

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

March 2004

SPRING TREK

This month there is a feature article in the Spokane Living magazine about the Dishman Hills Natural Area written by John Latta with some beautiful photography by Rich Leon. Rich also added a write-up on the history of the Natural Area and a tribute to our founder, Tom Rogers. Check it out. The following was submitted by Rich for our newsletter; so join him on a spring hike seen through the eyes of a talented nature photographer.

As I walk the trail a thin layer of fog blankets the area. The hillsides are carpeted with buttercups and glacier lilies covered with dewdrops. As the fog burns off the early morning sun makes the flowers sparkle like little diamonds. Today is a good day to be going for a hike in the Hills and a great day to be a photographer.

A little farther up the trail I hear the cry of a coyote and then another. Looking up into the Hills in the distance I see them and what looks to be a couple of pups. Too far away to get a good photo but still a wonderful sight to see. Not wanting to disturb them any further I head off on one of the side trails. After a short distance I stop to photograph a glacier lily and see many balsamroots that will soon be in bloom. Not far away I find shooting stars; a flower that goes back to ancient Greek time. As the story goes it was considered to have such beauty that it was protected by 12 Greek gods.

After reaching a spot overlooking the East Pond it is time for lunch. In the pond below I see a couple of mallards enjoying a swim on this beautiful spring day. My mind begins to reminiscence about Tom Rogers. Tom not only was a friend but also someone I would stay close to whenever he would led a hike. From him I was able to learn a lot about various wildflowers, mushrooms, and other things nature related. The Hills don't seem the same since he has been gone but he will always be with me in spirit. Without his vision and devotion over the years the Dishman Hills today would be a far different place. So the next time you go for a hike in the Hills give thanks to the man who helped to make it all possible. R.L.

FROG TIME

It's Spring time, the time for flowers, a time for the return of longer days and a breakaway from winter's cold grip. There is something else that "blooms" this time of year that may not be so obvious; it's the frogs. The Hills have a healthy population of these squat, green, large-eyed amphibians. They hang out around the numerous ponds that hold water this time of year.

Frogs, being cold-blooded, are not active at temperatures lower than 40 degrees. As things warm up they are coming out of their winter homes deep in the muddy pond bottoms. Frogs are never far from water (toads are dry land frogs) and their skin is thin and moist. They can both drink water and breath through their skins. Their powerful hind legs are suitable for swimming, digging, or jumping. Jumping on land enables frogs to move rapidly without leaving a scent trail, helping them escape from predators. Our frogs eat mainly insects and small pond bugs. They sit patiently, waiting for something attractive to pass by, then lasso it with a long, sticky tongue, swallowing their morsel whole. When a frog swallows, its eyes sink down through holes in the skull to help push the food down the throat.

When the well's dry we know the worth of water

Benjamin Franklin

While you often can't see the frogs that inhabit the ponds in the Dishman Hills, you will be able to hear them this time of year. Approach the ponds slowly, since they are very sensitive to the vibrations of your footsteps and will "shut up" if they detect the tremors of your walking. Frogs communicate with complex calls of ribbets and croaks made by forcing air through vocal cords. Spring is mating season and this when the amphibian choruses ring through the Hills. Females can lay up to 10,000 eggs that are attached to rocks and vegetation in the pond. They will hatch into tadpoles which grow into frogs in the warmer months of summer before the ponds dry up.

A healthy frog population is an indicator of a healthy environment, both locally and regionally. They are very sensitive to pollution, changes in the weather, and global effects such as increases in ultraviolet radiation due to thinning of the ozone layers in the atmosphere.

BUTTERCUP HIKE

Our annual Buttercup Hike is coming up next month on Saturday, April 17th. We will start at Camp Caro at 1pm on the north side of the Natural Area and hike a couple of hours up into the Hills to enjoy the season and chat about what's new with our Association. Some like to picnic at Camp Caro before the hike. See you there.

ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have any questions. We meet every other month on the third Tuesday at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur, in the teacher's lounge, 7pm. Our next meeting will be May 18.

The following are our February donors that have consented to be listed: Barbara Bailey, Bob Barbero, Stephen & Jan Barrett, Marjorie Benander, Robin Bishop, Eric & Beth Calkins, David Cole, David Fritz, Randall Greyerbiehl, Tim & Susan Henderson, Patty Houff, Frank Howard, Mark & Diane Hugger, Mary Jones, Jayce Keeling, Mary Kester, Rich Leon, Pat & Ruth Manners, Bettie Maron, Inland Empire Gardeners, Brian & Beth Miller, Trudy Miller, Pat & Marlene Montgomery, Barbara Morkill, Dandy Digger Garden Club, David Noble, Mike & Jeannette Ormsby, Iris Scheel and the Hobnailers with memorial donations for Walter Oslund, Linda Siverts, Joan Talbot, Pat Thompson, Beth & Ed Tietjen, Walt & Norma Trefry, Jeanne Wilson, , and two anonymous donors; THANKS

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