

June 17 2025 Guest speaker



John Straley – “Crime, Climate and the Birds in the Sky”

Learn how to build the enduring world of a crime series by exploring how geography and climate shape crime narratives, and discover techniques for transforming close observations of a place into rich, immersive fiction.

John Straley has published twenty books. He is best known for his crime writing but has also published non-fiction and poetry. He has authored thirteen previous crime novels, including the *Cecil Younger Investigations* and the *Cold*

Storage novels, two series both set in Alaska. John has won a Shamus Award and a Spotted Owl, and his books have been featured on CBS Sunday Morning and on *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross. He has worked professionally as a wilderness guide, a horseshoer, and for thirty years as a private investigator in Alaska.

John Straley graduated from the Browning School for Boys in New York City in 1971. On his way to earning degrees in literature from the University of Washington, John worked summers in the wilderness of north central Washington State as a wrangler, horseshoer, mill worker, and trail crew foreman.

John married Janice (Morrison) Straley - now a prominent marine biologist - and her work took them to Sitka, Alaska where John became a private investigator and wrote *The Woman Who Married a Bear*, the first in the Cecil Younger series, published in 1992. In the years since, John continued the Cecil Younger series, has written four books in the Cold Storage, Alaska series, and has published five books of poetry. He won the best first mystery Shamus award and the Spotted Owl award for the best northwest mystery, was appointed Writer Laureate of Alaska in 2006, and was awarded an honorary PhD from the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

In 2017, John retired from the Alaska Public Defender Agency. In October 2022, he and Jan moved to Carmel, California, to be closer to family. After more than 40 years in Sitka, John remains an Alaskan at heart. His latest novel was a stand-alone entitled “Big Breath In” published in November 2023 by Soho Press.