



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

October 1983

BIRDS & INSECTS DISAPPEAR; MUSHROOMS THRIVE IN HILLS

By late October nearly all the summer resident birds have left the foothills for more southerly climes or the nearby valleys. A few juncos and flickers may remain for a while until snow drives them down into the suburbs and lowlands but many have already arrived. The juncos are searching for seeds and feeding upon the blue aphids that are flying and collecting on tree trunks. Flickers like a variety of food from old apples and unharvested waste corn to ants and blue aphids. An occasional Audubon's warbler may still linger with them as do a few migrating white-crowned sparrows. Some of the latter may winter at feeders supplied with bird seed. Most of them are juveniles, with head stripes brown and buff rather than black and white as in the adults. We still have robins and starlings, house finches and house sparrows. All will winter here, except possibly the robins. If you have much scrubby you will probably host a song sparrow all winter. The concentrating of small birds in the valleys prompts the little sharp-shinned hawks to move down too, where they occasionally capture a small bird.

Back in the hills chickadees and nuthatches remain, hunting their food in the trees, joined perhaps by a brown creeper and a few golden-crowned kinglets. Evening grosbeaks and red crossbills have arrived from the mountains and feed upon conifer seeds. Great horned owls remain in the forest where grouse, rabbits and mice are available and few red-tailed hawks continue to soar over the open country in search of mice. Chipmunks have usually retired by the end of October to their cozy homes among the cliffs and rocks, where they will eat and sleep the winter away, relying upon their store of seeds. Except for the noisy red squirrels, and gray squirrels in some suburban neighborhoods, other mammals are little in evidence, since no snow is present to record their travels.

Few insects remain active as late as October and November. On sunny days when the temperature rises to around 55 degrees Michaelmas daisies attract honey bees and the similar-looking but stingless drone flies and syrphid flies. Also may come a few thistle butterflies and west coast ladies, handsome in orange-brown, black and white, and sulfur butterflies, yellow with black borders. Slender queen hornets are crawling into protected places where they will overwinter, as are the brown, inchlong leaf-footed bugs, which, by the way, give off a most disagreeable smell when handled. Several kinds of flies are still active. This order of insects seems to be able to cope with chilly conditions better than some. When hiking up Spider Glacier in the North Cascades we noticed flies alighting on the snow and taking wing again without any problems, while grasshoppers, beetles and other kinds were immobilized by the cold.

The cool, moist days of autumn are the time for the "lower" kinds of plants to take over. Mushrooms and other fungi put on a great display with a profusion of sizes, shapes and colors. Some get their nourishment from decaying material in the soil and others take it from dead trees or logs. They are the scavengers of the forest, decomposing the dead and returning them to the soil. In turn they may be eaten by deer or stored among tree branches by squirrels for future use. Many kinds become the hosts of tiny fly larvae, but not before they have launched millions of microscopic spores upon the wind.

If anyone knows the whereabouts of our Dishman Hills scrapbook with news clippings about the project, please let us know. It was loaned to someone.

ADDING LAND TO NATURAL AREA NOW DEPENDS ON DONATIONS ALONE

Hopes for financial help from Spokane County for adding land to Dishman Hills Natural Area unexpectedly appears out of the question. Neither are there any funds available from the state or federal government. Two tracts of rugged, beautiful land are now for sale in the Hills. One contains the rocky landscape the children who explore in the area have named Eagle Peak and the ravine they dubbed Dinosaur Gulch. Two small springs add variety to the plant and animal life. If we are to acquire either tract, we apparently are going to have to raise the money at the grassroots level from further contributions from the Spokane community. Our land fund now contains less than half the amount we expect will be needed.

We are putting together several proposals. Hopefully one of them will be acceptable to the owners and enable us to make this important addition. This will be the main topic for discussion at our October 26 meeting. We'd be happy to have you attend and contribute your thoughts. The place is Camp Caro, the time 7:30 p.m.

REUNION RAISES MONEY FOR HILLS

A family reunion at Camp Caro July 30 raised \$50.00 for the Dishman Hills land fund. Eighty-one people aged 87 years down to one month attended the gathering, organized by Bernice Oglesbee Hahn and Mr. and Mrs. Roy Bucknell. Bernice is a charter member of our association and has been a board member from the beginning. She was the caretaker-host at Camp Caro for many years. Congratulations and thanks to Bernice and to the Bucknells.

CANNON HILL CLUB HOSTS SLIDE SHOW

We presented a slide show on the Dishman Hills to the Cannon Hill Garden Club September 23 at the home of Elaine Schoen. We enjoyed the sociability, the interest the members showed in our project, and incidentally, the delicious refreshments! Many thanks, ladies!

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving some of the natural environment of the Spokane area for people to enjoy and learn from. Our monthly meetings are at Kiwanis Camp Caro, S. 625 Sargent Road at 7:30 p.m. the fourth Wednesday. You are cordially invited to attend. For further information and for slide programs and guide service into the Dishman Hills call us at 926-7949.

Please use this form when sending contributions to save the Dishman Hills and the Tower Mountain corridor. Your dues and/or gifts are income tax deductible.

\$ ___ Annual dues (\$5) New? ___ Renewal? ___

\$ ___ Land purchase fund

\$ ___ In remembrance of _____

\$ ___ Bulletin expense fund (\$1 or more)

_____ your account number above your address.

Please make checks payable to Dishman Hills Natural Area Association and mail to David E. Lentz, Treasurer, E. 10922 3rd Spokane, WA, 99206. Many Thanks! To reduce expense, no receipt or acknowledgement will be sent unless requested.