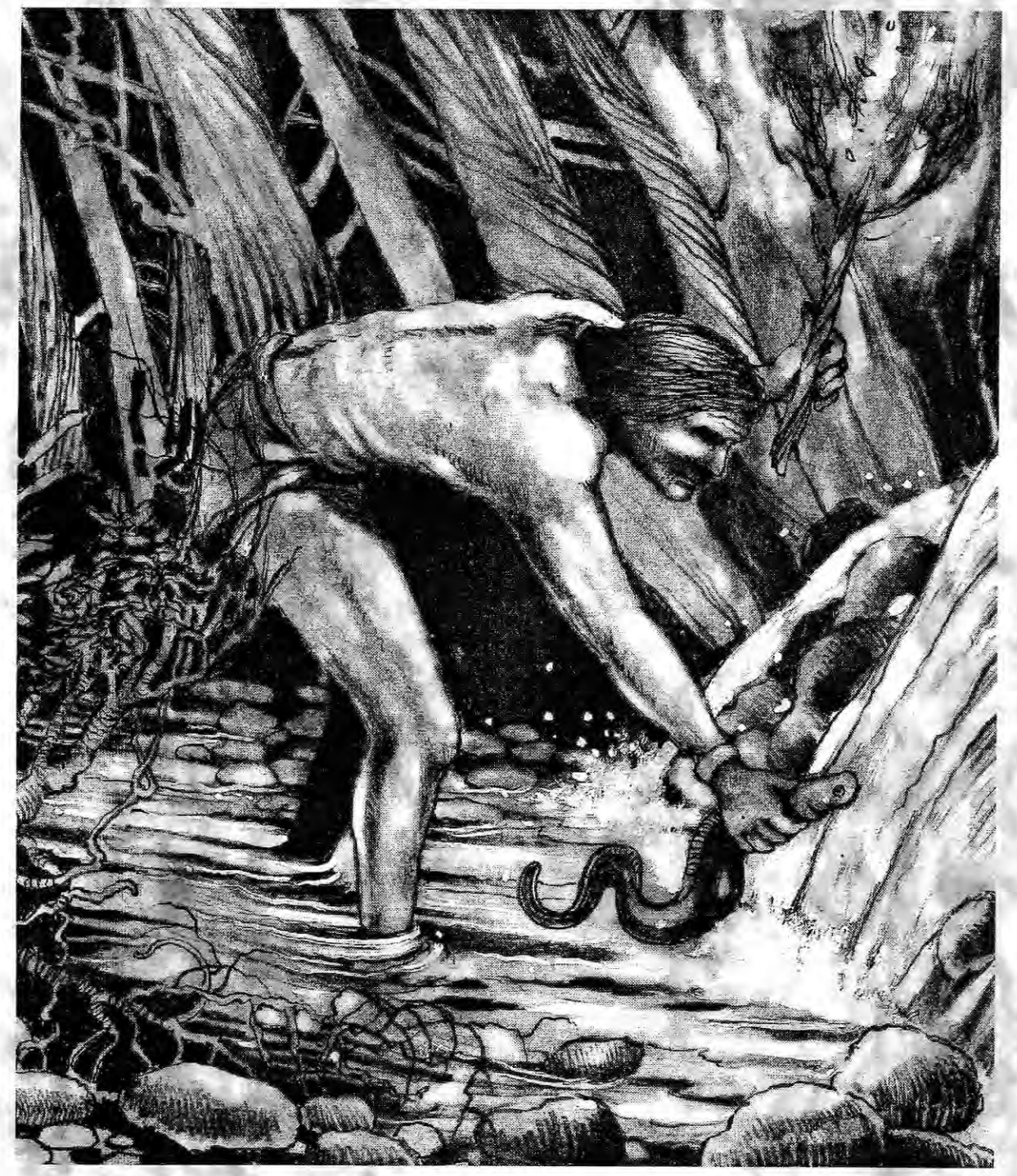
SKWAKOL:

The Decline of the Siletz Lamprey Eel Population During the 20th Century



Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon
1996

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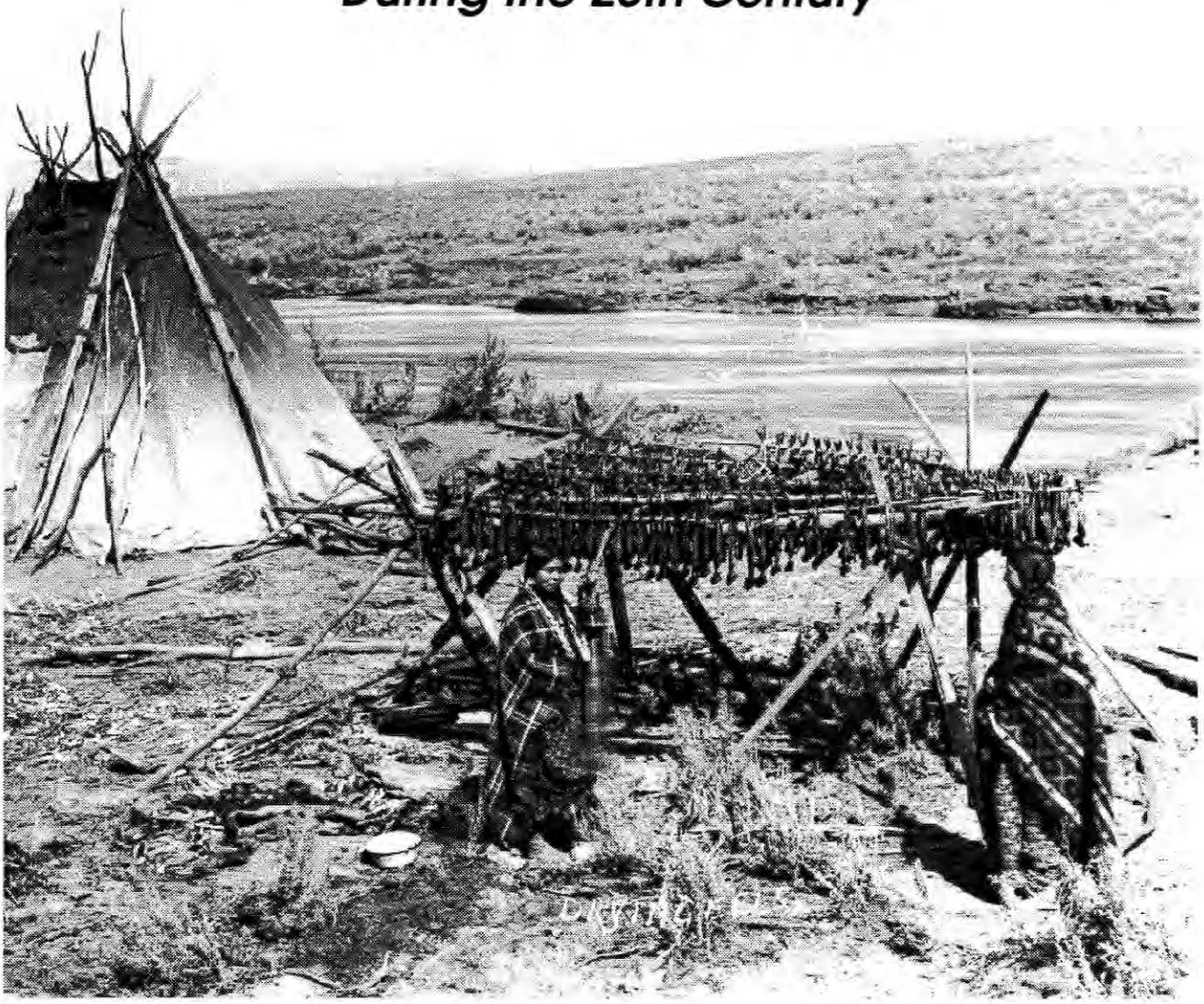


by
Tom Downey, Darin Rilatos, Annette Sondenaa, Bob Zybach

OSU Chapter
American Indians in Science & Engineering Society (AISES)

Prepared for Judith Vergun and Jefferson Gonor
OSU College of Oceanographic & Atmospheric Sciences
Native Americans in Marine Science (NAMS) Program

Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon
1996

Dedication

This report is dedicated to Pearl Rilatos, Vickie Ben and the other Siletz tribal elders that have helped to preserve and maintain the history and cultural traditions of the peoples and families of the Siletz River Valley. Although they may no longer be with us in body, the words, beliefs, actions and spirit of these elders live on in the lands and lives they helped to shape. With this report may we also help to preserve these traditions for our children and grandchildren.

Acknowledgments

This study could not have been completed without the cooperation of the nineteen Siletz area residents who agreed to be interviewed and recorded. Without their help, much of the historical, cultural and ecological information in this report would have likely been lost.

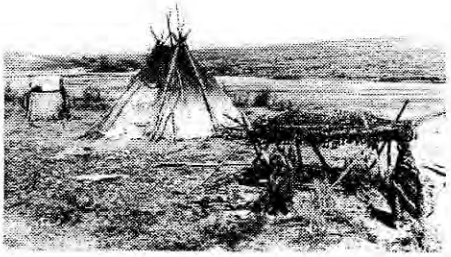
Teresa Miller and Frank Simmons, Siletz tribal natural resources representatives, were instrumental in obtaining the assistance of Oregon State University for the research. Dr. Jefferson Gonor provided financial help and departmental expertise through the Native Americans in Marine Sciences (NAMS) Program that he founded and administered for several years. Dr. Judith Vergun, current NAMS Director, is helping to coordinate the final printing and distribution of the report. Dr. Mack Barrington, OSU Rangeland Resources GIS lab and David Reinert, OSU College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences, have provided GIS, mapping, graphic reproduction, and production expertise. Grace Castle and Leonard Whitlow provided critical assistance in the location and evaluation of historical materials. Georgie Zamora and Penny Noland provided final editing and indexing.

This study was initially supported by a grant (OCE 9016300) from the National Science Foundation to the College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon State University, for support of the NAMS program. Research support services and final printing costs have been assisted by contributions of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz.

Authors

Tom Downey is a Siletz tribal member with a Bachelor of Science from Oregon State University in Environmental Health and Safety. Darin Rilatos is a Siletz tribal member and is currently employed by the tribe. Annette Sondenaa is a Siletz tribal member and is recently attended Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon as an undergraduate. Bob Zybach has a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from Oregon State University and is currently completing a Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies.

The cover drawing shows a western Oregon Indian man catching an eel as described by Kalapuyan, Charlie Hudson in the Ethno section of this report. The drawing is used by permission of "The First Oregonians" book.



This photograph shows two women drying eels along the Umatilla River in the early 1900s. It is reproduced by permission of the University of Oregon Library, and is housed in Special Collection as #5609 in the Lee Moorhouse Collection. The title, "Drying Eels," can be seen inscribed near the center foreground.

Summary

It can be reasonably assumed that lamprey eel harvesting has systematically and periodically occurred along the Siletz River and its tributaries for as many hundreds, or thousands, or tens of thousands of years that human families and lamprey eel populations have coexisted in the Siletz Valley ecosystem. This report is an historical accounting of the abundance and uses of lamprey eels by the peoples and families of the Siletz River Valley during the past 170 years, beginning with documented uses by Siletz Indian ancestors in southwestern Oregon and northwestern California in 1828. Historical, cultural and biological information for the twentieth century is focused on the spoken accounts of descendents, neighbors, and elders of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of 1855-1995. The primary source of information for this latter period were oral history recordings made with nineteen longtime residents of the Siletz River Valley by the report's authors during the summer of 1991. Principal conclusions derived from a systematic consideration of these materials can be summarized:

- At least one, possibly two, and maybe three, species (or "kinds") of anadromous lamprey eels have migrated along the Siletz River in large numbers during this century;

- The hunting, gathering, cooking, trading and eating of lamprey eels has been an important part of the cultural heritage of many native western Oregon families for over 170 years;

- The hunting and gathering of lamprey eels at specific times and locations along the Siletz River has been an important part of the subsistence history of many Lincoln County families during this century;

- The local hunting and gathering of lamprey eels has had a measurable ecological impact on certain conditions of the Siletz River environment during this century;

- Between 1981 and 1991 there was a dramatic decline in migrating lamprey eel populations along the Siletz River that may be linked to eel declines noted earlier this century;

- The decline in Siletz lamprey eel populations may be linked to recently noted declines in other riverine species, including periwinkles, clams, freshwater mussels, crayfish (crawdads), salamanders, salmon, trout, beaver, mink, otter, raccoon, wild cats, and bears;

- The decline in Siletz Pacific lamprey eel populations is most likely due to a combination of factors, including:
  - ✓climatic conditions, especially drought cycles;
  - ✓anthropogenic impacts, such as poisoning from herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers;
  - ✓abusive or irresponsible management of watershed uplands, such as livestock overgrazing and clearcutting of timber.

- The apparent decline in local wildlife populations is of serious concern to many longtime residents of the Siletz River Valley.

The recently reported declines in Siletz lamprey eel populations is widely perceived as an important local issue with significant cultural, historical, biological and ecological consequences. It has been the stated opinion of nearly every participant in the research process, including the report's authors, that immediate actions should be taken by a number of cooperating agencies and landowners to specifically address this problem.

SKWAKOL:
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Vickie Ben hanging eels to dry.

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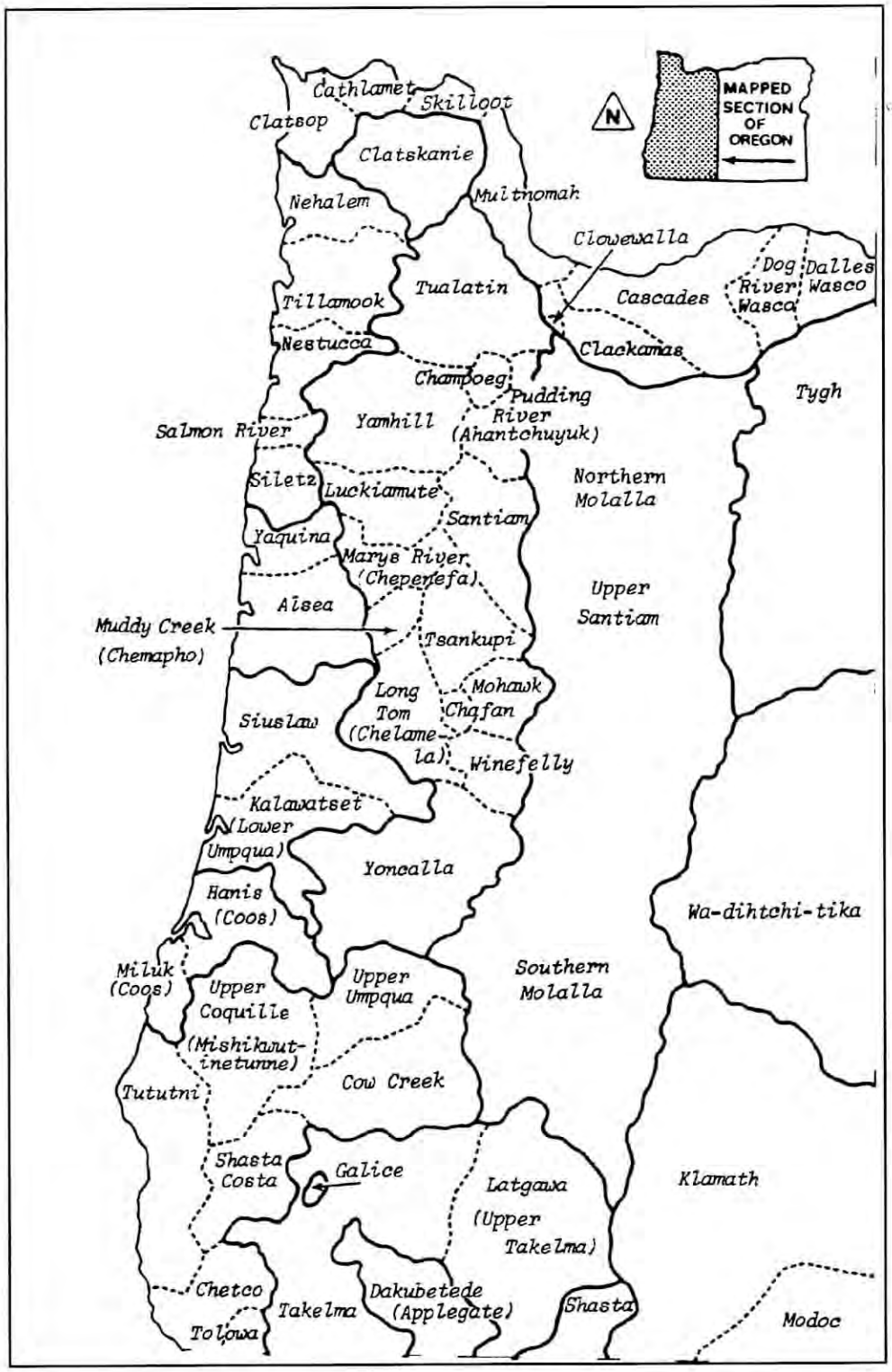


This map of the ancestral peoples of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians was first published in 1939 by Berreman. It shows the names and boundaries of the Indian nations of western Oregon as they were thought to have existed in 1750.

Introduction

Skwakol is the Chinook jargon used by Siletz tribal members to refer to the migrating lamprey eel populations that have populated the Siletz River and its tributaries since the time of tribal formation, in the 1850s. Contemporary Willamette Valley Kalapuyans called them *Antayu.* The local English name for these animals has been "eel." Although the lamprey is not a true eel (as explained by Angela Sondenaa in the biological overview section of this report), in general the words "lamprey," "eel," and "lamprey eel" will be used interchangeably throughout this document to refer to the genus *Lampreta* and the Siletz River valley populations of these animals in particular.

Purpose and Need

Beginning in the late 1980s, several Siletz Indian families began reporting sharp declines in eel harvests at traditional fishing locations. Fearing that a significant part of their cultural heritage might be lost forever along with the declining lamprey populations, tribal members suggested a study be done to document the traditional gathering sites and methods; the preserving of the lamprey for winter food; and the fact that the lamprey were declining and may soon be gone from the river completely. It is hoped that, by documenting the apparent decline of the lamprey runs in the Siletz River, research can be initiated to discover the causes for the problem and methods can be determined to restore populations to past levels.

Project History

In 1991, because of local concerns with declining eel populations and at the suggestion of tribal members, Teresa Miller (then Hunting and Fishing Liaison for the Siletz Tribe) and Frank Simmons (former Siletz tribal council member) contacted Oregon State University (OSU) in 1991 for the purpose of enlisting help to resolve this problem. They were put into contact with Dr. Jefferson Gonor of the University's Oceanography Department (now called the OSU College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences). Dr. Gonor, in conjunction with the American Indians in Science & Engineering Society (AISES) chapter of OSU, had recently established a program called "NAMS" (Native Americans in Marine Sciences) that was being funded by the National Science Foundation. This program provides funding for Native American students to do research with faculty members as mentors. Dr. Gonor and Mrs. Miller discussed the possibility of assigning a NAMS student to the proposed project. Tom Downey, a Siletz Tribal Member, OSU undergraduate student, and OSU AISES cofounder, expressed a particular interest in the topic. Dr. Gonor agreed to serve as Downey's mentor during the research design and implementation phases of the study.

Downey was employed by NAMS and subsequently put into direct contact with Dr. Gonor, Dr. Hiram Li, and Dr. Carl Schreck to begin developing a research project that could address the cultural and biological concerns of the tribal elders. Bob Zybach, a specialist in oral history interviews and Northwest natural resource history, was then consulted to help develop a series of questions and an interviewing process that would use both the expertise of the OSU scientists and the knowledge of longtime Siletz Valley residents (see Appendices A, B, C, D, and E). The primary purpose of the project would be to develop baseline data for measuring the significance of the apparent lamprey population decline. During the summer of 1991, Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos (employed by the Siletz tribe as a technical and research assistant for this project) conducted a series of 18 oral history interviews with knowledgeable Siletz elders and a few of their longtime neighbors. These interviews were then transcribed to a computerized word processor by Downey and Rilatos under the supervision of Miller.

In 1992, another OSU AISES student and Siletz tribal member, Annette Sondenaa, was hired by NAMS to complete, edit and format the earlier work of Downey and Rilatos (see Appendix F). She worked with Bob Zybach to correct, organize, and outline an interim report for the project. She also assisted her sister, Angela Sondenaa, with the nineteenth—and final—interview for the project; their grandmother, Viola Sondenaa.

The first phase of the study was formally completed on August 21, 1993, when "The Siletz Eels: Oral History Interviews with Siletz Tribal Elders and Other Lincoln County Residents Regarding the Decline in Siletz River Lamprey Populations" was jointly presented to the Siletz Tribal Council and to the nineteen elders and neighbors that had originally agreed to have their observations recorded, transcribed, and analyzed (see Appendices G, H, and I). The first report was coauthored by the same four individuals as the present report, which is principally an expansion and refinement of our earlier findings.

In 1994 and 1995, Downey and Zybach completed additional research, mapping, editing and indexing with the assistance of a number of other individuals associated with OSU and with the Siletz tribe, including Judith Vergun, Robert Kentta, Mack Barrington, David Reinert, and Georgi Zamora. This report represents the results of that effort. Final findings and recommendations were publicly released by Downey on July 10, 1995 at a meeting in Siletz organized by a coalition of government agencies (see Appendix J). Significant additions to the initial report include a biological overview of Pacific lamprey eel life history by Angela Sondenaa, expanded historical and cultural overviews of the relationship between lamprey eels and Siletz peoples between 1828 and 1995, printed and digitized GIS computer-mappings of important Siletz eel hooking locations, and an index of important Siletz family names, named locations, wildlife populations and ecological conditions.

Report Arrangement

This report is arranged into several parts.

- Introductory section.
- Description of the study's research methodology;
- Background materials regarding the historical, biological and cultural contexts of the study.
- Printed maps of computerized Geographic Information Systems (GIS) layers depicting traditional eel fishing locations on the Siletz River;
- Transcripts of the nineteen oral history interviews completed in 1991 and 1992.
- Report conclusions and recommendations.
- Appendices.
- Index.

Methodology

The principal methods used to perform and display research on this project include historical research (scientific literature review, historical documentation, and consultations), oral histories (focused interviews, transcriptions, and analysis) and GIS map constructions based upon oral history and historical research findings.

Historical Research

Standard methods of literature review and historical research were conducted during this project. Specific methodologies and findings are included in Part III of this report. Documentation includes printed scientific reports, historical texts, maps, photographs, and direct quotations. References to materials acquired in this fashion are included in the Reference section (Appendix A).

Oral Histories

People with a specific knowledge of eel fishing and eel processing were contacted by tribal representatives regarding their willingness to participate in this project. Once a list of elders possessing knowledge of lamprey was established, these people were approached and asked if they would allow themselves to be interviewed. The elders were very cooperative and interviewing commenced July 1, 1991. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos.

Auditing Tapes: The taped interviews were listened to in their entirety with a hard copy of the transcripts in hand. Changes were made to the hardcopies with special attention to missing data, re-wording of answers by the transcriber and basic punctuation and spelling. Once this step was completed the computer files were accessed and all necessary changes were made.

Releases: All parties interviewed were mailed copies of their transcripts to be reviewed. They were invited to add information or to delete statements they didn't want included in the final report.

Editing: During the auditing process, it became apparent that some of the dialog was irrelevant, repetitious or potentially damaging to the speaker. In these instances the editor has inserted the symbol (. . .) where dialog has been omitted. The tapes themselves have not been altered in any way. Anyone interested in the interviews, in their entirety, should contact the Siletz Tribe, OSU Dept. of Oceanography, or the Oregon Historical Society where copies of the tapes have been archived.

Formatting: During the final phase of the editing process the transcripts were reformatted. In the interest of clarity, the names of the interviewer and interviewee were deleted from the question and answer section. To indicate who was speaking, the questions and comments of the interviewer were put into italics. Likewise the interviewee's answers were indented and remained in normal type. Questions being asked by someone, other than the interviewer indicated at the beginning of the transcript, have been prefaced with the speakers name, set off by brackets. For example; if Tom is the primary interviewer and Darin asked a question during the interview, the transcript would look like this. . . [Darin] What time of the year was this?

Interviewer's comments: It has come to my (Annette Sondenaa's) attention that comment sheets were designed and printed for the use of the interviewer. However, due to time restrictions, these sheets were not filled out by Tom or Darin. This lack of information is unfortunate, but in no way invalidates the data collected or the sincerity of the participant.

Historical Context to Interviews

A History of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

by Robert Kentta

The ancestors of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz belonged to many sovereign Tribes and Bands - whose aboriginal territories included all of the lands and waters between the Columbia River, and the Klamath River and from the summit of the Cascade range to the Ocean. The aboriginal territories combined, encompassed nearly twenty million acres.

Eight entirely different language families are represented in aboriginal western Oregon, with each of these language families sometimes having as many as six or eight distinctly different dialects.

Life-ways in the pre-reservation era were as nearly as diverse as the languages. Depending on the geographic location of the group, ocean foods such as mussels, clams, oysters, flounder, smelt, etc., might be some of the primary food sources, where for inland peoples, it would more likely be venison, acorns, camas, wild carrots, etc. Whatever the primary food sources were, it was always a wide ranging combination of meats, roots, berries, nuts and other plant foods.

All of the peoples were, however, dependent on - and oriented towards life on the rivers. It would be safe to say that all tribes depended heavily on the salmon runs for their existence. Every tribe had its own religious practices which honored the first salmon caught at the beginning of each fishing season, showing its significance to all the people. The rivers provided many other foods as well, eels, steelhead, trout, crayfish, river mussels, sturgeon, etc.

By the 1850s, despite federal laws that were supposed to protect the rights of Indian people, trappers, settlers, gold miners and others had entered all parts of western Oregon. The pressures on the indigenous peoples increased to a point of an all out war of extermination. Between 1851 and 1855, all of the western Oregon, and upper Klamath River Tribes were pressured to cede all of their lands to the United States in exchange for a permanent reservation, which was to be selected by the President of the United States.

On November 9, 1855, President Franklin Pierce signed an Executive Order creating the "Coast Reservation" (Siletz Reservation). In the winter snows of 1855, the removal of western Oregon Indians to the Coast Reservation began. Over the next couple of years the people were either taken by steamer ship from Port Orford to the "temporary camp" at Grand Ronde, or marched up the Willamette valley or the coast to the central portion of the Coast Reservation. In May of 1857, 2/3 of the upper Rogue River Tribes, and all of the Coast Tribes that had been at Grand Ronde were moved to the new Coast Reservation headquarters at Siletz. In June of that year, an Executive Order was signed by President Buchanon, which secured the temporary camp at Grand Ronde as a reservation.
Over the next twenty years, an Executive Order and an Act of Congress reduced the Coast Reservation by over three-fourths its mass without any treaty, agreement, or even compensation to the Indian people on the Coast Reservation.

From 1875 to 1892 the Siletz Reservation consisted of the 225,000 acres that were left after the reductions. In 1892 the General Allotment Act took effect at Siletz. The Allotment Act required the survey of enough land to assign 80 acre parcels to each individual Indian on the reservation. This broke up the communal ownership of the reservation and was to encourage the acceptance of European concepts of

property ownership by Indian people. The other affect of the Allotment Act was that after each individual had been assigned an allotment, the remainder of the reservation could be declared "surplus." Once declared surplus, the Secretary of the Interior could send a commission to purchase the unallotted lands.

Within a couple of months of the allotment schedule being sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for approval, a commission was sent to Siletz to "negotiate" the purchase of the unallotted lands For a month the commission stayed in the Siletz area, traveling up and down the river, talking to people who knew the area well, and taking notes on terrain, soil types, timber, etc. The commission told the Siletz people that they had only had "use and occupancy rights" to the reservation, and would never have rights to the resources on the unallotted lands anyway.

The commission proposed that the unallotted lands (estimated at 175,000 acres - but actually 192,000 acres) be sold to the government for $ 142,000. In the meeting journals the commission denounced the unallotted lands as nearly worthless, yet reported to Washington D.C. that the land was covered by dense stands of valuable timber, and had many rapidly running streams that would provide a means of getting the timber out. After several days of meetings and with no alternative available, the sale passed on October 31, 1892.

The ease with which allotted lands passed from Indian ownership was accelerated with such legislation as the "Siletz Indian Inherited Lands Act" which limited the amount of allotment lands that could be inherited by a Siletz Indian allottee. By 1912 Agent Egbert noted that about 2/3 of the Siletz allotments were then owned by non-Indians.

As the land base was taken away, the State of Oregon began imposing State fish and game regulations on Siletz tribal members. Similarly, as the trust restrictions on lands were deleted, the Bureau of Indian Affairs saw little need for normal agency functions such as schools, medical facilities, and other administrative functions. The Siletz people were set adrift with a few remaining allotments & some scattered reserve timber lands, surrounded by a non-Indian society, which did not recognize their treaty rights to hunt and fish on their "permanent reservation."

By 1954 the political and administrative situation for the Siletz Tribe had deteriorated to a point where the Siletz people were unable to defend themselves against the proposal that the Federal Government was making to end the trust relationship with all of the Western Oregon Tribes. By 1956 the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians had joined the ranks of other "terminated" tribes.

By the late 1960s the effects of being a "terminated" tribe was the driving force to a Siletz Tribal reorganization effort. The tribal members began electing a tribal council again, and started to run drug and alcohol treatment programs, job training & placement, elders and low income housing assistance, etc. under the name of a nonprofit organization since the federal government didn't recognize the Siletz Tribe as a political entity.

Momentum built for the restoration of federal recognition to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and in 1977 legislation was passed which gave back that federal recognition. Since the passage of the Restoration Act, there have been many changes in the numbers and quality of programs that are run by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz. The Siletz Tribes were among the first to try the "Self Governance" program of contracting its own federal programs so that more of the moneys go directly to services instead of being taken up in layers of administrative costs.

The nine member elected council is always looking towards the day it can serve all tribal members with health care, education, employment and other needs - while at the same time retain, and nurture the unique cultural and political identities of the peoples who make up the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon

*Pacific lamprey (*Lampetra tridentata*).*

Close-up of lamprey eel head. The lamprey does not possess a true jaw, but eats by means of suction.

Life History Overview of the Pacific Lamprey (*Lampetra Tridentata*)

by Angela Sondenaa

This summary regarding lamprey eel biology was written for this report by Angela Sondenaa, a Fisheries and Wildlife graduate of Oregon State University and a Wildlife biologist for the *US Forest Service*. She is currently working on a Ph.D. program at the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho. Angela is a Siletz tribal member.

Approximately forty species of lamprey are currently found throughout the temperate regions of the world and of these, only nine species undergo a parasitic feeding stage. The pacific lamprey is one of the parasitic forms. All lamprey belong to the family Petromyzontidae and are related to hagfish. They are rather primitive group of animals because they do not possess a true backbone, but instead have a cartilaginous skeleton which is rather flexible.

The Pacific lamprey is by far the most abundant of the Lampetra species found along the pacific coast from California north to Alaska and is undoubtedly the "night eel" used by the Siletz people. It inhabits most coastal drainages as well as the Columbia River Basin as far inland as Idaho. The life history of this species is rather complex with young living in fresh water and adults migrating to sea. In this way they are anadromous like salmon fishes.

The individuals caught by Siletz Tribal Members are mature adults returning to fresh water streams to spawn. Adults migrate into river systems in late spring and early summer where spawning takes place when water temperatures are between 50° and 60° F. During the upstream migration, the animals quit feeding and may experience weight loss. Spawning areas are located in low gradient stream segments that have gravel and sand on the bottom. Often these sites are just above a riffle where calm waters begin to break up.

Like salmon, lamprey build redds (egg nest) by scooping out depressions in the stream bottom before laying their eggs. Observation indicates that both sexes participate in the nest building process. After spawning the adults die within four days. Their decomposing bodies add greatly to the nutrients of the river system both as direct food for other organisms and as raw nutrients.

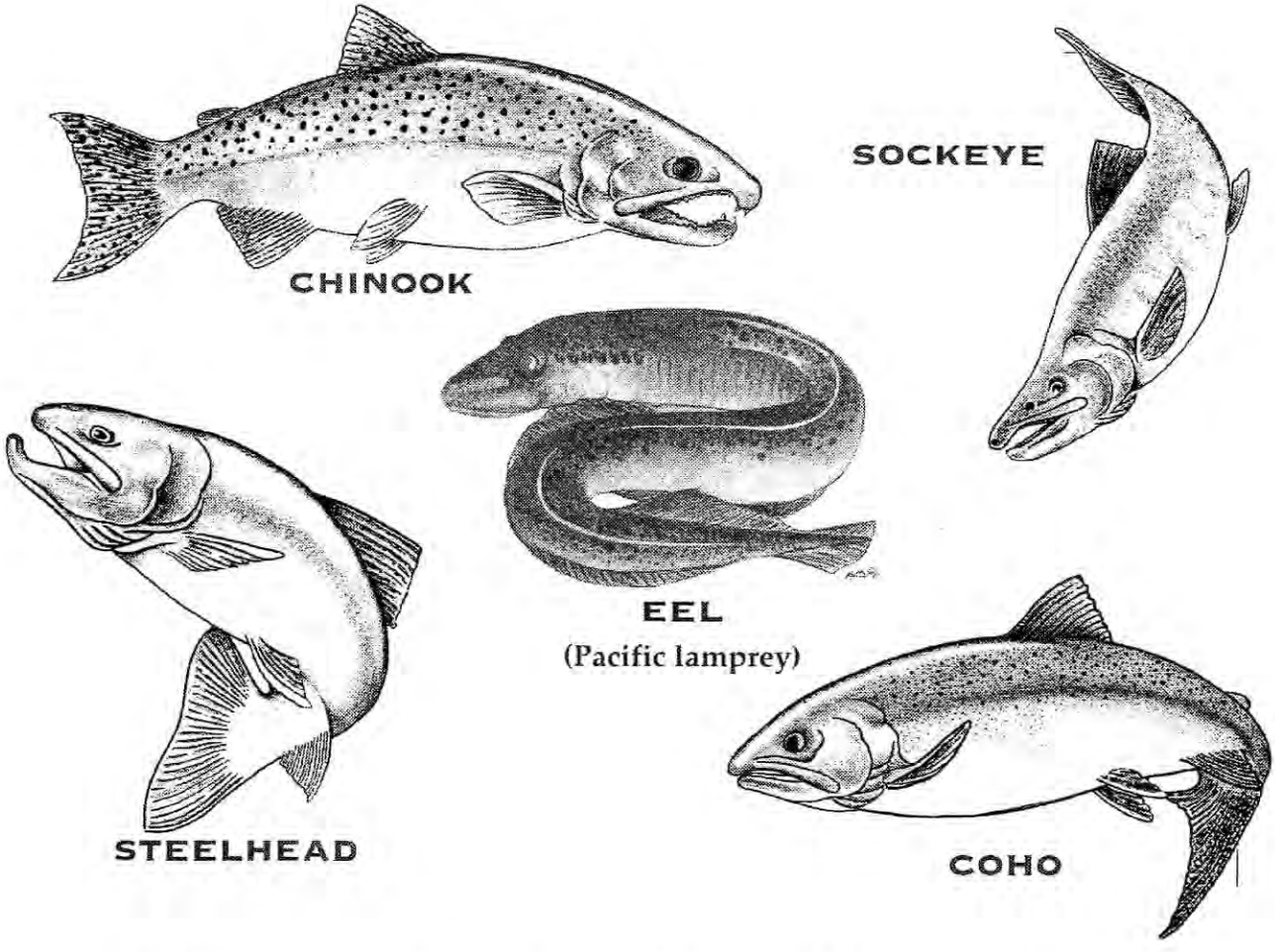
The eggs are extremely small and take about 2-3 weeks to hatch. Once they hatch the young travel to areas of soft mud, silt and sand where they burrow under the surface. Typically, these "larval beds" are backwater or eddy areas where stream velocity is low and the substrata is very soft with a high amount of dead plant material in it.

This stage of the lifecycle last the longest and is generally 4-6 years long. During this time the larval lamprey feeds on microscopic plants (mostly diatoms) and animals that they filter from the silt and mud. Few other vertebrates use these types of food so the role of the lamprey in the stream ecosystem is unique. They are also food for a wide range of species including trout, crayfish and birds. Generally the young are quite sedentary, but they will occasionally move to new beds as they grow.

It is not known exactly what triggers the larvae to begin their transformation into adults but this process starts in the summer or fall when the young are 4-6 years old. The transformation process takes at least two months to complete (maybe longer) during which time the lamprey do not eat. After metamorphosis is complete, the young adults average 4.5 inches long and are ready to enter the ocean. Movement from the river generally coincides with periods of high water in late winter and early spring.

The oceanic phase of the life-style is the least known because adult lamprey are not easily observed and rarely caught. During the 2-3 years they spend in the ocean they are parasitic on a wide range of fish and mammal species including salmon. How far they range or where in the water column they spend most of their time is not well understood. The adults return to freshwater in the late spring or early summer and the cycle repeats itself.

As for the "day eel" mentioned by nearly all the interview participants, it may be a different lamprey species than the Pacific lamprey but it is unclear which one. Oregon State University collections do not have records of other lamprey from the Siletz River Drainage. Two other species live in the coastal streams of Oregon and the day eel is probably one of these; Lampetra ayresii or L. richardsoni. Neither species has been documented for the Siletz River but L. ayresii has been collected in the Yaquina River and in Yaquina Bay. It would be very helpful to have good specimens collected in the Siletz River and sent to Oregon State University for positive identification.



Pacific lamprey are parasitic on a wide range of fish during the 2-3 years spent in the ocean.

History of Ancestral Eel Use, 1828–1961

By Bob Zybach

The history of eel use by Siletz tribal members and their ancestors is presented on the following pages from three primary sources of information: Harrison Roger's journal of the 1828 Jedediah Smith expedition (shown on the map on the next page), the 1957 Siletz High School Yearbook ("Warrior"), and a May 25, 1961 newspaper article from the Lincoln County Leader.

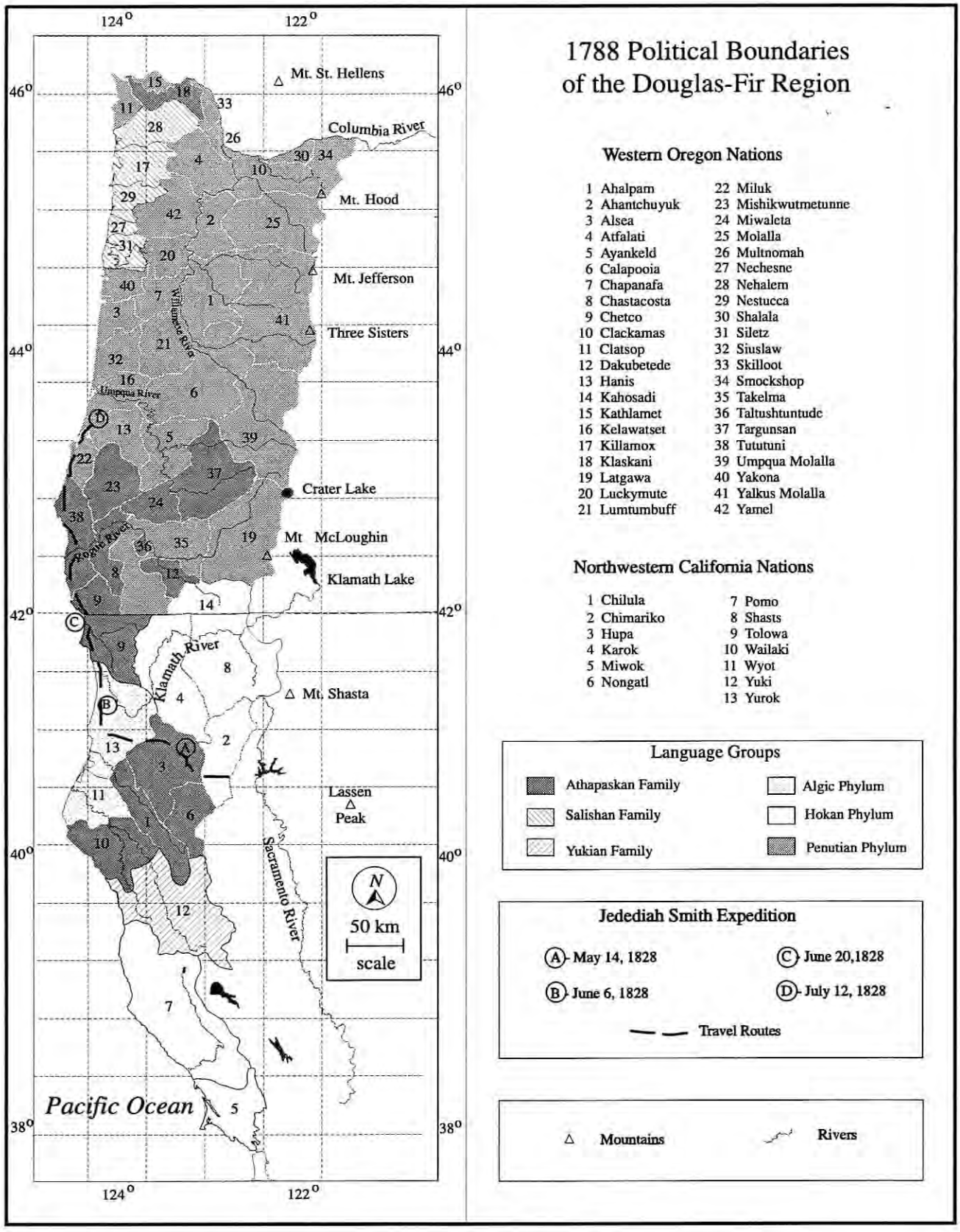
One hundred and seventy years ago, in 1825, the ancestors of today's Siletz Indians owned nearly all of the lands of the rivers of western Oregon: from the crest of the Cascades to the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west; from the Klamath River on the south to the Tuality Mountains that border the Columbia River on the north. Epidemics in the late 182Os and early 183Os killed most of the peoples that lived in the nations of that vast area, and by the early 184Os Klickitat invaders from the southern Washington Cascades and white settlers from the United States began to make land ownership claims throughout much of the region.

By the mid-1850s, nearly all of the remaining Kalapuyan and Molallan families of the Willamette and Umpqua valleys and the western Cascades had been confined to the Grand Ronde reservation; coastal and southwestern Oregon tribes were largely confined to the Yachats and Siletz River reservations, but a small number of northwestern California tribes, including the Modoc, Yurok, and Tolowa, also have descendents listed on Siletz tribal rolls. It is believed that the ancestors of all of these peoples have captured, prepared, traded, and/or ate lamprey eels for the past several hundred – and probably several thousand – years.

Although the title page to this report shows two Umatilla women drying a large number of lamprey eels along the Columbia River in the early 1900s, Lewis and Clarke failed to mention use of eels during their 1805–1806 travels along the river (Thwaites 1959). This lack of information may have been occasioned by the fact that Lewis and Clarke traveled west along the Columbia in the early winter of 1805, and returned east in early spring, 1806; missing the brief late spring, early summer runs of these animals.

The first historical mention of the Hupa nation of Trinity River area of northern California is in 1828, by a member of Jedediah Smith's beaver hunting brigade. It is also the first mention of lamprey eels along the Pacific coast in history. Harrison Rogers served as Smith's clerk in an expedition that included nine other members.

> WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 1828. Saw some [probably Hupa] Inds. that crossed the [Trinity] river in a canoe and came to me; I give them some beads, as presents; they made signs that they wanted to trade for knives, but I told them that I had none: **they give me a lamper eel dried, but I could not eat it.**
>
> They appear afraid of horses; they are very light coloured Inds., quite small and talkative. The weather still good.
>
> THURSDAY, 15TH. MAY, 1828. The men was divided in parties this morning, some sent hunting, as we had no meat in camp, others sent back after horses and packs that was left back.
>
> 5 Inds. came to camp; I give them some beads; they appear quite friendly; shortly after fifteen or 20 came, and among them one squaw, a very good featured woman; she brought a dressed skin and 2 worked boles for sale; I bought them from her for beads. The hunters killed 5 deer. The balance of the horses and packs, was got to camp about 4 oc. in the evening; the men quit[e] fatigued climbing up and down the hills. The weather still good. Some black bear seen by the hunters.



Political boundaries in place during the travels of Jedediah Smith.

By the next day, May 16, and despite the fresh venison, Rogers had apparently gotten over his squeemishness regarding "lamper eels":

> ... 20 or 30 [Hupa] Inds. visited our camp in the course of the day, **bringing eels for trade and roots; the men bought the most of them** giving awls and beads in exchange. Capt. Smith made them some small presents, and bought one B.[eaver] skin from them; the women does the principal trading, Those Inds. are quite civil and friendly; the weather is still good.

On Tuesday, May 20, Rogers and Thomas Virgin traveled by horseback to the Pacific Ocean. On the return trip Virgin killed a local Indian man, possibly in self-defense:

> As our horses was lame and tired, we concluded to remain here [at a May 19 camp above Redwood Creek "on the side of a mountain, where their was plenty of good grass and water for our horses"] and let them rest, and kill and dry meat, as elk appeared to be plenty from the sign.
>
> After breakfast, myself and Mr. Virgin started on horse back for the sea shore, following an Ind. trail [probably of the Chilula nation] that led immediately there; after proceeding about 5 m. west, we found we could not get any further on horse back along the Ind. trail, so we struck out from the [Redwood] creek that we had followed down, about 3 miles from where we first struck it; this creek being about 40 yards wide, heading into a mou[ntain]. south and emptying into the ocean at a N.W. direction. .. On our return we saw some elk; I went after them, and Mr. Virgin stay[ed] with the horses. I did not get to fire on them, and saw a black bare and made after him, and shot and wounded him very bad, and heard Mr. Virgin shoot and hollow in one minute after my gun were discharged, and tell me to come to him. I made all the haste I could in climbing the mou. to where Mr. Virgin was; he told me that some Inds. had attacked him in my absence, shoot a number of arrows at him and wounded the horses, and, he supposed, killed them by that time, that he had shot one, and was waiting for me. I rested a few minutes and proceed on cautiously to the place where we had left our horses, and found an Ind. lying dead and his dog by him, and Mr. Virgin's horse with 2 or 3 arrows in him, and he laying down. We got him up and made camp a little before night, and there was 7 or 8 Inds. at camp when we got there, and I made signs to them that we were attacked by some of there band, shoot at, one of our horses wounded, and we had killed one; they packed up and put off very soon...

By Sunday, May 25, the brigade had reached the Yurok nation, along the Klamath River (called "Indian Scalp River," for unknown reasons, by Smith):

> As usual when travelling, we was up and made an early start, directing our course N.E. about 1 mile and struck Ind. Scalp river opposite to an Ind. village, and got the Inds., with there canoes, to cross our plunder and selves. We drove in our horses, and they swam across, where they had to swim from 250 to 300 yards. We give those Inds. that assisted in crossing our goods, beeds and razors for there trouble; there was a number visited our camp in the course of the day, men, women, and children; **some brought lamprey eels for sale; the men bought them,** giving beeds in exchange. Those Inds. live in lodges built similar to our cabbins, with round holes about 18 inches in diameter for doors; the appear friendly and say nothing about the Ind. that Mr. Virgin killed on the 20th inst. About 10 oc. A.M., it commenced raining and continued to rain on pretty fast during the day.
>
> We cannot find out what those Inds. call themselves; the most of them have wampum and pieces of knives [metal objects provided Rogers with sure evidence of prior trading contacts for European goods]. Some have arrow points of iron; they also have some few beaver and otter skins. Mr. Smith puchases all the beaver fur he can from them. The foundation of there lodges are built of stone with stone floors; the[y] appear quite affraid when we first reached the river and called to them, but, after coakesing, one came across with his canoe...

By early June the brigade was still struggling northward along the California coastline. Thursday, June 5th, found them nearly out of food and dependent upon local Yurok families and eels for sustenance:

> No Inds. seen to-day; one man sent hunting but killed nothing, and we are entirely out of provision with the exception of a few pounds of flour and rice. Capt. Smith give each man a half pint a flour last night for their

FROM INDIAN RESERVATION TO PRESENT DAY CIVILIZATION

The Siletz Reservation, at one time comprising one and one-third million acres is gone, but a few relics remain on what is called Government Hill, named by the early Indians, Tyee Ililhe, which means high land. A few of the older Indians remember hearing of the times before the coming of the white man, when different tribes living in the valley had their own hunting and fishing grounds and lived always peacefully, for the Indians in this valley were never warlike. Perhaps it was for this reason that the government brought many Rogue River Indians here, so that they might learn more peaceful ways. According to the older living immigrants, the natives were the Flatheads.

Among the immigrants from the Rogue River were the Chetcos, To-To-To-neys, and the Coquelles, who were moved unwillingly from their native lands over a hundred years ago, about the year 1855. They had been promised land, a home made of lumber, horses, cattle, and necessary machinery if they would go. In spite of protests they were put on board ship at Port Orford, Oregon by soldiers of the government. Each person was allowed one package, generally a basket, and most of the people took food, knowing nourishment would be needed first. They left behind all hides, canoes, and good houses, with little hope for the future. After several days at sea, they sailed into the Columbia River and were eventually taken south to Grand Ronde. Some of these tribes stayed there, and others wandered southward, looking for a place to build a home. Measles struck, killing many people, but eventually sixteen reached the Siletz Valley, where they settled, finding friendly natives already here. These natives called the river the Se-la-gees, but the first government agent to record the word called it Siletz, by which name all the Indians in the valley, including the natives and immigrants, were called. Eventually, the Reservation was also named Siletz.

The school, the city, the valley, and the river are unique, not only in name but in the way that the many peoples have learned to live together in harmony, each respecting the other's right to be different.

Few of the Indians who live in Siletz Valley today try to preserve early dress and customs. Below are Archie Ben and his brother, who take pride in their heritage. They also dance with a group on many occasions.

Page taken from the 1957 Siletz High School yearbook "Warrior".

supper; we can find no game to kill although there is plenty of elk and bear sign. The day clear and pleasant. The most of the men went hunting after they had enc[amped]., but found nothing to kill; we killed the last dog we had along, and give out some more flour.

FRIDAY, JUNE 6TH, 1828. Myself and six men started early hunting, but killed nothing; 5 others started after we returned, as we intended staying at this camp for several days for the purpose of recruiting our horses. 8 Inds. ventured to camp and **brought a few lamprey eels and some ransberrys; they were soon purchased** by Mr. Smith and the men for beeds. The morning foggy and cloudy, the after part of the day clear and pleasant.

The hunters all returned without getting meat, and we were obliged to kill a horse for to eat

SATURDAY, JUNE 7TH, 1828. At the same camp; some men pressing beaver fur, and 2 sent hunting, and 3 others sent back to look for loossed horses. The horses hunters returned without finding but one horse; they report 2 dead that was left back. 18 or 20 Inds. visited camp again to-day with **berrys, mussels, and lamprey eels for sale; those articles was soon purchased,** with beeds, by Capt Smith and the men, and when the Inds. left camp, they stole a small kittle belonging to one of the men; they come with out arms and appear friendly but inclined to steal. The day clear and pleasant.

By Sunday, June 18, the brigade had finally reached the Pacific Ocean, near the mouth of Wilson Creek. The Yurok village of Ah-man was located near here, marking the northern-most extent of this nation. June 9 brought a change in fortune to the brigade:

... All the men that was sent out in the morning from camp had come in without killing any thing, Some Inds. in camp with a few small fishes and clams; the men, being hungry, soon bought them and eat them. They also brought cakes made of sea grass and weeds and sold them to the men for beeds. Where we encamped, there was a small creek pulling into the ocean at a south direction. Capt. Smith started out again to try his luck and found a small band of elk and killed 3; he returned to camp and got some men and horses and brought all the meat in, which was a pleasing sight to a set of hungry men. The day was clear and pleasant.

TUESDAY, JUNE 10TH. We concluded to stay here today, dry meat, make salt, and let our horses rest, as there is good grass and clover for them. A number of Inds. in camp with berrys, but do not find so good a market for them as they did yesterday. The morning cloudy and foggy, some rain towards evening. The men appear better satisfied than they do when in a state of starvation.

By Sunday, June 1959 5th, the brigade had entered into the lands of the Tolowa, near present-day Crescent City:

Several men started hunting early, as we intended staying here today and letting our horses rest. Joseph Lapoint killed a buck elk that weighed 695 lbs., neat weight; the balance of the hunters came in without killing. A number of [Tolowa] Inds. visited our camp again to day, bringing fish, clams, strawberrys, and a root that is well known by the traders west of the Rocky mountains by the name of commeser [camas], for trade. All those articles was soon purchased. The day cloudy, windy, and foggy, some rain in the afternoon. Cap. Smith and Mr. Virgin went late in the evening to hunt a pass to travel and found a small band of elk and killed two.

On Friday, June 20, Smith's men bought eels from the Tolowa, apparently fished from the Smith River of northwestern California (as distinguished from the Smith River of southwestern Oregon-although both are named for Jedediah, and both for events related to this 1828 exploration). The purchase of lamprey eels is significant because it means that the Hupa, Yurok, and the Tolowa (representing the southern-most extent of modern Siletz tribal ancestries) all used eels as prominent trade items during early summer months nearly 170 years ago:

Capt. Smith started early with one man to blaze the road and left me to bring on the comp[an]y. I was ready about 10 o.c. A.M., being detained collecting horses that was missing, and started and travelled along an Ind. trail, about 2 m. east, thence 1 mile N.E., on the blazed road, forded the [Smith] river that Capt. Smith discovered

THE RIVER SILETZ

Several legends explain why the Siletz River was so named, though even the meaning of the word is disputed. The belief that Siletz means "crooked river" meets with more agreement than many, but this explanation may stem from the fact that from above Logsden to the mouth it is a winding, twisting stream. Actually, the river meanders 124 miles from source to mouth, a mere 12 or 14 miles by air.

One legend explains why the river is crooked. According to it, years ago before the white man came, a favorite daughter of the Chief was so seriously ill that herbs and steam baths did not improve her condition, and the medicine man was called. Obeying his instructions, the Chief sent the warriors to find a large snake. This snake the medicine man showed to the Great Spirit, which accepted it, casting it upon the ground with such force that it writhed and squirmed, cutting an imprint into the valley, which became this winding river.

THE SHIPWRECKED MAIDEN

One story attributes the name Siletz to that of a white shipwrecked maiden, who was the only survivor when a ship went down in a storm near the mouth of the river. She lived on herbs and berries, working her way up the valley, where she was joyously accepted by an Indian tribe living at the present location of Siletz. This beautiful "strange fair one" was called Celeste, and eventually they named the tribe in her honor. It was not until the government agents misspelled the name that Siletz evolved.

BLACK BEAR SEEKS PEACE

Black Bear, legendary father of the original Siletz people, prayed to the Great Spirit for peace, for he hated the continual wars of his people. The Great Spirit heard his prayer, directing him to cross the mountains with his wives, his sons and daughters and their families where they were to occupy a beautiful land of plenty. Only one warning was given. Black Bear must keep his tribe pure. He set out with his wives, sons, daughters and their families, and after many days, came to this beautiful river and country, which they called the Celestial Valley. Here they lived in peace and plenty, until Black Bear disobeyed, taking a beautiful foreign wife. This brought much unrest and jealousy, for the new wife was very jealous of Black Bear's favorite daughter, Celeste. She caused her to be stolen away and drowned; the Great Spirit punished all the people with drouth, famine, and fire. This foreign wife even contorted the name of Celeste to our Siletz, and the original name was lost. Black Bear paid dearly for his disobedience to the Great Spirit. Time passed and the foreign wife returned to her people, so that once more the trees grew, the rains fell in season, the river rose so that the salmon returned.

Victoria Ben hangs eel to dry.

VITAL FOOD FROM THE RIVER

Both eel and salmon have long been important in the Indian diet as drying both gave food for the entire year. A few old Indians can remember the run of salmon being so heavy that the river was black with the fish, traveling up the stream so close together that a man might have crossed the river on the backs of the salmon.

Though the salmon and eel are not essential foods for the Indian living here today, many older ones have found it hard to adjust to the modern day meats, and would prefer, if it were possible, to have salmon, eel, and deer meat to the more readily available kinds.

THIS PAGE SPONSORED BY NOEL'S MARKET, SILETZ.

Page taken from the 1957 Siletz High School yearbook "Warrior".

yesterday, which was nearly swimming and from 60 to 70 yards wide, and enc[amped]. on the east side, in a bottom prairie that contained about 15 or 20 acres of good grass and clover. About 20 Inds. came to camp in their canoes, and **brought lamprey eels for sale; the men bought a number** for beeds. Several of us went hunting, and I killed a fine black tail buck, that was fat. [Toussaint] Marichall killed a small deer.

From the Smith River, Smith's brigade traveled northward along the coastline, entering Oregon (and the lands of the Chetco nation) on June 23rd. The Oregon natives were not so friendly as their Californian counterparts and abandoned their villages and hid as the men and horses crossed the Chetco and Pistol Rivers. On June 27th the party reached the mouth of the Rogue River:

... struck a river about 100 yards wide at the mouth and very deep, that makes a considerable bay and enc[amped]., and commenced getting timber for rafts. A number of Ind. lodges [of the Tututuni nation] on both sides of the river; they had run off, as usual, and left their lodges and large baskets; we tore down one lodge to get the puncheons to make rafts, as timber was scarce along the beach. The weather clear and windy. The Inds. that run off raised smokes on the north side of the bay, I suppose, for signals for those that were absent, or some other villages, to let them know we were close at hand. All the Inds. [Chetco and Tututuni] for several days past runs off and do not come to us any more.

Wednesday, July 2nd, brought Smith's brigade to the northern-most extent of the Tututni:

The country, for 3 days past, appears to leave the effects of earth quakes at some period past, as it is quite cut to pieces in places and very broken, although it affords such and [sic] abundance of good grass and clover. The weather is still good..

THURSDAY, JULY 3RD, 1828. We made a pretty early start, stearing N. along the pine flatts close by the beach of the ocean and travelled 2 m., and struck a river about 2 hundred yards wide [Coquille River], and crossed it in and [sic] Ind. canoe. Capt. Smith, being a head, saw the [probably Miluk nation] Inds. in the canoe, and they tryed to get off but he pursued them so closely that they run and left it. They tryed to split the canoe to pieces with thir poles, but he screamed at them, and they fled, and left it, which saved us a great deal of hard labour making rafts. After crossing our goods, we drove in our horses, and they all swam over, but one; he drowned pretty near the shore. We packed up and started again, after crossing along the beach N., and travelled 5 miles more, and encamped. Saw some Inds. on a point close by the ocean; Marishall caight a boy about 10 years old and brought him to camp. I give him some beads and dryed meat; he appears well and satisfied, and makes signs that the Inds. have all fled in their canoes and left him. I killed one deer to-day. The country similar to yesterday; the day warm and pleasant.

On July 5th, the brigade finally obtained proof that they were nearing their objective of reaching the Willamette Valley (and Fort Vancouver) with their horses, mules and beaverskins:

... Two Inds., who speak Chinook, came to our camp; they tell us we are ten days travell from Catapos [probably the Calapooia nation] on the wel Hamett [Willamette River], which is pleasing news to us. Plenty of elk sign, and several hunters out, but killed nothing.

On July 6, the company traveled only two miles before camping, although two elk were killed later in the day. On July 7 a decision was made to stay in camp, and substantial evidence was provided to show the proximity of European trade goods:

We concluded to stay here to-day for the purpose of resting our horses and getting meat and clearing a road to the mouth of a large river that is in sight [probably South Slough, a tributary of Coos Bay] about 2 miles distant that we cannot get too without. About 100 Inds. in camp, with fish and mussels for sale; Capt. Smith bought a sea otter skin from the chief; one of them have a fuzill [fusil or fuzil: a flintlock musket], all have knives and tommahawks. One a blanket cappon [?],and a number have pieces of cloth. The weather for several days past good.

Dancers are: Archie Ben, Pauline Ricks, Arthur Bell, Herman Bell, Dennis Bostwick, Steven Brown, Shirley Ben, Maxine Rilatos, Bob Rilatos, Paul Youngman, August Simmons, Clark John, Patrick Ben, Robert Simmons, and Gaylene Towner

Only a few of the young people have learned to perform the tribal dances. This group, however, still practices, and is one of the most entertaining features for half-time at football games.

"KLAT NAAGA", THE WHISTLE MAN

Belief in the power of the Whistle Man has not disappeared from this valley, for many Indian families have great respect for this legendary figure whose eerie whistle has been heard at night in recent years. It is an awful sound, they say, like nothing else ever heard, and when he hears it, one can make a positive identification. Some believe that the Whistle Man has the power to bring either a sudden or lingering death; others think he merely torments his subjects, stealing their catch or disturbing their sleep and scaring their children. This power is an evil one, gained by much practice in running, jumping, and whistling, and is located in a charm, actually a bone from the graveyard, which he must protect with his life, lest the power be lost.

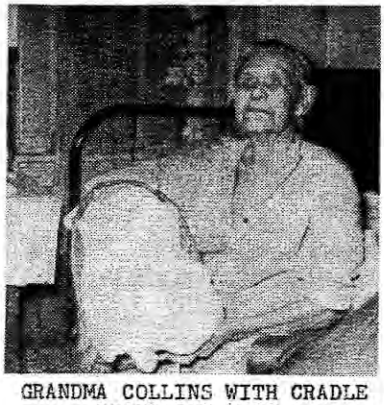
A favorite practice ground for an aspiring Whistle Man is a falls in the river about four miles upstream from Siletz.

According to the belief, one who has this power can stay at home in bed, sending his evil self out to do his bidding. This evil self may remain in the spirit, or may take a physical form, but with this form is mortal. A favorite physical being is that of an owl; for as such he can perch in a tree, whistling and tormenting his victim.

The story of the Whistle Man was confirmed by Grandma Collins, 87, who lives on Government Hill, but her version differs in some particulars. "Klat Naaga carries poison wrapped in gauze under belt, part red and part white, the red for blood and the white for bone," she said. "When one hears him, sounds like nothing ever heard and it makes the nose to bleed and the hair to stand straight up." She has not seen him recently, but has heard his whistle. Fear of the Whistle Man is one reason for keeping clean, for cleanliness helps to defeat him; the fear of this man was Grandma Collins' explanation for the steam bath which is more cleansing than a swim in the river. "Indians must keep clean like fish," she remarked.

TRIP BACK TO ROGUE RIVER

Many of the people from the Rogue River country were homesick and wished to return. When she was about 7 years old, Grandma Collins made the trip down the beach with her Grandmother, who packed eel and dried fish in a basket for supplies. They walked all the way down the coast, many days, each night sleeping behind logs on the beach. When they came to a river, they made friends with the people who would take them across in a boat or casket. Few of these Indians who had been moved into the Siletz Valley stayed here all the time, moving to Devil's Lake or over into the Willamette and back to Siletz.



GRANDMA COLLINS WITH CRADLE BOARD SHE MADE

BURIAL CUSTOM

"The early Siletz Indians were buried with a knife in one hand and a $25 gold piece in the other, prepared to fight or buy entrance into the next world," says Oregon, End of the Trail, a history book which was prepared by Oregon State Board of Control. Grandma Collins agreed to that statement, but explained that the money might have been silver or money beads.

Page taken from the 1957 Siletz High School yearbook "Warrior".

TUESDAY, JULY 8TH, 1828. We made and [sic] early start, directing our course N. along the beach and low hills; the travelling very bad on account of ravenes, fallen timber, and brush. We made 2 miles and struck the river [South Slough] and anc[amped]. The river at the mouth is about 1 m. wide, the Inds. very numerous, they call themselves the Ka Koosh [probably the Hanish or the Miluk nation of Coos (or Kusan) speakers; the boundary between these groups was roughly in the neighborhood of South Slough]. They commenced trading shell and scale fish, rasberrys, strawberrys, and 2 other kinds of bury that I am unacquainted with, also some fur skins. In the evening we found they had been shooting arrows into 8 of our horses and mules; 3 mules and one horse died shortly after they were shot. The Inds. all left camp, but the 2 that acts as interpreters; they tell us that one Ind. got mad on account of a trade he made and killed the mules and horses. The weather still good. One horse left today that was ma[i]m[ed].

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9TH. We made an early start... and struck another river [Coos River] and enc[amped]. We crossed in Ind. canoes; a great many Inds. live along the river bank; there houses built after the fashion of a shed [this likely means that the buildings were built with boards, rather than being thatched]. A great many Inds. in camp with fish and berries for sale; the men bought them as fast as they brought them. .. We bought a number of beaver, land, and sea otter skins from them in the course of the day.

After crossing the Coos River, the brigade continued northward, crossing Eel Creek and then camping along the Umpqua River. On July 12, they crossed the Umpqua and camped, near the mouth of the [Oregon] Smith River. The entry of July 13th was the last ever made by Rogers:

We made a pretty good start this morning, directing our course along the bay, east and travelled 4 miles and enc[amped]. 50 or 60 Inds. in camp again today **(we traded 15 or 20 beaver skins from them, some elk meat and tallow, also some lamprey eels)**. The traveling quite mirery in places; we got a number of our pack horses mired, and had to bridge several places. A considerable thunder shower this morning, and rain at intervals through the day. Those Inds. tell us after we get up the [Umpqua] river 15 or 20 miles we will have good travelling to the Wel Hammett [Willamette] or Multinomah [Multnomah was the name of a powerful Chinookan-speaking nation that lived along Sauvies Island near present-day Portland; their name was often used for the portion of the Willamette River from its mouth at the Columbia to the falls in Oregon City], where the Callipoo [Calapooia] Inds. live.

Here three men pole for eel from a rocky shelf overlooking Rock Creek, a tributary of the Siletz river near Logsden. With 12 to 18 foot poles to which a sharp hook is attached, the fishermen pull them across the bottom of the creek until they snag an eel which is then swung over their heads on the end of the poles to the bank.

Seen here, left to right, are Whitney Samuels, Robert Rilatos, and Ray Hoinness (back to camera).

Poling for eels, from the Lincoln Count Leader, May 25, 1961.

True to the traditions of their forefathers, the Indians today are interested in community betterment, and willingly give of their time, money, and talents to see that needed improvements are made. Three well-known civic-minded citizens, whose ancestors were Rogue River Indians, are pictured below. Mr. Art Bensell stands at the right with his mother; they are members of the To-To-To-Ney tribe. Mr. Coquelle Thompson, who was a coach and teacher in the high school several years ago, is a Coquelle, his father having been a chief. Mr. Thompson served as a member of the local school board for a number of years, and is always interested in athletic progress, assisting the coaches and boys in many ways.

THE PITCH WOMAN LEGEND

From the valley of the Rogue River comes the legend of the Pitch Woman, who came into the area after the second distructive fire. She was covered with pitch from head to toe, and was so strong and large, being nearly a hundred feet tall, that the Indians could not successfully resist her. She strode through the valley, carrying a large basket on her shoulder, gathering up the children that she could find. Many ran into the houses and hid, for they feared her, although she attempted to appear friendly. The first basket of children was taken up the mountain in which she had her home, where she kept them captive, feeding only lizards and snakes to them. Then, taking her basket, she went back to the village where she tried to capture the remaining people. They hid in their homes, but she lifted off the housetops and placed them all in her basket, hurrying back to the mountain. One old man determined to try to defeat her, so he set fire to the pitch on her back. It was quickly ignited, and burned rapidly, finally burning the strap which held the basket on her back. Though quite hot and shaken, the people were not severely injured, but the pitch woman could not extinguish her flames, and though she reached the top of the mountain, was finally burned to death. The Indians then freed their children from their prison in the mountain, all returning to their homes. Since that time descendants of these people have disliked lizards and snakes.

Page taken from the 1957 Siletz High School yearbook "Warrior".

Pat Ben grasps a squirming eel from the bank, tossed there by a poleman, and reaches for a gunny sack to add it to the evening's catch.

INDIAN EELING SEEN IN PHOTOS

Editor's Note:—This is the first time, it is believed, that the story of eel fishing by the Siletz Indians (one of the only tribes to practice it) has ever been told. Here the art has been known since the Siletz tribes first established themselves on the Pacific coast many centuries ago.

Compartively few white men today have witnessed the Indian eel fishermen in action. So far as is known no photographs exist.

The Leader presents to its readers this week not only the story but the first photographs of this springtime Siletz Indian ritual, handed down to the present generation from the dim, dim past.

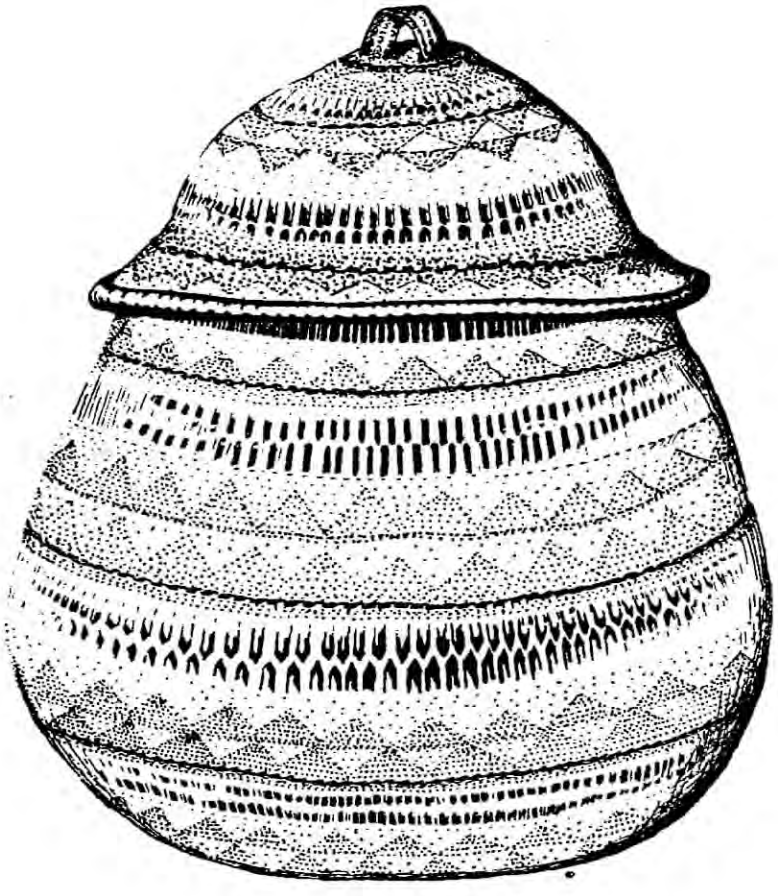
Strange things are happening on the Siletz and Rock Creek these balmy May nights.

It's eeling time and the Indian folk, carrying on a waiting for.

With long, slender pol to which is fastened a sha hook, he pulls it ginger along the bottom of t creek, snags the eel, a

Poling for eels, from the Lincoln Count Leader, May 25, 1961.

Marie Fuller was one of the "bankmen" Thursday evening when a Leader photographer visited an eel fishing party on Rock Creek. She holds a gunny sack, already a quarter full of eel taken from Rock Creek by polemen.



Eel basket

Lamprey Eel Ethnology: John Hudson

by Melville Jacobs

In addition to myths, early researchers attempted to record the methods by which early families made a living, the languages they spoke, and their thoughts and feelings. The following are accounts of catching and cooking eels are direct translations from Kalapuya text.

1. Boiling of foods

Long, long ago, when they (women) boiled their food (meat, etc.), they took their (bark) bucket, and they put water into it. Then they cut up their food when they wanted to boil it. (1) And then they built a fire, they heated many stones. Now when those stones had become hot, then they put them into the (water in the bark) bucket. And then they put their food into the bucket, and (they put in) water too. (2) Now the hot stones were put into the bucket (of water). Then the water would boil. And when a stone got cold they took out that stone, and they put in another hot stone again. Then their food would boil, and so whatever they ate became cooked. (3) And the water, they call it soup, they would drink it too. When they ate they also would drink the soup. That is the way the people used to do long, long ago. They boiled salmon, they boiled eels, they boiled deer meat. (4) That is what they did to their food. They also boiled acorns. The thing that they fixed their fire with when they built a fire, and with which they held the hot stones I do not know (what) its name (was) that they called it.

4. Camas and some other food

1. Long ago the people after they had dug a hole (for acorns) then they would build a fire right there (in the hole). Now they would put a lot of stones (on top of a fire). Then when the rocks got hot, then they would say to a shaman "Look at the rocks now! Is it all right for us to put our camas on them?" (1) Now then the shaman would step (barefooted) on the hot rocks, he would cross over on them, he would look at his feet, and he would say, "Oh pretty soon the camas will be good (well cooked)." That is how they used to do once in a while. (2) So then they placed all their camas (in it) there. They always put (in) large quantities of wide maple and ash leaves, they put them in first (on top of the hot rocks). Now then they put in the camas. And then they placed leaves on top of the camas. (3) Now then they covered it over with earth. Now they built a fire on top of rocks (placed over the oven), hot rocks were under it. That is how they did when they prepared cooked camas. And they were (in) there for three days, (though) once in a while for (only) two days. (4) Then the cooked camas became done. When they covered their raw camas (in the ground oven), one woman put in her raw camas first, and she put some few leaves (on them). Then another woman, now she put in her own raw camas, and she put on them a few leaves. (5) Now then another put in her raw camas. That is the way they always did. The leaves lay between (individual piles of raw camas), That is how they did. Now then they all knew where they had placed their (own) raw camas. Once in a while they would examine (the oven) where they had put their raw camas. (6) They dug a hole in, they pulled out one of the uncooked camas, and they looked it over. It would not be quite done yet, so they would put in again. Now then they built a fire again (on top). (7) When they at length (again) took out another camas, they would look at it , and now it was done. Then they would say, "This cooked camas is ready (done) now." And they would wait till it became cold, and then they uncovered it, and they gathered up their cooked camas. (8) That is the way they always did. Now that it had become cooked camas they dried some of it in the sun. And they took care of it (turning it over) all the time (it lay drying). (9) And when it was dried, they then put it away. They ate it in the winter time, when there was a lot of snow on the ground. Then they ate the dried cooked camas. That is what they always did.

2. That is the way they did with everything. They always put it away. They dried Chinook salmon for the wintertime, and then they ate it. They dried meat, and in wintertime they also ate hazelnuts and acorns, and tarweed seeds, and dried berries. (2) They dried all sorts of things, (and) in wintertime they ate them at the time when their was a lot of snow. They dried eels which they ate in wintertime. In summertime they picked tarweed seeds, and they dried them on the fire, and when they were done, then they put them away. (3) Now long ago the people had a large rock which had a hole (concavity) in it's center (i.e., a mortar), and they mashed their tarweed seeds. And when they were through then the people ate what was mashed which they had pulverized. (4) They mixed hazelnuts, and cooked camas, and tarweed seeds, (and then) they ate their cooked camas and their tarweed seeds and their hazelnuts.

5. Acorns

When acorns ripened on oaks, and when the acorns fell down, then the women would gather those acorns (that had fallen). They would pick up quantities, they would put them into their soft-bags, and they would take them back to their houses. (1) Now then they would roast them in hot (coals in the) ground (till they cracked). And then they would take them out, and now the acorns would be (seen to be) cracked. Then they put away its (their) flesh (meaty part). They dried the acorns' flesh (meat they were laid in the sun either on the ground or on tightly woven rush mats). (2) Now when they wish to eat (some) they had a small soft-long-basket, and they put some of the acorns into it. Then they placed it (basket and acorns in it) in water (to soak) maybe one day and one night (to remove the bitter taste). And then they took the acorns out (of the water), and they boiled it (them). When cooked they ate it. That is the way they did.

9. Eels bark buckets

1. Long ago the people (the men) used to get eels in small streams (creeks), the eels that had gone into the small streams, that had left the big-river (the Willamette). It always has a great quantity (too much) of water. (2) Eels could not even be gotten by them there. (But) in the small streams, there where there are small waterfalls, at such a place there were always quantities of eels it is said. They (eels) would be going up stream. Always at that time when it was getting near to summertime, they would catch eels. (3) But on the other hand at the falls (at the great Oregon city falls) there would always be quantities of eels in the summertime. They would be fastened on the rocks there at the falls. Quantities of eels are always there. They would catch them just with their hands. (4) And when they had caught them they would break their necks. That is the way they used to do at the (Oregon City) falls when the people caught eels. All the people got their eels at the falls. When the eels were at the falls the people would say, "The eels are quite fat." When they wanted to eat eels they always roasted them on stakes (spits). (5) They had roasting spits. When they had roasted them, when they had cooked the eels, then they ate the eels. And when they were through eating they put away their roasting spits. They put them away. They always took good care of their roasting spits. That is what they did.
2. Long ago they used to get eels in the night time. When they got them at night they obtained pitchwood, they lit the pitchwood (brands) and they held them. Then they went to the stream. (2) And when they saw an eel they seized it close to its neck there, where it has little holes. They say it is a little soft there. Then they broke its neck when they seized it. And they also held on to the lit pitchwood, so that they could see the eel. (3) That is the way they used to do in the night time to catch eels. They split the pitchwood. And they tied the (split) pitchwood in several places. They took it at night when they went. They lit that pitchwood. That is how they used to do long ago it is said.

3. Sometimes too in the daytime they would get eels. They would just go to the stream, there where they saw eels they would catch them, all of them that they saw. They would always seize the one that stayed to the rear. (2) They would never catch the one that was ahead. If they seized the one that stayed in front, the others that were behind would all get away. But if they did seize the one to the rear, they would catch all those eels.

4. When the people (the men) had caught eels and when they had come back to their homes with them, then the women split them (lengthwise). The eels they did not want to eat at once, those eels they dried. (2) When they split them they put them up above (on drying frames made of four upright forked poles, with many cross poles) and there underneath they built a fire. It was not very hot. They smoked them with the smoke (of the fire beneath). That is the way they did when they wanted to dry them. (3) However when some got dried they placed them (in storage). That is what they did for their winter food. That is what they always did with their food. They said that they put others into soft-bags and they hung them up above from a tree. There they put their food to be eaten in the winter. That is the way they did it, it is said.

Eel basket

Charlie DePoe

Lamprey Eel Mythology: Charlie DePoe

by Leo Frachtenberg

The following story was related to Leo Frachtenbrg by Charles DePoe (also known as Depot Charlie), a well-known Siletz Indian during the early 1900s. Depoe Bay, Oregon, is a small coastal community in Lincoln County that is named for this man. Although lamprey eels are only discussed at the beginning of this story, it is interesting to note the relative importance that Coyote gives to these animals in comparison to salmon.

Coyote arranges the seasons of the year

After Coyote had come back from across the ocean, he staid with his wife one year in Joshua Country, and built himself a sweat-house there. He was in the habit of leaving his wife frequently for the purpose of hunting and fishing. A little ways up the river he had a house for drying salmon. One day he went to the drying-house and staid there a month. Then he went back to his wife, carrying all the dried salmon in a canoe. After his return he went out on the beach at low tide, where he found plenty of eels with red backs. This surprised him, and he concluded that spring must have come. It seemed to him that he must have missed a good many months. He could not understand this; so he decided to go upstream to a prairie and view the country from there. Arriving at the place, he saw that all the flowers were dry. This convinced him that he had missed all the winter months. So he went back and said to his wife, "My wife, everything upstream is dry. It will be midsummer soon." But the women laughed at him. Then Coyote told her to throw all the old salmon into the river, as he did not want to mix old salmon with fresh eels. The woman refused to do so, and quarrelled over it for a long time. She suspected that someone had been playing a trick on her husband: so she decided to hide all the food she could find, and store it away. She did not believe that fall was coming. Coyote thought that his wife had thrown all the old salmon away, as he had told her to do, and went out to gather fresh eels; but he did not see a single eel. He thought, "Well the eels will come tonight." He went back to his wife and told her about his failure. She paid no attention to him, but kept on eating the salmon she had saved up. At night Coyote went out again. He fished a whole night, but did not catch a single eel. In the morning he was very hungry: so he went down to the beach in the hope of finding something to eat. Again he was disappointed. Nothing had drifted ashore. In the evening he went out fishing again. He was very hungry by this time, and suspected that either the Sun or the Moon had fooled him. For nearly a month he had nothing to eat. He was so weak that he could hardly walk. And all this time his wife was eating the meat she had stored away without his knowledge.

One day Coyote called all the animals and birds together, told them how the Sun had fooled him, and asked them to help him kill the Sun. Coyote was given food, which made him feel stronger. Then they started out in quest of the place where the Sun habitually comes out. They built a fort there, covered it with tips, and made a small hole through which to watch the Sun. Coyote also made a knife, and was ready to catch the Sun as soon as he should come up, and to kill him. He watched. Towards daylight the Sun appeared way off. So Coyote told his companions to take a good rest that day, after which they would go to the place whence the Sun emerged. They started again. Coyote spoke to the land and the distance shortened. Soon they came to the new place, and made themselves ready. Again the Sun came out, but he was so far that Coyote could hardly see him. Again he told his friends to rest. In the evening they started out once more. Again Coyote shortened the distance by a mere wish. They came to the new place, but the Sun was still far off. The same thing happen twenty times. At last they came to a high mountain, which the Sun could hardly make. Then Coyote was glad, and said, "Now we shall surely catch him." So the next night they went to the new place. Coyote shortened the distance as before.

Quite a number of his companions were already worn out with hunger and fatigue and had dropped out. The new place they came to had high mountains on both sides. They made a high wall between these, and felt sure that they should catch the Sun in this place. At night they got ready. Daylight began to appear, and Coyote warned his friends to beware of any tricks that the Sun might play on them. "He may come out from the ground with his eyes shut," he said, "so that you won't see him until he opens his eyes on top of the mountain, and then he will be out of reach." At last the Sun appeared at the foot of the slope on the other side of the mountain. He looked very large, and was quite a distance away. So Coyote told his friends to rest that day. He felt sure that they would catch the Sun at night. After sundown they started out and came to a large body of water. Coyote held council with his people, and asked them to look for a place to cross the ocean. Half he sent north, while the other half was to go south. He thought that perhaps the Sun might have his house in the water. Soon they saw lots of reeds. Coyote's friends became discouraged and wanted to go home, but he encouraged them, saying that he had been there before. They were very tired and hungry. So Coyote advised them to eat some roots. These kept them alive; and from that time on people learned the use of roots as medicine. From the shore they saw a large fog on the other side of the ocean, which disappeared as soon as the sun came out. Then they were sure that they were near the Sun's lodge. At noon the Sun came up high above them; he was still very far. They did not know how to cross the ocean. So Coyote called upon the water people to help him. Ten times he called, but no one came. Then he nearly lost his courage. He and his companions were almost starved to death.

Finally Coyote said to one of his companions, "Strike me over the head twice! Something may happen." His companions refused, fearing he might kill him. Coyote insisted, and told his friends that if he dropped senseless, they should let him lie until someone came, and then they should push him. So Coyote sat down, closed his eyes, and his companions hit him on the side of the head with a stick. A cracking sound was heard. Twice Coyote was hit before he fell to the ground lifeless. Then the people began to wonder how they should get home without Coyote, he had taken them so far away from home. Night came, and they heard the sound of mice squeaking around them in a circle. At first they did not wake Coyote. Three times the mice went around them before the people thought of waking Coyote. At first they called his name, then they shook him. At last Coyote stretched himself, and said, "Oh, I am sleepy!" His friends yelled at him, "Some one has come!" Then Coyote opened his eyes, squeezed his head on all sides, and it got well again. Soon the Mice began to squeak, and Coyote called to them, "My grandsons, come to me!" Then two Mice appeared. They had no tails; their ears were small, and their hair was very short. Coyote told them that he was their uncle, and that their father was a great friend of his. The mice listened in silence. Then Coyote asked them to tell him where the house of the Sun was; but the bigger Mouse said, "If you give us what we want, we will tell you where the Sun's house is located." "What do you want?" asked Coyote, "dentalia shells?" The Mouse shook her head. Coyote offered them all kinds of valuables, but the mice did not want them. The night was passing fast, and Coyote was in a hurry: so he took a salmon-net and made two tails of it. To one Mouse he gave the long tail, while the other received a short tail. He also gave them ears, and hair of different color. At last he asked them if they were satisfied; and the Mice replied, "Yes." Then Coyote took some fat and rubbed it on their noses, and told them that there after they would smell grease, even from a long distance; and this is the reason why all Mice today like grease, and why they get into salmon nets and tear them whenever they are hung up. They do this because their tails were made of salmon-nets.

Then Coyote asked the Mice, "How do you cross the ocean?" and the Mice told him that they had a trail under water. He also inquired about the house of Sun and Moon, and learned that there were one hundred Suns and Moons, and that the Suns and the Moons were the same people. One person would appear as a Sun one day. Upon his return, another man would go out as Moon; then they would come back, go to sleep, and another person would go out as Sun; and so on. Coyote wanted to know if there

were any sweat-houses there. "Only one," the Mice said "and it is very hot." They also told him that whenever a Sun wanted to enter the sweat-house, he would first thrust his foot in and then jump out quickly; then he would go in again and jump out. He would do this five times before remaining in the sweat-house for good. "Then," the Mice said, "you can catch him." Coyote also found out that the Moon's country was dry, had no water, and that it was always hot and light there. He also asked the Mice, "Which Sun fooled me last fall?" and the Mice answered, "There were two of them. Their names are Ltsi'ca and Can Sun. They are very bad and make all sorts of trouble. The others are good." Coyote wanted to know how big they were. "Very big," the Mice said "and very dangerous." Then Coyote told the Mice that he and his companions would rest a whole day, and would make the attack upon the Suns and Moons the next night. He asked the Mice to go home and to gnaw through all the bowstrings in the houses of the Suns and Moons. At last he asked, "Did you say these houses were under water?" "No!" replied the Mice, "they are on land." Coyote suspected the Mice of lying, but decided to take chances. Then he asked, "How far is it from here?"-"A long ways off." The Mice were ready to start at noon. Coyote wanted to know how long the Suns staid in the sweat-house, and if they had any dogs. "There are no dogs," the Mice said. Then they continued, "None of the Suns urinate very much, excepting the two we mentioned before. These two leave the house often, and urinate for a long time. Whenever they do so, it rains and storms very hard. Watch these two carefully, for they are the ones who played the trick on you." Just before the Mice departed, they agreed to warn Coyote of any lurking danger by squeaking. Then they opened the door and disappeared.

Coyote called his people together and held council. It was decided to eat the Suns and Moons as soon as they should be killed, for in that country there was no place to bury them. Then he ordered the ocean to become small and dry, and started out with his people. Soon the light began to grow very bright; they were approaching the home of the Suns and Moons. The sands were exceedingly hot. They came to the sweat-house; and Coyote hid his companions in it, while he himself knelt down inside near the door, where he could catch any one who went in, kill him and throw him to his friends. Soon he heard the Mice squeaking and whispered, "My children, I am here!" The Mice told him that all the Suns and Moons were in the house: so Coyote caused a heavy fog to spread over the place. The Mice said, "The people saw our new tails and furs, and wondered what it meant. They are surprised, and suspect that Coyote has done this, and that he is watching them. We have eaten up all the bows and strings in the house." Coyote was glad. Then one Mouse went back into the house, while the other remained outside to give warning. Soon everything became quiet. After a little while Coyote heard the slow, heavy foot steps of an approaching Sun, and saw a bright light accompanied by a faint hissing sound. Then a foot was thrust into the sweat-house and quickly withdrawn. Four times this process was repeated. After the fifth time a Sun put the whole body in, whereupon Coyote killed him, threw him to his people, who ate him up at once. And from that time on the birds and Coyotes have been in the habit of eating dead corpses.

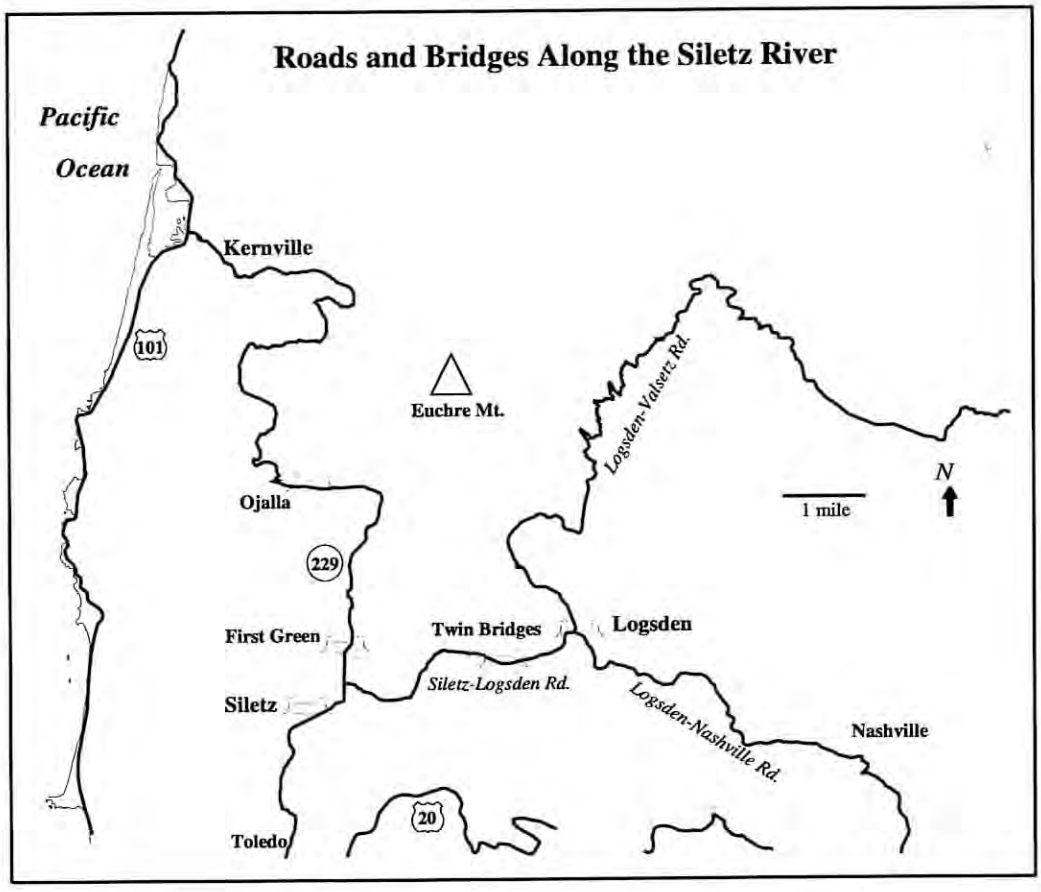
In this manner he killed fifty persons. After the first twenty-five had been killed, Coyote's people became satiated and could not eat any more. So the place began to smell of blood, and the other Suns became suspicious. At last Ltsica started for the sweat-house. He approached, causing a great noise and wind. Coyote trembled with excitement. Ltsica urinated for a long time. As he came nearer to the sweat-house, he wondered why it was dark inside. He put his foot in, then withdrew it quickly. Coyote began to waver; he thought that perhaps he had killed enough Suns and Moons. At last Ltsica came in. Coyote stabbed him, but only scratched his rump. The wounded Sun rushed into the house, and gave the alarm. Coyote quickly gathered his people and told them to disperse. Then he produced a heavy fog, so that he could not be seen. The Moons woke up and seized their bows and arrows; but all were gnawed through. Thus Coyote and his friends escaped. The Mice, too, went home on their trail. They met at their first meeting place, and Coyote danced the death-dance. Since then people have always

been dancing the murder-dance. The wounded Moon had a very bad night; he was very sick. At noon Coyote looked up to the sky, and said, "Sun if you ever fool me again, I will come back and kill you all!" The Suns did not answer. Then Coyote settled the length of the year, and divided it into twelve periods; and since then the Suns have never dared to disobey him.

Maps of Siletz River Eel Gathering Sites

The maps on this and the following pages show the various landmarks and fishing areas discussed in the oral history section of this report.

Information obtained from historical research and the oral histories was transcribed onto 7 1/2 minute USGS maps provided by the tribe. They were then transformed into a GIS format by Downey, under the direction of Mack Barrington, using facilities provided by the OSU Department of Agriculture GIS lab.


Roads and Bridges Along the Siletz River
Pacific
Ocean
Kernville
101
Euchre Mt.
Logsden-Valsetz Rd.
N
1 mile
Ojalla
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Twin Bridges
Logsden
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Nashville
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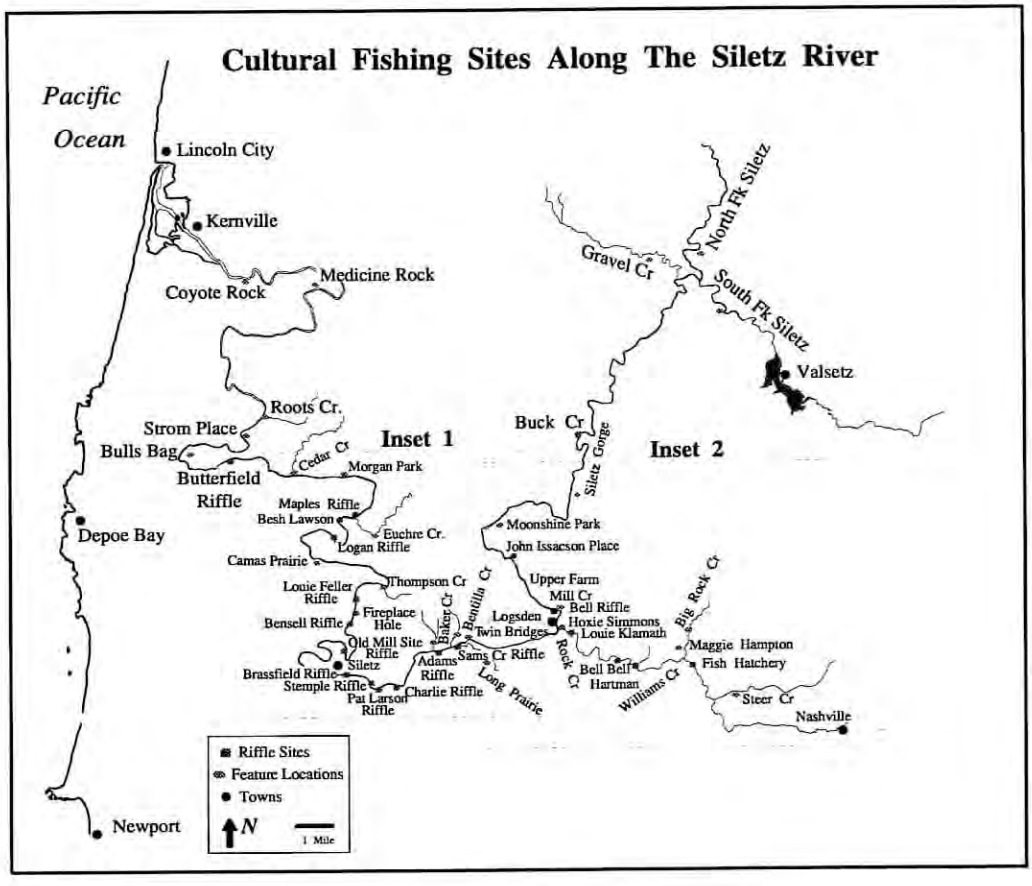
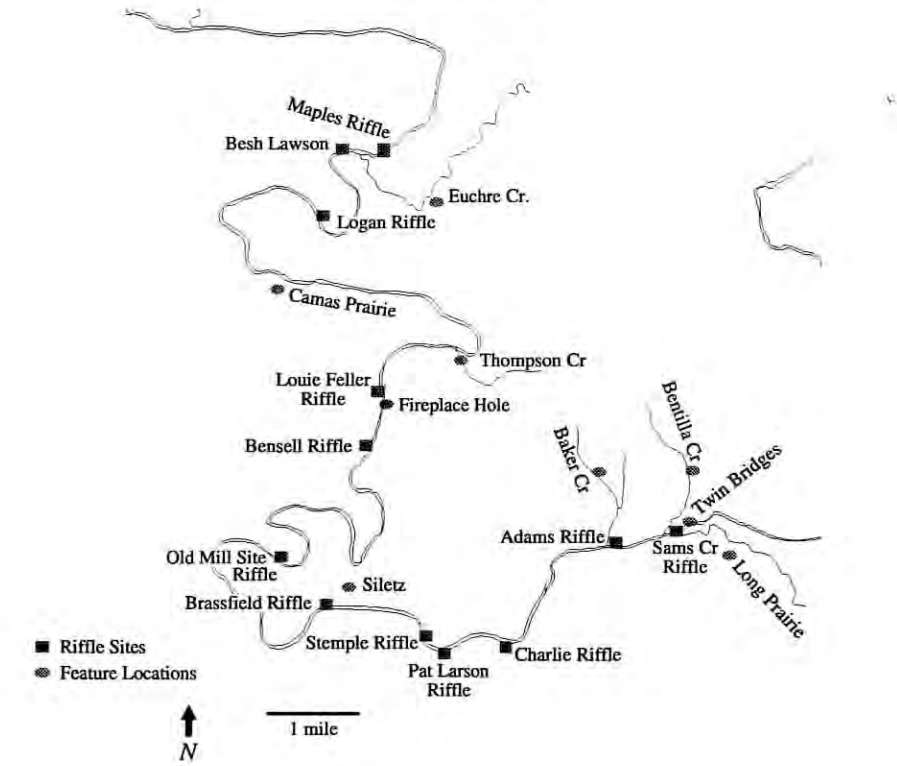
Toledo


Cultural Fishing Sites Along The Siletz River
Pacific
Ocean
Lincoln City
Kernville
Medicine Rock
Coyote Rock
North Fk. Siletz
Gravel Cr
South Fk. Siletz
Valsetz
Roots Cr.
Strom Place
Bulls Bag
Inset 1
Cedar Cr
Morgan Park
Butterfield
Riffle
Maples Riffle
Besh Lawson
Euchre Cr.
Logan Riffle
Depoe Bay
Camas Prairie
Buck Cr
Siletz Gorge
Inset 2
Moonshine Park
John Issacson Place
Upper Farm
Mill Cr
Bell Riffle
Hoxie Simmons
Louie Klamath
Logsden
Twin Bridges
Big Rock Cr
Maggie Hampton
Fish Hatchery
Thompson Cr
Louie Feller
Riffle
Fireplace
Hole
Bensell Riffle
Baker Cr
Bendilla Cr
Old Mill Site
Riffle
Siletz
Brassfield Riffle
Stemple Riffle
Pat Larson
Riffle
Adams
Riffle
Sams Cr Riffle
Charlie Riffle
Long Prairie
Rock Cr
Bell Bell
Hartman
Williams Cr
Steer Cr
Nashville
Riffle Sites
Feature Locations
Towns
N
1 Mile
Newport

Inset 1



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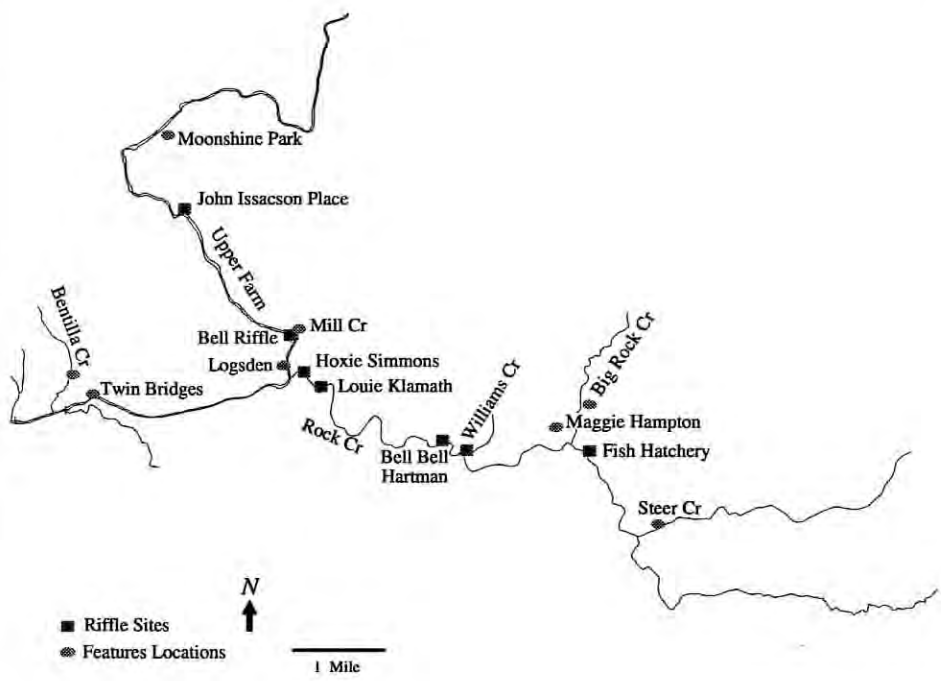


Oral History Interviews

Lillian Bayya

The following interview with Lillian Bayya was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at the Bayya home on August 15, 1991. Lillie was born on the Besh Lawson allotment on the south side of Euchre Creek, September 11, 1929. She is a Siletz tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area, and were you born here?

I was born here and raised down on the old ranch [Lawson Allotment, currently Kosydar Road].

What year was that?

September 11, 1923.

What area of the Siletz Valley did you grow up in?

Down Kernville way, just on this side of Euchre Creek where Mary [Lawson Miller] and Matt Miller lived.

How far back do you remember people fishing on the Siletz?

Golly, way back when I was a kid. . . My dad used to go fishing. When he used to set net, he used to bring two strings of fish back and tell my mother to take her pick. She did. Yes, I can remember way back.

What year was this?

Let's see, I was thirteen at the time, I'm sixty-seven now. About fifty years ago.

What was your father's name?

Besh Lawson.

Did you fish for eels yourself?

Never did, but I would go with my brothers and pick them up. But I never did hook them.

Where was this at?

That was down on the old ranch and up at Rock Creek.

Where were the traditional eel fishing grounds located on the Siletz River?

Golly, I would not know what to say about that.

Where did you see the most people fish at?

Most of them hooked [eels] on the riffles in the [Siletz] river.

Was there any riffle that they hooked the most?

The Logan Riffle was the most popular, down below the [Euchre] grade going toward Kernville. They called it Logan Riffle.

Where was this located at?

Just beyond Morgan Park.

Did your family have a special eel fishing area?

On my dad's place, the old ranch.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year?

My Grandma Martha [Lawson] said that up at Rock Creek, when the water was high, she said they would run in January up there. That was what she told us.

So, you think that they run almost year around?

Most of the time, I would say.

What time of the year did you folks hook them?

Some where in the first part of July. . .

What other signs were there?

Oh, eel ants. Lots of our Indians said that was a sign. During hot weather they were all over the ground. That was their sign that the eels were to run good.

Describe the eels that were hooked.

The night eels were a pretty blue and the day eels were a brownish color, and if you cooked them they were kind of rubbery. But the night eels were more of a blue.

Why do you think that they would not hook these eels?

They were too tough and rubbery when you cook them. If you tried to take out the back bone, they were too soft and would fall apart. Your night eel is the best eel.

What were the stream conditions like when the eel runs were good in the past?

The streams were low and I often times wondered how they caught them. The way my brother use to hook

them was to put his pole and hook in front of the eel and pull into the eel. . .

You let the eel run into the hook?

Yes. I know that my dad said that when they did not have a gas lantern that they would use pitch, but the only thing about using this is that the eel would taste like pitch.

You said that the day eel is brownish color?

Yes, they are more brownish in color and they get real soft and they are full of eggs. When you take the eggs out there is nothing to them.

Was that the same thing that they called the sun eel?

Yes, that is the same eel.

Did you ever see where the eels spawned?

No, I never did.

How long did the eel runs last?

They usually last a month, somewhere along there, but if there is light of the moon they would not run. Yes, they would not run in the full moon.

How many people did you see hooking in any one place at any one time?

A lot of them used to hook up at Rock Creek. That is where I used to see the most of them hook.

What year was this?

Oh, who used to own that place? I think it was Mr. [Frank] Lyons. That must be somewhere about fourteen years ago, but you know that he will not let people in there because people broke glass in his field.

How many people were there at one time?

Oh, about ten.

Do you know of anyone trapping eels on the Siletz?

A long time ago. I never did see it, but my Grandma [Annie] Rooney, my dad's mother, they had what you call a net that they made out of roots. It was big and round at the top and narrowed down to a horn and my dad said that they would take cedar boughs and block the riffle and make the eels run into the trap. I seen the basket that Grandma made. I wish that I had it now for a keepsake, you don't see them any more. She made it. That's the way they used to trap them.

Was there more than one season or run of eels?

Not that I know of, just the one in the summertime.

What other types of animals were abundant in the streams during this time, when the eels were running good?

My mother used to go to the river and get those river mussels, those little black ones on the riffle, and cook them and make chowder out of them. That's what she used to do with river mussels.

What years were this?

Almost any time in the summertime, when the water is low. That is the time you can see them, but they are there all the year long, but you have to let the water go down before you can find them.

When was this, about thirty years ago?

Yes, I don't know if anyone does that anymore.

Have you seen any mussels lately?

No, I have not been down to the river lately.

How were the eels prepared after they were caught?

Well, Sammy [Bayya] used to cut them into short pieces and put garlic, salt and pepper, vinegar, soy sauce, onion, put [them] into some water and bring [them] to a boil. But I always just part smoked and baked them and then I canned them. I like to fry them too. Just take the backbone out and put salt and pepper on and fry them. I even got Grandpa Tindall to eat them. I would cut the head and tail off and part smoke them, put it into the oven and bake them and then take it to him. And he thought it was real good. I couldn't get his wife to eat them. . . it tastes just like tuna.

When was the last time that you folks got enough eels for a good mess?

A year ago.

How many did you get then?

Oh, I think that Bristo [Bayya] got about half a sack full. About eighty in 1990, the last time that they got any.

Everyone has been talking about not getting any for more than five years.

Yes, a lot of them go too early. Bristo usually goes up late in July.

The river has changed?

Yes, they say that the river has changed a lot. That might be the reason too.

Yes, there is a lot of people saying that they haven't had any eels for five or six years.

I know that Nellie Orton said that she has not had any eels since my brother died, and that has been along time ago.

Yes, maybe all the others have been going in May and June and the weather has been cool.

Yes, we have not had a lot of hot weather during the year. It does require a lot of heat.

How did they fish for the salmon on the Siletz?

My dad mostly fished with a [gill] net.

What years was this?

My dad died in 1945. It was in about '42. I think that was the last time they could do it. That was when they put a stop to it, but I do not know of him using a gaff hook though. Just the net. He could use it on the ranch. They could not go off government land, the same with deer hunting, you had to be on your own place.

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz at this time?

Well, I would say there was quite a bit. It was pretty good.

What was it like growing up on the Siletz at this time?

It was hard times.

Did you have plenty to eat?

We had plenty to eat. We did not go hungry. We lived on deer meat, fish and eels. My mother did a lot of canning. No, we had plenty of food. It is not like it is today.

What did your father do?

He was a carpenter. I don't think that he logged.

Why do you think that there is a decline in eels and other game on the Siletz River?

I really don't know. I don't know what to say on that. Just what I heard, you know.

Do you think it is the logging practices or do you think it is outside influence?

Probably outside.

What did you hear?

You mean about the eels? Well, everyone I talked to said that they were being killed, they were putting poison out for them, but I don't know what kind, because the fishermen claimed that they were killing their fish. And ever since then, the eels have not run like they did.

In the last five or six years you folks have had some good years and some bad years hooking eels?

Well, we had some good years, but some wasn't so good.

I heard last year you didn't get any?

This last year Bristo only got two.

Then last year you got almost eighty and the year before that you didn't get any?

We didn't get any. It all depends on how they would run. It is just nothing like it used to be.

When was the last time you remember that you folks caught a lot?

Well, when the hatchery was still running, they used to let my boys go into the box where they used to hold the fish and hook them because they used to hang onto the walls. But it got so they would not let you go up there because they thought they were getting their fish. In fact, I and Bristo and Sam went up there one night and one of the guys who lived up there held Bristo at gun point. He thought that we were getting fish. Bristo told him no, that we were getting eels. We only had about five. Another person came and told the other person to let us go. So, when we were on our way back home we met the State Police. He asked what we had been doing and Bristo told him that we had been up to the hatchery hooking eels and he said, "Can I see them?" So, Bristo opened the sack and showed him the five eels we had. And he asked Bristo, "How do you cook them?" So, he said my mother part smokes them and bakes them. And then he said, "Go ahead and move on." And after that we could not go back up there anymore to hook eels.

What time was this?

About 1986. There wasn't too many that night.

What is the importance of eel fishing to you, your family and friends?

We just like to hook eels and the boys like to eat them too. They really enjoyed hooking them.

If there was abundance of eels again, would you hook them again?

Yes, we would be hooking them again. I think that a lot of people would be hooking them.

It's a good food too?

Yes, it is good. It's the best food you can eat. Like Mr. Neuman who stayed over here, the kids would be playing out in the field, playing ball, and his grandson would ask why he couldn't play ball like the Indian kids. He told him that they did not eat the right food. He said, "The Indians eat the right food, like fish and eels and deer meat." That's how his Grandpa explained it to him.

Vicky Ben

The following interview with Vicky Ben was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos on an automobile trip between Siletz and Toledo. Vicky was born December 25, 1912 on the John Adams allotment along Baker Creek. She is a Siletz tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

I was born here and lived here all my life. I'm 77 years old.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?

Baker Creek.

Where is that?

Just above your Grandmother's [Martha Adams] place, Baker Creek.

How far back do you remember fishing on the Siletz River?

I can't remember a date, but I have fished on it all my life. There used to be a lot of salmon in the creeks you know. Timber industry, they fall all their trees across the creeks so the salmon can't go up to spawn. That's why you don't have any salmon. If you want salmon back into the river you are going to have to clean those creeks up.

Did you fish for eels yourself?

Oh, I used to just go up there with them. I never did hook, but those guys did.

Did you put the eels in a sack?

Yeah, when they hooked them I put the eels in a sack.

When was the first time you remember doing that?

Heavens, I don't know. The eels really used to run in the creek up there. Just before the creek gets to the river there.

Where were the traditional eel hooking grounds?

The river! Everyone had their own fishing grounds on the river.

Everyone had their own fishing area?

Oh yeah.

You said you used to fish at Clifty's [Clifty Brassfield] place?

Yeah, Archie [Ben] fished a lot there in the deep water below the riffle.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run?

Well, the weather got warm and you would see all those black bugs crawling around, that's all I know. Oh, the dark of the moon. Never in the moonlight.

Can you describe the eels that were being caught? Color and the size?

Oh, they were all different sizes, they were dark blue. Some say they are black. They aren't black, they are dark blue.

This was the night eel wasn't it?

Yes, the night eel. That's the one you catch. The sun eel is no good, all full of eggs. When you take the eggs out there is nothing left.

How were the stream conditions?

All depends. When you go to the creeks it had to be a certain height. River could be low and you can still see the eels. Of course, you got some kind of light on your boat. It flashes down in the water. If you didn't have a gas lantern you would use a candle and put it in a bucket. That would be your light.

Did you remember them using pitch for light?

Yeah, you would burn that in your boat also. And alongside the creek.

What were the color of the day eels?

They were a brown color.

How long did the runs last?

Oh heavens, I don't know.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time? Was there a lot of people hooking?

Yes, everyone that had a pole went down there. They would just take turns.

Did you ever hear of any one trapping the eels?

No, but I have heard how they catch the trout like that. They would put the fish basket underneath the falls, you know, tie it on one side and then tie it on the other side.

What other types of animals did you observe that were abundant in and on the Siletz River?

There is such a thing as a river mussel in the river, but you can't chew it, it was really tough. There used to be a lot of crawfish as well, but I was told that they are coming back. I don't know, I don't go to the river anymore.

When was the last time you had any eels to eat?

Everett [Butler] brought me some.

How many years ago was that?

Five or six years ago.

How many eels do you feel was caught that day Everett brought eels to you? Was there hundreds of them?

Oh, he got a lot. Yeah, that was the last good run that I have heard of in a long time.

How was the fishing for the salmon on the Siletz and what was used to catch them?

In the early days they gaff because they built their own salmon houses you know. Spear was used also.

When did they stop us from using our nets?

When they terminated us.

They gave up the netting then?

Had to. They arrest you if you put your net in the river.

When you were growing up was there a lot of deer and other animals?

I did see a lot of deer.

How about the raccoon and stuff like this?

Well, Uncle Elber [Butler?] used to trap them.

They would get an abundance of furs and skins that way?

Yeah.

What would they trap for?

Oh, mink and anything they could get a hold of. They got a lot of beaver.

What was it like growing up on the Reservation?

I figure I had a hard time and I still have a hard time.

Did you have plenty of food?

Yeah.

Did you own your own allotment?

Archie's [Ben] family did. So did my dad [name], but sold it a long time ago. Archie held on to his mother and dad's [names] because he was born too late. Harrison [Ben, Archie's older brother] had one, but any one younger didn't have one. . .

You said your parents had an allotment. Where was this located?

Up by Baker Creek someplace.

Why do you think there is a decline in eel populations and other animal populations?

State poison them in the ocean because they claim that they were killing off the salmon. The little ones. If you would ask them they would deny it.

Do you ever see the eels spawning?

Yeah, if you look in the sand they would be just thick.

In your estimation, they spawned in the sand?

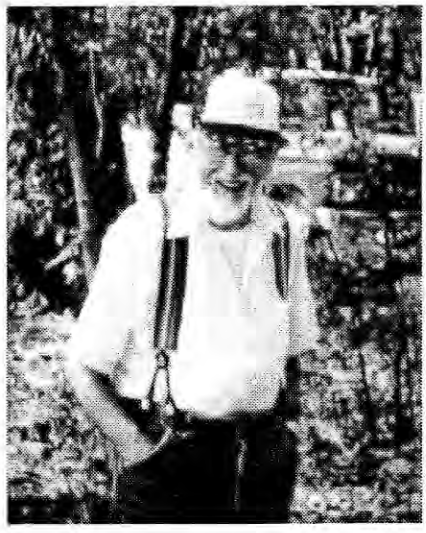
Yeah, fish same way.

What was the importance of the eel fishing in your family?

Well, that is what we lived on, same as the fish.

If the eel would come back in abundance, like it was in the past, would you be hooking them the traditional way again?

Yes.



Alton Butler

The following interview with Alton Butler was conducted by Tom Downey on June 26, 1991 on top of Government Hill at Alton's job site. Alton was born May 22, 1911 in the Siletz area. He is a Siletz tribal member.

Alton, how long have you lived in the Siletz area?

I have lived in Siletz area all my life, lived in Lincoln City from 1952-1979, then returned to Siletz area.

You have lived in the Siletz area since then?

Have been in Siletz for eleven years working for the tribe.

How long ago was the last time you fished for eels?

I have not fished for eels since 1936, that was on Rock Creek.

Did anyone in your family fish for eels?

Did not know of anyone in [my] family that fished for eels.

Where were the traditional fishing areas located?

One was located at the mouth of Rock Creek and also they fished at Klamath's Hole [Klamath allotment], where they presently hook them.

Do you know of anyone who fished for eels out of the Siletz River?

Fished eels on Salmon River, about seven miles from the mouth.

What were the signs that the eels were ready to run?

Warm weather. When they were going to run you'd see the ant flies, I would call them. They look like a big ant, but they had wings. But most important thing was the warmer weather and the dark of the moon.

What was the color of the water when the eels ran?

It was pretty light when the eels came. It was a water color.

Can you describe these eels you hooked at Rock Creek?

They were dark in color. They were different in color than the sun eel. The sun eel is more brown color. The night eel is dark, a dark grayish-blue.

Were the eels different size in the Rock Creek?

Yes, there were some that were bigger than the others. The female were a lot smaller than the male.

What were the stream conditions when runs were good and eels were abundant?

Shallow areas or ahead of a small riffle like.

Did you see anyone fish during the day and why do you think they fished at night?

I do not have any idea why they fished at night. But very seldom seen a night eel during the day, but you did see day eels. They were different than the night eel. They were not as fat as the night eel and a different color. They were brown in color.

Do you think these were older eels or younger?

I would have no idea, but I know there was a difference in the two eels. There was a difference in flavor. Dad used to go out and get some of those day eels.

What was the abundance when you seen people hooking eels as compared to today?

There's no comparison today as there was, say 65 years ago, when I was 15 years old. There was a lot of eels and a lot of us hooked them.

Can you give me numbers today, that you've seen?

No. I haven't hooked eels since I was young.

How were the eels prepared?

Some were baked and others were boiled and some did fry them.

Were they dried too?

When they were dried, that's the way you could warm them up, drink your beer, and eat your eel.

Everett Butler

The following interview with Everett Butler was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at the Siletz Tribal Office on July 22, 1991. Everett was born on February 29, 1952 in the Siletz area. He is a tribal member and a nephew of Alton Butler

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

Born and raised here twenty-five, thirty years.

In what area of the Siletz did you grow up in?

Right here in town and Upper Farm, Logsden.

How far back do you remember fishing on the Siletz River?

1964.

Did you fish for eels?

Yes, we hooked eels, my father's [Everett, Sr.] uncles, [Burce, Chester, Alton], in fact I can remember doing it when I was a little kid. It had to be in the late fifties. I was about seven years old. . . I remember hooking eels.

When was the last time you hooked eels?

Last time I hooked was three years ago, maybe four years ago, with Robert Rilatos, Jr. and his boys. We took them up there.

Was there a lot of eels running up there that night?

We got nine eels in a matter of six hours, maybe nine eels. The year before I went with George Mcgrath, I got six. I never went last year or this year. The year before I went with Robert Rilatos Jr. That was about eight years ago, I guess. It was with Darrel Butler and some people from Grand Ronde [Oregon]. I would say we got close to three hundred, we got three sacks anyway.

That was about eight years ago?

Yes, I think it was eight or nine years ago. I don't remember for sure.

Where were the traditional eel hooking grounds located on the Siletz?

Rock Creek, at the mouth of Rock Creek where the flat rock is, about a hundred feet up Rock Creek. I have it on video come to think of it, high water and low water. Over here behind [Archie] Ben's where that big rock is, kids swim there. There is a place, there is a troth of water up there above Rock Creek. We used to hook in there. Right down from the Logsden store.

Did your family have a special eel hooking area?

Rock Creek. We went there mostly.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year?

It was usually when the bugs began to hatch, we called them eel ants, I think they are called carpenter ants, and hot weather. I have caught them in the rain, it was warm, but it was raining. Over the last six years I have been going with George Mcgrath from the [NAPA Auto] parts house in Toledo. The last three or four years the eel bugs weren't here. We had an east wind and it blew them out to the ocean. I remember that and no one caught any, it was too late.

And this year it is cold too.

And this rainy weather, things just aren't straight.

Yes, and this is our first hot day here and it is in the eighties, probably eighty-five, and is kind of late in the season for them to run.

I think so, I never went up there to see this year and look.

Describe the eels that were fished. Color, size and general appearance.

Oh, they were a good thirty inches long, twenty-seven to thirty, and kind of blue-silver color, big guys. They're inch and a-half in diameter, a bluish-gray color.

You say about 2 - 2 1/2 feet long?

Yes. Arms length.

What were the stream conditions when the eel runs were good in the past?

Well, the water was clear and it was warm, because we would be right there in the creek. It was in the nighttime. It was about fifty or fifty-five degrees temperature, I would say. I could put my hand in it and it was not cold, could get used to it.

And you guys usually caught them where there was a lot of rock cliffs?

Yes, well after awhile the people started abusing that Rock Creek area and the people cut us off from using it.

Did you ever see or hook eels during the day?

I have seen them during the day, but we used to call them sun eels. They were spent, or burned out. We would hook them, but they would fall apart. They were spawned out.

Where was this at?

At the sand bar down there in early July. Late June, early July.

What was their color?

They were bluish black. . .

Why do you think that they would not hook them?

They were too mushy. And most people did not like them. They would use them for bait.

The day eels, were they much smaller then the night eels?

There was two different kinds. There was the big ones and the small. I guess you would call them sea lamprey. I called them creek eels. They are smaller. They had a longer fin on them. The river eel fin is longer and firmer and more muscle in them.

Were they the same color then?

No, the night eel was darker and they were faster in the water and the day eel was lighter in color.

Have you seen the eels spawn? What kind of conditions?

Yes, they will spawn in the mud. They will dig a little hole in the mud, clay bank. I seen them up at the [John] Jantzi place, at Rock Creek, where it is in the shade. The sun cannot get to it. I think the people who live there is named Dort, at the twelve mile mark. You can see them in there. They have beds all over the place.

It is in the sandy part of the creek?

In the dark clay area, black material.

What color were they?

They were pretty dark. You can see them working in the water. Some you can see picking up rocks from all around, like a chicken making a nest.

I'm surprised, you're the first person to tell me this.

Yes, I seen that.

Yes, the male comes up first and then the female.

Just like a salmon. The males run first and then the females.

How long ago was this?

Within the last ten years. You can sit there and see them suck on a rock. You watch them and let that one go and you can see them suck on that rock and it looks like it is moving it.

Have you been back there lately and seen this?

No, I haven't been back the last two or three years. I've been up there, but nothing was going by. Couple muskrats, a beaver.

Have you noticed the bottom, has it filled up with more silt?

Yes, there is more silt there now that you have said this, because I have been going up there to what used to be [John] Jantzi place, Rock Creek, but I guess now it is the Tribe's property. . . and going down there and the mouth of Rock Creek, the creek is more colored than it used to be and more silt.

How long did the eels run?

They would run until daylight. Everyone would be grabbing sacks when they were running good. Back in sixty-eight, seventy they run real good. Seventy-four they would run real strong. Everybody would sack up. There was a lot of them.

Did they run, like a week?

Yes, they would run four or five days at a time. You could go up there night after night and get sacks after sacks, four or five sacks a night.

What months did they run?

Mostly June and July.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time in any one place?

I would say fifteen to twenty. I was going to video them up there, but they never have came back like they used to. I went up there night after night to try and video them, to see if they were coming up. Nothing happened.

Did you ever see anyone trap on the Siletz?

Not the last two or three years, no. The last two or three years there has been nothing. The last time I got any was the last time the salmon hatchery was running. That was the last year they ran halfway decent. We probably got two or three hundred that night.

How many years ago was that?

The last year the hatchery ran.

I think that was 1987. Was there more than one season or run of eels?

No. Once they started running, it seems like they were continuous for a week long. Every night they would be running.

How late in the season did you hook eels?

To the latter part of July.

What other types of other animals like fish, clams and mussels were abundant in the streams during eel runs in the past?

There was river mussels, but there is none anymore, even in the deep pools. There is no crawdads anymore. All the river mussel are gone. They are nonexistent. You could go to the backside of any deep pool and it would be covered. It looked like gravel out there, but it would be river mussels. Now you can get maybe a dozen, you have to look for them.

Do you think that the crawdads are coming back?

The crawdads are coming back, but not like they used to be. They are little tiny guys.

That is what I heard. What about the salamanders and other animals?

Yes, you see them some times.

How did you prepare the eels after they were caught?

We would gut them and cut them behind the gill. Cut the head off and then cut the backbone out.

How did you fish for salmon on the Siletz?

I just fished with a pole and line.

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz at this time?

Yes, there was more then, than is now. There was more deer out. A couple years ago Terry Fisher shot a doe and it was no good. It just fell apart and I wanted to get the liver out of it and see what was wrong with it, but he got rid of it before I could do anything.

How many years ago was that?

That's when Terry Fisher lived down there next to me. That was probably five or six years ago.

Why do you think that there is a decline in the eels and other game?

Because of this 2-4-5 T, and Silvex Defoliation that the property owners sprayed around on their property. And also the big corporations who sprayed to get rid of the broadleaf trees and replace it with fir trees for pulpwood and mowed down everything to the ocean.

In the past, when the eels were running good, was there a difference in trees and other vegetation overhanging the streams compared to today?

No, the water is clearer now. There is less algae than there was. Used to be a little beetle with paddles on them, can't remember what you call them, those aren't in the water any more. The fresh water shrimp, none of those in the water. Those periwinkles aren't like they used to be. Those little tiny snails, black looking shell snail, there is some of those, but not as much. There is less of those crustaceans in the water. I guess the plants are still there. Long time ago, the river would raise up and it would get a dark green and stay that way for days. Now, when it rains, it gets muddy brown and looks like coffee going downriver. Now when the river raises up it drops down in a matter of days before it would raise up and turn a greenish color. It was like that for months. The river gets more dirty when you have high water.

The river has more erosion?

You can see the erosion when you cross the [Siletz] bridge. You can see lots of gravel up there.

It is getting wider?

Yes. And when they drained the Valsetz Dam, you could see the silt come down with it.

Was it silver color?

Yes, it looked like dead algae or something.

It could be from that mill, some of that ash.

You could see the difference in the water where the south fork met the north fork. I worried about that. I went up there with my video in hand, but I could not get in. They locked the gate on me.

They were taking samples?

Yes.

What was the importance of the eel hooking to you, your family and friends?

It was food on the table, plus it was a treat. I used to go up to Aunt Vicky's [Ben] and she used to can them and smoked them. I miss that now. You go downtown and no one has any eels left.

If they were abundant again, you would be hooking them again?

Yes. If they were there, I would be up there tonight.

Pete Downey

The following interview with Pete Downey was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at the Siletz Tribal office on July 11, 1991. Pete was born July 2, 1933 on the John Adams allotment. He is a Siletz tribal member.

Pete, how long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

Yes, I was born here. Except for two years that I spent in the service, 1953 to 1955, I spent my whole life here in the Siletz area.

What year were you born?

July 2, 1933, right in the middle of the depression.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?

Logsden area.

How far back do you remember that people fished on the Siletz?

As far back as I can remember. I think the first time I went to the river I was about three years old. We used to go there and watch my Aunt Cecille [Offield] fish. She used to come up from Northern California and we used to call it Aunt Cecille's fishing hole. On the old Adams ranch she would go down there and there was a lot of trout in the river at that time, all the year round. She would go down and catch those trout and bring them home and fried them up with potatoes and onions. But most of the trout fishing at that time was done at night. They would build a big fire and the trout would come to the light and she would yard them out.

Did you ever fish for eels yourself?

Yeah, you bet I did. We used to really fill our sacks up. The main fishing for eels was up where Rock Creek emptied into the Siletz River. There was a rock platform up there. We would all stand on it. Most of the fellows would feel for them down below in the fast water and they would hold on the rocks. Then you would put your hook against them and yard them out. The best fisherman I seen that done that was Sidney Lawson. Him and the Charley boys [George, Thomas, Laurance] were real good at that. The only way that I could get them is when they came out of that fast water and hit the bedrock. When they dart up that bedrock I would scoop them off of there. If they were running good it didn't take long to get a lot of them. We would get enough to eat, you know, and then come home.

Where were the traditional fishing grounds located on the Siletz?

The only one that I can remember was above our place. They fished them all the way from down here at Louis Fullers old place clear up to the [Logsden] riffles. You would anchor your boat at the head of the riffle and hook the eels there. Where the deeper, faster water channeled down off the riffle, they would come up there and dart into the shallow water. You'd park your boat there and hook them there. You would have a gas lantern that you would hang off the end of the boat.

Did your family have special fishing grounds on the Siletz River?

It was the second riffle down on the Adam's property.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year?

Generally, the first warm days in April. We used to get some real warm days sometime in the middle of April, mostly towards the end of April and the first of May. This was back in the 50's. It probably hit close to the 90's. I always said as soon as those eel ants showed there were eels in the river. Archie [Johnson] and I always depended on a warm day though because those eel are pretty sensitive to temperature. They would even run on a warm rain in May. It had to be warm usually.

Was there something like the dark of the moon?

Yeah, that had something to do with it, but they would still run at the light of the moon.

Mostly the temperature?

Yeah.

Describe the eel that was fished. What color, the general appearance, size and etc.?

I knew of only three species here in the Siletz. The big night eel, it would range from 15 inches to 25 inches. Then there was another one they called a day eel. It very seldom got over a foot long. You can see them during the day in the river on the bottom squirming around. Then there was another species of eel. It was a blue looking eel, a little bit bigger than the day eel. Sometimes you seen them in the day, but not very often. They were a little bit longer, about 15 inches, but not much more than that and

they had a thin body. The day eel was a short brown eel and it was heavy bodied and the other eel was blue bodied and slender, 15 inches long. The night eel was much bigger and fatter. They were really fast in the water.

What were the stream conditions when the eel runs were good in the past?

That was another thing, the water was in transition. It was just coming out of the freshets and the water was clear on the bottom and you could see the eels and the water was kind of blue. And the longer you get toward August, the less eels you would see. I would say by the middle of August you didn't have that many eels coming. . . just between low and high water time, just when the water is at it's ebb, you know.

Did you ever see or hook eels during the day?

No, I never did. We played with them when swimming, but we never hooked them. I heard that they were no good to eat.

Do you know where the eels spawned?

No, I never did. I think the day eels spawned in the old salmon mines where the salmon would mine during the winter, make a big hole in the gravel bar. That's where you generally find these day eels, they would be down in the bottom of that hole messing around. I don't know if they were spawning or what. They would roll over on their side and kick and stuff. They could have been spawning. Never did see those big night eels spawn.

You never went up to the little streams to see them spawn?

No. The bigger ones, when daylight came, you hardly ever seen them. They went under rocks or something. Under bedrocks.

How long did the eel runs last?

I heard of them catching them on the first raise in the fall, but I didn't see any.

You think they run from April up to fall?

Yeah. I never caught any night eels after the middle of August, used to see a lot of dead ones in the river at that time.

Have you seen very many dead ones lately?

No, none at all.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time, in any one place?

I have seen up to 15 to 20 people at one time up at Rock Creek and more people on bank watching.

Do you know if they trapped eels on the Siletz?

No, they didn't trap them, but they may have poisoned them, if anything, to get rid of them.

Was there more than one season or run on the Siletz?

No, the only one I knew of was the early spring one.

How late in the season did you hook eels?

Not after the middle of August.

How were the eels prepared after they were caught?

The way I liked them was baked on a rack so that the oil would drip off, but a lot of people canned them in quart jars or pint jars. I didn't like them like that, but I guess they were okay. The white people fixed them like that, but the Indians dried them or smoked them. I didn't like them smoked either, they're too rich. I liked them baked with a lot of mustard on them. . . onion too.

What other types of animals like, insects, snails, clams, mussels were abundant in the streams during eel runs in the past?

Well, really the only thing we paid much attention to was the trout, salmon, eels, and deer. Deer were scarcest down low, if we saw one we would try to get it. We traveled all around looking for deer. There was not a lot of them around like today.

How was the crawdads? Was there a lot of them around?

Yes, they used to feed on the dead eels and dead trout. They had a lot to eat then.

Do you remember seeing little water mussels?

Yes. Oh yes, I seen them.

Are they as abundant today as in the past?

I'm not sure. I don't go to the river as much I used to anymore, but in that fine gravel there was big beds of them. I can tell a story about them. They brought them Chemawa boys over here. They left them some place over here and took off to the river. They all spread out along the river below what is now Art Bensell's place now. All along the bed rock there they were eating those river mussels. We never did eat them. I don't know why. I guess we thought that they are not very good eating. They were just gobbling up those river mussels. I thought that they would get sick, but they didn't. They just boiled them in a can. They were about five inches long. Here lately there is just those small ones about three inches long.

How did they fish for salmon on the Siletz in the past? Nets, gaff hooks, pole and line?

Well, if you had an allotted land, I don't know about hunting, but we could set net all the time on Adam's ranch, it was still in trust yet. The game warden would try to catch someone setting net. Two times we went down to pickup the nets [and] they would be there. I think they thought it was a white person setting net at that time. You did not need a tag or anything. I used to gaff for salmon, but I did not know the laws at that time. But I gaffed anyway, up at Sams Creek. We could really get some big

ones there, Chinook, Steelhead. Good enough to smoke. We were after eggs mostly.

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz?

No, there was no deer in close like it is now. Most of the people who lived in and around Siletz killed or lived off the deer. The best hunting I seen was up in Long Prairie Creek. When I went to work for Tommy Thompson in 1950, they were all old homesteads up there then and a lot of deer. The other place is the Maggie Hampton place on the Rock Creek.

Did you hunt at night?

No, no light.

Why do think there is a decline in eels on the Siletz?

In the late fifties the Game Commission went through here and poisoned this river. They wanted to get rid of the eels and bass was starting to come in the river too. Also, the steelheaders thought that the eels were eating all those little fish. And I think the DDT had a lot to do with it also. They sprayed DDT up there about twenty years before they knew it was that harmful.

When was the last time they could set nets on the river?

When we [were] terminated.

Did they take the tags away from the netters too?

Yes, if you had a tag you had to turn it in. I think Archie Johnson had one of the last tags the last two years before they terminated. Then the game wardens enforced the tag thing.

So this was in 1955?

Yes, 1954, 1955.

In the past when eels were abundant, was there a difference in the trees and other vegetation overhanging streams, compared to today?

Well, I think there is just as much vegetation now as there was then. I don't know if the overhang has anything to do with the eel production. The decline rather.

Do you think that the logging has anything to do with it?

Well, I don't know how the eels spawn, but I guess if the streams are plugged they can not get back up them. The Sams Creek had that trestle there and it was plugged tight when some logs were jammed. So tight that the salmon could not get through for years and years. So that depleted the runs in the Sams Creek and the Long Prairie. Not even a trout could get up there.

Who else knows a lot about eel fishing on the Siletz?

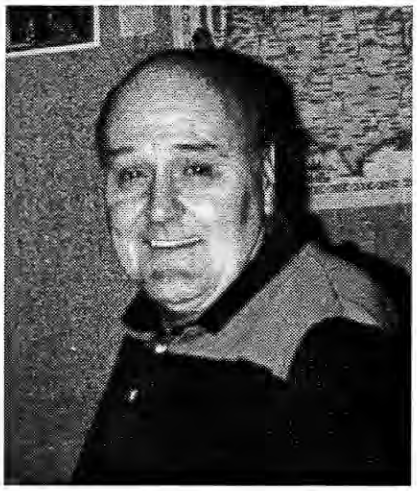
Just me. I was thinking about some names, but they're all gone now.

What was the importance of the eel fishing to you, your family and friends? If the eels were abundant again would you hook them again?

Oh yes, I would say the eel meat is the most nutritious meat for you, of food type. This is the only country that tries to kill them off. In Germany and the Netherlands, our eels are a delicacy to them. So that tells you something right there. United States is the only country that tries to kill them off, poison them. Now they are trying to poison them out of the Great Lakes because they seen one suck to a fish.

So you think that the eel is a benefit to the tribe?

Well, it is great food source. I mean you don't have to eat very many eels to get all your vitamins. Every vitamin is in an eel.



Dan Fisher

The following interview with Dan Fisher was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at his home on July 16, 1991. Dan moved to the Camp Twelve area in 1945 and married a Siletz tribal member, Dolly Simmons two years later.

Dan, how long have you lived in the Siletz area, and were you born here?

No, I came here November of 1945.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow up in after you moved here?

On the old loop over there, at Camp Twelve, and here in Siletz. And when in 1947 I and Dolly got married, we just lived around Siletz.

How far back do you remember people fishing on the Siletz?

I started fishing in 1946 right after I got here, started fishing with Ted Kosydar and Clifton Brassfield. When I got married I went fishing with Fritz Simmons and Ray Hoiness. . . I done a lot of fishing.

Did you ever fish for eels?

Oh yes, I hooked eels. The first stand I had in the water my father-in-law helped build it, Ernie Chandler and I, at the old Larson place across from Davey Goodell's place. I remember that night, Ernie and myself. Fritz taught us how to build the stand. We caught around three hundred by ourselves and we never hooked before in our life. You could look down that river and you could see hundreds of thousands, and they were just flashing in the water. We got eels that night, like the wife was saying, eighteen inches. I say we got some two feet, to thirty inches. Light bellies on them and their backs on them just like a steelhead. Like Gramma [Agness] Thompson said "They were the prettiest eels that they had seen in their lives." And for two of us beginners to catch three hundred, it was something else, so you could see what was in that river and we never hooked before.

In what year was this Dan, can you remember?

Boy, this was just before we went down to Rogue River, about 1958.

Where were the traditional eel hooking grounds located on the Siletz?

Rock Creek was one. . . a lot of them built stands all over on the river. I used to go with different groups, Larkie Logan, Joe Goodell, and every body like that, wherever they would find a real good spot. They would watch how the riffles were and how low the water was and fix a stand. We would cut spruce limbs and spruce boughs to keep them in a small opening. Then after you are set up on the river with your vine maple holding up the chicken wire you are ready to hook eels.

Did you have a special eel fishing area yourself?

No, I have been up to Rock Creek with friends and everybody else.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of year?

I just watch for the old eel ants and a good warm day, they start showing up, flying all over and crawling around. We seen that and we would start building the stands and the eels would be there.

Describe the eels that were fished. Color, size, and general appearance. You said that they were dark blue on the back?

Yes, just like a steelhead, light on the stomach too, and some were dark gray. We got what is called the sun eel. They never ate those, they were light like a bass. They weren't edible.

What were the stream conditions like when the eel runs were good in the past?

Good, real good. I have gone up there in the winter on Rock Creek with some people to fish salmon. We went across the trestle, that was when the trestle was still there, I looked down in the water and holy cow, there was thousands and thousands of eels sucked onto the rocks, nice eels running in that muddy water. I thought they were salmon. I seen that two or three times.

What time of the year was this?

Boy, that was after the first raise in September, between September and November. The water was muddy and so I think that you could hook them in the winter time also. I seen this four or five times. The water was high and real muddy, couldn't hardly see nothing.

So you think that they ran from spring to fall?

I would say that I seen them later than that too. It was around Christmas at Rock Creek when you would get a good raise and that.

Did you see or hook eels during the day?
No, just at night time.

Why do you think they would not hook the day eels?
Well, I have no idea. I was told that some folks were diving up at the Stemple Hole, there is some big ledge rocks there. Mike Kosydar told me that those eels sucked under those ledges by the thousands. They would just come out at night and are hid during the daytime. They were good eels. I never got to see this, I just got to hear about it from different ones that dove in the Siletz River.

Do you think there was a different taste between the night eel and the day eel?
I just don't know. I just never ate a day eel and I never seen anyone eat any. That's what I call a sun eel.

What was the color of the day eel?
Just like a calico bass, tannish color. You can tell them from the other eels too.

Smaller too?
A lot smaller. I would say about like this, about eighteen inches down to a foot or so.

Did you ever see the eels spawn?
No, I have never seen them spawn.

How long did the eel runs last? Ok, you said that you seen them run year long?
Yes.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time in any one place?
Like on the Rock Creek, as high as twenty-five.

Did you see anyone trap eels on the Siletz?
No, never have.

What other types of animals like fish, insects, snails, clams and mussels were abundant in the streams during eel runs in the past?
I saw mussels. The very first mussels I gathered was right below Jim Goodell's. Dolly's mother [Augusta Simmons] fixed them on the stove for us, cooked them up and we ate them. I told you I have seen them below Cedar Creek, toward the Bull's Bag, I saw them by the thousands and thousands. You could walk on them solid. You couldn't walk barefooted then, but they are all gone now too. I have made drifts since then and there is not a mussel in there. Lucky to see a crawfish.

When was the last time you have been down there?
It has been years ago, I don't remember when. We just made a summer drift down there. We would put in at Morgan Park to all the way to Strom's all summer long it was a beautiful drift.

This has been the last ten years?
As far as I can remember.

And you do not see anything like that nowadays?
No, we used to see summer steelhead, those summer runs there. We would wait there and could see twenty or thirty in a bunch. Hardy Simmons would slap with an oar and there would be fish all over the place. We would hit how many more bunches on the way down through the day. . . They were coming up.

In the past when eels were abundant, was there a difference in trees and other vegetation overhanging streams, compared to today?
Well, it was a lot better years ago. Because I cut in Buck Creek and the way the salmon ran in Buck Creek, the old growth cedar standing in there, they took that all out you know, and the way they logged the creeks, they just ruined it.

Why do you think there is a decline in the eels and other game on the Siletz River?
Oh boy, that's a hard one to answer Tom. There is probably a lot of reasons, but just to get down to it, I have talked to Hank Kentta and Matt [Kentta] and we just can not come up with a answer. It's hard to pinpoint it.

Did you hear anything about eels being poisoned?
Yes, I did. I heard they poisoned them awhile back. I and Dolly were talking about that earlier before you came down. I was trying to remember who told me about it. I have been told different times, from different people.

What years do you think that this happened?
I cannot remember. I heard it and that is all. It seems like after that there were no eels.

Do you think it has been in the last five years?
I would say it goes back more than that, because they are not even getting them up at Rock Creek anymore by the hatchery site.

MARY (DOLLY) FISHER

The following interview with Dolly Fisher was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at her home on July 16, 1991. Dolly was born in the town of Siletz in 1928. She is a Siletz tribal member.

Dolly, how long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

Yes, I was born here and lived here for 63 years.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?

Right here in the town of Siletz.

How far back do you remember that people fished on the Siletz?

Boy, ever since I can remember. Since I was a little kid.

Did your father fish, or your family?

Yes, my dad fished a lot. He had a net, a permit to set his fish net. We would help him when we were kids.

In what area was this at?

Right down behind our old place, where Goodells live now.

Where the park is? Green Thumb or the Old Millsite?

Yes.

Did you ever hook eels yourself?

I went with the guys. I never did it myself. I just went as an observer.

What year was this?

A long time ago. It was after Dan and I was married though. Probably the last time [was] 1960 or so, but I did not participate in that too much.

Where were the traditional eel fishing grounds located on the Siletz River?

I can remember Rock Creek in the Logsden area. But then I can remember Dan building a fish stand below our house. We lived right across from Davey Goodell's house, on the river side, [in] Pat Larson's old home. They put an eel stand there and really caught the eels. That was in 1960.

This was the last time that you hooked eels?

Yes.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year?

I am not quite sure. It has to do with the weather and the water and the eel ants.

Did your family have a special fishing area and where was this located at?

That was up in the Rock Creek area up in Logsden.

Could you describe the eels that were fished? Color, size, and general appearance?

I can remember them being a blue-black, I guess, I'm not sure. They were about two feet long. My mother [Augusta Simmons] and Grandma [Agness Thompson] used to clean them out in our back yard by the dozens.

What were the stream conditions when the eel runs were good in the past? Was the water low or high?

No, it seems that the water was low and a little bit warmer.

Did you ever hook eels during the day?

I have seen them during the day, but I did not hook any.

Why do you think that they would not hook eels during the day here on the Siletz?

I'm not sure. I heard my parents speaking about them. They just didn't want them. That's all I know.

Because they were not solid enough?

I guess so, and also they were a lighter color too.

Was the day eel a lighter color, like a brown?

Yes. Brown I would say.

Did you ever see the eels spawn?

No, I have never seen them spawn.

To you, how long did the eel runs last?

I don't really know, Tommy. It didn't seem like a very long time period that they ran.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time in any one place?

Gosh, fifteen to twenty.

This was at Rock Creek?
Yes.

Did you know of anyone who trapped eels on the Siletz River?
No, I didn't.

Was there more than one season or run for the eels?
Not that I know of. . .

There was no early season or a late run that you can remember?
I don't remember, but there could be.

What other animals were abundant in the steams during eel runs in the past like insects, snails, clams and the mussels?
There was a lot of river mussels. We used to gather them and cook them. My mother cooked them and everyone would try to chew them, but they were tough.

How long ago did you go looking for the river mussel?
That's been a long time ago.

Have you seen any lately in abundance?
No, I haven't seen a river mussel for years.

How were the eels prepared after they were caught?
They were cleaned, the backbone was taken out of them and my mother would smoke them in the smokehouse.

How did they fish for salmon on the Siletz in the past? Nets, gaffs, hooks, poles and line?
Yes, when I was a young child the Indians were allowed to use nets.

How long were they able to use these nets?
Until termination in the mid-fifties.

Did you see anyone use gaff hooks on the Siletz?
Oh yes, my dad did that.

In what area did your dad use to set his net?
Up at Rock Creek and other parts up towards Logsden. Also below our old home where [Jim] Goodells [family] live[s] now.

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz when you were growing up?
I can remember deer, but I can not remember any elk. But I can remember a lot of deer.

How about the beaver and such things like this?
Oh yes, there was a lot of beaver.

What was it like growing up on the Siletz? Was it hard? Easy?
I didn't think it was too hard. I think we ate better then, than we do now.

Why do you think that there is a decline in the eels and other game on the Siletz River?
I'm not really sure. I think that the logging practice had a lot to do with it, damaging the streams. I believe the seal population has a lot to do with it. . . at the mouths of the rivers.

In the past, when the eels were abundant, was there a difference in trees and other vegetation overhanging steams compared to today?
It seems like there was more vegetation along the banks then.

Then today?
Yes. . .

What was the importance of the eel fishing to you, your family and friends? Was it as a food?
Yes, as a food we used to have a lot of them. My mother used to smoke them and put them in a pillow case and hang them up in the upstairs in our house. And anytime we wanted some eels for lunch or dinner, we would go up and get some and warm them up. She also partially smoked them then canned them in jars.

When was the last time you had any eels?
I would say 6 to 7 years ago. Bobby Simmons brought four to five. He has not been able to get many since then.

So you don't think that the people are just not hooking them anymore? It is because there is a decline in the eels?
Yes.

If the eels were abundant again, the Indians would fish them again?
Yes, oh yes.

One of the staples of their diet?
Right.

Marie Fuller

The following interview with Marie Fuller was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at her home on July 10, 1991. Marie was born on the Edward Charlie allotment on March 10, 1923. She is a Siletz tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

I was born in Siletz, you know where I lived up there. My mother was Sarah Charlie, my dad was Edward Charlie.

What years were these, when you lived up there on the Charley place?

My mother, my dad?

Yes.

I lived there all my life, I'm 68 years old. I should know something.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow up in?

On just this side of Klamath Grade.

How far back do you remember people fishing on the Siletz?

I have fished all my life. I'm 68 years old and I fished every since I was a little girl about six years old. I used to go hook eels with my dad, set net and everything. We had lots of people come around our house every Sunday afternoon. They would cook and eat and my Grandmother [Kitty Charlie] who was 99 years old when she passed away, would cook.

Did you fish for eels yourself?

Yes, me and my brother and my dad. We had a canoe you know and we hooked out of it.

Where was the traditional eel hooking grounds located?

We hooked at our place right by the waterfall. And a lot of people hooked up at Rock Creek. . .

What were the signs that the eels were going to run?

Oh, about May to June I guess, mostly.

Was there any other signs?

Well, it was warm, but when they ran my dad would hook them out and put them in our canoe.

Describe the eels that you hooked. Size, color, general appearance.

They were night eels, they called them. The day eels were brown color. You could see them in the day. They had those big holes in the river.

Was there a different size and color between the sun eel and the night eel?

The night eels were bigger than the day eels and they were light colored. The day eel[s] were kind of brown.

What was the difference between the day eel and the night eel that some would eat the night eel and not the day eel?

Oh, I don't know why the night eel was ate more. . .

What were the stream conditions like when the eel runs were good in the past?

Oh, I don't know, they were about the same. You could catch crawfish too, you know. Did you eat crawfish too?

Yes.

They're good! We would catch them in August, you could get some big ones. Put some liver out in the water and they would come up and we would catch them all, used to get a sack full.

Was the water low at this time or was it high water?

It was low water.

The turbidity was clear?

Yes, it was clear. . .

Marie, why do you think that they would not hook eels during the day?
Was it because they were not firm enough?

Yes.

Have you seen the eels spawn?

Just the day eels. You could see them in the river. They would swim around in them holes. We used to see them down where we used to live, down on the old Charley place.

How long did the eel runs last?

June and July. About two months a year we would catch them.

How many people did you see hooking eels at any one time at any one place?

Just up at Rock Creek. That is the only place I seen a lot. All the Ben family used to go up there.

Do you know of anyone who trapped eels on the Siletz?

No.

Was there more than one season or run of eels?

I think there is only one season a year, June and July.

How late in the season did you hook eels?

I don't know. Just end of July.

What other types of animals did you see at this time, that the eels were running good?

There was salmon. My dad used to catch them when he went out to hook eels, hook them out of the river at night time, you know. He would build a fire in the boat. He would catch the salmon.

Has the abundance of these other animals changed over the years?

There used to be those little mussels in the river. There was a little up there by our place, but I think it was too deep of water, had to dive to get them. But if you went down toward Kernville you could get them. Down by the second bridge there was a lot of them there. Grind them up, fry with salt and pepper and onions. Oh, they were good. Gee, I haven't had them in years. I forgot how to cook them.

When was the last time you have gathered mussels?

It's been, down by the second [Pompel] bridge, about 20, 25 years ago. My dad been dead about 60 years. There's no place to go anymore, too many houses and Boston people around. They ask you what you want? What you looking for? It kind of makes you mad. . .

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz at this time?

Deer used to come right into our front yard. My brother would say he was going to shoot him and my mother would say, "No, let them go back up on the hill."

Why do you think that there is a decline on the Siletz of eels and other game?

I don't know. I have been back for only six months and I have not been to the river. We just drive through Moonshine Park and come home. You can't get to the river anymore. . .

Is there a difference in the vegetation on the streams today compared to the past?

I don't think so. It is the same. . .

What methods did you use to catch eels?

We used long poles with hooks on them. That's how they catch them.

How long were these poles?

It depend on how deep the water is. You might have a ten foot pole, put a hook on the end of it.

You folks felt the bottom for them?

Yes.

How were the eels prepared?

We would clean them, smoke them with a little alder wood in smoke house for a few days and bake them. And boy, they were good! Salmon same way.

You folks prepared your salmon the same way?

Yes.

Who else knows a lot about hooking eels?

Gladys Muschamp. . . Roscoe Schaeffer. He Boston man, he think he is Indian.

no
photo
available

Robert (Johnie) John

The following interview with Johnie John was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at the Siletz Tribal office on July 11, 1991. Johnie was born at the Chemawa Indian School on September 29, 1938. He is a tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

Lived in the Siletz area for only sixteen, seventeen years and I was born at the Chemawa Indian School in Salem.

In what area of Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?

Oh, about 1 and 1/4 miles east of Siletz, up towards Logsden.

How far back do you remember people fishing on the Siletz?

I could remember since I was about 6 or 7 years old. My grandfather was raising me then. I lived with my grandfather. We used to do a lot of fishing.

Who was this?

Grandpa John. David John. He lived by us, he only lived about 100 yards from our house. I was raised by him.

Where were the traditional eel hooking ground located on the Siletz?

Well, on the Siletz the first one that I knew of was up the Rock Creek, about 1/4 mile up the creek. The second that I knew was were the Charley boys [George, Thomas, and Lawrence] and I hooked eels in the daytime at Stemple's Hole, around the corner from the Stemple's Hole, the old gravel pit. We did day hooking there. We hooked day eels there out of a boat.

Did your family have a special eel hooking grounds?

Yeah, the special place we went all the time was at Rock Creek. It goes into the Siletz at Logsden. Herman Bell and I did a lot of hooking eels all night long when the certain time of the year, like when they go up to spawn or the dark of the moon in the summertime.

What are the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year?

Yeah, dark of the moon. When the eel bugs show up. Dark of the moon was the best time to go. Seems like they go up to spawn at this time, but the dark of the moon was the most important part of it, I think. Because they ran at night and when the moon came out it seemed like they just disappeared. The only time they would run was at the dark of the moon. It was just kind of a traditional thing that we knew.

In what months did the runs usually occur?

Oh, it seemed like it was in the summertime around July, August, maybe September. . .

Describe the eel that was fished. Color, size and general appearance?

The ones we caught were about 1 and 1/2 inches through and dark brown, almost black. On the average, one of them could be 1 and 1/2 foot to 2 feet long.

Was this the day eel or night eels and there could be a difference in size?

Yeah, the night eels. I think these were the night eels and they also called them the sun eel which would sometimes run with the night eels, but you couldn't eat them things, they were too soft. They called them sun eels.

So you think there is about three different species of eels in the Siletz? You talked about the day eel you caught also, the night eels and the sun eel?

Yeah, sometimes the sun eel would come up and spawn with the night eel and every once in awhile you would catch one, but he was no good to eat because he was too soft and light color. Sometimes during the day you could hardly see him because when the sunlight hit him it seemed like he turned invisible. He was there. It was just a soft, light eel. About the same size, but he was soft, not good eating.

What were the stream conditions in the past?

Oh, the creeks were not too high then. Like I say, in summertime they were well down. But at Rock Creek the water ran over sandstone and that's where you couldn't break a eel hook there. Oh, like in the river you can break a hook just by hitting a rock or something. . .

What were your eel poles made out of? How long were they?

Dad and my grandfather made them out of cedar and averaged about 15 feet long.

What were the hooks made out of?
My grandfather made them out of hay forks.

Have you seen the spawning ground of the lamprey?
No, that is something that I never did do. Never did find out where they went to spawn.

How long do the eel runs last?
I would say a couple of months. Only about two months out of the year you were able to hook eels.

Within that month was there breaks in the runs or did they run all the time in those months?
They ran just a certain time. Like I say, in the dark of the moon and when the eel bugs come out. They never ran steady all the time just kind of in spurts. The months we did go it wasn't every night, just certain times they would come up to spawn.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time?
Well, at Rock Creek, up to three people at a time.

Did you know of anybody trapping the eels?
No, I have never seen that.

Do you know if there is more than one run?
No, we only knew of the one season. That was in the summertime.

How late in the season did you hook eels?
We hooked them right up until they quit running. The end of September. . .

Was the weather warm in the past?
Yeah, it was warm at night. I think that's what made them run up and spawn. And the bugs came out, eel bugs.

What other types of animals were abundant in the streams?
We seen river mussels and crawdads, about the only things I really remember seeing.

Were the crawdads and river mussels plentiful?
Yeah, up there around Logsden there was a gelakey where we always got water mussel. We used to take those up and eat them. There was a lot of them down in there.

How were the eels prepared?
Well, we would take them, take a razor blade cut there heads off, then split them down the center. Then take a nail and pull the backbone out and slice the meat so they would lay out flat and then we would put them in brine for two or three days before we hung them up to smoke.

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz?
Deer, you can see deer all along the Siletz River.

How were the salmon fished?
We used to gaff salmon at the Sam's Creek all the time. Unless somebody try to catch us, but yeah, we gaff them.

What were some of the sizes of these fish?
They were huge! I think I could remember one being about 3 and 1/2 feet, sometimes even 4 feet long. Boy, they were huge ones.

Did you ever set net?
Yeah, up at Jug [Arthur] Bell's we set. Herman Bell and I set net when the Salmon were running. Go down to the river at night and pick it up in the morning. I could remember one time we got this one about 4 feet long. Hugest salmon I have ever seen.

What was it like for you growing up on the Siletz River?
We had a lot of fun. We did a lot of swimming, crawdading. Caught a lot of crawdads and did a lot of fishing with just a line and regular stick. . . But crawdading was the biggest thing we did. Boy, the crawdads were huge!

Can you give me a size?
Oh, I'd say about 10 inches long from the head to the tail.

When was this?
Back in the early 50's until I left here in '56. The river was really nice when the timber was along it.

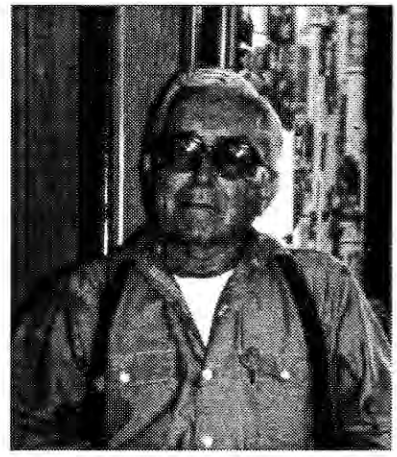
Why do you think there is a decline in the eel population?
I think the timber has got a lot to do with it. If they never logged, if they kept them from logging all the timber along the river, because the timber holds moisture and give nutrients to the fish and stuff from the timber, I think.

Is there a difference in trees and other vegetation overhanging streams, compared to now?
Yeah, oh yeah. There was a lot of overhang where the salmon kind of hung around in the shade during the summertime. You just knew those salmon were laying in that shade and you would plunk the old hook right down in there. . . you would usually get one.

What was the importance of eel fishing to you and your family?
We were raised on it. I thought it was quite nice to have something from the river to eat, carrying on the old tradition. The eel is very good for you. Somebody should show these young guys how to do it.

Do you think it is a tradition and should be passed down?
Oh, yeah, I really do. I think these young guys should get down there and get into it. Carry on to the next

generation. It was done for me. I think we should do it for them. We should carry on some of these traditions. You got to know how the old Indians lived! They caught their suppers for the winter.



Carl Kentta

The following interview with Carl Kentta was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at the Siletz Tribal office on July 3, 1991. Carl was born in Siletz on April 19, 1912.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and where were you born at?

I was born here in Siletz in 1912. I left here when I was 8 and came back when I was 16, never left since.

Did you ever fish for eels?

Yes.

Where were the traditional eel fishing grounds located?

Where I hooked eels was right there behind the [John] Issacson's place on the Siletz River. At night time we had a fire. We took pieces of pitch out of our gunny sacks and that was your light. We used a boat to get close enough to hook the eels.

What were the signs that eels were going to run? What did you go by?

Well, generally speaking, maybe around the first of April. A real hot day was one of the signs. Sure enough after dark. I don't really know when their runs start, but when the river is low enough, that is a good indication.

Carl, was there many people that fished on the Rock Creek area?

Yes, I have hooked eels at Rock Creek. It is a excellent place there. When we'd go to hook eels there, we would get an arm load of old tires and that would be our light. You don't need the light to see the eels, but the bedrock was quite lengthy and wide and we would stand on that. We would throw the pole over our head and shake them off right on the bedrock. Then there would be a few guys there to pick them up and put them in a sack. Then if you would get tired a few guys would step up.

How many did you see fishing down there at one time?
Six or eight.

How was the water conditions?
It was pretty clear, pretty wide. Lots of water in it.

What was the best time for the eels to run?
Low water because when it is too high you can't handle your pole very well. At the bottom of the creek where we hooked, there were very few boulders in there. The water was swift enough that the boulders were washed down below. There was just a bedrock rock bottom and you run your pole across the bottom of the creek.

At this time, when the eels were plentiful, was there a lot of over-hang and brush?
Oh yes, there was. There was a lot of people fishing off the same bedrock we were. There was no overhang on that side of the river.

Did you ever hook the eels during the day?
No, sun eels that is all you seen during the day. I guess they were not edible, don't know, I never did try them.

What are the reasons that no one tried to eat the sun eels in your own opinion?
Well, I never seen or heard of anyone eating the sun eels. It is entirely different eels than the night eel. Night eel was larger and they were way longer than the sun eel. The night eel was bigger around too.

They were a different color also, weren't they Carl?
The sun eel is a very light tan looking eel. . .

The night eel was dark?
Yeah. They were very dark, but not black. Lots of meat on the night eel.

Do you know any spawning areas that you seen where after they have laid their eggs and seen the little ones?
Well, I have seen lots of little ones, but I can't say if they were night eels or sun eels. I don't know. At the edge of the water I could run my hand under the sand about 4 to 5 inches and hundreds of little eels would come out and race away. That was later in the year. Probably June when it was warm weather. . .

Where was this being taking place? Like at Rock Creek or the river or where?
The little ones were on our own property on the Siletz River, up above Logsden. Eels in the river there too, up above the riffle. . .

How was the eels prepared?
Well, my Aunt [Agness Issaacson] used to fry them fresh, bake them, or half bake them then put them in the smoke house. They were awfully rich just baked. . .

Carl, when the eels were running and plentiful how was the abundance of other aquatic animals such as the mink, crawdads, and etc.?
At that time there was lots and lots of crawdads in the river. We would take a gallon bucket down there with us. It would take only a little while to fill the bucket half way. We would cook those crawdads right there and eat them.

Was there lots of salamanders and creatures like this living in the creeks and rivers?
Yeah. There was a lot of salamanders and various creatures, so to speak.

What about the beaver, mink and animals of this nature?
Yeah. There was a lot of beaver and otter. When the eels were running up Rock Creek the otter would make a loud whistle.

Has the abundance of the eel changed over the years in your estimation and why, if there is a change?
I would rather think they have declined, but to what degree I wouldn't know. After I was old enough to live on my own I lost track of what [Inaudible]. I haven't heard of too many eels being got like they used to be, just like salmon. These rivers were loaded with salmon when I was a kid and far after that. . .

Did you see anyone trap the eels on the Siletz?
No. I have used my hands to pick up the night eels. . .

How long do you think the eels run and how long did you hook them into the summer?
Well, not too long. Like most things, you get what you want and that is it. I have never kept track of how long they would run. After the first few runs we would have all we wanted then. We just didn't bother about it.

Did you fish later into the summer or fall?
I didn't know that the night eels would run in the summer and if they did I didn't really pay attention to it. I wasn't interested in it and I didn't hear of anyone hooking the eels.

What about the salmon fishing on the Siletz, how and when?
Well, I came down here from Portland when I was sixteen years old and I started to fish for salmon right away.

Carl, what year was that?
May of 1929.

How did you fish the salmon?
Well, I fished with a spinner. Basically, the steelhead,

and the Chinook. We also used bobbers and salmon eggs.

At this time period how many people fished the Siletz and did they basically use the same equipment as yourself?

Well, it was quite an activity anywhere and everywhere. Salmon fishing was a recreation for a lot of people. Of course those of us in the early days canned and smoked. Everyone was salmon fishing, it was a going thing, just like deer hunting. Everyone hunts deer.

Did you see some of the Indians or even the white people using gaff hooks and this and that?

Well. . .

I'm talking way back when there were no laws on how you had to fish.

Yeah, when I was a kid I would spear salmon on the riffles.

They used a pole and hook and a little wider hook than the eel hook?

Yeah.

Mostly around the mouths of the streams that they were going up into?

Yeah, but that was years and years ago. I haven't done that since way back when I was a kid. Those days were the fishing days. People got what you wanted, when you can get it and that is all they did. They were living.

When did they first start to use the nets?

I think that everyone that lived on the river just about owned and used a net, in those days. Hell, never sold anything, we helped each other. Those that didn't live on the river, why we would set the net and get the fish for them. Well, as the years went on things changed and we don't do that any more.

About what year did they outlaw the nets on the Siletz River?

Oh, I couldn't really say.

How was the hunting in the early days? Was there a lot of deer or elk here?

In my time there was no elk around here no place, but you got to remember that everything was virgin timber. If you went anyplace in the hills, you walked. . .

Did you do any trapping?

Yeah.

What did you mostly trap?

Mink and wildcat.

Did anyone ever hunt for bear?

When I was a kid there was no problem hunting for bear, they were everywhere. We never really hunted for bear.

How many people lived up in the Logsden area and was there still allotments there? Was the Indians in control of the land?

Yeah. They had a lot of allotments in the Logsden area.

Can you name a few?

Yeah. There was [George] Baker and Evaline his wife, the Blacketers, and various others.

Darin: Carl, how long are your poles and what type of wood did you use? Can you briefly describe what you made your hooks out of?

Well, yeah some what. The pole was eighteen to twenty feet long and the hook, we made them out of pitch fork tines. That is the general idea of it. Close to the end, about six inches, we would make a sharp bend and point so it was easier to run along the bottom of the bedrock.

Darin: Could you say that most families around the Siletz area lived on such things as eel hooking, deer hunting, and etc.?

Well, pretty much so in the depression years, yeah. Every family had a little different way of making their living, but in general, yeah.

Walt Klamath

The following interview with Walt Klamath was conducted by Tom Downey at his job site at the Siletz Tribal Clinic on August 16, 1991. Walt was born May 8, 1930 and grew up on the Klamath allotment, east of Logsden. He is a Siletz tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

I was born and raised in the Siletz area. I left in 1951 and came back in 1982.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?

The Logsden area.

What year were you born Walt?

May 18, 1930.

How far back do you remember people fishing on the Siletz?

As far back as memory. My first vivid pictures [are when] I was in grade school in Logsden.

What year was this?

Oh, 1936, '37.

Have you fished for eels yourself?

No, I watched. I attempted, lets put it that way.

To you, where were the traditional eel hooking grounds located?

The ones that I remember very vividly are the ones down at the Frank Lyon's place. There used to be a railroad trestle there and just below that trestle was a ledge. . . the water was probably about 2 to 3 inches deep. That is where we did most of our hooking. Then there were other sites on up the river. There was sites were I lived and then there were sites on the Indian property which they called it the Bell Hartman place. They used to build a bridge across there and [hook] eel from the bridge.

This is on Rock Creek?

Yes.

Do you know if anybody hooked on the Siletz River?

I never did see anybody hook nowhere on the Siletz River, but they used to have salmon fishing sites. One was at the Mill Creek were it dumps into the Siletz River. Another one was Mill Creek Falls.

What year was this?

Oh, when the railroad was in there, so about the 40's. As soon as they got that railroad through it gave them good access to that site. There used to be quite a congregation down there and a lot of eels were caught.

Did your family have a special eel hooking area?

Yes, right in front of my place. And we used to let people come up and fish there too.

This is on the Klamath place up on the Rock Creek?

Yes, right where I live now.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year?

They started running some time in the latter part of April. One of the signs was the eel ants, when they were out. And a real hot, balmy day and Grandpa [Louie Klamath] would say the dark of the moon. And also when there was thunder and lightening they would really run. They run like crazy then.

This was from April on?

From April through June.

Could you describe the eels that were fished? Color, size and general appearance?

To me they were snakes, but the ones that they eat are black and real white bottoms. And the eels that were unfit to eat, that ran in the daytime, were brown in color. Those were the day eels.

Some people called them sun eels?

Yes.

What were the stream conditions when the eel runs were good in the past?

It was low water so that you could see the eels pretty good.

Did you see or hook eels during the day?

No, I did see the day eels during the day, but they say they were no good.

Were they in the same time that the night eels were in?

Yes.

Why do you think they would not hook the day eels?

They said that they were unfit to eat and that was

good enough for me. I never seen anyone eat them and the people I know of that ate eels wouldn't eat day eels.

You say that they were tan in color or brown?
Yes.

Did you ever see the eels spawn?
Yes, you can see them make a little pot hole in the bottom of the river, this little pot hole. This was the day eel and they would go round and around. You could go up the streams and see the light spots in the bottom of the stream in the gravel beds.

What color were they on the spawning grounds?
They were the day eels, so they were tan.

You never seen the night eels?
No.

How long did the eel runs last?
To me it seem like it was about two to three months, from April, May and June. I don't remember too much about July.

You don't think it is getting too cool, that is why they are running late?
I don't know what it might be.

How many people did you see hooking eels at anyone place?
That rock ledge down there was full of Indians. There was the men hooking and the women putting into the sacks. I don't know how they would know what eels belonged to who. But there would be a lot of people down there.

Do you know how many people?
I don't know any numbers, but the last big eel hooking done down at my place there was about forty-five people there.

What year was this?
This was about fifteen years ago.

How have the eels been the last ten years? Have you seen any eels?
The last ten years has been very, very skimpy. You don't see any dead eels on the river, along the river banks, and you don't see any day eels in the water during the daytime. I saw two, two years ago. There were two spawning and someone said that they poisoned the streams a few years ago. I asked him how they did it. He said that they put capsules in the stream. This may or may not have happened. The Fish and Game Commission denied that it happened. And another theory is that these logging companies sprayed to get rid of the underbrush because the crawfish population is way down and they need clean water. This is another theory, that the spray has caused the decline of the eels and the crawdads.

What were the first years that you first started to notice this decline?
I don't know. I was gone for almost thirty years and when I left there was all kinds of eels and when I came back there wasn't any.

What year was this?
I came back in 1982.

Then you started to notice right after that there was a decline in eels?
About 1985 we went down to hook eels. There was a few caught, but not the great numbers there were before. Where you used to see thirty to thirty-five eels go by, now you might see one.

Was this before the fish hatchery was terminated?
Well, someone said to me that eels were killing the fish so that is why they wanted to get rid of them. So this is before the fish hatchery was shut down.

And in the last five or six years there is hardly any?
No. In the last six or seven years we set it up for eels and different ones in the tribe have been up here watching for the eels and nothing has gone by.

Have you seen anyone trap for eels on the Siletz?
No.

Was there more than one season for the eels?
No. There was just the one time of the year. We would get one big mess and that would be it.

What other animals were abundant in the streams at this time?
When the eels were running good, there was abundance of crawfish, salmon. In fact, in the evening the stream would be red with crawfish and you could put bait out there and you could see the stream coming to you. Now you put bait out, you might get a dozen all day. There is no salmon runs, there might be a few go by. I used to see as high as thirty fish in front of my place at one time. Now you might see one or a pair I should say.

Did you ever see those little mussels in the river?
Yes.

They're about gone too?
I looked for some this last week. Looked in some of the potholes and I could not find any.
Like the clams, snails?
I don't know anything about those. I don't know if they have to have clean water like crawdads and skippers.

Do you see much algae up there?
No, not much.

This is up in the Rock Creek?
Yes. The water is pretty fast.

How were the eels prepared after they were caught?
Mom [Catherine Klamath] baked them, cut them into little pieces. I don't know how they cleaned them.

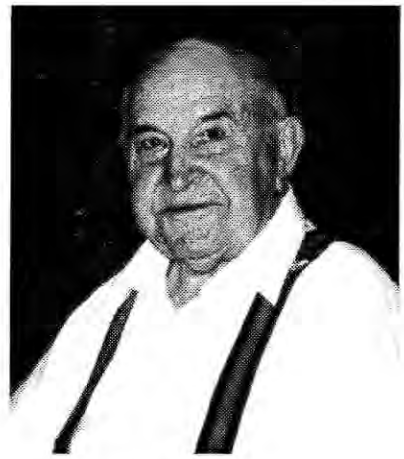
How did they fish for salmon on the Siletz?
Our family used spears, wooden spears. Tuton Rilatos used a gaff hook and Tuton used to make a fish house over the creek and the fish would come to it and Archie Johnson used to set net. . .

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz at this time?
The deer did not seem as abundant then as it is today. It used to be real hard to find deer. The deer population has grown a lot since I have begun hunting.

What was it like growing up on the Siletz at this time?
It was a good life, though I did not appreciate it at the time. I lived on a farm. It was a lot of work. There wasn't much activity around. We got a lot of fishing time and hunting time in. I didn't fish the main river. I fished the little streams. There used to be a little stream up by the Issacson place. That little stream was full of mountain trout. I don't know how they got there because there was a falls they had to go over. We used to fish William Creek and the one that I was raised on. There was a lot of fish. I have not been around them since 1951.

Why do you think that there is a decline in eels and other game on the Siletz?
I believe that they have been poisoned and also these sprays that the logging companies are using are hurting the streams. Also there is other streams that are being effected. The Siletz is not producing like it used to produce.

What is the importance of eel fishing to you and your family?
To me it was recreation. I don't eat them. To a lot of people I know they are a delicacy. They would be a good product to get into commercially. A smoked eel is a delicacy and one of the things I talked about is opening the hatchery to eel production. But not too many people know anything about their spawning habits. I have dug baby eel up in the sand, but I don't know if these are the same ones or not. While digging in the sand I've found baby eels 2 or 3 inches long. That is one of the things we don't know about and they have a five year cycle before they come back into the river.



Ted Kosydar

The following interview with Ted Kosydar was conducted by Tom Downey at the Kosydar home July 20, 1991. Ted was born in Siletz in 1912.

Ted, how long have you lived in the Siletz area, and were you born here?
I was born and raised here. I have been here all my life. I'm 79 years old. I lived here all my life except for five years I was in the War, 1941 to 1946.

This was the Siletz area that you grew up in?
Yes.

How far back do you remember fishing on the Siletz?
From about 1935. That was the first time we had to get a license. I used to fish before that without a license.

Did you fish the lower Siletz too?
Just around Siletz, and after that, 1940, '37, '38. Clifton Brassfield and I fished the gorge for Steelhead, but not for Chinook. But I think he hooked a big Chinook up there by the shop. . . It took his line and went right up the river with it. He could not turn it's head and it broke his line.

What year was this?
About 1938.

Where was some of the places you fished on the lower Siletz?
Oh, I fished all the river, from (Pompel Bridge) down. We fished for trout, we caught spring steelhead, and you know, we called them spring salmon. We didn't know they were spring Steelhead, that's what dad called them, so that is what we called them. We caught them in April and May. You were allowed seventy-five trout a day back then. There was no problem about getting your limit. Nice, great big trout. . .

Seventy-five?

Seventy-five trout a piece and they cut it to thirty-five, twenty-five, and ten. Now I think it is five.

Five per day?

Yes, up in Alaska, you are allowed only one salmon a day. . .

Did you fish down there in the early times, the Maples?

Yes. Did most of my fishing down that way.

Between Morgan Park?

Yes, between Morgan Park and the Fireplace Hole. Yes, not too many years ago the river came up in June and my boy Mike [Kosydar], he was fishing at the Fireplace Hole, and he hooked a steelhead and a Chinook. It didn't go fast, just slow and powerful, and finally broke loose. He was using eggs. . .

Did you ever fish for eels?

Yes, I have hooked eels all my life, since I was old enough to hold a pole. We used to fish with the Lawson boys [Harry, Sidney and Manuel]. A run would last about a week. You know, there were some runs where we would hook about 2000 eels between them and us both. Hook until daylight.

What year or years did this occur?

That was in the early 20's. I was about 10, 12 years old. I started hooking eels then. Harry Lawson was about same age as Mary [Lawson] and she was a little older than what I was. It was sure fun. I could remember them fishing before I did. They used to burn pitch in the boat. There was so damn many of them going by, you can't even see them all. Both sides of the boat.

Where are the traditional eel hooking grounds located?

Just below Besh Lawson's place. First riffle below Besh Lawson's place, yep. . .

What were the signs that the eels were going to run?

Those black flies. When you see them flying around you know the eels are going to be in good. After a hot day, these eel flies come out. Generally 2 or 3 days after a full moon was the best.

Describe the general appearance of the eels that you caught?

They are about two and a half feet long, weigh about one pound to a pound and a half. Sometimes you get a big king eel and they would be three feet close to four feet. They would be a pretty blue and when they are in the water they look silver.

These are the night eels?

I'm talking about the night eels. Sun eels are brown and a little smaller.

Did you ever hook for the sun eels?

No, just the Lawson boys used to hook them, because they would put in enough to last the whole winter. . . they would smoke, and dry them. Like I said, they caught two thousand and it would last them all winter, because we would only take a few for ourselves to smoke. My dad had the cruisers down there and my mom boarded them a week. We had eels one night for supper and we didn't tell them what they were. And after we told them that they ate eels, they said that they thought it was tuna fish. . .

What were the stream conditions when the eels were plentiful?

Low water. It was really clear. We never hooked in dirty water.

Why do you think they didn't hook the day eel?

Well, they are a different color. They are brown. They had a mushy taste about them. Well, I remember when I came back out of the military in 1945. I was living in the project up here and my wife never did see eels in her life. I caught a mess of them and brought them up and my wife put them in the oven to bake. When she opened the door to check on them one of them crawled out of the pan and she screamed! You can cut their head of and they will still move around. . .

Did you ever see the eels in their spawning grounds?

No, not your night eel, but I have seen your sun eels spawn. Never did see your night eel spawn. I think that you would have to go up in the gorge to see where they spawn. . . I seen the little ones, but you can't tell if they are night or day. And I hooked night eels in Rock Creek too.

How long did the eel runs last?

Well, they start in April and we hook them clear into July. But after July they start slacking off and getting soft.

How many people have you seen hooking eels at one time?

Mostly the Lawson boys. . . there was about 8 to 10 of us hooking. Two boats full of people. They wouldn't let me stay in the boats and so I would have a basket hooked onto two sticks and just swung them into the basket. I got just as many as they did, ones they missed. Ha, ha, ha. And Clifty Brassfield had a lot hooking up here too, and at Eddie Bensell place they had a stand built out into the river. . .

Do you know of any one who used to trap the eels on the Siletz?

Besh Lawson trapped them with a fish basket. Someone uptown here too, between Walt Dick and Dr. High. There was a shelf there and there was a gap just big enough for a basket to go into the eels would go right into that. Some Indians used to, but I don't remember a name.

There is three allotments down there, Clayburn Orton, Jack Wenkler, and old Larky Logan. It's still that way today, the river.

What other type of animals were abundant?

There were a lot of clams. We never did eat them. We used to go and get these horsenecks [clams] and dig razors clams. They make really good clam chowder.

Did you ever see these fresh water river mussels?

No, all I remember is those clams. We used to do a lot of swimming, you know, and you could hardly walk because those clam shells would be open and cut your feet, you know. There was just clam bed after clam bed. You don't see them anymore like there used to be. You don't ever see those crawfish anymore. I think too many people are eating those damn things. There are a lot of dead eels and the crawfish feed on them and in turn the Steelhead and Chinook feed on the crawfish.

Yes, because them eels only live from one to fourteen days and then they die.

Yes, I seen a lot of them when I was fishing for trout up in the gorge.

They live for about six years, about five in the river.

It's like they say about salmon, they will spawn and die, but I seen them when we were fishing for Steelhead in the winter time. I seen them Chinook heading back down the river. If they make it back, I think that they come back bigger. My son Mike caught one fifty pounder just below Cedar Creek about three or four years ago. . .

Has the abundance of these other animals changed over the years?

Oh yeah, you betcha. You don't hardly see any mink anymore, not so many 'coons. All you really see nowadays is those dead opossums laying around. My brother [John Kosydar] used to trap. Martin Ojalla used to trap for mink, 'coon and wild cat. John set a trap for wild cat up the Euchre Creek trail and I think he caught a cougar because it took everything, trap and all. You would see marks up on the tree six, eight feet up the tree where he was scratching. Trapped bear also. Clifty Brassfield, and I used to trap for bear too, down there by Louie Fuller place. We got permission to trap a bear there, and we got that two hundred and eighty pounder. . . Mrs. Bresfield said she wanted the lard because it is real good for baking. Anyway, when he shot the thing, Clifty said to go down and check it out to see if he was dead. I said, "Hell no, he is not dead." I took a long stick and poke him and he moved. I said, "See, he is not dead." Clifty shot him again and he asked if he had enough. And the bear said, "Uh hum", and died. . .

What year did all this happen?

Oh, that was in the 50's. About '55, '56.

How did you folks fish for salmon on the Siletz? Did you do a lot of netting or gaff hook?

We netted years ago. Just caught what we wanted and smoked them up. We always had plenty fish but never wasted any. I have seen them seals as far up as the park behind Goodell's, they would follow the steelhead runs up. They just eat the belly out of them, and waste the other part. . .

Yes, they are protected. How was it for you growing up on the Siletz? Did you have enough to eat?

Yeah, heck I grew up on fish. . . I remember dad used to work with beef cattle and milk. The only meat we ate was when a cow would get too old, dad would kill it and mom would can her. We never did eat any steaks. Fish, sauerkraut and your potatoes. And eels, trout.

Was there a lot of overhang in the streams and creeks on the Siletz?

The river was more protected then, more covered. What spoiled that was your bank erosion. The water would get a certain height and then you get bank erosion and slide in. Then the beaver cut a lot too.

Do you feel that the river is getting wider?

I think it is, too much high water.

Yes, one of the reasons is that the trees have been logged off back behind this small overhanging vegetation on the river. The sunshine is right on the river for long periods of time, and there is no shade. The water is getting warmer.

I really think it is in certain places, yes. I tell you a story. Old Tuton used to make fish traps on the Siletz. You know the salmon would have to rest some times, next to the bank. Where they did, Tuton used to lay white rock down there and gaff them.

Gaff them?

Yeah. He said, "You can see them better that way. ."

Martha (Marty) McMahon

The Following interview with Marty McMahon was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at the Siletz Tribal office on July 8, 1991. Marty was born August 12, 1928 in Siletz and was raised on the John Adams allotment. She is a Siletz tribal member.

Marty, how long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

I was born right in the town of Siletz August 12, 1928.

How far back do you remember that people fished on the Siletz?

Oh, ever since I could remember, just old enough to realize that they brought in lots of salmon. I was just a little tiny girl when we lived on our grandparents ranch, John Adams, and we used to see great big salmon in their bath tub. . . they were about as wide as the bath tub at the bottom and as long as the tub.

Where was this located at?

Approximately four miles northeast of Siletz Oregon, on the Siletz-Logsden Highway.

Did a lot of the people hook eels and do you remember where they were being hooked?

Yes, I remember very well because we didn't eat eels especially, but my mother used to tell a story about eating sun eels that they got down on the river on their property. But they never really fished for the eels at night until an older gentleman came to our home to do work for my father and mother to build a chicken house and etc., etc., and he hooked eels and that was the first time I have ever seen these large big lampreys.

How much bigger were they than the sun eels?

They were a lot larger.

What, how . . . ?

The sun eel is a little, small, brown eel that hang on the rocks even during the day in the light hours in the river. But the large lamprey eel that migrates, or comes up the creeks and river to spawn, are very large and they run in the Rock Creek where they really got them enmasse, which I understand.

What color are they mostly?

They are blue-black or a gray or sometimes a very, very deep gray, almost a charcoal black. Nice fresh ones.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?

I grew up right here in Siletz and up towards Logsden. We lived most of our years up towards the 4 mile marker at the John Adams allotment.

How many did you see fishing at the Rock Creek at one time?

Going down to the Rock Creek to fish we had to go quite a ways from the Logsden store or Logsden property. There, G.P. had a railroad right-of-way and I understand that is where most of the people went down in my years when they could still hook these eels. Myself, I have never went down there. But I know that is where they went.

Did you observe anybody hooking the Siletz River?

Yes, we did. That is what I say, we seen them up there at the covered bridge or Twin Bridges. They had a walkway, a cat walk sort of thing, and they were hooking that summer.

Was there a lot of game at this time?

Oh, yes there was a lot of game here, but no elk. Now there is elk, but no eels.

Was there a lot of water life like beavers or. . . ?

Oh, lots of beaver because [when] Archie used to hook, they'd get them in the net. Not a lot, but now and then.

Was there a lot of life in the little creeks?

Oh, we had trout galore. Yes. Yeah, lots of trout. My mother said don't take them out because there will be salmon. Sure enough some boys moved into our county and they fished our creeks out. They packed big sticks with little trout on them and pretty soon they were all gone.

Did you see the little eels that spawn out?

No never had.

So you never seen them yourself?

Oh, wait a minute, ain't that where Rock Creek is, their spawning area?

Yes, but you never had seen them yourself?

It seems like we have seen little eels in the river, but I can't remember.

What were the signs, that you can remember, when the eels would be about to run?

They were just known to be here. Because a real warm weather in the spring and real warm, warm climate in here that brought them and then there was big old ants that flew around here, we called them eel ants, but actually they were carpenter ants.

Do you feel that these ants are not really eel ants, but they are really called carpenter ants?

They truly are carpenter ants, but we called them eel ants.

How were the eels prepared after they were caught?

The eels that I seen were boiled, canned, smoked and canned, smoked and baked, and just baked.

Which way do you think was the best?

Smoked and baked.

That is what people mostly ate?

But, I have heard, that people canned them and took them to work with them.

Was the salmon fishing in the Siletz area plentiful?

Oh yes, lots of salmon. Salmon all over this country.

On the Siletz River did you know of anyone setting nets?

No, Archie is the only one I know of. . .

Did you see anyone gaffing salmon?

Oh, yeah. They gaffed on the Bentley Creek. That's the only one I knew of close to home. Of course we didn't know everyone around here.

Can you remember the ones that owned the allotments around here?

No, I don't know, but from about the Logsden area on up was called Long Prairie area, I remember that. A lot of Indians lived in there.

Do you remember any of the families that had homes in that area?

Archie had an allotment and the Johnson's, but I don't know anybody else. Oh, Perry Battise lived on Long Prairie. . .

What was it like growing up in the Siletz area?

Oh, it was nice here, beautiful country. The only bad thing we had was the roads, but we didn't know any different. It was a large logging community. A lot of Indian people were still here yet. Timber was all over. Finally, they started logging some of these areas off and I feel that might of affected the fish population.

Gladys Muschamp

The following interview with Gladys Muschamp was conducted by Tom Downey at her home on July 12, 1991. Gladys was born in Corvallis Oregon on September 3, 1914. She is a tribal member.

Gladys, how long have you lived in the Siletz area, and were you born here?

I was not born here, I was born in Corvallis, Oregon. It was hops picking time, September 3, 1914. I was raised here.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow up?

About four miles from here, just past the second green bridge. Father [Jim Bensell] owned a home there.

On Miller road?

Yes.

When was the first time you remember fishing on the Siletz and seeing people fish here?

I never did fish, I had some brothers, they got the eels.

Was there a lot of eels at that time?

Oh yes, there was a lot.

You could get gunny sacks full of them?

One night I think they caught three hundred of them.

What year was this?

Oh, this was way back.

Where were the traditional eel fishing grounds located on the Siletz River?

I think that everyone had their own place, only later did they go up to Rock Creek.

That is where you got most of your eels, up there at Rock

Creek?
Yes. . .

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year?
They say they run all year round, but this time of year, river is slower.

You mean in the summertime, May, June, July?
Yes.

You mean warm weather?
Yes.

Did you ever see those little eel ants coming out too?
Yes. I have not seen any this year.

Yes, that is what everyone is talking about. No eel ants and too much light from the moon. Hasn't been hot enough seems like. Describe the eels that were fished. Color, size and general appearance.
They were dark silver on the bottom and dark on the back.

They were the night eels then?
Yes, the ones we eat.

You people just fished the night eel then?
Yes.

You people did not hook the day eels?
No, the sun eel we would throw back into the river.

Was this because they were not good to eat?
They were not fat enough. They were soft.

What were the stream conditions when the eel runs were good in the past?
It was low water.

What color was the day eel?
They were kind of brown, reddish brown.

Did you know where the eels spawned?
Long ago when we use to go chitum peeling, I use to see those little ones in the creeks. . .

What creeks were these?
Root Creek was one. . .

Was this in a sandy area in the creek?
Yes, in some black looking sand.

How long did the eel runs last?
Oh, they are good now, but later on they will get wormy. You can see the worms.

After July or August?
After September they get worms.

That is the first time that I have heard that. How many people did you see hooking eels at one time in any one place?
There was the three of us. I never did fish up at Rock Creek. . .

Do you know if they trapped eels on the Siletz?
No, I didn't know of anyone. Perhaps they could have, if they knew how to make the trap.

Was there more than one season or run for the eels?
No.

How late in the season did you hook eels?
Not after September.

Did you see a lot of other animals in the river at this time when you were hooking eels?
River mussels.

There was quite a few of them?
Yes.

You have not been to the river lately have you?
No, not for years.

How was the eels prepared after they were caught?
You had to clean them, take the back bone out. You could bake fresh or fry them. We used to clean them first and then soak them overnight in salt water to get the slime off then hang them in the smoke house. That is how I done those. I don't know how others do theirs.

How did they fish for salmon on the Siletz in the past?
You would have to ask my son [George (Woody) Muschamp], he is the fisherman in the family.

You never seen anyone set net?
No, that was way back in my father's day, he used to set net. . .

What was your father's name?
Jim Bensell.

Was there a lot of game around Siletz when you were growing up?
Yeah, fish. I can remember that the river used to be just red with crawfish. Nothing in there now.

Lots of deer?
Yes.

Lots of beaver, raccoons?
Yes.

What was it like for you growing up on the Siletz?

My mother [Ida] and (unintelligible) was together yet. . . We had smoked eels, smoked salmon. I never remember going hungry until I got old.

Why do you think there is a decline in eels and other game on the Siletz River?

The way they hunt there is all these cars out in the woods. Last summer we seen this deer across a canyon, they were all shooting at him.

They had a small war going on?

Yes.

Do you think that there is too much over-hunting and overfishing going on?

Yes.

Do you think that the trees overhanging the streams is different today than in the past?

Everything is different now. We used to be able to eat things from the woods. We can not even drink water up there now. . .

What was the importance of the eel fishing, on the Siletz, to you and your family and friends?

For food. My mother dried them and also canned them too, after they were dried.

If we got eels back again in abundance would you hook them again?

I don't know, the river is so dirty. We got some mussels one time it had some smell to them.

Yes, that is one of the problems, we would have to clean up the river first.

Yes.

Who else knows a lot about eel fishing on the Siletz?

One person who is good at it is Bobby Simmons. Also drying them; we used vine maple. You have to take the bark off first. The bark makes it kind of bitter. Alder, the same way, reddish look. I like vine maple the best, it is better tasting yes, take the bark off first.

Nellie Orton

The following interview with Nellie Orton was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at her home in Toledo on July 10, 1991. Nellie was born in Siletz on March 6, 1913. She is a tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

I've live here all my life, I was born here. Since 1951 we moved over here because our house burned down. Because, Sonny [Son, Charles Orton] was only 10 years old. . .

In what year were you born?

I was born in 1913.

What area of the Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?

Down there by the Grange Hall [Siletz Grange Hall on Metcalf Road]. . . my dad owned all that land there where the Grange Hall is. He had a house there. That is where we used to live. It is where those government buildings sit now. He used to have a house there. He never sold any of that land, he just sold that little piece to the Grange Hall. He owned clear down to Gibson berry patch.

How far back do you remember fishing on the Siletz?

Well, I know I have been fishing ever since I could remember, since I was a kid, you know. I know Charles [Husband] used to set net all the time, long time ago.

Did you ever fish for eels yourself on the Siletz?

Not really, but I watched them hook eels. I never hooked or anything. I have picked up the eels as they are being thrown on the bank and put them into gunny sacks. They told me to put sand on your hands so you can pick them. . . they are so slimy.

Can you remember where the traditional eel hooking grounds were?

Just about any place a person wants to build himself a

platform or had a good riffle, you know. Everyone had there own place to eel where ever it was the closest to them, you know. So we never really had no special place, each family had there own fishing holes. When we lived in Siletz we fished down there where the Old Mill site was, you know, they have a park there today. There is a good riffle down below there. My dad owned land on the other side so they built a platform, then they hooked eels and fished from that, you know. You had to go across in a boat to get to the platform. Just about everybody had there own eel stand. . . each one had their own so when they want to go hook eels they could, you know. Here lately they have been hooking off the bank up by Logsden. Rock Creek.

What year do you think they started hooking up in the Rock Creek?

It was when my kids were small. Jimmy, [grandson, Jimmy Pyle] would be 40. He was just a little fellow going up there hooking eels. They would take the kids along to pick up the eels and put them into bags, you know.

Was this at the Rock Creek area?

Yeah, Rock Creek, uh huh. People would build a big fire on the bank and one kind of close to the water so they can see the eels. Then they, more or less, they feel around with their hooks because the water was always kind of boiling like. When they threw the eels out, there would be kids there to pick them up and put them into sacks. You know, they never really counted their eels until they were ready to split them up.

Was there a great number of eels hooked?

Yeah, there was.

You talk about using pitch when you hooked eels in the boat. Did they take it out in the boat with them?

Yeah, they took them out after they have built a place on the boat. They would use a piece of tin or something that wouldn't burn the boat and then they would pile other things. . . they wouldn't make a big fire, but just enough to have a blaze so you can see into the water. A lot of them used to use gas lanterns. After they got away from using pitch, using the modern way, gas lanterns, and when you seen a white streak going, you know it was an eel.

It was probably a lot cleaner, you didn't have to deal with the smoke.

When they come you can see them. Before they climb that riffle they would wait to give themselves a chance to rest. And generally that is where they get hooked.

How long were the poles that they used?

Oh, a lot of them had real long poles because up Sams Creek it is quite a ways down. You would feel for your eel rather than see them. When it would run good you could just throw them out one, two, three, if the eels were running good.

What did they usually make there hooks out of?

Pitch forks. Charles [Husband] always used to cut up dad's [Wilberton Orton] pitch fork. His dad was pretty mad at him for cutting up his pitch forks. Then they use great big nails too. Then they file it down.

What were the signs to you that the eels are going to run?

Well, generally it is about this time of the year, like June and July. It has to be hot day and the eel is going to run good you know. Since they have been plugging up the water ways, the eels can't go up to spawn. So they just don't come in any more it seems like. Or they are putting too much chlorine into the water. It just kills them.

Can you describe what the eels look like? Color, size and general appearance?

Night eels are dark. They are longer. The sun eels are kind of a lighter color, they eat them too, but they say it don't taste as good as the night eel. The night eel is always longer, and they come in from the ocean, but the sun eel is always in the river. The night eel come just certain times of the year. Same as fish

What were the stream conditions in the past? When the eels were running good was it low water or high?

Generally, in the summertime it is never really too high, but that is why you still need to be at the top of a riffle.

You could just about see them coming?

Yeah, you can see them coming.

Did you ever see or hook eels during the day?

I never did. . .

Have you ever seen where the eels spawn?

No, but they say when they do spawn they get in a ball. . . just pile together. . .

What color did the little ones look like?

I don't think they looked any different when they are ready to spawn. The day eel and the night eel I don't think changed in color.

How long did the eel run last?

It will run for oh, at least two to three weeks anyhow, good eeling. You can get quite a few eels. A lot of people smoked them, and they canned them. My mother [Ellen Metcalf] used to salt them, like you would do fish. Did you ever eat eels?

Yeah, that was a long time ago. How many people did you see hooking eels at one time?

Oh, I don't know, but when they get a gathering they have like Indian dance, you know, people would bring what ever they could. Like I'll bring eels and you bring jerky. . .

Did you know of anyone who trapped eels on the Siletz?

Oh, you mean in the eel basket? Older people used to do that. Their baskets were made so the eel can go in, but not out. Then they would go and pick up their basket the next day and sometimes they would get quite a few. It was a round basket like, and there was a round funnel. The eels would go in there and not know how to swim back out. . .

Was there more than one run?

No, just that one. Generally it is in between May and June.

What other types of animals were abundant on the Siletz?

Deer and stuff like that.

I was talking about like the river mussel and etc.?

Yeah, river mussel, they were good. They were in little black shells and they grow where there is a lot of rock. They are good to boil and if a fellow grinds them up, it would make good fritters.

Today is there people still eating them?

I don't know of anyone going out and looking for them today. There used to be a lot where [Archie] Ben's place is. We used to go dig them for her and she would put them in a pot and boil them the same as with mussels.

Do you think that the abundance of these animals have changed over a period of time? Have you seen less of them?

Yes, I think so, because you do not see them as much as you used to. And there not much of anything now, not much deer or anything.

How were the eels prepared after they were caught?

Some would bake them, some would fry them, some would smoke them, boil them. Some canned them after smoking them a few days and eat them right out of the jar. It was like kippered. My sister used to do that, boy they were good.

Just to change here, how was the salmon fished for?

Well, mostly them times they had nets. Because you see, they had a license to fish. . . the government gave him. . . they moved them around so much that the government let them fish because every time they settled down in one place they would strike gold and so they would take their place away from them again. They had to give them something, you know. I don't know who got away with the old man's, I think that Clarence's [Orton] wife [Lee] did. Dan [Name?] have the license from way back, that's why they could not arrest him. That was to be their food.

That was right from the start as soon as they moved on to the reservation?

That was the only way they could get any amount of fish. When they first moved on the reservation they set nets and even made their own, you know.

Did you see any one gaff hook on the Siletz too?

Yes, when they were looking for some fish, when it was high water time. They had a pole as long as an eel pole they would hook with.

When did they finally take the nets from the Siletz?

When they moved them this last time or took everything away this last time. Charles dad would not give his up. He said that the government gave him that and he wouldn't give it up. We did not have brains enough to save it. It would be a souvenir now. . .

What was it like for you growing up on the reservation?

I didn't mind it at all because I'm a "Genuine-Buckskin". I have been around Indians all my life and I understand what they are talking about. Because I told my kids, "Don't make fun of old people because they did not look that way long time ago." I said that every body gets ugly when they get old.

Why do you think there is a decline in eels and other game on the Siletz River?

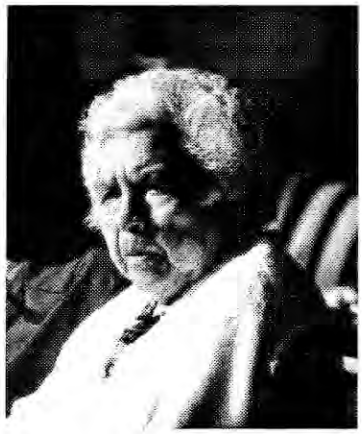
Well, I don't know. I think that it's because of the junk that they put in the water. Our water here, you can taste it when they put all that chlorine in the water.

In the past, when the eels were abundant, was there a difference in trees and other vegetation overhanging the streams, compared today?

Yes, there was more shade. . . that is where the fish like to swim, in the shade. The same as us, we like to find a cooler place.

What was the importance of eel fishing to you, your family and friends?

It was food for the people. We never had refrigerator or anything. We had to salt it, or smoke it, or can it, to put it away. You know you had something to eat. You had your potatoes. We had our own garden. . . and we had to pick apples to put away. Now people don't do that. We had our own root cellar to put our food in so we learned to save and not go hungry. If go hungry nowadays you are just too damn lazy.



Pearl Rilatos

The following interview with Pearl Rilatos was conducted by Tom Downey, Selene Rilatos Lynch, and Darin Rilatos at Pearl Rilatos home on July 1, 1991. Pearl was born October 9, 1905 and raised in Logsden. She is a Siletz tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

It was October, my folks were out in the Valley picking hops.

How far back do you remember that people fished on the Siletz?

Since I lived in the Logsden area. I do not remember what year we moved down here.

You grew-up in the Logsden area then? Until you got married?

Yes, we moved down here then. My folks [Hoxie and Elizabeth Simmons] lived in Logsden, they are all gone now. They had the big house in the field just past the [Logsden] schoolhouse after you make the turn. . .

What year do you think that was?

I don't know.

Was there a flood or anything like that?

We were kids, I got married in the school grounds.

You were married in 1922?

Yes.

Do you remember people fishing for salmon on the Siletz?

Yes, on the Rock Creek. Have you ever been there?

Yes.

That is where they usually fished. With poles.

That was for the eels?

Yes, that was for eels.

Was their a lot of eels back them?

Yes, but since that time there has not been as many. Bobby [Simmons] has been the only one to catch any.

How did they fish for them, by hooks?

Yes, smaller hook then the salmon hook.

Hook and pole?

Yes.

Do you remember anyone trapping on the Siletz or Rock Creek?

Some folks did, but we never did.

At this time, when the eels were running good, were there a lot of other aquatic life in the streams? Like mink, salamanders?

There was more then, but you hardly see any now. With a trap even, you can't find them. They've moved away or died.

How did they fish for the salmon at this time?

With a hook and pole.

More with an open gaff hook with the salmon?

Yes.

They never started setting nets until later on?

Yes.

What time do you think that they started using nets?

Oh, as far as I could know we never had any, but other folks had them.

Why do you think that the eels have declined in recent years?

I don't know why. In the last few years there hasn't been very many.

How were the eels prepared in your family?

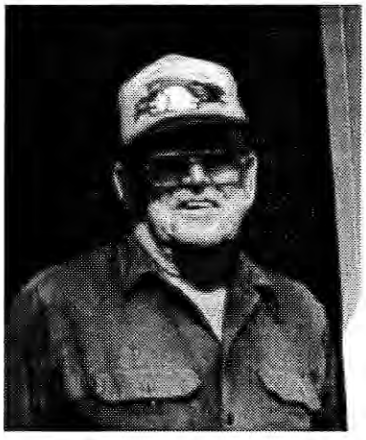
They baked the eels or some older people salt them and then they boil the eels. Frying was another method.

Tom: Did your family have there own fishing hole for salmon. . . ?

We all had the same area.

Was that the Rock Creek area?

Yes.



Roscoe Schaeffer

The following interview with Roscoe Schaeffer was conducted by Tom Downey and Darin Rilatos at the Siletz Tribal office on July 17, 1991. Roscoe was born in Toledo in 1921.

Roscoe, how long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?
Born in Toledo, in 1921.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?
Upper Farm.

This is the Logsden area?
Yes.

You lived there all your life?
Well, from the spring of 1923 to when I came out of the service in 1946. Then I moved down here to Siletz in 1946.

How far back do you remember fishing on the Siletz?
Since I was about eight years old.

So you did a lot of fishing here?
Yes I did.

Did you fish for eels yourself?
Hook eel, yes, lots of them.

Was there lots of eels then?
Lots of eels before I went in the service, up until about six years ago. And they started disappearing.

You have hardly caught any since about six years ago?
No.

Where were the traditional eel fishing grounds located on the Siletz River?
Mainly on Rock Creek.

This was at the mouth?
No, about a quarter mile up from the mouth.

Did your family have a special eel fishing area? Where?
That was at Rock Creek.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run, and what time of the year?
Good hot day mainly and dark of the moon. They like to run at dark of the moon.

Was there any other signs that you can remember?
Well, those were the main two and the time of the year.

What time of the year did you feel that they were going to run?
Well, there was an early run in the spring when the water was high and a run in May. And a later run in the fall, in October.

Was there a difference in these eels, in these different runs, that you could tell?
No, I couldn't tell any difference in them. They were the same as all the lamprey.

Could you describe the eels that were fished? Color, size and general appearance?
They were a blue, bluish-gray. They would run from anywhere from twelve inches to twenty. About an inch and a quarter diameter.

What were the stream conditions when the eel runs were good in the past? Was it high or low water?
They run on both the high and the low water. I hooked them in high water when you could not see them, you felt for them. I hooked them in low water when you could see every one of them.

Did you ever hook during the day?
No. All night time hooking.

Why do think that they didn't hook during the day?
I didn't think they ran during the day, nobody did. The old Indians even.

So you never seen a day eel or sun eel?
I have seen sun eels when they were spawning.

You seen them spawning?
Oh, yes.

What were the color of these?
They were more of a brownish color. Light brown, the sun eel is.

Where were some of the eel spawning areas?
All along in that Rock Creek, even above the

hatchery. There was two spawning up there just about a week ago, two together, but they spawned and they were gone.

That is surprising. What color were they on the spawning ground?

They were the blue yet, sun eels are brownish color.

How long did the eel runs last?

About a week. Had to do with the water and the temperature.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time in any one place?

Heck, I seen fifteen to twenty people lined up at Rock Creek shoulder to shoulder.

You guys hooked with poles?

Yes.

How long were these poles?

I have an eighteen foot and a twenty foot pole.

What were these poles made out of?

Fir, and hand whittled.

Does that make the pole good and stiff?

Yes, you can whittle them down.

What were your hooks made out of?

Used pitch fork tines. Had to watch the pitch forks.

Do you know if they trapped eels on the Siletz?

No.

Was there more than one season or run of eels?

Yeah, there was a couple of pretty good runs. On that summer run, they just come lingering along very few at a time. I don't know where they go, I never did really see hardly any of them, but I have seen lots of the dead ones when they spawned out, but you hardly see them anymore. Last couple of trips down in the boat I haven't seen any of them.

Have you seen a great number of dead along the banks?

Not recently, but a few years ago, heck yeah. You would hit a little eddy like that, would be dead eels in there and the crawdads would be just thick. There isn't any dead eels there now.

What other type of animals have you seen like mussels and etc.?

There used to be a bed up there by the old Bell's place. Then there were several beds around town here. They like to be in the really fine rock as long as there is a big rock so they can get hold of and rest.

What about the salamanders and other animals like that?

I haven't seen a salamander for a long time. Far as I know, they are extinct. I haven't seen one of those black salamanders for a long time. You used to catch a lot of them.

So you think that the other animals have changed over the years too?

Yes, the deer population seems to be coming back some.

Do you see otter once in awhile?

I haven't seen an otter in years. Very few mink. Once in awhile you will see a raccoon track along the riverside, but not much. I used to trap when I was about eight years old.

How did you prepare the eels after they were caught?

We baked them mainly. We smoked them too. We always had smoked eel put away. We liked them baked the best.

How was the salmon fishing, in the past, on the Siletz?

We set net, and also gaffed hooked, but we only had to go once. We would take a team of horses with wagon, get enough to salt down and can.

Where were some of these places at?

Mill Creek was a good one for that, salmon fishing. Mill Creek falls.

Down behind [George] Kentta's?

Yes.

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz at this time?

Oh yes, I used to go camping up the river in the gorge. You see mink and beaver, all kinds of animals. You had better have your supplies tied up or it would be missing when you came back at the end of the day.

What was it like for you growing up on the Siletz River?

Oh, It was fun for me living up in the mountains on a homestead three miles from the Logsden store. Moved up there in the Spring of 1923. Didn't leave there until I went in the service in 1942. Got back in 1946 and the folks had moved off there. They moved down to Logsden. They moved here in 1900.

Roscoe, why do you think that there is a decline in eels and other game on the Siletz?

I don't know if it is sea otter, or the seals. I see a lot of them on the bar over there at Newport, hundreds of them. I seen one of them come up with a fish and take a big bite right out of the stomach and go get another one. I'm sure they eat the eels too.

Yes, they don't have very much information on them when

they go out to sea and the eels are real small compared to the others.

When they are born they are only about three inches long.

Did you ever see any of them small eels?

Lots of them.

They were in a sandy gravel?

Small gravel. They would work a hole out, and that's where they laid their eggs.

Do you see very many of those these days?

No, not anymore.

In the past, when the eels were abundant, was there a difference in the trees and vegetation overhanging the streams?

Oh, there wasn't any. You used to be able to walk the creeks pretty good, but you can't now. You have to wade down the middle of them.

You say there is more overhang now than the past?

Yes. I think so.

So you think that the water is not getting cooled enough?

Well, a lot is that when they logged they did not reseed enough.

Do you see a lot of green algae in the river now?

There is a lot of it. You see that green algae in there and the moss.

Yes, I have talked to others and they have said the same thing.

You get that green algae on your line when you are fishing.

This is an indication of a pollutant in the water.

And the water temperature is changed too, there is no protection on the banks. The sun is right on it all day.

You think it is because of the trees that are not on the bank anymore?

They don't have shade of the timber farther back.

The sun hits in the middle.

And it is that way to the head of it, the same.

This is why it is talked about a buffer zone.

Yes, they are supposed to have one, but they get down too close to the creeks.

What was the importance of the eel fishing to you and your family?

It was food.

Your people ate everything?

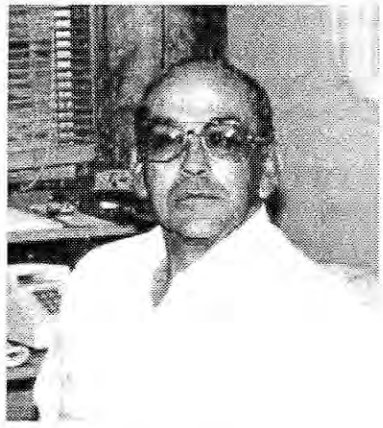
We depended a lot on it for winter food and summer.

If the eels were abundant again, would you be eating them?

I would be canning them. You can't get enough of them nowadays to put away.

Who else do you know that has fished for eels?

The Rilatos family.



Frank Simmons

The following interview with Frank Simmons was conducted by Tom Downey at the Siletz Tribal office on July 8, 1991. Frank was born in Siletz December 27, 1934. He is a tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz Valley and were you born here?

I was born here. Probably lived here for about forty-five years.

In what area of the Siletz Valley did you grow-up in?

Right in the immediate town of Siletz.

How far back do you remember people fishing on the Siletz River?

As long as I could remember. Ever since I was a young child I used to follow my grandpa [Hoxie Simmons], my dad [Fritz Simmons] and uncles [Lester and Edwin Simmons] to fish and gather eels on the Siletz and Rock Creek area.

What year or years are you referring too?

Oh, probably from the 40's to about 1965.

Did you ever hook the eels yourself?

No I haven't, but I was there several times when eels were being hooked.

Where were the traditional eel hooking grounds in those days?

There are several traditional hooking areas. It seems to me each Indian family had their own designated area on the river, where they had their homesteads or allotted property. They would use a boat and go out into the river and hook the eels out of a boat. When the Rock Creek was more popular for eel hooking for culture purposes, which is now known as the [Jack] Sweet's property site.

Did your family have a special eel hooking site?

No I didn't, but my grandparents [Hoxie and Elizabeth Simmons] lived on the Sweet's property and it ran clear down to Rock Creek. That was their property in the early 40's.

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year?

Usually they started around the May months when the weather started to warm up and it seem like the humidity was quite high. Eel ants would come out. They were a big black ant that had wings and they would fly and land and sometimes they would lose their wings. In those days there were a real abundance of eel ants. It seems to me that was a sign that eels were going to run.

Can you describe what the eel look like? Color, size, general appearance?

On the river the eels were a lot bigger type eel and they were dark and more pretty eel, almost the color of a salmon. They had dark back and a light colored stomach. I would say they are probably up to 30 inches long. On the creeks they were a smaller eel, probably 16 up to 22 inches long.

What were the stream conditions when the eels run were good in the past?

The water, seems to me, was quite low, because you could see the eel in the water when they hooked eels at night. When you had a light shining on the water the eels would reflect off that light like alumina. You can see the eel coming up on the rocks and you hook them. But there were times that when the water was higher and dirty and this was when special times came for the Indians because they felt for the eels by dragging their hooks on the bottom slowly until you feel the eel and jerk. That was really a speciality amongst the Indians that could do that. Not very many Indians could do that.

Did you ever see them hooking eels during the day?

I have not known anybody hooking eels during the day, but I have seen eels during the day in the warm summer days. When I was a young man swimming, quite often I would see quite a few eels. That is what we called the day eel.

Why do you think they did not hook the day eels?

As long as I could remember, traditions told me that the day eel wasn't good for human consumption.

What color was the day eel?

The day eel was kind of a dirty water brown, as near as I could explain it.

Do you know where the eels spawned?

No, I don't. Especially the eels that went far up into the creeks and the rivers. I don't know of anybody that

would be able to identify where they spawned. The summer eels seem like they spawned in the lower parts of the river in the sand bank areas where the water stays kind of warm and slow.

How long did the eel runs last?

Last. . . recently. . . ?

Yeah, today or in the past?

Oh, I would say May and June was the two prime months of the year.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time in any one place?

Well, Rock Creek, like I said before, was the most popular area and I would say there was anywhere from 3 to 15 people there, but there were about 4 poles that was being used. The men would take turns using the poles. At that time they would gather a lot of eels.

How long were these poles?

Probably about 18 feet long.

Was there more than one season or run for the eels?

Not that I know of. There is only one a year.

How late in the season did you hook eels?

June.

What other types of animals was there on the Siletz River, like your water mussels, bugs, insects and such things like this and how was there abundance?

A lot of abundance. The river and creeks were really abundant of all types of food chain that fish and eels lived on.

How were the eels prepared?

After the men caught them, generally that is when the spouses took over cleaning them and preparing them to be smoked, or just brought home and cleaned and boiled or put in the oven and baked, how ever the family liked it. But the most popular way of doing it was to smoke the eel then put them in the oven and bake and put on the dinner table.

How did they fish for salmon on the Siletz River?

Well, on the river the most popular way of doing it was with a net. Families had their own boats and nets and they would go out and set their net. They caught a lot of fish, but what they caught they used for their own families consumption. Then the creeks were more popular in the falls area. The salmon would hold up and you would gaff them, or spear them. . .

When was the last year they were able to set net on the Siletz River?

I don't recollect, but it was probably thirty years ago. My dad had a net that had a special government tag that he used on his net. He set his net for catching salmon and the only other person that I can remember ever having one of those was Archie Ben. I know my dad's was confiscated. I don't know what happened to Archie Ben's net.

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz, at this time?

Yes, there were an over abundance of fish and eels and all the predators that use the water. Coons would come down and eat the dead eels and dead fish and bear would come down in certain areas and trap the salmon also.

Have you ever seen anybody trap for eels?

No, I haven't.

What was it like growing up in the Siletz area?

Times were tough and times were hard. It was hard times because it seems like all we had culturally was potatoes, deer meat, fish and eels was our main table settings and homemade bread. But it was a good time 'cause when families hooked eels or got clams or any kind of shellfish or salmon or deer or bear they shared with other people. It was a culture for them to catch a lot, but not an over abundance. They used just what they harvested.

Why do you think there is a decline on the eel population?

Probably the water table in the river and creeks have lowered tremendously. The logging that is going on in the areas and the logging practices of dragging logs and debris across natural habitats and spawning areas for salmon and eels and that damages their spawning areas.

How many eels do you remember hooking at one time?

Years ago, when they hooked on the river out of their boats, they hooked a lot of eels and put them at the bottom of their boat. They never did count their eels because when they figured that they had enough and that was enough in their boat. At Rock Creek cultural fishing site, they hooked the eels and again they didn't count their eels because someone would be in the background picking up the eels and when you had a gunny sack full you were done. They counted the gunny sacks full and that was a lot of eels. Today the eels are so few and far between that they started to count their eels and that would be between 1 to 2 and up to 12.

What was the main reason people fish for the eel? Traditional or major food group?

Yes, it was. Eel was a main staple. The eels were caught only in May and June. They waited every year to catch their eels. Eels were prepared like I say, smoked and later on when canning was popular you canned 100 up to 200 jars. . . to last you all through winter.

Do you know any eel hooking going on today?

The Bayya boys [Bristo and Sammy], they usually go up in the Rock Creek area and try to hook eels, but the eels are so almost desiccated that no one hardly tries to catch them. But these people were raised with eels all their life and they go up there even through. . . they only catch 1 to 12. Even though they stay there at the river and creek bank all night and wee hours in the morning, they catch very, very, few eels.

Why do you think that eel hooking is not being done today?

It is still a culture and a Indian heritage in our area, but the eels aren't there so they just gave up even though it is a traditional cultural diet to the Indian in this area. Almost anyone over 50 years old, or 45 to 50, would say that it was one of their main diets in the early age.

Viola Sondenaa

The following interview with Viola Sondenaa was conducted by Angela Sondenaa and Annette Sondenaa at her home in Siletz, November 24, 1993. Viola was born in Otis, Oregon March 8, 1925. She is a tribal member.

How long have you lived in the Siletz area and were you born here?

I was born in Otis, Oregon on March 8, 1925, moved to Siletz area when I was six years old and have been here every since.

In what area of the Siletz Valleys did you grow up in?

Well, it was called the lower river. And then I got married and I moved over here to what is called the Camas Prairie.

How far back do you remember fishing on the Siletz?

Well, every since I was a little girl I had to go set the net and pull it out, rack it up and clean it out and take the fish out. When I probably was seven or eight years old.

Did you fish for eels yourself?

Well, no I was not big enough, but I went down there and watched them.

Where were the traditional eel hooking grounds on the Siletz River?

Well, it was on the Logan property. We called it the Logan Riffle. It was on our property over there.

Did you ever eel any other place?

No.

You answered my next question; did your family have a special place?

What were the signs that the eels were going to run and what time of the year was that?

It was in the early summer and it was the first hot day, 85 degrees or more, and than the eels ran and they

only ran for about two days, and it had to be a real hot day.

Describe the eels that were being caught: the size and the color?

Well, they were Lamprey. They had a suction cup on them and they had seven or eight holes down the sides of their head and they tapered down to about. . . some were twelve inches and some were, when there was a good run about two or three feet long when you got them.

What color were they?

They were a kind of dark gray. There were two eels, there was what is called the day eels and the night eel. We did not eat the day eels. We ate the night eels. And the day eels were light in color.

What were the stream conditions like when the eels were running?

Well the water was low because it was in the summer time like early May or the first of June is when they ran.

Did you see or hook eels during the day?

No, never.

Why do you think they did not hook during the day?

Well, I don't know that was just the old myth that they were never any good. Some of them eat them, I guess.

What color was the day eel?

Kind of a light gray. That's how you could tell the difference.

Do you know where the eels spawn?

No.

How long did the eel runs last?

About two days. And it had to be real hot day.

How many people did you see hooking eels at one time in one place?

Usually about eight or ten.

How did they do it in groups? Were some bagging and some hooking?

There were usually two people hooking in the boat and two other people gathering and two other people taking them to the shore.

Do you know if they trapped eels on the Siletz?

I don't know anything about that. We just hooked them.

Was there more than one season or run of the eels?

No, just once a year.

What other types of animal did you observe that were abundant in and on the Siletz when the eels were running?

Well, most of your little fish stuff was there, like periwinkle were in the river.

Was there other animals like clams, crawdads that you would eat?

Yes, I tried what you call the river mussel. You can eat them, but there not like the ocean mussels, they are eatable.

Has the abundance of these animals and other animals changed over the years?

Oh! My gosh yes, because they are just deteriorating.

How was the eels prepared after they were caught?

Well, we had a board with a nail on it and we cut the head off and we had that nail and hook them on it and slit them down the sides and pull the backbone out. It was not a bone, but a gristle and than slit down the sides and lay them open and than smoke them for three days and than we would can them and to cook them we put them in the oven and bake them for how long it would take. . . it did not take long. I always like to eat them boiled with potatoes, but no one else did.

How did they fish for salmon on the Siletz in the past?

With nets, and I still got my dads tag. Or how do you say it, a permit?

Was there a lot of game on the Siletz at this time?

Yes, back in my day there was a lot of game.

What was it like growing up on the Siletz?

Well, it was fun. You always had something to eat. You could get your own deer, your own fish, your own eels, so you always had something to eat.

Why do you think there is a decline in eel populations and other animals populations?

That I couldn't tell you.

What is the importance of the eel fishing to your family and friends?

Well, it was something to eat. It was like you pick[ing] the apples. They come once a year so you had to go do it. You go get your winter supply of eels once a year [too].

Who else do you know who hooked in the past or is hooking them now?

My brother's boys are the only ones I know that is hooking, Kendall Logan.

If eels were abundant today, would you, your family or friends hook eels?

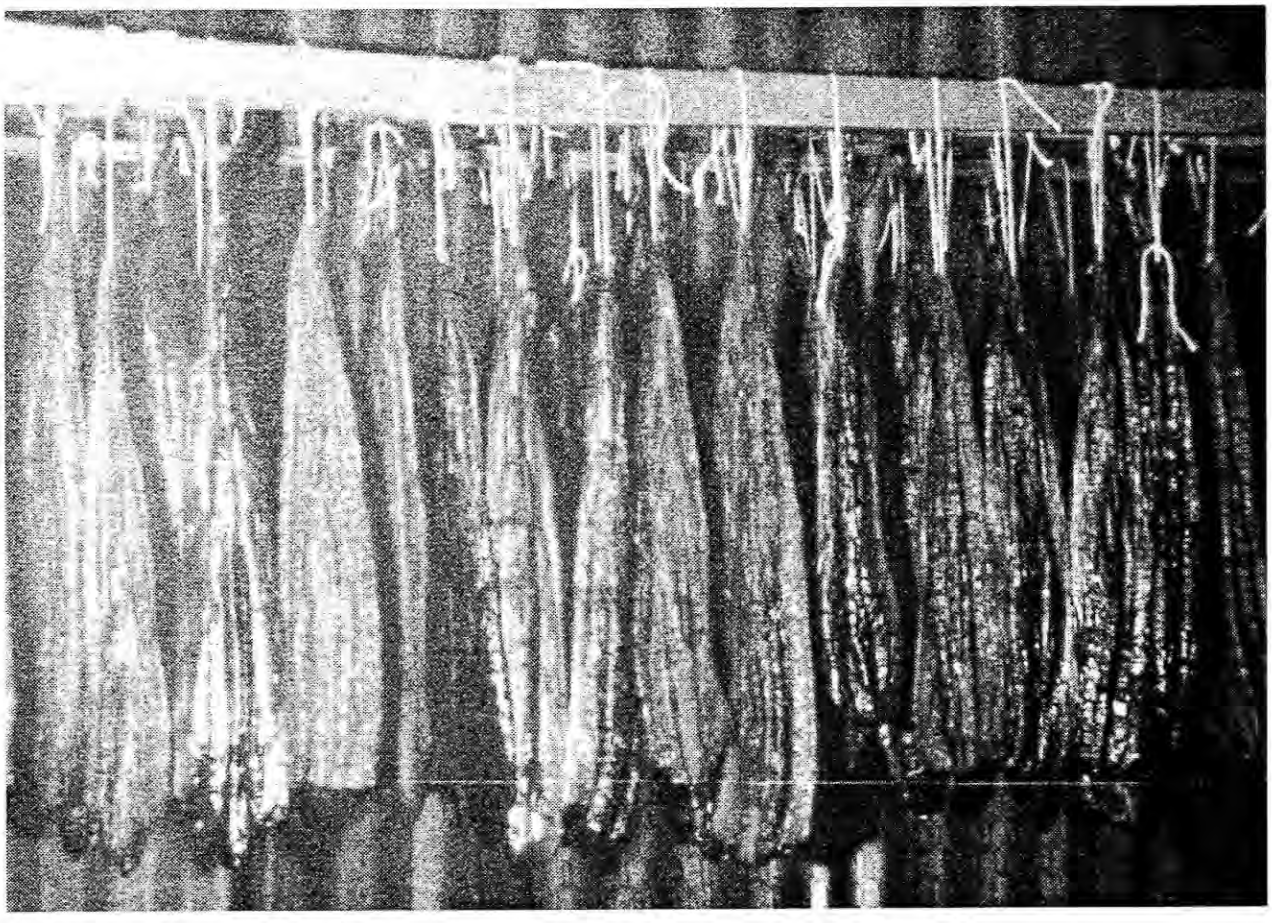
You bet! You bet!

When was the last time that you remember having eels?

Oh, it must of been about eight years ago. My nephew brought me a bucket of them. Kendall Logan.

You know anything about fishing for eels with an eel basket?

No, fish basket yes, but not a eel basket. Those eels you couldn't catch them if you wanted to. You haven't seem them have you? They are like a long snake. They have a suction cup and if you wore boots they would stick to your leg. Ask your mom about eel hooking. Ed [Sondenaa] took her hooking when they graduated, up at Rock Creek, he scared the hell out of her. He stuck one of those eels to her foot. So you know it had to be in June that they run, but it had to be the first hot day. But yes, I would eat them again.



Smoking eels

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been generated through research and public presentations associated with the construction of this report.

The recently reported declines in Siletz lamprey eel populations is widely perceived as an important local issue with significant cultural, historical, biological, and ecological consequences. It has been the stated opinion of nearly every participant in the research process, including the report's authors, that immediate actions should be taken by a number of cooperating agencies to seriously address this problem. Specific actions recommended to be taken at this time include:

1. Long-term monitoring of the Siletz River is critically needed. A partnership of cooperating institutions and agencies should include the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, Oregon State University, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, Lincoln County, Oregon State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Oregon Water Resource Department. Principal private landowners, including Boise-Cascade Corporation and Georgia-Pacific, Inc., should be encouraged to assist in monitoring activities;

2. Permanent water quality monitoring stations should be immediately installed at all entrance points and exit points of Siletz River waters on Siletz Indian lands; and

3. Good specimens of each identified "kind" of Siletz lamprey eel should be collected and sent to Oregon State University for positive identification;

4. The idle Rock Creek Fish Hatchery should be put into use for the production of lamprey eels, native trout, and other depleted aquatic Siletz River wildlife. Coordinated hatchery production of native stocks for other rivers within the historical land base of the Siletz peoples should also be given consideration;

5. Research on upland habitat conditions in the Siletz River Valley should be initiated, with a focus on historical relationships between terrestrial conditions, water quality, and riverine animal populations;

6. President Clinton's 1993 Plan for Northwest Forests called for "new economic opportunities for year-around, high-wage, high-skill jobs," and for the "maintenance and/or restoration of spawning and rearing habitat on Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service lands to support recovery and maintenance of viable populations of anandromous fish species and stocks considered 'sensitive' or 'at risk' by land management agencies. . ." The plan also requires that particular sensitivity be given to the cultural values and traditions of Native Americans and that consideration be given to the economies of rural, timber-dependent communities. The Siletz River should be given serious consideration for restoration efforts and the Siletz River Valley community should be provided economic consideration for the development of jobs (particularly research, reconstruction, and monitoring jobs) related to restoration efforts under guidelines presented in the President plan;

7. Lincoln County school children and Siletz tribal college students should be encouraged to combine academic pursuits with the gathering of important scientific information, and/or with personal income-producing Siletz River "restoration" projects.

Appendices

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Memorandum

TO: Tom Downey, Jeff Gonor
FROM: Bob Zybach
RE: NAMS Siletz River Eel Study
DATE: June 20, 1991

MAPS: General Land Office (GLO) and Donation Land Claim (DLC) maps can be obtained from Portland BLM (Pat Pickens 503-280-7001) at about $2.00 each. They cover 36 square miles and include many landmark, homeowner, and creek names. The survey notes that accompany these maps can be obtained from the Lincoln County Surveyor (Tom Hamilton 503-265-6611 X 247) and can be obtained for the price of copying. These maps and notes, when combined with the 1890-93 Siletz allottment maps (see William Kent, 1973, The Siletz Indian reservation 1855-1900: p.33), provide an excellent historical basis for determining the locations of traditional fishing grounds, landmarks, creeks, and reservation families. The simplification of this information into a series of two or three 8 1/2 X 11 maps would provide an ideal basis for recording each of the oral interviews. They could also be used for formal reports and for substantiating traditional uses of the Siletz by Native American people.

INTERVIEWS: I would recommend that two people conduct each interview; Tom would ask the leading questions, maintain the conversation, and follow a brief, conversational outline as suggested below. An assistant would aid with the recording device, ask occasional follow-up questions, and monitor the checklist of specific questions.

I would assemble the conversational outline into the following format, and assemble the checklist into a similar, parallel framework:

I. TRIBAL ANCESTRY. What tribes is the informant descended from? What are tribal and family attitudes toward fish and eel runs? Where did they fish? Do they still fish together? Why or why not?

II. TRADITIONS. Is the informant aware of any legends or superstitions regarding sea-run trout, salmon, or eels? Where did they come from? Were any ceremonies enacted regarding these animals?

III. METHODOLOGIES. What times of year were salmon, eels, and trout caught? How were they caught? How did techniques change through time? How was the meat prepared? Do any family recipes exist?

IV. SPECIFICS. Physical characteristics: varieties, size, color, weight, etc. Locations: creeks, landmarks, homes, named fishing holes. Time: hours, days, months. Climatic events: 1921 droughth, 1931 Dust Storm, 1937 Snow, 1962 Columbus Day Storm, 1978 Freeze, other. Stream conditions: muddy/clear, warm/cold, logs/trees/brush, holes/riffles, etc. Human impacts: fishing, logging, agriculture, road building, other. Spawning: locations, numbers, methods, local stream conditions.

V. OPINIONS. Are populations different? Why? What can be done about this problem? What would you like to see happen? Why? Are projects like this important? Why or why not?

Once an interview has been completed (and arrangements made for a follow-up interview, if needed), I highly suggest that a duplicate of the recording be made and submitted to the Oregon Historical Society oral history librarian in Portland, along with copies of the signed release, interview notes, and subsequent transcriptions. Original materials should be stored with the tribe.

If transcriptions can be made by school children, so much the better. They can then be audited (checked against the recordings) and submitted to the interviewees (??) for further corrections, revisions, and additions. The final products should be of tremendous value to the tribe, as well as other individuals interested in Lincoln County and Oregon history, fish biologists and other scientists, and members of the local community.

Office Questions

I. Information on past locations and abundances of eels in streams on the reservation.

1. Did you ever fish for eels yourself? Did anyone in your family fish for eels?
   What other ways did you learn about eel fishing? Have you watched people hook eels?

2. Where were traditional eel fishing grounds located on the reservation?
   What were the original names for the streams and the places on them that you know were used for eel fishing?
   Can you locate these places on a map? Did your family have a special eel fishing area? Where?
   Do you know of any other eel fishing areas used by the same people every year?
   Was Rock Creek used for eel fishing? Where?

3. Do you know where the eels spawned? Can you locate spawning areas on a map?
   Have eel spawning areas changed over the years?

4. How do you think the abundance of eels has changed over the years?
   When was the last time you, your family or friends fished for eels? Where was this?
   Did the numbers of eels change from year to year in the past?
   When was the last time you know eels were abundant enough to fish?
   How many people have you seen fishing for eels at one time? When? Where? What date?

5. What were the stream conditions when runs were good and eels were abundant?
   In the past, when eels were abundant, was there a difference in trees and other vegetation overhanging streams, compared to now? What was the bottom like in eel run and spawning streams? Gravel? Sand? Mud? Leaves?
   Compare to today? What were water temperature and turbidity then?

II. Information on seasonality of eels on the reservation streams.

1. When in the year did eels first appear in streams on the reservation?

2. When was the main eel hooking season and how long did it last? How did people know it was eel season?

3. Was there more than one run or season for eels in reservation streams?

4. If there was more than one run, did the runs take place in all the streams that had eels?

5. If there was more than one run, what months did the different runs take place?

6. Do you know if there are any differences between eels of different runs?

7. What were the stream conditions during good runs? What was the bottom like?
   Water temperature? Turbidity? Water level? Did these change before runs?

8. Did you ever see eels spawning? Where? What were stream water conditions in spawning areas? Depth? Color?
   Bottom material -sand, gravel, mud? Were spawning grounds more shaded than other places?
   How long after an eel run appeared in a stream did spawning take place?
   Were fish or animals attracted to eel spawning areas?

III. **Information on the types of eels in reservation streams.**

1. Describe the eels that were fished - in size; color and general appearance.

2. Do you know if there were more than one kind of eel in reservation streams?

3. What types do you know about - how did they differ?

4. Some people distinguish between "sun" or day eels and "night" eels. What do you know about differences in color, size, behavior, time of activity between these two types?

5. What type of eels occurred in Rock Creek?

6. Were sun and night eels both found in all the streams on the reservation that had eels?

Office Questions (cont.)

7. Did sun and night eels always appear in the streams at the same time? Every year?

IV. **Information on other aquatic animals in eel streams.**

1. What other types of animals like fish, insects, snails, clams (mussels), and crayfish were abundant in streams that always had abundant eels in the past?
   Compare the past abundance of these animals to their abundance today.

2. Has the abundance of these other animals changed? When do you think these changes began?
   Did their abundance change at the same time and in the same places where eel abundances changed?

V.. **Information on traditional fishing methods.**

1. What were the signs that the eel fishing season was coming?
   What other things were happening or changing on the land and in the streams?
   Changes in weather, plants, in the moon, other animals?

2. Was eel fishing related to any other traditional spring activity, like salmon fishing?
   To any spring celebration?

3. Was eel fishing a group or family activity?
   What were your fishing experiences?

4. What were considered the best kind of eel fishing places? Shallow areas? Small waterfalls?
   Places where creeks entered the Siletz river?

5. What method did you use or see used to catch eels? Poles and hooks? By hand?
   Were traps ever used on the Siletz to catch eels?
   How were lanterns used at night?

6 Was there any day fishing for eels? Why was eel fishing done at night?
   Did anyone **catch** and eat "sun" eels? Why didn't some people eat "sun" eels?

7. About how much or many eels do you remember people getting at one time? Where and when was this?

8. How were eels prepared after they were caught? Smoked? Dried? Used fresh?

9. How were they cooked or prepared for eating.

VI. **Information on eel fishing today.**

1. What were the main reasons people fished eels? Tradition? As a major food? As a **delicacy?**
   For use in some traditional meals?

2. When was the **last** time anyone you know went eel fishing with success?

3. Are there any people fishing during the eel season of **this** year or in the last two years?

4. Why do you think that people are not eel fishing today?

5. Do you agree that the numbers of eels have declined?

6. What do you think has caused the decline in the numbers of eels?

7. If eels were abundant today, would you, your family or friends fish for them?

8. What is the importance of eel fishing to you, your family and friends?

Interview Questions

Questions For Interview

(1) How long have you lived in the Siletz area, and were you born here?

(2) In what area of the Siletz valley did you grow up in?

(3) How far back do you remember people fishing on the Siletz?

(4) Did you fish for eels yourself?

(5) Where were the traditional eel fishing grounds located on the Siletz River?

(6) Did your family have a special eel fishing area?

(7) What were the signs that the eels were going to run, and what time of the year?

(8) Describe the eels that were fished, color, size and general appearance.

(9) What were the stream conditions like when the eel runs were good in the past?

(10) Did you ever see or hook eels during the day?

(11) Why do you think that they would not hook eels during the day?

(12) What color was the day eels?

(13) Do you know where the eels spawned?

(14) How long did the eel runs last?

(15) How many people did you see hooking eels at one time in any one place?

(16) Do you know if they trapped eels on the Siletz?

(17) Was there more than one season or run of eels?

(18) What other types of animals like (fish, insects, snails, ciams, mussels) were abundant in the streams during this time when the eels ran in the past?

(19) Has the abundance of these other animals changed over the years?

(20) How were the eels prepared after they were caught?

(21) How did they fish for salmon on the Siletz in the past?

(22) Was there a lot of game on the Siletz at this time?

(23) What was it like growing up on the Siletz at this time?

(24) Why do you think there is a decline in the eels and other game on the Siletz River?

(25) What is the importance of eel fishing to you and your family and friends?

(26) Who else do you know that has hooked eels in the past or is hooking them now?

(27) If eels were abundant today , would you, your family or friends fish for them?

Native Americans in Marine Science

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Lamprey Fishery

Interviewer's Comments

Tape Number____

Narrator's Name_____ Date of Interview_____

Interview's observations about the interview setting, physical description of the narrator, comments on narrator's veracity, accuracy, and candid assessment of the historical value of the memoir.

Date_____ Interviewer's Name_____

Gift and Release Agreement

I,_____, agree to give and grant to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz as a donation for such research, educational and Tribal purposes as the Tribal Council shall determine, the following tape recording(s) and its (their) contents. This gift is unrestricted. As such, I understand that I am assigning to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz any literary rights or legal titles which I otherwise would possess to this (these) gifts(s).

This gift does not prohibit any personal use of the recording(s) or transcript(s) by myself, heirs, or assignees.

The following conditions may also apply:

_____

Signature

Date

_____

Interviewer

_____

REFERENCE NOTES:
Date of Interview

_____

Place of Interview

Follow-up Letter

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY, ST. ZIP

DATE

Dear NAME:

Thanks for helping with the eel project. As you know, I've recently resumed the work started by Tom and Darin last summer. The project is nearly completed and it is almost to the printing stage. Once again we are requesting assistance from everyone that was interviewed for the Siletz Eel Study.

Enclosed please find a copy of the transcript that we made from your interview. If you could please read it carefully and get back to me in the next week or so, I would really appreciate it. What I'm most interested in learning is:

1) Is there anything that you want left out or changed?

2) Is there anything else that you think is important that should be added?

3) What specifc dates do you relate to the decline in eel runs?

I'll be in touch soon. Thanks for all the help. We're learning a lot of things from this project that are of value to the tribe's history and culture, as well as being of substantial interest to the biological scientists at OSU.

Sincerely,

Annette Sondenaa
NAMS/Siletz Eel Study
Siletz Tribal Office
Siletz, Oregon
(503) 444-2532

Presentation Outline

Siletz Tribal Council Meeting
August 21, 1993

TOM DOWNEY PRESENTATION OUTLINE

A. Thank you for opportunity to present.

B. Summary of report history. Introduce Gonor.

C. Presentation of recordings and reports to council.

D. General Conclusions.

E. General Recommendations.

F. Teresa Miller press release update.

F.I.S.H. Education Program
July 10, 1995 "Siletz Meeting"
Siletz Tribal Community Center
Government Hill, Siletz, Oregon

Topic: Current Status of OSU/Siletz Tribal "Eels Study" Report
Statement of: Tom Downey, Siletz Tribal Member, Principal Investigator, OSU AISES/NAMS "Siletz Lamprey Eel Research Project"

The second phase of the "Siletz Eels Study" is coming to an official close in the next few months with the printing and distribution of *Skwakol:* The Decline of the Siletz Lamprey Eel Population During the 20th Century. The report is coauthored by Tom Downey, Darin Rilatos, and Annette Sondenaa, all members of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, and by Bob Zybach, former OSU AISES (non-Indian) member. It is the culmination of a four-year research project involving a partnership of Siletz tribal elders, other long-time Siletz Valley residents, Siletz tribal resource managers, the Oregon State University (OSU) Native Americans in Marine Sciences (NAMS) program, and the OSU chapter of American Indians in Science & Engineering Society (AISES).

The first phase of the study was formally completed on August 21, 1993, when "The Siletz Eels: Oral History Interviews with Siletz Tribal Elders and Other Lincoln County Residents Regarding the Decline in Siletz River Lamprey Populations" was jointly presented to the Siletz Tribal Council and to the nineteen elders and neighbors that had originally agreed to have their observations recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The first report was coauthored by the same four individuals as the present report, which is principally an expansion and refinement of our earlier findings. Significant additions to the report include a biological overview of Pacific lamprey eel life history by Angela Sondenaa, expanded historical and cultural overviews of the relationship between lamprey eels and Siletz peoples between 1828 and 1995, printed and digitized GIS computer-mappings of important Siletz Eel hooking locations, and an index of important Siletz family names, named locations, wildlife populations, and ecological conditions.

SILETZ EEL STUDY BACKGROUND

The new report is an historical accounting of the uses and abundance of lamprey eels by the peoples and families of the Siletz River Valley during the past 170 years, beginning with documented uses by Siletz Indian ancestors in southwestern Oregon and northwestern California in 1828. Historical, cultural and biological informaion for the twentieth century is focused on the descendents, neighbors, and elders of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of 1855-1995. The primary sources of information for this latter period were oral history recordings made with nineteen long-time residents of the Siletz Valley during the summer, 1991. A result of this limitation is that very little is known about "eel hooking" before 1920, although it can be reasonably assumed that eel harvesting has systematically and periodically occurred along the Siletz River and its tributaries for as many hundreds, or thousands, or tens of thousands, of years that human families and lamprey eel populations have coexisted in the Siletz Valley ecosystem.

This study could not have been completed without the support and cooperation of the nineteen Siletz area residents who originally agreed to be intrerviewed and recorded. Teresa Miller and Frank Simmons,

Siletz Tribal Natural Resources representatives, were instrumental in obtaining the assistance of OSU for funding and research assistance. Dr. Jefferson Gonor provided financial help and departmental expertise through the NAMS Program that he founded and administered for several years. Dr. Judith Vergun, current NAMS Director, is helping to coordinate the final printing and distribution of the report. Dr. Mack Barrington, OSU Rangeland Resources GIS lab and David Reinert, OSU College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences, have provided GIS, mapping, graphic reproduction, and production expertise. Support services and final printing costs have been assisted by contributions of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz. Grace Castle and Leonard Whitlow provided critical assistance in the location and evaluation of historical materials.

SILETZ EEL STUDY CONCLUSIONS

After a systematic consideration of the materials generated during research on this project, the report's authors were able to arrive at the foloowing conclusions:

1. At least one, probably two, and possibly three, species (or "kinds") of anadromous lamprey eels have periodically migrated along the Siletz River in large numbers during this century;

2. The hunting, gathering, cooking, trading, and eating of lamprey eels has been an important part of the cultural heritage of many native western Oregon families for over 170 years;

3. The hunting and gathering of lamprey eels at specific times and locations along the Siletz River has been an important part of the subsistence history of many Lincoln County families this century;

4. The local hunting and gathering of lamprey eels has had a measurable ecological impact on certain conditions of the Siletz River environment during this century;

5. Between 1981 and 1991 there was a dramatic decline in migrating lamprey eel populations along the Siletz River that may be linked to eel declines noted earlier this century;

6. The decline in Siletz lamprey eel populations may be linked to recently noted declines in other riverine species, including periwinkles, clams, freshwater mussels, crayfish, salamanders, salmon, trout, beaver, mink, otter, raccoon, wild cats, and bears;

7. The decline in Siletz lamprey eel populations may be linked to drought cycles;

8. The reported decline in local wildlife populations is of serious concern to many long-time residents of the Siletz River Valley.

SILETZ EEL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Four recommendations were originally submitted with the Siletz Council report on August 21, 1993:

1. That Downey and Zybach be authorized by the Siletz Tribal Council to develop additional documentation for the eel study;

2. That additional research and long-term monitoring of the Siletz River ecosystem is critically needed and that a partnership of investigating institutions and agencies—including the Confed-

erated Tribes of the Siletz, Oregon State University, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, Lincoln County, Oregon State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Oregon Water Resource Department—should be immediately formed to implement and fund these activities;

3. That the Rock Creek Fish Hatchery should be developed for the production of coastal lamprey eels, native trout, and other depleted aquatic wildlife;

4. That Clinton's Plan for Northwest Forests, calling for "new economic opportunities for year-around, high-wage, high-skill jobs," and for the "maintenance and/or restoration of spawning and rearing habitat on Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service lands to support recovery and maintenance of viable population of anandromous fish species and stocks considered "sensitive" or " at risk" by land management agencies. . ." give serious consideration for eel restoration efforts on the Siletz River, and that the Siletz community should be provided direct economic consideration for the development of jobs (particularly research, reconstruction, and monitoring jobs) for the accomplishedment of restoration efforts under the plan's guidelines.

To these four existing recommendations, we—the authors—would like to add two more at this time:

5. Permanent water quality monitoring stations should be immediately installed at all entrance points and exit points of Siletz River waters on Siletz Indian lands; and

6. Siletz area school children should be encouraged to combine academic pursuits with the gathering of important scientific information, and/or local income-producing "Habitat restoration" projects.

SUMMARY

The recently reported declines in Siletz lamprey eel populations is widely perceived as an important local issue with significant cultural, historical, biological, and ecological consequences. It has been the stated opinion of nearly every participant in the research process, including the report's authors, that immediate actions should be taken by a number of cooperating agencies to specifically address this problem.