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WASHINGTON TRAILS

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Northwest Exposure

Photo contest winners revealed!

Olympic Discovery Trail
Volunteer Appreciation
Trail-Tested Hiking Boots



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Dave Schiefelbein



Paul Raymaker



Janet Holm

WASHINGTON TRAILS

Staff Picks: What trail tops your to-do list for 2012?

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Washington Trails Association is a volunteer-driven nonprofit membership organization working to preserve, enhance and promote hiking opportunities in Washington state through collaboration, education, advocacy and trail maintenance.

Washington Trails Association was founded by Louise B. Marshall (1915–2005). Ira Spring (1918–2003) was its primary supporter. Greg Ball (1944–2004) founded the volunteer trail maintenance program. Their spirit continues today through contributions from thousands of WTA members and volunteers.

WTA Highlights »

A few items we just had to share.



Neal Myrick of Groundwire presents WTA communications director Lauren Braden the Groundwire Connector Award for Engagement Leadership, as Susan Elderkin and Karen Daubert look on.

WTA Earns Four Stars



Charity Navigator, one of the nation's leading charity evaluators, has awarded Washington Trails Association its highest four-star rating—for the sixth time! WTA has earned this highly coveted rating for sound fiscal management and a commitment to accountability and transparency.

MEMBER NOTICE: Last fall, WTA moved to a new membership database. Please contact us at membership@wta.org, or (206) 625-1367, if you notice any errors on your magazine mailing label, or on other correspondence from WTA.

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News+Views

The Front Desk »

“WTA is my absolute favorite.”

“I have supported WTA for years because of the people.”

“Everyone works so hard and has such a fun time!”

“WTA has a great mission and its work is transformative.”

“WTA is a good solid investment.”



Karen Daubert

Executive Director
karen@wta.org

“WTA Is the Best!”

Comments like these are what I heard over and over again during my first three months on the job, traveling throughout Washington meeting with volunteers, land managers, donors, crew leaders and corporate partners.

First, I traveled to eastern Washington where I met 30 super trail workers who have transformed trails near Spokane and in the Colville National Forest. Next, at Seattle’s volunteer appreciation event, I met with dozens of volunteers from throughout the Puget Sound region who listened as one land manager after another thanked them—and WTA—for critical trail work.

I heard the same in Vancouver when I talked with one of our new youth members who, with incredible pride, reported on the 80-foot section of trail he and his team built on a Volunteer Vacation. And it was the same on the Olympic Peninsula. Our government partners praised WTA for the quality and quantity of work, and reported that they foresee even more reliance on WTA volunteers for key trail work in the years ahead.

So with this New Year’s issue, I have resolved to continue to meet with partners from throughout the state, to continue to build upon this solid base as we move forward with an incredible year ahead of us. And speaking of the new year—because I am a consummate list maker—by mid-January I will have made my list of New Year’s resolutions that will guide me through this coming year.

Last year was really different. I had left my job of nine years and was taking an entire

year to be with family and friends and to accomplish some more physical goals. The list included miles hiked, trails visited, peaks climbed and places explored. I loved that list, and it will always remind me of a magical year.

This year I have a new job, new friends and colleagues, new family priorities, and a more structured schedule. But I’m still enjoying making my list, which will include:

- Hiking at least twice a month rain or shine and submitting trip reports on the adventures
- Taking one multiday backpacking trip in Washington
- Helping introduce at least five young people to the joys of hiking
- Spending at least five days working on the trail, whether it be day trips, a Volunteer Vacation, or a backcountry response team

I hope your own New Year’s resolutions include connecting with trails—and with WTA—in the coming months. And I hope to meet as many of you as possible this year as we host events, participate in work parties, take part in Hiker Lobby Day and hike—just for fun!

In the meantime, happy New Year from your happy executive director.

Warmly,

Karen & Daubert

The Signpost »

The Journey Is the Destination

That phrase adorns one of my favorite hiking t-shirts. It was one I purchased at a tiny gear shop in the eastern Sierra, after a particularly good week of backpacking around Yosemite's high country many years ago. It's since become my motto as a hiker—and no doubt many of you are familiar with it. As I wrap up this, my first full issue of *Washington Trails* as the new editor, I found myself pondering this expression, and what it means to me.

I've been hiking for as long as I can remember. In my early years, it was the annual family camping trip to the Kern River or Lake Isabella in the southern Sierra. After high school, it was persuading my dad to hike the Grand Canyon. After meeting my wife, Mitzi—who shares my same love of the outdoors—it was tromping all over the high country regions of Yosemite and Kings Canyon.

Longing for change and a better living experience, we left Southern California behind and moved to the Northwest in 2005. We were still entrenched in our respective careers—Mitzi in social services, myself in commercial marketing—yet now we were so much closer to the environment we cherished. Wilderness was at our doorstep—and we were determined to take advantage of it to the fullest.

We began hiking at every opportunity: Mount Hood, the Columbia Gorge, Olympic, the Enchantments. We were always looking for a new area to explore. My previously casual interest in photography began to flourish, and I took classes with a several outdoor photography schools. I wanted to share what I was doing and seeing; to convey to others how spectacular wilderness could be, and how important it is to preserve and protect.

It started by posting photographs and trip reports on *Backpacker's* web site, where I was soon recruited to become a regional correspondent for the Northwest. Wanting to acquaint myself with the local hiking community as well, I became involved with Washington Trails Association in a similar fashion, contributing photographs and

occasional editorial pieces. That pursuit of a journalism degree so many years ago (with a minor in geology) was finally for a purpose.

I began to see a new journey taking root. Not one through the wilderness, but a parallel journey to promote wilderness. My work with *Backpacker* progressed, as did my efforts with WTA and *Washington Trails*. We volunteered with local trail maintenance groups. I soon became disenchanted with my corporate position, longing for the opportunity to immerse myself in this new journey.

2010 was a pivotal year. After several years of planning, I was going back to the Sierras to hike the John Muir Trail—one of my life-list aspirations. At the same time, having had enough of the rigors of the corporate world—and with Mitzi's blessing—I made a clean break to focus entirely on my true passion—my new journey—that of promoting appreciation of the outdoors through word and image.

I spent the next year doing freelance work, mostly for *Backpacker*, much for WTA, and a few other travel publications. Though the pay was small and infrequent, I was happy, just biding my time for the right opportunity. That was when Lace Thornberg, previous editor of *Washington Trails*, and who I had the pleasure of working with for over two years, informed me that she was moving on and that the magazine was going to be in need of a new editor. This was the destination my journey was leading me to.

Far from an ending, this is but a fork in my ongoing journey—a new path with new discoveries. One that I get to take with the production of each issue going forward. And one that I'll be joined on by all the members, contributors and volunteers who share the same enthusiasm for the promotion and preservation of our trails and wilderness areas. I hope you enjoy the journey. I know I will.

Cheers,



Do you have a passion for hiking and wilderness?

Do you enjoy sharing your experiences with others?

Are you savvy behind a pen as well as a camera?

Then *Washington Trails* is looking for you!

We're recruiting new regional correspondents to help produce and plan future issues.

If this sounds like it's the trail for you, then email editor@wta.org for more info.



**Eli
Boschetto**

Editor
editor@wta.org

Meet Our Members!



Janice Van Cleve

Janice Van Cleve took her very first hikes in the Colorado Rockies when she was only eight years old. She didn't start hiking in Washington until 1994, and finally joined the Washington Trails Association in 2003. She dove right in with a hike up Wallace Falls with *Washington Trails'* former editor, Lace Thornberg.

Janice dipped her feet into trail maintenance in 2005 with a work party on Taylor Mountain led by long-time WTA crew leader Mike Owens. Never one for half measures, she followed up that work party just a few months later with a weeklong work party at Holden Village. Since then, she's been on nine more volunteer vacations, including the Middle Fork Snoqualmie, Marmot and Clarice Lakes, Stuart and Colchuck Lakes, Mount Rainier's Carbon River, the Teanaways, and Twisp Valley.

Professionally, Janice has been engaged in electoral and issue politics for over 25 years. As an advocate for wilderness, she's a tremendous asset to WTA's work. She has attended three of our Hiker Lobby Days in Olympia and has spent years cultivating close relationships with many state representatives and senators.

"The secret to getting access is by working on the campaigns of candidates," she says. "When you show up to volunteer for a politician you're made to feel very welcome, and they listen to you later." Janice's relationships with elected officials and the real-life experience she's amassed by working on gay and lesbian civil rights make her a unique and invaluable resource for WTA's advocacy efforts.

Thanks, Janice, for all your hard work to make Washington an even better place to hike!

— Jonathan Guzzo

You Said

In a recent Facebook poll, we asked about your New Year's hiking resolutions, and which trails top your list for 2012. Here's what you had to share.

"Didn't get to climb Mount St. Helens last year—too much snow. Hopefully this year I will make it."

— Michael Andrews

"Enchanted Valley eluded us AGAIN last year! We will do it this year, and we will do it with our goats!"

— Rachael McIntosh Taylor

"Hike the Wonderland Trail—in nine days!"

— Rosie Sgrosso

"I'm going to hike the Wonderland Trail with my hubby for our tenth anniversary."

— Tina Dibble Beckendorf

"Write another hiking guidebook!!"

— Craig Romano

"To hike way more in 2012 than last year. Working on my top 15 hike list already!"

— Aubrey Reed

"Do the Alpentail Loop—Denny Creek, Melakwa Lake, then cross-country to Snow Lake."

— Uli Steidl

"To create a schedule that affords me more time to get on some WTA work parties, and more Hike-a-Thon miles. Oh, and to actually reach the glacier camp on Sahale!"

— Gwen Tollefson

"Klapatche Park and Summerland are on my list for this year."

— Jon Lee

"Would really like to do the Enchantments again. Went a few years back but wasn't able to make it to the peaks because we had to take one of our members back down for safety concerns. That place is amazing!"

— Ben Carlson

"I would really like to get back to see Glacier Peak. With the road closures on the mountain loop and the extra snow this year, I wasn't able to make it."

— Dave Nielsen

Q&A

Lace Thornberg chats with Mike Gauthier about climbing on Mount Rainier, working in D.C. and his new post as chief of staff at Yosemite National Park

You left your post as Mount Rainier's chief climbing ranger in 2008. What have you been up to since then?

I've spent the previous two years as a congressional fellow with the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. The first year I worked on the U.S. Senate Committee for Energy and Natural Resources, specifically on the National Park Subcommittee with Sen. Mark Udall, an active mountain climber.

The second year was spent in the Department of the Interior working for the assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. That office oversees the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—and like the U.S. Senate, it was very political. During those two years, I learned how legislation is crafted and passed and how the Department of the Interior interacts with other agencies, the U.S. Congress and the White House.

So, what was more dangerous—being a climbing ranger on Mount Rainier or being a legislative specialist in D.C.?

Definitely being a climbing ranger! Though the political pitfalls in D.C. are numerous, mistakes there only affect your career. A mistake in climbing can cost you a limb—or a life! At times, I was able to mix climbing and politics, like in 2009 when I climbed Mount Rainier with Sen. Maria Cantwell. On that trip, the Senator and I discussed some of the challenges that the National Park Service faces today, as well as the inspirational opportunities of America's most treasured landscapes.

What will you be doing in your new role as chief of staff at Yosemite National Park?

I'll be managing a number of high-level programs for the Office of the Superintendent. The job is part policy development and part operational. At Yosemite, there are a number of important and politically sensitive programs that span internal park divisions. They also engage and interact with our external friends and partners such as the City of San Francisco and the Yosemite Conservancy. In addition to these types of programs, I'll be shepherding high-profile projects for the superintendent, and serving as a liaison to some of our local communities.

What would you say is going to be the biggest difference between working at Mount Rainier and Yosemite?

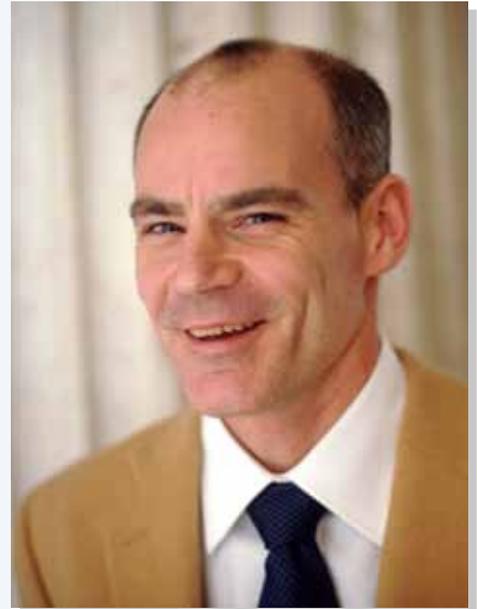
Yosemite is a much more complicated park. For example, there is a U.S. District Court, a post office, banking services and a grocery store in the valley. While both parks are iconic, Yosemite has much more ardent supporters and defenders that try to influence, steer and shape the park whenever possible. Yosemite also has the largest concession contract of the national park system, with over 1,200 Park Service employees during the peak season. Annually, Yosemite receives over 4 million visitors whereas Mount Rainier sees about 1.7 million.

Mount Rainier National Park has just named a new superintendent, Randy King. Did you ever work with him? And what unique qualities do you think he'll bring to the role?

Yes, I did get to work with Randy on a few projects, and we've climbed Mount Rainier together. He'll bring consistency and continuity to Mount Rainier National Park. He's an outstanding choice for the National Park Service, and I'm very happy for him to be there. He'll definitely be an asset to the park as well as the people who love "The Mountain."

Do you think you'll be getting back to Washington anytime soon?

Now that I am back on the West Coast, I intend to reconnect with Washington state. I own a beautiful piece of property on the mountainside above Hoodport with an incredible view of the Puget Sound, Seattle and all of the Central Cascades. There, with the help of many friends from Mount Rainier, we are building a fire lookout and cabin as a getaway location. Washington—especially the Olympic Peninsula, where I'm originally from—is a very special place to me, so I'll be trying to get "back home" often.♦



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To discuss trail issues online, visit the Signpost Blog at www.wta.org/blog/ or follow WTA on Facebook or Twitter.

Hiking News »

The Nisqually Wildlife Refuge Restoring an historic estuary

Two years ago, managers at the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge began tearing down dikes and allowing salt water to flow once again into what had been farmland. They moved the earth from the dikes back into the “borrow ditches” from which it had come, and constructed a new dike to partially bisect the refuge, helping to separate freshwater from salt water and allow construction of a new boardwalk trail. Next, they flooded, mowed and disc-plowed the invasive reed canary grass, constructed a logjam near the Nisqually River, and planted snags for raptors to perch on. All this for the purpose of restoring the natural habitat of the Nisqually delta.

For centuries, the delta of the Nisqually River—which flows off of Nisqually Glacier at Mount Rainier—was a saltwater marsh, home to bountiful wildlife. The river ran black with Chinook salmon from late summer into fall, providing food for the local inhabitants.

In 1904, a progressive lawyer from Seattle, Alson Brown, bought the land and established a dairy farm that produced milk, sausage, eggs and butter. Brown had the dikes erected to hold back the salt water. Next, World War I exacerbated natural landscape loss in the region when the army took over two-thirds of the Nisqually Reservation to construct Fort

Lewis in 1917. And finally, the construction of Interstate 5 in 1967 cut right through the delta, creating another artificial dike. It wasn't until 1974 that it was decided to preserve the area as the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge.

For many years the refuge was a place for duck hunters, bird watchers, Indian fishermen and visitors who just wanted to walk the perimeter trail. The Nisqually fought for the right to continue their traditional fishing at places like Frank's Landing, southeast of the refuge. In 2008, three cooperating groups—the wildlife refuge, the Nisqually Tribe, and Ducks Unlimited—launched the largest estuary restoration project in the Northwest, with the purpose of restoring salmon runs and protecting migratory birds.

The project began by removing the Brown Farm Dike over the summer and fall of 2009. This process reconnected 762 acres to the estuary, allowing 21 miles of tidal channels to meander mostly at will again, and letting McAllister Creek once again find its natural channel. On the east side of the Nisqually River, the Nisqually Tribe also removed dikes and restored a surge plain forest.

The refuge now has three habitat areas. As the tides have moved in north of the new dike, the site is in transition from a freshwater to an estuarine habitat. Since there is an abundance of native salt marsh in the estuary already, there were ready seed sources, so no planting needed to be done.

“It's easier to let the plants determine where they want to be,” says Jesse Barham, one of the refuge's restoration biologists. “Tidal marsh plants such as pickleweed (*Sarcocornia perennis*), fat-hen saltbush (*Atriplex patula*), and sand-spurry (*Spergularia marina* and *S. canadensis*) have begun to colonize the site.”

On the eastern end of the refuge, Barham has worked more actively to restore important habitat for juvenile salmon and migratory songbirds. Some 25,000 species were planted to re-create tidally influenced forested wetlands (riparian surge plain forest), a relatively rare habitat type due to its strategic location at the confluence of rivers and salt water. Such habitat has traditionally

Opposite: The recently reopened White Chuck Road
Photo by Kim Brown

Bottom: View the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge wetlands from the boardwalk trail
Photo by Megan MacKenzie



attracted settlers and was frequently targeted for development. South of the new dike, schoolchildren have planted bigleaf maple, red alder, black twinberry, salmonberry, crabapple and a few Sitka spruce.

Reed canary grass—an invasive species that grows very tall and crowds out more beneficial habitat varieties—was brought in as pasture for the particularly wet ground. It had been in the refuge for at least one hundred years and once covered more than 50 percent of the area. After human intervention, the grass now affects only 1 percent of the estuary restoration area and is no longer a threat to native plants.

In the estuary as a whole, young salmon are finding the food they need. Four species of juvenile salmonids have been documented using one of the restored sloughs: chinook, pink, chum and coho. Chinook benefitting from the restoration could return to the river as early as 2013 or 2014.

More shorebirds are also visible now, coming farther in at high tide and using the mudflat habitat, where tidal levels can vary by up to 20 feet. During the first week of October last year, local bird watchers were excited by the reported sighting of a rare ruff, (*Philomachus pugnax*), a medium-sized wading bird more common to northern Eurasia. Typically, several thousand waterfowl overwinter at Nisqually, including American widgeon, green-winged teal, northern pintail, mallards and geese.

Besides the benefits of having ducks to hunt, fish to eat and eagles to watch, the restoration has also had benefits for hikers. The perimeter dike-walk and the trail to the council grounds were lost during the rehabilitation, but a new boardwalk, 5,524 feet long, opened February 1, 2011. A large part of its funding came from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. This new Nisqually Estuary Trail allows an increasing number of visitors to explore the wetlands and view more than 300 species of birds in a more natural habitat.

From the refuge visitor center to the end of the boardwalk is a 4-mile out-and-back. The final 700-foot stretch of the boardwalk is closed during waterfowl hunting season (October through January). The older Twin Barns Loop Trail, including the 1-mile riparian boardwalk, is a delightful stroll for all ages. ♦

To visit the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, take I 5 to exit 114 at Martin Way and follow signs to the entrance. Admission is \$3 per vehicle. For more info, call the refuge at (360) 753-9467, or visit www.fws.gov/nisqually.

– Judy Bentley



Two Long-Closed Roads Reopen to the Public

This past fall, two long-closed roads reopened to vehicles, allowing hikers to access places that had been mostly off-limits for years.

The Upper Icicle Road near Leavenworth reopened to motorized use in early October. This popular road had been closed beyond Ida Creek since May 2008 when a landslide and flooding took out a portion of the roadbed. With the reopening of the road, snowshoe adventures beckon up Icicle Creek this winter, as well as a half-dozen major trails that will once again be accessible this spring and summer.

The Icicle Gorge Loop trail is an easy hike well-suited for families that starts at Chatter Creek and wanders through a gorge along Icicle Creek. The Upper Icicle Creek trail at the end of the road is a wide path, with groves of cottonwood and majestic old-growth conifers. Experienced hikers can look forward to getting back to the Chatter Creek trail to Lake Edna later in summer. Not for the faint of heart, this 12.5-mile round trip requires 4,500 feet of elevation gain (to 6,735 feet)—but the payoff is huge.

Less than a week after the Upper Icicle reopened, the White Chuck Road also opened its gates for the first time since 2003. Ten years ago, hikers by the dozens rumbled down the road on their way to launch backpacking trips into the Glacier Peak Wilderness, access the Pacific Crest Trail, and soak themselves in popular Kennedy Hot Springs. Then came a massive rain- and windstorm in November 2003. The White Chuck River and Road were pummeled by flooding and mudslides. Kennedy Hot Springs was buried under several feet of debris, gone forever. Since then, the White Chuck Road has been closed to vehicles.

Now open, the White Chuck Road (FR 23) once again allows vehicle travel to just beyond the turnoff for Rat Trap Pass (FR 27). After that point, the road has been decommissioned. The payoff for hikers on the White Chuck is long term. The White Chuck Bench Trail is washed out in several places, and the U.S. Forest Service is working to get the funding to make repairs. The repaired road will also improve access to Crystal and Meadow Lakes and Circle Peak. Before the 2003 flooding, the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest was improving the trail network for these destinations, adding new trail miles that were designed to eliminate dull road walks. That effort was derailed eight years ago, but could pick up again as the road access makes it easier to acquire needed funding.

Finally, there is the White Chuck Trail at the end of the original road. This trailhead used to provide access to the PCT through one of its most spectacular stretches along the west side of iconic Glacier Peak. Lake Byrne, Kennedy Ridge and White Chuck Glacier have been virtually unexplored by hikers for the better part of a decade. It's going to be a few years before this changes, but improvements are possible in the future. ♦

– Susan Elderkin

The Olympic Discovery Trail Gets a Presidential Spotlight

New project puts local trails groups at odds with the national park

The Olympic Discovery Trail (ODT) has new friends in high places. Under the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, President Obama has selected this trail as one of two Washington state projects that show promise in helping citizens appreciate the outdoors and connect with the country's natural settings.

The initiative will help facilitate the convergence of the ODT (connecting Port Townsend to La Push) with the 1,200-mile-long Pacific Northwest Trail, stretching from Montana's Glacier National Park to Washington's Olympic National Park.

The initiative was the culmination of a ten-month process in which Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and other Interior officials held over 50 meetings around the country. They asked governors, stakeholders and citizens how they needed help connecting people to the outdoors while fostering conservation, recreational and economic opportunities. Over 10,000 citizens attended the meetings.

"The America's Great Outdoors Initiative turns the conventional wisdom about the federal government's role in conservation on its head," Salazar said. "Rather than dictate policies or conservation strategies from Washington, it supports grassroots, locally driven initiatives."

The Olympic Discovery Trail is just such a grassroots project. The trail got its start in 1988 when three bicyclists thought of turning a recently abandoned railway corridor into a nonmotorized public access path along the Olympic lowlands on the Pacific coast. Since then, 40 miles of the intended 120 miles

have been paved for the transportation and recreation of pedestrians, bicyclists, mountain bikers, skateboarders, equestrians, and mobility-impaired people.

The trail ventures through towns, tribal jurisdictions, Sequim Bay State Park and Olympic National Park. As a shared-use pathway, it has been built with minimum grade, 5 percent or less when possible, a width of 10 feet, and a slip-resistant surface.

The Peninsula Trails Coalition, the nonprofit organization behind the ODT's creation, is currently at odds with Olympic National Park over the planned incorporation of the Spruce Railroad Trail section. Following Lake Crescent's north shore, the Spruce Railroad Trail sits atop the bed of the historic Spruce Railway.

Of four alternatives proposed, the park's preferred plan would make the trail 6 feet wide for much of its length, maintaining a section of trail at an 18 percent grade. Clallam County's proposed plan would keep the Spruce Railroad Trail in accordance with the rest of the ODT. Olympic National Park is concerned that expanding the trail to 8 feet will disturb the railbed, which has historic value.

The Peninsula Trails Coalition, in accord with Clallam County's proposal, would like the Spruce Railroad Trail widened to at least 8 feet with a 4-foot-wide stock trail immediately adjacent, and leveling the 18 percent grade section. This would allow the entire length of the ODT to be ADA-accessible. They contend that the park's preferred 6-foot width and 18 percent grade is too narrow and steep for cyclists and people with mobility impairments.

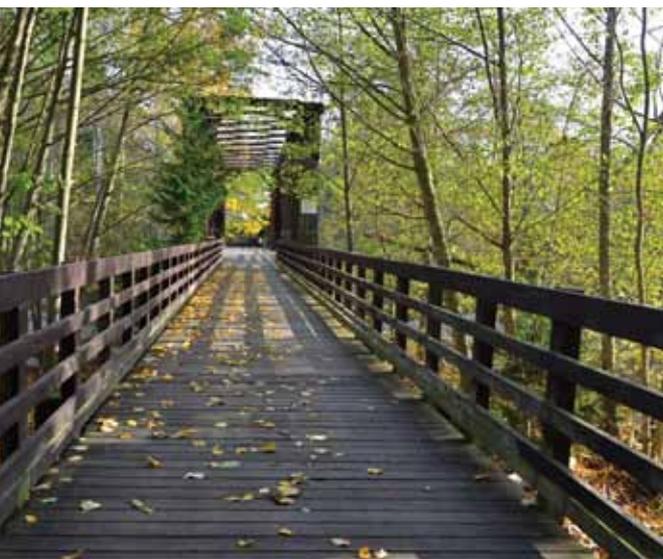
For the development of the Olympic Discovery Trail, the Department of the Interior will provide technical and financial assistance to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Washington State Department of Transportation, recreation and conservation organizations, and local tribes to define, design and acquire key segments of the trail.

Washington's other project selected under the America's Great Outdoors Initiative is the Lower Columbia River Water Trail, a 146-mile paddleboat trail that connects Bonneville Dam to the Pacific Ocean. The proposed action would create another water trail farther upriver, eventually creating a water trail the length of the Columbia River through Washington state to be designated as a National Water Trail. ♦

— Andrew Coghill

The Olympic Discovery Trail through Railroad Bridge Park, near Sequim

Photo by Bob Griffith



State Parks Facing Dramatic Budget Shortage This Year—Even With the Discover Pass

The Washington State Parks system—the fourth oldest in the nation—will be celebrating its centennial next year—but it may be in trouble. Ongoing budget and funding crises continue to plague this valuable cultural and natural resource.

This year, State Parks are looking at a shortage of at least \$11 million, through a combination of general fund cuts and less-than-expected sales of the new Discover Pass. The park system is now facing even more staffing cuts looking at turning over 160 full-time positions into seasonal jobs. This is in addition to ongoing deferrance of maintenance projects. Actual closure of units is not yet on the table—but it could be soon.

“The situation [will] be bleak if Discover Pass and other revenues do not increase,” said State Parks Director Don Hoch. “Our goal is to keep parks open, but we need the help and support of the public to do that.”

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission has already started working on a new plan it hopes will reinvent the state park system by expanding fundraising and volunteer opportunities, developing marketing and promotional campaigns, and developing new operations and staffing models. It will also be looking at a variety of ways to improve the Discover Pass—including making it transferable between two vehicles—and encourage its purchase.

The commission is also planning to ask the state Legislature and governor to retain and strengthen the Discover Pass as a principal source of operating funds, plus retain its general fund budget, to help support the park system and keep it safe for public use.

“The Discover Pass is a vital funding source for state parks,” says commission chair Joe Taller. “We are asking the public to support and protect state parks by purchasing the Discover Pass.”

Washington Trails Association is a strong supporter of the Discover Pass as a method of funding our state parks and DNR lands, and will be continuing to advocate an improved Discover Pass during this year’s legislative session. ♦

State parks like Larrabee will be relying heavily on Discover Pass funding to stay open this year. Photo by Andrea Ginn



Fee-Free Days for 2012

The U.S. Department of the Interior has announced fee-free days for 2012. Entry fees will be waived to encourage everyone to get out and enjoy our public lands.

The fee-free days apply only to federal lands. In Washington, that includes Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks (North Cascades National Park is always free), all national forest lands, national wildlife refuges and Bureau of Land Management lands. These are areas that require a Northwest Forest Pass, America the Beautiful Interagency Pass, park-specific pass or a federal day use-pass.

- ▶ January 14–16, 2012 (MLK weekend)
- ▶ April 21–29 (National Park Week)*
- ▶ June 9, 2012 (Get Outdoors Day)
- ▶ September 29 (National Public Lands Day)
- ▶ October 14 (National Wildlife Refuge Week)**
- ▶ November 10–12 (Veteran’s weekend)

Note that these fee-free days do NOT include state parks, DNR lands or state Fish and Wildlife areas that now require a Discover Pass.

*National Parks only **National Wildlife Refuges only



OPEN HOUSE
 You're invited to join us in celebrating a year in our new location.

- ➔ Meet Executive Director, Karen Daubert
- ➔ Talk with the staff and board
- ➔ Learn what we have planned for 2012
- ➔ Enjoy light hors d'oeuvres and beverages

We hope to see you there!

When: January 26th 5pm-7pm
 Where: 705 2nd Ave #300 Seattle

WTA at Work

Trail Maintenance »

2011 in Review

Despite last year's long rains and lingering snow, volunteers turned out impressive numbers in coming to the aid of trails

Last year was a crazy year—no one will deny it. In the heights of Washington's mountains, the snow fell, and the snow stayed. By late August you could still see blankets of white clinging to the peaks of the Washington landscape.

And still, volunteers came out in droves. True, they couldn't get to those trails that were still frosted with several feet of snow, but they could—and 2,600 determined WTA volunteers did—retreat to the valleys to hack away at overgrown huckleberry brush and log-out trees that had fallen across trails.

In the end, even the snow couldn't deter WTA volunteers. By the end of the year, WTA volunteers had logged nearly 100,000 hours of trail work for 2011—around the same amount of work that volunteers had done the year before.

In 2011, WTA crews built new trails at places like Cape Horn in southwest Washington. They returned to maintain their old favorites on projects like Holden Village and Tiger Mountain. They came out on day trips, and they went on weeklong Volunteer Vacations. They traveled into the heart of the Pasayten Wilderness and built trails in more populated areas like Evans Creek Preserve. All together, WTA volunteers ventured out on 720 work parties this year, spending over 1,000 days on 153 different trails.

"Last year was a crazy big year because of the weather," said Tim Van Beek, project coordinator at WTA. "But our volunteers came together to make it a success."

And a success it was, in all four of WTA's trail work departments. Whether they were going out on day trips, Backcountry Response Teams (BCRT), Volunteer Vacations or youth work parties, volunteers braved the snow to help keep Washington's sacred natural places hikable.

Day Trips

At WTA you have the volunteers who have been coming out on trail every Thursday for the past ten years, and then you have the volunteers who have never touched a Pulaski before. But regardless of trail experience, by the end of the day every volunteer knows the basics of trail maintenance. Last year, thousands of volunteers of varying experience levels came out on one of the 580 day trips that WTA offered across the state.

And volunteers didn't only maintain already-created trails, they also connected hikers to previously untrod natural areas by breaking earth for the first time on brand-new trails.

At Evans Creek Preserve, over 250 WTA volunteers spent 7,300 hours helping the City of Sammamish break tread for the various gravel and dirt trails that now run through their new park. Last year WTA continued to develop the Cape Horn Trail in southwest Washington, building a sturdy wooden bridge and retreading the trail to meet the new bridge. This project, begun in 2010, now bypasses areas hosting peregrine falcon nests that would have been endangered by the previous trail.



Sarah Rich

Program Assistant
sarah@wta.org

WTA also continued to hammer away on the boardwalk they began building at Grand Ridge Park in 2010. The 600-foot-long boardwalk is made out of all native materials and now allows easy access between Duthie Hill Park and I-90.

Hiking back down the mountain at the end of a day of trail work, every volunteer knows the satisfaction of recognizing the very physical results of a day's worth of trail maintenance. So imagine the satisfaction that WTA volunteers felt last year when they actually finished the construction of entire trails like the West Fork Foss River trail and the Glacier Basin Trail.

The Glacier Basin Trail had been in trouble since 2006, when a massive flood on the White River wiped it out. Thanks to WTA volunteers' hard ongoing work, the second section of the Glacier Basin reroute was completed. Under the leadership of Pete Dewell and Arlen Bogaards, WTA also completed the construction of a new mile-long trail on Guemes Mountain in the San Juan Islands.

Backcountry Response Teams

It is only the hardest volunteers who venture out into the wilderness, carrying everything they need to survive for the next three to eight days on their backs—plus lugging shovels and Pulaskis along with them as well. Almost 150 such volunteers came out on the 37 BCRT trips that WTA offered this year.

In addition to working on trails in the North Cascades, crews also worked on projects like the Lewis River Trail in southwest Washington, locations on the Olympic Peninsula's Six Ridge Trail and several trails in the Colville National Forest in Eastern Washington.

Last year was the first time WTA held several BCRTs on the Colonel Bob Trail in the Olympics. This trail was devastated by a windstorm in 2007 and since then, blown-down trees have lain across the tread, making it difficult for hikers to reach the peak via Colonel Bob. WTA went to work repairing the trail.

On the Snow Lake Trail in the Enchantments, volunteers hunkered down for six days to build puncheon. At Quartz Creek Trail in the Mount St. Helens region, they reworked the tread and logged-out some major trees. At Dingford Creek, they responded to a U.S. Forest Service need late in the season and logged out several sections so that no contractor was needed.

But BCRTs aren't all work. Volunteers brought their own personal canoes out at Bead Lake in Eastern Washington; they paddled across the lake, hauling all their tools and gear to their campsite. Adventures like this make BCRTs both fun and rewarding.

Volunteer Vacations

It was Volunteer Vacations that were most affected by the unusually heavy snow last year. By mid-July WTA could tell that the snow in many backcountry locations was becoming an issue. Staff worked with land managers to change or postpone projects, but even in late August several backcountry trails were still covered in snow.

Never before had WTA had to move so many trips around. The season started out with 30 adult Volunteer Vacations on the agenda. Six of those trips were cancelled, and another ten had to be moved to different locations. "You can have just one stretch of snow that's 20 feet by 5 feet, and it's all over," explained Van Beek.

Fortunately for WTA, volunteers who couldn't access backcountry trails for their own personal hiking understood the particular need for trail work last year. And so they came out in impressive numbers on weeklong Volunteer Vacations at lower-elevation projects.

Volunteers logged-out miles of trails in places like the Sawtooth Wilderness and on the Chelan Lakeshore Trail. At Cape Disappointment, they rebuilt the North Beach Trail. On the Gibraltar Mountain Trail they installed drainage structures and built new tread. On the Pacific Crest Trail they accomplished a whole host of work on six different weeklong projects.

"This was the year for annual maintenance because everything else was under snow," says Van Beek. So it was that volunteers revised

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Thank You!



Volunteer Vacation crew at Prince Creek, Lake Chelan, May 2011
Photo by Harold Pelton

By the Numbers

Some impressive stats for 2011 trail work volunteers:

Hours worked:

▶ **100,000**

Days on trail:

▶ **1,000**

Number of trips:

▶ **720**

Volunteers:

▶ **2,600**

(4% increase from last year)

First-time volunteers:

▶ **1,470**

Youth volunteers:

▶ **600**

New green hats:

▶ **300**

New WTA vests:

▶ **37**

New youth vests:

▶ **7**

their plans for the year, working on more front-country projects instead of backcountry ones and doing more standard brushing maintenance instead of tackling lots of new tread.

Even so, land managers made an example of WTA's work, identifying a stretch of trail that WTA worked on in the Colville National Forest as a prototype for tread work. "Land managers relied heavily on WTA's expertise and the expertise of our crew leaders last year," said Van Beek.

And none of this would have been possible without WTA's broad volunteer base. "I'm just thankful that people came out," said Van Beek. "Some people still didn't know where they were going for their Volunteer Vacations just days before the event. I appreciate the flexibility."

Youth

Youth participation with WTA broke records last year. More than 600 volunteers under age eighteen spent a day on trail. WTA hosted 108 days of youth-specific trail work parties. Youth were volunteering on trail 234 days out of the 365 days last year. Most years WTA awards one or two youth vests, a milestone that marks a volunteer's 25th work party. Last year we awarded seven.

Youth volunteers have been returning more consistently every year to complete work parties with WTA. Youth Volunteer Vacations now have a 42 percent return rate.

Some of these youth connect to WTA through their parents, but others are involved with one of WTA's community partners. Last year WTA partnered with 12 different programs like YMCA BOLD Mountain School and the Student Conservation Association to recruit kids who might not otherwise have an opportunity to get out in nature. "We hope to get more youth out and be meeting other youth who are interested in trail work," said Krista Dooley, youth programs manager at WTA.

Of the 15 Youth Volunteer Vacations scheduled in 2011, only three trips were relocated due to snow levels and weather. Quartz Creek and Beacon Rock State Park made great substitute locations for Volunteer Vacations. When they got off from school for spring break, young volunteers went on a series of day work parties at Evans Creek Preserve. Even entire families came out to do trail work on National Public Lands Day and National Trails Day.

"The next time [these kids] go on a hike, they'll look at trails differently," said Dooley. "After just a day of trail work they were able to say, 'Oh yeah, we really can impact this issue.'"

So many youth graduated from WTA's youth trail maintenance program last year that WTA has begun to devise ways to keep them involved. On the burner for 2012 is an alumni trail work trip for young adults aged eighteen to twenty-one.

In spite of annual challenges (snow being a pretty big one), WTA volunteers have opportunities to connect with nature and affect the hiking world throughout their lives. "It doesn't matter what age you are," said Dooley. "You're still a valuable volunteer."

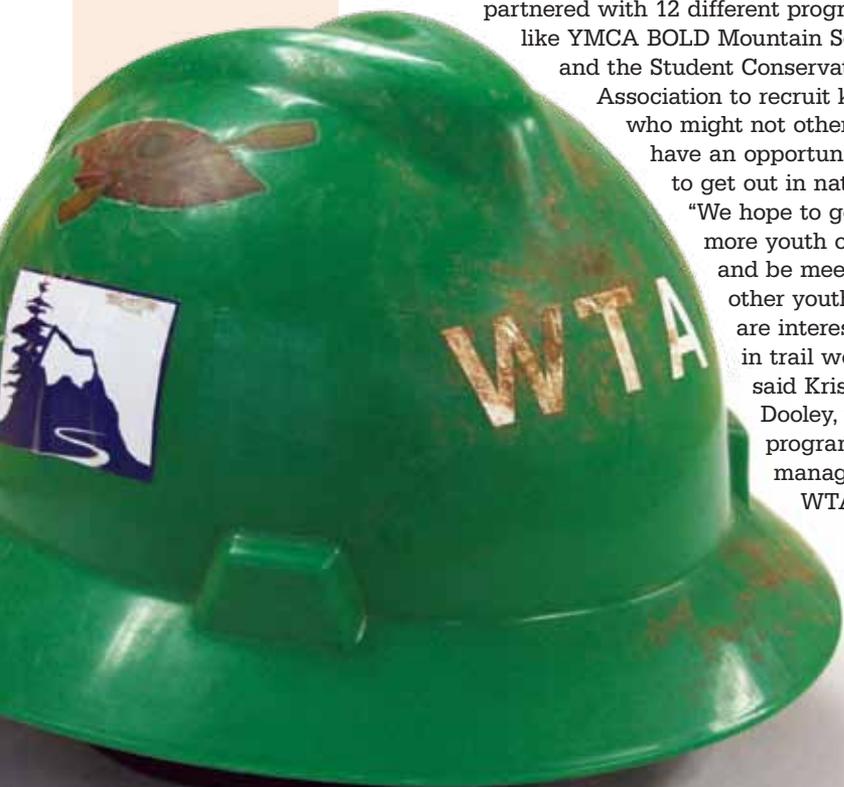
Looking Ahead to 2012 . . .

It will be hard to top the trail work productivity of 2011. It was a year of forging new partnerships and new trails and a year of remedying the old standbys, a year of recruiting new volunteers of all ages and of fostering relationships with seasoned crews. So as we look ahead to 2012, WTA only hopes to match the rigor of the trail work accomplished in 2011.

Of course, we can always wish for better weather in 2012. Having procrastinated on so many backcountry projects because of the snow last year, WTA hopes to return with renewed energy to those trails this year.

On the agenda for 2012 are a number of work parties in King County Parks. WTA also plans on beginning a few new projects, including work at Pioneer Park in northwest Washington and Leadbetter State Park in southwest Washington. Volunteers will also return to ongoing projects at places like Evans Creek and Cape Horn.

But none of this work could be accomplished without the dedicated volunteers upon whom WTA relies so heavily. Day after day, these generous folks have worked—and will continue to work—to help the entire hiking community stay connected to Washington's beautiful wilderness areas. ♦



Volunteer Appreciation »

Last November, WTA held several volunteer appreciation events around the state—from Vancouver to Bellingham, and Seattle to Spokane—to recognize and thank the scores of participants that came out in 2011 to help improve and maintain Washington's hiking trails—despite the weather and snow levels!

In addition to over 300 new green hats being awarded last year, the staff at *Washington Trails* would like to give a special shoutout to the following participants and their trail maintenance achievements in 2011.

Trail Crew Vests (25+ work parties)

Jonathan Aloof	Doug Beeman	John Bisset
James Bradrick	Kathleen Burns	Joan Burton
Donald Campbell	Pat Campbell	Cliff Cantor
Pauline Cantor	Donnie Carville	Riley Coleman
Baker Conte	Arian Ensley	Eric Espenhorst
Tzuria Falkenberg	Donald Gregory	Jennifer Hooker
Sean Leaverton	Jackson Lee	Nancy Lemoine
Eli Mauksch	Scott McConnel	Greg Mork
Pat Mork	Patrick Olmsted	Marshall Palmer
Eric Rathmann	Bob Sheffield	Greg Sippy
Andres Springborn	Brian Starlin	Dan Streiffert
Louise Suhr	Barry Teschlog	Todd Weisgerber
Richard Yokota		

Trail Crew Saw (50+ work parties)

Terry Bartlett	William Baxter	Richard Blackburn
Trev Cookson	Bill Creel	Sally Davies
Laurie Fleming	Sarah Glorian	Randy Greyerbiehl
Donald Hammon	Robert Koreis	Karl Lewis
Linda Loft	Meagan MacKenzie	Allison Maloney
David Millard	Jena Myers	JB Robinson
Linda Rostad	Edward Rozmyn	Michael Shanahan
Liz Ulloa	Jill Wilson	

Full Bench Club (250+ work parties)

Dave Blevins	Ken Broman	Pam MacRae
Marta Sheridan	Richard Tipps	Lee Young

Crosscut Saw Club (500+ work parties)

Rose Alfred	Chad Creamer
-------------	--------------

The Golden Rockbar Club (1000+ work parties)

Pete Dewell

“Carhartt Awards” Outstanding Volunteers of the Year

Jane Baker	Marty Barney	Pete Dewell
Darrel Dochow	Lynn Kittridge	JB Robinson
Charlie Romine	Marta Sheridan	Lee Young
Gary Zink		

Photos, top to bottom: Chad Creamer receives the Crosscut Saw Club award; Jean Akers receives her new green hat; Ryan Ojerio congratulates Lee Young for winning the Blue Hat of the Year award; Pete Dewell receives the Golden Rockbar award.



Youth & Families »

Teens Get Excited for Volunteer Vacations

Below: Sally Miller and Arian Ensley put new skills to work clearing trails in the Glacier Peak Wilderness.

Photo by Chris Wall

Opposite Lower: U.S. Forest Service staff and volunteers participate in a class on log retaining wall construction during WTA's Crew Leader College.

Photo by Ryan Ojerio

In January every year, we eagerly wait for the Volunteer Vacations to be posted on the WTA site, checking nearly every hour and constantly keeping each other in close contact. We read through the summer trips and weigh our options: Hart Lake or Hyas Lake? Or do we want to work on the Pacific Crest Trail? Always among the first to sign up, we've been volunteering with WTA for four years now and are part of a dedicated group of youth volunteers that come back summer after summer to give back to the trail network in Washington state. And we're determined to continue to do so even after our years as youth volunteers have passed.

We learned about WTA's youth program in 2008 and decided to give it a try. After our first frontcountry trip at Wallace Falls State Park, we have returned every year, anxious to add to our list of new challenges, new friends and growing memories. The satisfaction in seeing a project take shape is beyond inspiring; the improvements that a group of 12 people can make to a trail are impressive. The teamwork involved in moving 300-pound rocks and 20-foot logs, or using a crosscut saw, teaches a person lifelong lessons.

It's empowering to see how each and every person adds exponentially to a project—two people working together can accomplish so much more than twice what one person can do. Sometimes friendly competition arises as we race to drill holes in a puncheon bridge or collect fill for steps and turnpikes. The excitement in the air is palpable when we walk across a finished bridge or culvert for the first time, chattering about the planning that went

into its completion, overwhelmed by satisfaction and pride in our work.

Challenges inevitably arise when we run out of materials, come to a particularly rough piece of trail—or realize that the chipmunks have eaten our lunches. But solutions are always found when we put our collective minds to the problem. Creativity is mandatory for youth volunteers!

Since we began volunteering, we can't help but notice the work that goes into maintaining the trails we hike on. We admire the symmetry of a well-constructed bridge or the effectiveness of a well-placed drainage, and we take pride in our ability to respect the forests. The leadership skills and self-confidence we have gained through our experience will aid us both in our individual futures during college and beyond.

No matter the situation, we youth can rise to the occasion! Youth are important volunteers, not only because of the excitement and enthusiasm we can bring, but also because of our voice in new upcoming generations and our ability to make a change for the future. We are strong and focused workers and can complete as much as adult crews, sometimes even more. So we challenge you, whether you are a youth or an adult—are you ready to rise to the occasion? If so, you've found the right place, and we'll see you out on trail! ♦

Sally Miller and Arian Ensley are seniors at Mount Si High School. Sally is interested in majoring in mathematics or aerospace engineering. Arian's interest in conservation and ecology is leading her to major in marine biology.




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Southwest »

Trail Skills College Coming Back this Spring

For decades, volunteers have taken on ever-greater responsibility for trail maintenance on public lands. And now they are taking on an increased role in training new volunteers. This spring, WTA will once again partner with the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) to host the fourth annual Columbia Cascades Trail Skills College in Cascade Locks, Oregon.

These events—free, and open to the public—are aimed at both building the skill set of returning volunteers and recruiting new volunteers. The Trail Skills College concept started in 2007 when a volunteer with the High Cascades Volunteers of Oregon decided there needed to be an easy way for folks to get their crosscut and chainsaw certification done in one stop (along with the prerequisite first aid and CPR certification). The following year the idea grew with support from the PCTA and the Willamette National Forest to include two classes: Basic Trail Maintenance and Crew Leadership. Two years later, with support from an REI grant, the PCTA grew the curriculum again, adding a suite of classes ranging from the basic Intro to Log Out to more advanced classes like Trail Design.

In 2009 the PCTA joined with the Trailkeepers of Oregon to host the first Columbia Cascades Trail Skills College. In 2010 the event expanded, adding new partners and sponsors to the host planning team—including WTA. And just as the curriculum has grown to nearly two dozen classes over the years, there are now seven different Trail Skills College events planned annually across California and Oregon.

But the success of these events is not without some growing pains. During the past two years, interest in the Columbia Cascades event at Cascade Locks has spiked. This popularity has stretched the capacity of the planning team to identify teaching sites, recruit volunteer instructors and pay the event's costs. Although the U.S. Forest Service has generously supported the event with funding and staff to teach some of the classes, the success of the event has hinged largely on the support of volunteers affiliated with the host organizations. At last year's event the Backcountry Horsemen association cooked meals, PCTA volunteers led most of the saw classes, and volunteers from WTA, the Mazamas and other nonprofits pitched in to teach the trail classes.

This year WTA and PCTA are looking at ways to ensure that regular volunteers who have continued to pitch in to host the event also have an opportunity to expand their own trail maintenance knowledge. To accommodate this, the Columbia Cascades event scheduled for April this year will be focused on offering training opportunities to people already volunteering on trails, by offering a set of classes available by invitation only. Another set of classes will be aimed at recruiting new volunteers. The sawyer certification classes will be held two weeks after the Columbia Cascades event to allow instructors an opportunity to participate in a saw certification class.

Meanwhile, WTA will continue to hold its annual Crew Leader College event, where WTA crew leaders and assistant crew leaders train each spring in partnership with the Forest Service. And if the 2012 Columbia Cascades Trail Skills College proves to be successful and sustainable, it may serve as a model for another Trail Skills College event for WTA "green hats" and other trail volunteers in Washington in 2013. ♦

Ryan Ojerio is WTA's Southwest Regional Coordinator. For more information email ryan@wta.org.



Remembering Jim Proctor

Last fall, WTA lost a good friend and important partner. His passing was unexpected, and the work he had outlined for WTA volunteers in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is unfinished. But Jim Proctor's memory and legacy will live on in the people he inspired.

Jim first worked with WTA volunteers while serving in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. As the trails coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service in the Gorge he was the keystone and the catalyst for all of WTA's recent work on the Cape Horn Trail. Jim was deeply committed to the idea that public lands are for everyone and that everyone could make a positive contribution to their stewardship. Rather than a gatekeeper, he was a facilitator and a teacher. He had a very special talent for knowing when to step in and take charge and when to get out of the way and let others exercise their own abilities.

The new bridge at Cape Horn is the last project Jim worked on with WTA and one which he was very proud of. The bridge will be dedicated in his honor this spring.



What's the Deal With Funding?

Why do the governor and Legislature consistently cut state lands recreation programs every time state revenues fall?



Jonathan Guzzo

WTA Advocacy
Director
jonathan@wta.org

If you've been paying attention, you've probably noticed the slow-motion funding crisis unfolding on state and federal recreation lands. Every year it seems as if our land management agencies grapple with decisions over which trails and roads to maintain or restore, and which to let go. Some agencies—Washington State Parks and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in particular—face the possibility of having to close lands due to the very real prospect that they may not have enough funding to maintain minimum standards for public safety. Why?

The short answer is that roughly 70 percent of the state budget is walled off. Those are dollars that are required to be spent—mandated by the state constitution, by lawsuits and settlements against the state, and by virtue of matching federal dollars. That leaves just 30 percent of the state budget that can be touched when the budget must be cut. And unlike the federal government, the state must balance its budget each biennium—it cannot spend more than it brings in.

This creates a situation where agencies and programs that are within that 30 percent bear the brunt of declining revenues. State recreation lands are within that 30 percent.

That's the simple answer. But it's incomplete. Obviously, 30 percent isn't a majority of the state budget. And there are other items in that 30 percent, are there not? So why does it seem that state agency recreation programs are the first place legislators go to realize savings? There's a much more complicated answer to that question—and the answer goes to priorities, motivations and ideology.

I reached out to our state land management agencies for their perspectives on the issue.

"When you look at all the essentials that the state funds, from health care to schools to prisons, legislators have some tough budget decisions to make as they look to cut \$2 billion from the state's budget," says Mark Mauren, DNR recreation and public access division manager. "Fortunately for the recreation community, the Discover Pass provides the Department of Natural Resources with the ability to keep our recreation trails and facilities open, safe and enjoyable for the recreating public."

Larry Fairleigh, Washington State Parks assistant director for planning and development, expanded on that theme, saying "A primary role of government is public health and safety, and some services have the ability to provide a portion of their own funding." Fairleigh continued, "For instance, aid to unwed mothers cannot be a self-supporting priority. State Parks, though, has the ability to increase its level of support by becoming partially a fee-for-service agency."

Sometimes, the search for answers only leads to more questions. When the state has a surplus again, how are we going to make the case for increased general fund revenues for these recreation agencies, especially if user fees have at least partially supplanted appropriate dollars?

It won't be easy. It requires consistency. We have to continue to send the message that outdoor recreation is a core public service and key component of our quality of life. You help us do that each time you write, call or visit your elected officials on behalf of trails. The time spent telling your personal story is never wasted, and will help us preserve access to these lands for the long term. ♦

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Speak Out for Trails!

Hiker Lobby Day is February 1

Washington Trails Association is the voice for hikers, but we can't do it without your voices speaking out for trails right alongside us. Join hikers from across the state at WTA's sixth annual Hiker Lobby Day February 1, 2012, in Olympia.

This is your chance to meet your local representatives in person and tell them recreation is a core public value that must be protected. Your presence helps ensure that lawmakers know that recreation and funding for public lands are important to their constituents and should not be cut from the ever-shrinking state budget.

No citizen lobbying experience is necessary. WTA will provide you with everything you need to have a fun and successful day. Hiker Lobby Day starts with short trainings that provide you the tools you need to meet with your elected officials. Then Jonathan Guzzo, WTA's advocacy director, will provide an issue briefing, arming you with all the information you need to build your case. Finally, you will join other hikers from your district and meet with your representatives. There will be plenty of time to network with other hikers and talk trails—and of course, we will have a chocolate break.

Your voice really can make a difference for trails. Please take a day to join us and speak out at Hiker Lobby Day. You can sign up for WTA Hiker Lobby Day online at wta.org/action.

Over 75 hikers joined WTA on Hiker Lobby Day in 2011. Your voice needs to be heard. Won't you come out and join us this year?



WHAT: Hiker Lobby Day
WHEN: February 1, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
WHERE: Olympia, Washington
WHO: Hikers like you
RSVP: wta.org/action

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NATIONAL

On Trail



**MAKE
TRACKS!**

Grab your snowshoes and hit the trail this winter

By Joan Burton

**Snowshoer on Huntoon Point
Photo by John D'Onofrio**

Northwest Explorer »

Snowshoeing is just like winter hiking—with the addition of tennis racket-like gear attached to the soles of your boots. And unlike skiing or other winter activities, you don't need stylish clothing or expensive accessories. You don't need advanced techniques to stop or turn. You don't need to buy lift tickets. And best of all, it can be as easy or strenuous as you like.

But why snowshoe? Most importantly, it's to get out in beautiful surroundings and enjoy a leisurely—or challenging—stroll through silent winter scenery. Learning is fairly easy, it can be an excellent source of aerobic fun, and it can get you outdoors during a season when you crave outdoor activity. Plus, snowshoeing can offer access to destinations you may have seen in summer, but which take on a whole new face blanketed in snow.

If you're just beginning, plan to rent your first pair of snowshoes. The pros at REI and other winter sport shops can help you determine the best length of snowshoe for your height, weight and snow conditions. There are two distinct types of snowshoes, defined by their binding styles. Free-pivot bindings are ideal for easy terrain, winter camping and carrying loads, because snow doesn't build up on the deck of the snowshoe. Pre-sprung bindings hold the snowshoe closer to your foot so you have more control, and are better for stepping over obstacles such as trees and branches or jumping creeks.

In addition to your snowshoes and winter apparel, bring along trekking or ski poles for balance. Your clothing can be the same breathable, layered parka and pants combination you use for hiking or skiing. Remember that you will be exercising



Megan MacKenzie

Hurricane Ridge

Mileage: 3–6 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: Up to 800 feet

Map: Green Trails 135: Hurricane Ridge

Permit: National Park Pass

Directions: From Port Angeles, drive 17 miles up Hurricane Ridge Road to the end, and park at the visitor center. Sign in with the ranger on duty.



Paul Raymaker

Lake Keechelus

Mileage: 4 miles out and back

Elevation Gain: 200 feet

Map: Green Trails 207: Snoqualmie Pass

Permit: Sno-Park Pass with Groomed Area Tag

Directions: From Seattle, drive east on Interstate 90 to exit 54 for Hyak; turn left on Forest Road 2219 for 1.5 miles to Hyak Sno-Park.



John Porter

Lake Kelcema

Mileage: 10 miles out and back

Elevation Gain: 1,600 feet

Map: Green Trails 110: Silverton

Permit: None

Directions: From Granite Falls, drive east on the Mountain Loop Highway; 12 miles past Verlot, park at the end of the plowed road.



Janelle Walker

Mazama Ridge

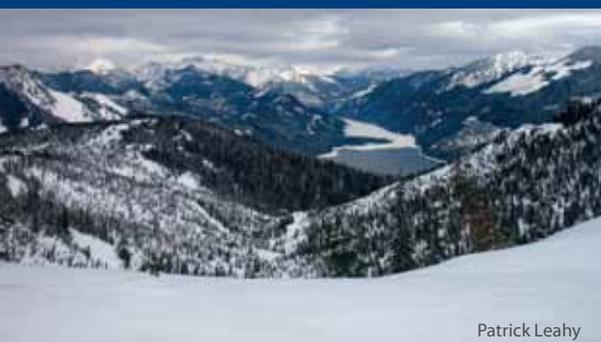
Mileage: 6 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 900 feet

Map: Green Trails 270S: Paradise

Permit: National Park Pass

Directions: From Tacoma, drive east on State Route 7, turning left on State Route 706 at Elbe; continue east, through the Nisqually Park Entrance, to Paradise Lodge.



Patrick Leahy

Amabilis Mountain

Mileage: 8 miles up and back

Elevation Gain: 1,600 feet

Map: Green Trails 207: Snoqualmie Pass

Permit: Sno-Park Pass with Groomed Area Tag

Directions: From Seattle, drive east on Interstate 90 to exit 63 for Cabin Creek; turn right to the Cabin Creek Sno-Park.



Jim Kuresman

Lake Valhalla

Mileage: 7.5 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 1,700 feet

Map: Green Trails 144: Benchmark Mountain

Permit: None

Directions: From Seattle, drive U.S. Highway 2 to the Mill Creek exit. U-turn back onto westbound US 2 for 3 miles; park in pullout before Smith Brook Road.

strenuously, so you may not need too many warm layers. Waterproof boots are essential to avoid cold, wet feet (the new Keen Revel got high marks with the *Washington Trails* gear team as an insulated winter hiking boot). Before leaving home be sure your boots fit the bindings snugly and securely. There's nothing more annoying than trying to walk in snowshoes that won't stay on. And remember, you're still hiking, so carry the Ten Essentials, including extra water, snacks and socks.

TIP: Wearing gaiters helps prevent snow from filling up your boots

Now just choose a destination. Many of Washington's Sno-Parks offer groomed or marked snowshoe trails, and similar to ski resorts, they are divided into easy (green), intermediate (blue) and difficult (black) categories. Regular hiking trails also offer a variety of snowshoeing options, but be sure to check road conditions and trailhead access before heading out.

You more experienced snowshoers may want to avoid the crowds at the Sno-Parks and more popular locations in order to find more solitude in the backcountry. Always make sure to carry a map and compass (or GPS), and know how to use them. In addition to your Ten Essentials, you may also want to carry a portable backpacking stove, for melting snow for water or making a hot meal. Educate yourself in avalanche awareness techniques (see sidebar at right) and always pay attention to the weather around you. Backpacking and snow camping can be a fantastic winter escape, but be prepared to deal with the extremes.

Following is a handful of snowshoe trails—from beginner to expert—to help you get out there this winter and enjoy some spectacular winter mountain scenery. Give one of them—or all of them!—a shot and you just may find that hiking is not a summer-only activity.



Getting Started

Whether you're an expert or a first-timer, **Hurricane Ridge** in Olympic National Park is one of the most spectacular places to snowshoe in Washington state—and on clear days you'll be treated to bird's-eye views of Mount Olympus in all her winter splendor. Beginners can wander the lower-level ridgelines and meadows, while more advanced—or ambitious—snowshoers can go for Hurricane Hill. From the visitor center, start westward on fairly level grade, following the ridgeline. You'll pass through winter-coated forest and have nice views of the valleys below. At 1.5 miles the "road" comes to an end in a broad meadow. This makes a good turnaround point for beginners. To tackle Hurricane Hill, proceed right up the ridgeline, past two avalanche chutes, to the top. From the summit, take in 360-degree views of the Olympic Range, Puget Sound, Mount Baker, Glacier Peak, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

For a nice location in the Central Cascades, try the Iron Horse-John Wayne Trail along the south shore of **Lake Keechelus**. This is a treat for new snowshoers, especially if it has been recently groomed. Because of its easy accessibility, it can often get crowded on nicer days. The trail is the former route of the Milwaukee Railroad, so it's generally level and smooth. Views along the way are forest on the uphill side and open on the lakeshore side, with a great outlook over the frozen lake and up to Rampart and Keechelus Ridges. At 2 miles you'll come to the base of a large avalanche chute. This makes a good turnaround point.



Step It Up a Notch

For a more strenuous trail head out to Deer Creek and the **Lake Kelcema** trail. From the parking area, the route proceeds up the Deer Creek Road—watch out for tubers and sledgers on the lower portion.

Your path steadily gains in elevation, while views are mostly forested. A few “windows” through the trees offer peeks of Bald Mountain along the way. Passing 2.5 miles, views improve as you continue climbing, the surrounding forest transitioning from second growth to old growth. Cast a glance behind you for a panorama of Big Four Mountain and Sperry, Vesper and Little Chief Peaks. Leave the road at the 4.5 miles and snowshoe up the creek for the last half a mile; look for trail markers. During heavier winters there can be many downed trees along this part of the trail. Arriving at the frozen lakeshore, Bald Mountain looms above, with Devils Peak visible to the east.

Mazama Ridge at Mount Rainier's Paradise area offers an especially scenic intermediate-level snowshoe route, in the midst of snow-covered alpine meadows. From the parking area near the lodge, climb above the guide huts and head east to the Mazama Ridge Trail, crossing Edith Creek on a footbridge above Myrtle Falls. Continue eastward up out of Paradise Valley to the beginning of the route. Climb steeply another half a mile to reach the crest of the ridge with its snow- and wind-sculpted trees at 5,700 feet. From the ridge crest admire views in every direction—south to the peaks of the Tatoosh Range and north to mammoth Mount Rainier, all draped in a winter blanket. Add more to your outing by following the ridgeline south, first along the east side to views of Reflection and Louise Lakes below, then back up the west side through more winter meadows, and back to where you started.

TIP: On shared trails, avoid walking in cross-country ski tracks

Experts Only

Ready for a challenge? Try **Amabilis Mountain**, lying inconspicuously above the groomed trails of Cabin Creek. From the Sno-Park, start up fairly level Forest Road 4826, being sure to avoid ski tracks. After just a quarter of a mile, turn onto Forest Road 4822 and begin your ascent—the snow-covered road gains 2,100 feet in 4 miles! The trail is often groomed only to the 2-mile overlook, where you will have climbed about half the vertical elevation gain to the top. Views from this point are fair and include the weather tower at Stampede Pass and the vertical clearcut ski run for The Mountaineers' Meany Lodge. Here the road divides, and either choice will take you to the top: the right-hand option being longer, the left-hand option being more challenging. Amabilis has a broad rolling summit with spectacular views in all directions. Look for Lake Keechelus and the Yakima River Valley to the southwest. Note that one false summit often has a prominent snow cornice.

A popular summertime destination for many hikers and backpackers, **Lake Valhalla** also makes a rewarding advanced snowshoe route. Begin by heading up Forest Road 6700, first through a patchwork of second-growth forest and clearcut meadows, then switchbacking up the ridge until you reach the end of the road at 4,000 feet. Traverse the hillside toward the head of Smith Brook Valley, crossing the Pacific Crest Trail, and into the Nason Creek valley, where you'll look down at beautiful Lake Valhalla below. Continue around the lake basin at 4,800 feet, and drop to the shore. Across the ruffled lake water sweep breezes from Stevens Pass, while above you are Jove Peak, Lichtenberg Mountain, Valhalla Mountain, Nason Ridge and Skyline Ridge.

Want more? Turn to this month's Take a Hike section on page 43 for four more snowshoe routes, including Mount St. Helens, Mount Rainier, Mount Baker, and Snoqualmie Pass. And for even more winter destinations—snowy and not—check out the Trip Finder at wta.org. ♦

Joan Burton is a long-time hiker, cross-country skier, snowshoer, and the author of Best Hikes with Kids: Western Washington and the Cascades.

Avalanche Awareness

Snow and winter weather conditions change constantly, affecting the potential for avalanches in backcountry areas. Be flexible about your destination, and plan for an alternative destination if you see avalanche warnings or sudden weather changes.

Factors that influence avalanche activity

- * Heavy snow in recent days
- * Rain in snowy areas
- * Sudden warming

In general, avalanche danger is particularly high during warming trends or after a heavy new snowfall. Steep, north-facing hillsides are prone to avalanche activity in early winter, when sunlight cannot reach the slopes and help consolidate snowpacks. South-facing slopes are generally more dangerous during spring due to excess meltwater acting as a lubricant underneath snowpacks. Wind across ridgelines causes snow to build up and create dangerous cornices on the leeward sides. Avoid going onto or under a ridge with a potential cornice.

The Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center evaluates hazard levels with these warning categories:

- **Low:** Mostly stable snow. Generally safe.
- **Moderate:** Areas of unstable snow possible. Use caution on slopes.
- **Considerable:** Unstable snow and avalanches likely. Exercise extreme caution.
- **High:** Snowpack very unstable and avalanches probable. Travel not advised.
- **Extreme:** Highly unstable snowpack on all aspects. Damaging or life-threatening conditions exist—go elsewhere.

Always check snow and weather conditions before you go with the Northwest Avalanche Center at www.nwac.us, or call the recorded message at (206) 526-6677.

Finally, know your own ability, and use common sense when attempting any winter trail. If conditions appear questionable, turn back or consider an alternate location.

Northwest Exposure 2011

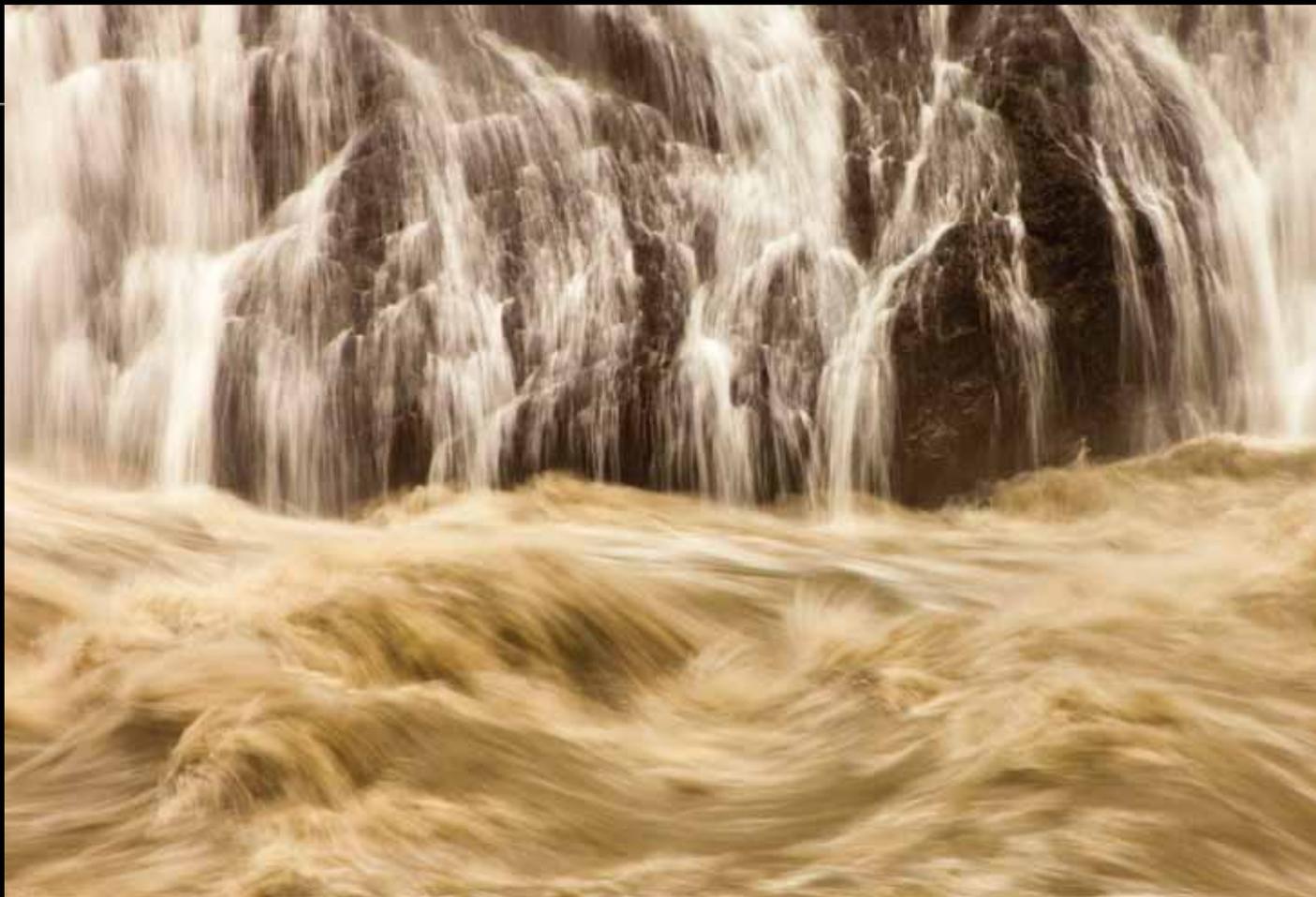


GRAND PRIZE: Ruby Beach by Todd Mortensen

"I visit Olympic National Park several times a year as it is one of my favorite places to hike and photograph, often in the late fall to early spring to take advantage of the passing storms. I have taken pictures at Ruby Beach several times but to my surprise this was the only time I found these particular rock formations. (I came back to this location later in the year and found these rock formations completely covered by sand and the rocks no longer visible.) For this photo, I reached the area about two hours before sunset, following a snowstorm, just in time for the clouds to break up enough to let the setting sun through to illuminate the skies."



Nature & Landscape



▲ **FIRST PLACE: Boulder River by Delton Young**

"I had seen an image of Boulder Falls on the WTA website perhaps three years ago, and it looked like a fine location for some heavy-weather drama. I visited the falls three times before it all came together in mid-January this year—two days of very heavy rain, then a letup in the rain to get some photos."

THIRD PLACE:

Winter at Mount Rainier by Robert Bryll ►

"The weather was beautiful: sunshine and blue sky interspersed with suddenly ominous dark clouds. I took two images of the same area, one wide angle and one at full telephoto. The zoomed-in version became my favorite."





▲ **SECOND PLACE:**
Enchantment Lakes by Paul Raymaker

"I captured this image rather spontaneously while setting off from our base camp to do some day hiking. As I scrambled up a short steep section, I turned around and was presented with this fantastic view; golden larches reflecting off the blue waters of Inspiration Lake, with Prusik Peak and The Temple looming above, all covered with a fresh blanket of snow."



◀ **EDITOR'S CHOICE:**
Columbia Foothills by Todd Mortensen

"Every spring Washington's Columbia Hills come alive with wildflowers. At the end of a trail I came across this beautiful oak tree complimented by sunset skies."

THIRD PLACE:**Vine Maple by Harry Abelman ►**

"I was looking for subjects to photograph in the Ohanapecosh area of Mount Rainier when I saw a young vine maple with bright, raindrop-covered leaves. I needed to give myself some working-distance, so I positioned my tripod so as not to touch the tree and lose the raindrops on the leaves."

**▼ FIRST PLACE:****Dandelion by Janet Holm**

"I was hiking in the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge on the Pine Lakes Loop hoping to see wildlife. It was a hot day so there was not a lot of wildlife activity, but I noticed the very large dandelions on the side of the trail. I pulled out my macro lens, set up my tripod and was amazed at the beauty and detail I saw."



Flora & Fauna



▲ **SECOND PLACE: Anemone at Second Beach by Jacqueline Kajdzik**

"I left my tripod behind and contorted into a crazy position to keep the flash from reflecting off the water, while trying to hold perfectly still just a few inches above the pool. I love that the flash caused part of the anemone to become luminescent, looking like a string of pearls."

EDITOR'S CHOICE:

**Chipmunk by
Kristen Sapowicz ►**

"As I sat next to Lake Serene, enjoying my snack, this curious little bugger kept on looking at me, waiting for a dropped crumb. He was not afraid of me!"





Hikers in Action

▲ **FIRST PLACE:**
Emmons Glacier by Wes Cooper

"I was leading a group of climbing students to the top of Mt. Rainier via the Emmons Glacier. As dawn broke we found ourselves about 400 feet below the summit, where the wind and sun sculpt the ice into very interesting shapes, known as penitentes. I was amazed at how the rays of the sun were playing through a light layer of cloud. I only had a few seconds to get this one shot because the light was changing fast and my teams were moving across the ice field."



◀ **SECOND PLACE:**
Freemont Lookout by Andres Caldera

"This was my first time on this amazing trail from Sunrise to the Fremont Lookout. While shooting the mountain from multiple angles, I found this hiker taking a nap who provided a nice compositional element to give depth to the scene. Back home I realized that this was meant to be a B&W photo, as it let the eye follow textures and shapes, rather than get distracted by color."



▲ **THIRD PLACE: PCT Camp by Dennis Lussier**

"While hiking the PCT near Chimney Rock, we set up camp late in the day. Rather than focusing my attention at the peak, I turned the camera around to get a shot of our beautiful mountain top campsite. After composing the shot I thought it would be nice to jump into it, since I rarely show up in my own images. I wound up sitting there for at least fifteen minutes after the shutter went off, just taking in the beauty that was all around me."

EDITOR'S CHOICE:
Road Approach by Mike Helminger ▶

"A sunlit ridge atop Prairie Mountain was further accentuated by the blowing snow dust. Baton down the hatches and snowshoe on."



Families on Trail



▲ SECOND PLACE:

Shadow by Jacqueline Kajdzik

"We were playing on Second Beach, close to sunset, when my daughter encountered her exceptionally long shadow. She was in awe of it after she realized that it was mirroring her movements. It was very gratifying and meaningful to me to capture that instant of discovery"

THIRD PLACE:

Tree Climb by Ken Kaufman ▼

"Camping at Rialto Beach, I took the kids on a short hike where they found this tree, and scurried right up it."



▲ FIRST PLACE: Cairn Building by Jason Racey

"My 4-year old son, Noah, and I hiked to the top of Earl Peak to watch the sunset. Over the past summer he's become fascinated with building rock cairns and this evening was no exception. Just as I was about to wrap up shooting I looked over and noticed he was hard at work on another sculpture."

EDITOR'S CHOICE:

Foggy Trail by Randall Hodges ▶

"Fog can create a special mood in almost any photograph. For this shot it was what I needed to block out the distracting background in this image. The red leaves add pop of color to complete the shot"



▼ EDITOR'S CHOICE:

Alpine Story Time by Chris Moorehead

"This was my two-year old daughter's first overnight camping trip. I was busy taking photos in the fading light when I turned to see mommy and daughter in the tent enjoying story time."



Thank you to everyone who entered photos in the 2011 Northwest Exposure contest. We received an unprecedented 1750 pictures highlighting Washington's backcountry. While not every photo can win, many of these images may still be used by WTA in our work to protect and promote trails. We appreciate everyone's help in supporting this mission.

A special thanks to WTA's Northwest Exposure sponsors Lowepro, EverGreen Escapes and Outdoor Research, and to our judges Dave Schiefelbein, Don Geyer and Wade Trenbeath.

EDITOR'S CHOICE:

Disappointment by Jake Johnson ▶

"I took this photo near the washed out section of the Index Galena Rd. My boy was so disappointed that we where unable to hike, he shuffled off, hands in pockets."



Backcountry

The Gear Closet »

New Year = New Boots

Time to replace your hiking boots? Check out some of these trail-tested models sure to give you happy feet and comfy miles

You put a few hundred more miles on your boots last year—over rough, rocky trails, through streams and mud, and probably a good helping of snow. The tread is gone, so you spent more time sliding down trails, while the water-repellency is shot, making every puddle feel like stepping into a river in stocking feet. The soles are cracked, and something has been gnawing on your laces, now hanging on by a thread or two. All these are signs that it might be time for a new pair of hiking boots.

Knowing that more than a few of you may finally be needing to retire your favorite hiking boots and start the new year with some new treads, we sent our intrepid gear team into the field with a variety of the latest hiking footwear—from trail runners and light hikers to heavy backpackers. The team hit the trails—from the lower rain forests, slick with moisture and wet vegetation, to the upper alpine regions, rife with loose jagged rock and even a little snow—and everywhere else in between—to determine their picks for quality footwear in preparation for hitting the trails again in 2012.

The testing criteria was simple. First and foremost, comfort. Would people want to hike in this product? Are the boots supportive in all the right places, without being restrictive? How heavy are they—like walking on clouds, or slogging with bricks on your feet? How's the tread and traction over all those soggy miles? And finally, are they

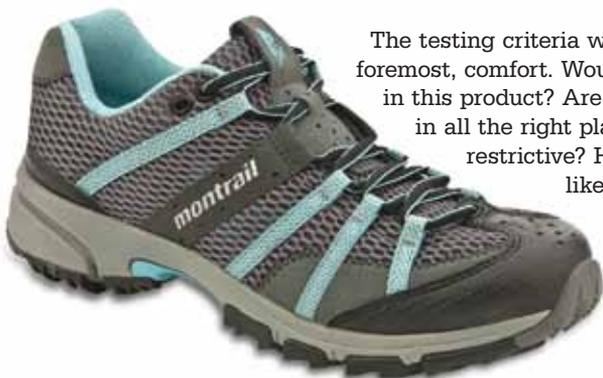
water-repellent enough to keep feet dry through the worst of rain and puddle jumping?

In the end, the team calculated their final scores on every pair tested, assigning each a 1–10 rating. Most scored fairly well, with a few close calls. A few they sent back to the planning boards. For this issue, we've selected the team's top choices for trail runners, light hikers, midweight hikers, and heavy backpackers.

Runners and Light Hikers

9.5 I honestly never knew that trail running could feel so good. The **Montrail Mountain Masochist** runners changed that world, and now I take a lot more runs in the city and out on the trail. The narrow heel cup and wide toe box make these some of the most well-fitted shoes I have ever worn. They literally hug your feet through the midfoot and have enough space in the toe box to let your foot effortlessly slide with the shoe. The Gryptonite blades on the outsole offer amazing traction, and the Trail Shield will keep your foot well protected from rocks as you saunter through wooded trails. The midsole is made of compression-molded EVA, which makes for a lightweight and super comfy ride both on the trail and hitting the pavement in town. The mesh upper provides ultra breathability, and you can opt to get this shoe with or without OutDry technology. Available in men's and women's sizes. \$95–\$115

— Cheri Higman





9.2

I like to push gear to its max and perhaps a little beyond. As a lightweight hiker, the **La Sportiva FC ECO 2.0 GTXs** withstood my beating—and I have to say I'm pretty thrilled with them. They took on Washington's wet autumn trails like a champ. The Vibram sole, combined with La Sportiva's Impact Brake System, prevented slipping and sliding on the wet, steep, muddy slopes of Mailbox, and the lugs are intense enough to take on Rampart Ridge with 18 inches of snow. Throw some gaiters on over these shoes, and you will find that the Gore-Tex bootie that lines the shoe creates an impenetrable force against the likes of our sloppy Northwest weather. Also, the uppers' mesh system is highly breathable, so even in hot months you will find your feet dry and comfortable. These shoes offer a very stable system, both laterally and torsionally. They give when you need them to give, so they offer a lot of comfort, but they are also firm enough to provide the support you need climbing across boulders. Plus, they're made with eco-friendly materials: the outsole is Vibram's Eco-Step compound, with nubuck uppers and recycled polyester insoles and laces. \$145

— Cheri Higman



8.0

Designed with the quickness of a running shoe and the support of a light hiker, **The North Face Havoc GTX XCR** will have you moving faster and going farther. On numerous day hikes in the Cascades, I was impressed with both its cushioning and protection. The one-piece hard plastic heel cup ("Cradle"), arch protection, and full-length plastic plate ("SnakePlate") gave me the torsional rigidity I was looking for on uneven terrain and really saved the soles of my feet from bruising and fatigue on

long sections of rocky trail. The construction employs a dual-density midsole to provide stellar cushioning, while the Vibram outsole kept me from slipping. Designed with a Gore-Tex bootie, these shoes are fully waterproof, yet remarkably breathable. The North Face made an excellent choice by designing the front half of the shoe with full-grain leather and a rubber toe rand, while the tongue and the back half of the shoe are made of a very durable and extremely breathable synthetic fabric. The Havocs look great, feel great, and perform great. And they're available in both low (as tested) and high versions, for those looking for added ankle support. Coming this spring in both men's and women's sizes. \$150

— Patrick Leahy

Midweight Hikers



9.2

As a mid-hiker, the **La Sportiva Delta GTX** will take you wherever you want to go and through just about any terrain you're willing to explore. The more steps you take, the more form-fitted this boot becomes, due to an innovative, foot-focused design called the Symbios System, which creates the perfect balance of fit, form and function. After fifteen hours of hiking and climbing in the Pasayten Wilderness—with a 40-pound pack on—my body and mind were exhausted, but my feet felt great! My feet stayed dry all day, and there wasn't even a hint of discomfort. The integrated, stretchy tongue hugs your foot like a sock, so there is no extra fabric and no folded gusset overlays to dig into the top of your foot, while the 3D Flex ankle area and ergonomically designed uppers move with you, not against you. The anti-shock EVA insole and "Agile" polyurethane midsole provide superior cushioning and support, while the Vibram outsole delivers exceptional traction and impact absorption. Deltas have everything you need and nothing you don't—all wrapped beautifully into one magnificent boot. Your feet will thank you! \$250

— Patrick Leahy

Ask the Gear Team

Q: Does packing a down sleeping bag in a compression sack damage the filling? I have been packing the bag in a sack about twice the size of the compression sack, but if compressing it more will not damage the filling, I would like the smaller size.

— Dennis Graver

A: Loft is what you want to preserve to make sure your sleeping bag remains performant, but packing your bag in the compression sack is what it's designed to do. If you crush and fluff your bag periodically you may actually find that it lofts better. But don't store it in the compression sack for long periods of time, use the loft bag that came with it.

— Matt Thyer

Got a question for our experts?

Send an email to gear@wta.org and ask.

If your question is selected for the next issue, you could win a piece of trail-tested hiking gear. This month, Dennis Graver has won a Therm-a-Rest RidgeRest SOLite sleeping pad.

Don't Forget Your Socks!

Of course, you still have to consider what goes between your feet and your footwear. This can be a crucial element of any hike—long or short. Wool socks offer warmth and odor-resistance, while synthetic socks are quick-drying and durable.

Again, our gear team took it to the trail. They sampled socks and sock liners of every weight, both wool and synthetic, from many of the leading manufacturers.

"For trail running, I go for Thorlo Experia crews. They hug your feet and provide extra support in the heel and toes."

— Cheri Higman

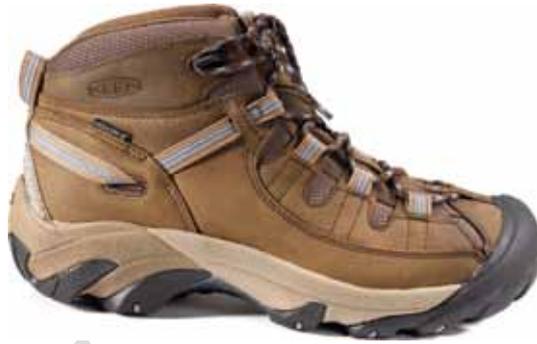
"I love hiking in Icebreaker Hike Mid Crews with a Bridgedale Coolmax liner"

— Patrick Leahy

"Thorlo Synthetic Trekkers and Icebreaker wool liners make the perfect long-distance combo."

— Eli Boschetto

Check out even more footwear reviews—plus the full sock field test!—at wta.org/hiking-info/gear.



9.6 The **Keen Targhee II** mid-hikers were consistently comfortable from the very first hike. From the steep gravel back roads near Cherry Falls to Snow Lake's frozen east grade, they provided 100 percent comfort and support. My feet were happy on both the upward slogs and the steep downhill—due in part to the compression-molded EVA midsoles and metatomical footbeds. Like most Keens, they provided ample room in the toe box—behind their patented rubber Toe Guards—while still holding my feet in place with their secure-fit lacing system. Plus, the carbon rubber soles are beefy enough to protect the feet from sharp rocks and provide a steady grip on wet surfaces. When the weather went south the waterproofed nubuck leather, in combination with the KEEN.DRY waterproof membrane, keeps the moisture out while the nylon mesh upper still allows breathability, ensuring dry feet and socks. All this makes the Targhee IIs ideal for year-round hiking, rain or shine. \$130

— Cherie Bevers

Backpackers



9.4 Every year, I cover hundreds of trail miles in several states, over every type of terrain, and I expect a lot out of my boots. Like a fine leather glove, the tried-and-true European-crafted **Lowa Renegade GTX Mid** continues to impress. The full-leather nubuck upper combined with Lowa's patented polyurethane Monowrap midsole offered ample support and durability in a surprisingly lightweight pair of boots. Mile after mile—from day hikes in the Columbia Gorge to thru-hikes in the Sierra Nevada—the

Renegades cradled my feet with a climate-control footbed, while allowing just the right amount of flexibility thanks to Cordura ankle bands and shock-absorbing full-length shanks—all supported by a Vibram Evo outsole with a heavy-duty tread that sticks to anything. And don't even think about getting any leakage in these things. The seamless Gore-Tex lining let me tromp straight through creeks and puddles—not to mention the rain—while the insides stayed dry and comfortable thanks to excellent breathability. This could be the perfect backpacking boot! \$210

— Eli Boschetto



9.6 Until now, my only experience with Salomon was their snowboarding boots, and a pair I have loved for the past few winter seasons. When I was offered the **Salomon Discovery GTX** backpacking boots I was eager to see if they would perform just as well. I was not disappointed. First off, for a backpacking-rated boot, these are ridiculously lightweight while packing some serious internal support utilizing Advanced Chassis technology. The suede-and-mesh upper allows for superior breathability, while the EVA midsole and OrthoLite sockliner cushion the feet over the rough stuff. The outsole is Salomon's Contagrip, providing maximum traction over the slickest surfaces—some of which I sampled in the soggy Olympics—and the heels and toes are protected by rubber caps. And talk about waterproof! With a waterproof upper and a Gore-Tex membrane liner, they kept my feet and socks dry and comfy through the wettest conditions. And for all of these features and trail comfort, you can't beat the price! Available in men's and women's sizes. \$140

— Eli Boschetto

Our advice: Try several pairs before you make your final decision on your new pair of hiking footwear. Walk them around the store, and try them out on a trail simulator if you can. Check the store's satisfaction and return policy—especially if ordering from online retailers. And be sure to properly break them in. Finally, get out and enjoy! ♦

How-To »

Maintain Your Hiking Boots

So your hiking boots have taken a beating this past season—rain, mud, rocks, snow. But they've still got plenty of life left and should keep you moving down the trail for several more seasons—if you take care of them.

We wanted to know the best practices for preserving the life of our hiking boots, so we went straight to the source—the brands that produce them, the companies that sell them, and the people that repair them. Every single source was able to narrow it down to three simple steps. Here are their recommendations for preserving the life of your hiking footwear.

Keep 'em Clean

This was at the top of the list from every source we consulted. Leaving your hiking boots dirty and grimy after hiking, or over seasons, is the quickest way to accelerate deterioration. Sand and grit wear into fibers and break them down, and mud sucks moisture out of leather, leaving it dry and less supple.

When you get back from a hike, no matter the length, clean your boots. Use a soft cloth or brush and a little water to get all the dirt and trail crud off of your footwear. If the lugs are all globbed up, use a brush or tread cleaner to clear them out. If your footwear has removable insoles, take them out and clean and dry them separately. And don't forget the laces. After cleaning, let your boots air dry at a normal temperature. Do not place them next to a heater or fireplace or in direct sunlight to hasten drying—this can weaken seals and adhesives and cause shrinkage and drying in leather.

If your boots are especially filthy, consider using a cleaning product. Both Nikwax and Gear Aid offer a variety of maintenance products to help revitalize hiking footwear. Nikwax's Footwear Cleaning Gel helps remove stubborn dirt and release stains by simply scrubbing with a soft brush, while Gear Aid's ReviveX Boot Cleaner Concentrate is specially formulated for cleaning Gore-Tex type boots. **DO NOT** use household soaps or detergents on your hiking footwear. These products often contain surfactants, brighteners and fragrances that can actually attract water or leave residues that attract grime.

Treat 'em Well

Hiking in the Northwest, we constantly expose our hiking boots to moisture—rain, creek crossings, muddy puddles. If you start to notice your boots' water-repellency deteriorating—the giveaway being that water starts absorbing into them and not rolling off of them—then it's time to apply a waterproofing treatment.

For all-leather boots, consider using Nikwax Waterproofing Wax for Leather; or for Gore-Tex footwear, try Gear Aid's ReviveX Leather Gel Water Repellent and Conditioner. For suede and fabric footwear, both brands offer similar weatherizing products. Depending on the frequency of your wet-weather hiking, you may find it necessary to apply a waterproofing treatment several times a year. Always consult your specific footwear brand to see which product they recommend for the best results.

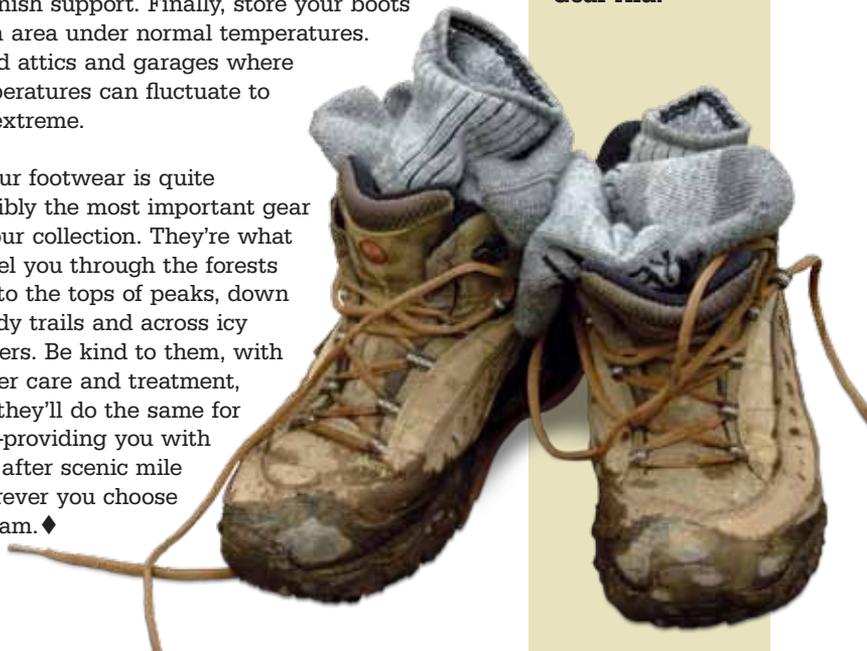
Store 'em Properly

Once your hiking season is over and you're digging out the skis and snowshoes, make sure you keep your hiking footwear stored properly. This will prolong their life and keep them ready for the next season. Again, keep them clean. If the leather is dried out or cracked, consider using a conditioning agent, such as Nikwax Conditioner for Leather. Do not use mink oil or similar products as these will soften leather and diminish support. Finally, store your boots in an area under normal temperatures. Avoid attics and garages where temperatures can fluctuate to the extreme.

Your footwear is quite possibly the most important gear in your collection. They're what propel you through the forests and to the tops of peaks, down muddy trails and across icy glaciers. Be kind to them, with proper care and treatment, and they'll do the same for you—providing you with mile after scenic mile wherever you choose to roam. ♦



Keep your hiking footwear in shape with cleaning and maintenance products by Nikwax and Gear-Aid.





Bear in Mind

Managing Wildlife in Washington state

Story and photos by Tami Asars

Top: A black bear peeks its nose out of a bear trap

Bottom: Mishka, the Karelian Bear Dog

Opposite: A large black bear roams its native habitat—in North Bend

As an avid backpacker, I've always been drawn to wildlife. Okay, I confess, obsessed is perhaps a more fitting word. Seeing a bear munching trailside as I hike makes my day. So naturally, the first time I had the opportunity to meet Fish and Wildlife Officer Bruce Richards and his service dog, Mishka, I was thrilled.

Before me stood a somewhat reserved, gruff man brandishing a badge with a sarcastic, yet polite, demeanor. He was kind, yet there was a twinkle of spirited mischief in his eyes not unlike the creatures he works to protect. Connected to him was an affectionate Karelian Bear Dog wearing a Department of Fish and Wildlife vest. The setting was an event to promote our respective outdoor programs.

Officer Richards, Mishka, and other members of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WSDFW) team were front and center with a large bear cage, cougar pelts

and educational literature aimed at helping homeowners and recreationists peacefully cohabitate with the great beasts of the forest. I watched as small children gingerly tiptoed around the corner of the big cage, half expecting to see a snarling black bear inside.

WSDFW wildlife biologist and leading cougar researcher Dr. Brian Kertson was busy explaining animal behavior to eager faces as they touched cougar paws and tails for the first time. That introduction was the first of many opportunities I would have to learn about the focused dedication of Officer Richards, Dr. Kertson and other agency officials. Managing wildlife in Washington state is a challenging, complex job, and each official fills their respective roles because of their long-standing passion for keeping wildlife populations healthy.

Keeping wildlife wild has been an evolving process in light of our state's ever growing



population. Years ago, with no other alternative in sight, habituated bears were often euthanized as a means of public safety. But killing a bear simply because it wandered into a crime of opportunity with a curbside trash can or backyard bird feeder was far from the best solution. Just five years ago, a much better method of rehabilitation, the “hard-release,” was introduced and has had a very high success rate.

It all starts with a bear who, in a search for food, follows its highly sensitive nose into an urban or rural neighborhood. Garbage cans left out by homeowners the night before pickup day become easy pickings, and bears learn to surf the sidewalks for dinner. Bird feeders on decks become protein sources where bears learn to shop for appetizers in back yards. When a bear becomes a repeat offender and is posing a hazard, it's Officer Richards, Mishka and others on the team to the rescue!

The bear is humanely baited into a large cage that locks the bear securely inside. Next, the bear is tranquilized, measured, ear-tagged and checked for overall health by a biologist. At this point in the rehabilitation, children and adults who are in the neighborhood are often invited to assist the biologist with tasks, or to touch the sleeping bear's coarse fur. As the bear awakens it is transported to a more “bear-friendly” location, such as a greenbelt, watershed or mountaintop and receives the scare of a lifetime—otherwise known as a “hard-release.”

At the scene of the release, everything is orchestrated as a finely choreographed dance with the Karelian Bear Dogs' deep barks creating the resounding background music. Before the bear is released, the dogs are taken to the trap and encouraged by their handlers to “get that bear.” The encouragement is to help the dogs recognize the bear's scent, if it needs to be located post-release. Officers then stand back with loaded nonlethal beanbag rounds in their shotguns—a measure intended to give the bear a sting to remember.

During the commotion, onlookers are encouraged to shout, clap and holler as if the bear were invading a campsite, so that human voices also become synonymous with fear. When the trap is opened, the bear usually moves at lightning speed as it sees the opportunity for the safety of the forest. And just like that, it's over.

Despite its being in the best interest of the bear, it always tugs a little at the heartstrings. It's one of the only ways humans can communicate these important lessons and protect bears from certain death. Through this program, roughly 80 percent of problem bears have been successfully rehabilitated. Much of the success of the process can be attributed to

Bear Country Suggestions:

Living near bears

- ▶ Take trash out the morning of garbage day, instead of the night before
- ▶ Avoid using bird feeders, except in winter
- ▶ Clean outdoor grills after each use, including any grease drippings

Hiking near bears

- ▶ Make noise by singing or clapping your hands while in bear country
- ▶ Hike in groups during daylight hours to avoid attracting things that go bump in the night—including bears
- ▶ Watch for bear signs, such as tracks, piles of scat laden with berries and small trees scratched to bits by hungry bears looking for grubs

Bear encounters

Although aggressive behavior is very rare, a bear will defend its young or food source if it feels threatened. Startling a bear can also lead to distress and agitation. Most times bears prefer to avoid confrontation and will flee, but when they are agitated, you'll be able to read the signals clearly. They wear their emotions on their big, furry sleeves, and you'll see signs of distress such as jaw popping with head turning, huffing or vocalizing, or aggressive slamming of their paws to the ground. If a bear behaves this way, it's trying to tell you that you've crossed the line. In this case

- ▶ Do not look the bear in the eye; this is perceived as a challenge and a sign of dominance.
- ▶ Never turn your back to a bear; if safe to do so, slowly walk backwards and give the bear as much space as possible
- ▶ Talk calmly and quietly so the bear can identify you as a human, and do your best to diffuse the situation

Occasionally a bear will bluff charge as its way of trying to resolve the situation on its own. This is when a bear charges, then stops short of you and veers off, running away. If you practice good bear etiquette this should never happen to you—but if it ever does, your body language in this situation could save your life. Stand your ground and hold as still as possible without making eye contact. Don't even take half a step backwards.

Once the bear is gone, promptly find a tree to hide behind and change your soiled drawers.



Attention Photographers!

Are you looking to improve your photographic skill in the new year? The Appalachian Mountain Club has just released the new *AMC Guide to Outdoor Digital Photography: Creating Great Nature and Adventure Photos*, written by professional photographer Jerry Monkman.

Geared toward outdoor enthusiasts, this easy-to-read, full color guidebook encourages photographers to expand their photography skills beyond the basic, plus it helps experienced photographers hone techniques. Monkman covers the full spectrum of working with photography: from packing gear and finding inspiration to taking great shots and editing photos in the "digital darkroom."

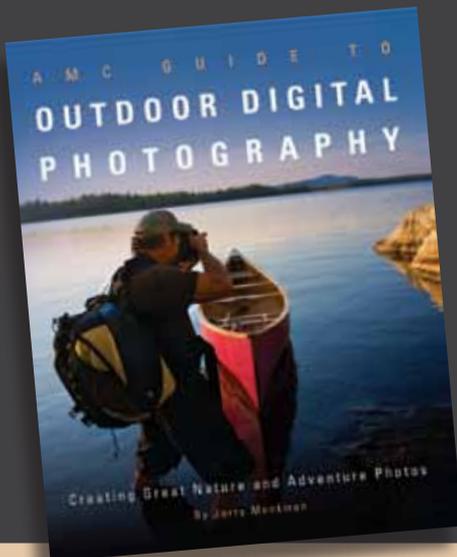
With easy-to-follow instructions, case studies and expert advice, you will learn

- ▶ Gear and gear safety
- ▶ Telling stories with photos
- ▶ Shooting in different weather, lighting and seasonal conditions
- ▶ Perfecting composition and exposure
- ▶ Processing images using editing software
- ▶ Keeping photographs organized and safe

Also included is a section on additional recommended reading, software resources, and the ethics of being a conscientious photographer.

Jerry Monkman is a conservation photographer whose nature and adventure photographs have appeared in *National Geographic Adventure*, *Outdoor Photographer*, *Audubon*, *Men's Journal*, and *National Wildlife*.

Order your copy at www.outdoors.org/amcstore or by calling (800) 262-4455.



the help of Karelian Bear Dogs, which were recently introduced.

In the world of wildlife work, Karelian Bear Dogs (KBD) are priceless. Long used for hunting in northern Europe, this unique breed, when specially trained, can track bears and detect birds, shell casings, scat and other important items, as well as track down dead animals. In 2003, Mishka became the first KBD in the agency and assisted his handler, Rocky Spencer, to locate two dozen cougars in east King and south Snohomish Counties and, in turn, educate citizens on avoiding conflict.

When Spencer was tragically killed in 2007, Mishka went to work with Officer Richards and to this day continues to be an important part of the team. Recently, Mishka helped wildlife officials locate a den of three cougar kittens whose mother had been killed. Mishka has also been instrumental in tracking poachers in Olympic National Park and has even assisted in homicide investigations. Mishka is one of four KBDs in the agency today, but more are needed and funding is lacking.

Officer Richards, Dr. Kertson and others in the agency are more than just officials with titles. They seem to all have a united passion for the creatures that share our forests and a strong desire to minimize wildlife conflict for those of us who love spending time in the outdoors. Through educational opportunities such as evening classes and public outreach, more and more of us are learning how to behave when we encounter a bear on trail or find wildlife in distress.

It's not only painted mountains that call me to wander the hilltop hinterlands, but also the creatures that live within its boundaries. As I wear down the soles of my hiking boots, I'm grateful and honored to know those who are working not only to protect our trails, but also to protect the wildlife that call them home. ♦

For more information on how you can help, please visit www.wdfw.wa.gov/enforcement/kdb.

Tami Asars is a guidebook author and outdoor writer who lives in the Cascade foothills.

Justin K. helps Dr. Kertson measure the teeth on a sedated black bear. Photo by Tami Asars



Snapshot » Dave Schiefelbein

Composition

Without a doubt, if you're a member of WTA you are also an admirer of Washington's natural beauty. It's that devotion to nature that draws most of us out of our living rooms and into the woods and hills. While we're out and about in the wilds, we frequently come across something that we want to bring home with us in the form of a picture.

But how often, after we get home and look closely at our pictures, do we say, "Hey, this picture doesn't look as good as what it was like when I was there"? Well, don't despair. Photographs will never replace being there. The best we can hope for is to bring back a picture that comes close to capturing the spirit of the place we visited. For that we can continually hone and practice our photographic technique, specifically our compositional skills.

Plainly stated, "composition" is how the elements in the scene are arranged. While we can't be in charge of the weather, or the light, or the wind, the balance and placement of the elements in a camera's viewfinder is the single thing that photographers *do* have most control over. Some people refer to the "rules" of composition, but I prefer to call them "suggestions" because composition is an art, not a science. And if it can be done well, a rule is meant to be broken.

Here are four of the basics that will help any photographer build a stronger, more effective composition:

1. The Rule (i.e., "suggestion") of Thirds: Envision your viewfinder divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically ... a tic-tac-toe board. Where the lines intersect are considered the power points. Rather than dead-center in the frame, try placing the main subject of the photograph where two of those lines cross.

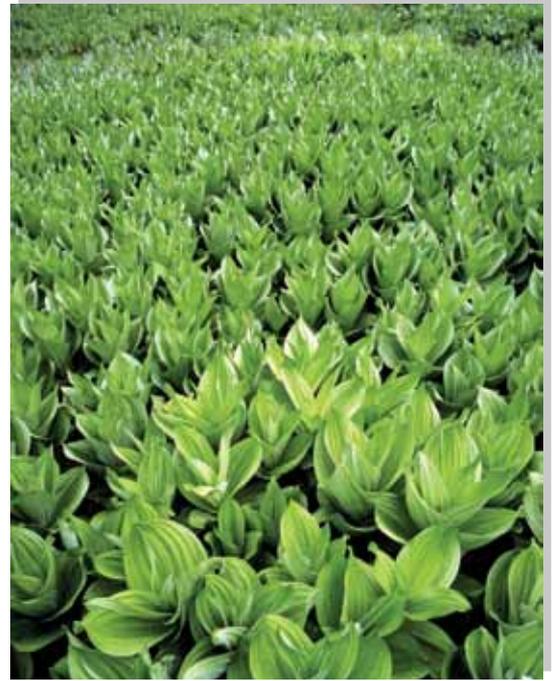
2. Remember, It's Photo-"graphic": Graphic elements, like lines, curves and basic geometric shapes can be used creatively to enhance a picture. A winding river or trail can be a line that guides a viewer's eye effortlessly through a scene.

3. Perspective: Most people walk up to a scene they want to photograph, raise the camera to their face (usually that's 5-6 feet off the ground), and snap the photo. Once you've taken that picture, don't put the camera away. Mix it up by using a lower or higher camera angle. An unusual perspective can add an interesting element. Try to portray the scene in a way that you've never seen it rendered before.

4. Less Is More: This is one my favorites. Think of photography as a subtractive process (unlike painting or poetry, where one begins with nothing and adds elements to create the final product). Break the picture down to its most basic elements. Simplicity is the key.

Remember, it's our love of the mountains that brings us to photography, not our love of photography that brings us to the mountains. With a little extra effort and practice, we can create pictures that more accurately define what it is we admire about those wild places. ♦

Dave Schiefelbein is a commercial photographer based in Seattle. He goes to the mountains to find solitude while practicing his craft. To see more of Dave's work, google "Dave Schiefelbein photography."



One spring during a light rainfall I came across a meadow full of newly opened false hellebore leaves.

My first pictures were frame-filling images of a big portion of the field (above). These were nice enough—full of color and pattern—but a central point of focus was missing.

I got in close, positioned the camera lower to the ground and came away with a much better picture (below). This created a more pleasing composition that now clearly says "spring rain in a green meadow."



Trail Eats » Sarah Kirkconnell

Warm up your winter camp with one of these tasty soup recipes.

Clam & Bacon Chowder



IN A SANDWICH BAG:

- ▶ 1 cup instant plain mashed potatoes
- ▶ ¼ cup shelf stable bacon
- ▶ 4 tsp. low-sodium chicken bouillon
- ▶ 1 tsp. dill weed
- ▶ ¼ tsp. granulated garlic
- ▶ ¼ tsp. black pepper

DIRECTIONS:

1. Add 1 cup cold water to the milk bag, seal tightly and shake until dissolved.
2. Add 3 cups water, oil and contents of potato bag to your pot. Bring to a boil and stir the milk mixture into the soup. Bring back to a gentle bubble and let thicken.
3. Turn to a low flame and add in the clams with broth, cheese and chives. Let heat through but don't boil. Serves two.

IN A SECOND BAG:

- ▶ ¼ cup dry milk
- ▶ 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour

ALSO TAKE:

- ▶ 1 Tbsp. or 1 packet olive oil
- ▶ 6.5-ounce can minced clams
- ▶ ¼ cup Parmesan cheese
- ▶ 1 tsp. dried chives

IN A SANDWICH BAG:

- ▶ 1 cup biscuit mix
- ▶ 1 Tbsp. dry milk
- ▶ 1 tsp. each dried chives, parsley
- Mark on bag "Add 1/3 cup water"

IN A SANDWICH BAG:

- ▶ 3/4 cup freeze-dried vegetable mix
- ▶ 1 Tbsp. diced dried onion flakes
- ▶ 1 Tbsp. diced instant hashbrowns

IN A SMALL BAG:

- ▶ 4 tsp. low-sodium chicken bouillon
- ▶ 1/2 tsp. dried parsley
- ▶ 1/4 tsp. dried thyme
- ▶ 1/4 tsp. diced dried garlic
- ▶ 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- ▶ Salt to taste

ALSO TAKE:

- ▶ 7-ounce pouch of chicken

DIRECTIONS:

1. Cover the vegetables with cold water and let soak for 5 minutes in a 2-liter pot.
2. Add 4 cups water, the broth and vegetable bags, and the chicken with any broth to your pot. Bring to a boil, taste the broth, and salt to taste. Lower the heat a bit on your stove and keep simmering at a low boil.

Meanwhile mix up the biscuit mix in its bag.

4. Add the water, push out any air, seal the bag and knead till mixed. Snip a corner on the bag and start squeezing out dumplings. Let them simmer on the soup with lid on, for 5 minutes or till the dumplings are steamed and done (poke a spoon in one to check for being doughy), lowering the flame as needed to prevent boil-overs. Makes two large or three small servings.

Chicken Stew & Dumplings



Slide Mt. Bean Chowder



IN A QUART FREEZER BAG:

- ▶ 1/2 cup instant rice
- ▶ 1/3 cup instant black refried beans
- ▶ 1/4 cup freeze-dried corn
- ▶ 1 Tbsp. shelf-stable Parmesan cheese
- ▶ 1 tsp. diced dried bell peppers
- ▶ 2 Tbsp. dried salsa

FREEZER BAG DIRECTIONS (FBC):

Add 2 cups near-boiling water. Stir well, seal tightly and put in a cozy for 15 minutes. Stir well again.

MUG DIRECTIONS:

Add 2 cups boiling water to the dry ingredients in a large mug. Stir well, cover tightly and let sit for 15 minutes.

ONE POT DIRECTIONS:

Bring 2 cups water to a boil in your pot. Add the dry ingredients, stir well and let sit for 15 minutes, tightly covered. In cold weather wrap your pot in a pot cozy to retain heat.

Serves 1 as a meal, 2 as a side.

Sarah Kirkconnell is the author of Trail Cooking Made Simple. Find more trail-worthy recipes for your next adventure at www.trailcooking.com.

Take a Hike!

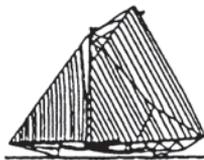


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Winter Hikes»

- 1 **June Lake**, Mount St. Helens
- 2 **Huntoon Point**, Mount Baker
- 3 **Northrup Canyon**, Steamboat Rock
- 4 **Wenatchee Crest**, Blewett Pass
- 5 **Mowich Lake**, Mount Rainier
- 6 **Middle Fork Snoqualmie River**
- 7 **Ebey's Landing State Park**



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► South Cascades

Location: Mount St. Helens

Total Mileage: 5 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 900 feet

Highest Elevation: 3500 feet

Map: Green Trails 364: Mount St. Helens

Permit: Sno-Park Pass; additional climbing permit required if going above 4,800 feet

Directions: From I 5 at Woodland, drive east on SR 503 for 30 miles to Cougar; continue east on FR 90 for 7 miles, then FR 83 for 6 miles to Marble Mountain Sno-Park.



Snowshoe: June Lake

Visit a hidden lake and waterfall, cross snow-covered lava flows, and wander among stands of old growth, all below the snow-blanketed slopes of Mount St. Helens.

Cross the upper parking area to Pine Marten Trail 245. This trail parallels snow-covered Forest Road 83—which is often crowded with speeding snowmobiles—for 0.8 mile. Cross June Lake Creek, then turn left on June Lake Trail 216B.

The trail climbs gradually through second-growth forest for 1.4 miles. Along the way are several viewpoints of Mount St. Helens above the June Lake Creek canyon. The route then makes an eastward turn to the shore of shallow June Lake, where a 70-foot ribbonlike waterfall pouring over a basalt cliff is visible across the lake. To this point makes an easy goal for an in-and-out trip.

For a more challenging return route, after visiting June Lake turn left toward a snow-covered lava flow and make your way to a post on top. Climb higher as you head across the lava flow, with views of Mount St. Helens looming ahead. Look for a large blue diamond with a left-pointing arrow in a tree on the far side, which marks the point where Pika Trail 244D re-enters the forest and climbs to the junction with Swift Trail 244. The distance from June Lake to the Swift junction is 0.7 mile.

Turn left and descend 1.5 miles down the Swift Trail through more second-growth forest. At the junction with Fir Trail 244B, turn right for a scenic 0.3-mile side trip among huge old-growth Douglas-firs and western redcedars. At the next junction, turn right again on Swift Trail 244 for 0.2 mile back to the Sno-Park.

Text and photo by Susan Saul — Vancouver, WA



Snowshoe: Huntoon Point

With a starting elevation of 4,300 this tour is your best guarantee of good snow, even in a lean year.

The sojourn to Huntoon Point is a study in contrasts. It starts amid the hustle and bustle of the Mount Baker Ski Area and ends in the silence of Kulshan Ridge, where icy winds blowing off glaciers will cleanse your soul and refresh your spirit.

Park at the enormous lot adjoining the upper lodge of the ski area (4,300 feet) and head up from the southeast corner of the lot. The route is straightforward, but not without some minor huffing and puffing. You'll be swimming against the current of downhill skiers and snowboarders, but the snow-covered high meadows will compensate for the traffic.

Take the obvious trail that veers off to the right from a downhill run, climb a steep hill and catch your breath at Austin Pass with its spectacular view of Mount Shuksan. Follow the path of the summer road as it traverses beneath a ridge, and then angle up before you come to the last big switchback below Kulshan Ridge (Artist Point). This switchback has seen slides and is the only dicey place on the route, so exercise caution. One more episode of vociferous grunting and you're on top. Make your way along the undulating ridge to the high spot at Huntoon Point, where basking in the winter sun can be a religious experience.

From the Point, the North Cascades reveal themselves in a most breathtaking fashion. Mount Shuksan is resplendent and the Border Peaks form a magnificent chorus line against the northern horizon. Mt. Baker, the Great White Watcher, dominates all. Don't hurry back down; linger awhile, eat your lunch and savor the remarkable view.

Text and photo by John D'Onofrio — Bellingham, WA

► North Cascades

Location: Mount Baker

Total Mileage: 6 miles round trip

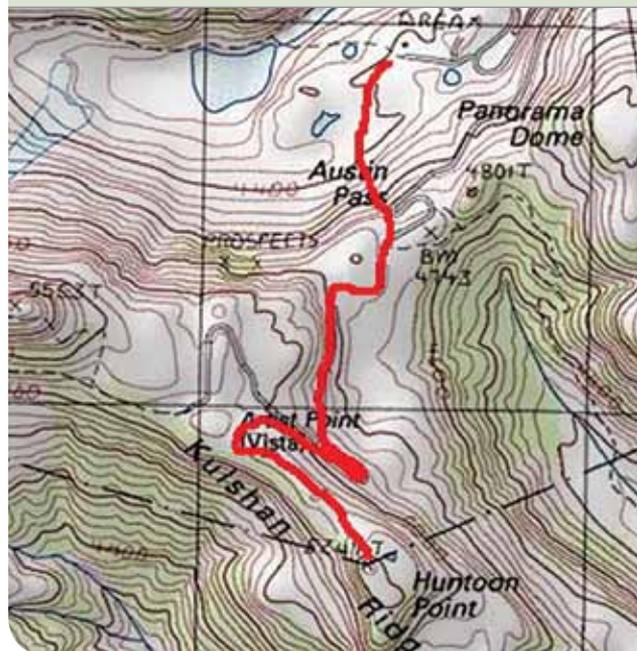
Elevation Gain: 1,200 feet

Highest Elevation: 5,150 feet

Map: Green Trails 14: Mount Shuksan

Permit: None

Directions: From I 5 at Bellingham, drive east on SR 542 for 64 miles to the Mount Baker Ski Area. Park in the upper lot.





► Eastern Washington

Location: Steamboat Rock State Park

Total Mileage: 3 miles

Elevation Gain: 384 feet

Highest Elevation: 2,134 feet

Map: WA State DNR: Banks Lake

Permit: Discover Pass

Directions: From Ellensburg, drive I 90 east to exit 151 for Ephrata/Soap Lake. Drive north on SR 17 20 miles to US 2; turn right and drive 4 miles, then merge onto SR 155 for 19 miles. Right onto gravel road for Northrup Canyon.

Hike: Northrup Canyon

Bald eagles, icons of the mossy forests and deep rivers of the Pacific Coast, flock to this desert canyon each winter, and their presence is reason to visit in winter.

Up to 200 of the big birds roost in the trees along the south side of Northrup Canyon each night. Get to the trailhead early to see the squadrons of majestic birds flying out of the canyon as they head to the fishing areas of Banks Lake. Even without the baldies, the area offers a great experience with nature. While the eagles focus on fish, the local populations of red-tailed and Cooper's hawks hunt inland for upland birds, rodents and small mammals. The prey animals find shelter in the rich ground cover of the canyon. Ever-present sagebrush provides the best cover, but the little beasts also scurry under the clumps of balsamroot and other desert vegetation.

The trail climbs into the canyon, which holds the only native forest in Grant County. The forest is mostly pine (ponderosa and lodgepole), but some Douglas-fir also is in the mix. Those trees make this canyon a logical home to birds of all kinds, and the result is a bird lover's paradise. Following the track as it meanders through the heart of the canyon, look and listen for avians such as great horned owls and barred owls, woodpeckers and flickers, grouse and quail, swallows and sparrows, hawks and eagles.

Hike up the canyon for a good 1.5 miles, and you'll find the forest diversifying with the inclusion of willow and aspen trees. Continue up the canyon to find an abandoned farmhouse, and scramble around the forest at your leisure before heading back the way you came.

Text and photo by Kim Brown — Seattle, WA





Snowshoe: Wenatchee Crest

Here's an easy snowshoe or cross-country ski with low avalanche danger, incredible views and a good chance of sunshine.

The Wenatchee Crest near Blewett Pass is an ideal entry-level snowshoe, thanks to its modest elevation gain and panoramic views from the ridgetop. And even with such an easily accessible trailhead, the crowds are often minimal.

Starting at the north end of the parking area, the route follows Forest Road 800, climbing moderately through forest to a junction half a mile up. Take the left-hand fork to continue along the ridge; the right hand fork drops down into Scotty Creek. Beyond the junction the road levels out as it meanders along the north side of the ridge dividing Scotty Creek and Swauk Creek, sometimes near the crest, other times traversing shady basins. The forest is mostly fir and hemlock with scattered western larch, looking bare without their needles. Along the way there are numerous clearcuts with views out to Tronson Ridge, the Peshastin Creek Valley and back to Diamond Head.

Continuing another mile, the road makes a sharp bend to the left and traverses toward Point 4411 with views of the Stuarts and an occasional glimpse of Mount Rainier. After another quarter of a mile, just past the point, come to a large clearcut with an unobstructed panorama of the Teanaway Mountains and the entire Stuart Range—all the way from Miller Peak to the Peshastin Valley. This makes a good lunch stop and turnaround point.

For further exploring, the route continues on to a saddle where the road forks again. Take the left fork for nicer views. Either way, return to your starting point by the same way you came.

Text and photo by David Hagen — Yakima, WA

► Central Cascades

Location: Snoqualmie Pass–Teanaway

Total Mileage: 6 miles round trip

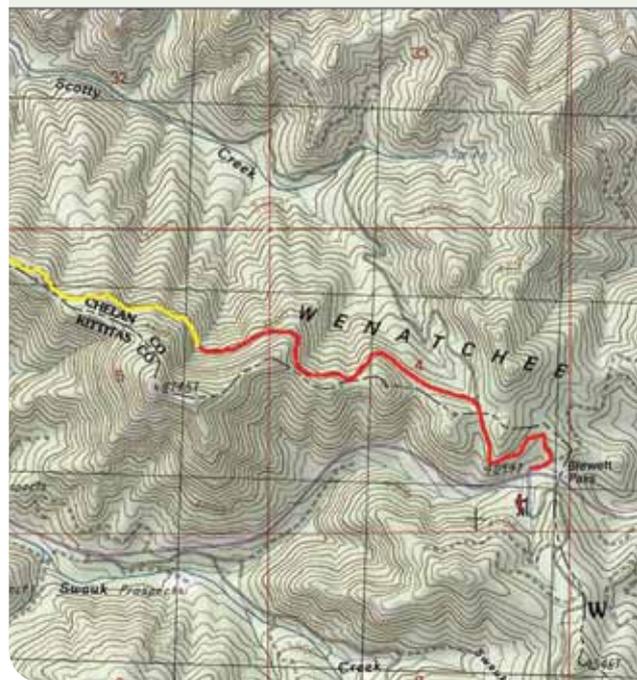
Elevation Gain: 400 feet

Highest Elevation: 4,500 feet

Map: Green Trails 210: Liberty

Permit: Sno-Park Pass

Directions: From Yakima, drive I 82/US 97 north 67 miles to the Blewett Pass Sno-Park.





Janet Putz

Snowshoe: Mowich Lake

Enjoy the serenity and peacefulness of a mountain lake in the quietness of winter.

From the park boundary, go around the gate and start up the forested, snow-covered road. Along the way, you'll be enticed by views of Martin Peak, Meadow Creek Valley and Tolmie Peak. After 3 miles, keep your eyes peeled for the Grindstone Trail. This is an alternative to staying on the road and provides a shortcut upslope through the trees. In the summer this trail is well marked and easy to find, but winter can prove to be more challenging; be sure to have map and compass if you decide to go this way, otherwise stay on the road. Arrive at the shores of Mowich Lake and enjoy the scenery. For a look at Mount Rainier, continue southward a quarter of a mile to a ridgetop viewpoint.

Location: Mount Rainier

Elevation Gain: 1,400 feet

Map: Green Trails 269

Total Mileage: 10 miles round trip

Highest Elevation: 5,000 feet

Permit: None



Kim Brown

Hike: Middle Fork Snoqualmie River

Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, this forest walk is accessible throughout winter—with peekaboo views of Garfield Mountain.

Start on the trail nearest the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Campground and plunge into older second-growth forest of thick mosses and ferns before crossing a creek. From a clearing are views of Garfield Mountain, brilliant when capped with snow. The trail works its way up to an old roadbed where you enter a forest on the verge of old-growth status. Lovely trees and lush mosses abound. The trail meanders along the forest floor among giant snags left from an old forest fire and the ghostly white glow of alder trees that line the trail in some places. On sunny days, sunshine pokes through here and there and on the wet days, what better place to be than on a forested trail?

Location: North Bend

Elevation Gain: 400 feet

Map: Green Trails 174: Mount Si

Total Mileage: 4 miles out and back

Highest Elevation: 1,450 feet

Permit: Northwest Forest Pass



Susan Elderkin

Stroll: Ebey's Landing

This year-round hike offers a log-strewn beach, a coastal bluff with views of the Olympics, coastal wetlands and rich human history.

Ebey's Landing—the first National Historic Preserve—was one of the first places on Whidbey Island to be settled by non-Natives. Hikers can choose between a 3.5-mile coastal loop hike or a longer 5.6-mile lollipop loop that also incorporates the historic homestead and the museum. Hike counterclockwise, by climbing up the bluff. On clear days, the views are fantastic. In winter months, the mountains are covered in snow, providing texture and depth that are missing during the summer. Below, caught between the beach and the bluff, is Peregos Lake, a rare saltwater lagoon favored by shorebirds. At the far end of the lake, the trail turns down the bluff on a steep and sandy trail.

Location: Whidbey Island

Elevation Gain: 260 feet

Map: Fort Ebey State Park

Total Mileage: 3.5 or 5.6 miles

Highest Elevation: 270 feet

Permit: Discover Pass



Volunteers working on the Grand Ridge boardwalk.
Photo by Richard Axon

WTA'S Trail Work Parties in January and February

Date	Location
Jan 1	Tiger Mountain
Jan 3 - 7	Grand Ridge
Jan 8	Tiger Mountain
Jan 10 - 14	Cougar Mountain
Jan 14, 15	Pioneer Park
Jan 14	Dosewallips State Park
Jan 15	Tiger Mountain
Jan 17 - 21	Cougar Mountain
Jan 21, 22	Pioneer Park
Jan 22	Dosewallips State Park
Jan 22	Tiger Mountain
Jan 24 - 28	Taylor Mountain
Jan 28, 29	Larrabee State Park
Jan 29	Tiger Mountain
Jan 31 - Feb 4	O'Grady
Feb 5	Tiger Mountain
Feb 7 - 11	O'Grady
Feb 11, 12	Larrabee State Park
Feb 11	Dosewallips State Park
Feb 12	Tiger Mountain
Feb 14 - 18	Grand Ridge
Feb 19	Tiger Mountain
Feb 21 - 25	Grand Ridge
Feb 25, 26	Larrabee State Park
Feb 26	Tiger Mountain
Feb 26	Dosewallips State Park
Feb 28, 29	Evans Creek Preserve



To sign up for one of WTA's day trip work parties, head over to www.wta.org

Featured Trail Project »

Evans Creek Preserve

Washington Trails Association's trail maintenance program is a year-round endeavor. In the summer, our volunteers tackle high-elevation trails in Washington's national forests and national parks. In fall, winter and spring, when the snow line is low, county and city park managers come calling. WTA generally takes on one or two big "frontcountry" projects each year. Front-country projects are on trails that are accessible to hikers and trail runners year-round near urban areas.

WTA's largest frontcountry project of 2011, and one of our 10 signature projects, was a new trail on an old farmstead for the City of Sammamish. WTA laid out several loops on the 179-acre preserve—and more than 250 volunteers subsequently put 7,000 hours into this 2-mile trail system.

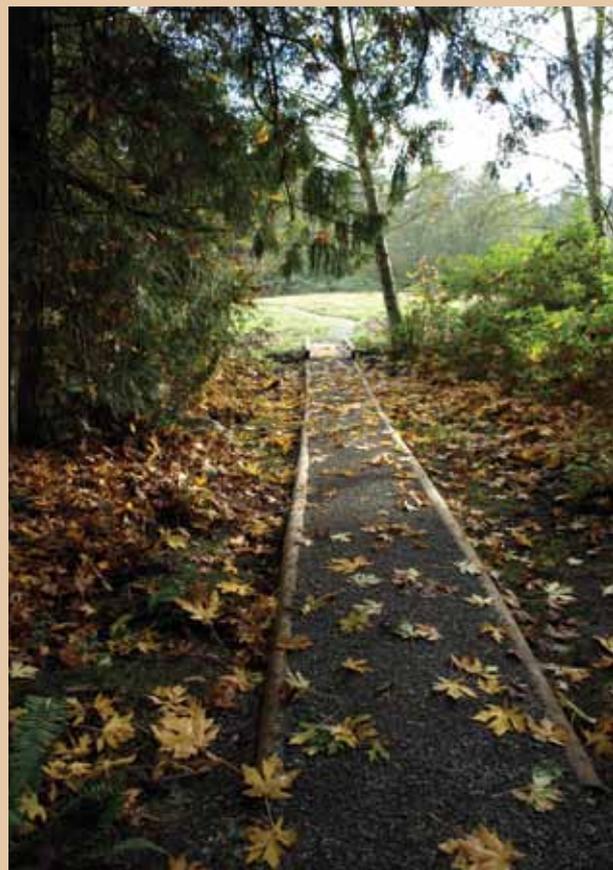
There was something for everyone to do on this project, from the youngest (age ten) and newest volunteers, to the oldest (age eighty) and most seasoned veterans. We had several youth crews out (including our first-ever spring break trips), corporate groups, and lots of first-timers and regulars.

Volunteers followed little pink flags and encountered massive amounts of mud, huge stumps and roots and plenty of moss, alder and ferns. Participants who liked to build structures had plenty to do as well. There are 14 new bridges and a long boardwalk – beautifully handcrafted to protect the wetlands and to keep hikers from getting muddy. And finally there was the gravel—eight dump trucks worth!—that took care of the remaining mud.

All of this work transformed the landscape from marshy farmland to a public space that is ideal for families, dog walkers, bird watchers and more. There is even an ADA-accessible loop option. The terrain is gentle, and the trails move in and among wetlands, meadows and airy forests.

Directions to the Evans Creek Preserve are in WTA's online Hiking Guide. Give a visit this winter and a quiet thanks to the volunteers who built these trails.

New tread in Evans Creek Preserve
Photo by Susan Elderkin



A Walk on the Wild Side »

The Spiritual Hiker

My relationship with mountains, and how it influences my artistic interpretation of wilderness

By Roy Hughes

In 1871 John Muir, acclaimed preservationist, stated, "As long as I live, I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing. I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood, storm, and the avalanche. I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can."

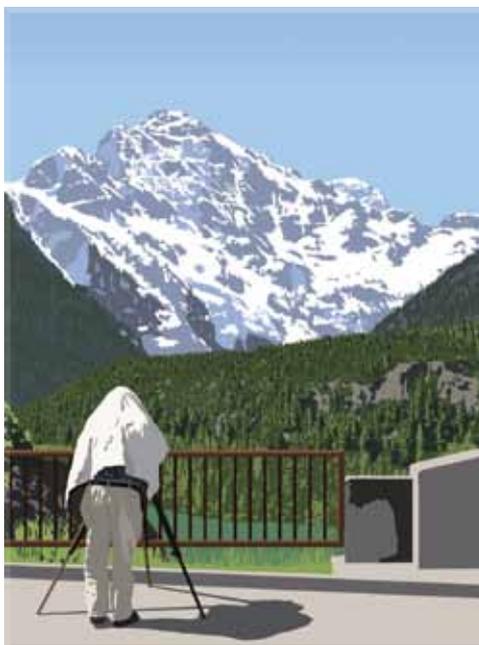
In the same vein as Muir, Gary Snyder, a well-known Beat Generation poet, is a spiritual hiker. While on a fire lookout on Crater Mountain in 1952, he engaged in Zen mountain watching for hours on end. His poetry allowed him to "become one with the mountains."

In my quest to understand this spirituality, painting is my own attempt to get "as near the heart of the world as I can," and "become one with the mountains."

When I hike, I always look at a scene in terms of how I would capture the "feel" of the scene. I need to feel the essence of the scene to be able to paint it. It might be the composition, how elements like mountain shapes and forest shapes relate to one another. It might be the light and dark values or the importance of colors in the scene. Or maybe the scene powerfully evokes a mood, such as tranquility or exhilaration.

After I have felt what the essence of a scene is, I next think about how to communicate that feeling artistically. When I sit down at my tablet and begin my painting, I have a feeling of what I want to communicate and a general idea of how I want to proceed. Before I get very far into the work, however, I usually find the picture taking over, "talking" to me about how to proceed.

This interaction between my experience in the real world and the work being created carries me back



"The mountains are calling and I must go."

– John Muir



and forth between the reality of the scene and the creation of the painting. Soon this back-and-forth process melds into one thing, a sense that the painting is the actual scene and that the actual scene is in the painting. The painting eventually becomes one with the actual scene and I have become one with the scene, through the process of painting.

In the upper painting, *Image of Splendor*, the photographer illustrates the concept of becoming "one with the mountains." Notice he is not using a modern point-and-shoot camera. He has immersed himself into the scene he is photographing, going beyond just "taking a picture," and becoming one with the glorious mountain and its surroundings. I believe that in my own artistic efforts I am moving beyond being an observer of mountains and beginning to sense what it means to be "one with the mountains." Painting enables me to do that.

In the lower painting, *Yellow Aster Butte*, we see two people mountain watching, as illustrated in the words of Gary Snyder. There is a sense of solitude and peacefulness, of grandeur, implying a scale of man to nature. This is a spiritual scene. There is a sense of being "one with the mountains." I feel that—that I am near the heart of the world, at one with it—when I am immersed in creating these scenes. If you feel that as well when viewing my works, I will have succeeded as an artist, and have attained my own relationship with the mountains as a spiritual hiker. ♦

Roy Hughes has been hiking around northern Washington for over forty years. He has just published the book North Cascades Beautiful: An Artist's View. It showcases more than 70 of his works of art, inspired by his wanderings from Mount Baker to Snoqualmie Pass. It is currently available for purchase on Amazon.com.

Featured Landscape »

Winchester Mountain



Solitude and winter twilight at Winchester Lookout

It was the weekend before winter-quarter midterms at the University of Washington, and I needed to find somewhere to study. Somewhere isolated, quiet and devoid of electronic distractions. What could be a better spot than the old fire lookout on the summit of Winchester Mountain?

Constructed in 1935, Winchester Lookout is one of a number of lookouts built by the U.S. Forest Service in the 1920s and 30s in order to spot fires. By the 1970s, most of these structures were abandoned as fire detection began to rely on other technologies. There are a number of old fire lookouts still standing on summits across Washington. Most of them have become popular hiking destinations, maintained by volunteer hikers and sometimes even outfitted with cots, propane and cooking utensils.

Since it was wintertime when I hiked up to the lookout, I encountered impassable snow on the road long before I reached the trailhead. But this was fine with me, as I just pulled out my notes, strapped on my snowshoes, and got in a few good hours of studying as I slowly slogged up the road. I was forced to put my notes away for the last few miles of deep snow and steep slopes up to the lookout. My mind now refreshed, I lit a candle, set up a tripod, made some hot chocolate, and snuggled into my sleeping bag for a night of studying while my camera took long exposures of the glowing lookout. Overall, I think it was my most productive—and most enjoyable—weekend of studying to date. ♦

Story and photograph by Steph Abegg

HIKE IT>>

Twin Lakes/Winchester Mountain 685

Location:

Mount Baker

Distance:

3.5 miles round trip from Twin Lakes trailhead;
8.5 miles round trip from Yellow Aster Butte

Elevation Gain:

1,320 feet; 2,900 feet

Map:

Green Trails 14: Mount Shuksan

Permit:

Northwest Forest Pass

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OFFBEAT EXPOSURE

FIRST PRIZE ►

**A Different Breed of Mountain Goat
by Christine Cortis**



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Stocking Up by Megan Richards



▲ SECOND PRIZE
Chillin' Out by Mary Campbell

◀ THIRD PRIZE
Get the Tent! by Jeremy Allyn