



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

JANUARY 1990

DONATIONS HIGH IN DECEMBER

Donations, including a number of memorials, came to a big \$4,412.25 for December. Expenses amounted to \$272.09. Listed below are those who contributed money, recyclables and/or services and have given permission to be listed here. If we missed you, please let us know at 926-7949.

James C. Banta, Kathryn Bernard, D.E. Chilberg, Lyndall Cook, Ruth/Cecil Cunningham, Verna Dolphin, Reese Ennesh, Margaret M. Fellows, Helen Ferguson, Dr. W.A. Fernau Jr., Dr. George W. Girvin, Scott B. Grimmett, Louise/Tollif Hance, Evelyn/Russ Harmon, Dorothy Hartung, Millicent Havlick, Angus C. Hay, Dr. R. Steven Heaps, Ivy/Ken Hendrix, Blanche/Mel Holsten, Mary Holz, LeRoy E. Hook, Betty Hughes, Jean Koch, Alfreda Krause, Marion E. Krauss, Donald L. Larson, Kim Urich Larson, Patrick S. Lettenmaier, Ralph P. Lorer, Janice Mahoney, Jack/Alice Malone, Bernadine McClincy, W. Frank Menzel, Leo J. Middendorf, Nikki M. Myron, Gloria M. Nicol, Lonnie V. Roe, Tom Rogers, Dennis L. Sanders, Ruby H. Smith, Spokane Mushroom Club, Spokane Retired Teachers Assoc., Helen Stowell, Larry Thiewan, Jane Van Meter, Clara C. Wardrop, Leona Widner, Jeanne H. Wilson, Donald Woodke and Mary L. Wright. Many thanks!

At our annual meeting to elect officers and directors all those whose terms expire were reelected. The possibility of adding more needed land to the natural area was explored. How to stop the vandalism and damage was discussed. Clearly we need fencing at crucial places to keep out motor vehicles. Reportedly there are county and Department of Natural Resources funds to do so. Also it is becoming more apparent that we need a ranger to patrol the area, for human-caused fires, tree-cutting and building of "hideouts" continue to damage the area. Signs at entrances are also needed, to discourage these activities. We expect our association to assume part of the cost. Thus we see the need for continued donations. Please keep on sending what you can.

We were honored at our meeting by the presence of Elizabeth Carlson, who has moved here from Coulee Dam. She fought tirelessly for the protection of the unique Steamboat Rock in the Grand Coulee. Looking like just a basalt monolith, in reality it supports on its nearly level top a beautiful but fragile expanse of wildflowers and native grasses. Horse riders wanted a trail to be blasted up the steep south end so they could get up onto the rock, but she opposed this, instead suggesting they use Northrup Canyon close by, where they could ride without doing damage. They are doing it.

We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving some of the natural areas of the Spokane area for people to enjoy and learn from.

President: Larry Thiewan Secretary: Helen Lininger
Vice-President: Tom Rogers Treasurer: David Lentz
Board members (in addition to officers): Doris Allgood, Gary Brewster, Omar Carroll, Margaret Haggin, Francis Potter, June Potter, and Ray Staley.

Our monthly meetings this winter will be at Riverview Terrace Retirement Apartments, E. 1801 Upriver Drive, the third Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. You are cordially invited.

BIRDS VERSUS BUTTERFLIES?

Is there a relationship between red-breasted nuthatch numbers and the numbers of the pine white butterflies that were so abundant last August? Data gathered over the last fifteen years in the Dishman Hills suggest just that. Winter censuses of the bird show that its population rises and falls every two to four years while that of the butterfly does likewise but on a more irregular pattern. There is the suggestion, however, that the butterfly's numbers may increase because of decreasing numbers of the nuthatch in previous winters. The birds feed not only on pine seeds but also on insects gleaned from the trunks of the pines. The butterflies pupate on the trunks in summer and presumably spend the winter as either eggs or young on the trees. Thus they are vulnerable. The last two winters have seen very low nuthatch numbers and the two following summers, extremely large swarms of the insects. This winter's censuses are finding very high numbers of the birds, suggesting that their food supply was plentiful because of the butterflies. It also suggests that next year's pine white population may be lower due to more predation by the birds. But we will have to wait until late July and August to see if this happens.

Pine whites seldom have been reported as doing significant damage to trees but the potential is there. It may very well be that the nuthatches are an important control on these insects. But for the birds to maintain effective numbers they need snags in which they can excavate nesting holes. Barring that, they will nest in boxes made for them. At present there are very few snags in the Dishman Hills, since the area was logged in the early part of the century and supports a relatively young forest. Presumably many of the wintering birds move in from nearby woods where more snags are available. Another factor may be important: There apparently is a minimum size of pine forest necessary to support a nuthatch population. Small, isolated groves seem not able to provide enough feeding habitat for the birds to supply hungry nestlings.

A precedent for this theory is the figures for rabbit and lynx populations in Canada. Increase in the rabbit population was followed by a similar increase in lynx numbers. When rabbit numbers plummeted, so did lynx numbers, since rabbits are the principal prey of the lynx. There was always a lag in predator numbers, however, since rabbits reproduce faster than lynx.

Please use this form when sending contributions
(Contributions are income tax deductible)
Account No.

\$ _____ Land purchase fund

\$ _____ Memorial for _____

\$ _____ Annual Dues (\$10) New? Renewal?

\$ _____ Student or Living Lightly (\$5)

\$ _____ To cover bulletin expense (\$2)

Check here if you do NOT want your name listed as a donor.

Please make checks payable to Dishman Hills Natural Area Association and mail to the Treasurer, P.O. Box 14141, Spokane, WA 99214-0141. Many thanks!