

11/10/2007 10/2 → 10/8
6th
Hesperon
10/2 where to begin?
with humility and respect, perhaps.

I'm beginning my journal at the unpoetically named "log decomposition site" (or something like that)

and I'm humbled both by the forest and the long-term ecological project that I've been invited to join.

I started by trees that rise 20-30x my 5-foot-7-inch height and weigh immeasurably more than my 150 or so lbs, I shrink in size. That's good. ^{even} better, is the shrinking of ego.

but the Douglas firs and hemlocks aren't all that 5-centuries old ^{younger} ~~the~~ thick mossy beards that hang from branches and carpets of moss that blanket log/planned trees and the forest floor are equally enthralling, as are the many understory plants unfamiliar to this Alaskan. The forest not only stretches far ~~into~~ ~~and~~ beyond me in height and distance, but also in years. Though a middle-aged human, I'm a ^{younger} here, when the years stretch into centuries and millennia. An ancient place, indeed. And, yes I'll say it: this place holds a sense of the sacred. With apologies to

coffee clouds in mostly blue sky

Basho the poet and Charles Goodrich's reading of Basho's haiku, I'd like to adapt it to this place, because it seems so apt right now, as I sit in a still and silent and holy grove of old-growth trees:

The temple bell has stopped ringing
but the sound keeps coming
out of the forest.
[flowers]

It's strange, in a way, to be thinking and feeling and recording such notions in a place dedicated to the scientific study of the forest (and specifically its "dead wood"), to be in a poetic place within sight of white plastic pipes and red and pink flagging tied to wires, the stuff that forest ecologist Fred Swanson playfully calls "researcher trash." ← (correct?)

But the mix of such "trash" and poetry is exactly what this project is about, a collaboration of science & poets and creative non-fiction/writer/writers like myself that leads to ^{essayists?}

one to another source of humility: it is truly humbling to be part of an experiment that stretches across 200 years. I've ~~got~~ ^{gotten} it right, the project is now in its 21st year after being started in the mid 80s by a scientist named Mark Harmon.

Writers have joined the ^{experiment} ~~campaign~~ only recently. The first was - Rob Mahomed Pyle, spring 2004, followed by: Robin Kummer, fall 2004,

→ Cont

Scott Zivich Spring 06, Alison Hawthorne Deming, Spring 06, Vicki Graham, Spring 06

That, too, is humbling, to follow in the paths and writings of such accomplished essayists and poets.

So, plenty to keep me humble in the coming days. And plenty to keep me in the place of "beginner's mind," open to new experiences, new ideas, new possibilities, a place and psychic/mental/emotional space physical of learning.

And, to finish this brief introductory passage, a bow of respect to the forest and the people who got this experiment going and are participating in it, over its 200 year span.

and its many wild inhabitants

Except for the occasional jet that rumbles overhead, the forest has been largely quiet since I entered it today, its voices mostly those of birds. I've only become a serious "birder" in my middle age, a marvelous broadening - and deepening - of my life's experiences, inspired initially by black-capped chickadees, who remain my favorite avian relatives. I've not become a "life hater" and I'm not the sort who'll drop everything and travel far (or even not so far) in order to see a rarity, simply to say I've done so. I'd rather get to know a smaller number of birds well, learn something about their natural history, their hangouts and lifestyles.

That said, I do get enjoyment in learning the names and voices and appearances of birds that are to me. And I like to learn the ^{new} names, songs, etc. of birds in places I visit or see what I recognize from home. Inevitably I do make a "top list" of sorts. And here's what I've come up with so far:

nuthatches (red-breasted, I assume; I've ^{frequently} heard their dasally "yank-yank" calls, but haven't spotted one yet)
ravens
Steller's jay
varied thrush
robin
winter wren
golden-crowned kinglet
some sort of woodpecker, but I'm not sure which species
+ ruffed grouse

1st heard as a high-pitched, reedy, kind of tinkling; finally seen today

I've heard other voices, but haven't recognized their makers yet -

^{moment} I've also seen a small rodent scamper across trail, too quick & shadowed to I.D. and I think I've heard the churring and "scolding" of a squirrel (+ a deer briefly bedded down yesterday @ N.F. Hg)

enough writing for now - time for a walk...

add: about to begin my hike, I'm distracted 1st by a spider, spinning illuminated by ^{its} web
sunlight. Such precise lines, such intricate architecture, lovely form ... more on this?
then, chickadee chatter - the 1st I've heard. a few brief notes then silence. I stop & listen & form my head toward the canopy upward

⑦ Finally I see one: it appears to be a black cap, but I'm from a distance (even with help by binoculars) not sure if their are any closely related species in "this neck of the woods"

I watch awhile, see a couple of them hopping & dancing & hunting among the high branches -

my attention is also caught by the sunlight streaming through holes in the forest canopy, how it sets parts of the forest underfoot aglow, from spider webs to the mossy beards hanging from trees ...

more on streaming sunlight and its effects ...

Following the trail, I end up going in a circle! I thought this path went some distance farther, but apparently not ...

while writing these last few notes, I am visited by a winter wren. curious, the bird flies in close, hops along downed trees nearby, then struts off

a reminder of how easy it is to get disoriented in the forest and any new landscape

→ the effect on the hanging moss is, in a sense, incidental (sp?) -

its as if the moss "beards" have become flames, lighting up the tree, creating a "burning bush" effect

and the spider webs - the many strands are set aglow (as well the spider's body), illuminating the

encounter with Oregon's salamanders -

Leaving the decomposition site, I head back down Rte. 1506, bound for what is shown on my map as Road 300, which affords access to a trail. Alas, the map seems to be mislabeled. What is shown to be 300 is in fact 302. Not realizing that til later, I go exploring. Eventually I find what appears to be a trail, along with some insect study stations. But the path is ^{centrally} quickly overgrown with young ^{terrestrial} trees. I push ahead until the trail disappears. I'm about to backtrack, when I notice a bench of some sort above me. I ascend 10' or so and discover a gravel road. Wondering where this will lead, I follow it to the end, where there's an artificial pond (complete with skimmers across it) and above that, water a stream gauge station, with building, artificial channel, and various instruments. After poking around a bit, I retreat down the road, which is marked at the bottom as 302. Along the way, I discover the trailhead to "Small Watershed 2": my original goal. Ahah! Despite the detour, it appears I've found my trail. But this trail, too, soon peters out - or rather seems to be buried beneath a large pile of debris. Put there by F.S. employees? It's clear that this trail has been closed off. Continuing back former to 1506, I begin to notice woolly caterpillars, the type with black front and rear and brown mid-section. Or is it vice versa? Within a hundred feet I cross paths with a handful of the woolies. What's going on here? A migration of some kind? Do caterpillars have "hatches"? Reaching the road, I head for the car, and discover ~~more~~ more caterpillars, a few ~~more~~ crawling a handful across the blacktop, others squished. I remove the still living woolies

10/2
early
weekend

a clearcut ^{— some sitting on top of it}
with perfect form, a vulture sweeps into view
as I arrive & the clearcut along road 1501 —
the "bird of death" loops above the clearing
a few x, sweeps in low, then flies off...

the clearcut ~~is hard~~ offers a sort of
sensory overload — it's "hard to compute" because
it clashes so much w/ all I've seen so far in
this experimental forest —

it's not a lifeless place, but it's not lush
with life either. and its nature is alien to the
place. from a distance, this seems
particular clearcut mimics an alpine meadow,
with its bushes and ground hugging ^(or subalpine) plants,

[an aside: the dried, gray, lifeless, skeleton of a
stump contrasts dramatically with the "dead
wood" we saw and touched and sat upon @
the "log decomposition site" and others we
passed while hiking through the forest. As
Fred Swanson noted, those dead ^{old growth} trunks of
trees held more living cells/matter ^{downed}
than the upright living trees. Here the stumps
are simply dead, except for an occasional mat
of lichen.]

or
certainly
present

The clearing is loud with insect chirping —
Crickets? + grasshoppers — others?
lots of

I see several birds and spot get a good look
at a Lincoln sparrow + one other species I'm
not sure about.

⊕ Hunter along the road tells me he's seen as
many as 17 (deer, I presume) in this
opening + a bear grazing on blackberries.
— ^{big black} ... to local wildlife

at least temporarily. Still, it is a dispiriting
place, and becomes more so as I climb the
hill from which the forest has been "stolen" away,
as if some giant hand ~~had~~ swept
had reached in and pulled &
the trees, like a human pulling clumps of grass.
snarled

The ground has been taken over by prickly,
thorny plants, including dense
thickets of blackberry vines — some evergreens
have been planted, but most are not much
fatter than me, if that. and then there are
the sad, gray stumps. In one area, enough of them
rise above the living plants that
they form remind me of a graveyard, filled
with decaying gray tombstones...

There are piles of slash scattered here and
there, too, and the sense I get is of a plot of
land struggling to recover. Even the soil has
changed. It is dry, sandy stuff...

It's ironic that ^{pro-development} people — like Alaska's Ted
Stevens, Don Young, & others — can call a biologically
rich place like the Arctic Refuge coastal plain a
barrenland, yet ignore how clearcut + further
harvesting practices create ~~barrenlands~~
places that I would consider ^{even}
more later, perhaps

⑨ Tues morning 10/3 A walk down to the creek behind the headquarters area...

Again, what gets my attention first is a bird: a chickadee flitting and feeding among the young trees and bushes that line the perimeter of the #6 "camp."

My mind is busy, distracted, brimming with thoughts, so I don't notice that I'm among giants until 100 yards or more down the forest path. Though this is my ~~third~~ fourth walk along the trail, the first couple times I entered at night and went only to the campfire pit, when the gathering of nature writers had convened to muse and talk and listen to folk music (sung by one of our own, Lorraine Anderson), and share good company. The third time, I was in something of a rush, accompanied by Fred Swanson, who was shown took me to the creek. Though we stopped and savored the old growth, it wasn't until we were almost to the stream. And both coming and going, my passage was focused more on our conversation than the surrounding forest.

Disturbed, or perturbed, by my lack of attention, I decide to re-enter the forest. Returning to the trailhead, I'm surprised to see that the old growth trees reach nearly to the forest's edge. How could I have missed that? Walking more slowly, deliberately, I stop briefly at the green metal platforms, which allow a person to stand (or sit) some 5 feet above the ground. What's their purpose? Why placed there? Wandering about this, I have a thought: wouldn't it be wonderful to have some

platforms placed high in the canopy, where visitors - and researchers - could have a bird's-eye view, and a treetop's sense of the forest. I spent time on such a canopy platform in a Costa Rican forest, up where the howler monkeys hunt and play and shriek, and it was among the most fascinating/memorable times spent in the forest. And I've read of upper canopy "adventures" in other places, complete with rope & pulley, or some sort of system, to actually allow passage through the canopy. I can't have dreamed that, can I? Anyway, it's something I would love to do, spend time up high.

It's beginning to drizzle. Inevitable that rain would eventually arrive. October, I've learned, is among the driest months here. Maybe the driest? But Fred Swanson also told me that the headquarters area gets about 96" of rain annually, on average. Though I've greatly enjoyed the dry, sunny, blue-sky weather, it's refreshing to also get at least a taste of the ^{warm} wetter, moister side of life here, which makes this forest possible.

Moving beyond the campfire pit and platforms, there's a perceptible shift in the "energy" of the place. "Energy" doesn't seem exactly the right word, but I'm not coming up with a better one for now. The shift is internal as well. I sense myself slowing down, growing calmer. I ~~was~~ slow my pace even more, my body relaxes, mind slows too. There's a physiological - and emotional - shift that simply happens; not a deliberate, intentional change. It's as if now I could be miles from any human construct, deep in the wilds. And

(11) I've gone only several hundred feet. The forest is again still and quiet, except for the pleasing rush of the creek. I'm reminded of what someone said the other day, quoting Fred ^(in our writers' circle) (so this is 2nd hand); that the forest is a place of tranquility (my word) - for long stretches of time, with periodic, short episodes of intense violence (whether wind storms, "flash" flooding, or fires). I've heard that good idea, or a similar one, before, in the context of some human occupation/lifestyle, to the effect of long stretches of boredom, followed by moments of extreme fear or something like that.

And on the creek and its soothing music: I'm more of a land person than a water one. I feel more at home, at ease, on "terra firma" than on rivers or large bodies of water. In fact I used to have nightmares tied to the "ocean deep" and its larger predatory inhabitants (esp. sharks). And it doesn't take too much rolling on the ocean to get me sea sick. But I love the sounds of flowing water, which ~~water~~ has a sound much like rustling leaves. Both, to me, relaxing. And I've come to love the water's edge, whether a river, ^{or lake} shore or the ocean's coast one of my favorite places to walk, the last few years, has been the coastal flats that border Cook Inlet and Anchorage's western edge.

all the adventures & ^{ocean} adventures

And I've reconnected with the wonder I had as a boy, exploring the neighborhood swamp, while looking and listening for frogs & doing catch-and-release with aquatic bugs, in a couple of small Anchorage ponds. (12)

So later I'll spend more time at the creek's edge, looking and listening and seeing what I notice. Now it's time for breakfast...

at the foot of the Pt. of the Anchorage B.C.

Afternoon hike to "the watch tower": the Carpenter Mtn Fire lookout station. It's ~~at~~ 122 mi from the ferry to "Rte. 150" (later to 350), to a pullout where a Subaru wagon is parked. The last mile or so is rough & narrow. Doesn't look able to fit 2 vehicles, esp. if I were a truck. The hike is supposed to be a mile long but seems longer (which is ok, because I'm partly out here for the exercise) and is almost entirely uphill. A good workout. From the map, the el. gain seems to be about 250m, or 750-800'. At the gray-sided lookout, I meet Mike, a lifelong ^{small, boxy} Oregonian, whose roots here go back 5 generations on both his parents' sides. Mike has been here since July 1 and has 3 more days left. Stated though he's a fire lookout veteran, he's a rookie here! But he helps me identify several of the most common trees on visible from here. Closest to the tower are mountain hemlocks (which give way to western hemlocks lower on the mtn). The hemlocks are mixed with 3 kinds of firs: silver, noble, and Douglas. I learn that fir cones point upward, something helpful to know. (While when Mike pointed out the mtn. hemlocks, my mind flashed on Chugach St. Park, the mountain wilderness

that serves as Anchorage "backyard playground. The Chequamegon Mtns. have copes of mtn hemlock, but here they're at their northern limit, & much more stunted and gnarly in character.)

At my request

Mike also identified several of the high peaks visible from here: Mts. Jefferson and Washington, the Three Sisters (shrouded in clouds) and a couple others whose name I've forgotten. Perhaps just as impressive as any of those, maybe more so from this spot, is Wolf Mountain, a mostly bare, gray "plug" of basaltic lava. I'd like to learn more about Wolf Mountain.

Tall, on the lean side, with red beard and hair tied into a long ponytail, Mike answered my questions deliberately, in a deep, bass, monotone voice. I get the sense he enjoys his solitude up here, something I can appreciate. Friendly enough, but not openly inquiring of questions or company. With some more hiking to do myself, I didn't stay long, before heading out to explore a ridgetop trail that the forest Service is letting grow over.

What else I learned: There's a large meadow along the route to the lookout. It had a different feel to it than yesterday's clearcut, & only a few stumps. And different plant assemblage. Mike confirmed it's a "natural" meadow, that there's been no logging on Carpenter Mtn that he knows. It's probably something about the slope and soils that has kept fires from moving in there.

There have been some fires, but no large ones recently. Still, I could see evidence of

While sitting here jotting these notes, I've been visited by ~~several~~ gray jay, which swooped in close, then perched briefly - looking for handouts? - and then moved on. And a chipmunk, screeching/yelling his alarm, then watching me several minutes before scampering off.

Birds to add to my list:

- gray jay
- hairy woodpecker
- dark eyed junco
- yellow-rumped warbler (I'm pretty damn sure, from today's hike)
- vulture
- Lincoln's sparrow (from yesterday's clearcut)

back @ headquarters
Wed evening

A few more thoughts:

Back at the car, I got another look at the Three Sisters & Mt. Washington, & the gently sloping "plateaus" between them. Now I wish I'd asked Mike if I might just sit up top a while longer, soaking in the gorgeous 3rd-degree sweep of Oregon landscape. I wish too that I had a map that showed more of that landscape. While to the north, are the high peaks and gentler benches, between, to the southwest (stretching NE-NW) are waves of forested ridges, stretching far into the distance. Today there's a sort of "Smoky Mountains" effect, as fog and a misty haze hang over and between the ridges, to create a lovely, gray-toned

Another thing I forgot to mention, perhaps the most amazing thing I discovered all day: on the hike up to the lookout "tower," I passed between two sides of a huge fir (I think) that had collapsed and fallen uphill. What first got my attention was the huge "root ball" that had been pulled out of the earth by the falling tree. Then I noticed something I'd never seen or even imagined before: the lower half of the trunk had been hollowed out—by a slow-burning fire?—except for a series of "fangs" ~~that protruded~~ that protruded into the wooden, empty shell of the trunk. Each could be traced to the outer scar of a branch—so apparently they are the inner "roots" of the tree, large branches (3-4" dia. at the base). The branch-root fangs pointed inward from the outer layer/bark like the spokes of a wheel, except that are in fact fangs (or cone) like, and recede into the trunk, in 3D fashion. I wish I'd had a camera—or sketched the image. It's truly unlike anything I've ever seen. I need to find out more about this. What's strange is that the section of trunk on the ~~the~~ other side of the trail was solid. Was it a ~~an~~ slow-burning fire in the lower trunk that exposed the fangs? And, if so, was it "accidentally" (naturally) set—or started by a person? —end of this rambling—

CONTINUED FROM P. 16

nudging them to the shoulder and off the road — & at least head them in the right ^{rain} direction, toward the forest. After searching a while longer for an open trail, I call it quits. Before returning to A.E.F. headquarters, tho, I decide to check the road, see how many other caterpillars I can find, still wondering about their movements. It's then that I find my 1st Oregon salamander. Though at first I think it's a lizard (as strange as a lizard sounds in a rainforest, Charles G. said he saw a few sunning ^{themselves} on rocks at A.E.F. Hq.). Brown in color, & not moist—or hidden—like the salamanders I hunted in Connecticut as a boy, the critter is raised up on its legs, in a pose that a lizard might take. I move in close, expecting the "lizard" to skitter off at any moment. But it remains utterly still. I poise my hand above the brown body and then pinch it with my fingers, expecting it to struggle in its attempt to squirm away. But there's almost no resistance. That's when I realize I've caught a salamander. At some point I notice a

second one — that one squashed on the road. When they crossing together? Is this a salamander crossing zone?

dark chocolate brown on its topside, a moist orange below, & eyes that are a green-black slit. Tail almost as long as the rest of the body.

→ actually, I now remember I noticed the squashed one before trying to catch the live sal. — and was surprised that a lizard would get squashed by a car.

Because, like many other humans, I'm a meddler. And because I like to

① "rescue" critters that I believe to be in danger (often with unexpected results), I take the salamander to the forest's edge and release it - place it upon a moist leaf. Then I go looking for other salamanders & woodies & other small critters in harm's way. This is what I do sometimes, tho
for better or worse

whether or not I'm "helping" I can't say. Part of it is that I'm intrigued by creatures great and small, and the predicaments we all seem to get ourselves into now and then, often without realizing that trouble lies ahead. But after walking a few hundred feet, I decide I want a better closer look at the salamander. I return to the place I released it, but the dang' thing seems to have disappeared. Returning to the car, but keeping watch on the ground, I then find a second (or third, I suppose) salamander. At least I think it's a different one. I grab it gently and ~~bring~~ bring it close, feel the moistness & coolness of its underside and touch the cool, pimply brownness of its upper body, watch the pulsing beneath its mouth - breathing? And

^{orange pink} study the tiny toed feet. Then I return the salamander to the cool, damp ground and leave, watching the road more closely as I drive back to camp.

Ensatina eschscholtzii

10/1 (13)

No

So my "salamander" is not one after all, but is in fact a newt. Which makes its appearance in my life even more interesting, for a number of reasons.

rough-skinned newt *Taricha granulosa*
(a close relative of the California/Oregon newt *T. torosa*)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taricha_granulosa

Ok, to catch up: last night, I went online & googled "Ensatina eschscholtzii" which is the scientific name for local salamanders. It quickly became clear that the animal I'd found was no such beast. This morning I asked A.E.F. Ho, manner kathy keable:

~~about it~~. Right off she asked "Is it dark brown on top and bright yellow or orange on the bottom?"

"That's it. Exactly!" I practically shouted. "Then it's a newt," she told me. "In fact it's on our T-shirts; it's our camp mascot." Who'd've guessed? Not me, clearly. That makes my discovery even more exciting, because I've never before encountered a newt of any kind, anywhere. It also guarantees I'm getting a few T-shirts to haul home. Back to googling, I soon pin the local newt down to *Taricha granulosa*: the rough-skinned newt. And I printed out several pp of natural history info about this Pacific Coast amphibian, whose range stretches from N. California to Southwest Okla.

21 when the creek changed course, flooding their roofs? And just beyond them, deep green-needled giants, many ^{gray-tinked} bearing shaggy manes of moss. Life & death, side by side, impossible to ignore - "but death from 'natural causes', not commercial harvest victims". Does this make a difference? I guess to me it does... Many of the downed trees have been here a long time, their tops and flanks covered by moss. How long, I wonder, does it take moss to blanket a dead, downed tree?

Ok, more to come, time to do some shopping & eat dinner.

I'll be back, for certain

Note: Another contrast is the dense "cover" of the old growth, and the open window to the sky along the creek, a place for the sun to stream onto...

and - I think this could be a good place to watch for forest residents

another add: I began my hike today about 2; now almost 6 and I've seen or heard no one...

back @ HQ, after dinner

"Slow down, you're moving too fast."
Paul Simon

The lyrics run through my head as I begin the return leg of my 7-mi RT hike along the Lookout Cr. Old Forest trail. I planned on a good workout hike today, but this trail took me further - and longer - than I anticipated. What I first

22 imagined as a 2-hr hike had nearly stretched to that on my "inward" journey. The trail on my A.B.F. map looks closer to $2\frac{1}{2}$ mi than the 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ it really is. So as the minutes passed and I still didn't hadn't reached trail's end, I picked up the pace, and focused more on my destination than the forest. I finally regained the Rd. 1506 - my ^{surrounding} turnaround pt - ~~at~~ just 10 min shy of 2 hours. After a big gulp of water, (which became a gobbled ~~at~~ candy beer, and ^{my goal w/} another look at the map, ~~and~~ and ~~became~~ a few minutes of just sitting, I began my return hike. Moving steadily, but paying more attention to my surroundings - now having a good idea of what lies ahead - I suddenly notice I'm moving through a patch oval-leaf blueberry bushes. Fat berries hang from thin branches, ^{with a pale} I grab several and stuff them blue "bloom" in my mouth, but not before some burst open in my hand, painting fingers and palm in dark maroon and purple stains. The fruits are on the sour side, but juicy & delicious. An unexpected treat. Resuming my walk, I notice ever more blueberry bushes and pick their fruits as I walk. Now and then a red huckleberry plant joins the mix. How, I wonder, did I miss these before? They're everywhere. It's the second time this week that the forest, like Paul Simon's has ^{"Feeling Groovy"} reminded me to slow down. The first was my backtop encounter with the newt! [see previous notes]. Today, driving slowly up ~~the~~ 1506, I spotted four more newts on the roadway. In my reserve (middle mode. I stomped the car each time and

move & released them into the forest. Who knows if my actions make a difference. I feel good doing it - maybe saving a life here & there; at least I don't believe I'm doing harm. [more on this perhaps?]

It seems I can't be reminded too often: slow down, pay attention. Songbirds have perhaps been my biggest mobile teacher in this regard, but ~~so~~ I too often forget - or ignore - the lesson. So one of this week's great benefits to me is the opportunity to ease up, slow down, move into something that more closely resembles forest time.

→ [Find Loren Eiseley quote about us humans running around like "Mad Hatters" & missing so much of what's going on around us.]

That's one reason - another reason - that this LTR program's reflection sites are so valuable: they call for a slowing, a ^{by their nature} paying attention/becoming attentive.

More on this TC - perhaps in an essay?

I see a need for natural history lists & the A. E. F. A list of birds that inhabit the forest, another one for mammals, and also one for common trees and other plants. It would be an aid to folks like me, getting to know the local inhabitants...

ADD BIRD: Chipper, singing & hunting along Lookout Creek, a couple hundred feet below the bridge

Speaking (or writing) of lists. I'm going to make lists of plants here also found on Anchorage area, + plants/trees not found there.

^(that I've noticed so far) Familiar Plants (here & in Southcentral Alaska).

oval-leaved blueberry, devil's club, watermelon berry, ground dogwood, tall fireweed, alder, mountain hemlock, red elderberry (the leaves much bigger here), lady fern, wild rose, false Solomon's seal, ^{Sotkea} willow (not sure how many species), juniper, horsetail, moss (check species), lupine, aster (the perhaps different species), corn parsley, goldenrod (the perhaps Canada vs. northern)

Southcentral
Not in Alaska (to my knowledge)

Douglas fir, noble & silver firs, western hemlock, red huckleberry, Oregon grape, maple, poison oak, black elderberry, sword fern, (Oregon?) oak, bear grass, rhododendron (Pacific), big-leaf maple, vine maple, (rocky mtn maple?), Pacific yew, thistle, trailing blackberry, salal, yellow cedar, juncos, thimbleberry, ^{2 or 3 sites}

(25)
A ~~the~~ hiker inspired by my
encounters with newt:

Traffic zooms past next
walking along forest road.
I'd give him a lift.

another hiker

Bright streaming sunlight
falls upon bearded hemlock
moss bursts into flames.

A restless night, with coughing and mucous (?)
~~stiff~~ congestion. Still "battling" this cold.
During our wakeful period, I put on fleece jacket
and shoes and step outside. The full or
nearly full moon has slipped behind one the
hills bounding the Hg area, but its radiance
still diminishes the starlight. But I'm able
to pick out Orion, tunc bling through the night
sky. The big & little dippers, the Placides (or?),
Taurus, and some others I'm not sure about.
While admiring the ^{constellations} sky, I also listen for
owl. But the night is quiet. And still.
I need to read the info on spotted owls;
don't know how likely I am to hear or otherwise
observe one at this time of year...

10/5 Thursday already. The week is rushing past;
would it move so quickly if I didn't make
my days so busy with projects and errands?
I head to the reflection site near Hg,
after breakfast and ph call back home.
The morning is still cool, so I wear my jacket,
but I'm sure the air will warm up soon, as
the sun once again floats across a cloudless
azure sky. I do a short walkabout before
head into the creek channel
settling down. My legs - and instincts - take me
upstream, farther from signs of humans.
I pass a lovely, deep reflection pool that
seems made for fish, & crystal clear
but see none. I wonder once more about the
fish that inhabit this creek (which is the
lower stretch of Lockhart Cr.; not far above
where it feeds the Blue River reservoir). So far
I've seen only fingerling sized fish. I also
pass a huge paper-wasp nest; hanging
from an alder limb, it's larger than a
football and its residents come and go
every few seconds. I'm drawn to a small
place among cobble-strewn volcanic rx, most
of them with rounded edges which suggests
they've been in the creek bed for awhile.
I close my eyes and let go of thoughts, and
have to repeatedly let go when my mind
insists on thinking. The creek tells me
with a two ~~tone~~ ^{part} melo harmony: a higher (and
pitched splashing below & a softer but deeper
gurgling and bubbling upstream. It's (another)

beautiful spot that in one sense seems timeless - until I'm reminded of the seasonal change by leaves going to yellow and red, others brown & dried on the ground, and still others dropping onto rocks and creek. Yes, the constant here is change, even if things first appear, during my short visit, in a steady state. But there are many scales to the change: daily, ~~seasonally~~, ^{yearly}, seasonal, annual, decadal, century, millennial...

I sometimes imagine that our human movements among long-lived trees like the firs here must be analogous to the buzzing, frenzied flights of bees and other insects around our species. Completely different scales of being on this earth. I'd like to reflect & write more about this sometime. (And then there's the even SLOWER scale of ~~the~~ rivers and glaciers, and especially rocks...)

The sun is now high in the sky & the day is approaching noon. And my warm spot ^(at) has become hot. Time to move on. I want to do more exploring and return to my "personal" reflection site, higher on this creek.



Water spiders and reflections on bottom of pool shadows by getting ^{my} reflection

30-40 skating along / small pool - the water spiders lead me to a nest, resting on the bottom of the pool; how long can they remain ^{motionless} submerged?

Hike to the top of Lookout Mtn - turns out the trails here, too, have been allowed to grow over - the & the map once more confuses me - there's a Rte 625 that isn't shown on the map; & it's blocked marked after 14-15 mi. I follow the road a ways, til it's clear if wait lead me to trail. I think go some uphill "bushwhacking" ^{mtn-top?} through a bear grass meadow. A good workout & a slippery slope! Reaching ridgetop, I then have an easy walk of a few hundred more yards to reach Lookout's summit, where there's now a communications tower along with mtn hemlock, a stand of cedar, some spruce, and (I think) some firs. I find what may have been the trail, now overgrown after a short distance. Windy up here, with a grand "360" panorama, including unobstructed views of the high peaks; I saw the other day from fire lookout post. Taking more time to absorb the view, I can see how rolling forested hills (with patches of charcut) rise to the high plateaus (benches) (kelp?) from which the three Sisters & other volcanic mtns rise. On the other side of the

22

about the same (or close to) height as Lookout. Lots of robins; a flock of \approx at least 12-15; they at least a few seem to be keeping an eye on me, & calling out in alarm.

Am I intruding on them somehow? Lots of other birds, including some new ones for this trip: fox sparrow, white-crowned sparrow,

ruby-crowned kinglet (I think) Townsend solitaire also a bird with yellow rump patch - but not y-r warbler, I suspect. eye vireo? and pale yellow neck? need to check

one is loudly calling from a perch atop this ridge, within 50-60' - most others flying among firs below

new trees: cedar, spruce, pine I need to check poster & book back etc. to have a better idea of species

It's wandered up here, the landscape spreading out around me - and no rush to descend. taking my time, today...

Ht. of Lookout mtn _____? My mistake

Well - it turns out I didn't climb Lookout Mtn, but rather an unnamed ridge to the east! (nearly as high) I'm wondering about the relationship of certain landscape - & map - features and things don't seem to be adding up. I finally get my bearings - and location - after returning to the car. I'd gone about a mile further than I thought - and go another 2 miles, trying to figure things out, before seeing my mistake. Backtracking, I can begin to see how

symbols on the map match features on the ground. I still can find no hint of a trail, tho, until I back-track in the car and, driving very slowly, spot a narrow path leading into the woods. Almost hidden, especially when coming from below (as I was initially). There is a narrow plastic pipe, but that's all. It'd been paying closer attention - and driving more slowly! - I might have caught it. though largely 'hidden' from the road, the trail seems to be maintained & I leave open the possibility of returning, & climbing the real Lookout Mtn. But I doubt I will, with only 2 full days after this.

Note: I locate the Carpenter Mtn Lookout (while hi on the ridge I climbed), roughly N of Lookout Mtn. So I think the high peaks are more to the east than NE - though of course they're spread out across the landscape.

shutty offer

(after much re-orienting) So now I'm back at my "recreation spot. Deep blue sky overhead, golden light falling on the creek channel. By 5:30 the channel is entirely in shadow, with light creeping up the trees above it (overhanging it). It's cool & damp here. I search beneath rotting wood and rocks for salamander, but again come up empty. I'd really like to find one, but it's looking less & less likely. I measured the fir that has been made into a bridge; ~50' across the creek, & the tree itself is not more than 2x that in all.

Someone has (sliced) grooves into the tree (and flattened it some) for cut better traction, & a railing has been built along one side, for stability when crossing...

As I write this

I'm sitting on another big downed fir, my perch 20-30' above creek bottom. I plan to

Note: warty caterpillar with long white "hairs" protruding from its ends - what's that about?

Partly because of the extra driving I did today, I've been thinking about the miles I've been putting on the car. Not because of the cost per se, but the use of energy to get around to these various reflection sites and trails. I could have spent most of my time at the reflection site near HQ and not burned up nearly as much fuel. So, some greenie guilt, I guess. Especially since this is a writing venue/retreat with an environmental bent. Still, I'm glad I rented a car, and I've enjoyed my explorations. I've been in an "exploratory" mode, seeing different places - and a variety of habitats - within the AEF. I've learned more about the nature of this place - and surrounding landscapes - with my travels here and there. Yet, I wonder if I might have learned "all I need to know" at the one site. Back & forth, back & forth...

I've also been thinking about "different ways of knowing" - for instance getting to know a place, learning more about its nature. There's the science approach, and then there's my exploring-natural history-anecdotal-discovery-meditative approach, to name just 2. I think both can be equally valid and lead to different kinds of knowledge that are both valuable. I think about this a lot, actually, especially given science's place in our culture and the attitude sometimes - too often - taken by scientists that other ways of knowing the world are less valid, less worthy. That's why I'm excited to be part of a ^{partly} collaborative venture, in which writers' reflections, observations, questions, etc carry some weight - or at least have some role. It

will be interesting to see where all this leads, and whether the literary/humanities aspect remains a part of the 200-yr-long project. More reflections on this, per haps...

6 pm now and only the very tops of the trees are now touched by sunlight

Fri Oct 6

of varied thrush

The songs ^{finally} pull me from my bed, ~~after~~ ^{and out into the still morning.} ~~it~~ took a full week, but I can resist their ^{beckoning} ~~no~~ longer. When the decision is made, I jump out of bed and quilt (can't sleep?), jump out of bed, and pile on several layers of shirts + jacket to ensure I'll stay warm in the cool, damp, ^{morning} October air of an Oregon rain forest.

To say it's early is a bit misleading; ~~at~~ a few minutes past 7 when I step out the ~~the~~ ^{the} clock reads door, cross the lawn outside my ~~apt.~~ ^{room} and enter the old growth stand only a stones throw from where I've been sleeping, eating, and writing these last several days.

The songs of varied thrushes ^{and} ~~thrushes~~ ^{many} The forest rings with the wake-up calls of thrushes, the predominant sound on this still, quiet morning in the Audubon Experimental Forest. The songs aren't the fluid, pleasing, melodies of ~~their~~ ^{the} relatives, ^{the} swainson's ^{wood,} and hermits (thrushes), or ^{for instance} American robin.

Muscicapidae But the distinctive voice is pleasing nonetheless, at least to these ears. For those who may not yet know the varied's song, it's a series of single-note trills, each song at a different ^{repeated} pitch. Some notes sound more buzzy than whistled; occasionally they

39 resemble a telephone ring. Once noticed and learned, they're among the most distinctive woodland voices.

avian
Sad to say, I didn't notice either the bird or song until I'd reached my mid-40s, a year or two after Chickadees and in particular, and songbirds in general, finally gained my attention and expanded my world in unexpected and delightful ways.

I first saw a thrush in the birch-spruce-cottonwood boreal forests of Alaska's Denali region. I was shocked by the bird's handsome plumage, which is a combination of bluish-gray, orange, black and unlike anything I'd seen in Alaska's wilds. It remains among the most beautiful northern birds I've encountered. But in my part of the world, Southcentral Alaska, the varied thrush tends to be a shy, seldom secretive inhabitant, far more often heard than seen.

Imagine my surprise and delight that Loxia naevius is a common and highly visible of Oregon's old-growth forest, at least in early October. The birds are everywhere, it seems, from roadside to the shoulders of gravel roads to the highest canopy.

I've seen them more than any other bird, and probably heard their alarm

calls - a soft \rightarrow - even more frequently, made at my passage through their territories

But their songs seem to be sung only as when night gives way into day. I can't say sunrise this week ~~was about 7:15~~ and from the Oregonians ~~the papers~~ seems to be ~~starting~~ about 2 minutes daily. I can't say when the thrushes have begun their morning chorus, but when awake, I've heard their songs between 6 and 7. And the songs have largely, if not completely, stopped by the time I head outdoors - no earlier than 8 am this week (during a week when I've been saddled with a severe head cold, my excuse for not getting out earlier).

~~But~~ ~~the~~ Runny nose, wheezing cough, and buckets of phloem (sp?) ~~and~~ and a tired body - stop me today, not with time running out on my 1-wk residency here at the Andrews. ~~Already~~ I sense a sort of urgency. That can be a good thing, and today it is witnessed by my ^{400- to 500-} fruit-row seat ~~on~~ on a downed Douglas fir, ^{the decaying log} while all around me, varied thrushes sing 'n the day.

I wonder if this is a seasonal thing here, or if the thrushes sing year round. Heck, come to think of it, I can't be certain that all these varied are locals; maybe some are passing through, or seasonal residents, or just happened to be passing through... all none though I tend to doubt it.

(35) So, Another question or Z₁ or more - for the local biologists who pay attention to such things.

Back home, ^{the songs of} varied thrushes echo through woodlands only for a few all-too-short weeks. And then sporadically. ^{in Anchorage} Maybe I've come to delight in their voices because varied thrushes are among the earliest migrants to reach Anchorage each spring. Sometime during the latter half of April, they'll join their voices with those of ruby-crowned kinglet and junco (and ~~—~~), ~~an~~ early proof that winter is once more truly to let go its hold, even when snow stubbornly clings to the landscape.

There, the thrushes are early bird songsters, ^{too} sending out their whistled, breezy tunes before ^{belting} most humans have begun their daily routines. But the varied's are also late-night singers during Alaska's vernal season, while here ~~they~~ I haven't noticed their songs at day's twilight end, though I've been out in the forest ~~since~~ ~~at~~ a couple days after the sun has set.

Because one of my tasks, while here at the Andrews, is to reflect (another is to write), I've been thinking alot about the different ways we get to know a place, for instance - an old-growth rainforest. Most of ^{temperate} what goes on in this

(36) experimental facet is scientific research. But I'm here because some sharp, forward-thinking people decided it would be cool and potentially valuable - to add ^{creative} writers and "humanities" types to the mix, in a ~~program~~ ^{program} that's being called ~~the~~ been named project Long-term Ecological Reflections.

The idea is to bring creative writers, especially those with an interest in "the natural world," to places within the Andrews, and ask the designated writers "to observe, think, and record their reflections." Now here's the really cool part: ^{the work of} writers like myself, and Robert Michael Pyle, and Patricia Rogers and Anson Hawthorne Deming, and Scott Slovic (you, it's a little intimidating to be in company of such nature writing heavyweights) is intended to be part of a collaborative process with forest ecologists and other science types. And this collaboration ~~is~~ is a lifespan of 200 years. Two centuries of ^{North} science, reflections, and creative writing.

To be part of a project that goes far beyond one's own lifespan is indeed a marvelous and humbling thing. ~~what~~ ^{it's} a privilege, indeed. Makes a fella from (the Far North wonder) now he got invited to ^{join} this party. America's far N. outback

It turns out that, before becoming a nature writer (I'm one of those who embraces the label, ~~be~~ at least partly because it's a community I'm proud to belong to, ~~one~~ with ~~many~~ and

(37) I was a scientist of sorts. A geologist, complete with MS degree. I got out of geology, and into writing (first as a sports reporter, then later as outdoors newspaper guy and ~~then~~ freelance nature writer) partly because I didn't consider myself especially overly talented, and not passionate about the work. There was also the looming specter of becoming some kind of expert in the field. Expertise seems well nigh impossible; my fear was that people would discover I didn't know nearly as much as they assumed I did. One of the great things about being an essayist and nature writer is that you don't have to be an expert. You want authority, go to the people whose ^{expertise on bears, or fungi - or those things} their life's work. I can pose questions, search for answers, and sometimes reach conclusions, ^{volcanic rx -} and also occasionally ~~but~~ I don't have to be the "one who knows." I can also occasionally rant and be opinionated and disagree with the "common wisdom" and be a patriotic dissenter - all things that it didn't seem I could be as a scientist. Maybe I was wrong, way back in my 20s, but I'm pretty damn sure I would not have "found my voice" as a geologist.

Anyway - For a long time I've kind of had a love-hate relationship with science. Even back in college (maybe high school, too, though I can't recall) I used to sometimes wonder ~~about~~: how can we really be sure about this? How do we know that our theories and interpretations are correct? Maybe we're just getting a small piece of the

in my science classes

(38) Nowadays, I often do natural history or environmental writing that depends on ~~the~~ scientific knowledge. I love the insights that ~~scient~~ researchers can give me, how they can help me understand bear behavior, say, or ^{better} what led to why ~~there's been~~ an outbreak of spruce bark beetles in the 1990s, killing ~~the~~ spruce trees across millions of acres of Southcentral Alaska.

But there's an arrogance to science, too, and that annoys, frustrates, ^{the culture of} and sometimes scares me. I loved Wendell Berry's Life Is A Miracle, because he expressed so well and vividly many of my own misgivings & criticisms of science's "true believers." ^{unsettles} ~~the~~ Berry can see the ways that science can become ^{dangerous} a religion, its practitioners convinced of science's "one true way" of knowing the world, of understanding the "truth" of things. That's scary stuff to

(also) [↑] ~~negative~~ perspective

So, to be part of ^{this} collaborative project whose initiators clearly believed that left-brained creative types also have something valuable to share, something that the scientific community might actually gain from: that's a marvel. That's definitely worth celebrating and embracing.

Sitting on a mossy log, ^{sniffing and catching} beneath peach-colored clouds and listening to the ^{one-note} falls of varied thrush - eventually joined by the high-pitched, liquid, tinkling songs of winter wrens (which my ^{bird} field ^{well})

(39) myself: what would I study, if I were ~~unlucky~~ a scientist lucky enough to work here. On this morning, the first thought to pop into my head is, of course, varied thrush. They're abundant, they're lovely, they're birds that have had my attention for several years already, and they're beings I would like to know better. I wonder how much is already known about varied thrushes and their place in the Pacific Coast's old growth rainforests. I make a mental note to later do an internet search, gain some new insights into the bird's forest lifestyle.

I imagine starting with the bird and learning its habits, its seasonal behaviors and movements, its place in the "food web." And then I would slowly spiral

and preferred habitat within this larger forest

outward, hoping to learn how the thrush affects other forest organisms and in turn is affected by them. Perhaps

I would learn more about the thrush's nesting behavior and gain some better understanding of why it builds its nest where it does. Or I'd learn which foods are its favorites and try to figure out why. And I'd learn more about the insects and _____ that it depends on to live.

I'd learn how it what strategies it employs to avoid being killed by its primary predators _____ And I'd try to better understand the shifting, evolving balance between _____.

Maybe I'd learn something entirely new about the varied thrush, something so subtle it can only be learned ~~learn~~ through patient observation and being in the forest with the bird. I'd do my

best to make my research a true field study, one that demanded I be out in the forest, in all kinds of weather, year after year. Field biology more like the way it used to be practiced. I would try to be minimally invasive. For all that can be gained through banding and radio collaring or tagging, I'm troubled by the necessary harassment it requires. I'd learn from being with the bird, rather than data collected by electronic means. The varied thrush would be my teacher, my source of first-hand "data." And along with all this, I would try to imagine what the forest would be like without the varied thrush. Already, in a week's time, I know it would be an emptier, quieter, and less magical place. Ah yes, magic. And mystery. No matter how much I learned, I would continue to honor and celebrate the mystery of the thrush, and the fact that any study, no matter how long and intensive and obsessive, can only give us glimpses of ~~the~~ bird and its ^{species} kind. Maybe I ^(any individual) could get close enough, though, that I would have visions and dreams, and these would give me knowledge - and, I could hope - a sort of wisdom, an understanding, that's impossible through research alone.

(40) So, the thrush would be a good choice. But other possibilities leap into my head. The rough-skinned newt, for one. Unlike the varied thrush, the newt is completely new to me. And it is to completely captivated me with its amphibian otherness, since I first met one in the middle of a paved forest road, standing as still as a statue, rounded in its face is a flattened conical

(21) That newt was a reminder to slow down, which I've done since then while driving these forest roads (which may, in turn, have kept me from smashing into a deer that faced bolted right in front of rental car, a few nights later. Only ~~my~~ a glimpse of the deer, along the road, my ~~fast speed~~ slow speed, in the forest

^{I'm convinced} and a large measure of luck kept us from ~~apart~~ let that deer slip past, only inches, it seemed, from my front fender). It's also gotten under my own mammalian skin, partly because of the nature of our meeting, and the fact that I initially misidentified the critter - twice, I'm embarrassed to say, 1st guessing it to be a lizard (in a rainforest) and then a salamander - only learning its true identity from camp manager Keith Beadle, who ~~Adams~~ also added to my graving delight by telling me the newt is

^{infest} the Andrews' official mascot, embroidered onto AEF T-shirts, which of course I had to buy. When ~~if~~ one other factor comes into play: I've also always been a sucker for ^{garter} creepy crawly critters, from the snakes and ^{boils} frogs - and, yes, salamanders - of my

^{inhabitant} Connecticut boyhood, to the tarantulas and ^{inhabitant} scorpions of the Arizona desert and the orb-weaving spiders and wood frogs of that ^{inhabitant} my Anchorage Bowl.

which of course means that I'd consider this forest's frogs, snakes, salamanders, spiders & insects - especially the water striders, which have long fascinated me with their alien forms and skittish, racing movements - in ponds and lakes and streams.

^{little brown} And bats. I love bats, again because they're so different. Unusual. And while "creepy" to so many folks - thanks largely, I'd guess, to all those Dracula movies - they're such a fascinating evolutionary adaptation: Mammals that fly. Imagine. I know I've dreamed long to ~~dream~~ fly and some of my most vivid dreams have been flying dreams. And the way they catch insects, by radar (check) or something like it, by God. What amazing creatures. I actually touched a bat once, ^{and petted} captured one of Australia's "flying foxes." ~~But~~ Though I am generally opposed to zoos, I had this ~~memorable~~ encounter inside an enclosure where Aussie birds of all kinds walked ~~and~~ waded, perched, and flew. I'd gone there for a fund-raising "breakfast with the birds" and had larkets nibble from my ice cream cone (not a good thing, I know), but the flying fox stole the show for me, and my brief time in its company has remained one of the stories I tell again and again. And here once more.

The winter wren, also a ubiquitous resident (or so it's been this week), ~~also~~ would be a great choice. Or the ^{inhabitant} whatch, which a regular of my feeders back ⁱⁿ home and a constant presence here with its nasally yank-yank call.

Then there are the more charismatic fauna: bobcats and cougars and bears, oh my. I ~~have~~ am in the midst of a ~~four~~ decades long (and ongoing) love affair with bears, so they would be a natural. And big ^{or medium} small wildcats, ~~what~~ who could resist?

By now it's clear that I'm more of an

add:
was by
way of

(3) animal guy than plant person. But I could probably be persuaded to at least seriously consider a plant. For instance the red huckleberry, until this trip the unknown relative of Alaska's black huckleberries - and great tasting, so I could subsist on my research subject as I studied it. Or the moss that covers everything. Or the prehistoric-looking sword fern, which doesn't reach my part of the world. Or one of the giant trees here, which one, I wonder, is most overlooked. And what about fungal forms: they're essential to the forest's health and some are real beauties.

Well, I could go on & on, but enough enough.

Of course, someone ~~can~~ might ask, why a single species? Why not consider the bigger picture. My answer - perhaps not well thought out, as I'm going with first thoughts -

is that, for me, I'd like to start small, and perhaps spin outward into ever widening &

intersecting circles of relationships.

so, it appears, an essay in the making

10/16 jumping page, in case I resume the essay from preceding or before returning home:...

afternoon - back at the log decomposition site - 1st a walkabout, doing the complete circuit and then returning to a place to sit awhile - away from where Fred Swanson told us nature writers about the science being done here, last Sat.

before sitting, I do something I've been thinking about: I hug a tree. One of the elder Douglas firs, nearly as big across as my arms spread wide.

I wrap my arms around the furrowed, shaggy, mossy bark,

(how can I leave the forest without doing that?)

press my upper body and face against the tree, rub my beard against its - I close my eyes and feel my feet sinking into the soft mossy mound at the tree base. I wonder what grand events it has witnessed: the gales, the downpours, the fires and the many quiescent spells. I'm struck again by how still and quiet this place is... I hold the tree awhile, appreciate its presence here. And I wonder what

dramas big and small

this place was like when this huge fir was a tiny seedling. How has the forest changed in its lifetime...

I wish to again express my appreciation for this project. And thanks to Fred Swanson, who shared some of the science tied to this site in particular. Also to Mark Haman, who apparently came up with the idea of starting a project that would culminate long after his death... Thanks to the forest ecologists and others who challenged the notion of old-growth stands as "decadent" and who've learned the importance of dead and

downed trees to the forest's health, through the recycling of nutrients, as a host for so many other living forms, as their importance and relevance to the "carbon budget" (and release of CO₂ to the atmosphere), and on and on -

I'm struck again by the simple, I suppose you could say primitive, nature of the tools being used here. The plastic jugs and funnels and tubes and "pipes" being used to collect information in a forward thinking project...

ok, time to meditate & reflect awhile -

Next stop, The Bridge Site

I play around a bit to begin, slipping and sliding as on moss (& algae?) slickened rocks, getting my feet wet as I footie across the creek. In a pool upstream of the bridge, I notice a splash. And upon walking out on a broad, downed fir, I spy a dozen or so fish, loosely grouped & facing upstream, ranging from 5-10" long I'd guess. One forms on its side, flashing silver. I'm as sure as I can be that these are rainbow trout - and Lookout Cr. is indeed supposed to have rainbows & cutthroats. This happy discovery makes it even stranger that I've been unable to find any sign of piscine life on the stretch of creek that flows behind the H₂O, including the deep pool I wrote about earlier. I checked again this morning, & no sign of fish, big or small. What gives?

After watching the fish awhile I walk upstream; this is indeed a beautiful stretch, made more lovely now by the big maple going to gold (or lemon yellow). I then some exploring, along an offshoot of the main trail that goes to 100-200' below

ending at a deadfall. I follow someone's (or some critter's) tracks up a steep dirt bank and walk around a bench some 50-100' above the creek. I find a huge toppled fir that pulled out its roots - and may have fallen across, and taken down, another big fir, whose "root ball" has left a big pit in the ^{uplifted} ground. I think I hear some rustling in the forest, but when I listen closely, there's no more sound - I watch the creek below for awhile from this high perch, then hike 1-1 1/2 mi, going at a moderate pace, watching & listening. I flush a (family?) group of varied thrushes and also spook a thrush that could be either hermit or Swainson's. It's off a ways & the light is dim, so it's hard to tell, but I think I see white eye ring and rusty tail, which would make it a hermit thrush.

After dinner

Just before 7 I walk down to the creek, listening for varied thrush and looking for bats. No thrush song, but good bat watching. I lay down upon a downed fir that has fallen into the creek channel, and watch the bats hunt insects. They are ~~small~~ indeed little brown bats, not much bigger than a warbler or chickadee, that I can tell. They're flying high, near the top of the canopy, but occasionally flash within 10 or 15' of my prone body.

Their wingbeats are remarkably rapid and the bats show an impressive ability to change course "at a dime." Once a bat does an about-face 180° turn without losing a beat. It's well after sunset (about 3/4 hr) when I finally leave, but the ^{or maybe more} sky still holds enough light for me to watch the bats in rapid beat action. I'm pleased I finally made a dusky visit down here...

On the subject of bats: Last night (10/9) I saw a few while driving back to Ho, in the dark. A couple passed right over the car. A winged creature of some sort also flashed through my headlight beams; ~~it~~ I guessed it to be a bat, but given the tiny size of the bats I watched tonight, I wonder. Actually, I even wondered last night - could it have been an owl. It caught me so off guard and shot past so quickly, I really can't say if bird or owl.

On that same drive out, I nearly hit a deer (as mentioned in my essay). What a frightening close call that was! I caught a glimpse of the deer, ~~it~~ off to the right, in the beam of the car. Seems I saw 2, but things happened so fast. For reasons I can't say, a doe spooked, and instead of fleeing into the woods, she cut across the road, right in my path. Thank goodness I was going slowly - 15-20mph.

on the gravel road, or I would have smashed the deer for sure. Even hitting my brakes at that speed, I nearly hit her. She must have been inches from the left corner of my fender when I stopped. I couldn't believe it, and said a bunch of "thank yous" to whomever or whatever was watching? listening.

Some followup stuff

I've confirmed my yellow-rumped warbler; drawing of fall color phase matches closely what I saw & there's other bird that comes close.

Also, not sure now if my red-breasted nuthatches are in part - or wholly - white-breasted species - though I've heard them lots, have gotten a good look, & assumed they were red-breasts - but no bird guide suggests white-breasted more likely. Gonna look harder tomorrow.

I may have heard/seen a flock of siskins - almost sure of it now. their pine call was familiar, as was their flight pattern. Thought they could have been redpolls, but distribution map suggests that would have been a rarity...

on to plants

The unusual cone I found belongs to Douglas fir



The cedar I found atop the rocky ridge (when looking for mt. Lookout) is a yellow cedar, based on ecology/habitat

not sure about the shrubs. I found along

I've learned that tall, 2-3', reddish-brown plant I found along Lookout Cr Trail is a "saprophyte" called pine drops.

I think the shrubby plant with slimy, thick green-leaved, dark green leaves is salal - on closer inspection ~~it~~ does the leaves do have "finely-toothed" edges - also has a distinctive smell, not mentioned in guidebook. And the ecology fits -

^ wildflowers - having a hard time blooming

Note: introduced/invasive Himalayan blackberry - abundant on clearcut - large, stiff, thorny stems - taking over?

vs. franklin blackberry, a native

add: several pine trees also along high ridge & rd 1506 - based on cones & ecology, at least ~~must~~ some are (appear to be) western white pines

check on *Ensatina eschscholtzii* (google)

10/7 Sat = ~~sun~~ mid-afternoon ^{atop Lookout mtn} on a bright "bluebird" afternoon - I made a good - no, great - decision when deciding to come back here and hike to Lookout's summit. It's become a glorious afternoon after a raw, damp, cloudy morning, with only faint streaks & clouds in a mostly blue sky -

Just now I've been sharing the eastern hillside (which I'm looking over & beyond) with a small group of what I'm almost certain are bluebirds - mountain. I'll have to check bird guide when I get bluebirds: back to the, but I'm pretty damn sure 4 of them flew past (2 overhead) and whether or not my "pssshing"

(51) impossible far me at that distance and we birds mostly silhouetted against bright sky, except for rusty brown upper breast, grayish lower breast/body and dark head and wings. Then one flew closer and I could make out bluish-gray head, w/ sharp black beak. Another flew closer still, & as it did, I could see bluish wings in flight - bird landed atop much younger fir, maybe 30-35' away, and blue cast to it's head now clear. Exciting encounter and a new species for me, I think (if I'm correct), because I think western bluebird is considered different species than eastern. Will find out later. → ^{turns out though} western bluebirds.

Earlier, confirmed sightings of pine siskin & red-breasted nuthatch (finally! I was surrounded by several, but they stayed hidden for the longest time). Now I'm looking/listening for white-breasted. Recognizing nuthatches are actually more common in this region (according to bird guide), I've been paying more attention to ravenets in "yank-yank" call.

Also: a red-tailed hawk soaring above Lookout Mtn, doing spirals, then tucking into a dive, still high but moving at a slight shallow back-down ridge. Later, a couple of purring shrikes/crows - the red tail? (almost certainly, yes, either checking out guide)

(And this morning, in camp no less, a pileated woodpecker - such a strange, prehistoric-looking bird, and another notable encounter.)

I have an unobstructed view of 3 sisters from my perch; 1st time they haven't been at least partly hidden by clouds. Also, a

good look at forested hills off to E, and numerous patches of clearcuts, in various stages of "recovery" - not sure recovery is accurate for all (or any?) - regrowth probably more on the mark. (52)

The trail here is a beauty, narrow but clear, & gradual ascent through forest. I missed the "side trail" to the summit and when it became clear the path was descending, I tumbled back and eventually scrambled up dry-needle slick slope, finally connecting with ridgetop trail, which passes through some alpine meadows as well as woodlands. Lots of songbirds, including juncos, chickadees, & g-c kinglets in addition to others already mentioned. Though I love the old-growth groves, I also love ridgetops & meadows and the warm sunshine on my back is a sweet pleasure, especially after being chilled earlier (related to my stubborn cold?). As the saying goes, this is as good as it gets. (And while a couple cars were parked at lower trailhead to Lookout Creek trail, I seem to have this ridge to myself - along with all the wild inhabitants, of course.)

The bluebirds & I share each other's company - at a distance - more close to an hour, certainly > 1/2 hr. Finally they leave, a single bird, then a pair, circling above the trees, then ~~fl~~ over the ridge. I count 7. (Others clearly in the area, tho' unseen.)

After a "snack lunch" I return to the trail, and discover it continues to ascend, another 1/2 - 3/4 mi. For the 1st time, I find scat that I'm sure is a bear's. It's old and dry, but definitely ursine droppings.

I also find canid scat - reminds me v. much of wolf scat - but I don't think wolves inhabit this landscape, do they? Seems much too large for coyote. And I'm

(53) out sure what mtn. lion scat looks like. The scat is ~~rich~~ loaded with hair — and also contains a couple of deer hooves. That's a surprise. Later, higher on the ridge, I find the skull of a fawn, still with fur attached. No other bones, but I don't look very hard. So, some interesting findings! ^{gorags} along this ridge. From high point (summit height?) I can see all of the high Cascade peaks on the high bench/plateau to the east. I linger a short while, then begin an unhurried descent. No other hikers. This has been an excellent outing, from weather → landscape, to sightings & other "discoveries."

I next drive to upper end of Lookout Creek trail, & go berry picking. I collect close to quart of blueberries, big and juicy, in about ~~an hour~~ ^{an hour}, including walking ~~time~~ ^{time} along trail. Berries are super abundant.

including walking ^{time} along trail. Berries are super abundant. Searching will take these Oregon blueberries. (in a few red huckleberries mixed in) home and see if Helene wants to make a pie. By the time I'm done, my fingers and thumbs are stained the color of my sweatshirt: a deep maroon. Even now, close to 3 hrs. later, some stain remains.

Then, a final visit to the Fir Bridge site. I walk around, lift a few rocks and decaying pieces of wood, still looking for salamanders. I find a couple

(54) of blooming wild flowers, both tiny blossoms, ^{with petals} one white flowers with petals "split," growing from a ground hugging plant that radiates stems in a circle; ^{streamside} the other is yellow, growing from a stem 1-2' high, also in creek channel, ^{thin} among rocks. species?

also wildflower along ridgetop, with thin stem (now reddish brown, in seed) and basal leaves, "fleshy" growing in small clusters —

add, more ~~to~~ ^{road} ~~hill~~ (actually found yesterday):

mole — ~~not~~ not squashed, with a small amount of blood near mouth — ~~would see~~ ^{what} might have killed it? why in the road?

I've seen many "hole holes" in the forest, most noticeable when they cross trails —

I pay "bow of respect" to the site and say my good byes...

11/8 departure day and another blue-sky beauty — though I wouldn't have minded one rainy day more typical of rain-forest weather —

I have one final encounter with newt, on trail down to reflective site behind hg. — laying still on log when I nearly step on it — I move back a few steps, and in slow motion the newt crawls into fracture formed within the log, out of sight... no Salamanders tho — or frogs or snakes or mtn lions, bears, or spotted owls. I guess I'll have to come back!

one's intriguing experience: walking along ^{trail}

(59)

trail that begins a back of hg area,
I notice the shadow of a bird pass
across the ground to my right, while crossing
an opening where sunlight pours through.
Walking a few paces, so that I'm in the
shadow of a large fir, I look up into the
trees. A few moments later, a bird - the
same one, I assume - leaves its perch and
heads to the fir in whose shade I'm
standing. There's a rustling, flurry of activity &
and a sudden churring & yelping. The
bird flies off - I still haven't gotten
a good look at it - and a squirrel lets loose
with a series of cries. I'm sure the bird
attacked the squirrel, though it didn't seem
~~the~~ big enough to go after an animal
that size. Later I talk to Tom FOX,
formerly a spotted owl researcher at
the Andrews, & he suggests it may have
been a sharp-shinned hawk. That
~~possibility~~ possibility had occurred to me,
and the bird was the right size, but
I never imagined a sharp-shinned hawk
go after a squirrel. "Oh, yeah," says
Tom. "They're very fierce birds."
So, I think that's what it was. A
rather remarkable happening to end my
stay at AEF.