

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

February 2011

SLEEPERS AWAKE !

Spring is just around the corner. This season tends to be a long one in the Pacific Northwest, starting in late February with the first buttercup flowers and running into May and June with late season snowstorms, and cold, "tomato plant" killing nights. To the astronomers it starts on March 20th at 11:21 pm, when the Earth's axis is neither tilted towards or away from the sun. This is the equinox when the days and nights are the same length. To the meteorologist spring comes several days earlier than it did 150 years ago due to the overall warming of the global climate. But for the many things that call the Natural Area home the arrival of spring is herald by a number of events. Ground plants are sensitive to the slow rise in soil temperature, waiting for the right moment to germinate. Extended sunlight encourages plants to end their dormancy. New science has found that plants have a "memory" built into their genetic structure that senses it's time to shut down after consistent cold in the fall and it's time to awaken in the spring after a long, typical period of cold, rather than just the renewed warmth. Soil moisture increases in the spring as snow melts and storms dump. Many of the plants in the Natural Area depend on the wet, warmer season to grow and propagate before summer's long dry season.



Buttercup, harbinger of spring

For many, spring is also a time for sex. Some critters that are loners during most of the year become very sociable in the spring. The tree frog is a good example. After a long winter's nap in a half frozen, muddy bed, this amphibian awakes to the irresistible mating calls that flood the wetlands of the Natural Area. The early males up in February get priority in staking out their mating territory. Soon after, they start calling loudly to the choosy females of the species. Animals of all sorts arrive into spring very hungry, and delight in the return of the vegetation. Bird activity increases in the spring. Migration of birds that winter to the south is now starting and is serious business. There is an optimal time for the birds to arrive in their breeding area. The strongest males arrive first, and thus have their pick of prime territories, often where they were the year before. Arriving females then select the males that occupy the best habitats for raising young.

Spring is Nature's way of saying "lets Party" Robin Williams

We humans, after a long winter of sedate activities and traditional over-eating events are eager to get out and enjoy the better weather, and experience first hand all the wonderful changes of a new season of growth, and adventure!

NEW LAND DEAL

The Association has moved forward to secure addition land on the south side of our Big Rock parcel on Tower Mountain. We have an accepted offer to buy 10 acres on the end of Stevens Creek Road which will allow for public parking near trailhead for the extensive Iller Creek Conservation Area to the north. We have until the end of May to accumulate the funds for this purchase and will **greatly appreciate any donations** that the community can make for this important addition to one of the County's premier recreation areas. In the last year we have realized how important public parking is for this trailhead, and have had to discourage southern access to Big Rock because of inadequate parking. A job worth doing is worth doing right!

MAKE NOTE

Remember to put April 9, Saturday, on your calendar for the second, annual Dishman Hills Service Day. This event, run by REI, was a great success last year. One can sign up on the REI webpage. There will be more details next month. Buttercup Hike April 2!

ASSOCIATION NEWS

We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have questions. Our board meets every month on the third Tuesday. Our next meeting is March 15th, 7 pm. We meet at the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal St. Visitors are always welcomed.

The following are our January donors that have consented to be listed: Mary Benham, Bertha Booth, Erwin Bronsch, Phyllis Burwell, Velda Carlson, Gary Casey, Nancy Cashion, Rita Cencich, Virginia Danke, Myrna Decker, Dave & Gail Duba, Brent Egesdal, Bill Fix, Celesta Frost, Corinne Gillingham, Wayne Green, Judy Heggem-Davis, Jonathan Isocoff, Mary Jones, Patrick Killien, Mike Kloster, Cynthia Langlois, Kerry Masters, David & Becky Knapp, Jim & Marilyn McCall, Gale Mueller, Michael Ormsby, Linda Pool, John Rose, Linda Siverts, Jan Strobeck, Kenneth Swedberg, Richard Taylor, Bernadine Van Theil, Robert & Sylvia Wilson, William Zimmer, and two anonymous donors. WOW !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

YES, I want to help protect our natural areas in the Spokane Region

Enclosed is my tax-deductable donation of :

\$ 15* \$ 25 \$ 50 \$ 100 Other _____ * annual dues, due by June 30

Gift is a Memorial for: _____

Name: _____ Acc. No. (see address) _____ Please don't list me as a donor

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