

THE METHOW CONSERVANCY 2010 METHOW CONSERVATION COURSE

“Secrets of the Shrub Steppe”

Mondays, 6:00 – 8:30pm, February 1st – March 8th
at the Twisp River Pub

February 1st - Shrub Steppe Development - From glaciers to butterflies

(This first class starts at 5:30pm instead of 6pm)

Dana Visalli, Naturalist and Botanist, and **Eric Bard**, Geologist, will help us explore geological and glacial formations and the brilliant adaptation of plants and animals in the shrub steppe of our neighborhood. Learn how this arid environment constructed itself from the ground up over recent geologic time, and how plants and animals survive in a fragile and complex web of inter-relationships.

February 8th - Early People - First contact with people of the Methow

Jack Nisbet, writer and teacher, will relive his research about the early people of eastern Washington, relating fur agent David Thompson's and naturalist David Douglas's first written descriptions native encampments and flora and fauna near the mouth of the Methow River between 1811, and 1826-33. We'll try to reconstruct what the earliest white visitors saw and how the local tribes moved through the landscape.

February 16th (Tuesday) - Deep Dirt – The varied strategies of burrowing animals

Kim Romain-Bondi, wildlife biologist, will take us underground to understand the function fossorial (burrowing) animals play on the shrub steppe landscape. We'll discuss the life stages and strategies of shrub steppe species such as the predatory badger, the innocent and endangered pygmy rabbit, and the ancient and slimy spadefoot toad.

February 22th - Animal Survival – Islands of life in a harsh world

Michael Schroeder, WDFW Upland Bird Research Biologist, will explain how unique habitat elements of the arid shrub steppe landscape benefit wildlife. He'll take you up high to view the importance of cliff bands and coulees, as well as microscopically low to understand the intricacies of rocky outcrops and microhabitats that support the shrub steppe's more uncommon wildlife species.

March 1rd - Landscape Disrupted – Dramatic forces and subtle shifts

Jerry Benson, Restoration Ecologist, will discuss the positive and negative impacts that historic natural and introduced disturbances such as fire and grazing had on the shrub steppe landscape, and the ecological interactions they imparted on the soils and vegetation communities. He'll explain how plants (both weeds and natives) play a role our environment, and how genetics, soil chemistry, and micro-organisms help rehabilitate and restore the landscape.

March 8th - Stopping the Decline – Realistic efforts to preserve and restore habitat

Heidi Newsome, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Ecologist, will wrap up our course with conservation successes and challenges throughout eastern Washington and closer to home in the Methow Valley. They will discuss ongoing restoration projects, and prioritization techniques to restore and protect these unique landscapes. You'll be anxiously waiting for the snow to melt to start your own restoration projects at home.

April 17th – FIELDTRIP: Plant adaptations and ecology of the shrub steppe

George Wooten, conservation biologist and botanist, and **Rob Crandall**, restoration ecologist, will lead our field trip into the shrub-steppe landscape as it explodes in a myriad of flower pageants. We'll explore how the plants and animals have adapted to extreme weather and soil conditions; plant defenses to herbivores; as well as factors that favor shrubs, grasses and herbs on our shrub steppe lands.