

**BUDBURSTERS**

While a blanket of snow still covers the Dishman Hills, spring is just around the corner and a new season of growth has already started below the ground. Soon, in the next several weeks, the succession of sprouting plants in the Hills will start with the first appearance of buttercups that show up where the soil is warmed on the north-facing slopes and next to rocks.

In Japan the first appearance of the cherry blossoms is reason for a time-honored celebration of the coming of spring. Cherry blossom blooming data exist for the last 1100 years. As it turns out, this data was found to reflect global climate changes, documenting the medieval cold spell from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and the continuous warming of the atmosphere since the start of the Industrial Revolution.

Here in the U.S. there is a new group called Project BudBurst which endeavors to document the dates of first appearance for a number of domestic and native plants in order to track climate changes here. Many plants respond to local climatic temperatures as to the time of flowering or leafing out. The project uses volunteers and the internet to collect data. Citizens interested in lending science a hand can register with the project that is being run by Univ. of Montana and the Chicago Botanical Garden. Spokane schools have been reporting and the BudBurst plant list (see their website) includes a number of species found in the Dishman Hills, such as bitterroot, serviceberry, and yarrow.

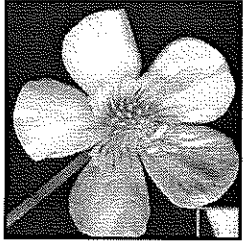
Plant growth stages fall under the study of "phenological" events or the timing of natural events in relation to the climate such as animal migration or hibernation. Phenological observations have been used for centuries by farmers to maximize crop production, outdoor enthusiast for plant viewing conditions, and all those that suffer from seasonal allergies. The BudBurst Project wants to harness this data to see what is happening to our atmosphere in these modern times. The project invites participants to report the day of the first leaf, first flower, and first fruit or seed dispersal. All you "budding" biologists out there may wish to experience spring in a new way and become a phenologist with the project. If you do, let us know what you observe so we can share the information with the readers.

**BOARD EXPANDS**

The annual members and first-of-the-year board meetings were well attended and several new board trustees and one new officer were elected. Impressive member interest resulted in the expansion of the board from seven to eleven members. Previous, retained members included Andrew Ashmore, David Cole, Michael Hamilton, and Lawrence Thieman. New members consist of Roger Killackey, Chris Kopczynski, Jeff Lambert, Kelsey Louglin, Robert Ordner, Mary Weathers, and Chris Wolbach. Chris was installed as our new treasurer. Welcome aboard one and all! There's lots of new energy, ideas, and resources at work and we think this year will be quite successful. Several ideas for 2008 activities were introduced including a membership drive, better communication with community groups, a new attempt on the Big Rock Exchange (formed a committee), and how to continue our attempts to connect the two Natural Areas on the Dishman Ridge with a corridor for animal migration and public passage. Any ideas from members and newsletter readers will be well received, so send them in and we will add them to our to-do-list.

**HIKES PLANNED**

The annual buttercup hike has been scheduled for Saturday, April 5. We will meet at Camp Caro on the North side of the Natural Area and hike into the early spring wonder of the forest awakening from a long winter. Some like to have a picnic at Camp Caro before the hike. We usually hike about three hours or less. Maybe the Lost Ponds would be a good destination.



A geologic tour of the Dishman Hills Natural Area is scheduled for May 24<sup>th</sup>, Saturday. The course is through Spokane Community Colleges, Continuing Education, and one must register with them to take the tour. We have been running this tour twice a year for the last several years and it has been very popular. The date for the fall tour is October 4<sup>th</sup>. The course covers Northwest geology and the includes a hike into the Natural Area with stops at a variety of geologic features that cover 1.5 billion years of the Earth's history.

**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. Our board will meet on the third Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, of the month at 7pm, at a new location, the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal St. With new trustees on the board we thought that a location more central to their location would work better. The date of a Wednesday is because of spring schedule conflicts at the facility but we will try to get back to the third Tuesday when we can. Members are always welcomed to attend these meeting to see what the board is up too.

The following are our January donors that have consented to be listed: Nancy Cashon, David Cole, Joseph Collins, Robert Downing, Victoria Egesdal, Art Fried, Andrea Gunning, Eris Heggem, Patrick Killien, Charles Gillingham, Jayce Keeling, Gale Mueller, Mike & Jeanette Ormsby, Marjorie Rozell, Art Zack, Donald Walker, Jeanne Wilson, and one anonymous donor.

We cannot command nature except by obeying her.  
Francis Bacon - English Philopher (1561-1626)

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