

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

From the
Dishman Hills

June 2008

DISHMAN ARTICLE

The following is an article about the Dishman Hills that appeared in the Spokesman Review on June 2, 2008. The author is Pia Christensen and we reprint it here with their approval; enjoy!

On a Thursday morning the Dishman Hills Natural Area is one of the quietest places in Spokane. A couple of cars sit in the parking lot. Walk through the log building at Camp Caro, and the traffic noise from Sprague Avenue and the scratching intercom from the car dealerships fade in the background. Soon, all you can hear is the wind in the tall pines, the birds and your breath. Be ready for deer to watch you. Stealthy yet curious, they are clearly used to human visitors interfering with their morning grazing. Striped chipmunks scamper across the trail or watch from rock outcroppings.

In 1966, the land was originally purchased and donated to protect it from urban development and sprawl. In the late 90s, after another fight to protect the area, a partnership to protect the hills was cemented between Spokane County Parks and Recreation Department, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and the nonprofit Dishman Hills Natural Area Association.

"We maintain it for its natural beauty and ecological value; it truly is an urban wilderness," said Michael Hamilton, president of the Dishman Hills Association. "We deal with some of the trouble that comes with that. There was a recent fire up on one of the hills; I'm sure it involved some young folks and a fermented brew."

You can hike up into the Dishman Hills, but you can't ride your bicycle or your horse. The trails wind up, down and around, over rock outcroppings and down hillsides, so wear comfortable shoes. There is nothing manicured about the area, except the occasional gravel repair of a steep trail.

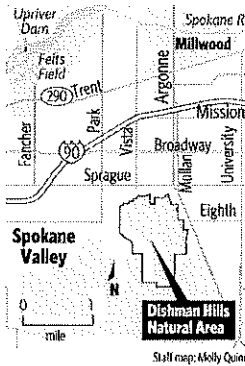
"It's a prepioneer ecosystem. It's a biological remnant from before we were here, I believe", said Hamilton. "There are many waterholes in there, and in spring there are a lot of wildflowers. Later it turns squeaky dry and other plants take their turn." Bring a camera or a sketch book. The contrast between the tall rocks and the deep ravines is bound to inspire any artist.

Right now, the Dishman Hills are lushly green, and the last crop of spring wildflowers is on its last bloom. Look for lupines in blue and white hues next, among tiny wild strawberry plants. Honeysuckle is on its way, and the bunchgrass is coming back to life. There is a diversity of native plants and mosses in these hills.

There is so much to look for the rocks, the birds, the plants, Hamilton said. "Just a relaxing hike and experiencing the woods is plenty for many. Pick up a map at Camp Caro; the main loop takes about an hour to walk, with plenty of time to stop and enjoy the scenery. Dogs must be on a leash.

For smaller children or those who aren't up for hiking, the area around Camp Caro is perfect for a picnic. There are tables, benches and a small play set, surrounded by a giant lawn just waiting for someone to kick a soccer ball or whip out a Frisbee.

"We put benches up in the hills for people who want to sit and watch nature," Hamilton said. "I think it's therapeutic just to hike up there and sit and watch a cloud go over your head."



SEASON IN POETRY

*I love to loll upon the bank, and watch the puffy clouds
Shape maps and woolly forms of sheep that melt away in shrouds;
Where brown-eyed daisies and Queen Anne's Lace flaunt their
Petals in my face - Things I Love to do, June; Sybil Beulah Maus*

*Oh! To be a flower nodding in the sun,
Bending, then up springing as the breezes run;
Holding up a scentbrimmed cup,
Full of summer's fragrance to the summer sun.
Song - Amy Lowell*

*When the thunder stalks the sky, when tickle-footed walks the fly,
When the shirt is wet and throat is dry, look my darling, that's July.
Summer Serenade - Ogden Nash*

*One day in the bluest of summer weather,
Sketching under a whispering oak,
I heard five bobolinks laughing together,
Over some ornithological joke.
- Christopher Pearce Cranch*

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 meets every other month on the third Tuesday. We are on our summer break and our next meeting will be on September 16th at 7pm, and at the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal St. Members and the public are always welcome to drop in.

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