

Dan Luoma

As an active member who has dedicated his skills and talents to the Native Plant Society of Oregon for over twenty-five years, Dan Luoma has rotated through a number of board positions during that time. He joined our Society in 1982 when Esther McEvoy was getting people together to form the Corvallis Chapter. Dan served as the Corvallis Chapter president from 1983 to 1985 and has served as the chapter's treasurer for many years. At the state level, he served as president for two years (1987 to 1989), immediate past president for two years, vice president for

matters, large or small. Because of his long association with NPSO, Dan offers a broad, seasoned perspective with a historical context. More often than not, the State Board turns to Dan for sound advice on how to proceed on issues. Working behind the scenes, Dan also displays a winsome talent for recruiting new board members (no easy task) through cajolery and a smile.

Dan grew up in Roseburg where he learned about natural history by roaming nearby hillsides: the family home was on the edge of the town with easy access to woodlands and meadows.

It helped that he was, fortunately, not very sensitive to poison oak. His mother, who led hikes for Cub Scouts and Blue Birds, knew some of the common wildflowers. She also took Dan and his sister to some of the earliest wildflower shows in Glide. Dan was interested in plants and fungi from an early age and, in high school, developed an interest in archeology sparked by his participation in summer programs at OMSI's Camp Hancock. In 1975, Dan purchased a Nikon camera and began taking photos of plants. Besides his mother, Dan credits botanists Freeman Rowe, Dave Wagner, Carl Johannessen, Bob Frenkel, Ken Chambers, and John Miller with inspiring his interest in plants. In 1979, Larry Scofield (Salem District Botanist) introduced Dan to NPSO when he worked as a botanist for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Rhoda Love and Frank Lang mentored Dan on the board of NPSO, and Jean Siddall and Julie Kierstead taught him the formalities of rare and endangered plant programs.

During the academic year of 1975-76 Dan took biology classes from Freeman Rowe at Lane Community College. This launched a more serious study of fungi and vascular plants and in 1978 Dan completed a BS in physical geography

and environmental studies at the University of Oregon. Dan was working as a botanist for the BLM in the late 1970s when Freeman Rowe recruited him to help at the Glide wildflower show where he met members of the Limpy Rock botanical committee: Jeanne Moore, Yvonne Knouse, Alice Parker, and Mary Powell. This introduction to the special botanical features of the Limpy Rock area led Dan to study the plant communities in Limpy



Fascinated by the complexity of life in tide pools, Dan Luoma photographs a nudibranch (*Hermisenda crassicornus*) at Seal Rock. Photo by Joyce Eberhart.

six years, director-at-large for nine years, and has been chair of the field research grants committee and the budget committee for twenty-five years. Anyone who has served on the State Board in recent memory is more than likely to attest that Dan is the go-to person at board meetings for questions regarding NPSO policies, by-laws, finances, history, past stands taken on conservation issues happening around the state, field research grants, and all other

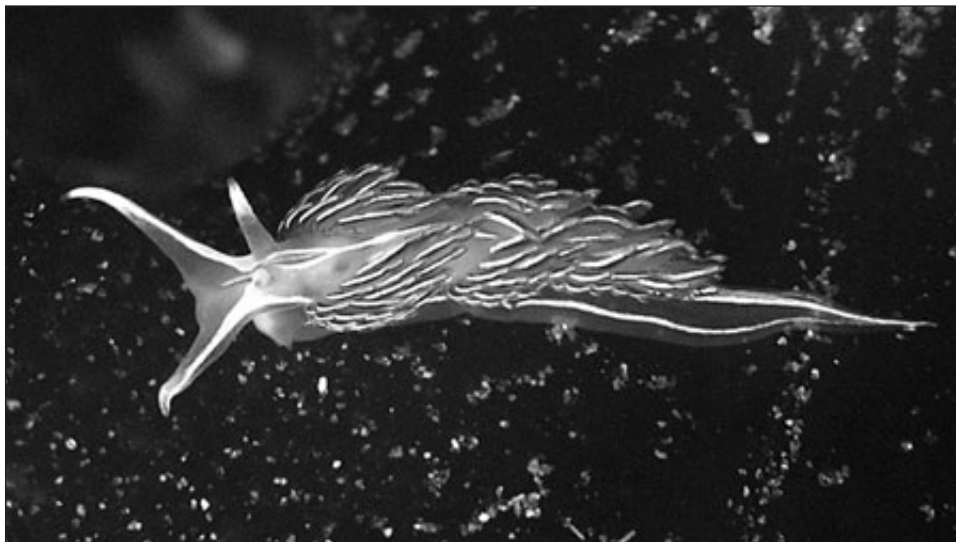
Rock Research Natural Area (RNA). Of special interest were non-green plants including snow plant, Indian-pipe, pinesap, fringed pinesap, and gnome plant, all members of the Monotropoideae (achlorophyllous, mycotrophic plants in the Ericaceae). The fact that these plants derive their energy from an underground network of mycorrhizal fungi that are in symbiosis with the fine roots of trees allowed Dan to combine his interests in vascular plants and fungi for his MS thesis in ecological plant geography with a minor in botany (OSU, 1987).

Mycologists Freeman Rowe, Jim Trappe, Bill Dennison, and Steve Miller inspired Dan's keen interest in fungi. Dan learned about hypogeous (belowground fruiting) mushrooms (truffles) in Freeman Rowe's class and from a talk by research mycologist Jim Trappe at a conference in 1977. Three years later, Dan collected his first truffle with Jim. Larry Scofield had set up a BLM study area for fringed pinesap (*Pleuricospora fimbriolata*), and invited Jim to visit the area. Of course, Jim asked the mycologists to hunt for truffles and Dan found a big (and stinky) fruiting body of *Gautieria monticola*. Years later, researchers at UC Berkeley discovered that *Gautieria monticola* is the trophic host for fringed pinesap that, lacking chlorophyll, cannot produce its own carbohydrates. In 1984, Dan started researching truffles as part of his dissertation project at the H. J. Andrews Experimental Forest. Dan went on to complete his PhD at OSU in 1988 in ecological plant geography with a minor in botany. His dissertation was on the quantification of truffle production in relation to forest structure, community type, successional development, and truffle species phenology.

From 1989 to 1997, Dan was a Research Associate in the Department of Forest Science at OSU. Since 1997, he has been an Assistant Professor and senior researcher in the Departments of Forest Science and Forest Ecosystems and Society at OSU. His research focuses on ectomycorrhizal fungus species diversity and fruiting body production in managed and unmanaged forests of the Pacific Northwest. He pioneered experimental designs that evaluate the economic potential of sites for producing commercially harvested edible forest mushrooms, especially Oregon's native truffles of culinary interest. Dan has been a member of the North American Truffling Society since 1980, serving for a time as its vice president. In 2004, Dan was selected as a Distinguished Alumnus by Lane Community College for, in part, his contributions to the

Mount Pisgah Wildflower Show, the Mount Pisgah Mushroom Show, and the Glide Wildflower Show.

Along with his professional study of fungi, Dan's botanical interests include native plants in natural habitats, perennial plant gardening with native and non-native plants, and visiting botanical gardens. Dan and his wife, Joyce Eberhart, like to botanize when they travel and bring back photos for presentations that are both informative and entertaining for NPSO chapters. Together, Joyce and Dan have given programs from their botanical experiences in California deserts, Norway, Spain, and Switzerland; however, they are convinced that botanical experiences here in Oregon and



*Hermissenda crassicornus*. Photo by Dan Luoma.

the Northwest are among the best in the world, the spectacular wildflower display of Iron Mountain and Cone Peak being only one example. Dan has gotten the greatest satisfaction in life, however, from watching his children successfully navigate the challenges of youth to become independent young adults.

Asked about his vision for NPSO's future, Dan replied that he would like to see the inactive chapters (High Desert, Blue Mountains, Klamath Basin) revitalized and has offered to help local folks take the steps necessary to make it happen. Dan would also like to continue working on improving membership retention throughout the state. About NPSO, Dan affirms: "I became active in NPSO because I really like the members and our collective commitment to the pursuit of the 'enjoyment, conservation, and study of Oregon's native plants and habitats.' It is a great organization and it fills a niche for a plant-centric group that operates on a personal scale." It's apparent to all who know and have worked with him that Dan Luoma cares deeply about NPSO and is committed to seeing it thrive

-David Lebo, Portland Chapter.