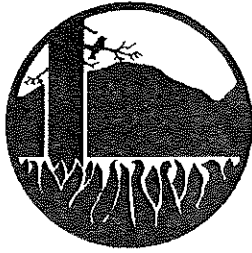


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# LIGHTS AND SHADOWS FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

NOVEMBER 1993

## THANKS TO OCTOBER CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions to the Dishman Hills Natural Area Project came to \$252.62. Interest income on our reserve was \$11.59. Expenses were \$40.00 for administration, \$58.56 for bulletin printing and \$61.53 for bulletin postage for a total of \$160.09. Our thanks to you who contributed cash, recyclables and/or services and have given permission to be listed here: James F. Conaty, Earl Coombs, Michael Hamilton, Willene Priestley, Tom Rogers, Mabel Sackett, Richard/Lonnie Schmidt, Ed Tietjen, Doreen B. Vance and Jeanne H. Wilson.

We are still exploring the possibilities for adding land to the nature preserve but so far have found no willing sellers. When we do we hope to have enough reserve to make a substantial up front payment and save interest expense.

A November 8th hike into the Dishman Hills as usual provided some interesting experiences. The highlight was the sighting of a handsome adult goshawk which obligingly perched on a pine branch, its smooth, slate-gray back contrasting with snowy white undertail coverts which flared out on each side. Then there was a diminutive golden-crowned kinglet, down from the mountains for the winter, fluttering among the conifer branches in search of insects. A chickadee was also looking for breakfast. Red-breasted nuthatches were scarce--anything to do with the total absence of pine white butterflies this fall? Or maybe the scarcity of pine nuts. A raven and a crow sounded off from the distance. No ducks on the ponds--a coating of ice had driven them away. No flowers or colorful autumn leaves yet.

Not one red squirrel was heard. It looks as if they would have a tough time this winter for there seem to be virtually no pine cones to supply them with food. Douglas fir cones were plentiful, however, and may help to make up the difference. Coyote dung was rather common on the trails. One pile contained apples, indicating that these wild canines are scrounging for food. Perhaps they can do better finding mice.

The cool day discouraged most insects, but a geometrid "measuring worm" moth ventured about, as did three flies. Flies and geometrids have been noted to be active in cooler weather than most insects, suggesting that they may be able to maintain a somewhat higher body temperature than the air around them, a bit more the way birds and mammals can. A syrphid fly "hover fly" was attracted to my yellow car parked at Chipmunk Crossing. It seems that flies and yellowjackets are attracted to yellow, at least to my little car! But nothing to eat there!

On the down side, mountain bikes continue on the trails through our land, where they are prohibited, and dogs and a horse, also forbidden, left their manure. At least some of our signs, hung from the trees out of reach of vandals, still are there. The litter situation was better; only three pieces were noted, one a big Pepsi throwaway cup. Maybe a bottle of water would be more appropriate on a hike!--TR

We will not meet in December, but we will meet in January for election of directors and officers the third Monday at 7 P.M. at Opportunity Elementary School, South 1109 Wilbur. You are cordially invited to attend.

## "IT'S COLD IN THEM THAR HILLS"

That's no news. But it's also beautiful, with a covering of new snow.

If it weren't for the snow, one would conclude that few animals were about. Yet a recent hike into the Dishman Hills revealed the story of activity. First the tracks of a white-tailed deer. Then coyotes leaving their neat footprints along the trails or criss-crossing them frequently. Probably they were looking for a meal of deer mice, which jumped along, leaving their delicate traces in the snow. Then there were frequent tracks of red squirrels as they bounded from tree to tree. At one place it looked as if a small cottontail rabbit had passed by--they have been very scarce there in recent years.

Birds were scarce. A red-breasted nuthatch sounded his "little tin horn" in the frosty distance and a jet black raven flapped and croaked overhead as he looked for lunch.

East and West Ponds still have water in them--the solid kind. The tree frogs supposedly are buried in the mud for the winter. According to Shannon Jayne, a student at Spokane Falls Community College, frogs here seem to be in trouble, the reason not apparent. She reported that tree frog eggs in the ponds here have not been hatching. Decrease in frog numbers has been reported across the United States. Is it water pollution, air pollution or something else? Amphibians may very well be indicators of environmental quality.

Spokane County Commissioners haven't yet made up their minds whether or not to allow horses and bikes into county land in the nature preserve. If you agree with us that they not be allowed, it is urgent that you drop them a line to that effect. Thanks.

We are updating our mailing list. If we haven't heard from you in the last two years, either by a contribution or a phone call or a note, we probably will be putting your name on the inactive list. We don't want to pester you with mail you don't want.

Sorry that this newsletter is so late but we had a problem. Better luck next time!

Please use this form when sending contributions  
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