

Our trip to Oregon - by John Losey

The trip to Oregon was fantastic! Kate Yates, mother of six-year-old superspotter Alyson Yates, called me as I was boarding the plane from San Francisco to Klamath Falls to say that they would love to collect with us and that they already had a nine-spot ladybug for us. When we arrived in Klamath we found out that the place we had planned to stay was



Eric Denmark in Oregon, 2009

actually an hour away from the "center of rare ladybug diversity" (aka Lakeview, Oregon) so they suggested we stay at a cabin/B&B just across the border in California. They also told us they had caught two more nine spots for us! It was already 6 pm by the time we left the airport and we headed into what is known locally as The Oregon Outback. The cabin turned out to be beautiful and the owners incredibly friendly and gracious hosts. While I prepared to make use of my comfortable bed Eric Denmark (my student and fellow adventurer) strapped on his head lamp and headed out to the alfalfa field behind the horse pasture and chicken coop. He came running back in a few minutes later. On his very first attempt he caught both a nine-spotted and a transverse ladybug (perhaps the second rarest in the US). An auspicious start and, although we collected hundreds of other ladybugs from that field, that was the only nine-spot we collected from that location.

The next morning we ate omelettes made from eggs still warm from the hens and then took the short drive up to collect with Alyson and her family. Alyson was a wonder. She was effervescent and loquacious, the opposite of her mom who is calm and quiet. Alyson is a great reader and her parents are both wildlife biologists. I don't think I'm exaggerating to say that she knows more about insects than most undergraduates. She was equally excited about every insect we found and she could correctly identify most of them. They already had several more nine spots for us and we collected a few more with them that day and the next. We also collected on at a organic wild plum orchard and winery which is worthy of a story on its own.



Alyson & Kate Yates Those mugs are full of ladybugs!

When we reluctantly left Oregon Friday evening we brought with us 13 nine-spotted ladybugs, over 30 transverse ladybugs, and several individuals of other rare species which are new to the Lost Ladybug Project. The nine-spotted ladybugs responded to the romance of air travel and they have laid over 100 eggs since we brought them back to the lab. Yesterday, the first clutch of eggs hatched and the little ones are beautiful. I think these may be the first nine-spotted ladybug larvae in NY in over 20 years



The plum orchard in the Oregon Outback where John and Eric collected ladybugs, 2009.



Alyson Yates and John Losey, 2009