

Global warming forcing butterfly migration, biologist says

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Jessica Hellmann discusses climate change, butterflies, March 27 at the Oregon Zoo

PORTLAND - Global warming is "an inconvenient truth" for plants and animals as well as people: A rapidly changing climate has already forced at least 279 species to move closer to the poles. Other species have been driven to extinction by their inability to adapt. Jessica Hellmann, assistant professor of biological sciences at Notre Dame University, discusses the effects of climate change on butterflies, Tuesday, March 27, at 7 p.m. at the Oregon Zoo, as part of the 2007 Wildlife Conservation Lecture Series.

Photo by: Oregon Zoo

Hellmann's lecture, "Butterflies, Climate Change and the Future of Biodiversity," draws on her research on butterflies in oak grasslands of the Pacific Northwest. Her research on climate change brings her and her students west to Washington and Oregon each spring and summer and has recently been covered by both The New York Times and the San Francisco Chronicle.

"Studies have shown that butterflies have responded to climate change in two ways," says Hellmann. "Some species have shifted their geographic distribution poleward and upward in elevation, but others have experienced population extinctions as climatic conditions change."

Further research is needed to determine whether butterflies are evolving in response to climate change, notes Hellmann. "It would not be surprising to see genetic changes in populations due to climate change, but species are unlikely to evolve entirely new adaptations to climate change as the pace of warming is incredibly fast," she says.

Hellmann will also address the role humans could play in helping species at risk of extinction. "Individuals, policy makers, and land managers all have a role to play in preserving global diversity, and Northwestern ecosystems can teach us how to be effective stewards," she says.

The Wildlife Conservation Lecture series is sponsored by Pro Photo Supply, Shiels Oblatz Johnsen and New Belgium Brewing. Hosts for the series are the Audubon Society of Portland, the Oregon Zoo and the World Forestry Center. Lectures are held in the Oregon Zoo's Banquet Center and begin at 7 p.m. The cost for each lecture is \$10 for nonmembers and \$8 for members of host organizations, students or seniors.

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