



b, June Primeau

# Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, December, 1997

## GETTING THROUGH THE WINTER

Now that winter is here, we humans have different feelings. Skiers rejoice, drivers complain, and children build snow forts. For wild creatures it's not all that easy. Most of the summer birds have left, only a few hardy species remain. Crows and ravens scavenge for food. Pigeons, mourning doves, house sparrows, house finches, a few song sparrows, and flocks of quail depend largely upon food at feeders. Little hawks watch crossbills, woodpeckers, flickers, and the occasional brown creepers hunting diligently in the forest for insects. Ruffed grouse feed upon aspen buds and any berries they can find. On rivers and ponds ducks welcome handouts. Herons and Kingfishers prey upon small fish. Winter visitors are almost sure to soon arrive. Waxwings will be gorging on mountain ash berries, competing with a few robins that have decided to brave the winter. Red crossbills may descend from the mountains, feeding on conifer seeds. Redpolls sometimes appear from the far North to eat the seeds of the birch and alders. Also from the North may be an occasional roughlegged hawk, joining with wintering red-tailed hawks in search of mice.

Deer and elk find it tough going, especially in the deep snow, when they browse upon brush twigs. Snowshoe rabbits subsist on the bark of shrubs. Red squirrels depend on their caches of pine nuts, and chipmunks wake occasionally for snacks of stored food. Coyotes hunt for mice and any other animal they can catch, but often go hungry. Weasels also are looking for mice. Pine martins chase squirrels through the tree branches. Skunks remain active, searching out mice and welcoming carrion. An occasional cougar not Rose Bowl bound stalks deer, and bobcats hunt rabbits and mice.

## ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving natural areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton at 747-8147 for any questions. We have our monthly meetings at Opportunity Elementary School, South 1109 Wilbur, the third Tuesday of the month at 7PM, You are cordially invited.

We thank the following November donors who have given permission to be listed here: Laura Ackerman, Carolyn Boatsman, Helen Cook, Robert Damon, Virginia Danke, Kathryn Henderson, Beverly Hinton, Sandra Hollar, Gail Lambert, Helen Lininger, Janice Mahoney, Mrs. Wm. F. Marchand, Margie Middendorf, Marilyn Miller, John O'Brien, Jill Pestrin, Francis/June Potter, Tom Rogers, Iris Scheel, Shirley Skinner, Mary Sullivan, Florence Thayer, Clodall Wilson, Jeanne H. Wilson, Hershel Zellman, and four anonymous donors. **Again many thanks.**

## TAKE A HIKE!

We do it every day of our lives. It's sport, transportation, work, pastime, and it's what we do a lot of in the Dishman Hills; walking. Our society has devoted great amounts of time and energy to eliminate walking, and we have been conditioned to go to lengths to avoid this slow, demeaning, and humbling experience. While this is probably our most primitive form of transportation, it is the most suitable choice for our natural area for several reasons. First, we feel that a walking gait is just the right speed to travel through such a beautiful natural setting. One should leave behind all the contraptions of our everyday lives, shed the pager, turn off the Walkman, park the bicycle, and leave it all at the parking lot to meet nature head on in the simplest way possible. The Hills are for us all to experience, enjoy, and learn from in a passive way. It is not a race track, pet run, obstacle course, or sport field. Secondly, the Association is dedicated to preserving the Hills in as natural condition as possible, and walking is a low impact means for people to experience the area. If people hike only on the trails and obey the rules, we feel that the Hills can be maintained as a beautiful place forever. So get out there, and get walking!

## MISCELLANEOUS

How about some articles from you readers about what the Dishman Hills has meant to you over the years. Send comments to, Michael Hamilton at 3415 S. Lincoln Dr., Spokane, WA 99203. The hawk mentioned in the November bulletin was a "sharp shinned", not a "sharp-skinned". Birders no doubt were disturbed.

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