

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

January 2005

POND PROJECT

A mid winter hike into the Natural Area found the forest basking in warm sunlight, temperatures in the upper 40's, and no snow at all on the ground. El Nino has taken the sting out of winter in the Pacific Northwest. Trails were full of hikers, dog walkers, family outings,



and exercise enthusiasts taking advantage of a break in winter's icy grip. Those traveling to the East-West ponds (still dry!) on the northwest side of the Natural Area will discover a new structure built there this winter by the Dept. of Natural Resources. They have placed an observation platform on the north side of East pond. This

project has been pending for several years. Our Association had expressed some reservations about it. We fear that a wooden structure here will become a focus for vandalism, as have similar structures in other parts of the County. The example that comes to mind is the observation structure on Spokane's NE side at Three Springs park, off Meenach Dr., next to the Spokane River. The structure is heavily vandalized and has become a meeting spot for backwoods partying, drinking, and who knows what else. Dept. Natural Resources hopes that the platform structure will signal to the public that they should stop right there to see the scenery and not proceed further into the pond bottom area which is very environmentally sensitive. It will be a fine place for student groups to get some arm-waving lectures on the pond ecology, and maybe in the future we can attach some information signs to the structure. The site of the platform, however, is on the very spot that generations of students, kids, and the generally curious have approached the edge of the pond to observe or sample the waters teeming with many wiggling things, and already it's obvious that foot traffic is working around the structure to approach closer to the pond. Time will tell.

BIRDS ON THE MOVE

The woods and the meadows in the Dishman Hills this time of year are conspicuous for what's not there, the birds that head south for the winter. Two to five billion birds fly from the snow and cold in the north to Central and South America for food and comfort each year. About 120 species of birds in the Pacific Northwest migrate south. Local species that vacation south include the yellow warbler (as far as Brazil), rufus hummingbird (as far as Mexico), cedar waxwing (as far as Central America), and the red-eyed vireo (as far as Peru). Migrating birds can travel several thousand miles in a week, fly up to three miles above the earth, and can navigate the same routes to the same destinations year after year. They know how to use the winds that move in different directions and different speeds at different altitudes. The general plan is to breed and flourish in the north where there is lots of room and it is safer (fewer predators) in the summer, and then head south for a fun, warm winter of ample food and lots of company. People do this.

Three hundred trout are needed to support one man for a year. The trout, in turn, must consume 90,000 frogs, that must consume 27million grasshoppers that live off of 1,000 tons of grass. G. Tyler Miller Jr., American Chemist

Migration highways channel birds in their travels and the part of the Pacific flight path passes us with the wet lands of Turnbull Wildlife refuge being the main attraction. How birds find their way is very interesting. Some birds oriented themselves to the compass by sensing the earth's magnetic fields or positioning by the sun during day or stars by night. Others depend on the lay of the land, smells, or sounds such as waves breaking on the shoreline. Memory of these navigation clues seem to be hard-wired into each species with many migrating birds abandoning their young as soon as they fledge, and a short time later the young migrate on their own.

\$ - 04

As we close the books on 2004, we find last year was a very good year indeed, and here are the numbers. Total income, mainly donations with some interest was \$12, 879. Expenses include \$782 for postage, \$139 for printing, \$397 for taxes, \$1,198 for insurance (now required by the County), \$65 for licenses, \$14 office supplies, and \$3,350 interest on our two land contacts. Our Tower Mountain property contract was paid down from \$69,127 to \$62, 900, and last year's new land purchase south of the Natural Area has a contract that remains at \$31,368. We are please to announce that once again there is a multiply effect of about 20 to 1, that's \$20 market value of land conserved to each dollar donated. This includes our successful conservation-futures nomination at the Iller Conservation Area

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 March 15th.

The following are our December donors that have consented to be listed: Andrew Ashmore, Steve Barrett, Patty Burkhardt, Earthworks recycling, Janet Hannink, Karen & Steve Heaps, Eris Heggem, Harry Hendron, Mike Henneberry, The Hobnailers, Shirley Hook, Rebecca & David Knapp, Jean Koch, Esther Lancaster, Patrick Lettenmaier, Linda Martin, Don & Gloria Nicol, Diane Rogers, Luella Rowberg, Spokane Mountaineers, Jan Strobeck, Patricia Sweeney, Mary Sweeting, Robert & Darlene Turner, Mary Ann Wilham, Jeanne Wilson, Harold Wimpy, and two anonymous donors. Thank you for this fantastic month of generous support!

Please use this form when sending **CONTRIBUTIONS or DUES**

All contributions are tax deductible.

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