

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

March 2008

SPRING !!!!!

Scientists are reporting that spring (weatherwise) is arriving nationwide about 8 hours earlier each year due to global climate change. This was determined by studying animal migration patterns and plant blooming dates over the last 30 years. On the other hand, Punxsutawney Phil, our illustrious groundhog in Gobbler's Knob, Penn., saw his shadow and forecasted six more weeks of winter and thus a late spring.

It appears that we may be more in tune with the groundhog's forecast as spring arrives in the Hills in the Northwest fashion, wet and cold. Small patches of snow still lurk in shady places and the forest is dotted with ponds, puddles, and dripping rocks. Spring flowers are running a bit late this year, with just a few buttercups and grass widows already blooming. The forest floor is soaking up all the extra precipitation we are getting from our "La Nina" season and as the weather warms up there should be a fabulous display of wildflowers.

The weather will be perfect by April 5th, Saturday, when we have our annual **buttercup hike**. The start of the hike is scheduled for one PM and the place will be Camp Caro, at the end of Sargent Road just off Appleway between Park and Dishman-Mica roads. Our hike should last about three hours. Come, one and all! Some people like to show up at noon for a communal picnic lunch at Camp Caro. As usual, our hike will include lots of chat about what is going on with the Dishman Hills Association as we see what is going on in the Natural Area.

ANIMAL CALLS

The Association receives a variety of phone calls from citizens who wish to report something important or extraordinary concerning their contact with the Natural Area. Often a call can mean trouble or complaints about the misuse of something or other. This month several calls came in about Appleway Toyota's parking trucks on the County's open space in front of Camp Caro as an attempt to use public land as an extension of their lot across the street.

Lately however, there have been much more interesting calls reporting sightings of larger (bigger than squirrels) animals that have included deer, moose, mountain lion, raccoon, porcupine, and marmot. We are very pleased that the ecology is supporting this population of animals. Whether this means larger populations or that these critters are seeking the lower elevations of the Natural Area for food during this snowy season we don't know. Hikers encountering them should carefully and respectfully leave them alone.



Buck on the north side of
of the Natural Area



Moose near Camp Carol

March is proof that winter does indeed have a hangover
Garrison Keillor—A Prairie Home Companion

One of more impressive inhabitants in the Hills during the spring are the moose. In past years moose have been at home in the Hills, especially near the numerous ponds. These small bodies of water will dry up by the heat of the summer and these impressive creatures will move on to greener pastures. It's a mystery where as these semi-urban wanderers come from or where they go. Other areas around the Spokane Valley have reported an unprecedented number of moose sightings this winter and spring with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife receiving an average of six calls of sightings a day. The moose have a hard life in suburbia with a number killed each year by encounters with cars and trains, or poisoned by eating ornamental plants and foods that are not part of their usual, wild diet.

So if you meet one of these very large (up to 1,000 pounds) quadrupeds, take a look and keep moving. Bull moose, one of which was recently seen in the Natural Area, are territorial and do not appreciate people approaching into their space. One swipe from a powerful front hoof can ruin your day. Do not allow your dog near a moose since they see them as wolves, a natural predator, and endeavor to kill them. They are fascinating animals and if you see one consider yourself lucky and give us a call so we can better track the forest populations.

Earth Day is Tuesday, April 22

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. May 20th is the next meeting, at 7pm, and at a **new location**, the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal St. Members and the public is always welcome to drop in to see what is going on with the Association.

The following are our February donors that have consented to be listed: Joyce Alonso, James Ammann, Andrew & Diedre Ashmore, Nancy Cashion, Brian Chavez, David Cole, William Eagle, Don Griffiths, Helen Gudgel, Michael & Claudia Hamilton, Mary & Bill Herron, The Hobnailers, Sanda & Robert Mansfield, Bettie Maron, S.G. Olson, Sally Reynolds, Terry & Ann Smith, Jeanne Wilson, and one anonymous donor. Make sure you get your dues in as soon as possible. Thank you for your continuing generous support.

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