



Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, April, 1998

BUTTERCUP HIKE SUCCESS

Mike Hamilton, our president, assisted by past president Lawrence Thieman, vice president Tom Rogers, treasure Helen Lininger, Guy Gifford from DNR, and James Francis, our new student volunteer from SCC, led about 20 hikers plus a one year old in Guy's wife's backpack on the annual Buttercup Hike April 18.

James, a major in a Natural Resource Program, has volunteered to patrol the Natural Area for the summer to fulfil a program requirement. In addition to patrol, he will provide hikers with information and participate in several conservation projects. We are very happy to have him on board, and you can look forward to meeting him if you plan to spend any time in the Hills this season.

On the hike Mike, a geologist, explained the history of the rocks and ravines. Hikers revelled in the wildflowers. Stealing the show were the bright yellow glacier lilies, though the pink of grass widows competed for attention. Buttercups were still common in spite of the early Spring and a few magenta shooting stars delighted the eye along trails. Adding to the splendour were yellowbells, fringe cups, and some balsamroot. A few blue camas buds promised flowers later and a delicate Woodsia fern greened a niche in a trailside rock outcrop. A shapeless brown mushroom was suspected of being a false morel or a Helvella.

We toured last year's burn area which is showing a heartening recovery even though a number of trees and serviceberry bushes were killed. The once blackened ground had a azure carpet of blue lip flowers and was brightened by buttercups, lilies, yellowbells, grass widows, whitlow grass, biscuitroot buds and even a few miner's lettuce. It was surprising that the seeds of the little annual plants survived the scorched earth as well as the perennials. In spite of predictions of a bad fire season, it seems very improbable there will be natural fires in the Hills due to lightning strikes. Our fire threat comes from human-caused fires resulting from smoking, campfires, or arson. Controlled burning is a current topic of the joint management team for the Natural Area.

A prize sighting was a great horned owl trying to catch forty winks in a big pine. The only other birds seen were towhees, and lots of robins. Someone reported tree frogs, and an immature long-toed salamander scurried from an accidentally upturned rock, far from a pond. It was too cold for most insects but Guy's axe exposed bark beetles in dead pines. A few carpenter ants were observed doing their job to hasten dead trees in their return to the soil. Also found were a small scarab, a brightly patterned black and orange carrion beetle, and another unidentified black beetle.

The terminus of the hike was Eagle Peak with a fine panorama of the Valley and lower Dishman Ridge. A good time was had by all.

CORRECTION !

There was a mistake in last month's article about Regal's new Internet homepage for the Dishman Hills. The Internet address should have been listed as <http://www.sd81.k12.wa.us/Regal/DishmanHills/56DHills.htm>. Computers don't forgive those little mistakes. So correct your bookmarks for this homepage. If you run a search engine for "Dishman Hills" you can get two "hits", one from REI, and one from Spokane Outdoors, both on the hiking opportunities in the Hills. For some reason one doesn't come up with Regal's DH homepage.

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 April and May meetings at Opportunity Elementary School, South 1109 Wilbur, the third Tuesday of the month at 7PM. During the summer months we meet at Camp Caro at the same date and time. You are cordially invited.

Our thanks to the following donors that have given permission to be listed here: Kathryn Bernard, Brad Blegen, Carolyn Boatsman, George Bourekis, Phyllis Burwell, Vickie Bushee, James Conaty, Robert Downing, Celesta Frost, Mary Ann Goodwin, Adeline Haynes, Beverly Hinton, Patricia Houff, Emma Jacklin, Carla Joyal, Helen Lininger, Carl Milton, Francis/June Potter, Tom Rogers, Iris Scheel, Harold Skinner, Helen Stowell, Jeanne Wilson, and several anonymous donors. **Again many thanks.**

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