

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

September 2004

GREEN POLITICS

The Dishman Hills Association along with the Spokane Mountaineers, Inland NW Land Trust, and others led a hike last month over the top of Tower Mountain with candidates for the two County commissioner positions that will be filled in the fall election. Turnout was good and we talked more than walked. The tour started with a display of a newspaper travel section published this July in the Indianapolis Star featuring Spokane as a outdoor paradise. The article, titled "Spokane abounds in outdoor thrills", starts with:

"Spokane, Wash.- There's a major problem in trying to find outdoor adventure around here: Too many options, too little time. In Spokane there's white water rafting, wilderness canoeing, horseback riding, mountain biking, 50 miles of hiking trails, a paved bike trail, trout fishing, rock climbing, roaring waterfalls, and the biggest state park in Washington. Wildlife watchers may spot golden eagles, bear, moose, and elk. And that's just inside the city limits - an urban area less than a fourth the size of Indianapolis. It's a mind-boggling assortment of adventure."

The article mentions the Dishman Hills Natural Area as a "beautiful place for wild flowers and exploring." It was a good reminder how "easterners" view our fair western town from their sprawling megacities.

On our hike topics included those that rate high in importance with the conservation community, including supporting the Conservation Futures Program, working with Growth Management to save our natural spaces, and providing a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities for the community. Other topics covered saving natural scenery, consumption of natural space by development, and the positive economic impact of having a beautiful city. Candidates listened politely and seemed interested. Our goal was to educate rather than convert. We also learned from them about working with limited funds, mandated growth management requirements, and people's attitudes about public space in their neighborhood. All in all, it was a good exchange of ideas to support Green Spokane. As a continuing effort to make conservation and outdoor recreation part of the discussion of this year's election the Spokane Mountaineers will be having a public forum with the candidates on **September 30th, 7pm**, at REI on North Monroe, upstairs in the Community room.

NASTY NATURE

The woods are full of plants that at first glance seem unfriendly since they sting, bite, or otherwise say "leave me alone". Actually, they are an interesting and important part of the ecosystem.

The most recognizable is poison ivy, a plant that grows in the wetter areas around the ponds. Easy to recognize, poison ivy has clusters of three leaves with serrated edges and a hairy stem. Rashes occur when one touches the plant picking up an oil called urushiol which causes an allergic reaction. Right after contact (up to 20 minutes) you can wash the oil off with cold water to avoid the itch. A number of animals dine off the ivy including deer, rabbit, and heron. Goldfinches collect the hair off the stems for nest building.

One of the poisonous plants in our natural area, the black snakeroot, has an interesting place in American history. Named for the scaly surface of the root, snakeroot is believed to be the cause of

death of Abraham Lincoln's mother. She consumed poisonous milk from cows grazing on snakeroot. Evidently, the cows were unaffected by the poison but passed it on in their milk.

Stinging nettles are covered by tiny hollow hairs that break off and inject acid when one brushes up against the plant. Pain lasts an hour or so, but can be stopped by applying a base, like baking soda, to the inflamed area. The leaves can be boiled to supply edible greens and the boiling water can be used as an organic pesticide. Native Americans used the pithy stems to make string and rope. Red Admiral butterflies lay their eggs on the undersides of leaves so the young will have a meal as soon as they hatch.

Several plants in the natural area create thorny thickets that can rip and tear at anyone trying to pass through. The primrose is a good example. These thickets provide important habitat for birds and small animals that need protection from predators that don't like the "brier patch". Nasty nature is really nifty nature that deserves a little respect.

In nature there are neither rewards nor punishments, there are consequences - *Robert Ingersoll, American lawyer (1833-1919)*

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. The next meeting will be September 21.

The following are our July and August donors that have consented to be listed: Bob Barbero, Jim Berry, James & Janice Cooperstein, Francis Davis, Bill & Cindy Erler, Harriet & Bill Fix, David Fritz, Don Griffiths, Helen Gudgel, Hobnailers (for Joan Halliday), Joyce Kelley, Stephanie Lambert (for Gail Lambert), Kathryn Mann, Leo Middendorf, Mr & Mrs. C.R. Orcutt (for William Fritz), Lorna Ream (for Bob Stilger & Susan Virnig), Philip Spohn, Helen Stowell, Betty Stratten, Jan Strobeck, Lorraine & Dick Taylor, Beth & Ed Tietjin, Edwin & Betty Weilep, Jeanne Wilson, Art Zack & Nan Smith (for Eagle Scouts Will Doering & Danny Rowse, and four anonymous donors, Thanks for your summer support !.

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