



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

JANUARY 1992

WHAT USES FOR THE HILLS?

A recent newspaper article indicated that public input will be sought regarding the uses to be permitted in the Dishman Hill Natural Area. It pointed out, however, that there are four owners involved: our Dishman Natural Area Association, which started the whole process of saving the area; The Nature Conservancy; Spokane County, and the Department of Natural Resources. The DNR took a leading role in management by designating the area as the "Dishman Hills Natural Resources Conservation Area" and setting up a committee made up of members of the various owners plus a few citizens at large, to advise on how to manage the area.

The spokesman for the DNR has said that the first priority is the "protection of the resource." We believe that this should mean careful use by visitors on foot. It is not such a large area that it cannot be seen in this way. Both our organization and The Nature Conservancy have the policy of excluding vehicles, horses and dogs from our portions of the preserve, as we believe they interfere with the "protection of the resource." Furthermore we believe that the entire area should have uniform rules governing use, since enforcing different rules for different ownerships would be difficult if not impossible.

The Dishman Hills Project was started with the idea that the area would be a nature preserve, not the "recreation area" which it seems to have become, where almost anything goes. A highway map of the Spokane area labelled, without authorization, the Dishman Hills as a "recreation area."

While the use of our association's and The Nature Conservancy's land cannot be dictated by anyone else, the county's and the DNR's land apparently is "up for grabs." We stand for the most complete protection possible for the entire natural area and will need your support to oppose harmful uses.

Due to lack of space, the listing of December contributors will be postponed until the next bulletin but our thanks to you now. Omitted from the last bulletin for the same reason were these people: Lyndall Cook, Virginia Danke, James & Jane Kirk, Karl Krogue and Shirley Wihlborg. Thanks and our apologies!

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: Lawrence Thieman Secretary: Helen Lininger
Vice-President: Tom Rogers Treasurer: David Lentes
Board Members (in addition to officers): Doris Allgood,
Omar Carroll, Margaret Haggin, Francis Potter, June Potter
and Ray Staley.

Our monthly meetings starting in October and continuing until Spring will be at Opportunity Elementary School, 1109 South Wilbur the third Monday at 7 P.M. You are cordially invited.

THE WINTER THAT WASN'T?

In the Valley, at least. Whether the season is El Nino, the warm ocean current off the coast of central American and California, or the greenhouse effect, or just one of the quirks of weather common to our area, we don't know. Most people, except for some of us oddballs who remember childhood fun in the snow, probably are happy that the snow has stayed elsewhere. Skiers no doubt revel in it. Wheat farmers probably are wishing for more.

It should be a relatively easy winter for wildlife, with mild temperatures as well. Just locally the Spokane Valley's part of the Audubon Society's Christmas bird count came up with forty species, about as high as any year and the total number of birds was close to the highest ever, despite the complete absence of Bohemian Waxwings. Robins helped to fill the gap however, with 533 counted. House Finches came in second with 425, House Sparrows next with 390, Mallards with 315, Starlings with 246, Rock Doves (pigeons) with 128 and juncos with 107.

Conversely, Dishman Hills Natural Area seems to have very few birds so far this winter: an occasional raven and flicker and once a flock of robins. Virtually no pine or fir seeds may explain the absence of crossbills and nuthatches, while the lack of snow would explain the presence of the robins and flickers, since they mostly feed on the ground.

We have no information yet on the total Christmas count for the Spokane area (a count circle 15 miles in diameter centering on Division and Francis.)

Whether there will be enough snow to supply the region's needs next summer will depend upon the snow depth in the mountains. If it's low we could be in for a long, hot, dry summer. But meanwhile let's look forward to buttercups before long!

Our annual meeting for the election of directors and officers is postponed until the fourth Monday of January because Martin Luther King's birthday is a legal holiday. We urge you to attend, at Opportunity Elementary at 7 p.m. on south Wilbur Rd. in the Valley.

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