

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Craig Rudolph, Ph.D.

INTERVIEWER: David Todd

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TRANSCRIBER: Trint, David Todd

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FILE:

RedCockadedWoodpecker_Rudolph_Craig_Oregon_2November2021_Reel4076_NoiseReduced
&SignalAmplified.mp3

Google Voice [00:00:01] This call is now being recorded.

David Todd [00:00:05] Well, David Todd here.

Craig Rudolph [00:00:08] It's working.

David Todd [00:00:09] Oh, good, good.

Craig Rudolph [00:00:11] Well, it was, when I hit speaker, a little screen comes up and maybe the setting got changed or something, but the choices were phone, speaker and. So I hit speaker a second time in that, in that little screen, and it actually turned the speaker on.

David Todd [00:00:31] Oh okay.

Craig Rudolph [00:00:32] I don't know. I wasn't aware of that before, but whatever.

David Todd [00:00:36] You know, these phones are like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. I mean they've got so many buttons.

Craig Rudolph [00:00:43] Obviously, you know well, by now, I don't know what I'm doing.

David Todd [00:00:49] No, you're good.

Craig Rudolph [00:00:49] Anyway, I've got a good signal here, so we should be good.

David Todd [00:00:53] OK. Well, you know the drill. Let me launch, if you don't mind.

Craig Rudolph [00:00:59] Well, I do have one question.

David Todd [00:01:02] Yes, of course.

Craig Rudolph [00:01:03] How far through this narrative are we eating to re-record? I forgot from last time.

David Todd [00:01:10] Well, so, I think that we have a good recording, starting with your discussion about the Theory of Island Biogeography. But before that...

Craig Rudolph [00:01:26] So, the question, we've got the question, "Is there a book or movie that was especially influential?"

David Todd [00:01:33] Yeah. Uh-Huh.

Craig Rudolph [00:01:34] We've got that.

David Todd [00:01:35] Yes.

Craig Rudolph [00:01:37] So we basically just need to do the first three questions, I guess, a bit.

David Todd [00:01:43] I think so, yeah. Childhood, and schooling and so on. Yeah.

Craig Rudolph [00:01:48] And higher education, and then we're done.

David Todd [00:01:50] Right. And I just, if you don't mind, I'd like to tack on this introduction in the beginning.

Craig Rudolph [00:01:57] Oh, yeah, yeah, of course.

David Todd [00:01:58] Okay. Well, yeah, that should cover it. So I think that 10 or 15 minutes, if you can spare that, we'll be all done.

Craig Rudolph [00:02:06] Oh, I've got all the time we need. I mean if we have to redo it after the first run, we can do that. I got plenty of time.

David Todd [00:02:13] Okay. Well, super. Well, let me let me begin, and I'll give a little introduction and then we can start with questions and wrap up shortly after that.

David Todd [00:02:25] Okay. All right. Oh. Well, my name is David Todd, and I'm on the line with Dr. Craig Rudolph. And together we plan on recording this oral history interview for research and educational work on behalf of a nonprofit group called the Conservation History Association of Texas, and for a book and a website for Texas A&M University Press, and then for preservation and an archive at the Briscoe Center for American History, which is located at the University of Texas at Austin. And Dr. Rudolph would, of course, have all rights to use the recording as he sees fit as well. And I just want to make sure that I was okay with him.

Craig Rudolph [00:03:13] Yeah, that's fine.

David Todd [00:03:14] Super. Okay, well, let's get started. It is November 2nd, 2021. It's about five o'clock Central Time and again my name is David Todd. I'm in Austin. We are conducting an interview with Dr. Craig Rudolph, who is, I think, currently in a secure, undisclosed location in Oregon. And this interview is being done remotely.

David Todd [00:03:45] Dr. Rudolph is a former research ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Research Station in Nacogdoches, Texas. In that capacity, he's had a long interest and research career with the red-cockaded woodpecker. And today we're going to ask a few questions about his background, his life and career in wildlife conservation.

David Todd [00:04:10] And the first question I wanted to ask is if there might have been any early events in your life that influenced your interest in natural history and science.

Craig Rudolph [00:04:24] Yeah, most definitely. I had developed an early interest in butterflies around the age of perhaps four or five, and my father encouraged this interest and over quite a number of years, we spent many days throughout California collecting and ultimately mounting butterflies. And this went on really until I entered college. So that was a major influence, I think, in starting me on the path to a biology career.

Craig Rudolph [00:04:58] And then growing up in Southern California, where chaparral dominated the landscape, and chaparral burns relatively frequently, I was frequently exposed to the effects of fire on the natural environment. And observing the flush of herbaceous vegetation and the tremendous response of animals, butterflies in particular, following fires, prepared me to recognize the critical role of fires in natural ecosystems. I'm not sure I recognized it at that time, but as I got older and got further along in my education, that, that really, I think made me accepting of those sorts of views.

David Todd [00:05:41] That's interesting, that some of those early exposures can really prep you to see things maybe more clearly and strongly as you get older.

David Todd [00:05:53] So during your more formal schooling, did you have any classmates or teachers, anybody in school, or college, or grad school, who might have been influential in setting you on this path to science and ecology and work in conservation field?

Craig Rudolph [00:06:18] Yeah, I think there were probably many, but looking back to high school, I think there was one type of influence that was pretty influential. I was very fortunate to have two teachers, one in algebra and another in geometry, that exposed me to the world of mathematics. And that kind of opened up an appreciation of how the world works, that there were underlying principles, not just a random collection of unrelated bits of information. And that made the universe a much more interesting place, and I think probably drew me to biology as a lifelong pursuit.

Craig Rudolph [00:07:00] And, sort of coincidentally, this occurred during a period when ecological theory was being extensively used to explore ecological principles, applying mathematical concepts to ecology theory and. Consequently, I had some fundamental grasp of math skills that really served me well in trying to understand where ecology was going and ecological theory was going. So I think that kind of paved the way a bit for being able to really appreciate what was going on in ecological research.

David Todd [00:07:48] Okay, so you're telling us a little bit about your high school introduction to some of these principles that stood you in good stead in the years to come.

David Todd [00:07:59] I was hoping that you might tell us next about your experience in higher education, in college and graduate school. Were there possibly any important influences during that period?

Craig Rudolph [00:08:14] Yes, I received my undergraduate education, and a master's degree, from the University of California, Santa Barbara. And this was in the mid '60s. And the biology department at UC-SB at that time was a very strong department, possibly the largest department on campus, and very active in ecology in particular. And this was influenced in a major way by one of the faculty members, Joe Connell, who was an extremely influential ecologist at that period of time. He worked extensively in intertidal habitats, of which the campus had many. We had about a mile of coastline and, the university had about a mile

coastline, and he was an early advocate of field manipulation, using rigorous experimental approaches. And I think that had a kind of a major influence on my work going forward.

Craig Rudolph [00:09:17] And equally important was the charismatic field biologist Bob Haller. And although I was a teenager, I took quite a number of botany classes, several from, from Dr. Haller. And that gave me, I think, insights into ecological relationships that I would have otherwise overlooked. Having some grounding in botany, even though I was a zoologist, basically, because it's all tied together in ecology, so I think that was very important.

Craig Rudolph [00:09:49] Subsequently, I obtained a Ph.D. from Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. And my major professor was Robert Mitchell. He was an invertebrate zoologist working extensively on cave faunas in Mexico and in Texas. And I had developed an interest in cave organisms during a time spent in the Ozarks in northeastern Oklahoma after my time at UC-SB. And ultimately, I did my dissertation research on salamanders associated with caves in the Oklahoma Ozarks. And I think those were kind of the major threads that guided me through my graduate studies.

David Todd [00:10:36] Well, that is really helpful. I know this is just skimming the surface, but it gives a nice background to work that you did in the years to come, which we fortunately have gotten the chance to talk about earlier. So I wouldn't want to waste your time, but if there's anything else you'd like to add while we're on the line, we would love to hear.

Craig Rudolph [00:11:03] No, I think we've pretty well covered it. Yeah, I don't think there's anything additional.

David Todd [00:11:12] Okay, well, conciseness is a virtue. And thank you so much for your time today. It's always a pleasure to talk to you and thanks a bunch for being so steadfast in helping us.

Craig Rudolph [00:11:26] Oh certainly. I enjoyed it.

David Todd [00:11:28] All right. Well, take care of yourself. I hope we get to talk again soon.

Craig Rudolph [00:11:35] I do, too.

Craig Rudolph [00:11:36] All right. Bye now.