

Geology & Ecology

Geology

The bedrock of the Dishman Hills is comprised of some of the oldest rock in Washington State, dating back 1.5 billion years. Bedrock, formed by sediments compacting under pressure, can be recognized by its layered appearance. Sandwiched within these layers are light-colored, quartz-rich deposits. About 70 million years ago volcanic magma from the earth's hot mantle just below the continental crust pushed upward into the fractures of bedrock and cooled to form the erosion-resistant granite outcropping of the Dishman Hills Area.

Ecology

The Dishman Hills NRCA is a transition area between forest, grassland, and shrubland biomes. Its geology combined with climatic conditions helped form many unique plant communities. About 18 to 22 inches of precipitation fall here each year. Moisture held in the shallow soils and cracks of rugged rocks supports a diverse mix of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, cottonwood, and plants such as oceanspray, Idaho fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, and moss. The NRCA is home to over 300 flowering plants, 73 species of mushrooms, and many lichens and ferns. Winter and spring runoff creates a vital water source for wetland plants and a wide variety of animals. These protected areas provide a sanctuary for squirrels, chipmunks, marmots, porcupines, white-tailed deer, hawks, ruffed grouse, coyotes, weasels, pheasants, and more than 50 species of butterflies and moths.



Things to Look For

Pine Drops

Pine Drops are identified by their brown-orange color and bulbous "lanterns". Pine Drops do not use chlorophyll to make food, but prefer to feast on the dead. You will find it only where the ground is rich in decaying matter, like in the Enchanted Ravine.



The Skull

Also known as "The Watcher", this ancient rock formation sees everyone who passes by on the trail and watches over the Enchanted Ravine. Look for the deep horizontal slits that contain its eyes. Also, notice the plant life that grows on or around The Skull. This is an example of the relationship between rock formations and native plant ecosystems.



Things to Look For

Witches' Broom

Witches' Broom is a deformity in a woody plant, such as a tree, where the natural structure of the plant has changed to form a dense mass of shoots growing from a single point, resembling a broom or a bird's nest.



Dwarf Mistletoe

Known also as the Vampire Plant, Dwarf Mistletoe sends its roots down into the vascular tissue of pine trees to steal water and nutrients from its host. It sends its seeds flying through the air to its next victim by firing a steam-powered cannon.



Lichens

Lichens are an example of a symbiotic relationship between fungi and algae. Fungi, the part we see, protects the algae inside from drying out while algae uses sunlight, carbon dioxide, and water to make sugar and food to share with the fungi.



Lichens are known as the Original Rock Eater because they produce acid which breaks down rock and facilitates the creation of new soil.

Project Supported By Funding From:



Welcome

The Dishman Hills Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA) is one of the most biologically diverse areas in Eastern Washington!

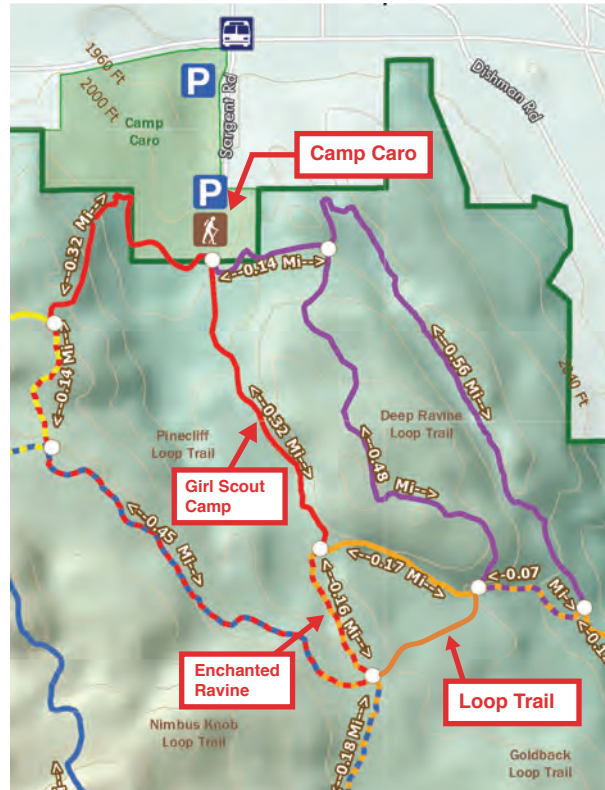
The protection of the Dishman Hills started in 1966, when Tom Rogers founded the Dishman Hills Conservancy (DHC) by purchasing 80 acres within the Natural Area. Today, over 530 acres are protected within the Natural Area, and nearly 3,000 acres make up the Dishman Hills in three units of land: the Natural Area, the Glenrose Unit, and the Iller Creek Unit.

The vision of the DHC is to acquire land by purchase and/or easement to connect all three units of land. Doing so will form one continuous conservation corridor between Camp Caro and the Stevens Creek Trailhead that is protected for conservation, education, and low-impact recreational opportunities. The 3,000+ acres currently protected within the conservation corridor are jointly managed by the DHC, Spokane County Parks, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

Trail Ethics

Utilize all of your senses. Do no harm.

As such, we ask that you follow these simple guidelines to protect wildlife and enjoy your visit. **1)** Stay on the established trails. **2)** Stop frequently and observe your surroundings. **3)** Don't be afraid to ask questions! **4)** Leave nature in nature. Wildflowers make lousy bouquets - leave them be! **5)** Take photos to share and remember **6)** Have fun! Remember, it's not about the destination - it's the journey.



Enchanted Ravine Trail Map



To learn more about the Dishman Hills Conservancy, visit our website at DishmanHills.org.

The Enchanted Ravine

A Walking Tour

