

THE METHOW CONSERVANCY 2018 METHOW CONSERVATION COURSE

Herpetology:

The cold-blooded but totally cool world of reptiles and amphibians

Mondays, Feb 12, Feb 26, March 5 and March 12, 6:00 – 8:00pm at the Winthrop Barn

Feb. 12th – What are Herps? with Dan Beck

Dan will give an overview of herpetology and what it means to be a reptile or an amphibian. What makes them special, including physiology, evolution, behavior, diversity, etc., and what are their roles in an ecosystem? He'll also give an introduction to species in WA, including why they are here and where they are found. Lastly, Dan will share some of his work on venomous reptiles and discoveries made about rattlesnakes in Washington (with the help of John Rohrer), and share a few live creatures with the audience.

Feb 26th - The Ecology and Distribution of Methow Reptile Species with Scott Fitkin

Scott will hone-in on our local Methow reptiles, focusing on the ecology, life-cycle and distribution of them. He'll also provide some information on some unique reptile populations within WA State including side-blotched lizards, striped whip snakes, and mountain king snakes. For two of the state's listed species (Western pond turtle and Northern leopard frog), Scott will give some detailed information on their status and management.

March 5th - The Ecology and Distribution of Methow Amphibian Species with Julie Grialou, plus Amphibian Disease & Toxicology with Jenn Zajac

Like the previous class on reptiles, this class will focus on local amphibians. We will learn about the amphibian species in the Methow Valley, including their unique physiology and role in the ecosystem, and what we know about their distribution in the valley. Julie will also provide a summary of results from past amphibian surveys in the Methow as we prepare for another valley-wide survey this spring.

Jenn will finish the night with amphibian disease and toxicology. Amphibian decline is occurring at an alarmingly high rate - disease and pollution are among the top contributors. We'll learn about the fungal amphibian disease *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd), also known as the chytrid fungus, from its origin to diagnostic techniques. Jenn will also cover the effects of agricultural runoff on the amphibians, and more broadly, the interactive effects of disease and toxicology on amphibians.

March 12th – Rattlesnakes & the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake, including Methow Research with John Rohrer

John will talk about rattlesnakes in general, including their taxonomy and diversity, but also the various ways they acquire food, what's in a snakebite, and what the rattle is all out. Then John will hone-in on our local Northern Pacific rattlesnake with lots of interesting details from studies and research, including the challenges of living at northern latitudes; winter dens and egress/ingress; den fidelity vs genetic exchange; nuisance rattlesnakes and translocations; and rattlesnakes as "watchable wildlife."

Field Classes Include:

- **Sunday April 8th:** A training for participating as a volunteer "citizen scientist" in a Methow amphibian survey will be led by Julie Grialou and several professional helpers. The training will be most of the day and includes a morning of indoor information then learning how to survey ponds outside. Surveys of Methow ponds and wetlands will occur on your own schedule from mid-April to late-May. Most people pick one to three areas to survey, and work in small groups of 2-3 people, though working alone is an option. We'll work with you to choose your areas.
- **Saturday May 12th:** The snake guru duo of John Rohrer & Scott Fitkin will lead us on search for Methow snakes, including a safe way to view and learn about rattlesnakes. Tentatively scheduled for May 12, pending sunny warm weather, which is necessary for finding snakes.