

SOUTH SLOUGH News



DID SLOUGH VISITOR SPY A RARE FOREST DWELLER?

Staff report

Recently a *South Slough News* reader reported seeing a dark brown animal with a thick, long tail scurrying into the underbrush. She contacted Manager Mike Graybill and asked if fishers are found in our area.

Fishers (*Martes pennanti*) are medium-sized members of the weasel family. They are native to North America and close relatives of the American marten.

Fishers are forest-dwelling creatures whose range covers much of the North American boreal forests. Males and females are similar in appearance. Males are 35 to 47 inches long and weigh 8 -11 lbs. Females are 30-37 inches long and weigh 4-6 lbs.

Some call them “fisher cats”, but the fisher is not a cat, nor does it eat fish. It is, however, one of the few mammals that hunt porcupines.

Fishers feed on a wide variety of small animals and occasionally eat fruits and mushrooms. Fishers prefer full forest and although they are agile climbers, most of their time is spent on the forest floor. They prefer to forage where there is a lot of fallen dead wood.

Fishers disappeared from most of Oregon as their

forest habitat vanished.

“Fishers have been reported on the southern Oregon coast, so it is possible that our reader actually saw a fisher,” said Graybill. “Wherever they occur in Oregon these days, they are extremely rare.”



The fisher is a small, weasel-like mammal that makes its home in deep, undisturbed forest. Although once plentiful, few if any fishers remain in Oregon.

According to one reference, the fisher is an animal of “deep, untouched wilderness”.

“If fishers prefer untouched wilderness, it is safe to consider the highly modified habitats in the vicinity of Coos Bay as being in the less-suitable-habitat-for-fishers category,” he said.

Some biologists think the fishers in southwestern Oregon may be a distinct subspecies. The Oregon

Department of Fish and Wildlife is taking a census of fishers and pine martens in southwestern Oregon.

Biologists affix traps at locations where fishers may “scratch against trees to snag fur samples for DNA analysis. If samples are found near Coos Bay, the DNA can be compared to that of fishers in the Cascades Range and in Canada. So far they’ve not collected any.

“The biologist didn’t seem too hopeful that fishers would be found in the Coos Bay area,” Graybill said.

From the Dog House to the Bat House

By Tom Gaskill

When bats first made their presence known at the South Slough Interpretive Center, they were a curious but infrequent visitor. The predecessor to our current exhibits included several rows of wooden shingles and not surprisingly, bats had found a way into the building and were discovered roosting in the narrow crevices between the cedar shakes. Sadly, from time to time, we would find a badly dehydrated bat on the floor of the auditorium, evidence that some of these creatures were having trouble leaving the building. Fast forward to this past summer and staff began to find persistent and undeniable evidence that the bats had come to stay and in ever greater numbers. Leaving droppings on the new exhibits and in other parts of the building, the bats were in the “dog house” and needed to be relocated. Enter Steve Langenstein, a.k.a. Batman. Mr. Langenstein is a biologist working for the Coos Bay Bureau of Land Management who specializes in the study of bats. He has been a special guest lecturer for South Slough and assisted with several workshops focused on improving public understanding of these amazing creatures and the underappreciated role they play in our lives. Recent workshops have included a session on constructing a bat box. Participants are



2011 South Slough bat box building workshop



Bat boxes hanging at the Interpretive Center

encouraged to take the boxes home, place them appropriately and check for signs of bats. In May 2011, AmeriCorps crew members working at South Slough mounted several of these bat boxes on the south facing walls of the Interpretive Center and on a post near the 10 Minute Trail. While we had tried to relocate the bats in the building into these boxes inside the building without success, we thought that we might be able to encourage the bats to move to the outside of the building if conditions were right. Encouragement included sealing the building at all potential points of entry, capturing and releasing any lingering bats (and there were quite a few!), and looking carefully for evidence of any continued presence in the building.

By late August, two things seemed clear: the bats were no longer in the building, and the bats were NOT using the bat boxes. And then, one day in early September, as we were relocating one of the bat boxes, we found them. Three bats in the one of the bat boxes! The next day was sunny and extremely warm. By mid-day, we counted 26 bats inhabiting the 5 bat

boxes at the Interpretive Center as they poked their heads and ears out the lower edge of the boxes to cool themselves.

We still keep a watchful eye on the interior of the building for evidence that our visitors have come back inside, but so far, they seem to like their new homes just fine.



Success at last!

South Slough Summer Science Camps

Joy Tally and Jenna Kulluson

2011 was a banner year for South Slough Summer Science camps! We had full enrollment in all 4 camps and for the first time were able to take campers out on the water. Every camper was able to ride in Chmoosh, our big canoe. Our oldest and veteran campers traveled 6 miles along the length of South Slough including a stop at Valino Island. All the camps explored and learned in the watershed, tideflat, saltmarsh, and estuary. We look forward to seeing familiar and new smiling faces next summer!



Megalops Summer Science Camp 2011



Dungeness Summer Science Camp 2011

South Slough Summer Science Camp

By Taylor Shawn Hatfield Waddington

I encourage kids to go to this sensational camp at South Slough. They don't just have camps, they have wildlife programs and awesome trails. There is tons of beautiful, beautiful wildlife that you can look at. Not only is there great trails, but there is awesome plants and awesome animals. It's not just for learning it is also for having fun.

Joy, Jenna, Tom, tons of wonderful people work at South Slough and tons of awesome animals live at South Slough.

It is one awesome place, filled with fun!

I hope that you enjoy it as much as I do and I hope that you have tons of fun!

Have fun at South Slough!



Taylor and Sophia investigate life under the docks.

Tales from Summer Science Camp

By Sophia Gaskill

I encourage you to go to South Slough summer science camp. You make T-shirts, you go on nature walks, and you learn about watersheds, salt marshes, mud flats and open water channels. You will go to a barbeque on the last day, you go on a bat walk too. You will have fun doing intertidal jumping jacks!



SOUTH SLOUGH FALL~WINTER CALENDAR 2011



OCTOBER

October 7

FIT FRIDAY HIKE 10 - 11:30 AM

Join us for an invigorating hike along the trails of the Reserve. [Min-4 participants/ Max-12] (free)

October 8

Octoberfish - Old Charleston School 12 - 6 PM

A Community Festival of Music, Food, Fun, and more! Benefiting ORCCA Children's Programs. (ADMISSION: \$1/PERSON FOOD: \$10/PERSON \$25/FAMILY)

October 15

Tide of the Toddlers ~Leaves~ 10 to 11 AM

Bring your wee ones, ages 1 to 5. Sing a song, read a story, make a craft and discover the natural world. [Max-15 children] (\$1/toddler)

October 22

Fall Mushrooms 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Discover the world of mushrooms with instructor John Schaefer. Learn how to identify at least 6 local mushroom species and techniques for mushroom hunting. This workshop takes place indoors and along trails, so please dress for the weather and wear sturdy hiking shoes. Please bring a sack and knife for collecting. [Max-20 participants] (\$20/participant includes 1 year FOSS membership; free to current FOSS members)

October 29

South Slough Volunteer Orientation 10 AM - 3 PM

Learn the answers to your burning questions about South Slough! Discover what it means to be a volunteer in this first of a series of volunteer trainings. Please bring a sack lunch, snacks and drinks will be provided. [Max-20 participants] (free)

All programs begin at the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve Interpretive Center unless otherwise noted.

Please call (541) 888 - 5558 to reserve your place and confirm all programs.

Programs may be cancelled due to low enrollment or hazardous weather.

Activity fees and donations cover materials and are used by the Friends of South Slough Reserve, Inc. in support of the Reserve.

The Interpretive Center, located 4 miles south of Charleston on Seven Devils Road, is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 4:30 pm. Trails are open daily from dawn to dusk.

For more information visit us at www.southsloughestuary.org

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 4

FIT FRIDAY HIKE 10 - 11:30 AM

Join us for an invigorating hike along the trails of the Reserve. [Min-4 participants/ Max-12] (free)

NOVEMBER 5

Birds on the Estuary 8 to 10 AM

Explore the shores of Charleston in search of winged wildlife. Interpreter, binoculars and spotting scopes provided.

Meet at the Charleston Visitors Center.

[Max-15 participants] (\$1/birder)

Fall Mushrooms

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Discover the world of mushrooms with instructor John Schaefer. Learn how to identify at least 6 local mushroom species and techniques for mushroom hunting. This workshop takes place indoors and along trails, so please dress for the weather and wear sturdy hiking shoes. Please bring a sack and knife for collecting. [Max-20 participants] (\$20/participant includes 1 year FOSS membership; free to current FOSS members)

November 19

South Slough Volunteer Training - Forests 9 AM - 12 PM

Learn more about the forests of South Slough and the opportunities to volunteer in the forest! [Max-20 participants] (free)

FILM: life ~HUNTERS AND HUNTED & CREATURES OF THE DEEP~
1 to 3 PM

Watch this amazing documentary about life on earth. This month's episodes will be "Hunters and Hunted & Creatures of the Deep". We'll provide the big screen and popcorn. (free)





SOUTH SLOUGH FALL~WINTERCALENDAR 2011



DECEMBER

DECEMBER 2

FIT FRIDAY HIKE

10 - 11:30 AM

Join us for an invigorating hike along the trails of the Reserve. [Min-4 participants/ Max-12] (free)

DECEMBER 3

South Slough Birding

8 to 10 AM

Search the reserve for winged wildlife. An interpreter, binoculars and spotting scopes will be provided. [Max-15 participants] (\$1/birder)

DECEMBER 28

Film: Gray Whale Obstacle Course

1 to 2 PM

Discover the journey of the gray whale from Baja to Alaska, including the Oregon Coast. We'll provide the big screen and popcorn. (free)



JANUARY 2012

JANUARY 6

FIT FRIDAY HIKE

10 - 11:30 AM

Join us for an invigorating hike along the trails of the Reserve. [Min-4 participants/ Max-12] (free)

JANUARY 7

Birds on the Estuary

8 to 10 AM

Explore the shores of Charleston in search of winged wildlife. Interpreter, binoculars and spotting scopes provided. **Meet at the Charleston Visitors Center.** [Max-15 participants] (\$1/birder)

JANUARY 14

Tide of the Toddlers ~Whales~

10 to 11 AM

Bring your wee ones, ages 1 to 5. Sing a song, read a story, make a craft and discover the natural world. [Max-15 children] (\$1/toddler)

January 21

Feeding Birds in Winter

10 AM to 12 PM

Build your own birdfeeder, discover which feeds work best for which birds and identify common backyard birds of Coos county. [Max-15 participants](\$5/participant)

January 28

Film: life ~Challenges of Life & Mammals~

1 to 3 PM

Watch this amazing documentary about life on earth. Narrated by Oprah Winfrey this month's episodes will be "Challenges of Life and Mammals". We'll provide the big screen and popcorn. (free)

We're Hibernating...for a month or so.

During November and December, the Interpretive Center will be periodically closed to the public as we undertake necessary building maintenance and work on installing a new exhibit. Please note the following changes to our normal operating hours.

Interpretive Center Closure Days

(Programs may still be offered)

November 11 - Veterans Day

November 12

November 24 - Thanksgiving

November 25 - Statewide Furlough

November 26

November 29 - December 10 - Building Maintenance

December 13 - December 31 Interpretive Center will be open Tuesday - Friday ONLY

TEACHERS - WE NEED YOUR HELP

There are two opportunities to help South Slough's education programs.

Attend a OCEP Teacher Workshop

The Oregon Coast Education Program (OCEP) is hosting a field based workshop at South Slough on Saturday, October 15 after the Oregon Science Teachers Association conference

Saturday, October 15

8:30 am - 3:30 pm

Contact jenna.kulluson@state.or.us

This Fall South Slough and its partners want to learn more about what teachers need in environmental education.

*Participate in a Needs Assessment
Visit www.southsloughestuary.org*

Saving Oysters in Oregon

Joanne Choi was a Oregon Sea Grant Scholar based at the South Slough for summer 2011. The following is an excerpt from the blog she created detailing her summer here.

*By Joanne Choi
August 16, 2011*

As for my thoughts on this whole experience... It was amazing. If you're thinking about applying, DO IT.

I cannot express my gratitude to Oregon Sea Grant and my mentor, Steve Rumrill SSNERR Research Coordinator, for setting up such a great summer internship. I came here because I needed more experience in the marine science/policy/management arena to help my decision-making about graduate school, and I got that and much more. Before, I knew I wanted to end up working with marine environmental issues, and I knew that I needed and wanted to get more schooling, but I didn't know which way to go: Science? Management? Academia? Government?

Now, I have a better idea of what working in the marine sciences for the government is like. Not only have I gotten experience with actual research, techniques and methods, but I have also been exposed to everything else that surrounds the science and definitely affects it. Policy, money, bureaucracy, stakeholders, the local citizens. It's all in there.

I have also met amazing people. Intelligent, hard-working, passionate scientists, directors, and managers, who have all been extremely friendly and

willing to share advice from years of experience in the field, I have learned a lot just by talking with them, and I'll definitely take their advice when I start applying to graduate schools. The students I've been living with have been amazing too! The students here at Oregon Institute of Marine Biology and I went on some cool adventures in Coos Bay. It's been great.



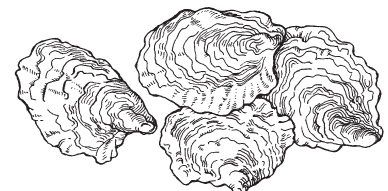
Joanne and mentor Steve Rumrill working with native oysters in Coos Bay

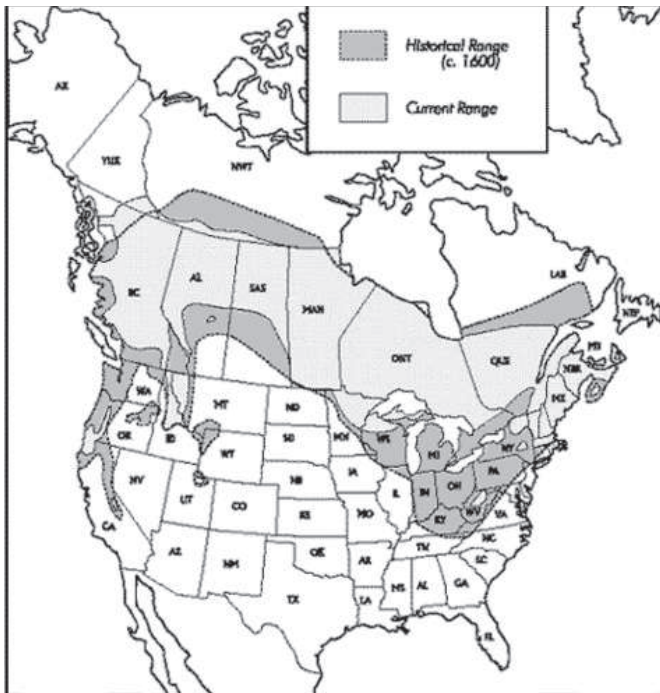
And my mentor? Awesome. Since day one, Steve Rumrill has been there to answer questions, offer advice... all those good things mentors should do. He was always on the move, switching from one project to the next, planning another one down the road, and he always brought me along. I came here looking to learn and experience as much as I could, and I definitely got that. Thank you!

What's next? Although I don't have a concrete idea about which graduate program I will be applying to, I now know what I will be looking for in my search. While that search is going on though, I will be in New Mexico, working with Sapphire Energy on algae biofuel for a few months. Trying out the private sector!

It's been a good summer, and I'll miss everyone I've met here in Oregon. I hope you all had fun reading this blog. Sayonara, folks!

To read the whole story about Joanne's summer visit: <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/seagrantscholars/category/joanne-choi/>





The fisher once ranged across northern North America, but in Oregon its range is shrinking.

WHEN DOES 'RARE' BECOME 'EXTINCT?'

By Mike Graybill

When the home of a plant or animal becomes less than livable, the individuals that remain are forced to live somewhere less suitable. The species that can't find or get by in these less suitable places simply disappears.

If there are places where they may still be found, their populations frequently shrink to fit the limited patches of habitat that remain. If the patches of habitat are too small or too far apart, then a local population can totally disappear. If the changes are happening everywhere that the rare plants or animals live, these local declines can push the whole species toward extinction.

The fisher is one of those species in Oregon whose range has shrunk to a fraction of what it once was.

As a creature becomes scarcer, it becomes more difficult to detect. Even though fishers are extremely rare, experts tell us they still occur in Oregon and if we pay careful attention, we just might be lucky enough to encounter one. If the animal that our read-

er saw was indeed a fisher, then they should consider themselves very lucky!

Sadly, though, an increasing number of scientific papers are asking when to *stop* searching for rare animals and what conditions need to be met before declaring that a rare species has gone extinct.

Many people mistakenly view extinction as something confined to a few species. They think extinction happens to esoteric bugs, solitary desert fish or odd plants, or something inconsequential that happens someplace else.

Too few are aware how rapidly the rate of extinction is accelerating, not only for rare bugs or obscure plants, but for many familiar birds and mammals.

I have a friend that who participated in a 2006 expedition to the Yangtze River in China. Their goal was to survey an extremely rare species of freshwater river dolphin known as *Baiji*. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baiji>).

They did not detect a single animal.

My friend had the dubious distinction of declaring this once common and recently rare species as functionally extinct.

I hope I never have to make a call like that.

The thought of finding fishers in our area filled my mind with both hope and apprehension – hope, because the prospect that fishers might actually occur in our area is truly exciting; apprehension, because the prospect that fishers may already be locally extinct is truly sobering.

Here in Coos Bay, the conversations I've had about nature are often dominated by the recognition of the immense material riches of our surroundings.

There is nothing wrong with that, but these conversations have overshadowed, and, in some cases stifled, conversations that highlight the incredible spiritual and emotional value of our natural world.

While I've never seen a fisher, the rumor of one near South Slough Reserve is an exciting prospect. Even though they may be rare, a few fishers may still live in our area.

I sure hope they do!



South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
PO Box 5417
Charleston, OR 97420

Non-Profit Org.
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Coos Bay, OR
97420
Permit No. 309

South Slough 101-“Where the River Meets the Sea”

By Deborah Rudd

This fall our South Slough staff will present the first phase of our formal volunteer training program. If you have been thinking about volunteering, currently volunteer or just want to learn more about South Slough, this training course is for you. As the foundation for our new formal training series, South Slough 101 will provide all current and potential volunteers with a base of knowledge that will be built upon with separate themed training modules offered seasonally.

This November South Slough will offer South Slough 101 and one module option, “Seeing the Trees through the forest” on two separate Saturdays. South Slough 101 will be repeated in the following two calendar sessions (Feb.-May) and (June-September). The program modules would be repeated each year around the same season although they are subject to change as Reserve projects develop and volunteer interests advance.

Currently, there is no charge for the course however we are asking that individuals who choose to take the optional modules commit to 48 hours a year (about 4 hours a month) of volunteer time. ***South Slough 101*** will be offered on ***Saturday, October 29 from 10am-3pm. Please call 541-888-5558 ext. 21 or email deborah.rudd@state.or.us to reserve your place in this exciting course.***

