Magic Mountie Vault: Bird Watching on the Mt. SAC Campus with Jared Burton Episode 118

00:00:02 **Christina**

Hi, welcome back, this is Christina. And today, in honor of Earth Month, we wanted to feature one of our favorite episodes from our nature series, hearkening back to the innocent days of 2019.

00:00:15 **Christina**

From the Magic Mountie vault here is Sun Ezzell and Jared Burton as they talk about birdwatching and the flora and fauna found on the Mt. SAC campus, enjoy.

00:00:31 **Jared**

The world was our library and its books were stones, leaves, grass, brooks, and the birds and animals that shared alike with us, the storms and blessings of the earth. To think of the natural environment around us as a library is a really interesting concept and metaphor, and broke me out of this idea that knowledge is just encased in text. There's something else that's out here that we can learn from.

00:01:02 **Voiceover**

Welcome to the Magic Mountie Podcast. This is a podcast that's dedicated to helping faculty and other college employees as they try and navigate the challenging fabric of serving students, especially at Mt. San Antonio college. But everyone's welcome.

00:01:19 **Sun**

Hi, it's Sun Ezzell with the Magic Mountie Podcast. We're back with another episode in our summer mini-series of our favorite nature spots on campus. In this episode, we'll go birdwatching with Jared Burton from the library and learn more about the flora and fauna at Mt. SAC.

00:01:34 **Sun**

We'll also have a chance to think about how the natural environment on campus is meaningful for students, the importance of vitamin N in all our lives, and how we as a campus community might explore the concept of the natural world as a library, and why - here's Jared?

00:01:52 **Jared**

My name is Jared Burton and I am a librarian here, recently tenured. My role on campus is to be a librarian. I work with faculty in different departments, including the earth sciences and music. I'm a liaison for those departments, as well as physics, engineering, also fashion. I work with the Perkins Grant, so I've worked with a lot of CTE faculty.

00:02:15 **Jared**

Yeah, and I also of course, work with students who are doing the STEP program and we still are this month, we're able to work with students for 30 minutes kind of showing them how the library can keep them on their path to completion.

00:02:27 **Sun**

You're busy.

00:02:28 **Jared**

Yeah, we stay busy. Definitely, one of the things that I enjoy about Mt. SAC is the natural environments we have. At least the landscaping and the plant life which supports a lot of biodiversity on campus. And some campuses don't have that. And so, we're really fortunate here to have it and not just because it's pretty and because ... it's also because it has a lot of benefits as it turns out, both psychologically and for learning and for education, for wellbeing.

00:03:02 **Jared**

And the more I think that we know this as faculty, the more we can incorporate those things into our instruction and into helping students to also realize the benefits that they have here on campus. We're standing outside the door of the library, just looking towards the Memorial fountain here. We're looking at the trees on the Free Speech area. CARE's corner, where the grass is.

00:03:25 **Jared**

And just standing here, I've already seen a couple of hummingbirds flying around. I wish I knew the names of these trees. That's one thing I need to figure out. And we can see some gopher holes over in the grass over there, probably much to the annoyance of some of our groundskeepers.

00:03:40 **Jared**

I like to walk from here on a quick break to get out of my office, which is windowless. And that's one of the things about the library. There's not enough, a lot of natural light, which is an unfortunate thing, because that does also show in studies to have a lot of benefits for studying and reading.

00:03:54 **Jared**

But I like to get out of my office, my windowless office, and take ... oh, see there's a black Phoebe over there. So maybe we'll head towards the black Phoebe, just cutting across the grass. So, I'm also a birdwatcher, not a competitive one like you've seen maybe jokes about. But definitely was raised in my early teens to appreciate birds. And I used to keep a list. I don't so much anymore.

00:04:18 **Jared**

When I first started here, I was keeping a list of the birds I'd see every year on campus, but I stopped for whatever reason. I'll probably pick it up again. I do just love to observe the birds and see what's out there because they tell us a lot about what is happening in the biodiversity on campus. Right now, I hear singing a Mockingbird and we're standing in the middle of the grass now, here. And I'm hearing hummingbirds to my right up in the tree.

00:04:44 **Jared**

And that black Phoebe flew off. But I've seen that black Phoebe actually ... oh, there it is. They're sitting on the bench there. You can see it's black on the back. And then if it turns around at all, it'll have the pale breast sort of halfway down. And these are actually related to flycatchers.

00:05:02 **Jared**

So, what they like to do is sit in one spot, and they just kind of hang out until they see something like it's doing now; it's flying, it's flying again, maybe just to reperch, but yeah, now it's around the music building and they like to catch little flies.

00:05:17 **Jared**

So, you'll see them, they'll be sitting, sitting, sitting, and then they'll kind of run out, catch something, and then come back to their perch. So, move away from the Phoebe heading towards building 9B, the student services center - I'm hearing ... these birds are called bushtits. And there they are. They're tiny little guys and they always travel in flocks and they're a feeding flock, and there's a couple there.

00:05:43 **Jared**

They kind of move together. I don't know how they know which way they're going to go, who's the leader. There's probably some science behind that. And there's a Kingbird flying over. The bushtits, they travel in flocks. And what's nice about them is that when they're moving around, they often bring with them other birds. Other birds will kind of travel with them. And they're basically just moving from tree to tree and gathering insects.

00:06:04 **Jared**

And that Kingbird that flew by actually, we've had a couple pairs of them on campus. And I recently saw them chasing a Cooper's hawk, which I think has a nest still over here in those sycamores, by Founders Hall and yeah, chasing them. Just getting them, I guess, probably away from their nest because those hawks eat other birds versus the red tails, which will eat the gophers and help out the groundskeepers.

00:06:27 **Jared**

And I like to walk over here towards the common grounds cafe. And one of the reasons I like to do this is to get out and walk and just kind of let my mind and my eyes wander up into the trees. If I've been in my email for a while, or been working on a workshop lesson plan, and coming out of a meeting or going to a meeting - to just kind of allow my brain to relax and kind of taking the benefits of the natural greenery.

00:06:55 **Jared**

And one person who's really great on campus, who has a lot of expertise in this is Lance Heard, the administration of justice professor in the public safety's programs. He specializes actually in nature-based stress reduction.

00:07:10 **Jared**

So, I usually take this path right here just to the west of the Mountie cafe coming up here. And they've got this landscaping that's just great. And as you walk up this ramp here, this is a great place to stand because you have a great vantage point of the trees to the south towards the instrumental music hall. And the Sophia B Clark Theater.

00:07:32 **Jared**

And this is just a good vantage point, because you're kind of standing behind a barrier where a lot of stuff will happen in the trees and you're almost at eye level with them, but you don't disturb it. You don't scare them off. There's a bird up there. I can't tell what it is yet.

00:07:49 **Jared**

And then this landscaping up here as we head towards the arts build area, the arts buildings, I think it really was well-thought-out and there's a lot of drought tolerance species. In fact, the sustainability tours highlight this area because of the sustainability of the drought-tolerant plants. Like this one, this tree is a palo verde, which means green stick in Spanish, approximately. And it is a native plant to this area and the southwest.

00:08:14 **Jared**

So, it's drought tolerant. It's also got this great green bark and the flowers are yellow and really pretty. And I see bees all over it when it's blooming. And I see hummingbirds love to perch in it. And if I had my phone with me right now, I would take a picture of it and use iNataturalist, which is an app that allows you to identify plants and insects, and animals if you can get a picture of them.

00:08:39 **Jared**

And one thing I think that's important too, is Lance Heard, again, talking about his work with nature-based stress reduction; his ideas, they're not just for faculty. It permeates the students as well. And he talks about nature sounds in the classroom, in the background, and how that stimulates a certain amount of calm and creativity.

00:08:59 **Jared**

And we have a butterfly here. I don't think it's a painted lady. Those were the ones that we had so many of. It looks like a Monarch, but it's so small. There's so much I don't know.

00:09:10 **Jared**

He also talks about having nature visuals in the background. So, flowing streams in classrooms during maybe the quiet time or group work or things like that. But I think that's really important because we have to remember that not all students may have the benefit of access to natural environments where they live. They may have never visited a State park. They may not have places to go in their neighborhood where they have access to nature.

00:09:34 **Jared**

It's important to remember that and that so when they come to Mt. SAC, they're actually experiencing something maybe vastly different than what they're used to. And it really has an effect on them, but then as they learn about how it can and be used as sort of a tool for their own wellbeing, that could be really beneficial.

00:09:52 **Jared**

And you can see how some students, you know, they, they react to the nature around them when they see a squirrel. It's always so funny when we see squirrels and they're like so ... it's a wild animal and it's there in their presence when it wants food from them and that can be really thrilling.

00:10:08 **Jared**

And it kind of is an example of how, when someone sees a natural being, whether it's a plant or an animal, and it inspires some curiosity in them and it inspires some kind of wonder in them. And I think that that's something to not just cast off as just funny, although squirrels can be pretty darn funny. It's a learning experience too.

00:10:28 **Jared**

For those of you listening, we're in the courtyard by 1B over in the arts area, and this is just a fabulous place. And sometimes you see the students sitting out here and drawing and doing that kind of thing. There's a student over there practicing his guitar.

00:10:40 **Jared**

Going back to kind of what we were talking about with students who may not have access to natural environments in their day - to - day lives, at least not in a way how Mt. SAC provides - there is this guy who wrote a book called Last Child in the Woods, and his name is Richard Louv. And he came up with these phrases, like nature deficit disorder, which is a lack of time outside, and how that can have detrimental effects on growth in terms of the mind and in terms of wellbeing. And then his antidote to that is this concept of vitamin N for nature, which is health benefits of spending time outside.

00:11:18 **Jared**

He also wrote a book called The Nature Principle, which was geared less towards the child development side of things, which is where the Last Child in the Wood focuses on. But also it focuses and builds on that in the Nature Principle and introduces a concept called the "hybrid mind." And in that he says, the more high-tech we become, the more nature we need.

00:11:41 **Jared**

And the goal is to "live simultaneously in both the digital and the physical world, using computers to maximize our powers to process intellectual data and natural environments to ignite all our senses to accelerate our ability, to learn and to feel."

00:11:53 **Jared**

We can have the real world guide us to better research and have our research guide us to a better world. And I think it's important to note that research can mean so many things. And part of the challenge is to determine what we mean by it, in context to our information seeking and information production in a given scenario.

00:12:12 **Jared**

And as a librarian, the question I ponder is how can we, meaning the Mt. SAC community of students, faculty, staff, and administration, learn to use our libraries' resources and all the rich information available to us there to be that point of connection between the real world and a better world.

00:12:33 **Voiceover**

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00:12:53 **Voiceover**

Remember any opinions that are expressed in this podcast do not necessarily represent Mt. San Antonio College or any of its agents. We'll see you next time.