annual herbiciding. Even the Christmas trees that share your home are sprayed, often. How can a bird, winter resident or summer breeder, find adequate and healthy food?

Change, here in the Pacific Northwest, will put all these and more of our familiar and often



iconic birds at risk of extinction by 2080. Note them well. The violet green swallow, blackheaded grosbeak, evening grosbeak, greater sage grouse, sandhill crane, Townsends warbler, varied thrush, mountain chickadee, rufous hummingbird, Western tanager, Western bluebird. Even the herring gull and California gull. Our neighbors Dick Lamster and Maeve Sowles have already noticed sad declines over the past decade in the numbers of birds nesting and fledging young in their 44 bird houses. No Western bluebirds have nested in three years, and violet-green swallows are declining in spite of improved summer habitat, perhaps because of habitat degradation and starvation when they migrate for the winter.

We are hell-bent on a course to destroy life as we know it. But this is absolutely not the time to turn away, thinking: "So horribly tragic, but at least I got to enjoy the world when it was lovely." We are, each one of us, morally obliged to do whatever we can to mitigate the damage to

the birds and the planet caused by climate change and overpopulation. We know many things we can do to relieve our burden on the environment. Carpool, use the bus, bike, or walk. Use a clothesline instead of a power gobbling clothes dryer. Shop locally and organic even if it costs more. Bundle up and turn down the heat. Use air conditioning sparingly or not at all. Garden, and do it organically. Landscape with native plants. Make your property into the best possible environment for wild creatures. Above all, it is vitally important for all of us to make serious commitments to help organizations that

are trying to preserve habitat. The Nature Conservancy, the McKenzie River Trust, the Oregon Natural Desert Association, Friends of Buford Park and the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum all welcome hands-on help as well as donations. Do what you can do, but do something, and do it NOW! The birds need us, and when you help to preserve habitat for them, you are protecting a whole cascade of life forms, from mammals and fish, through plants and invertebrates, to the soil microorganisms on whom all life as we know it ultimately depend.

If you have had trouble finding parking before our meetings, there is a sparsely used parking lot nearby. Turn north (toward the river) at the intersection of Franklin and Onyx and go about a block. It'll be on your left.

Events of Interest in the Community

Lane County Audubon Society

Sunday, 28 December, 8am to dark. Eugene Christmas Bird Count. This will be the 73rd ECBC and the 115th National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. Dick Lamster is the Coordinator again this year, supported by the Steering Committee of Allison Mickel, Herb Wisner, Dan Gleason, and Barbara Gleason; 27 great birdwatchers as Team Leaders; and—we hope—you! The ECBC is a fun and exciting event open to anyone interested in birds. If you are just starting to get interested and want to learn more, this is a great opportunity to learn about birds and birding from experienced birders. We have space for everyone. Watch for more information in the December–January issue of *The Quail*, or contact Dick Lamster at 541-343-8664 or [maeveanddick\(at\)q.com](mailto:maeveanddick(at)q.com).

Mt. Pisgah Arboretum

Sunday, 14 December, 8:30-11am. Winter Bird Walk. Nature Guides Chris Roth and Julia Siporin will lead a bird walk intended for people with all levels of birding experience. We'll use vocalizations, habitat, and behavior clues for identification of our winter and year-round residents. Come discover the Arboretum's avian diversity. Please bring binoculars. Option to continue the walk until noon for those who are interested. Rain or shine. Meet at the Arboretum Visitor Center. Fee \$5, members free.

Sunday, 21 December, 10am-12pm. Winter Solstice Family Walk. Celebrate the shortest day of the year with a fun walk and hot chocolate! Learn about what the plants and animals of the Arboretum are up to during the winter months, from slugs and bugs to trees and shrubs. Then warm up before you head back home at a build-your-own hot chocolate bar. Led by the Arboretum's Education Coordinator, Jenny Laxton. Rain or shine. Meet at the Arboretum Visitor Center. Fee: members \$5 per family, non-members \$8 per family.

Friends of Buford Park and Mt. Pisgah

Mondays, 8, 15 December, 9am-noon. Morning Regulars. Monday Morning Regulars work on habitat restoration projects wherever they are most needed each week. Their work includes working in the native plant nursery as well as planting native species and removing invasive species around Buford Park. Contact volunteer@bufordpark.org for more information.

Tuesdays, 9, 16 December, Thursday, 11 December, and Saturday, 20 December, 9am-12pm. Nursery Work. Join us for a morning or full day of planting seedlings, preparing and caring for beds, and otherwise helping out on the many tasks needed to propagate the native plant material we use for restoration projects. The nursery is a fun and beautiful place to relax and to get some fresh air and activity. Meet and work at the Native Plant Nursery at Buford Park. Enter Buford Park from Seavey Loop Road. Turn LEFT after crossing the bridge and drive 1/4 mile to the nursery.

Nearby Nature Go to <http://www.nearbynature.org/events> for information on NN activities, or call 541-687-9699.

Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter

Thursday, 18 December, 7 pm. Holiday Social and Picture Show. Bring 10 to 12 digital photos and a snack to share if you wish. Come and socialize with others who share your interest in native plants. Meeting location: Conference Room at Lane County Mental Health. For more information call 541-349-9999.

North American Butterfly Association, Eugene–Springfield Chapter

Monday, 8 December, Refreshments 7pm, Presentation 7:30pm. Feathered Architects: The Fascinating World of Bird Nests, by Idie Ulsh. From eagles to hummingbirds, Ulsh will explore with us how and where birds make nests and relate interesting facts about their construction. She has photographed the nests of more than 30 species and done an extensive three-year perusal of bird nest literature. In addition to her own photos she will include photos from many excellent northwest photographers and the University of Puget Sound Slater Museum. At the Eugene Garden Club, 1645 High St. Free.

The University of Oregon's Museum of Natural and Cultural History

Exhibit Hours: Tuesday through Sunday, 11 am-5 pm

Current Exhibits

- Explore Oregon: 300 million years of Northwest natural history.
- Site Seeing: Snapshots of Historical Archaeology in Oregon.
- Oregon - Where Past is Present. 15,000 years of Northwest cultural history and 200 million years of geology.
- Highlights of the Jensen Arctic Collection.

Friday, 12 December, 10:30-11:30am. Little Wonders - Stories and Activities for Preschoolers. You and your child are invited to learn and play at the museum during our monthly Little Wonders event! This month's theme is "If Rocks Could Talk," with stories and fun activities about Oregon's amazing geology. Cost: \$5 per family (up to 2 adults and 2 children). Admission free to members.

Wednesday, 17 December, 4:30-6:00pm. Basketry Demonstration and Trunk Show. Patricia Montoya-Donohue and Kim Black demonstrate basketry techniques using natural Northwest materials. Come browse our special holiday inventory of works by these local artists.

WREN (Willamette Resources and Educational Network)

Go to <http://wewild.blogspot.com> for November and early December events.

ENHS welcomes new members! To join, fill out the form below. 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

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: _____

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

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ENHS Schedule of Speakers and Topics for 2014-2015

12 Dec. 2014	– John Marzluff	– Welcome to Subirdia
16 Jan. 2015	– James Cassidy	– Soil: What it is and How it Works!
20 Feb. 2015	– Shelly Miller	– Native Freshwater Mussels in the Pacific Northwest
20 Mar. 2015	– Paul Engelmeyer	– Conservation Strategies: Seabirds and Forage Fish
17 April 2015	– Marli Miller	– Roadside Geology of Oregon: Some Highlights
15 May 2015	– Pat Ormsbee	– Wings in the Night: A Glimpse into the Mysterious World of Bats



Red-headed woodpecker

Jack DeLap