

September / October 2026 Dispatch
Discovering in the Proposed Douglas-fir National Monument



I am currently an exile from the proposed Douglas-Fir National Monument, spending most of my time in California, where there are some Douglas-fir trees, but nothing like what there is in the proposed monument. So I do what I can to vicariously visit, as reflected in the book reviews printed below, and whenever I am actually in the area I try to visit and, as I often urge you to do, I try to take pictures.

I recently had an opportunity to visit. The first stop that Sara (the most indulgent amateur photographer's wife ever known) and I made after a long drive from the south was the Hackleman Old Growth Grove. While not the most awe inspiring old-growth stand within the proposed monument this is a great place to jump out of the car and be able to get right into some decent sized trees. I always feel better when I am standing on a trail, looking up at a tall tree and getting a sunburn on the back of my throat.

In our discussion of the advantages of creating a Douglas-Fir National Monument, especially the scientific value of the proposed monument, we have never mentioned the Sasquatch. Personally, I kind of figured that Bigfoot was a phenomenon of more southerly forests. So I was a little surprised when we were visiting Hackleman and I observed what looked very much like some of the pictures I have seen of a Sasquatch. There he (or she) was, waving at us from the top of a very big tree (look above).

I don't think that we should make too much of a big deal about this, because I think he was at the top of a western hemlock, not a Douglas-fir. But if you are in Hackleman, or anywhere else in the proposed monument, and you happen to catch a glimpse of Sasquatch, see if you can get a picture. And especially if it involves a Douglas-fir, send it in (along with any other pictures you took, of course). Maybe it could be a bigger deal than I thought at first.

To those of you who sent in comments about the rescission of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, thank you. If you are willing, send me an email at info@douglasfirnationalmonument.org just saying that you did get a chance to comment. This will help the group who is spearheading the combined resistance keep track of the balance of submissions. It is hard to keep abreast of the numerous assaults on the natural world happening all the time. While we continue to fight these holding actions, we have not lost hope concerning the proposed monument, but only because we hope for a better chance to come. But maybe not? It seems to me that finding Bigfoot in the area might be just the thing to give us a chance with the current administration. It is just crazy enough to work in this crazy time.

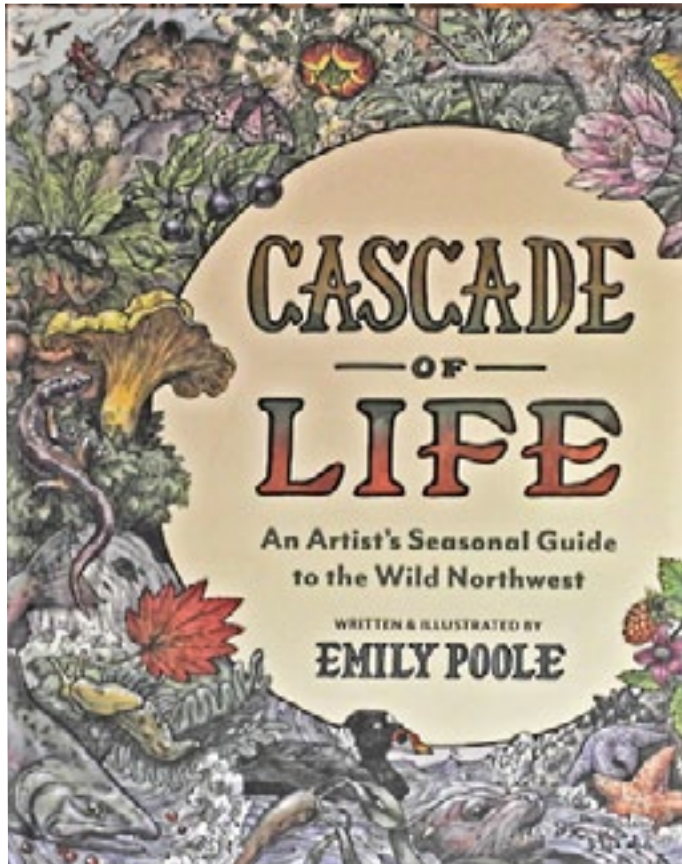
A couple of side notes: If you visit and don't get any pictures of Bigfoot, I understand. The next day when we also went into the proposed monument with the intention of a more extensive visit, there was a grass fire outside Corvallis and all of the areas we visited were tainted and un-photographical. So there is no pressure about your pictures, but don't doubt that we will welcome them. You may be saying to yourself: "they would never use a picture from me." Don't worry, our standards are obviously flexible.

Milo Mecham, President

You Should Read This: Book Reviews for Friends

With winter coming, perhaps you might like to start stocking up for the time when some of the proposed Douglas-Fir National Monument might be unavailable. But perhaps you might not want to wait on the two books reviewed here, because they both give insights on what to look for in all seasons.

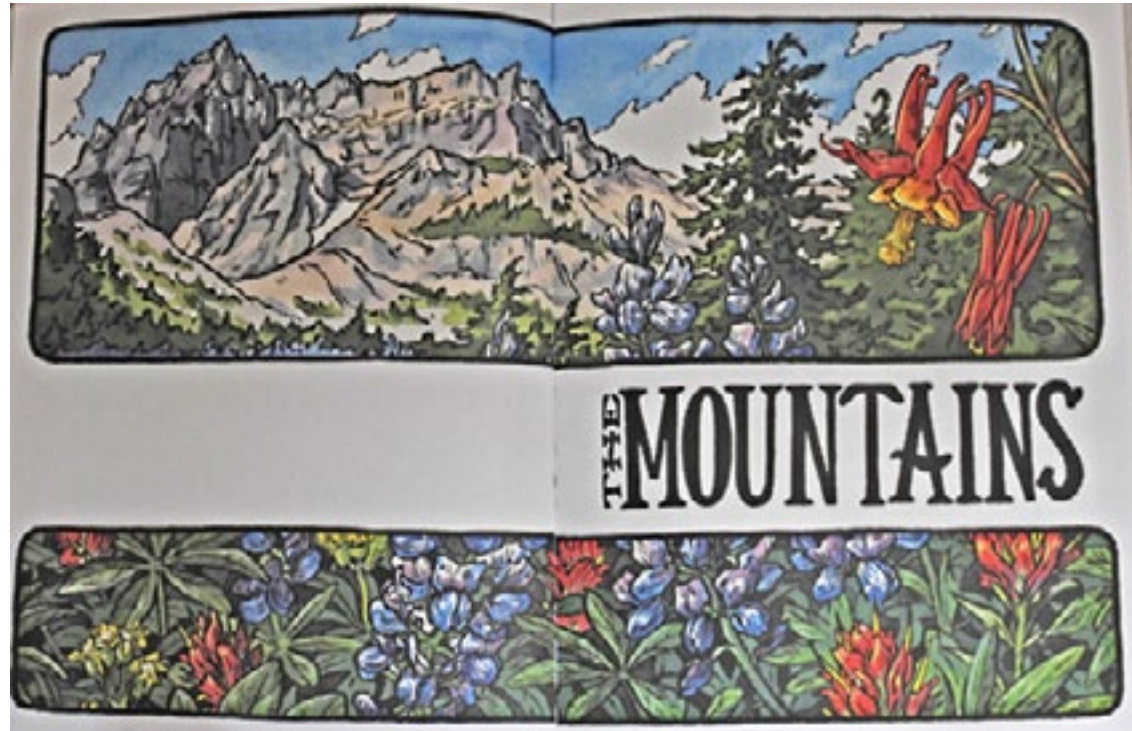
Emily Poole; *Cascade of Life*; Skipstone Publishing, 2026



The first book I want to recommend is by Emily Poole. This is as much a work of art as it is a nature guide. It is full of beautiful illustrations created by the artist/author.

The book talks about four ecosystems of the Pacific Northwest: the coast, the lowlands, the mountains and the drylands in each of the seasons. Obviously, it covers more than the area of the proposed monument, which would only fit into the lowlands and the mountains, and it does not include every detail that you could discover in the proposed monument. But it is very much worth visiting, just as the proposed monument is.

Some of the illustrations fill two pages and could be hung on your wall.



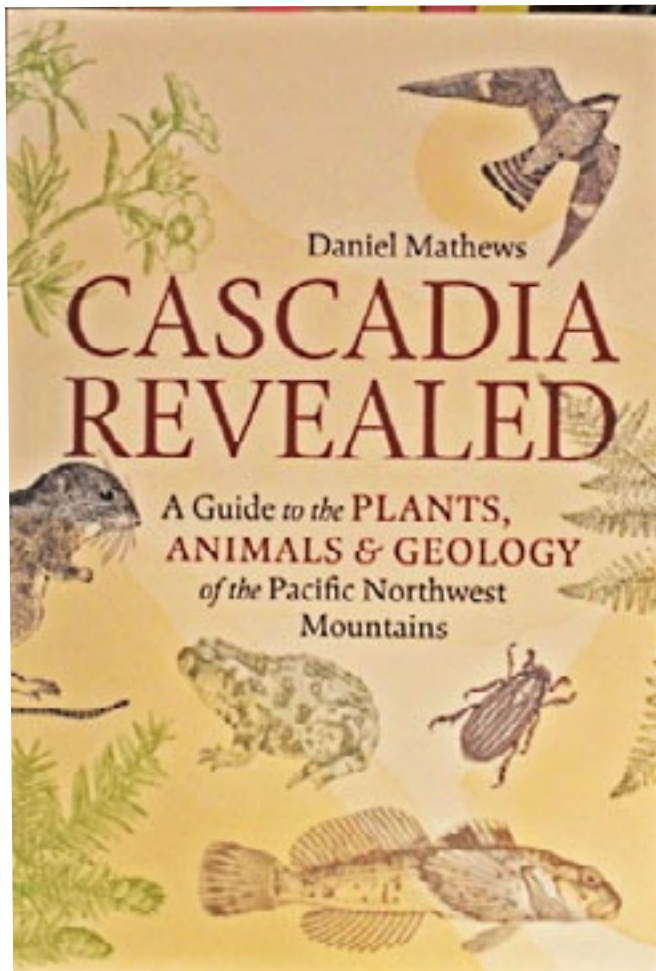
Cascade of Life mostly follows the standard format of nature guides: text on a particular species or phenomenon, accompanied by an illustration. The difference here is that the illustration is not a photograph, but instead there is a painting of the object.

As with any good guide, there is much to learn, if one reads carefully. For example, I learned that there are more than two hundred species of paintbrush, and that the plant is hemiparasitic, which means that it can take sugars from other plants as well as creating its own. What was lacking was a discussion about how this relates to the common mutual support system in the forest, thanks to mycorrhizal fungus. This is discussed in works like *The Mother Tree* and is referred to by Daniel Mathews (see below) as the Wood-Wide Web.



Cascade of Life has certain drawbacks: there is not an index, for example, which makes it hard to look things up when you are trying to write a review, and there are some omissions that I could have wished would have been included because I would have liked to see them. But as a work of art, which this is, and a fun read when it is raining in the proposed Douglas-Fir National Monument, which it is, it can't be beat.

I found my copy at Tsunami Books in Eugene, so I should add that it is a great discovery when the proposed monument is too smoky to make for a fun visit. When I was there, Tsunami also had some of the paintings as wall hangings, which is how I knew they are useful for that as well.



Daniel Mathews, *Cascadia Revealed* Timber Press Field Guide, 2016

This is much more of a real field guide than Emily Poole's work. I should probably have reviewed it before, but I only came across the paperback edition, published in 2016, this year at the Book Bin in Corvallis, after I found Emily Poole's book in Eugene. (No, I did not visit every bookstore in western Oregon, just my favorites.) Since it is still available as a new book, I think that my review is still relevant.

Daniel Mathew's book is an extensive visit to Cascadia, which includes the mountainous areas of all of western Oregon and Washington. That is, it examines the Coast and the Cascade Ranges, the Olympics and the mountains of Vancouver Island and southwestern British Columbia.

This guide is very inclusive: it discusses climate and climate change; it discusses the geology of the mountains, including identifications for the major types of rock to be found; it identifies many plants -trees, shrubs, flowers; fungi; animals of all sizes – mammals, reptiles, and amphibians; birds, fish, and insects. You could take it on short hikes. I wish that I had had it with me when I went hiking along the Rock Creek Trail (a detour off the Santiam Wagon Road Trail).

I was able to identify five different ferns, or what I thought were five ferns, but which might have actually been more, because some of the fourteen types of fern that Mathews talks about are pretty close in appearance, unless you are a fern nerd, or have the Cascadia Revealed field guide.

There are some emphases and omissions that I could wish had been different. There is a lot of discussion about fungi in the mountains, but it is focused mainly on how to find edible mushrooms and how to distinguish edible from poisonous examples. Being a coward, and taking massive liver failure seriously, I am not interested in picking mushrooms in the woods. But I wish there had been a discussion about the shelf bracket fungus that is, to me, the most common and obvious fungus in the proposed monument. On the positive side, it has a good index and is good to explore, even when you sit down to read from cover to cover.

This book is full of new things to learn. I had confirmation of Emily Poole's notation about both the variety of paintbrush and its ability to take nutrients and water from its neighbors. Cascadia Revealed provided some explanation about plants in Castilleja, the paintbrush genus: they are "easily recognized as a genus, hard to identify to species." Mathews makes it more clear that the relationship is "partially parasitic" as opposed to "hemiparasitic." Elsewhere in the work there is an extensive discussion of the Wood-Wide Web, emphasizing that relationships in it are not parasitic, but more two sided, or three sided, since it includes several plants and fungi between.

There is an extensive discussion of Douglas-fir as the most important tree within Cascadia. Daniel Mathews suggests that, because the largest Douglas-fir trees, now in British Columbia, are nearly as tall as the tallest Coast Redwoods, and because there are records of taller Douglas-fir, measured after they were cut down, the Douglas-fir might be the continent's tallest tree. I don't know the answer to this, because there are also stories of taller redwoods. I can only say; "Let's create a Douglas-Fir National Monument and see just how tall a Douglas-fir can really grow, even if this takes a thousand years."

Daniel Mathews' book is not a work of art, but it is an interesting and useful field guide to the area of the proposed monument and its neighbors in the Pacific Northwest.

Milo Mecham, President