

My Favorite Place on the Siskiyou National Forest. Lee Webb, Forest Wildlife Biologist.

Actually, I have discovered a number of favorite places on the Siskiyou National Forest since I arrived in March 1975: Bigelow Lakes, Mt. Elijah, Windy Valley, Lookout Mountain, Adams Prairie, Fishhook Peak, Snow Camp Meadow, and many more.

I spend many of my work hours in the confines of an office building. But often my job does take me out on the land. The Siskiyou National Forest. The land is my reason for doing the work I do. It's the land that makes me feel good.



The 25th of February 1992 was an especially good day. A great day, and I made a few notes to record my feelings. I didn't want to lose the memories I was creating. So here it is.

25 February 1992 Mouth of Watson Creek, Gold Beach Ranger District



A beautiful day. A contract helicopter will

be transporting bridge materials to three points along the Rogue River Trail, in the Wild Rogue Wilderness. I'm here to observe how the Watson Creek bald eagles react to the helicopter overhead. No roosting eagles are present at their regular perches.



But spring is on its way. Clots of animals are active, and the new grass is short, green, and lush. A few spring flowers are blooming. A pretty blue, and a small white. Temperature is in the 60's, maybe 70's. Light breeze; the air is fresh and clean. As I arrive at 0900 at Big Bend, the fog is beginning to slowly lift; 24 Roosevelt elk drift away to the north through the mist, and I begin my hike to the mouth of Watson Creek.



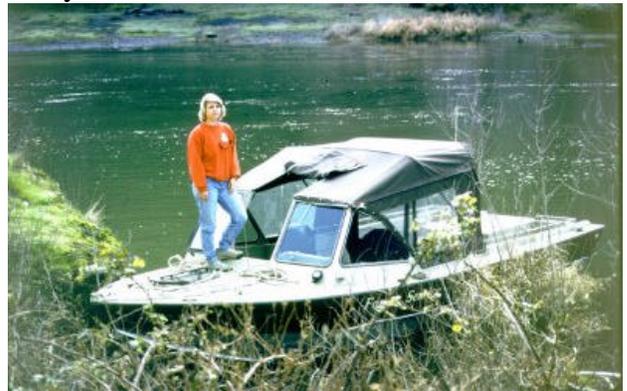
When I take up my observation station, I notice two belted kingfishers checking out their nest hole, 20' up the side of the soft river bank. And they practice their mating ritual. Wheeling and diving. Cone hits the

water abruptly, but no fish. A water ouzel calls excitedly from across the river, while I sit quietly. On most days my world consists of moving paper and electrons around (reports, documentation, meetings) Call on behalf of the land. But today I am alone and the land does all the communicating. I listen. Who speaks? Raucous kingfishers, chattering ouzel, quacking mallards, honking Canada geese. Watson Creek makes quick, urgent conversation as it splashes and rushes into the Rogue River. The heavy Rogue lumbers on past, murmuring lowly, and intent on reaching the Ocean.



Where are the eagles? Who knows? No eagles, and no helicopter work. Was the day worthwhile? You bet.

To be out on the Forest, feel the clean breeze, hear the birds sing, watch the water flow by. As our jetboat driver remarked as she briefly stopped at my location. It's been a beautiful day in Oregon. And so it has; it just feels good to be out in the field. I feel refreshed, and I think again of why I do the work I do. For the land. The land is all that really matters.



Postscript. A few days later we recycled the bridge work, and the eagles were at their usual perch trees; the birds appeared to pay no attention whatever to the helicopter activity.