

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

September 2008

NEW HABITAT

For those who would think that the recent wildfire in the Dishman Hills wiped out all the animal habitat in the southern acres that burned, your logic might, or should have, a snag or two in it. The burn area now has a abundance of snag trees that provide some "high quality" habitat for certain animals. Prior to Ice Storm (1996) our partner in the Natural Area, Washington's Dept. of Natural Resources, pointed out to us that the forest on the Hills was deficient of snag trees and suggested that we cut the top off of a number of trees to provide this valuable habitat for the wildlife. Well, twelve years later this deficiency seems to have disappeared. While our neighbors are removing and harvesting the burnt forest for aesthetic and economic reasons, we can leave dead trees in place for ecological reasons.



Useful snags are defined as standing dead trees that are at least 6 feet tall and have a diameter at breast height of at least 4 inches. However, smaller stumps also can be useful as foraging and nesting habitat for some bird species. Snags are categorized as being either hard or soft. Hard snags are composed of harder wood that shows no signs of decay and are usually branched. Soft snags have advanced decay, and are thus are softer. Common snag denizens include woodpeckers, chickadees, and birds of prey. There are many other species that depend on snags during some stages of their life cycle. There are two groups of snag user: primary nesters and secondary nesters. Primary nesters consist entirely of birds, and in the Natural Area there are five species of hard snag nesters and three species of soft snag nesters in the primary group. These birds actively excavate cavities to build accommodations. Secondary nesters can include mammals and some waterfowl that use natural cavities as well as primary homes. In the Natural Area there are 11 species of secondary nesters. It is not unusual to find both primary and secondary species using the same snag at the same time. Snag trees are places of great diversity because, like a forest, they experiences successional changes over time. The transition from death to complete decomposition provides a number of habitat subsets with each decay stage.

Forest practices for snag management includes the use of artificial nesting structures such as nest boxes and nesting platforms to attract cavity nesting species. These individuals once attracted to the neighborhood will move on to the natural snags in the forest. Larger structures that attract raptors and owls are useful during reforestation since these species serve as excellent controls of the rodent population during seed establishment.

There is a pleasure in the pathless wood,
There is a rapture on the long shore,
There is society where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and the music in it's roar.
I love not man the less, but Nature more...

Lord Byron (1788-1824)

BIONEERS ARE BACK

Coming up in October is the annual Bioneers Conference, Oct. 17 -19, at Spokane Falls Community College. If you believe in a sustainable future, are seeking solutions for conserving our environment, and want to know how to build a green community that minimizes waste and maximizes a rich, healthy quality of life, you are probably a bioneer. The conference is a combination of a live satellite down link of a national conference in CA and local workshops that address a large variety of issues. You can sign up for one to three days with the schedule available online under "Sustain Spokane". The conference is a montage of interesting lectures, field trips, interactive workshops, information and retail booths, a book store, a film festival, delicious foods, and tons of people with kindred spirit to meet.

GEOLOGY TOUR

The semiannual tour of the Geology of the Dishman Hills will be held on Oct. 4, Saturday. The tour, call "Head for the Hills" is run through Spokane Community College's Institute for Extended Learning and can be signed up for by calling them at 533-4748 or by registering online. The hike will start at Camp Caro at 11am and will take a loop trail up to Eagle Peak. This will be a good opportunity to see first hand the Valley View wildfire burn area on the southern side of the Natural Area. Numerous stops on the hike will cover geologic history of the Hills a well as other interesting topics.

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. October 21, is the next meeting, 7pm, at the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal St. Members and the public are always welcomed to drop by to see what is going on with the Association.

The following are our August donors that have consented to be listed: Nancy Cashion, The Hobnailers, Leroy Hook, Mary Alice Jones, Lewis Lovell, Linda & Mark Nelson, Fred Oberdorfer, Robert & Darlene Turner, Jeanne Wilson, Mary & Lawrence Wright, and one anonymous donor. Thank you all for your generous support.

Please use this form when sending **CONTRIBUTIONS or DUES**
All contributions are tax deductible.

Send contributions to: DHNAA
3415 S. Lincoln Dr.
Spokane, WA 99203

Your Name: _____
Please put your account no. on your check (see on address)

\$ _____ Memorial for: _____
\$ _____ Land Purchase Fund
\$ _____ Annual dues, due by June 30 (\$10)
\$ _____ TOTAL

New? Renewal? Don't list me as donor

Please tell us if this newsletter is unwanted or if there is an address mistake