



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

May 1985

JUNIPER FOREST WILDERNESS VISITED

In late April your bulletin editor was privileged to act as nature guide on a trip into the Juniper Forest with a group led by David Early, recreation director for Fairchild Air Force Base. This unique area south of Connell was recently added to the National Wilderness System.

The area is more sand dunes than forest, though western junipers up to 25 feet tall are scattered through the little valleys. Some of the dunes are active, driven northeastward by the wind, which spreads rippled patterns across their gentle slopes. The dunes' forward edges drop off steeply, however. Some of their windward faces are being invaded by dune grass, wild begonia and bastard toadflax, which slowly weave them together by their rhizomes (horizontal underground stems). Sometimes the plants are losers, the hot summer winds stripping away the sand and desiccating the rhizomes. On other places, however, they succeed and are joined by other plants. On the lee side of the dunes and in the little valleys plants are more successful. Showy flowers like larkspur, balsamroot and western wallflower appear, along with bunchgrasses, sagebrush, rabbitbrush and bitterbrush with its fragrant yellow blossoms.

On sparsely vegetated dunes several kinds of black beetles crawl or burrow into the sand. Little lizards scurry from bush to bush but slower horned lizards ("horned toads") seem to rely more on their sandy color for protection. Bees visit flowers. Meadowlarks and horned larks sing. Mourning doves nest under bushes. A few coyotes and deer roam the area and big hawks circle above, looking for mice. On this day migrating white-crowned sparrows were stopping on their way to nesting places in the mountains or in the brushy southern fringe of Canada's tundra.

We met several groups of day hikers -- overnight camping is not permitted. Old motorcycle damage is gradually healing; wilderness designation is apparently becoming effective in keeping the vehicles out. Littering is increasing, though seems not to be a serious problem yet. If this fragile, beautiful area is to be protected, visitors will have to behave responsibly. That's not a new idea -- it applies to the whole of Planet Earth.

BUTTERCUP HIKE

A late snowfall in the early morning discouraged all but a few hardy souls from taking part in our annual Buttercup Hike March 24. It turned out to be a fairly good day, however, with the forest protecting us from the wind. Buttercups were plentiful and a few grass widows had appeared. Other flowers were held back by the cool spring weather. Chipmunks were active and a pair of mallards on East Pond acted as if they planned to nest there.

Our slide shows were busy since the last bulletin. We gave our Dishman Hills program to Rosalia and Mariposa Garden Clubs and a program on Holden Village to Spokane Valley Women's Club. Thanks again, ladies, for your generous donations to our land fund. Holman Gardens Retirement Home residents enjoyed a program we presented on Three Sisters Wilderness in Oregon.

HEARING ON HILLS LAND MAY 28

The board of County Commissioners will soon hold a hearing on our request for a change from urban to a lower density for land next to the Dishman Hills. Urban classification in the comprehensive land use plan allows up to 17 dwelling units per acre. The plan now allow this density directly against Dishman Hills land designated for only one unit per ten acres. We believe a buffer zone of intermediate density should be established there. We need a big turnout of people who want to see the Dishman Hills protected. You need say no more than that you support our request. The hearing is at 1:30 p.m. May 28 in the county commissioners' meeting room in the Court House. Please come and help!

LAND TALKS MOVING AHEAD

Negotiations for the purchase of a 140 acre addition to Dishman Hills Natural Area are proceeding smoothly. We hope we will be able to announce in the next bulletin that we have reached an agreement to purchase. Meanwhile, please keep the donations coming. Many thanks!

Dishman Hills were the site for Spokane Audubon Society's discovery hike March 17 and for Joy Peterson's back-packing - nature awareness group's visit April 20. We assisted on both.

We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving some of the natural areas of the Spokane area for people to enjoy and learn from.

We will be meeting at Kiwanis Camp Caro, S. 625 Sargent Road until further notice. Meetings are at 7:30 p.m. the fourth Wednesday. You are cordially invited.

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 (\$10) New? ___ Renewal? ___

\$ ___ Land purchase fund

\$ ___ In remembrance of _____

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

\$ ___ Student (\$5) and/or Living Lightly

_____ Your account number above your address.

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