



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

March 1984

SPRING AND WINTER MIXED IN THE HILLS

The first week of March I hiked up Iller Creek along the east side of Tower Mountain to see any signs of spring. Pussywillows greeted me at the start but nowhere else. The creek was flowing generously as the snow above melted. In some places it ran muddily as runoff eroded ruts in the road reopened in the 1977 logging operation.

In spite of sunny weather little wildlife appeared; a song sparrow offering his spring melody, a few chickadees, a winter wren, and a pair of red-tailed hawks wheeling overhead, one closing its wings and diving almost vertically for hundreds of feet to a perch on the mountain. Four ravens flew over, one emitting positively musical couplets. On the snow, which reached above my knees near the upper end of the trail, were crawling the new hatch of stoneflies, which spend their early lives in the creek clinging to stones. An occasional gnat ingored the cool air but other little creatures were stranded on the crusted snow; little spiders, a caterpillar, a tiny beetle and a fly that was too cold to take off, though it tried valiently. A few "snow bugs" of the scorpionfly family were quite at home on the snow.

On the ridge above the creek the warming sun had produced many bare spots, but no buttercups or other spring plants showed any sign of growth as yet. But there was a great view of Mica Peak to the east and Steptoe Butte far to the south, as the air was quite clear, not like in summer.

A less happy note was introduced by four boys with 22's. When I asked what they were shooting at, they replied, "Birds." What kind? The one that was saying "Chickadee." They said they were unaware that it is a Federal offense to shoot nearly all kinds of wild birds. I remarked that the birds liked to live also and suggested they shoot at targets. The reply was, "They don't move." (No challenge.) I had thought song bird shooters were a thing of the past, but not so. Parents and kids alike, hopefully, will become better informed and more responsible.

On the brighter side I met two boys, without guns but with a real love for the place, bent on hiking up to the Rocks of Sharon, which I had just left. They, like me, were interested in seeing the mountain protected for hikers to enjoy. Whether this is possible is questionable, for a new road cuts zigzag gashes across the face of the mountain, presumably opening the way for development and more urban sprawl. The County Comprehensive Land Use Plan says that one house per ten acres can be permitted on these steep, snowy slopes--deer habitat. In fact, even Dishman Hills Natural Area could have such development! Fortunately, The Nature Conservancy and our own Association, plus Federal law for the county owned portion, prevent that. - T.R.

Our annual Buttercup Hike into Dishman Hills will be Sunday, April 1, (no fooling) at 2 p.m. starting at Camp Caro. Bring the whole family!

Starting April 25 our monthly meetings will be back at Camp Caro at 7:30 p.m.

LAND PURCHASE TALKS MOVING AHEAD

Our land acquisition committee recently held its third negotiation talk with the owners of the 140 acres adjoining The Nature Conservancy preserve in the Dishman Hills. We are seeing progress but no agreement has yet been reached as to price or time schedule for purchase. We may call a special session of our board of directors shortly and then will be meeting again with the owners. If we reach a contract, we will need many more donations so please keep your help coming. Many Thanks.

At our February meeting we voted to raise our annual dues to ten dollars, the first dues raise since we incorporated in 1966. In order that we not work a hardship on any of our members, we are retaining a "living lightly" dues category of five dollars. Dues paying members and those who contribute to the land fund or otherwise will continue to receive our bulletin. Others are asked to contribute two dollars a year toward bulletin expense. We are going back to a bimonthly publication schedule in an effort to reduce expense. We hope this will be satisfactory to all. The bulletin will come out in odd numbered months. If you don't receive a bulletin in May and want to continue, please let us know.

Elliot Marks, Washington State director of The Nature Conservancy, visited the Dishman Hills preserve recently. Perhaps you saw us on Channel 2. Elliot is interested in acquiring the land in the northwest corner of the Hills, where a rare plant grows in the East Pond. We have long wanted this tract to be added to the preserve so there is renewed hope!

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving some of the natural environment of the Spokane area for people to enjoy and learn from. Our monthly meetings are at Kiwanis Camp Caro, S. 625 Sargent Road at 7:30 p.m. the fourth Wednesday. You are cordially invited to attend. For further information and for slide programs and guide service into the Dishman Hills call us at 926-7949.

Please use this form when sending contributions to save the Dishman Hills and the Tower Mountain corridor. Your dues and/or gifts are income tax deductible.

\$ ___ Annual dues (\$5) New? ___ Renewal? ___

\$ ___ Land purchase fund

\$ ___ In remembrance of _____

\$ ___ Bulletin expense fund (\$1 or more)

_____ Your account number above your address.

Please make checks payable to Dishman Hills Natural Area Association and mail to David E. Lentz, Treasurer, P.O. BOX 141561, Spokane, Wa. 99214. Many Thanks! To reduce expense, no receipt or acknowledgement will be sent unless requested.