

Oklahoma Sierran

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What Do The Galapagos Islands Teach Us?

By Larry Edmison, Chapter Chair

In the last newsletter I discussed my recent trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands and talked about some of the similarities in environmental issues facing America and Ecuador. This time I want to talk about the Galapagos Islands.



Galpagos Marine Iguana

The first and most famous lesson learned from the Galapagos Islands is of course the facts that demonstrate evolution and the process of natural selection as explained in Charles Darwin's "The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection". Most people are surprised to learn how little time Darwin actually spent in the Islands; most of us think a scientific work of this importance must have been based on months if not years of study such as the works of Goodall or Fossey. In fact Darwin sailed on the HMS Beagle,

which in 1835 spent only five weeks in the Islands. Darwin himself spent only 19 days on land, having been plagued by sea sickness throughout the voyage.

From a study of the plants and animals that he and his associates collected from the Islands during that short time, Dar-

win realized that though the plants and animals had begun from the same ancestry, many of the samples from individual islands exhibited marked differences from those of other islands. He further realized that these differences provided an advantage to the organism for its respective island environment, and thus came the amazing revelation of the origin of species. Even today, the further study of the island inhabitants continues to prove the theory. *(Continued on Page 4)*

BEC Earth Day Outreach Targets Cool Cities

By Susie Shields, BEC Earth Day Outreach Chair

Oklahoma Sierra Club activists are partnering with other groups throughout the state during a month of Earth Day Outreach events to call for local solutions to Global Warming. As part of our Building Environmental Communities (BEC) Program, we are asking local and state government officials to "Step It Up," and cut carbon dioxide emissions.

The Sierra Club Cimarron and Green Country Groups are partnering with Sustainable Stillwater, Sustainable OKC, and Sustainable Tulsa in a Cool Cities Campaign to ask their mayors to do their part by signing the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement and beginning to find ways to embrace smart energy solutions.

Since there is no local sustainability group in Edmond, the Cimarron Group is partnering with UCO faculty and students as well as Edmond North and Edmond Memorial High Schools in a petition campaign to the mayor.

Packets of Cool Cities materials, with a letter of request to sign the Agreement, have been mailed to the mayors and council members of the four target Cool Cities.

To reach our goal to build a cleaner, smarter and safer energy future and meet and overcome the most urgent challenge facing us, all Americans must be part of the solution. To cut carbon emissions 2 percent a year for *(Continued on Page 2)*

View from the Chair

By
Larry
Edmison

Time to be optimistic . . .

The view from this chair looks great to me, for Sierra Club in Oklahoma. Of course I'm brand new to this position and haven't even been trained by National to be a Chapter Chair yet: I leave on Wednesday to San Francisco for that training. There is also the chance that the ex com members who voted for me to take this spot didn't tell me everything they know that may await me...but hey...you gotta trust some one, right?

Actually, I'm neither new to Sierra Club at the group level nor unfamiliar with many of the difficulties we face as an organization, but as I said I'm optimistic. Let me share with you some of my reasons.

The Club lost a very good friend and our experienced contract lobbyist when Keith Smith passed away so unexpectedly. This tragedy fell as we face some of our toughest times at the legislature with an evenly divided Senate. As a result of the political situation at the Capitol this year, the "Dirty Water Lobby" as Keith would have described them, i.e. the Farm Bureau et al, came to the session loaded with bills to turn back a decade of progress in regulation of CAFOs and

agricultural nonpoint source pollution regulation. They had plenty of unknowing authors that are still new to many of these issues as well as some old standbys who have carried their water before.

My reason for optimism is the wonderfully effective job that Billie Brown has done as our new lobbyist this year. With the help of the legislative committee and a number of like-minded friends at the legislature, she has achieved many successes. But, even more importantly to the successes, are your phone calls and e-mails to your legislators when Billie and the committee have called on you to act.

The session is not over and we must not let up, but we all have reason to be optimistic at how well Billie and the Club are doing so far.

Another reason for optimism is the changing mood in our country at a bipartisan political level as well as the grassroots level to finally confront the crisis of global warming. We should never have suffered the delays caused by the Bush administration, but throughout the country and across the political spectrum one can sense a building will to finally move forward and Step It Up! This is one of the Club's biggest priorities and the Oklahoma Chapter is actively engaged in trying to educate the body politic to effect progress!

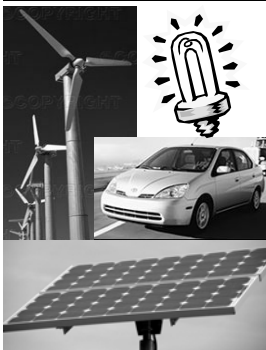
Of course the biggest reason for optimism has always been the sort of folks we have as members of this club. We have had some internal issues from time to time over the years such as the recent funding dilemma we faced with national over a significant bequest...but it seems to me we have always come back strong as an organization and committed to our shared ideals.

As Chapter Chair I will be working to try to strengthen all aspects of the Club, including outings and social events as well as political activism, because we all share different interests and we all need good reasons to remain engaged in Sierra Club. I also want to focus some effort on getting the three Oklahoma Groups together from time to time and to get to know each other better. I am not sure how best to do this but I will work on it.

I can't make it all happen, but each of you can. Stay involved, consider running for ex com (or getting on a committee) at the chapter or group level, or host a social event, or go on another outing or two...we have a lot of reasons to be optimistic about where we are headed.



BEC Earth Day Outreach Targets Cool Cities (Continued from Page 1)



each of the next 40 years means we must start right now to make different, better decisions about the energy we use at home, at work and as a nation.

Sierra Club volunteers can also help by taking these actions:

- Making energy and money-saving choices as a consumer.
- Increasing the energy efficiency of my car and home.

- Pushing my local utility to provide clean, renewable energy like wind and solar power.
- Asking my mayor and governor to adopt strong policies to reduce local carbon emissions
- Educating my candidates for state and federal office and ask them to take a position on clean

energy strategies and technologies that will create new jobs, build our economy, and put us on track to meet a 2% reduction in carbon emissions per year.

In an effort to get as much support for Cool Cities as possible, **WE NEED YOUR HELP**. If you are unable to sign a post card or petition throughout our Earth Day events, could you please e-mail the mayor of your target city requesting they sign the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement? And, could you ask your family, neighbors and friends in these cities to e-mail them?

- **Stillwater**—Mayor Roger McMillian (Mayor@stillwater.org)
- **Oklahoma City**—Mayor Mick Cornett (mayor@okc.gov)
- **Edmond**—Mayor Sandra Naifeh (sgnaifeh@cox.net)
- **Tulsa**—Mayor Kathy Taylor via Jack Blair (jblair@tulsacouncil.org)

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Sierra Club Supports Family Farmers

By Charles Wesner, Legislative Chair

The Sierra Club has always supported those issues that help the family farmers and small producers. We have opposed legislation and regulations that favored the factory farms to the disadvantage of family farms and the environment.

Our members know that the best stewards of the land are the families that live on the land. They are the ones who have a history with the land. They are the ones who have made a commitment to protect clean water and a healthful food supply and to pass on a way of life that is sustainable. We have members scattered all over the state but most are concentrated in urban areas.

But we are not so far removed from that family farm. My grandfather homesteaded in Washita County before statehood. I grew up chopping and pulling cotton, hauling hay, dehorning, castrating, and all the rest of it. Many of us know the hardships and what it means to be close to the land.

We also know that factory farms and large corporate agribusiness does not have that commitment to the land. Their commitment is to the short term interest of their stockholders and if possible to put family farms out of business or to force family farmers to work for them. They are ruthless. But they will tell you that the Sierra Club is your enemy.

Who is representing family farmers up here at the capital? Who is their lobbyist? Well, I can tell you who isn't representing them. It isn't Cargill. It isn't Monsanto. It isn't Seaboard or Tyson and, this may come as a surprise, it isn't the Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau is up here every day pretending to represent the small independent producer when in fact they are spending most of their time undermining them with legislation that benefits no one but the big corporate polluters.

Several of these bills took dead aim at the Attorney General and Secretary of Environment to prevent them from enforcing environmental laws that protect all of us from the hazardous wastes that

come from Confined Animal Feeding Operations. The bill's author, Senator Justice, tried to claim they were just trying to keep manure that is used properly or that was produced at rodeos, livestock shows and parades from being classified as hazardous like radioactive material. This of course was horse manure. It was not until the Tulsa World, the Oklahoman and other media began to focus on the issue for what it was that Senator Justice allowed substitute language that made his bill meaningless. It was passed to save face. Manure used in a non hazardous way was never a real issue.

The truth is that the Sierra Club has many of the same values and goals as family farmers and we should be working together to achieve them. Unfortunately there are many in the rural community who still believe the Farm Bureau myth that environmentalists are the enemy. The truth is the Farm Bureau is much more of an enemy than we could ever be.



ARBUCKLE SIMPSON NATURE FESTIVAL

Exploring Pontotoc Ridge Preserve; Blue River Ecology; Nocturnal Creatures; For the Birds and Fish Production are events being offered during the Arbuckle Simpson Nature Festival, May 4, 5 and 6 in Johnston, Pontotoc and Murray Counties.

This is the opportunity of a lifetime, announced Dr. Bill Pennington and Earl Brewer, coordinators of the event. The Nature Festival is offering a variety of tours and a lecture that should appeal to everyone. "We have one of the best areas for viewing nature in Oklahoma and this event will spotlight a natural resource not seen by most people," Brewer stated.

Registration is now open for the 2 day event which will originate from Murray State College. Event fee is \$25.00 per tour. Registration and information can be obtained by contacting the Johnston County Chamber of Commerce, 580-371-2175 or by visiting website: www.johnstoncountyok.org. Registration will begin each day at 7:00 a.m. at the Murray State College Student Union. Advance registrations are recommended, as size of tours is limited.

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Cimarron Group Hosts Oklahoma Screening of *Out of Balance: ExxonMobil's Impact on Climate Change* (www.worldoutofbalance.org)

Sierra Club hosted the Oklahoma screening of "Out of Balance: ExxonMobil's Impact on Climate Change" on March 30 at Mayflower Congregational Church. The film's director, Tom Jackson, is shown in the photo (on left) with Bill Dinger, Cimarron Group chair. Tom included Oklahoma City on his pre-view tour for the film, traveling across the country in an alternative fuel vehicle burning used vegetable oil and biodiesel. This film has been chosen for the National Sierra Club's Energy Film Festival. Sierra Club purchased two copies of the DVD, so these are available for loan to groups. Contact Susie (sshields@cox.net) if interested in checking out a DVD.



What Do The Galapagos Islands Teach Us? *(Continued from Page 1)*

For instance a species of sea bird that was originally thought to be migratory has been shown through DNA testing to be endemic to the Galapagos. The American Oystercatcher which in most cases eats oysters as the name implies, is not only genetically distinct in the Galapagos, but has adapted to different food as well. The result is a new species, the Galapagos Oystercatcher (which doesn't catch oysters in the Islands). Similarly what was once thought to be the Masked Booby has been shown by DNA study to be a completely different species now called the Nazca Booby, named for the Nazca tectonic plate. Similar results are found in DNA and other studies of



Galapagos Nazca Booby

lizards and other land species, sea life, as well as birds that were not at first thought to be endemic to the Islands but have now been clearly shown to be.

A second lesson the Galapagos Islands teaches us is humankind's ability to directly destroy a species or its environment to the point of causing extinction. Fur sea lions were nearly eradicated by whalers and sealers. In addition on some Islands the subspecies of Galapagos Tortoise endemic to the island was eradicated. This occurred because the tortoises could be stored in ships on their backs and remain alive for many months, thus providing sailors fresh meat during their voyage.

Fortunately the Islands also teach that human intervention can restore a population and bring it back from the edge of extinction. Work with land tortoises is one example of this positive lesson. Interesting in this regard is the story of Lonesome George. In 1971 park workers on Pinta Island found a lone

male tortoise where they had thought the island population to be extinct (the last sighting was in 1906). Lonesome George is now at the Darwin Research Station, and because so many tortoises had been moved to public and private zoos right before and at the turn of the century, a DNA search is now underway to seek a Pinta female to breed with George and bring back this subspecies (remember they can live for over two hundred years).

The next lesson is the harm caused by introduced plants and animals. We all know this lesson already; take Zebra Mussels, Fire Ants, or Musk Thistles in Oklahoma and elsewhere. Or how about kudzu or Africanized bees! In the Islands, goats are a big problem because they out-compete the land tortoises for

the low hanging vegetation and moisture laden lichen. If these introduced and now feral goats are not controlled, the tortoise may yet face a terrible fate.

For me the most important lesson was a reminder of how beautiful, fragile, unique, and inspiring nature can be. The Islands are awe-inspiring in many ways, not the least of which is the current Park System and real protections that Ecuador is providing to the Islands. In 1959 Ecuador declared 97% of the Islands to be a National Park. At first, however, they did little to regulate the park. Through the insistence of the citizenry, that has changed.

My suspicion is that in the Islands as here, good regulation and protection will only remain if the populace remains involved and vocal to the government. Maybe that is the biggest lesson for all of us, don't become complacent...never quit caring!

Five National BOD Candidates Endorsed by Oklahoma Chapter

Each time the election for Board of Directors (BOD) comes around some Oklahoma Chapter members have asked Executive Committee members if we know any of the candidates and whom we are going to vote for. Due to a recent rule change, the Chapter is now allowed to make official endorsements, a tradition we began last year when it first became available to us. We asked all candidates to submit a statement to the Chapter for endorsement consideration. Nine BOD candidates responded and requested the endorsement of the Oklahoma Chapter. They were Clark Buchner, Kenneth Langton, Ayelet Hines, Robbie Cox, Allison Chin, David Karpf, Sanjay Ranchod, Jerry Sutherland and Roberta Brashear. After reviewing their candidate statements, and based on personal contacts with several board members, the Executive Committee decided to endorse a slate of five candidates for the five open positions. Those endorsed are: **Clark Buchner, Robbie Cox, Allison Chin, Sanjay Ranchod, and Jerry Sutherland.**

FIRST ROUND OF STATE WATER PLAN PUBLIC MEETINGS SET

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board is commencing a five-year update of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan. The Water Resources Institute (WRI) at Oklahoma State University has been contracted to plan and conduct a series of meetings across the state to gather initial input. This is your chance as a citizen to speak up for the future of your local water supply. Find more on the web at: <http://okwaterplan.info> or e-mail: waterplan@okstate.edu. Following are the meetings that have been set.

April 19—Goodwell	May 31—Altus
April 26—Woodward	June 19—Enid
May 3—Alva	June 21—El Reno
May 8—Sayre	June 28—Kingfisher
May 15—Lawton	August 7—Shawnee
May 17—Weatherford	August 23—Kellyville



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Earth Day Outreach (Continued from Page 2)

For more information on this campaign, go to: www.coolcities.us/. If you are interested in launching a Cool Cities Campaign in your community, contact Susie Shields at sshields@cox.net. The Cool Cities Campaign can be done on a huge level such as the four April targets, or on a simpler level such as the one currently underway by Brian Figgins in Mustang.

The Club is participating in twenty-two outreach events this spring, including seven Step It Up! Climate Action Day events on April 14. Many of these will be over when you receive this newsletter, but hopefully you learned of them in your group newsletters in time to participate. Thanks are in order to the forty plus volunteers who made these events happen.

Sierra Club members who were involved in Step It Up! and Earth Day event planning are: Benton Howell and Nancy Smart (Edmond); Bill Dinger and Lisa Chambers (OKC); Martha Gregory and Dave Brown (Tulsa); Kathy Tibbits (Stillwell); Rachel Mackey and Ilda Hershey (Stillwater); Nicolette Nicar and Larry Edmison (Norman). A huge thank you to these people and all the volunteers (hopefully **YOU** are one) who helped get post cards signed.

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TRAINING COORDINATOR: VACANT	

NATURE FESTIVAL (Continued from Page 3)



Blue River photo by Kim Baker

Two topic tours are offered twice a day. Tours of 50 people will travel by charter buses to the various locations.

Editor's Note:

Due to length of this article as submitted, many of the details have been omitted here. Look for the entire article on our Oklahoma Chapter website.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SIERRA CLUB

We send out an appeal in March to each of our members, asking for contributions directly to our Chapter. These contributions really do make a difference to us, and are an important part of our Chapter's budget.

When you make a donation to the Chapter, you support the Sierra Club's work in your own backyard. You allow us to continue our work to protect wilderness and wildlife, to improve the quality of life in our cities, and to promote the enjoyment of nature.

Please be as generous as you are able - and remember, these funds directly affect your way of life in your neighborhood.

Mail your contribution to: Oklahoma Sierra Club
P.O. Box 60644, OKC, OK 73146-0644