



OLD TREES FIELD GUIDE TO THE 2 LEGGED

Oh, I love to see the two-leggeds ("people" as they so quaintly call themselves) coming to enjoy our woods, ravines, and high rocky ridges! There are the solitary ones, tuning in to every fresh smell, new flower, or spider web. There are the athletic ones (often with impressive gear!) that run while taking in the Dishman Hills with great fresh draughts of panting breath, grinning madly. Of course the families bringing their children to the Hills give us old Mossy Arms the sweetest pleasures. How many of these children have we watched grow through the years, bringing their own children, and seemingly before the yellowing of a leaf, their own grandchildren – and so, on and on.

Some come in groups, seemingly led by "experts" that seem to be studying US. Well, Little People, we have studied YOU, just a bit, as well. See if you recognize yourselves!

Group A usually walks along briskly, chattering away, looking about pleasantly until the Expert, with a grand sweep of the arm, indicates a cliff face of off-colored rock with verdant emerald green moss dripping jeweled beads of water. The group stares raptly, begins to examine rock surfaces one-eyed thru a small lens, may even chip bright fresh pieces of the rock with small, elegant but lethal hammers. Occasionally an Expert will proffer a small vial of acid, and all will coo in wonder at the tiny bubbles that foam when a drop is deposited upon the stone. Occasionally unable to resist, the random stone disappears into a pocket. This group is the most esoteric, as they love to talk, and often Experts and Sub-Experts will debate many possibilities, their speculations echoing thru sweeps of Time that even our collective Old Tree knowledge can't reckon. (How DO the short-lived Two-Leggeds, know ANYTHING about the Time?) They are indeed wondrous strange – and we cannot help but love them and marvel.

Group B sets out early in the morning, many carrying eye-pieces hanging from straps around their necks, and miscellaneous books, paper lists, and various image takers that can be coaxed to make bird like songs! Group B proceeds alertly and (comparatively) quietly, until suddenly they all freeze and snap around as one to stare into a tree, or across to a ravine. They are straining still and silent, ears alert, eye-pieces one by one lifted to hungry eyes. Some watch the watchers, imitating the direction of their gaze, bobbing up and down hopefully. While bobbing, pointing, straining their eyes, occasional cries of delight, wonder, triumph are emitted. Large eyepieces may be affixed to 3 spindly metal legs and everyone may have a turn staring into the trees, or the far end of the pond, or the top of a gnarly old snag (thank you

again Old Grand Father!) Some of the group have seen the bird before, but all seem to take undiminished pleasure in the revealed secret details, oft studied in the tattered books, but still astonishing to actually behold – the splash of scarlet, a tiny exquisite eyebrow, bandit mask, or bright yellow feet. In spite of frequent looking interludes, this Group usually manages to complete their hike before the day grows much older. All will be thrilled with their outing, whether they spotted 5 different birds, or 40.

Group C walks along murmuring to itself – but never gets very far. One of the group will suddenly drop to their knees, clicking with their devices over a flower. Others will circle around, some fanning through pages in similar tattered books. They make a great fuss about the loveliness of the flower, commenting upon various details such as the number of pistils, the arrangement of leaves, the sogginess of the soil or aspect to the sun. A few lose interest and wander down the trail until one of this advanced guard will spot a different flower – and REPEAT! Over and over! Strangely, for all their interest, this Group rarely picks any of the flowers they obsess over (Good for them!) Becoming progressively more delighted as the day progresses – they somehow manage to get back to where they started before dark, always amazed the hike took longer than planned,

Group D is in some ways the most delightful (or screwball!) of all; and their very odd behavior never ceases to amaze and amuse us. Making a relaxed mid-morning start, they embark looking something like Group B, dangling eye-enhancers, sprouting books and handouts. However they are characterized by one unique and startling detail – a few (the younger and/or most enthusiastic) are equipped with long cylindrical gauzy white nets affixed to long graceful handles. They will stroll along at a good clip, talking companionably, straggling along the trail until, SUDDENLY a cry goes up! Those with nets are darting back and forth, madly swishing their nets about before them. They are

CONSERVANCY NEWS

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We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Eric Robison, 202-0767, if you have questions. Our board meets every month on the third Tuesday. Our next meeting will not be until October 15th, 7 pm. Check next month's newsletter for other details. Visitors are always welcomed.

The following are our July donors that have consented to be listed: Nicolette Brant, Nancy Cashon, Patricia Danner, Diane Delaney, Earl Elias, Pam Gallaher, George Girvin, Mike Helbling, Inge Inge, Chris Hoppe, Melodee Jones, Cynthia Langlois, Heavin Maier, Leo Middendorf, Brent Perry, Christy Randel, Joseph Sander, Kim Schwab, Hershel Zellman, and one anonymous donor. Thank you all.

YES, I want to help protect our natural areas in the Spokane Region

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FIELD GUIDE – Cont.

heedless of the terrain, defying gravity to scale steep densely-shrubbed slopes and perilously rock while hopping at break-neck speed! They plunge into the underbrush, their nets madly swishing. The rest of the group meanwhile is cheering and exhorting them on (maybe an old nanny is bidding them to be careful!) The net wavers, now scattered and lost to sight, eventually return. Perhaps empty netted, but often with a tiny jewel-like captive fluttering in their nets! The captive is very gently decanted into a small jar with a magnifying lens in the lid. The group, awed and humbled, passes the hostage between themselves, greatly impressed by its vivid colors, filigreed delicacy, tiny details, maybe one butter colored spot, indicated by the Expert to differentiate a “Blue” hostage from a “Northern” one, or some such. The captive is released, and flutters away unharmed. Not even its dignity is damaged, for it led it’s pursuers a merry chase indeed. In fact, we Old Ones sometime wonder Who has really captured Whom in this scenario, which will repeat with endless variation of terrain, shrubbery, and target until the exuberant net wavers are tuckered out. At this point they must be led out of the field and stuffed into their cars by the rest of the group – as they clearly will keep leaping to the chase, long after knees and wind have given out.