



Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, February, 1998

URBAN TREES ARE IMPORTANT

"Tree Link" published last Fall by the Department of Natural Resources points out the importance of trees in cities. "American Forests" reports that trees promote cleaner air by absorbing carbon dioxide, control storm water runoff, save energy by providing shade and forming windbreaks, and encourage wildlife. The report also estimates that billions of tax dollars are saved nation-wide by urban trees. Parts of the Dishman Hills-Tower Mountain area are, in effect, becoming urban forest. County government is allowing residential development in some parts. It is also approving highway construction (the Valley Couplet) a few feet away from Dishman Hills Natural area, where auto exhaust fumes quite surely will damage the trees. The State Department of Transportation intends to implement the couplet with our tax money. County government, we understand, also has plans to widen more streets to four lanes. Both of these projects are designed to allow more private cars to drive faster (more air pollution and noise). The plan to widen the north University Road will result in seventy-two trees being cut down, reducing the urban forest, not increasing it. (South University has already been widened, with similar effects). It's a battle between autos (we love them) versus clean air, trees and our tax dollars. Government and many of us refuse to believe that the Age of Petroleum (cheap, plentiful gasoline) is surely drawing to a close, just how soon we don't know, but it is.

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 our monthly meetings at Opportunity Elementary School, South 1109 Wilbur, the third Tuesday of the month at 7PM, You are cordially invited.

Our thanks to you loyal supporters who have given permission to be listed here: James Banta, Kathryn Bernard, James Berry, Robin Bishop, Carolyn Boatman, Frances Davis, James Edge, Carol Ellis, John Gardner, Frank Gropp, Michael Hamilton, L.H.Hatch, Isabel Hawkins, Michael Henneberry, Loring Jones, Glen Kivett, Dorothy Knechtel, Laura Laufer, Helen Lininger, Bettie Maron, Mrs. Roy Mills, Marlene Montgomery, Patrick Lettenmaier, Madeline Phelps, Frank/June Potter, Ambrose Priestley, James Qualls, Ruth Roberts, Tom Rogers, Julie Rosenoff, Beverly Scheunemann, Richard Severn, Spokane Mushroom Club, Lee Smith, Florence Sylvester, Joan Calbot, Florence Thayer, Robert Turner, Wanda Warren, Mary White, Jeanne Wilson, Sylvia Wilson, and three anonymous donors. **Again many thanks.**

BEETLE MANIA

The bark beetle story started with Icestorm in the Fall of 96. Not only did the storm down lots of trees, but the following cold winter "freeze dried" the green parts of the trees that are beetle food. Bark beetles bore under the bark to consume parts of the live cambium layer beneath, they cannot survive on totally dead trees. The Pine Engraver is the beetle that started feasting on the downed slash in the Spring of 97 when the weather warmed. Soon bug numbers reached epidemic proportions with beetles moving on to standing trees. The Engraver's cousin, the Red Turpentine Beetle, was invited to the party, attacking weakened standing trees. The trees fought back by trying to push out this bug with sap or pitch. One can observe pitch tubes throughout the DH where this is happening. While there are a lot of the beetles, one generally does not see them without stripping off the barks and finding them hard at work in their galleries beneath. They do come out briefly at one stage of their lives to fly to better prospects in other trees.

We decided that all this beetle stuff comes under the heading of "natural events" and did not require any special preventative measures. While beetle damage trees are not very scenic, in the long run this too will pass and the bug population will diminish back to more normal levels. Meanwhile, hikers will notice a number of brown-needled, dead Ponderosa pines dotting the forest, giving testament to the continuing beetle epidemic. Remember, these beetle are also wildlife and have a place in the forest. The birds are some of the real winners with lots of delicious bug meals now available. One can see woodpecker dining areas on infested trees.

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