

Anecdotes about Loren Eiseley

By Morrie Tuttle

At the October board meeting of the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association, I presented the facsimile of the fossil artifact popularly known from the Eiseley poem as the “Innocent Assassin,” this being something the young Loren Eiseley had recovered from Wild Cat Hills in 1932. The artifact is the result of a 25-million-year-old cat fight, when one now-extinct wild cat in contest with another had bitten into the leg bone of the other cat, and the two of them then being stuck together had died in place. The resulting

fossil is the skull of the one cat with its teeth buried in the leg bone of the other.

Eiseley had been sent out there that summer by the University State Museum as part of a fossil-hunting expedition, when he was a student, as a member of the museum’s Old South Party. The facsimile, created by a 3D printing process, is an exact replica of the fossil that Eiseley had found. Another exact replica of the fossil is at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center, which is near the site of the discovery. The original fossil is a prized artifact held in the collection of the Uni-

versity of Nebraska State Museum (Morrill Hall).

This fossil copy has now become an item in the collection of the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors, which holds an extensive archive of Eiseley materials and is a part of the Lincoln City Library system. A major feature of the Heritage Room’s Eiseley archive is all the extensive notes and research materials collected by Gale Christianson, which then became the basis for his biography of Dr. Eiseley, *A Fox at the Wood’s Edge*.

A Community Reading from the Works of Loren Eiseley to Commemorate His 112th Birthday

Sunday, September 8, 2019
2:00–3:30 p.m.
Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors at the Bennett Martin Public Library
136 S. 14th St., Lincoln
Free and open to all

Info: tplynch@gmail.com

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the Peter Kiewit Foundation. [A Teachers Guide](#) has been written and is being continuously expanded. Please refer to it on our website, along with the [Lauritzen Gardens guide](#) for schools showing how to create a “sunflower forest” program. We welcome lesson contributions to increase the number of offerings to the K-12 school space. Check out our [Curriculum Guides](#) page for more details.

2019 Plans

In addition to our ongoing educational efforts, we are seeking funding support to bring artist Marti Reed to Nebraska to showcase her Eiseley-inspired paintings for a public exhibition either in Omaha at the Kaneko Art Center or in Lincoln. Her paintings can be viewed at [Marti Reed: The Loren Eiseley Series](#). Please contact Bing Chen for more information: bchen@eiseley.org.

The Caravan

Newsletter of the Loren Eiseley Society



Tom Lynch and Emily Rau discussing “Loren Eiseley’s Nebraska” for the Science Cafe Program.

President’s Letter

By Dr. Bing Chen

The Loren Eiseley Society has had an active year in its educational outreach activities, including completion of the “Eiseley’s Nebraska Storymap,” the Sunflower

Forest project for elementary schools, submission of *The Immense Journey* as a candidate for the One Book One Nebraska competition, and our annual Eiseley’s birthday reading. Our goal is to expose Loren Eise-

ley’s prose and wisdom to the public with an emphasis on young readers.

We also decided to eliminate our formal memberships and instead to solicit donations.

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Eiseley Society board member Chris Dando reading at the Eiseley birthday event.

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If you would like to support any of our efforts, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the [Loren Eiseley Society](#).

Teaching Young People

Ray Bradbury, who was an early Eiseley fan, encouraged Eiseley to become a serious writer. Before his death, Bradbury encouraged the Society to introduce Eiseley to the

next generation of readers. Our intention is to extend our efforts into this next generation with our Teachers Guide and to collaborate with other educational groups such as Prairie STEM and Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha. We encourage you to support our outreach efforts by adding to our lessons in the Teachers Guide or working with schools where you live to share Eiseley lessons.

Eiseley's Nebraska Storymap

Professor Tom Lynch (English Department of the University of Nebraska) along with Emily Rau (graduate student and associate editor of the Willa Cather Archives) completed a groundbreaking digital project, "[Loren Eiseley's Nebraska](#)," that creates a storymap of Nebraska based on Eiseley's childhood

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experiences in Lincoln and his college years at archaeological digs in western Nebraska.

Many of those who have discovered the beauty of Eiseley's hidden essay style are not familiar with his Nebraska roots. This project showcases the places that would influence his written work to provide a visual context. This is especially helpful for international readers who have come to appreciate Eiseley's work but who are not familiar with the Nebraska that nurtured his future genius as a nature writer.

The project was funded by

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For membership and
event information, visit
www.eiseley.org or follow
us on [Facebook](#).

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Loren Eiseley Society

the Loren Eiseley Society and Humanities Nebraska, with additional support from the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

We organized two events for this project. The first was a "launch" of the website in April, hosted by Francie & Finch Bookshop in Lincoln. The second was a presentation for the Science Cafe program of the University of Nebraska State Museum. This was especially appropriate since as a youth Eiseley spent many hours in the Museum, and later during his college days worked for the Museum as part of the South Party conducting paleontological explorations in western Nebraska.

Eiseley's Birthday Reading

We have continued our tradition of hosting a reading of Eiseley's poetry and prose during September, his birthday month. Last year's reading was held September 22, 2018, hosted at my home in Omaha, and was attended by about 15 people.

Fossil Freeway and Wildcat Hills Nature Center

One of our board members, Ray Boice, has been the architect of the [Fossil Freeway](#) and

has been instrumental in the creation of the [Wildcat Hills Nature Center](#) in western Nebraska, where Eiseley spent much of his college years.

Noted paleo-artist Jan Vriesen's painting *The Innocent Assassins*, inspired by Eiseley's poem about the finding of a *Nimravus brachyops* (often but erroneously called a sabertooth cat) is on display at the Nature Center. It was produced with the guidance of paleo-botanist Kirk Johnson.

Visitors traveling across Nebraska are encouraged to visit the Fossil Freeway by taking the Kimball exit along Interstate 80 and going north on Highway 71 into the Wildcat Hills.

The Loren Eiseley Reader

We have copies remaining of *The Loren Eiseley Reader*, which are available for purchase for \$26.95. The book is a specially chosen collection of Eiseley's most famous essays. With an introduction by Ray Bradbury, the *Reader* is divided into three sections: Reflections of a Naturalist, Reflections of a Writer, and Reflections of a Wanderer. A copy of the *Reader* was given to every Nebraska public school and library, an effort made possible by generous donors Hod Kosman and