

THE METHOW CONSERVANCY 2017 METHOW CONSERVATION COURSE

The Life & Times of Methow Mammals

Mondays, 6:00 – 8:00pm, February 6th – March 13th at the Winthrop Barn

Feb. 6th - Mammal Taxonomy and Evolution with David Moskowitz

Mammalia is a highly successful class of animals that has existed for about 200 million years. This class will explore the evolutionary origins of mammals and how the class has diversified into the wondrously varied collection of animals we know today. Using species found in and around the Methow Valley as examples, we will explore the basic anatomy of mammals and how structures such as dentition, limbs, and body size vary based on habitat and behavior in mammals. Basic patterns of reproductive biology, social organization, and diet will be introduced for the mammals of our region.

Feb. 13th – Canids with Scott Fitkin and Ursids with Dr. Bill Gaines

Scott will provide a brief overview of the morphological characteristics that define the canid family, and compare and contrast our 3 local species: fox, coyote, and wolf. He'll discuss the life histories of them including their unique habitat requirements, niche separation and overlap. Starting with an overview of the history of wolves in WA, including the Methow, he'll touch on current wolf research, monitoring methodology, and management. Bill will delve into the daily lives of the two bear species here in the North Cascades as we see how they adjust their habits as the seasons change. He'll share fascinating details about their intelligence and of the life-long bond that forms between a mother bear and her cub. And we'll explore the eons-long relationships and interactions between bears and humans. We'll finish with the current public policy issues surrounding grizzly bear reintroduction in WA.

Feb. 20th – Ungulates with Sara Hansen & Jeff Henlen

Sara and Jeff will be talking about our local ungulate species including deer, elk, moose, sheep, and goats. Sara will start by providing a brief overview of the morphological characteristics that define the cervid (deer) family and their unique life history strategies and habitat requirements. Jeff will cover the morphology, life history, and habitat needs of bighorn sheep and mountain goats. We will be discussing the ecology of these species throughout the evening and touch on local population dynamics as well.

Feb. 27th - Felids & Mustelids with John Rohrer

For the Felid Family, John will provide a summary of cat morphology, and their characteristics and unique adaptations. John will focus on our 3 species - bobcat, cougar, lynx – including how to differentiate bobcat from lynx, and the tracks of all 3. He'll give a summary of the Black Pine Lynx project including the effects of large wildfires on lynx habitat. John will also cover Mustelids with a summary of “weasely” characteristics, and then focus on weasel, marten, and wolverine but also touching on river otter, fisher, and badger. He'll finish with a summary of the North Cascades Wolverine Study including the effects of climate change on wolverine.

March 6th (class extended to 8:30pm) – Rodents & Lagomorphs with Dr. Kris Ernest plus the Methow Beaver Project with Dr. Torre Stockard

Kris will give an overview of some of the ecological and environmental challenges facing these small mammals, and talk about adaptations that different kinds of lagomorphs and rodents have evolved. Drawing on examples from her research on pikas and other small mammals, she'll talk about conservation issues, particularly ecological connectivity. We'll look at some skulls and skins, several types of live traps and other equipment used for small mammal field research, including a Portable Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT)-tag reader. Torre will briefly cover beaver biology and ecology as she updates us on the current work of the Methow Beaver Project. Torre will also bring beaver skulls, pelts, and traps.

March 13th – Insectivores & Mammal Specimen Lab with Dr. Peter Wimberger & The 10 Decades Project with Kent Woodruff

Peter will cover the fascinating insectivorous mammals in our area: moles, shrews and bats. We'll focus on the natural history of bats, the only mammal to colonize the air, and look at their evolutionary adaptive radiation. We'll take a look at shrews - notable for their unusually high metabolic rates, venom, and use of echolocation – as well as the shrew relatives, moles, of which one species can be found in the Methow. Peter will bring an assortment of mammal skins and skulls from the Slater Museum for a hands-on lab. Kent will take us through The 10 Decades project with the short Methow-based film “One Stick at a Time.” It is a conversation starter for answering the question “What can I do?” It is a chance for us to think about what our regional landscape will be like ten decades from now and start today to make it better than it would be if we did nothing.

Fee-Based Bonus Classes & Field Trips Include:

Feb 5th: 8:30am – 1:30pm, wildlife tracking and wildlife camera installation class with David Moskowitz

March 11th: 3:00-5:30pm on mammal tracking, foot morphology, locomotion/gait and more with Marcus Reynerson

March 12th: TBD if there's interest: wildlife tracking and wildlife camera gathering class with Marcus Reynerson