



Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, November, 1997

AUTUMN SCENE

Things are quieting down in the Hills, the fire season is over, deciduous leaves have fallen, and the "warm weather" hikers have been replaced by the fewer, hardy enthusiasts out for a bracing fall stroll. The "El Nino" weather this month gave us several weeks of lovely sunny, dry days to enjoy the great outdoors before we tuck ourselves away in our cabins for the long winter. Soon the forest will be covered with a mantle of snow, and icicles will start to grow where water drips off the rock cliffs.

We are now in the November "bird vacuum", when summer birds have left and, except for a few robins, winter visitors have not yet arrived. Of course, there are still the House Sparrows, House Finches, Crows, Flickers, California Quail, Mallards, and a few Song Sparrows, not to mention pigeons. Of special interest were two white throated Sparrows seen in the vicinity, a rare fall and winter visitor in the Spokane area. A few Juncoes have dropped down from the Hills, visiting feeders. Bohemian Waxwings should be arriving soon to feast on mountain ash berries. Following them will be little sharp-skinned Hawks to prey on the small birds.

Mushrooms are abundant this Fall, probably due to the higher than average rainfall this year creating moist conditions in the forest. Mushrooms are interesting little plants that can't make their own food but depend upon the debris left by green plants. Shaggy manes and Leucoagaricus (try to remember that one!) with it's big white fruiting body adorned with tan scales have been seen in the area.

Educational activities this Fall includes the start of a project by Discovery School of Spokane to biologically survey parts of the Dishman Hills. The project involves 25 students, grades 3 through 5, who will visit the Hills every two weeks year around, in order to map the biologic details of their assigned area and journal the changes that occur with the seasons.

ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving natural areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton at 747-8147 for any questions. We have have our monthly meetings at Opportunity Elementary School, South 1109 Wilbur, the third Tuesday of the month at 7PM, You are cordially invited.

We thank the following October donors who have given permission to be listed here: Margaret Bloom, Carolyn Boatsman, Signe Currier, Bart Haggin, Kenneth Gudgel, Robert Henderson, Helen Lininger, Janice Mahoney, Beth Miller, Marion Phillips, Francis/June Potter, Willene Priestley, Kent Richardson, Tom Rogers, Sally Reynolds, Lois Smith, Philip Spohn, Florence Thayer, Mary Ann Wilharm, and two anonymous donors.

CONGRATULATION!

Like an early Christmas present, the Conservation Futures Tax passed with a majority of voters supporting the program during November's election. In these times, public backing of a tax is rare and signifies very strong support. The tax passed by more than 7,000 votes. The program has been given another three years, after which the county will decide again whether or not to extend it. Meanwhile, we will all benefit as choice nature areas are aquired. The new nature area on Tower Mountain on which we are working, may be helped by County land purchases using Conservation Futures funds.

NATURE TRAIL UPDATE

The nature interpretative trail project has received \$5,000 of support from Washington state. These funds are an addition to the grant received from Foundation Northwest. They will allow us to upgrade the trail facility with better signs, and more elaborate brochure. This winter we will complete trail design, purchase needed materials, and write the informational brochure. Next Spring the trail will be constructed and ready for use by summer.

ROADWAY THREATENS

The Valley Couplet project is on go again, which means a major arterial will be built on the north side of the Hills in 2 to 3 years. We have opposed this project from the start With only one Dishman Hills and thousands of roadways you would think planners would take care to give higher priority to the Hills. More later on this!

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