

REALITY CHECK

Maybe it's something in the air, or a social trend, or tied to global warming (our climatic whipping boy), but there seem to be a bit of disconnect lately with reality in the Natural Area. A hike this month found the return of the white paint dots at trail intersections. We thought we dealt with this last year by talking to the dot painters, the local middle school track people that want to use the area as a marked track for their cross country teams. Their memory fades fast. Further up the trail towards Eagle Peak I found a new trail someone had constructed on the west slope of the peak. They did a good job, by digging in a path, moving rocks, and cutting steps into the rocky slopes; but no one ever contacted us, the land owners, for permission or guidance. Over the years we have had a number of spontaneous construction projects and this one was great compared with past projects such as rock walls, tree plantings, grave sites, and campsites. Many, evidently, see the natural setting as a blank canvas waiting for a human overprint to be made complete. Reality check, a natural area needs not the human touch.

On Eagle Peak someone had spray painted a special message on the bare granite for our view. They used green paint, maybe to harmonize with the surrounding natural setting. Reality check! On the way back to the parking lot, I noticed recent horse use of the trails. Upon investigation, it was found that some local equestrians



Rogue Miner

are now using the natural area after hearing from a friend, who heard it from the friend, that the management rules for the Natural Area had been changed to allow this activity. Reality check! The real management rules were supplied to them, so if you encounter any horseman using the trails please remind them that this is not a permitted activity. Last week, we were stunned to find that someone had moved heavy equipment onto the east side of the Natural Area and had been mining granite out of the old quarry in that location. They were confronted and they claimed that during a conversation with someone at County Parks and Recreation about 20 years ago they were given permission to do this. Reality check! The equipment was removed and the miners cited for trespass. The value of the rocks they had already sold will have to be determined and funds transferred to the County whose material they stole, that's reality.

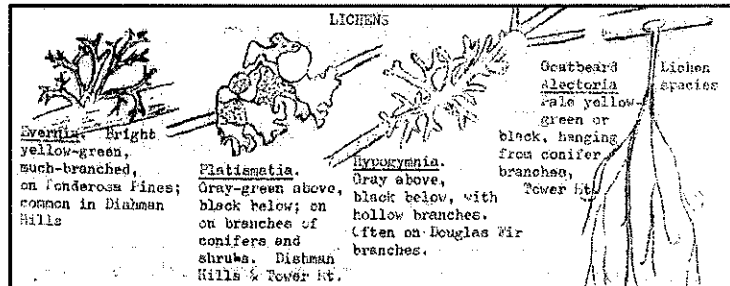
LIKEABLE LICHENS

As falls picks up, and winter looms around the corner the Dishman Hills stills displays an abundance of a fascinating plant that often goes unnoticed. Lichens are a partnership between algae, fungus, and sometimes cyanobacteria. They all work together and share their abilities to make use of an ecological niche that other plants avoid. The algae and the cyanobacteria produce the food through photosynthesis, while the fungus supplies the structure and the reproduction functions for the plant. There are about 13,500 to 17,000 species and they are one of the most widespread organism on the planet (present company excepted, of course), growing from the

Nature does nothing uselessly—Aristotle, (384-322 BC)

Antarctic to the equator, in wet to dry, and in very hot to very cold situations. Some plants live for hundreds of years!

In the Dishman Hills, lichens are represented by examples of its three forms: the crusty, green, rock covering variety; foliose or leafy variety; and fruticose or shrub-like form, with the last two varieties growing on tree branches and trunks. These plants are very useful. They are in the "front line" in soil formation, recycling bare rock and dead plants into useful components while fixing nitrogen from the air for fertilizer for the plant community. They are also excellent pollution indicators being very sensitive to man-made materials. A study of the lichens in the Hills would give us a clear view of the overall air quality of the Spokane area. So, let these humble plants be an example for all of us. They work quietly in partnership and cooperation for the benefit of their community.



ASSOCIATION 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 questions. We meet every other month on the third Tuesday of the month at 7pm, at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur. Our next meeting will be November 20th.

The following are our September donors that have consented to be listed: Nancy Cashon, William Erler, Frieda Froth, Scott Grimmert, Glen Kivett, Kathryn Mann and her sons, Peter, Luke, John, and Todd, Kerry Masters, Richard Taylor, Janice & Larry Thorson, Jeanne Wilson, Peter Wyman, Bette Young, and one anonymous donor. Thank you for your support.

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