



269 ACRES SAVED !!

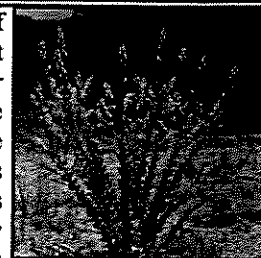
This month we have completed a major land deal that has saved 269 acres of prime conservation land just south of the Natural Area. To do this we have partnered with Spokane County Parks, and have provided over one quarter of a million dollars to the County's Conservation Futures Program for the land purchase! The Program has matched our money with almost twice that amount to complete the deal. The land has fabulous hiking opportunities with beautiful panoramic views from the ridge top. Public access to the new natural area (not yet named) is through State land at the end Thieman Ln off 25th Ave. in the Glenrose area. We plan to work to add this 160 acres of State Trust land into the new purchase. This deal is a major move in our current campaign to connect all of the conservation land holdings in the Tower Mountain-Dishman Hills area. We have already run several hikes to the acquisition this spring, so check out our web site to catch the next one. No doubt, there will be many more articles on this wonderful, new natural area in the near future. This deal is the culmination of several years of hard work by the Association, and those with sensitive hearing may detect the sound of Champaign corks popping in the distance. We are talking about having a celebration for the members and public sometime in May, stay tuned.

FINDING FLAX

There is a plant in the Natural Area, the Dalmatian toadflax, that is not part of the native ecology, but is part of the new ecology forming around the human urban environment. To some, the plant is an ornamental species for their garden, to others it's a noxious weed, while to others it's a foreign invader filling up our urban open spaces. What ever label you put on the plants, it reflexes the new ecology we are building in our city. Our cityscape is typified by a heat island effect where temperatures average up to 5 degrees higher due to the heat sinks associated with buildings and roads. The result is an extended growing season as compared to the surrounded country side. Additionally, cities form CO2 domes from auto, home, and industry emissions. Open space in cities is very fragmented and any successful plant better have a fast and efficient way of propagating. Habitat lost in urban areas is obvious, and lower biodiversity is coupled with larger populations of fewer species that prosper from lack of competition. There is also a general increase in available nitrogen from lawns and landscaping.

There will be a rain dance Friday night, weather permitting
George Carlin

Recent studies by Gonzaga University of Spokane's toadflax population, suggest that the successful adaption of this plant to our urban ecology, may be tied as much to the inability of the plants natural predator, the weevil, to adapt to the urban environment as to anything else. Individual toadflax plants were found to be larger in the Spokane city limits, and spaced further apart. Due to this weevil populations decreased in city areas, with the remaining insects more venerable to their natural predators. Since toadflax propagates from root regrowth, it can better survive urban mowing than rural spraying for weed control. Healthy native plant populations act as biological "fences" to the spread of toadflax, and we find that its' spread in the Dishman Hills is at the edges and in newly burned areas. We have tried, with great success, to introduce weevils to combat the noxious weeds. Look for the plants beautiful yellow flower bloom in June in the many open lots around town.



Toadflax
Pretty,? Noxious?

HIKE'S A HOOT

The 47th annual Buttercup hike was a success with over 25 people braving the early spring weather. The forest confirmed that we are having a late spring and just a few Buttercups were spotted, within sight of remaining snow patches. Grass Widow flowers were also seen. Most of the other spring flowers were just green shoots poking up through the forest floor. Many topics were discussed and participants were updated as to our most recent projects to expand and protect our natural spaces. There was no doubt that we are having a very wet season with the "ponds" filled to the brim, and midway spring gushing water like a bad leak in a broken pipe. A good time was had by all.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have questions. Our board meets every month on the third Tuesday. Our next meeting will be on May, 15th, 7 pm. We meet at the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal St. Visitors are always welcomed.

The following are our March donors that have consented to be listed: Pauline Hamlin, Esther Lancaster, Cynthia Langlois, Marilyn Miller, Mark & Linda Nelson, and one anonymous donor. This is an incomplete list for this month due to a vacation by the editor, so some donors names may be a month late.

YES, I want to help protect our natural areas in the Spokane Region

Enclosed is my tax-deductable donation of :

\$ 15* \$ 25 \$ 50 \$ 100 Other _____

* annual dues, due by June 30

Gift is a Memorial for: _____

Name: _____ Acc. No. (see address) _____ Please don't list me as a donor

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