Discoveries

News and views from Discovery Southeast Winter 2013 tablet edition

Digital Discoveries Upload this pdf to an iPad, android tablet or kindle reader for a multimedia reading/listening/viewing experience. Even on a lap- or desktop you may agree the new, horizontal format is friendlier than our old facing-pages layout.

One of our hopes in publishing for digital devices is that kicking back on the couch with your tablet will be more conducive to a meditative reading experience than hovering over a keyboard. Whether bushwacking with kids or philosophizing with elders, Discovery naturalists urge deceleration from mach-1 web-speed.

For example, that opening quote from Paul Shepard starts to make sense around the 7th reading.

Please share with us your successes and failures at viewing/listening on devices. As with any new technology, we anticipate glitches for early-adopters. Tell us what platform you're using (mac-pc), what hardware, what program or app, and what settings and plug-ins you needed to hear audio or view video. Thanks!

richard.carstensen@gmail.com

Backtracking

Discovery's past and future

Richard Carstensen

> *"I am ecologically an omnivore, and my attention is at least as versatile as my stomach and my location. Were I more keenly focused fore and rear, my spoor might be more obvious. As it is, these essays attest a record in twigs bent here and there, the odd muddy footprint, iotas of debris."*
>
> *Paul Shepard* ***Traces of an omnivore*** *1996 Island Press.*

Winter is when naturalists turn to tracking, and in the quiet hours, to retrospection. This winter, as *Discovery Southeast* takes on new roles as information synthesizers for our community, I'm glancing over the organizational backtrail. Who *are* we, anyway? How did this teeming, amphibious archipelago shape *Discovery's* half-meandering, half-visionary itinerary? How has our history braced us for what's around the next bend? Would our mentors—literary or befriended—approve of *Discovery's* many-braided trajectory?

After dropping out of college in 1971, I stumbled across a book by path-shunning ecologist Paul Shepard. His premise: the onset of agriculture and pastoralism, around 10,000 years ago, was an ecological and cultural disaster. I detected no shortcomings in his argument, so decided to become a hunter-gatherer. The logical place to do that was Alaska.

continued on page 7

In this issue

Banner: To a snowshoe hare, views behind demand as much attention as views ahead. Paul Shepard noted *"bulging lateral eyes, the better to judge the distance . . . [to] jaws and talons of its pursuers."*

For more lagomorphia, click ***audio*** button on edge of image.

Dear friends of Discovery

Recently one of our naturalists was asked to consider these questions: "*What are the needs of living things?*" and "*How do we know something is living?*" These are also the questions first graders in Juneau are grappling with as part of their science curriculum. As adults, it may seem quite obvious that living things need air, water, food and shelter, particularly given the devastating losses people experienced from Hurricane Sandy and the fire that destroyed the Gastineau Apartments here in Juneau last fall. But for young children, it is not always easy to tell the difference between living, dead, and non-living things.

These questions also serve as the basis for a new pilot Nature Studies program for first and second graders at Auke Bay Elementary School. When we headed outside last fall to investigate living and non-living things, we found plenty to be curious about including decaying fish, rotting leaves and plants, rocks, and other specimens. Some of our discoveries are captured in this audio-link starring Ken Leghorn and friends. ***audio***

As we plan winter sessions for the first and second graders, teachers and naturalists alike are excited to do some tracking. Finding fresh tracks in the snow kindles curiosity for young children as well as adults and questions emerge: "*What animal made those tracks? Where did they come from and where are the going?*" Tracks also provide evidence that living things need space. While young children might at first understand this to mean the space a tree's roots need to grow, later, when they see the movement of the forest through tracking, they may begin to grasp the importance of habitat to the various animals that live in the forest.

Discovery's Parade of Species, July 4th, 2012

Most importantly, it is through exploring their own backyard, a space where they can discover the wonders of nature, and wander around leaving their own tracks, that the depth of their learning is bolstered by the experience and a sense of place develops.

While we enjoy new opportunities like the expansion of Nature Studies, our ongoing programs continue to be a great success. Our summer 2012 Outdoor Explorers camp operated

Discoveries is published by *Discovery Southeast.* Founded in 1989 in Juneau and serving communities throughout Southeast Alaska, *Discovery* is a nonprofit organization promoting direct, hands-on learning from nature through natural science and outdoor education programs for youth, adults, and teachers. *Discovery Southeast* naturalists deepen the connections between the people and nature.

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at 94% capacity with 110 participants, and our first 4 Discovery Days this school year have been full. We also bought a used program van with the help of the Juneau Community Foundation's Blackwell Fund and a variety of special matching donations from businesses, foundations, and members. I also started my 6th year as Executive Director in October and with help from an excellent staff and board of directors, and with support from members like you, we raised over one million dollars in those first 5 years, and added more than $25,000 to our reserve funds.

As we look towards our 25th anniversary of delivering high quality, hands-on nature education programs in 2014, I hope that you will continue to support our mission of "connecting people to nature." We are proud to

Above: Kanaan Bausler leading Discovery Day at Treadwell, February 2012.
Left: Beth Weigel leading fire building at Skater's Cabin, November 2012.

again be an official *Pick.Click.Give.* organization, which means you can donate a portion or even all of your Permanent Fund Dividend to Discovery Southeast. You can choose to make a donation when you file, or you can add or change your *Pick.Click.Give.* donation by visiting *www.pfd.state.ak.us*. Last year, 89 people donated over $6300 through this program and our goal is to reach $10,000 from 100 people. Whether you can donate $100 or more of your PFD, thank you for your on-going support and please visit us at *www.discoverysoutheast.org* or follow us on Facebook to see what tracks we have been leaving, and where we are heading.

Sincerely,
Beth A. Weigel, PhD
Executive Director

Discovery news & thank yous

Thank you Alaska Zipline Adventures!

Hundreds of Juneau families came to Eaglecrest on a Saturday this August to enjoy Mountain Zip Fest, a fundraiser hosted by Alaska Zipline Adventures. They raised over $7,000, all of which went directly to Discovery Southeast.

Alaska Zipline Adventures is a locally owned and operated ecotourism company, with a civic-minded philosophy. Check them out next time you or your guest is looking for a summer adventure.

The event was co-sponsored by local radio stations Mix 106, KINY, KXJ, Taku 105, and KJNO. Generous in-kind support came from Printing Trade Company and Eaglecrest. Juneau is fortunate to have community-minded businesses like these. Please join us in thanking them for supporting nature education programs in Southeast Alaska!

New wheels for *Discovery Southeast*

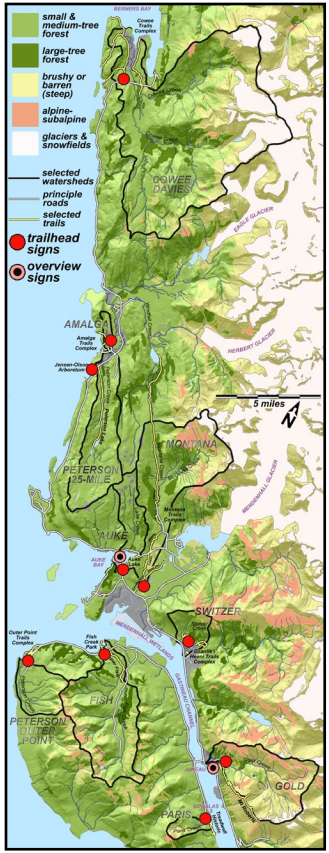
Discovery Southeast supporters stepped up big when our van's transmission went out just before summer camp. We were able to purchase a newer van thanks to a generous donation through the Juneau Community Foundation's Blackwell Fund and significant contributions from Juneau Emergency Medical Associates, The Skaggs Foundation, The City and Borough of Juneau, and many *Discovery Southeast* members. And a special thanks to Terry Schwarz for driving the van down from Anchorage. It should provide many years of safe, reliable transportation for Juneau kids to get outdoors . . . and it looks awesome! Keep an eye out for it around town, and thanks for your support!

Above: Charter School makes full-body tracks on *Discovery* outing at Methodist Camp, Eagle River, January 2013. • **Left**: Our new van!

Think *Discovery* when you *Pick.Click.Give.*

Alaska's *Pick.Click.Give* program allows residents to make a direct donation from their PFD dividend. Last year it raised 2.2 million dollars for Alaska non-profits, with only 4% of PFD recipients giving.

Pick.Click.Give. has become an important revenue source for *Discovery Southeast*, raising over $6,000 last year. Please think of us when you prepare your next PFD! Any donation you make, large or small, helps provide hands-on nature education to Southeast Alaskans.



Locations of 10 trailhead and 2 overview or master signs. Corresponding watersheds outlined in black. Most of the watersheds have multiple ownerships, but at least a portion of each selected trail system crosses CBJ land.

Discovery trailhead signs

Culminating a project begun in 2007 for CBJ Parks & Recreation, a series of 3-panel interpretive signs was installed at 10 trailheads throughout the Borough in summer 2011. Written and illustrated by Richard Carstensen, the signs present watershed-based descriptions of Juneau hiking destinations.

This project was the brainchild of Marc Matsil, former P&R director. Rather than generic, identification-oriented content typical of interpretive signs, Marc asked us for big-picture, landscape views explaining the special geo-ecology of each watershed—a task well suited to our skills and interests. We also soon learned that Marc shared our love of *detail*, typically frowned upon by professional sign designers.[1] When Marc also demanded scientific names in parentheses for all species (*!*), we knew *Discovery* and CBJ P&R would be compatible partners.

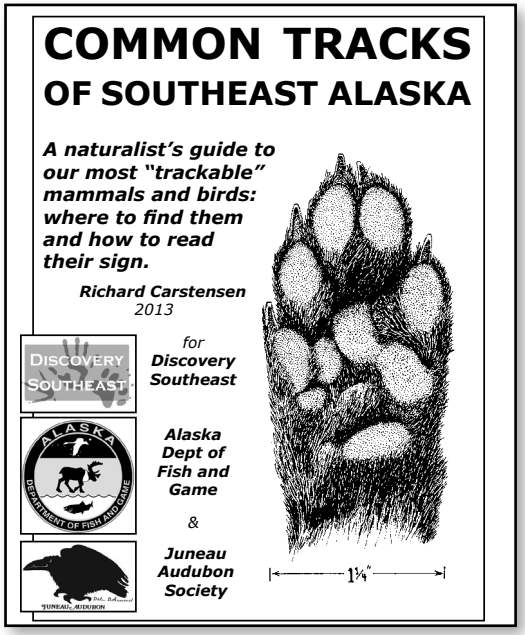
Complementing our trailhead sign project is a 72-page, 8.5x11, full-color Discovery Guide, entitled *Natural History of Juneau trails: a watershed approach*, to be printed—we hope—this winter. We also created a 4-fold interpretive brochure for each trail. Not yet printed, these are available now through our office as *.pdfs* you can bring into the field on your smartphone.[2]

Signs at trailhead to Outer Point. Center panel of each triptych has a high-resolution annotated airphoto. Left panels emphasize geology, glacial history, etc., & right panels usually treat ecology & human history.

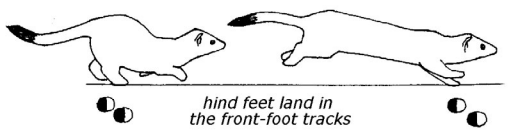
Early in the scoping process, when we told friends *Discovery* was designing signs, we heard unfavorable comments about sign proliferation along Juneau's favorite trails—an understandable distaste. Most signs are contracted to out-of-town companies with limited knowledge of Southeast natural history, and seem to prioritize visitors over residents who walk trails often or even daily. We decided to restrict our signs to trailheads, and to include historical series, habitat profiles, and geographic detail that reveal something new every time you stop to browse. More interested in wildlife than rocks? Fine! Maybe a decade from now, you'll have an "ahah!" moment, scrutinizing that geo map. No rush; the projected lifespan of these signs is about 20 years.

1 One federal administrator, when viewing the drafts, referred to our signs as "books-on-a-stick." Some say the core message of a sign should be digestible at a walk; we're okay with forfeiting that speed-reader component of our potential audience.

2 Sophistication of digital field guides is mushrooming. In the not-distant future, you'll download content from the DSE website for off-line navigation-&-interpretation with your phone or sleeve-protected tablet. Our voluminous scoping documents for the 10 watersheds average 60 pages; it only remains to make the info web-friendly and geographically rectified.



Cover of our tracking booklet In press at Alaska Litho. Contact our office (463-1500) to order your copy.



New edition of tracking booklet

Tracking and sign interpretation has been the core of our winter Nature Studies program since we started DSE back in the late 1980s. In 1991 we created a pocket guide to tracking in conjunction with workshops for teachers in Juneau and 5 other Southeast communities who took their students outdoors in winter. It soon became clear that interest in tracking was widespread—by no means limited to k-12 classes (or to snowy conditions).

That little booklet has long been out of print. This year, with funding from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and Juneau Audubon Society, *Discovery* has substantially expanded the 1991 edition. The 56-page, 4x5-inch booklet should be ready around the time you receive this newsletter.

In the past 2 decades many tracking guides have been written, and we don't wish to compete with them. Serious trackers will also want to own Mark Elbroch's encyclopedic *Mammal Tracks & Sign* (Stackpole Books, 2003). But *Discovery's* tracking booklet provides local detail missing from continental guides—just as a regional bird checklist complements North American bird guides. Range maps and tables give habitat preferences and distribution within the Alexander Archipelago.[1]

1 For more detailed taxonomy and distribution, see MacDonald, S. & J. Cook. 2007. *Mammals & amphibians of Southeast Alaska*. Special Publication No 8. Museum of Southwestern Biology. Available at this link:
http://www.msb.unm.edu/publications/documents/SpecPub-MSB-N08-McDonaldCook2007.pdf

Shrew movie (*click to play*) In July, 2012, hikers on Perseverance trail encountered an irruption of shrews. Even longtime Juneau naturalists had never seen anything like it. They moved so fast all my still shots came out blurred, so I gave up and took a movie. (Bomboid freneticism suggested the sound track—*Flight of the bumblebee*.) - ***RC***

As with audio-links, embedded video is a new experiment for us at *Discovery*. Please give us feedback! Do the links work on your computer, tablet, smartphone?

continued from page 1

Paul Shepard (1925-1996) was the first academic in America to hold a chair in human ecology—first to focus the beam of scholarship on relationships between human minds and ancestral habitats. When he knew his personal sojourn in that habitat was coming to a close, he wrote what became the Preface to the posthumously published *Traces of an omnivore*. A classic example of Shepardian prose-density is in the quote that opens this *Discovery Southeast* retrospective, snipped from the Preface to *Traces*.

In the Introduction to *Traces*, environmental philosopher Jack Turner called Shepard our most radical thinker about nature since Thoreau:

> *"To understand how radical Shepard is, consider this: the major environmental organizations could achieve all their goals and still not heal the pathology Shepard believes is destroying the Earth. . . Shepard offers an explanation of who we are, why we are destructive, and how we might change that* ***emphasizes child-rearing practises****, [*RC emphasis*] not choices we might make as adults."*

Tracking vibram Sometimes tracks tell you as much as direct observation. If you only saw these guys' bootprints, could you spot the non-resident environmentalist?

Moments after I took this photo on Revillagigedo Island in 2003, the Ketchikan Ranger District salvage-sale administrator roared off in his green truck to get another cut out, and Jeremy levitated cacophonously back into the sky in Greenpeace's SWAT helicopter. But a master tracker could story-tell the encounter from the dusty roadside, just by reading the soles of their footwear.

Note that visual clues, such as hair length and tatoos, may be misleading. Of course the hydration pack gets you somewhere, as do self-righteous versus defensive postures. Oh yeah, and the t-shirts kind of blow their cover.

Discovery has led Juneau's children into wild places for a quarter century. Although we don't advocate environmental policy, in my opinion—and I'm guessing that of a committed host of past and present board members, teachers and parent-volunteers—our legacy of kids outdoors makes us the most cost-effective "conservation group" in Southeast Alaska. My Harborview Nature Studies students of the 1980s now hear routinely from their own inspired children about the latest Nature Study outings—a community pedigree of ecological maturation.

Paul Shepard was an amazingly under-recognized pioneer. But his intellectual heirs—educators such as David Sobel and Richard Louv—are finally convincing schools, landscape architects, health workers and politicians of the fatal consequences of "nature deficit disorder" (a Louvianism the word-smith Shepard might have grimaced over but would surely acknowledge as our fundamental flaw). In homocentric cultures, childhood obesity is more attention-getting than global environmental unravelling. Oh well, any foot in the door, I guess.

And there are hints that conservation groups cited by Turner in his 1996 ode to Shepard have since recognised the regrettable connection between place-starved childhood and environmental train wrecks

Left: Wolf scat on alpine ridge crest, with toe bone, claw and sunbleached hair of hoary marmot. • **Below right:** DSE senior naturalist Steve Merli breakfasting at home.

we orchestrate as adults. Peter Karieva—the new cage-rattling lead scientist for The Nature Conservancy—immediately scandalized his biological army by claiming "*I'm not a biodiversity guy*." TNC's principle *modus operandi* has been to buy wild places. Those acquisitions are usually remote, if only because civilized land is unaffordable.

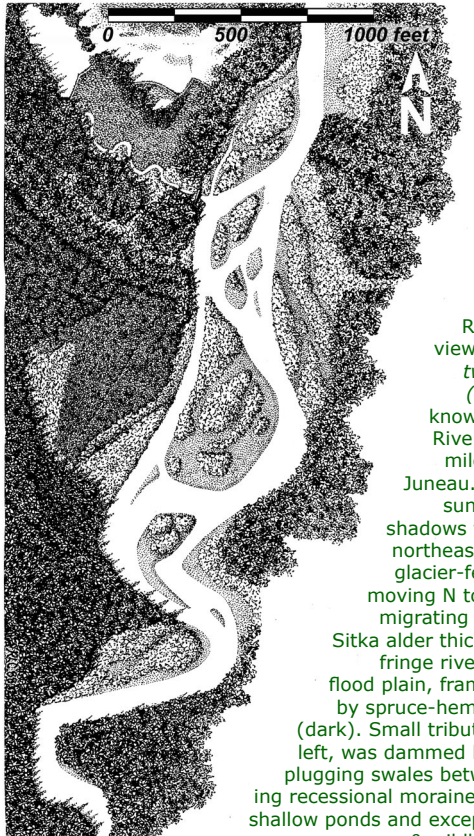
Eschewing remoter-the-better stewardship, Karieva is prodding his organization toward inner-city education and urban conservation, a huge shift for TNC, but essential, he feels, for any conservation group hoping to stay relevant in the 21st Century. He cites studies revealing that the stereotype of an environmentalist among urban youth is female, blonde, preachy, and not very fun to hang out with. ("*Hey!*" says Karieva. "*That's my daughter!*")

Throughout the urban United States, neither mall-kids nor most conservationists could draw you a credible map of their watershed, or name 5 neotropical migrants who sing in their perilous backyards. That's not merely an environmental liability. It truncates humanity. Nature illiteracy is the disorder *Discovery* was founded to tackle. Paul Shepard again:

> *"The child must have a residential opportunity to soak in a place. . .The adolescent and adult must be able to return to that place to ponder the visible substrate of his or her personality. Place in human genesis has this episodic quality.*
>
> *Knowing who you are is a quest across the first 40 years of life. Knowing who you are is impossible without knowing where you are. This is what makes the commercial ravagement of the American countryside so tragic—not that it is changed and modernized but that the tempo of alteration so outstrips the rhythms of individual human life."*

Shepard's call for episodic return to that foundational place is personally unsettling. For me, the place was Maryland farm country, and I haven't been back in 52 years. What bird song would rush back to me, if I could run through those fields again? What would I remember of the feel-&-smell of garter snakes, twining in my fingers? I envy my buddy Clay Good, who grew up in Juneau and had the smarts to stay here. Every spring, Clay says, when he first catches scent of sticky cottonwood buds, he's 8 years old again, hurtling through warm air on his bike, knowing who he is.

To adult graduates of our early Nature studies classes, Steve Merli was and is the "nature-dude," pied piper of backyard geography. In Merliland and Lubindale, scat is cool! Edible even, some



River tracks

Raven's-eye view of Asx'ée, *twisted tree (dam)*, also known as Eagle River, about 30 miles north of Juneau. Afternoon sun casts tree shadows toward the northeast. Powerful glacier-fed current, moving N to S, carves migrating meanders. Sitka alder thickets (pale) fringe river on active flood plain, framed in turn by spruce-hemlock forest (dark). Small tributary, upper left, was dammed by beavers plugging swales between arching recessional moraines, creating shallow ponds and exceptional fish & wildlife habitat.

say.[1] One afternoon of bushwacking with Discovery's senior naturalists provides about 4-month's inoculation against nature-deficit-disorder. More broadly, over time, it inoculates our community against perception that love of home is somehow humorless or preachy or unhip.[2]

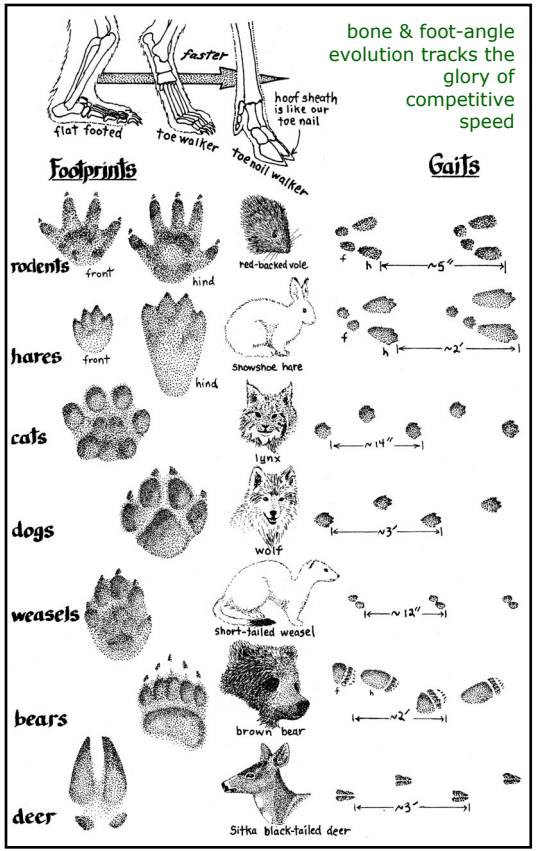
Everything is a track

By the early 1990s, counting toes and measuring straddles, it occurred to *Discovery* naturalists there was no qualitative difference between tracking shrews and tracking glaciers. Time scales and spatial perspectives differ, but both puzzles yield to deductive reasoning. Along with "*keep your space—save your face*" (Merliism from social bushwacks through devil's club that blossomed into attentiveness-metaphor), the mantra "*everything is a track*" should probably be embossed on every *Discovery* product and outing-announcement.

History has many faces, and we may be programmed to recognise them at different stages of personal and communal maturation. The timing sometimes surprises even senior educators. In my first years with *Discovery's* Nature Studies program, I naively projected a series of historical air photos of the slopes above Harborview Elementary to very young students. Educational theory suggested at that age they'd be bored by vertical

1 Athough Dave Lubin now inhabits Sitka, he was one of our founding naturalists. Years after he left Juneau, I spoke with young adults who told me in awe how Davey tossed porky turds into the air and caught them in his mouth. I didn't have the heart to explain the molded-tootsie-roll trick.

2 I was amazed to read in Jonathan Raban's *Passage to Juneau: a sea and its meanings* (1999, Pantheon Books, NYC) that he considered American "nature writers"—Lopez, Snyder, Nelson—to be unamusing evangelicals. Although a competent seaman who piloted his cabin cruiser up the inside passage in the wake of Vancouver (another gloomy Englishman), Raban was terrified on land, prey to that bear-behind-every-bush neurosis dogging humans raised by TVs instead of naturalists. Apparently Raban never endured an evening of incapacitating laughter at the irreverence of Richard Nelson or Hank Lentfer. Granted, their humor can be winnowed thin by lawsuit-savvy editors, until the page is relatively free of it. But neither do we curse in print. Gary Nabhan, the desert naturalist, pegs literary Rabanism securely to the dirt. Gary shuns the marketing term "nature writing," relegated to 4 feet or so of shelf space in the typical down-south bookstore. As he points out, ALL writing is nature writing, and books bracketting those marginalized 4 feet might as meaningfully be pigeonholed "urban disfunctional writing."



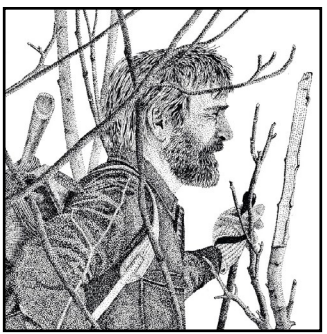
perspective; their hand-drawn "maps" pictured houses and lolipop-trees in side-view. But to my delight, it was impossible to keep kids in their seats. They kept running up to the screen to backtrack their homes: in 1984, 1962, 1948 . . . and the incomprehensible dark ages of 1929.

Backtracking community succession is my core interpretive tool when entering forest or bog or uplift meadow with students. And slowly I'm pushing deeper, backtracking isostacy and crustal plate collisions. Decades ago, noticing my inattentiveness to landform evolution, master-naturalist Greg Streveler obliquely mentioned that geo-blindered trail-followers (*i.e.* me) needed to learn to "*turn on the projector*," to run it backwards and forwards, watching oceans and mountains rise and fall. (He observed recently I'm getting a little better.)

Speaking to the future

One of the most beautiful things about Tlingit culture is the way elders introduce themselves. Before speaking, protocol requires tracing of maternal and paternal lineage—the twining tree of houses, clans, kwáans and moieties. The speaker often explains she's giving voice to those ancestors, especially important when addressing students too young ever to have known the elders' elders. I've tried this a few times in my stumbling, Viking way, and noticed that it bestows upon speaker and listener a kind of focus otherwise rare in secular, Western communication. After ancestors pass, they can only speak through us. What are they whispering to the future?

Discovery is now old enough to connect not only a student to a place, but to thread together generations of shoulder-standers, pronouncing the country's real names, sleuthing succession and metamorphosis and genealogy. Paul Shepard, Dan Bishop, Frank Maier and Pam Carstensen have walked into the forest. But I hear them, loud and clear.



Left: 1991 handout for tracking classes. I haven't used a calligraphy pen for almost 20 years. Google "*devolution of handwriting*" for eye-opening debates on whether keyboards have rendered pens passé. • **Right**: Hydrologist Dan Bishop, willow thicket, Chilkat River. Stem on right ridden down and snapped by moose seeking uppermost twigs.

Steve Merli

Knowing natural relationships

Scott Burton

"As a kid, when it was hard, I found myself in the woods or the ocean."

Steve Merli

Over 20 years ago, Steve Merli was among the Alaska Discovery employees that wanted to do more than take tourists on trips—they wanted to give back to the local community. So they formed *Discovery Southeast*.[1] Merli became the first *Discovery Southeast* naturalist at Glacier Valley Elementary and he's been there ever since. When he takes his students out this winter, he will be midway though his 22nd year in the field. During his tenure, his method has evolved into a unique, student-centric way of experiencing the nature of Southeast Alaska.

When Merli began at Glacier Valley in 1989, he says he was too focused on data collection such as flow rates in Jordan Creek, soil samples, and plant species lists. Although data like these are important, says Merli, he wasn't spending enough time examining the relationships around the creek. He began directing the kids to make more observations around the whole tributary—relationships between the water and the banks, what happened where the water flowed at different rates, variations in vegetation, and the effects a fallen tree had on current. The students would then go back to the classroom and map the creek on huge sheets of paper. Merli would also instruct the kids to imagine being a part of the creek, maybe as caddisfly larvae, and consider what adaptations might benefit them. "*These creations made the experience more tangible than just data collection,*" says Merli.

The next relationship Merli thought needed more focus was between the students themselves and the environment. "*If a student is cold and miserable,*" he says, "*he or she will not be open to learn or experiencing anything*." An example of this is the sleeping bag experiment Merli organized for years. After borrowing a plethora of bags from Alaska Discovery, he'd lay them in the woods in the middle of winter. Once inside the cocoons, the students warmed, and felt comfortable and

1 For a 15-minute audio profile on the history of *Discovery*, click the radio button, lower right of DSE home page: *www.discoverysoutheast.org*

Merli conducting survival workshop at edge of alpine karst precipice, October, 1998. Students were Jake Jacoby—now a biology teacher at Thunder Mountain High School—and Hank Lentfer, who, in his 40s, finally got out of that leghold.

safe. Once their basic needs were met, the young naturalists were open to experiencing the winter environment.[2]

> *"To be there, on the ground, with those trees, and with critters that are there all the time—they were able to gain some affinity with those other beings they share the planet with. There's no other way to get at this affinity. It will never come though a video. Parts of that knowing are literally coming from the tissues in their bodies."*

The importance of a holistic experience that includes a connection between the mind and the body became a new focus of Merli's and directly related to his occupational work in psycho-physical therapy.

The sleeping bag experiment was great, but it was only one session a year and Merli wanted the students to feel comfortable outside more of the time. One of the ways he helped them build this comfort was to become more connected with what their bodies were telling them. But how does one get a third, fourth, or fifth grader to become mindful of their bodies? Open the gate, that's how. After his in-classroom pre-sessions, Merli will stop his students just before they gain the trail system that webs the Jordan Creek drainage and the base of Thunder Mountain. With their feet firmly planted shoulder-width apart, the students follow

Merli's instructions through a series of moves that blend attention-gaining techniques and physical sensation awareness he calls "*opening the gate*." "*Opening the gate is an invitation to slow down and experience just your physical presence in the here now,*" says Merli. The exercises help the kids make connections with their bodies and prepare for the slower pace of life in the woods. "*Slowing kids down. It's amazing what happens there*."

No matter how much one mentally or physically prepares students however, there are certain days in Southeast where it just doesn't matter. Merli recalls one of those days with

2 For Steve's article on the sleeping bag experiment, see *Winter adaptations: getting cozy in rain on snow*, in the Winter 2002 edition of *Discoveries*, archived on the DSE website at *www.discoverysoutheast.org/newsletter*

a group of fifth graders when Southeast earned its rain-forest designation.

> *"By fifth grade, the students begin to slip into that form-over-function thing where they'll wear a cotton hoodie on a rainy day. So we're outside and everyone is wet, cold and miserable. I stop and ask them what their bodies are telling them. 'To go back to school!' they said in near unison. 'Alright,' I said, 'let's go.' So we go back and take off as many of the wet clothes as possible. Then, still utterly soggy, I had them use that fresh, tactile knowledge to write letters to the next fifth grade class on how to dress for their upcoming field trip."*

Being flexible and turning a negative into a positive like this is another way Merli has been successful over the years. Although the students probably didn't learn much about trees and shrubs or birds that day, they did learn about themselves—how a group of mammals are affected by heat loss. After all, we too, mind and body, are a part of the nature of Southeast Alaska.

To hear Steve talk about the importance of natural places for kids, click here. ***audio***

What would Raven see?

Richard Carstensen

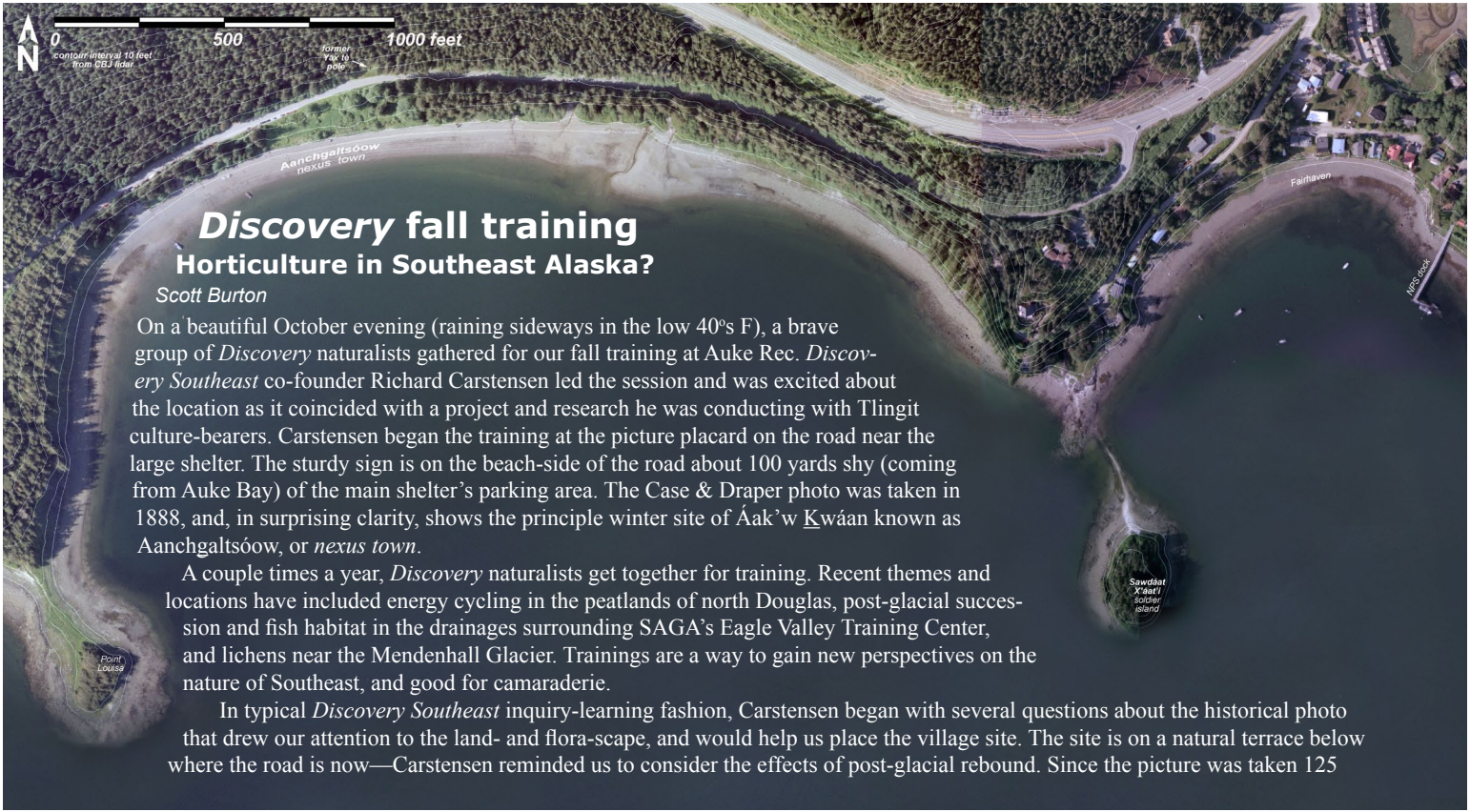
In June, 2010, with DSE naturalist Kathy Hocker and Clay Good (now a DSE board member) I participated in a memorable culture camp organized by Goldbelt Heritage Foundation. We created a manual for GHF, blending naturalists' skills with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), entitled *What would Raven see? New & old ways of knowing: tools for exploring the land of the Áak'w & T'aakú people.*

One day, Clay and I stood below the Yax té Raven totem at Auke Rec. I was jockeying around for the best ground-based photo angle, envisioning a vertical bar for the cover of our manual.

But Clay was mulling over Adaa analgéin—*Raven's way of studying the world.* "If you want to know what Raven sees, you need to look over his shoulder," he concluded. To our amazement, a perfect, fat-branched, open-grown spruce grew directly behind the totem, and we were soon lining up Point Louisa against Yéil's classy wing coverts. It wasn't until examining our photos afterward that we noticed the sapsucker holes riddling Raven's back.

The Yax té pole commemorates a barbeque in which Raven sent his littler helper birds into the forest for skunk cabbage to wrap a king salmon he'd fooled into coming ashore. While they were off on their errands, Raven ate the whole salmon. On their return, the little birds found him belching contentedly.

In 2010, the Yax té pole, carved from cedar in 1941 by Hoonah's Frank St. Clair, was pronounced structurally unsound, and taken down for restoration. There may be a moral here about the relative merits of intelligence and honesty. Adaa analgéin will fill your plate, but it's friends who've got your back.



Discovery fall training

Horticulture in Southeast Alaska?

Scott Burton

On a beautiful October evening (raining sideways in the low 40ºs F), a brave group of *Discovery* naturalists gathered for our fall training at Auke Rec. *Discovery Southeast* co-founder Richard Carstensen led the session and was excited about the location as it coincided with a project and research he was conducting with Tlingit culture-bearers. Carstensen began the training at the picture placard on the road near the large shelter. The sturdy sign is on the beach-side of the road about 100 yards shy (coming from Auke Bay) of the main shelter's parking area. The Case & Draper photo was taken in 1888, and, in surprising clarity, shows the principle winter site of Áak'w Kwáan known as Aanchgaltsóow, or *nexus town*.

A couple times a year, *Discovery* naturalists get together for training. Recent themes and locations have included energy cycling in the peatlands of north Douglas, post-glacial succession and fish habitat in the drainages surrounding SAGA's Eagle Valley Training Center, and lichens near the Mendenhall Glacier. Trainings are a way to gain new perspectives on the nature of Southeast, and good for camaraderie.

In typical *Discovery Southeast* inquiry-learning fashion, Carstensen began with several questions about the historical photo that drew our attention to the land- and flora-scape, and would help us place the village site. The site is on a natural terrace below where the road is now—Carstensen reminded us to consider the effects of post-glacial rebound. Since the picture was taken 125

years ago, Juneau's half-inch-per-year uplift rate means land has risen some 5 feet. Looking seaward beyond the sign, the landscape drops into a thicket of salmonberry, elderberry, and one of the plants Carstensen was excited to tell us about.

"*What is the first thing you notice?*" he asked about the picture. (Readers, please take a moment and examine the picture.) Someone noticed the unique landscape around the houses and wondered if they were middens, or refuse piles. Another naturalist noticed how the rounded features were covered with what appeared to be a uniform ground cover. Unless gardened, an area like that should be covered with a more raggedy mixture of tall herbs such as fireweed, lupine, cow parsnip or other carrot family members. "*What's covering the middens?*"

"*Nettles*," said Carstensen, "*cultivated nettles.*"

"*Horticulture in Southeast?*"

Yes, and Aanchgaltsóow is only one of the Southeast sites where evidence of cultivation has been found. In their 2006 book *Keeping it living: Traditions of plant use and cultivation on the northwest coast of North America*, editors Deur and Turner explain that plant cultivation was more widespread and intensive among Northwest peoples than recognized by early explorers or contemporary historians.

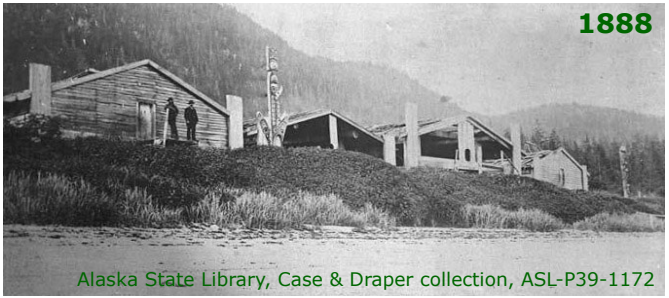
"*Nettles are like spinach, only better,*" said Carstensen.

Stinging nettle (*Urtica doica*) is the first spring green at Auk Rec. Even at summer solstice, unfolding top leaves are still edible. Mature plants were harvested for fiber.

Collect with gloves! Blanching kills the sting.

We left the picture and walked out onto the beach through what is now a chest-high thicket of thimbleberry and cow parsnip. Looking upslope, Carstensen momentarily shifted our focus to a new puzzler. Please click here for audio. ***audio***

We then walked back up from the beach to examine the flora. Among the foliage we did find some nettles. Due to lateness of season and competition from other plants however, nettles weren't nearly as dominant as their 1888 counterparts. Another (introduced?)



Alaska State Library, Case & Draper collection, ASL-P39-1172

1888 photo: Aanchgaltsóow—*nexus town*—winter village at today's Auke Rec. **Retake, March, 2010**, shows late-lamented Yax té totem in right distance, above the highway. The audio file helps explain why background hills are now blocked by 100-foot spruce. Arrow marks photopoint tree for preceding totem shot.

In the 1888 photo, the dark monoculture above paler beach-fringe ryegrass (*Leymus mollis*) is apparently cultivated nettle. Nettles still abound on the site, but now compete with taller vegetation. Nettles are uncommon in Southeast, yet frequently found around former Native villages, camps and fort sites.

cultural-site indicator was red-osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*), a shrub known for medicinal properties—and on transboundary rivers a staple for moose.

The fall light began to ebb so we strolled down the beach towards the main shelter. A cool and wet wind blew from the south. Our meandering boot prints were the only ones in the damp sand—the benefit of a snotty fall day. Back at the shelter we started a fire in fireplace and did final preparations for our potluck meal. Among other menu items, we enjoyed hot venison stew huddled around the fire. We shared stories of successes in the classroom and on hikes and enjoyed each other's company. The only dish that seemed missing was nettles. We decided we would have our next training in the spring when they taste the best.

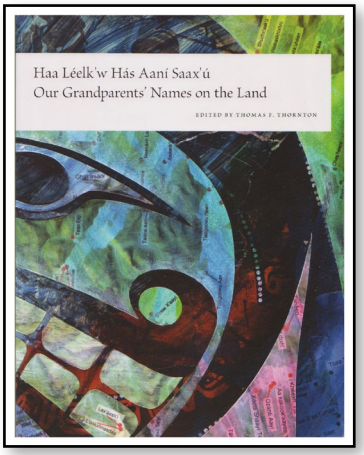
NOTE: Discovery trainings are open to anyone interested. If you'd like to join one, please call the office at 463-1500.

Book review

Haa L'éelk'w Hás Aani Saax'ú: Our grandparents' names on the land

Richard Carstensen

For 3 years I've looked forward to publication of Tom Thornton's compendium on Tlingit place names, *Haa L'éelk'w Hás Aani Saax'ú* (University of Washington Press, Seattle). Finally released in spring, 2012, this extraordinary cultural atlas is a gift to all Alaskans from elders, linguists and cartographers. Everyone who loves Southeast should know and use this book. (I've never said that of any other publication).



In the fall, 1999 issue of *Discoveries*, I wrote an article called *No Name Bay and other misnomers* (archived on our website), based largely upon discussions with Thornton. I'd just spent a rainy fall reading Donald Orth's lovely but culturally asymmetric *Dictionary of Alaska place names* (USGS Prof. Paper 567, 1967). Discovering how shamefully my culture has buried the Tlingit past, I grew frustrated by Important White Guy Names (IWGNs). Telling exactly nothing about the land we live in, IWGNs *disconnect* us from places. Names honoring distant (or even local) people cover deep history of favorite places like tasteless paint on fine hardwood: Stephens Passage, Seymour Canal, Point Young. Admiralty Island is an IWGN on steroids, named for not one but a bellicose slew of alpha caucasians. Orth also lets slip the phenomenon of IW**S**Ns (Important White *Ship* Names). Kuiu Island's Saginaw Bay (like Saginaw Passage off Shelter Island) was named for the steam-propelled warship that destroyed 2 Kake villages there—about as thoughtful as naming Pearl Harbor "Hirohito Cove!"

Around Juneau, our place names are doubly meaningless. George Vancouver, most prolific of IWG-Namers, saddled our dominant landscape features with eternal homage[1] to Brits who never saw, or cared much about Alaska. On top of that, he never saw the Juneau area *himself!* Seriously ill, George waited at anchor near the outer coast while survey teams under Whidbey rowed the northern archipelago. He named features sight-unseen from cartographers' impressionistic sketch maps.

1 Eternal, that is, until we declare independence. In my opinion, Thornton (2012) makes the honorable path inevitable.

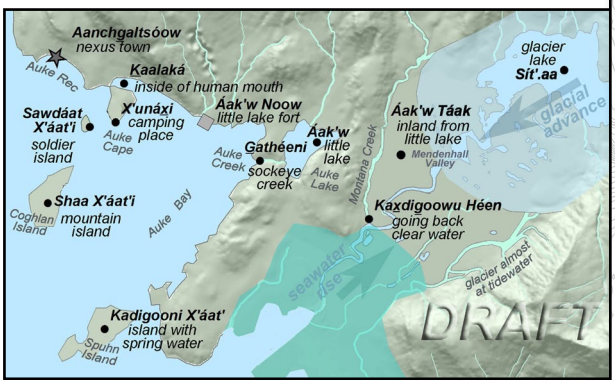
Clockwise: Liana Wallace—Áak'w Kwáan, L'eeneidí, Yaxte Hít (Big Dipper House), with high school students at mouth of Kaxdigoowu Héen, *going back clear water* (Montana Creek), Feb 14, 2013. Red dot on map shows location. This college-credit class is a collaboration of Goldbelt Heritage Foundation & UAS School of Education, entitled *Investigating Traditional Ecological Knowledge*. Liana told of excavating a ~700-year-old fish trap here, and of the L'eeneidí shaman/stream-steward whose cabin stood nearby. *Discovery* is partnering with Liana to merge our natural history interpretive skills with the vast and growing collection of local lore and archival treasures she's assembling for her new great-granddaughter. For example, our . . . . • **1910 map** shows westward migration of Mendenhall River[1] that undermined the site of a cabin mapped in 1910 by Adolph Knopf, USGS. On Knopf's masterful survey, miner's cabins were almost always connected to dashed lines indicating trails or primitive roads. None led to cabin (red square) downstream from Kax confluence. Was this the shaman's fish camp in Liana's story? • **Draft excerpt** from map in review for Áak'w Aaní. Place names from Thornton (2012) are being reviewed by L'eeneidí and Wooshkeetaan culture bearers. Ultimately, we envision a smartphone version linked to audio files of elders pronouncing and explaining the names.

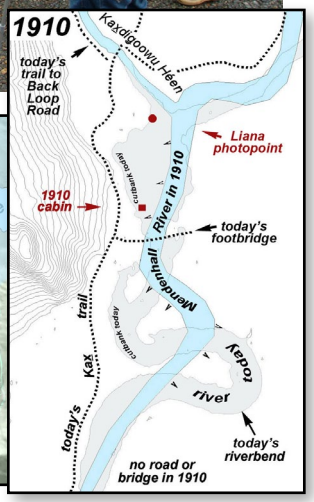
1 IWGNed river not born until late-1800s, so Thornton (2012) gives no Tlingit name.

Tlingit names are more respectful, informative and tenured than IWGNs. I've begun to use them whenever possible in my writing and cartography, followed by the English translation *in italics*, if available, and the IWGN where it belongs (in parentheses). Local examples:

- Áak'w Táak *inland from little lake* (Mendenhall Valley)
- Kadigooni X'áat' *island with spring water* (Spuhn Island)
- Koosh *oozing sore* (Thane)

Reading *Haa L'éelk'w Hás Aani Saax'ú* is like discovering grandparents you didn't know you had, who bequeathed to you the world's most beautiful island paradise, and all its stories.





Discovery calendar

February

- **19** Discovery Day 9am-4pm
- **22** Gastineau Friday Fun Night 6:30pm-8:30pm

March

- **16** SAGA Eagle Valley Center spring equinox jamboree 10am-4pm
- **18-22** Spring break 10am-2pm

April

- **19** 24th Annual Discovery Southeast dinner & auction
  5:30pm-9:00pm

May

- **18** Community Day at UAS

June

- **3-9** Bears of Admiralty Island Teacher Expedition
- **10** Outdoor Explorers begins
- **11-17** Exploring Prince William Sound teacher expedition
- **22-29** Glaciers and climate change in wild Alaska

July

- **4** Parade of Species
- **24-29** Whales of Icy Strait teacher expedition

August

- **9** Outdoor Explorers ends

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