



Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, May, 1999

ACTION ON THE MOUNTAIN

Things are happening up on Tower Mountain with the new Rocks of Sharon Nature Area. Spokane county announced that they will precede with the purchase of 320 acres of land that is northeast of Tower Mt., and adjacent to the western side of the DH land that we purchased five years ago. They are also pursuing another 500 acres just to the north. This purchase was possible because of some hard work by County Parks and Recreation, specifically Wyn Birkenthal, in bringing together Conservation Futures money, State matching funds and a land purchase agreement. Good work and many thanks!

The Association has refinanced the contract on it's Tower Mountain land to a annual percentage rate 2.25 percent lower than the original contract. While this cost around \$700, the lower rate will save over \$3,000 in interest during the first year. We work hard to get the maximum benefit from your generous donations. The contract has been paid down to about \$100K and has five more years to payoff, so keep those donations headed this way please.

Two newspaper articles in the last month, Spokesman Review 5/4/99, and Inlander 5/12/99, have featured the new Rocks of Sharon Nature Area. Both articles pointed out the importance of preserving the Tower Mountain area for its recreational, and ecological benefits. We hope there will be a heighten public awareness of our Sharon project and thus more support so that we can finish the job by paying off the contact and starting land improvements.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

There is a lot going on with signs in the Hills, some new ones are appearing and some old ones are disappearing. A new set of trail signs have been designed and are now being made. They will replace the old set that have been in the Hills for as long as most people can remember. The old signs, while very well built to withstand the usual abuse experienced in the back woods, had outdated and cryptic references to the "main" trail, nature conservancy land, and Tower Mt. The wood/paper signs that appeared last summer will also disappear since these were temporarily used to direct hikers along a trail written up in the Sunset magazine. The new sign set will refer to geographic destinations such as Eagle Peak, the ponds, etc., and will guide visitors on the more popular trails. They will also mark the new interpretative trail going in this summer.

New signs marking the boundary of the Natural Area, are being installed along survey lines re-established by state surveyors. These simple plastic signs (easily to replace) on wooden poles will serve to make sure that people know when they are entering the natural area along foot trails or overland. This resurvey will also give us the opportunity to install more fence along the north side.

HILLS ARE LUSH AND GREEN

Though the first half of May was nearly rainless, weather was wet earlier, allowing for exuberant plant growth. Spring flowers are gone from the Hills, but early summer ones are taking their place. Snowy clusters of buckbrush flowers brighten trailside along with ninebark and the white of death camas. Occasional wild roses are appearing. Scattered around are the blues of wild hyacinths and the reds of sticky geraniums. The yellows of biscuitroot are appearing, some even with green seed pods. Less conspicuous is the graceful rough fescue, a grass now uncommon in our area, and the East pond has much of a fruiting sedge. On a recent hike, birds seemed scarce, particularly nuthatches and chickadee, but towhees were here as usual. A few juncoes were about, probably nesting. A great horned owl with two full grown young appeared and a raven croaked as it flew over. Canada geese cruised past, but no birds appeared at the ponds, and the only water life seen were whirligig beetles. Where were the tadpoles?

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 with any questions. We will have our summer meetings only on call.

Thanks to the following donors who have permitted us to list them here: Marva/Stanley Geode, Don Griffiths, Frank Gropp, Kenneth Gudge M.D., Carla/Alfred Joyal Helen Lininger, John Lorang, Janice Mahoney, Linda Martin, John/Carolyn Mathews, Tom Rogers, Iris/Eugene Scheel, and Jeanne Wilson. The Walkin' Jim Stoltz program of spectacular scenery and guitar music brought in \$135.

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