

# LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the  
Dishman Hills

April 2004

## SOUND MANAGEMENT

In this day and age of diverse conservation efforts, there is a new field gaining attention, the preservation of natural soundscapes. Many involved in this new effort wish more people would listen as well look at nature. As with other conservation concerns, soundscapes are being endangered by human pollution, in this case noise. Natural sounds are not only important for the enjoyment by visitors to natural space but are important to a healthy ecosystem, too. For example, animals use sound to communicate with others, find mates, and locate their offspring. Certain animals use sound to locate prey, and others to avoid predators. There is even a word to describe the combined sound that living organisms produce in a given habitat, "biophony".

Part of this new wave of interest involves new activities such as sound surveys and sound tours. Soundscape recordings have been popular for the last 15 years and we have enjoyed a multitude of audio experiences from waves and waterfalls to whales and wipperwills. Now, people are concerned with conservation of these soundscapes. There is a movement to define a community soundscape in which we live. The National Park Service has embarked on sound surveys to document the normal range of noises in National Parks. They're recording sounds in undisturbed places and assembling a database of sound levels and frequencies to use in the development of new rules and procedures for future management of these areas. The NPS recommends these 10 ways to enjoy natural sound.

- 1) Stop. Listen to what's around you. Close your eyes. Do you hear other sounds?
- 2) Close your eyes. Lift a finger for each sound you hear; left hand for natural sounds and right for human-made sounds. Which type reaches five first?
- 3) Walk and listen. Do you hear your footsteps? Do you hear your cloths rustle? Can you walk without making any sound?
- 4) Take a moment to hear one sound around you. Use your finger to draw the sound in the air.
- 5) What is the most beautiful sound you hear? What is the ugliest?
- 6) Try to hear the wind blowing through different plants.
- 7) Find a stream or waterfall and listen carefully with eyes shut until the sound separates into single notes.
- 8) How does the shape of the land affect the way that sound travels to your ear? Where is the source of each sound? Are there any echoes? What is the closest?
- 9) Walk as though a predator were after you. Walk as though you are a predator.
- 10) Listen for an animal. Can you make its sound and communicate with it?

Extra activities:

Keep a tally of every kind of sound you hear on your walk.

Find a sound that you like. How would you spell that sound on paper

Can you hear animal movement in a bush or a tree. Guess on its size.

Develop some silent hand signals to communicate with others.

*Near nature, near perfect*

Spokane Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Dishman Hills has a full spectrum of sound issues and opportunities. While we haven't done any sound surveying, many have noticed a large variety of natural and human sounds in area. Often comments are made about the quietness, but after awhile one begins to pick up a variety of small sounds. Wind, for instance, sounds very different in the pine trees than in the broadleaf trees, and the forest makes some very interesting audio events by moving tree trunks and causing cones to fall. Some people use the variety of human sounds to navigate with distinctive sounds coming from different directions of the compass. All in all, it is good to get our ears out there to add another dimension in the experience of natural space.

## HIKE A SUCCESS

The annual Buttercup hike was a great success with attendance at about 40 people. Flowers were out in full force, and we even found a buttercup or two. The group headed up Eagle Peak for the wonderful 360 degree view despite stormy skies and cool temperatures. It was noticed that places along the trail that are usually wet this time of year are already dry, foretelling continued draught and a tough fire season. An Association crew has removed all the deadfall on trails. Thanks to Doug Donally. It is best to get this stuff taken care of early before new trails develop around them.

## ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have any questions. We meet every other month on the third Tuesday at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur, in the teacher's lounge, 7pm. Our next meeting will be May 18.

The following are our March donors that have consented to be listed: Pat Bliss, Alan & Velda Carlson, Rita Cencich, Joseph Collins, Jim Conaty, Dois Distad, Myrtle Erickson, Margaret Fletcher, Eris Heggem, Inge & Harry Hendron, Glen Kivett, Cynthia Langlois, Jacqueline Mallereau, Linda Martin, Kerry Masters, Margaret & Roy Mills, Jack & Patty Muncy, Bill & Gwen Nienhuis, C.R. Orcutt, Ed & Jan Reynolds, Mary Rudd, Dr. & Mrs. George Schneider, Florence Sylvester, Beth & Ed Tiejn, Hershel Zellman, and four anonymous donors; THANKS

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