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Mountaineer

EXPLORE • LEARN • CONSERVE

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The Mountaineers enriches the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about, and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

On the cover: Iris Lieuw, one of our Top 10 Mountaineers of Instagram, earning the vert and feeling alive. Photo by Lynsey Palmer.

Features

Columns

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Discover The Mountaineers

If you are thinking of joining, or have joined and aren't sure where to start, why not set a date to Meet The Mountaineers? Check the Branching Out section of the magazine for times and locations of informational meetings at each of our seven branches.

With the shift in seasons, I am saying goodbye to the sunny, warms days in the North Cascades and digging out winter gear for cooler, wetter trips to the mountains. The Mountaineers is gearing up for the changing seasons, too.

The past year provided an opportunity to find our footing after a time of external uncertainty. While the last few years had a profound impact on the organization, in many ways our community has never been stronger. We've recently seen an expansion in our overall membership, a steady increase in courses and trips offered, growth in the number of young people served through programs, and progress through our work to support environmental and recreation policies. Most importantly – and sometimes hard to quantify – is our work building relationships between people and with place. Those bonds feel stronger than ever.

The amazing opportunities we experience as part of this community cannot be accomplished without the work of our dedicated staff and volunteers (all 3,386 of them!). These folks serve as the critical strands that create the vibrant tapestry of our community (now 16,000 members strong). Through the priorities outlined in *Adventure with Purpose* (our new strategic plan), we will be intentionally investing in our volunteers and staff to make their jobs easier and to provide even more opportunities to improve their technical and soft skills for their chosen activities.

We have all benefited from the immense contributions of our community, and I know we all appreciate the feeling of paying it forward by giving back to our community through time, financial support, teaching our skills, and amplifying our shared impact. Together last year, Mountaineers gave over 165,000 hours of time to teaching, leading, and stewarding. We offered 186 courses, 922 youth activities, and over 4,000 trips, which cumulatively covered 221,000 miles and 49,000,000 vertical feet.

The strong sense of reciprocity, which vibrates through the organization, served as the cornerstone during our founding in 1906. Nearly 120 years later, we are still building on this legacy. The sense of community and giving back will guide us as we take the next steps in our evolution and think about how we can be good stewards 120 years from now.

A piece of this evaluation includes a change in leadership. As I begin to transition out of the Board President position, I could not be more thrilled to support Manisha Powar as the next President. Manisha has instructed many courses, led dozens of trips, and previously served as the Board's Secretary. She believes in empowering everyone to pursue their outdoor dreams and is the perfect person to help us navigate the implementation of *Adventure with Purpose*. I am excited to support her leadership, and I'm also personally looking forward to having more time to lead a course and a few trips next spring and summer as my own way of enabling adventures with purpose.

Gabe Aeschliman
Board President

The Mountaineers is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1906 and dedicated to the responsible enjoyment and protection of natural areas.

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editors note

Everett Nordic Skiing course students enjoying the snowy trails. Photo by Skye Michel.

Skye Michel
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Photo by Eleanor Lewis.

Until last winter, I had never been a fan of falling flat on my face. Shocking, I know, but I preferred to stay upright and avoid activities that would jeopardize the reliability of my feet. My world turned upside down, quite literally, when I enrolled in the Everett Nordic Skiing course. I was not a skier, skater, snowshoer, or anything winter-related for that matter. Once, I even ate a handful of anti-freeze salt from the ground thinking it was snow. Suffice it to say, winter was not my jam, but I was eager to find something to better connect me with the colder months.

On our first course field trip to Kahler Glen, a groomed golf course off Highway 2 with mostly level terrain, we practiced basic skiing techniques, such as standing up and staying standing. I never realized how easy it was to fall on a flat surface. Not long after clicking into my skis, I found myself back on the ground, face in snow.

As soon as I hit the ground the instructors cheered. When another student fell shortly after, they were met with a unanimous *hooray*. Then another tumble and ensuing ovation. We quickly reached an unspoken understanding that a celebratory applause was in order anytime anyone found themselves giving the ground an unexpected hug. The post-fall enthusiasm and support of my classmates was so uplifting that I started hoping I would wipe out. Thanks to everyone's infectious joy, I felt emboldened to test my footing and encouraged to rise after falling and try again. And, after years of avoiding the season, I had finally found my winter niche.

This edition's stories exemplify the many ways to find our footing. In "The Winter Solace of Birds," Thomas Bancroft reflects on the community and comfort that arises when we pay attention to the natural world, especially during our most trying moments. In "From ATVs to Nordic Skis," Brianna Traxinger explores how a love of the natural world and outdoor recreation can take many forms and reminds us that, at our core, we're more similar than we might think. Our theme finds a more literal outlet in "Toe-tally Not Cool: The Bunion Chronicles," where Kiana Ehsani and Grant Hennington provide expert advice on how to alleviate bunion risks and pains so you can keep steady footing and continue finding community in the sports you love. And our annual "Top 10 Mountaineers of Instagram" feature showcases how connected we all can be at just the click of a camera and the touch of a finger.

Our regular columns offer grounding insights as well. Craig Romano shares the special refuges that have brought him comfort and how he deals with their ever-changing nature, Mercedes Pollmeier highlights the importance of recovery in ensuring we have the capacity to stay connected and engaged in our busy lives, "Retro Rewind" unpacks the history of Mountaineers beginnings as nimble slope shredders at Snoqualmie Pass, and "Did You Know" gets our feet deep, dirty, and potentially duct-taped with some tips on how to make our own snowshoes.

Whether literally or metaphorically, I hope you find your own footing within your community this season. I know I'll be outside slipping in the winter powder and surrounding myself with Mountaineers who celebrate my falls. Oh, and steering clear of any salty "snow."

Our fall 2023 issue encouraged members to "Seize the Day." Many of you opted to seize your day by reading our magazine. We're honored that Mountaineer *continues to inspire our community and are ever grateful for your engagement and feedback.*

"My new issue just appeared in my mailbox. I immediately began reading it. Congratulations on another fine issue! You have done a beautiful job."
-Joan Burton, 72-year member

"It's a pleasure to read your magazine and learn about the many activities and achievements of members. The beautiful photos are always exciting. Maybe I should be a little jealous, but I have been out of the active arena for quite some time (I was 102 last month) and am happy just to observe and admire."
-Vilma Vojta, 67-year member

"I just want to tell you that I am one of your members that truly loves going to the mailbox and getting my latest copy of the magazine... and I do read it from cover to cover. It's totally full of good info and is such a quality product to have and to HOLD. "
-Connie Greenidge, 13-year member

In ***"The Priviest Views in Washington,"*** *we shared a list of the ten best backcountry places to sit back, relax, and take a weight off. Mountaineers member Delwin Elder inquired whether a Bulger List equivalent for visiting all these privies existed. Not yet, but after 50 years of championing The Ten Essentials, maybe it's time for a new type of ten to hit the spotlight.*

In last edition's ***"Outside Insights"*** *column, we took a deep dive into the creation of our Equity and Inclusion Leader Toolkit, a resource that supports our volunteers in providing inclusive and accessible outdoor opportunities for people of all backgrounds and abilities. We're grateful that this resource has been fruitful for our volunteers, and always welcome feedback on how to continue fostering belonging in the outdoors.*

"Excited and happy to see this! The Foundations of Equity and Inclusion module in the leadership training itself was excellent, happy to see more resources available for this valiant effort!"
- Daryl Greaser, 6-year member

A friendly reminder that if you've ever had an inkling to contribute to Mountaineer, *our contributors can attest that it's worth your while! Share your stories with us at magazine@mountaineers.org. We're all ears.*

"I finally caught up with the fall issue. Thanks for walking me through what proved to be an easy and enjoyable editorial process. I'm not sure if there will be a next time, but if there is, I'd be happy to work with you again."
-Charles Bookman, author of *Hiking Through History,* fall 2023

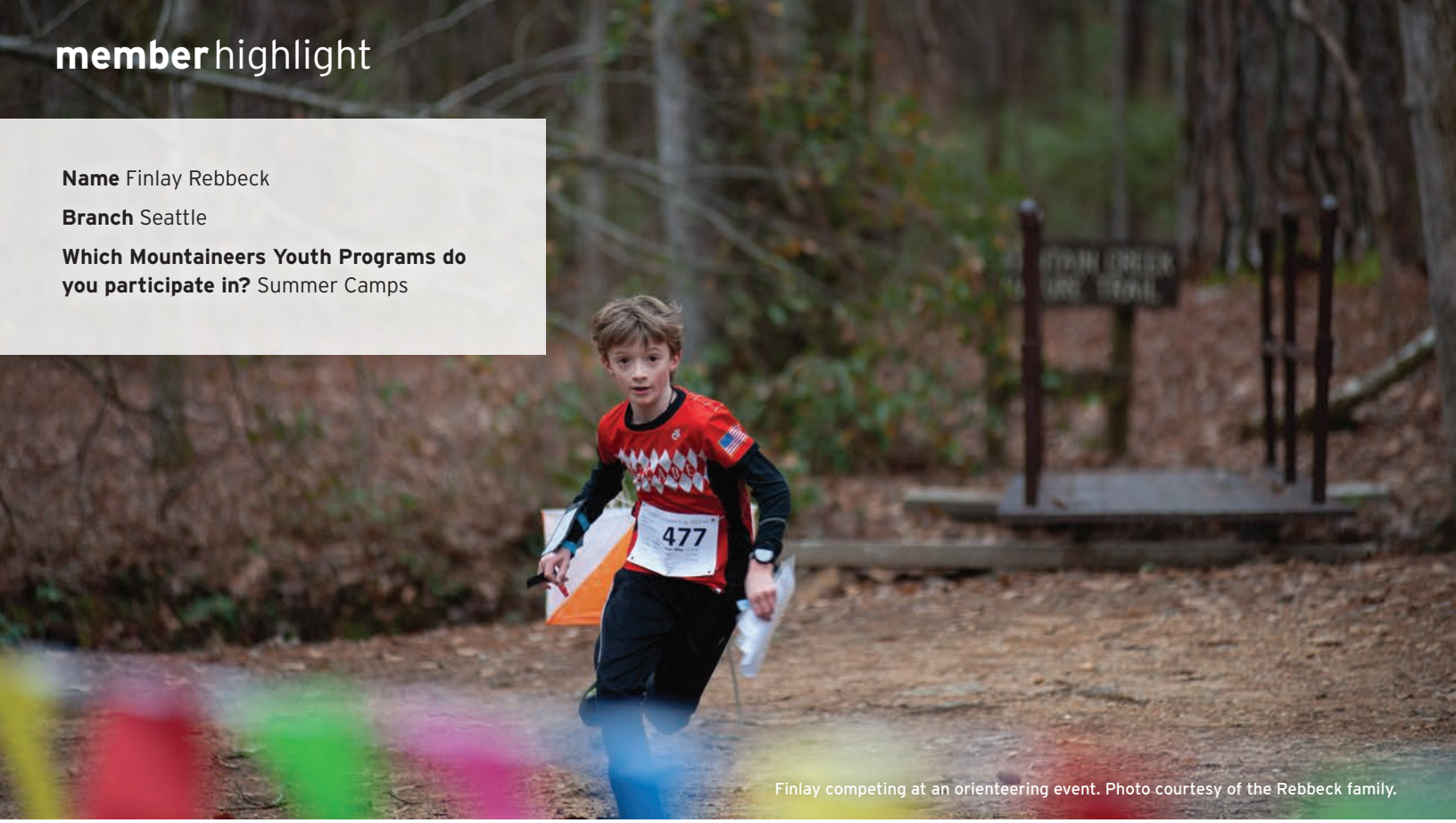
We value feedback from our readers, and we'd like to hear from you! Share your thoughts about *Mountaineer* magazine at magazine@mountaineers.org.

member highlight

Name Finlay Rebbeck

Branch Seattle

Which Mountaineers Youth Programs do you participate in? Summer Camps



Finlay competing at an orienteering event. Photo courtesy of the Rebbeck family.

How did you (or your family) first get involved with The Mountaineers?

My mother loved The Mountaineers *Trekking in Nepal* book when she taught in a remote Himalayan village when she was 18. She joined The Mountaineers as soon as she moved to the US before I was born, did lots of courses, and made some great friends. We went to see one friend from her Basic Climbing group along with her kids in Chamonix this summer! She was also on The Mountaineers Board. I got involved as soon as I was old enough – first as a camper at Kitsap Forest Adventure Camp and then in Seattle Summer Camps! Now my granny is a keen member of the Retired Rovers since coming to join us in Seattle a few years ago.

What is your favorite Mountaineers memory?

My favorite Mountaineers memory was when my parents won a birthday party at the climbing wall at the Gala auction. For my fifth birthday we set everything up in Goodman Hall and then went down to the South Plaza with all the guests. The instructors told us all of the adapted rules and we climbed on the outdoor walls. There was a hilarious moment when my cousin got all the way to the top of the wall but then got stuck and had to be rescued by one of the instructors self-belaying. It was one of the best birthday parties I've ever had, and friends still remind me about it!

What is your favorite outdoor activity to do and why?

Orienteering (a sport where you run with a map and compass, and is a bit like a scavenger hunt) because I've always had a love of maps. I love running on my own through the woods, with just the sounds of dry leaves crunching under my feet.

My love of orienteering is closely connected to The Mountaineers. The first time I ever orienteered was at Magnuson Park after summer camp two years ago. I told the counselors about it, including two junior counselors who I know to this day. This summer it was really fun to reconnect with those same counselors at camp and update them on my progress. I had just gotten back from a huge international orienteering festival in the UK (Scottish 6 Days), with 3,000 competitors, where I surprised myself by winning my age category!

What things do you like to do when you're not at Mountaineers Youth Programs?

My favorite thing to do in the world is orienteering. I'm a keen Nordic and alpine skier, and just started roller skiing. I also love sailing, especially when I get to help navigate with charts! Closer to home I love playing ultimate frisbee, soccer, and the viola.

Lightning round

Sunrise or sunset? Sunset

Gummy candy or chocolate? Chocolate

If you could have any superpower, what would it be? Flying

What's your favorite season? Winter. You can play in the snow, ski, and it's orienteering season!

Favorite post-activity meal? Mod Pizza

Incorporating Recovery Into Your Training Routine

By Mercedes Pollmeier, MS, CSCS

Living a modern lifestyle means keeping up with a lot, especially if you want to fit everything in. When it comes to trips outdoors, how do you balance training hard to perform while feeling rested enough so you can be your best? How do you avoid the risk of burnout, injury, and exhaustion? The answer is recovery.

Before I was a climber, I was a semi-pro tennis player. I played in college, training 20-25 hours a week. I got limited sleep, was sick a lot, and expected to perform at my highest level.

When I turned to climbing, my habits didn't change. I thought busting my butt as often as possible was the way to win. Nope. It was a way to get injured, a lot. It wasn't until my early thirties that I started to understand recovery.

Mercedes stretching her hip flexor as part of her warm-up for a rad day of bouldering in Leavenworth, WA. Photo by Greg Orlov.

What is recovery?

Recovery is when your body adapts and repairs. Put more scientifically, it's when your heart rate and blood pressure decrease and your parasympathetic nervous system activity increases. A recovery state allows the body to start rebuilding by allocating energy to the recovery process.

Here's an important insight about your amazing body: your energy is LIMITED. And guess what. Stress uses up a lot of energy. Training is stress. Eating food that your body can't tolerate is stress. Having unrealistic deadlines is stress. Any stress is stress - your body can't tell the difference.

Consistently training at higher intensities, which means having high levels of stress, makes it difficult for your body to allocate energy for recovery. However, when you progressively stress the body, varying the intensity, volume, and time of your training, your body can adapt long-term.

How to optimize recovery

Train thoughtfully. Vary the intensity of your training. Include mostly low intensity as often as you can, with days of moderate intensity. High intensity can be done a few times a month. Make sure to have a warm-up and cool-down. Incorporate breathing exercises before and after sessions, which spikes parasympathetic activity. Note: moderate to high intensity for long periods of time will be very difficult to recover from, making the next few days, weeks, and months suboptimal.

Eat. Fuel up with enough calories and prioritize protein. If you want to thrive, eat your body weight in protein, and don't be afraid of carbs.

Sleep. Strive for around eight hours of high-quality sleep a night. Things that affect the quality of sleep are alcohol, drugs, caffeine, and stress. Create boundaries with family and friends, and set priorities for yourself. Sleep more, it's worth it.

Move. Build your aerobic engine with low intensity movement every day, such as walking and getting your 7,000 steps. Even 15-20-minute cardio sessions at a low intensity can boost your recovery. On rest days, focus on low intensity movements that drive blood flow. Do you feel better and springy after your workout? Then it's likely a recovery workout!

Here are ideas to introduce into your recovery workouts:

- Lifting and movement, but nothing that makes you sore
- Foam rolling tight muscles, 30-60 seconds per area
- Stretching
- Stimulation (such as cold water therapy)
- Relaxing the brain (meditation, hot therapy, swimming/floating)

There's so much you can do to optimize your recovery. The key is to *start with one*. Choose methods that will be easy to stay consistent with, add more strategies slowly to build the habit, and remember to move every day. By prioritizing your recovery, you'll be able to thrive this winter season!

Mercedes Pollmeier is an NSCA-certified strength and conditioning specialist based in Seattle, with degrees in exercise science and human movement, and is a Precision Nutrition L2 Master Coach. Currently, she owns her own climbing coaching company, Modus Athletica, training climbers in person and online. Visit her online at modusathletica.com and on Instagram @modusathletica.

Out Here

By Shaz Zamore

Illustration by Simone Martin-Newberry.

Enjoy an excerpt from* Been Outside: Adventures of Black Women, Nonbinary, and Gender Nonconforming Peoplein Nature, *edited by Shaz Zamore and Amber Wendler.

This story is a love story. And it starts, as many do, in someone else's clothes, on someone else's board, with the guidance of patient friends. Joe, a former snowboarding instructor and a close friend of mine, stood downhill describing balance and how to work the board's four pressure points. Learning with me were my labmates, surfers who were used to boards and balancing. I wanted to learn as fast as them. I wanted to be better than them. I pushed myself harder than I probably should have, enchanted by the promise of a great beyond if only the basics could be learned.

By my third day snowboarding, I could successfully link turns (go from heel-side to toe-side and back again smoothly). Seeing this, my "mentors" took me up to the top of the mountain to "The Wall" and recklessly led me first off a small drop and then off-piste, into pristine, snowy wilds. "We have to get you on powder," they reasoned, claiming that groomed trails, or "groomers," were no place you wanted to spend your time on a mountain.

In the deep snow, I teetered and wobbled behind my friends' smooth and graceful turns. I was unafraid to go fast but unsure of how to do so. I'd finally accelerate only to waddle, flop, or fall. I was consumed with the act of staying aloft. I blew snow away from my face, frustrated and hot as I tried again and again to find balance. There! One long, smooth turn and I started to think I could get the hang of it. I looked up eagerly toward my friends but found solitude. I called out for them. I called again. Silence. My first time on a real mountain, and in a blink I had lost the people who knew how to get me down.

Shaz Zamore. Photo by Harly Ellis.

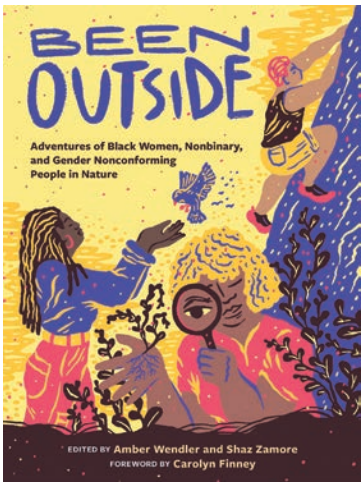
So there I was, stranded in waist-deep powder with no tracks to follow. Other than the trees, there was not a soul in sight. I sat on my board, feeling overwhelmed and increasingly aware of the cooling dampness of my clothes. I hoped someone would come by and give me a nudge, or maybe some hand warmers. Only stillness abounded. Looking downhill, I figured that if I hugged the mountain to the left, I'd wrap around the ridge and eventually end up on a groomed trail. With fervor, I scooted on my snowboard, hands between my splayed legs, which I lifted up if I gained speed. For twenty minutes, I wallowed, waded, and scooted in the snow to no considerable avail. I looked up at my path and saw how little distance I'd traveled. I looked out into the valley, full of ponderosa pines capped with snow, tinged the faintest pink from the sun's low seat in the sky. A sharp twist of fear. I wasn't sure I would make it back before the resort closed. What happens then?

Would I be allowed down? Did I just live here now? I frantically scanned the vast Tahoe wilderness, feeling utterly small and helpless. And that was it. That was the moment the mountain broke me. I began to weep.

No, weep is an understatement. Everything about this moment was childlike, from my snot-covered face to the ragged taper of sobs as I eventually ran out of gas. I at least had found a glamorous place to be lost, alone, and increasingly cold. I realized if anything was going to change, it would be by my doing. I ripped a glove off to wipe some snot off my face. I looked up to the sky, swore loudly, and put my goggles back on.

I wobbled onto my snowboard and strapped my feet back in, shaking and shimmying in a vain attempt to warm up. I repeated: scoot, topple over, dig the nose of my board into the snow. I shoveled the snow off my board. I shimmied again and leaned impossibly (painfully) back so my nose wouldn't dig into the snow. I scooched, teetered, and caught myself; my abs ached. I continued like this, empty yet furiously determined, until a shining moment. A first kiss. One long, smooth, stable glide. My despair was no match for that lilting feeling. I was floating, a particle among snowflakes, fluid and buoyant. Indescribably light, I was free.

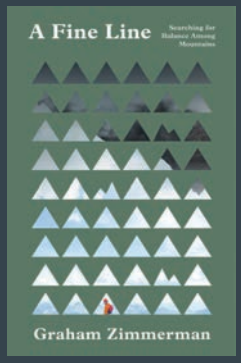
Been Outside *is available for purchase at our Seattle Program Center Bookstore, online at mountaineersbooks.org, and everywhere books are sold.*



Salmon, Cedar, Rock & Rain: Washington's Olympic Peninsula

By Tim McNulty, with six tribal contributors, a foreword by Fawn Sharp, and an introduction by David Guterson

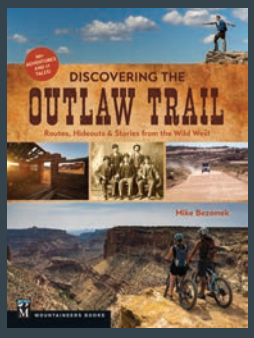
The famed Olympic National Park is at the center of a much larger ecosystem: a wild circle of rivers that encompasses ancient old-growth forests, pristine coastal expanses, and jagged alpine peaks. For tens of thousands of years, humans have thrived alongside this natural world. In *Salmon, Cedar, Rock & Rain*, Tim McNulty explores the Olympic Peninsula's complex — and ongoing — story of development, conservation, restoration, and cultural heritage, with writers from the Lower Elwha Klallam, Jamestown S'Klallam, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Makah Tribe, and Quinault Indian Nation sharing their own history, stories, and perspectives. Pick up this book for a rich and vivid study of Olympic National Park and its surrounding peninsula, featuring stunning full-color photos alongside comprehensive natural and human history.



A Fine Line: Searching for Balance Among Mountains

By Graham Zimmerman

In *A Fine Line*, acclaimed alpinist Graham Zimmerman grapples with how to reconcile the love of outdoor adventure with the attendant costs, both human and environmental. A world-class mountaineer, Zimmerman has made first ascents from Alaska to Kyrgyzstan, and in 2020 he received the Piolet d'Or for his climb on Pakistan's Link Sar with Steve Swenson. Beyond cutting-edge climbing and a mountaineering culture that typically demands one's full devotion, Zimmerman is interested in the balance of pursuing alpinism with social responsibility above all. *A Fine Line* traces his journey from adventuring for fun to becoming an outspoken conservation advocate, and mountain lovers everywhere will see themselves in this coming-of-age story of adventure and personal reckoning.



Discovering the Outlaw Trail: Routes, Hideouts, and Stories from the Wild West

By Mike Bezemek

The Wild West has never been more accessible. *Discovering the Outlaw Trail* by Mike Bezemek takes you through the outlaw trail — both literally and figuratively. By bike, paddle, car, and foot, readers can explore deep into the Southwest lands that once harbored fugitives and get a glimpse into the vast and varied stories of the Southwest's overlooked locations. Stories of the famed Butch Cassidy, Queen Ann Bassett, the Sundance Kid, and other infamous outlaws will enrich each part of your travels. This guidebook will take you through Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, and South Dakota, expanding the West like never before.

Unlocking Adventure

The Seattle Day Camp Lottery

By Tailor Dolgin, Camps Program Manager

A 2023 day camper bouldering on the South Plaza at the Seattle Program Center. All photos by Mountaineers staff.

Being someone who hasn't yet experienced parenthood, I'm unfamiliar with the most challenging aspects of raising children. However, as a summer camp professional, I do have a backstage pass to what appears to be one of the more stressful parts of being a Seattle area guardian: camp registration. For camps in the Seattle region, summer camp enrollment can begin as early as January. In the thick of winter, with summer far behind, families play scheduling Tetris to guarantee childcare and transformative summer experiences for their kids.

In 2021, I experienced my first Mountaineers Summer Camp registration day. Within five minutes of registration opening, the website crashed. Our youth staff triaged camp registration requests, enrolling campers where and when we could. When the dust settled, we were able to meet the scheduling needs of some families, but not many. As we wrapped up what had been, up to that point, the most stressful day of my professional career, one thing became clear: we needed to revise our process.

The problem: Website capacity and program interest

From 2011 to 2021, our camp programs ran registration in an open enrollment, first-come, first-serve model. For many years this was successful. However, as program capacity grew, so did website traffic on registration morning. Families familiar with camp were coming back to register, and new families were signing up to experience Mountaineers Summer Camps for themselves.

Eventually, the number of camp families registering for programs swelled beyond our website's capacity. It became nearly impossible to run registration without the website crashing. While this made it difficult for families to register, it was also challenging for staff who were trying to support the process. When the website froze, staff couldn't access rosters or help troubleshoot questions. No campers could be enrolled until traffic relented, which led to unfair registration conditions. Rather than true first-come, first-serve access, some folks were able to navigate through the website freeze and enroll their camper on luck alone. Others knew they could call our staff to get on a list and offered registration when the website restarted. New families, however, were unfamiliar with these back channels and continued to miss registration opportunities. Ultimately, the process led to unfair and inequitable registration experiences across the board.

The solution: Innovation and equity

Our goal in updating the registration process was twofold: first, alleviate stress on the website to prevent crashes; second, create a more accessible and equitable process. Implementing some form of lottery seemed like the best place to start.

In the fall of 2021, we piloted a Seattle Day Camp Registration Lottery. We created an application process through a survey format, beta tested the survey by asking our office staff to

2023 day campers building a fort at Discovery Park.

enroll their pets like campers, solicited feedback, finalized an application process and timeline for families, and then proceeded with our marketing efforts. In January 2022, the moment arrived: it was time to run the lottery.

The lottery accepted applications for two weeks. Rather than having to log in to our website at 9am and rush to enroll campers, this new timeframe gave families plenty of time to explore our camp offerings before applying. At the end of the enrollment window, we received over 400 lottery applications. After processing applications, Seattle Day Camp was over two thirds full heading into February's open enrollment for other youth programs. As a result, the website experienced significantly reduced traffic on registration morning, alleviating the strain on other camp programs and preventing website crashes caused by Seattle Day Camp registrations. Before camp even began, the new lottery process felt like a success.

The updated enrollment process allowed us to serve more families. In 2021, before the lottery process was enacted, roughly two thirds of campers were families that had previously attended one of our programs. After enacting the lottery in 2022, we saw the number of returners shift. Between one third and one half of our campers were still returners, but we were additionally able to serve a couple hundred new families over the course of the summer, a trend we saw continue in summer 2023 as the lottery helped establish an equitable registration baseline for camp. The increase in lottery applications from 2022 to 2023, from 400 to 600, also reflects the increase in community members served. While we love seeing returning campers and witnessing their growth each year, catering more to returners than to new families caused us to miss out on mission-driven opportunities to connect the next generation with the outdoors. Our updated lottery system allows us to share the transformative power of the outdoors with even more families.

That said, the Seattle Summer Day Camp Registration Lottery is not perfect. Each year we learn something new. In 2022, we learned that if we don't keep up with waitlists and check in with families later in the spring, we end up struggling to fill camp spots that open in late spring or early summer. And in 2023, we learned that just because something goes well once, doesn't mean results will look the same the following year. Due to increased interest and access from 2022 to 2023, traffic on the website during registration morning once again increased, creating small website crashes. While not the big slowdown we'd seen before, the registration experience was still affected by echoes of registration processes past.

Summer 2024 and beyond

Looking ahead to summer 2024, we're excited to continue refining this registration process to ensure equitable accommodation for as many families as possible while also maintaining peace of mind for staff and quality of programs. To do this, we intend to continue with the registration lottery for Seattle Day Camp while ensuring the process doesn't impact registration for other youth programs. We've also invested in our website to increase performance and server capacity, which will hopefully help popular registration days across our programs.

So, where does this all leave us? In the end, this registration lottery process has been a huge success, and we still have more to learn. We expect ongoing popularity among families in the greater Seattle area and an increasing pool of returning families in the future. Since these variables are clearly here to stay, we're eager to build upon this success, improve our approach, and further enhance the Seattle Day Camp experience for our hundreds of camp families in the future.

2023 day campers posing for a photo on the South Plaza.

Want to join us at camp this summer? All campers interested in Seattle Day Camp, new or returning, have the chance to enroll in one week of camp through our lottery process in 2024. Applications will be accepted for the first two weeks of January. Updated information can be found at mountaineers.org/seattle-day-camp.

Can't wait for summer? We offer Mid-Winter and Spring Break Camps at our Seattle Program Center in February and April. Registration for both is now open.

Questions about summer camps? Reach out to our team at summercamp@mountaineers.org.

The Return of The Mountaineers Leadership Conference

By Michelle Song, Volunteer Development Manager

Photo by Luke Hollister.

As part of The Mountaineers leadership development team, I have the privilege of supporting our impressive collective of 3000+ volunteers. The dedication of our volunteers is incredible, to say the least. The list of their contributions to our community and the greater outdoors has grown significantly over our 117-year history. From planning and guiding activities, to mentoring new Mountaineers, to managing our lodges, it's clear that our volunteers are generous with their time. While they share a common passion for the outdoors, our volunteers are driven by a range of motivations, such as paying it forward or expanding their adventure partner network. Our leadership development programs enhance these intrinsic rewards and invest back into our volunteers.

A key takeaway from my time with The Mountaineers is that leadership development doesn't adhere to a universal, one-size-fits-all approach. There is not one training, workshop, or course that provides the ultimate how-to for aspiring leaders. Mountaineers interests and focuses are as varied as the terrain of the Pacific Northwest, and leadership development opportunities are most impactful when they provide a diverse range of skills and qualities that extend beyond any specific role or context. Whether it's effectively communicating during a committee meeting, making informed decisions while leading a trip, or simply navigating the challenges of instructing a course while prioritizing mental health, refined leadership skills are invaluable to volunteers.

A core objective of leadership development at The Mountaineers is to meet the ongoing education needs of our volunteers, empowering them to promote a culture of belonging within our organization and beyond. We aim to ensure that anyone with the desire to learn an outdoor skill can safely do so from a Mountaineers volunteer. In our commitment to equip volunteers for success and support their leadership journey, I'm excited to welcome our annual Leadership Conferences back into our leadership development repertoire.

Leadership Conferences in Seattle and Tacoma

For the very first time, we are offering two iterations of our popular Leadership Conference: one at the Seattle Program Center in December 2023 and one at the Tacoma Program Center in March 2024. Offering two iterations amplifies our reach and grants our volunteers the flexibility to choose the location that suits them best. Both conferences will be sure to inspire, featuring a similar lineup of presenters and content. We will host a roster of esteemed outdoor experts as well as accomplished leaders from within The Mountaineers community. Through a series of interactive sessions, attendees will embark on a deep dive into the multifaceted dimensions of leadership. With topics thoughtfully categorized into three distinct tracks — Experiential Leadership, Risk Management, and Equity & Inclusion — current and aspiring volunteers of all experience levels will discover a topic that resonates with their interests.

Members at the 2016 Leadership Conference. Photo by Mountaineers staff.

Members at the 2019 Leadership Conference. Photo by Mountaineers staff.

The wide range of scheduled topics are tailored for The Mountaineers community and the various types of outdoor experiences our volunteer leaders provide. Participants will explore methods to enhance their leadership skills by immersing themselves in real-life situations and gain insight into how practical experiences can mold and shape effective leaders. Whether it be exploring strategies and best practices for risk management, learning to identify leader halos, or crafting actionable steps to establish spaces where everyone finds a sense of belonging, we'll cover numerous aspects of leadership, all guided by seasoned experts. Opportunities abound, with so much to discover and experience.

The hiatus: Developing the Foundations courses

Since the first event in 2014, The Mountaineers Leadership Conference has been an opportunity for like-minded volunteers to gather, learn, and grow together. The past few years have presented unprecedented challenges, with the pandemic causing a conference hiatus. We had hoped to reintroduce the conference in 2021, but a large gathering became infeasible. We made the difficult decision to cancel the 2021 Leadership Conferences due to rising cases of COVID-19 in King and Pierce County. This decision allowed us to ensure the well-being of our community and pivot our focus toward creating our Foundations of Leadership and Foundations of Instruction eLearning courses.

The Foundations courses were designed to replace the long-standing Becoming a Mountaineers Leader eLearning course and to impart greater fundamental leadership principles essential for our volunteers. The Foundations courses are a robust set of trainings and lessons catered specifically to Mountaineers volunteers. They're the premier introduction to leadership and instructional concepts, serving as our benchmark outdoor leadership training.

To accommodate different learning styles while establishing long-term leadership development, the Foundations courses are offered online and year-round. In 2022, in lieu of our standard Leadership Conference, we offered our Foundations courses as an all-day, in-person event. Similar to the Leadership Conference, Foundations of Leadership & Instruction In-person was an entire day of engagement and learning across branches. The in-person course, with its conference-style format, hosted a schedule around course components, accommodating individuals who learn best in a group setting and providing opportunities to ask questions and engage in real-time discussions about the foundational materials.

The comeback: Revamping the Leadership Conference

Looking back over the past three years, considering the conference hiatus, the cancellations of the 2021 Leadership Conferences, and the fresh ventures in our leadership development programming, one fact remains evident: we are consistently amazed by the steadfast leadership of our volunteers. Even this year's revival of the Leadership Conference and its existence as a dual event between Seattle and Tacoma is a result of feedback from our volunteers, who expressed interest in greater geographic opportunities for our leadership development programs and the return of the collaborative energy and branch networking that only The Mountaineers Leadership Conference can offer.

As we step into 2024, our dedication to the unique approaches of leadership development remains strong. The upcoming re-launch of the Leadership Conference signifies a vital occasion to bolster our current and aspiring volunteers. These two events promise to be a platform that will captivate volunteers from all journeys, offering something for every Mountaineers volunteer who facilitates the exploration, conservation, instruction, and enjoyment of the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

See you at the Leadership Conference in Seattle on Saturday, December 2, 2023 at the Seattle Program Center from 9am-4pm!

There's still time to register for the Leadership Conference in Tacoma! Join us on Saturday, March 23, 2024 at the Tacoma Program Center from 9am-4pm. Register at mountaineers.org/tacoma-leadership-conference-2024.

A Classroom With a View

The Unexpected Impact of a Mountaineers Scholarship

By Mckenzie Campbell Davies, Annual Giving Manager

Kelsey at the summit of Mt. Rainier. All photos courtesy of Kelsey Hoffman.

In a North Seattle public school, 65 miles from Mt. Rainier, Kelsey Hoffman's classroom is engaged in an unusual last-day-of-school activity.

Days before her Rainier summit attempt, Ms. Hoffman's students are exploring and unpacking her gear. "WHAT is THIS?!" a student exclaims, holding up a crampon. Another is wearing a 75-liter pack while doing pushups. Pickets, rope, and purged stuff sacks are scattered across the carpet. In the background of the excitement and curiosity, Mt. Rainier is visible through the classroom's third story window.

Kelsey Hoffman is a special education teacher with Seattle Public Schools and she loves her job. While she sometimes fantasizes about being a mountain guide, working with these students is what she lives for. "These are my kind of humans," Kelsey says with a grin. "If I walk into a classroom and there's a kid sitting backwards in their chair, that one's mine."

Kelsey works with youth who need constructive assistance to navigate social and academic environments. She learned early in her career that spending time in nature allows her to show up for her students as her best self. "It's where my brain and body are most aligned. It's where I feel connected," she shares. "It's where I go to reflect, to heal, to find inspiration, and to be artistic."

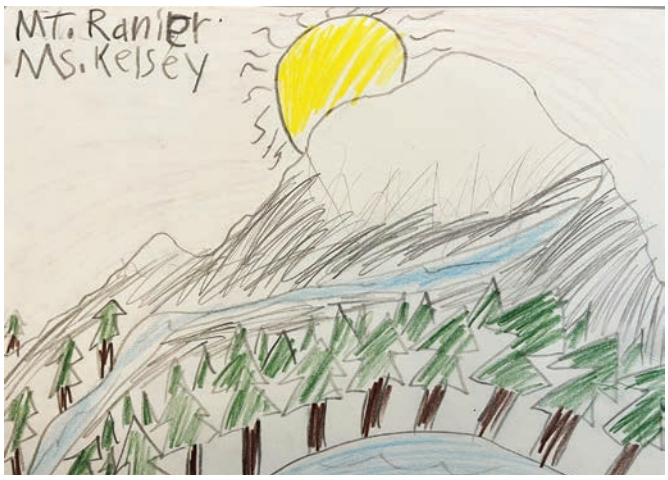
Having exhausted all avenues for exploring trails solo, Kelsey wanted to build more technical skills and find an outdoor community. Living and working in one of the most expensive cities in the country means there isn't much room in her budget for extras like a Mountaineers course. She applied for – and was awarded – a scholarship from The Mountaineers Access Fund for Basic Alpine Climbing, Wilderness Navigation, and Wilderness First Aid.

"Before this year it was 'get to the nearest outdoor space, conserve gas, don't take days off.' The scholarship gave me access to the Basic course, which also gave me access to a community. I can borrow stuff and barter for gear. We can carpool. It didn't just cover the class; it was my introduction to a group of people that made things infinitely more accessible," Kelsey explained. "Someone's act of giving has rippled through my life in ways I just didn't expect."

Bridging non-traditional classrooms

During the school year, Kelsey felt like a conduit between the learning environment she was experiencing at The Mountaineers and the one she cultivates with her colleagues and students. "The Leadership Halo gets talked about a lot at The Mountaineers. We do things because we see someone do it and assume they are right. It's not a term I've heard in the teaching world, but I see it all the time. We need everyone on the team to give input and feedback so that our kids get the best services."

In addition to the courses, Kelsey was also an avid attendee of our donor-funded Leadership Development Series. "There



A drawing of Mt. Rainier by one of Kelsey's students.

was one about emotional first aid that was so applicable in the classroom. We can get so focused on getting kids out of crisis that we forget to step back and look around; it's really about preventing crisis. My students aren't going to engage in learning new skills if they can't ask for help, and you can't ask for help if you don't feel safe. It's the rope skills that get us on to the glacier, but it's our social emotional skills that get us to the summit and get us home safe."

Kelsey is also inspired to bring her expertise in adaptive learning to The Mountaineers. She has stepped into several volunteer roles and hopes to build accessibility into more programs.

Mountain-sized goals made accessible

Kelsey was in special education when she was young, so she can relate to some of the challenges that her students face in school and life. "I wish when I was younger that I had known teachers who were mountaineers. I didn't know anyone who spent time outdoors who was also bad at academics. The special ed classroom wasn't fun or cool. I want that to be different for my kids."

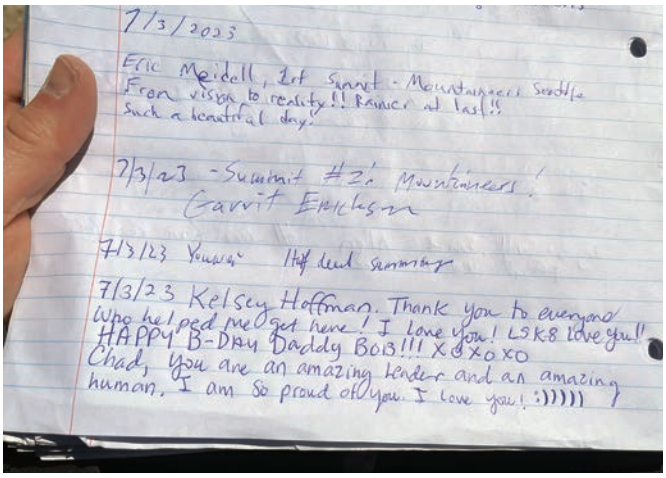
Her experience as an adult learner helps her connect real-world scenarios to the skills she teaches. "I was scared that I would get into this Basic course and find the content inaccessible. Some things were more challenging. I have to use workarounds and be more thoughtful about organization. In order to be successful, I knew I had to show up to every session and practice in different modalities." Kelsey applies the same concept to her classroom. When she asks her students to do something really difficult for eight hours a day, they're encouraged to engage in different approaches for success. "I brought examples back to my students, like 'You know how we color code your stuff? Here's how I color code my prusiks!' I can show them that to reach my goal of summiting Mt. Rainier, I start by just showing up to lectures and climbs."

Achievement is just the start

Kelsey had spent a lot of time thinking about standing at the summit of Mt. Rainier. When it started to feel possible, she was excited to share her goals with her class. Kelsey's students learned about the geology of Rainier, talked about climate change, and did 'training challenges,' all under the guise of helping Ms. Hoffman get ready for mountaineering. After unpacking her goals and her processes with her students for months, it was poetic that her climb would take place right at the end of the school year, and fitting that her students had a chance to explore the gear that would go with her.

On July 3, 2023 Kelsey summited the tallest peak in the state. It was difficult, and she did it. "To put all of this time and energy into a physical goal and to feel this uncomplicated feeling of total success – I've never done anything that had such an in-the-moment sense of accomplishment."

At the summit, Kelsey felt a deep sense of being part of something bigger. She has the classic 'raised ice ax at the summit' photo, but in her memory the experience will always be about being roped to other people. Her note in the summit register thanked everyone who helped her get there, with a special shout out to her "LS K-8 kids."



Kelsey sending love to her K-8 students and others in the summit register on Mt. Rainier.

While the stoke of her big climb is already fading, the skills and community that Kelsey built on her way to the summit continue to refresh and support her. This has proven to be especially true as Kelsey has just started her twelfth year of teaching and already encountered some weighty challenges. "I believe that my work in the world is to be a really good special ed teacher," she reminds herself. She realizes that goal each time she comes back from her time outdoors as a calmer person and a better human.

Scholarships for Mountaineers memberships, courses, and activities are one way that our community reduces barriers to belonging in the outdoors. For some people, financial assistance to access outdoor education can have a ripple effect throughout their life.

Find out more information or apply for a scholarship at mountaineers.org/scholarships.

Help people access the natural world and protect the outdoor experience with a donation to The Mountaineers at mountaineers.org/donate.

Standing at the Intersection of Conservation and Outdoor Access

By Conor Marshall, Advocacy & Engagement Manager

Climbers on Mt. McCausland. Photo by Luke Helgeson.

In July 2021, my wife and I navigated high-season crowds to Colchuck Lake on our first adventure in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, the most visited Wilderness area in the country. We arrived early and still had to park a mile from the trailhead. During the hike, we passed by throngs of other outdoor enthusiasts. Experiencing this bustle didn't diminish the stunning views and thrill of wide-open spaces, but it did underscore the need to harmonize recreation with the protection of this beloved landscape.

We're all feeling it: our parks and trails are more crowded than ever. More people in our region are discovering time outdoors to be essential to personal health, well-being, and building community. At The Mountaineers, we believe everyone should be able to find joy and belonging outdoors while ensuring the natural world is protected for generations to come.

Blazing a trail with wise conservation

Conserving nature while sustaining inclusive outdoor access has always been at the heart of The Mountaineers ethos, sometimes requiring a delicate dance as we've carried out our mission and expanded our impact over the years. Our books and programs are intended to get more people outdoors while inspiring them to speak up to protect our beloved outdoor spaces. "If the wilderness is to be protected, it must have more defenders," reflected influential Mountaineers leaders and authors Harvey Manning and Ira Spring, "people who know it intimately and love it well."

Throughout our 117-year history, The Mountaineers has always advocated at the intersection of conservation and outdoor access. Our conservation and recreation goals are reciprocal, as access to wild places motivates recreationists to advocate for and steward the natural world. Balancing these focuses of our mission has played out differently as new issues have arisen throughout the years and we've learned more about effective conservation practices.

Standing at the intersection of conservation and outdoor access has become increasingly challenging. Public lands and waters throughout the country are facing a unique suite of challenges that impact recreation and conservation. Climate change, lack of funding for land managers, impacts of increased recreational use, and the need to prioritize protecting Tribal treaty rights, cultural resources, and lifeways are raising tough questions with no easy answers.

How do we equitably manage increased visitation to public lands? How do we best protect natural and cultural resources and respect tribal sovereignty?

Striking a balance on Washington's public lands today

The Mountaineers is committed to centering outdoor equity as we leverage the voices of Washington's human-powered recreationists to help meet these challenges by engaging in collaborative efforts that balance conservation and outdoor access. Here are some of the issues that are top of mind for our outdoor access work, and where your feedback is helping shape a better future for Washington's outdoors.

Managing visitor use on Mt. Rainier

As more people experience the beauty of Mt. Rainier, it becomes harder for the Park to provide a quality visitor experience and protect natural and cultural resources. "At a time of significant growth in visitation to Mount Rainier National Park, staff have fewer resources to manage recreational use," shared Deputy Superintendent, Kevin Skerl. "Over the last 15 years, we've seen a 40 percent increase in visitation, while operating budgets have declined, and staffing levels have dropped."

The Park is exploring ways to disperse use and better conserve resources using a full array of management tools and strategies. This spring, we shared the Park's proposal to manage use by implementing a timed-entry reservation system during peak visitation. We understand the need to more tightly manage visitation and conserve resources, but have concerns with several aspects of the proposed management plan.

We submitted comment letters in 2020, 2021, and 2023, and our members shared feedback directly with Park staff. We heard loud and clear about how these changes would affect our members' experience. We're continuing to engage with Park leadership as they finalize their management plan, and will share more about what future access looks like and how you can continue to experience the mountain you cherish.

Backcountry boom in the Alpine Lakes

The beauty and rewarding backcountry experiences offered by the Alpine Lakes Wilderness have inspired Mountaineers for generations. With more people visiting than ever, the Forest Service needs additional resources and new methods for managing the Wilderness.

Our conservation team is heavily involved in the Alpine Lakes Collaborative - a community-centered project aimed at creating a sustainable, modern method for managing visitor use that preserves wilderness character, recreational access, and equity. We're in the early stages of this process, and the collaborative is keeping an open mind about what future tools and strategies might be needed to preserve the Alpine Lakes' wilderness character.

This summer, our members provided feedback to help inform the collaborative's work. We look forward to sharing future opportunities to engage with and amplify recreation perspectives as we chart a course toward a more sustainable future for the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and the amazing outdoor experiences it provides.

Convening diverse perspectives to tackle tough issues

One of the ways we've recently engaged members to advance these important discussions was by convening a panel of public land managers, recreationists, and conservation advocates at this fall's An Evening of Advocacy conservation fundraiser. The panel shared thoughts on the need to equitably manage a changing landscape, the responsibility we all have to care for our outdoor spaces, and the role we play in these efforts.

Speaker panel from The Mountaineers 2023 An Evening of Advocacy event at Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center in Seattle. Photo by Kara Hollenbeck.

"When individuals take responsibility for something, they'll care for it," shared Mountaineers Books author Craig Romano. "Recreationists can help address these tough challenges by first elevating their stewardship of our public lands."

The conversation was bolstered by thoughtful questions from the audience, underscoring how Mountaineers experience these challenges and are empowered to shape solutions.

"As we continue to connect communities to nature and build new champions for the outdoors to move policy, it's important to ask ourselves how we can make outdoor access and parks issues the personal agenda of more recreationists," said Kitty Craig, Urban to Wild Director at the Wilderness Society.

Preserving a sustainable future together

As The Mountaineers continues to convene partners, tackle tough issues, and work toward solutions, your engagement is essential to shaping a sustainable future for the Northwest's special landscapes. At the heart of this discussion are your personal stories that underscore how these challenges impact your outdoor experiences and connection to nature.

Connection to the natural world can translate to compelling advocacy with lawmakers and land managers so that future generations can access transformative outdoor experiences on public lands and waters. We'll continue to share how you can advocate for the protection of these resources while also preserving sustainable and equitable outdoor access. Stay updated on policy and planning efforts that affect Washington's outdoors through our conservation newsletter, and share your story when opportunities arise.

If Mountaineers continue to speak up, we can build a better future for Mt. Rainier, the Alpine Lakes, and the rest of our region's iconic public lands that provide a lifetime of adventure with purpose.

We want to hear your thoughts on how to balance conservation and outdoor access. Email conservation@mountaineers.org with your thoughts, questions, or concerns.

FROM ATVS TO NORDIC SKIS

How Alaska Shaped my Love for the Outdoors

By Brianna Traxinger, backcountry enthusiast, scientist, and writer

Brianna riding her "Kitty Cat" at the homestead, circa 1993. All photos courtesy of the Traxinger family.

I got my first snowmachine when I was two, my first ATV when I was four, and my first gun when I was nine. My snowmachine was an Arctic Cat "Kitty Cat," a real, gas-drinking motorized vehicle, miniaturized with a 90s brand of teal and purple striping on black casing. The ATV – four wheels for four years – was a zippy red Suzuki. My first gun was a BB.

In the way that other kids may grow into larger violins or skis, I got bigger and faster machines. To be clear, my family wasn't wealthy. But this is how it's often done in my birthplace: as necessary as replacing a kid's outgrown shoes and jackets.

Growing up in Alaska, my family wasn't outdoorsy in the environmentally aware or fitness-focused sense. We didn't backpack or trail run. We'd never heard of the phrase "Leave No Trace." But we were *always* outside. My dad's paternal grandfather, a German farming immigrant, homesteaded near Point MacKenzie, Alaska and built a series of cabins on the land. As a kid, we were at the homestead nearly every weekend. As much as I loved school, I would count down the hours until the Friday bell and race home to load up the truck with my dad. We were always joined by our husky mix Riley, who on reflection was maybe a coyote.

Once at the cabin, we'd eat junk food while waiting for our wood stove to heat up the cabin's interior (it took hours). My mom and younger sister would arrive the next day, already a snowmachine ride and a moose sausage behind. Our cabin, which my dad built by hand, wasn't like the nicer "cabins" (fancy houses that happen to be in the woods) I've visited as an adult. We used a generator and kerosene lamps for electricity and the roads were unpaved dirt. Ours was a truly remote and rugged experience. I loved it.

The last frontier

While we spent every weekend at the cabin, we lived in Anchorage — the biggest city in Alaska, hosting half of the then-600,000-person population — which falls somewhere between a small town, a suburb, and a nature preserve. Think open space, strip malls, and a decent-sized city center immediately surrounded by mountains on the east and ocean to the west. Anchorage is not rural in the extreme sense, but the boundaries between nature and city are impossibly blurred: moose and bears casually cross streets and lounge in backyard pools, houses back up to undeveloped forests, bike paths and trail systems run through the city and stretch up to the foothills. You can literally run from your house into the mountains.

An Alaskan life is highly tied to nature, regardless of whether you live in the backwoods or the city. Even for those who have never gone camping or skiing, living in Anchorage necessitates an exposure to harsh weather, long winters, and wildlife, whether welcome or not. This can make life difficult

Brianna taking a break after a muddy ride on her four-wheeler.

– shoveling feet of overnight snow from your car roof in zero degrees, moose-proofing your trees from bark-stripping teeth, and making sure your trash cans don't become bear bait. My own grandma, at 82, inexplicably survived a moose attack in Anchorage while walking in a wooded park.

Despite being a bookish kid who might have otherwise been inclined toward an indoor lifestyle, nature was my playground. My sister and I built snow caves in our yard (piled higher by my dad's plow), imitated Steve Irwin in the woods behind our house (sadly, Alaska only has two types of frogs, so the similarity to Australia was limited), and biked the neighborhood late into summer nights when the sun hardly sets. In high school, instead of drinking at parties, my friends and I would go sledding and set up orienteering courses. An engineer-minded friend once fashioned his own snowshoes out of wire, wood, and plastic bags, which we tested in a steep, snowy valley. Although my earliest outdoor experiences weren't motivated by exercise or any environmental agenda, they instilled a deep-seated love for being outside and embracing snow, wildlife, and the necessity of donning a full snowsuit just to walk the dog.

Rugged beginnings

Sometime around middle school, I graduated from the BB gun to a .22. Despite what many hardline, anti-gun proponents might think, receiving a gun at nine wasn't necessarily a reckless operation. My dad was extremely strict with firearm use. He'd supervise while we practiced shooting cans and targets, providing militant angles and invisible planes that we weren't allowed to cross with our gun barrel. I never had an interest in hunting (although I did work as a commercial salmon fishing deckhand for several summers), but my dad was a hunter: mostly moose and elk, and always for food. A moose processed and frozen into sausage and jerky would last the family all winter. And while the cabin was adorned with huge, taxidermized antlered heads, my dad abhorred trophy hunting. I will always remember my dad's disgust when

Brianna fishing for salmon at Bird Creek, Alaska, circa 1998.

the neighbor came home with a young bear carcass. He was appalled that someone would be proud enough to kill a baby bear. "Not even good meat," my dad said.

You might assume that someone who hunts doesn't care about animals, but I've found that people who hunt their own food sometimes appreciate animals even more. My dad is a softie for moose: he's called me in tears upon seeing a moose killed by a car (which is sadly common in Alaska). Another time he almost got trampled by an agitated mother moose while trying to lift and return her trapped calf.

Despite his tree-clearing-for-roads and beer-drinking-around-a-campfire ways, my dad has never left a piece of trash on the ground; never taken something from the environment he didn't need. Maybe not "Leave No Trace," but a "Cause No Unnecessary Harm" mindset that he's passed to me. As a kid, we didn't think about the environment from a politically correct, conservational mindset, but my inherent exposure to and reliance on the outdoors instilled a natural desire to love and protect the environment, which I've carried with me throughout adulthood.

A changing outdoor mindset

As I grew up and surrounded myself with more athletic friends, it became clear that I came from a very different outdoor breed. My friends' parents were former college skiers and planned backpacking trips with their kids, while mine shot guns and fireworks around a campfire. As I hit middle school, my relationship to the outdoors evolved. I started Nordic skiing, swapped ATV rides for runs, and

Clockwise, from top left: Brianna fishing for salmon at Bird Creek, Alaska with her dad and sister, circa 1997. A moose outside the front window in Anchorage. Brianna riding on her dad's snowmachine at the cabin, circa 1995. Brianna's mom and dad at their cabin, circa 2000.

collected animal skulls to study as a burgeoning biologist rather than to hang on the walls. By high school, I was an obsessive distance runner and cross-country skier (although, not having been enrolled in lessons as a kid like my friends, my skiing technique never quite caught up to theirs). I still visited the cabin and rode machines, but inclined toward what felt like a more refined outdoor lifestyle.

In college, a series of events led my dad to sell our cabin, which was devastating to our family and widened the rift between my former outdoor life and my new one. I attended a liberal arts school and became further aligned with the crunchy side of outdoors: leading backpacking trips and getting involved with environmental causes. I learned about factory farming and stopped eating meat, which, 14 years later, I haven't resumed. I never rode another snowmachine (although the smell of exhaust still triggers the most visceral sensory nostalgia I've ever experienced) and never returned to the homestead.

This mindset shift was partially a natural evolution toward a low-impact outdoor life and partially pretention. I didn't ride engines up mountains, I *walked* up them (conveniently ignoring the impact of driving cars to the mountains). Nature was no longer just the backdrop to my activities, but the reason I ventured outside in the first place. I began referring to my childhood as my "sledneck past." A you-can't-make-this-up Alaska party trick about getting a snowmachine before I got a bike, nothing more. However, I've been reflecting on my "alternative" outdoor path and how it led me to the ways I enjoy nature today, and more importantly how the outdoors, however they are used, can be a bridge between different political and cultural groups.

Common ground

I often find myself stereotyping Alaska as having two major factions: a gun-shooting, game hunting, snowmachine-riding majority, with environmentalists and outdoor athletes making up the "granola" minority. This is reductive (my family is an example of this intersection) and I don't mean to suggest that one type treats the environment worse. But it's fair to say

Brianna (left) and her friend Mariah Nordic skiing in Anchorage, 2023.

these groups use the outdoors differently, and these disparate attitudes often contribute to larger, widening ideological rifts across the country. I see it happen on a local level here in Washington: in our Sno-Parks, shared between snowmachine riders, dogsledders, and the "human-powered" snowshoers and skiers, recreationists fight over access and infrastructure, making judgements about the right way to use the outdoors. I've contributed to this at times in my evolution from a gun-shooting sledneck to an endurance sports-loving vegetarian.

But the thing about these two factions is that no matter how different they may seem, their common ground has always been the outdoors. A salmon fisher might revere Alaska's waters for the food they provide, while a kayaker appreciates the serenity of a glacier-lined paddle. And yet, both love and care for the water.

Many ways to love the outdoors

Disparate backgrounds often lead people to the same destination for different reasons. While I have many privileges that allow me to participate in outdoor activities now (whiteness, most of all, as well as having an able body and the funds to take time off and buy gear), my childhood is proof that that not all outdoor recreationalists are wealthy elitists who grew up with posh, sporty parents who funded ski lessons.

There's a tendency to police who has the "right" type of outdoor background, whether it was a childhood skiing expensive resorts in Aspen, shooting guns, enjoying urban parks, or having no outdoor luxuries at all. For many of us, these early "alternative" nature experiences — or the lack

Brianna Nordic skiing with her greyhound, Javier.

of outdoor access — are what compel us to pursue both outdoor recreation and conservation today. Many of us come from humble childhoods, compelled by our common love of nature to pursue the outdoors. For me, that meant slowly accumulating used gear over many years and learning to ski and backpack as an adult through subsidized, education-focused outdoor groups. Others are outside out of necessity or to sustain cultural and traditional lifeways. Thousands of Americans, often non-white, cannot simply choose to go outside, at least safely or enjoyably. Conversely, where nature is abundant, many rural communities suffer inverse consequences of isolation and poverty.

All people deserve the outdoors, however they want to use it. I believe in reasonable restrictions to prevent harm to the environment and those who dwell there — there's no outdoors for anyone if we destroy it — but does it really matter if I want to hike and you want to dirt bike? Or if I like to run to stay fit and see the mountains and you like to hunt? Maybe the sledders should think more long-term about sustainability, resource management, and LNT principles. Maybe the anti-hunters should reconsider their own reliance on factory-farmed meat and weigh the benefits of responsible hunting. Maybe hikers and skiers should assess their condescension about motor sports and recognize not everyone is able-bodied enough (nor wants) to trek outdoors on their legs. We must stop policing who is best fit to enjoy the outdoors because we need more, not fewer, people engaged in the environment if we have any chance of protecting it.

Would I have ended up so outdoorsy had I grown up outside Alaska? I can't say. But I do know that my outdoor childhood was a positive force. I no longer own a gun or eat meat, and I may have become a bit of an "earn your turns snob," but I value my roots as a backwoods Alaskan kid more than any other experience in my life because it's pointed me toward the nature-minded life that I'm privileged to lead now. So this winter, while I stick to cross-country skiing on the multi-use trails, I'll admire the husky dogsled teams who remind me of my dog Riley and wave to the machine-sledders, taking an extra nostalgic sniff as they scream past.

TOP 10 MOUNTAINEERS OF INSTAGRAM

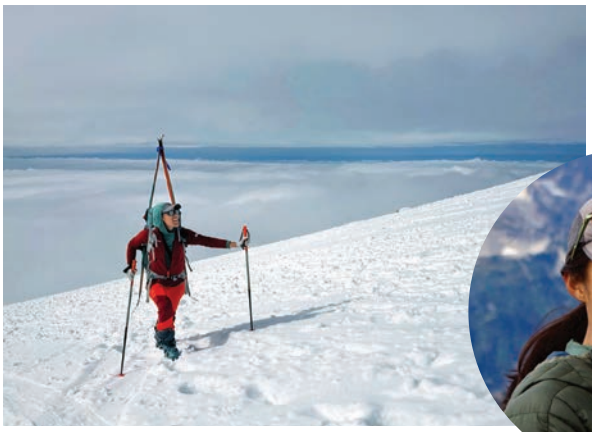
The Mountaineers launched our Instagram (@mountaineersorg) in 2014 as a way to celebrate the adventurous spirit of our community, the beauty of our natural landscapes, and the myriad types of outdoor experiences we have access to in the Pacific Northwest. From star-lit campsites to sun-kissed summits to smile-filled stewardship, Mountaineers are eager to share their photo-rich trip reports and inspire others to appreciate and protect the special places that we're lucky enough to call home.

Every winter, we choose Mountaineers whose photographic adventures we hope will inspire you into the New Year. A picture is worth a thousand words. We'll let the photos from this year's Top 10 Mountaineers of Instagram do the talking.

Photo by Eddie Kruger.

Eddie Kruger, @eddiekruger7

I started taking photos after high school as a way to document the places I was traveling to and the local landscape where I grew up in Florida. Landscapes naturally became my favorite subject to shoot. After moving to Washington, my love for day hiking turned into overnight backpacking and then to multi-day trips in the backcountry. The isolation of the wilderness encourages me to feel fully present. It's the form of escapism I was searching for from a fast-paced, modern society. Using photography, I am able to share the feeling of excitement that comes from summiting a new peak or the peaceful elements of sitting in an alpine meadow gazing at the distant mountains.



Iris Lieuw, @irislieuw

I grew up in California, and for vacations when I was younger my family would frequently camp at national parks. I absolutely loved being outside and exploring nature. As I got older and moved further up the West Coast, I rediscovered the joy and energy that outdoor activities gave me. What started as day hikes turned into long backpacking trips, scrambling, rock climbing, and mountaineering. I love photography because it allows me to capture the special moments of my adventures in stunning locations and share them with family and friends who couldn't be there with me or can't make it there themselves. Having these photos around is also a great reminder of how far I've come in my own journey with alpine climbing.

Janette Powell, @janettepowell

I dabbled with photography in my late teens and really got into it when I moved to the Canadian Rockies in the early 90s. I joined The Mountaineers soon after I moved to the PNW about seven years ago as I knew I wanted to explore and capture the great winter sights without becoming an avalanche statistic. Now when I get outside, I can't always tell if I want to simply move in the great outdoors or if I have a burning need to create a great shot. It's likely these desires have melded together. I love it most when I feel small and rendered speechless in a big, beautiful, wild outdoor space.

Hwei Ling Ng, @thenomadicartist

I grew up as a city kid in the tropics of Malaysia. Hiking and climbing were not part of my life until later in adulthood, but I eventually found my heart in the mountains. It was a natural combination for me to bring my love of photography into the outdoors. Memories made in the mountains bring extremes together. There is struggle and elation, pain and bliss, fear and joy. Hiking and climbing have taught me so much about myself - both my weaknesses and capabilities - and photography is my attempt to capture the experiences I've lived through in the wilderness, a way to relive my journeys through the places that make me feel most alive.

Lucas Cook, @lucascook_

I've always loved the way that photos inspire people and motivate them to go outdoors. I can remember countless photos of people adventuring outdoors that led to me researching and completing an adventure of my own. I love that photography brings people together to share their stories and memories of the outdoors. The beauty of photography is that you are hoping to capture a moment that emcompasses the lighting, grandeur, the feeling of that moment and still, you never can quite capture it all. It's the elusive nature of capturing that moment that keeps me closing the shutter.

Sam Bugas, @swbugas

Around age 21, I invested in a camera that sparked a great deal of curiosity and passion in me. Still, I struggled to find which way to point it, feeling both lost and captured by my new hobby. That same year, my cousin took me on my first climb to the top of Mt. Saint Helens, and everything began to make sense. I invested in a copy of *The Freedom of the Hills,* read it front to back (more than once), and threw myself at climbing. On my first climb in the North Cascades - Eldorado - I inadvertently discovered the power of photography in the mountains. Put simply, the rest is history. I've deeply invested myself into the mountains now, always with a camera in hand (even when my bag is way overpacked), and the intention and passion I feel every day is unlike ever before in my life.


glacier's edge

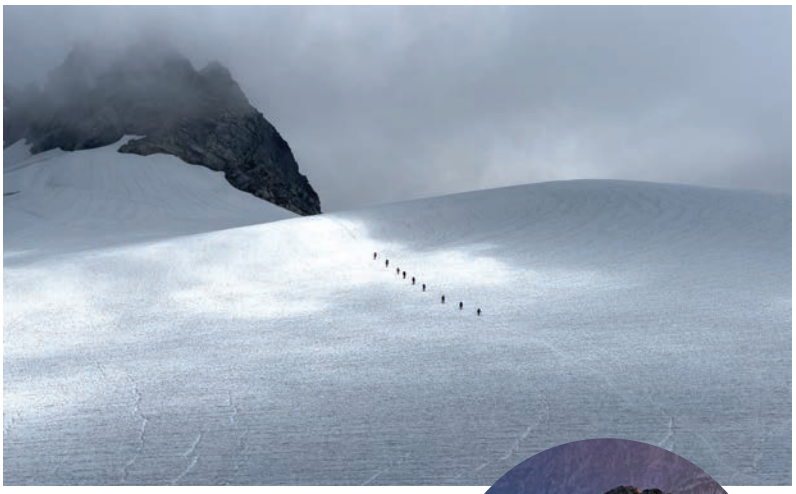
Photo by Martina Kohlus.

Laura Botz, @ellebotz

I moved to Washington from Minnesota 14 years ago and, until just six years ago, I didn't particularly like being outside at all. I went on my first day hike in 2017 and since then, I can't get enough. My photography is an expression of my awe at the natural beauty I witness on my adventures. I often feel stunned by the scenery of the Pacific Northwest, like it can't possibly be real. Taking a photo helps me to engage with my surroundings and process what I'm seeing. It also allows me to share the joy I find outside with others. Since taking the Intro to the Natural World course with The Mountaineers, I also use photography to document and identify the plants I encounter. And, at home, I use the photos I take on my adventures as source material for my other artistic outlet: printmaking.

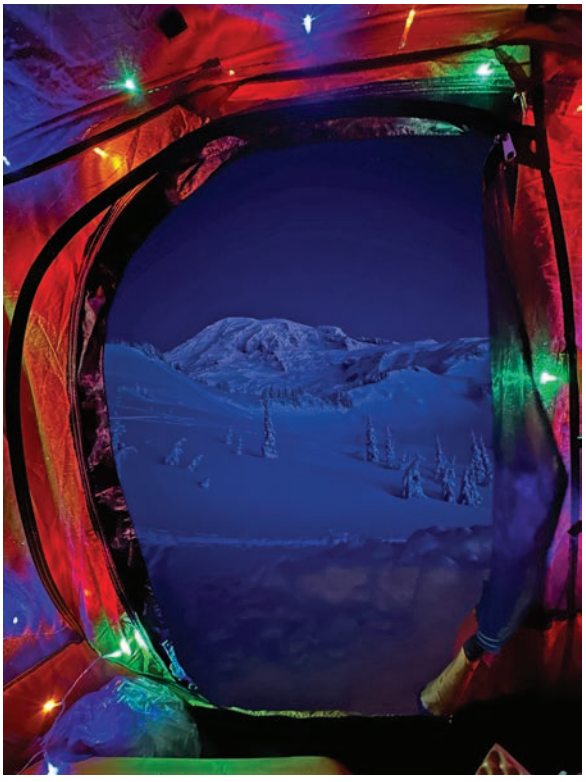
Ryan Keeling, @ryan.w.keeling

When I am on a trail run, climb, or other adventure in the PNW, I can't help but pause, look up, and gaze across the landscape. That view, that sliver of light, that experience, only lasts a moment. While it's no substitution for actually being there, pairing that pause with a few photos allows me to hold on to that moment. That is why I've fallen in love with landscape photography. Photography also gives me the opportunity to share my experiences with my family and celebrate the broader community.



Zihao Deng, @wilmtang

When I was little, I was fascinated by the ant colonies under my apartment and could watch them for hours. Naturally, I dreamed of becoming a wildlife biologist. Born and raised in eastern China, there wasn't much opportunity for me to explore the wilderness. I wasn't outdoorsy until several years ago when I moved to Seattle. I started going on trips I once would have considered very hardcore, but in fact are a cruise when with the right people who are patient, caring, and willing to share. Being in the mountains and capturing stunning moments, I feel I can realize my childhood dreams in another way. It's been four years since I began falling for photography. Not so coincidentally, it's around then that I discovered mountaineering. To say the two activities have become core to my drive, my emotion, my fitness, and my love for nature would be an understatement. Finding photography was like finding a reason, so to speak.



Martina Kohlus, @summitlass

Discovering the outdoors took me half a lifetime. I grew up in a Northern European city without a single mountain nearby and have mostly lived in big cities. Spending time in the mountains was somehow never high on my list of priorities. That all changed when I moved to the Pacific Northwest. With the mountains and the ocean in such proximity, the call of the wild could no longer be ignored. I discovered hiking, backpacking, mountaineering, and photography. I still have a lot of catching up to do, but as part of the community of outdoor enthusiasts, I continue to learn and explore, and often reflect on how there are "so many mountains, so little time."

Grant backcountry skiing Skyline Ridge, Stevens Pass. Photo courtesy of Grant Hennington.

Toe-tally Not Cool: The Bunion Chronicles

An interview with Grant Hennington

By Kiana Ehsani, Climb Leader and Super Volunteer

I was at the airport, ready to board a plane for my much-anticipated trip to Europe. My plan was to summit Mont Blanc and, if possible, do some rock climbing. I'd spent hours refreshing the hut reservation website to secure a spot, so the anticipation was sky-high. I dream of climbing all Seven Summits one day, and Mont Blanc seemed like the perfect starting point.

That day at the airport, I was in the best climbing shape of my life. For the past six months, I'd climbed consistently at least three times a week and stuck to a training program. The upcoming climbing season had me on cloud nine. But then, it struck...

At the airport, I suddenly experienced foot pain so intense it forced me to take off my shoes as soon as I found a place to sit. I saw a noticeable bump on the left side of my foot. Compared to my right foot, the deformity was evident. I quickly started researching and sending pictures to some professional acquaintances. All signs pointed to one diagnosis: Hallux Valgus, commonly known as a bunion.

Internet searches only fueled my anxiety, with many sources saying a cure is not available. I tried to remain optimistic. I bought bigger shoes to accommodate the bunion and managed to climb Mont Blanc. The journey left me with beautiful memories, a sore foot, and several large blisters.

Once home, the pain was so debilitating that climbing became impossible. After a month-long break, my impatience grew. I traded my aggressive rock climbing shoes for flat ones that were two sizes larger. My return to the rock climbing gym was underwhelming. The pain persisted, and my performance suffered due to discomfort and the ill-fitting shoes. My hours of training felt like they'd gone to waste as I performed worse than when I'd begun climbing. On a trip to Squamish, I attempted some cracks and quickly realized that jamming is a bunion's worst enemy. Another lesson learned the hard way.

I consulted a surgeon and after undergoing intensive treatments, multiple scans, and MRI studies, the diagnosis was clear: a bunion with some fluid accumulation in the forefoot, likely indicative of bursitis. The treatment regimen was to endure the pain, wear larger shoes, and return in a year to assess the deformity's progression.

As if this diagnosis wasn't disheartening enough, a few weeks later I experienced a significant alpine fall. My foot slipped inside my shoe, causing a loss of traction and shaking my confidence in leading. I couldn't help but wonder why my body was betraying me. Would I have to abandon all the goals I had set? Before succumbing to despair, I decided to be proactive. I planned a conversation with my PT, a fellow climber, who I trusted the most.

Getting to the bottom (or toe) of the bunion biz

What are bunions?

Bunions are bony bumps at the base of the big toe near the joint. They're typically painful, stiff, and swollen. They relate to a "hallux valgus" deformity where the big toe drifts outward. This creates an abnormal orientation at the big toe joint,

increasing stress on the tissues and causing a bump to form.

What causes bunions?

Bunions can be hereditary and improper footwear can also be a significant contributor. Wearing shoes that are too narrow or pointy can cause repetitive stress to the big toe joint. Over time, this can change the joint's orientation and irritate the involved tissues, leading to a bunion. Too much motion or too little motion at the big toe joint could contribute to the formation of a bunion. Osteoarthritis is another potential risk factor related to bunions.

Speaking of footwear, climbers and skiers often wear arguably the worst possible shoes. What's your advice for climbers and skiers, considering that footwear size and shape directly impact performance in these sports?

There is a trade-off between comfort and performance when it comes to climbing footwear. For high-level climbers who typically wear more aggressive climbing shoes, I recommend removing shoes when not actively climbing. For instance, take them off while belaying. This provides an opportunity to realign the big toe. The key is to minimize the time spent in those shoes. Some climbers modify their shoes for better foot accommodation. However, this may compromise shoe rigidity and performance. I usually recommend that if you're not actively climbing on the wall, you should get your feet out of your shoes as much as possible to reduce stress on the big toe joint. (Try belay station exercises, Exercise 3 from the list). On non-climbing days, focus on exercises that maximize joint and soft tissue mobility in the feet, and foot/ankle stability.

As for skiing, the boot will generally better accommodate your foot, especially touring boots, which are more designed for comfort since you wear them all day and walk/hike in them more. However, after a long day of skiing, it's important to perform exercises for the foot and big toe, especially if it feels stiff or uncomfortable. Placing orthotic inserts in your ski boots aimed at supporting the arch and big toe may be helpful, but the evidence varies on their effectiveness.

What are the side effects of bunions?

Besides pain, stiffness, swelling, and a visible deformity that can cause unease, the big toe plays a significant role in proprioception, or our sense of movement and position. Our ability to balance on one foot largely depends on proprioception. If our big toe joint is painful or stiff, it can affect our balance. With climbing, the ability to balance on one foot is crucial, especially on slabby routes or when using tiny footholds. Bunions can impair performance on these routes as well as the ability to front-point in crampons or even travel uphill on steep terrain during an approach to an alpine climb.

Some activities, like front pointing in ice climbing, jamming the foot into cracks, or skiing downhill for long hours intensify the pain.

How can we mitigate this? Are there any specific precautions we can take?

Preparing the foot for these activities is crucial. Start with a proper warm-up, especially if you will be performing a lot of these activities. Taping techniques may offer some support to the big toe joint during these activities as well. (See taping techniques at the end of the article). Post-activity, consider pain relief strategies. For instance, icing can reduce pain after aggravating the foot. Self-massaging the foot can be relieving after climbing or skiing as well.

You mentioned limited mobility. What exercises can help with toe mobility?

Self-mobilization techniques can improve the big toe joint's range of motion. Ensuring that the soft tissues of the foot, like the plantar fascia, remain flexible is crucial. Separate from toe mobility, foot and ankle stability exercises, like balancing on one foot while keeping your toes relaxed, are beneficial, as well as working on exercises to strengthen the muscles surrounding the big toe. While exercises like these are important, selecting proper footwear is vital to the health of the big toe joint.

How can we prevent bunions from worsening? Are there effective treatments, or is it true that once you have it, you are stuck with it for life?

The progression and onset of bunions might be slowed through the right choice of footwear, mobility and strength exercises for the big toe, and stability exercises for the foot and ankle. Splints and orthotic inserts may also be recommended. However, some individuals are more predisposed to bunions, and in these cases, it can be harder to prevent their formation and progression. In some cases, cutting/shaving the bone to create a neutral shape through surgery is an option, but it's important to weigh the risks and rewards associated with any surgical procedure.

Kiana traversing the Leuthold Couloir on Mt. Hood during a Mountaineers trip in March, 2023. Photo by Jerry Logan.

After my diagnosis and pursuing all potential treatments, the consensus was that I can't wear aggressive shoes anymore. Wearing looser ski boots means I can't ski as steeply and with as much control. These changes have been mentally challenging, especially since outdoor adventures and sports are integral to my life. What advice do you have for someone in my situation?

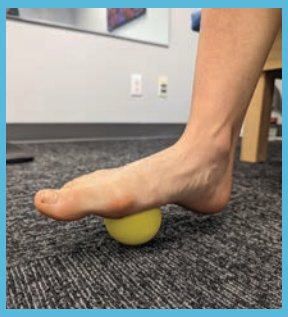
Understand that limitations or symptoms are not always permanent. There are typically things we can do to improve or worsen our condition, but we're rarely in a fixed, unchangeable state. The way you feel now, climbing in larger shoes or skiing in bigger boots, won't necessarily remain the same. As time progresses, you'll likely adjust to the new fit and become more adept. There might be a steep initial learning curve, but with time and the right combination of exercises and self-care, you can find a balance that allows for high performance and minimal pain. This could even let you entertain the idea of occasionally wearing more aggressive climbing shoes for significant objectives if you are able to manage your symptoms effectively.

Injuries that impact us mentally and emotionally require more than just physical attention. It's important to establish a team of trusted medical providers to lean on for support. I recommend tapping into the mental health community and taking advantage of telemedicine. Find a licensed professional with whom you can share your feelings, fears, and frustrations, preferably someone experienced with injured athletes. Keep in mind, it is better to have a support system lined up in advance, rather than scrambling to find one after an injury occurs. Preparing for potential setbacks and knowing who's on your team can make a world of difference.

For anyone out there grappling with the challenges of bunions like me, you are not alone. About one in four people share this journey with you. While it's undeniably a hurdle, it's not an insurmountable one. Every mountain has its difficult paths, but the view from the top is always worth the climb. Stay resilient; not every climb is vertical. Sometimes, our greatest challenges come in unexpected forms.

Grant Hennington, DPT is a Seattle-based physical therapist and clinic manager at Salmon Bay Physical Therapy. His clinical interests include rehabilitation and training of runners, climbers, skiers, and cyclists. He is passionate about helping others achieve their rehab goals through a combination of exercise and manual therapy.

EXERCISES TO TRY AT HOME



1. Plantar fascia mobilization with trigger point release ball.

Roll a ball under your foot for 60 seconds to self-massage the plantar fascia. This will reduce pain, tenderness, and tightness.

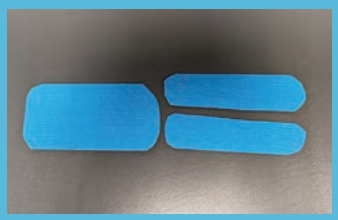
2. Single leg balance on unstable surface.

Stand on one leg on an unstable surface (such as an inverted half round foam roll) for 30-60 seconds (2-3 sets) to improve foot and ankle stability.

3. Strict plane toe-offs.

Using friction from the floor, align the big toe to point straight ahead and go up onto your toes (10 repetitions, 3 sets). This is a great exercise to try while at the belay station.

TAPING TECHNIQUES



1. Pre-cut the kinesiology tape strip.
2. Stretch and wrap the first narrow strip around the big toe.
3. Apply the second strip in a similar way, slightly offset with the first strip.
4. Wrap the wide strip around the foot, covering the narrow strips.

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Photo by Ida Vincent.

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Photo by Sylvester Jakubowski, @p90puma.

THE WINTER SOLACE OF BIRDS

By Thomas Bancroft, Naturalist Leader and Super Volunteer

A Short-eared owl hunting over the marshes along Rawlins Road on Fir Island. All photos by Thomas Bancroft unless otherwise noted.

It was early February 2021, and Seattle had been darkened by overcast and rainy skies for weeks. Even worse, we were eleven months into the pandemic, and I was feeling isolated. Birds in my yard had been my only physical companions throughout Covid. Other than my two sisters I'd visited in Pennsylvania, I'd not been hugged or, for that matter, even had a handshake since the previous March. I generally don't mind solitude, but that degree of isolation felt far different.

My spirits improved when The Mountaineers published guidelines for us to begin leading a few outings. Many requirements were put in place to protect leaders and participants from exposure to Covid. At first I was resistant, but then with one vaccine in my shoulder, I took the plunge.

I scheduled a birding trip to Western Skagit County for late February, limiting the participants to four. With Covid, we would have to drive ourselves. Normally we carpool with three passengers in each car - this gives people a chance to hang out together in between birding stops. The roster filled within one minute of opening. By early afternoon, we'd had a good day, finding swans, geese, sparrows, gulls, hawks, and plenty more.

We stopped then to walk along the dike at Rawlins Road. A fleeting Northern Shrike was a good find. Several sparrows flitted and chirped, then a participant spotted a bird flying in the distance. It was like an overgrown butterfly, with long gentle wing flaps and slow flight, almost as if it should just drop out of the sky. A Short-eared Owl was coming our way, one of the most sought-after birds in the Pacific Northwest. It was there in mid-afternoon, of all times. It came closer and closer, eventually circling us several times. The owl dropped for a possible mouse (no luck), landed for a minute on a log, and then began its slow quartering of the marsh again. I looked at my group; all spread out, everyone was transfixed by this show. The bird performed for an hour before flying west. No words could describe what had just happened or how it had raised our spirits. I offered to take them to one more spot, but we all agreed that nothing could top this. We left separately, reflecting on how this bird had enlivened us. We still talk about that experience today.

Our birding groups expanded as more people were vaccinated and Covid began to be controlled. During one trip we found a place where Snow Geese were grazing. Family groups of

Clockwise from top: A family of Snow Geese rising from a feeding flock to land in a new grass patch, Fir Island. Swainson's Thrush, Marymoore Park. A group birding in the Okanogan Highlands. Photo by Becky Andrade.

three, four, and five would fly up, move a few hundred yards, and drop back to the ground. At one point the mass, several thousand strong, took off. I thought they were leaving, but no, they circled and landed close by. Incredibly, these birds flew here from Wrangel Island in the Chukchi Sea of Russia, where they bred and raised their young. In April the flock will fly more than 2,400 miles back there to nest again. Occasionally, one here in Washington will become separated and fly back and forth cackling, eventually finding its family. Companionship is important to many in the natural world, too. One can't help but have their spirits raised by watching these birds, listening to them chatter, and witnessing their athleticism.

Slowing down enough to see the little things, like mosses and lichens, can improve one's outlook on life and help establish a deeper connection to the natural world. Several years ago, before Covid, my friend Gary planned a Mountaineers Naturalist trip to Old Sauk Trail. Just two days before our February outing,

Left: A male Rufous Hummingbird, Marymoore Park. Below: Northern Shrike, Fir Island.

Puget Sound received heavy snow and he canceled the trip over concern for road conditions. Once the roads improved, Gary and I went on our own and found nature's beauty to be just what our souls needed on those short days. We ate lunch on frozen rocks beside the Sauk River and found mosses. The soft colors of the running water created a kaleidoscope. We both focused on photography, looking deeply at mosses, ice, and water; sharing discoveries, perspectives, and recognizing the beauty that is everywhere if one takes the time to look.

The transformative power of nature

There is something about nature that is so special; it brings us solace, relaxation, and, maybe most importantly, a sense of awe. One can't help but be humbled when one realizes what different animals do to survive. Sometimes when I'm out with a group in winter, I'll mention birds we might see at that place in the summer. For example, the Swainson's Thrush we hear singing so beautifully on summer hikes are in either Central America or the Andes of South America during the winter, depending on whether they breed west or east of the Cascades.

Or that the miniature Rufous Hummingbird that dazzles everyone with its acrobatics and tenacity migrates in a loop, going south through the Rockies to winter in Mexico and then back up the Sierras and Cascades to summer here. Even some of our winter residents make incredible migrations. The Northern Shrike and Rough-legged Hawk come here from Canada to spend the winter with us. This is their "beach," their winter retreat. These creatures aren't our birds, but rather the world's. Thinking about their lives can't help but build empathy and patience for our own.

Western society is so focused on "me" and what is good for "me, me, me." Looking at nature can build an appreciation for the life of native plants and animals and their habitats. For example, the adaptations of alpine plants on Burrows Mountain to withstand winds, cold, and short growing seasons can't help but amaze us. Life is incredible. Remember the next time you are hiking and hear the sweet musical song of a Swainson's Thrush that this bird weighs the equivalent of 48 dried garbanzo beans, has a 10-inch wingspan, and yet flies all on its own from Washington to Latin America. The next time I am sweating and cursing that climb into the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, I will remember that 200 million years ago, I'd have had to go to where Spokane is now to find the North American continent. To make this state, four waves of island crusts have accreted since then. The rock under your feet on Mt. Rainier's Sourdough Ridge only solidified a few hundred thousand years ago when lava flowed between

Marbled Godwits, Bottle Beach.

two Pleistocene glaciers. This world is magnificent, and we humans are an insignificant part of it in time or life. We may destroy the earth's ability to support our lifestyle, but maybe with a broader view, our humbled selves will change things.

Last fall, I led a Mountaineers trip to the coast to look for shorebirds. We'd been sitting on the beach waiting for the tide to push the feeding birds toward us when two photographers came along. First, they walked out onto the mudflats just to our left, flushing the birds a couple of times, then came behind us, without acknowledging us, and walked again out to the flats. I asked them to show a little courtesy and etiquette. Neither thought I had the right to interfere with their quest for the perfect shot, let alone that their behavior increased the energy needs of these birds during their migration. So what? To me, one of the most important things the Naturalist program can share with folks is a sense of awe for the life of the animals and plants we have right here in the Pacific Northwest. Perhaps it will encourage folks to stay on the trail, show more courtesy to others, and have respect for living things and this planet.

There is something special about recognizing and identifying different organisms, and having a greater understanding of this world, its geology and ecology. Naming things shows a level of respect and is a powerful show of support; recognizing living things as being different and unique, so said Robin Wall Kimmerer, the writer and botanist. Noticing the land and its inhabitants can lead to a deeper connection to our planet and might allow us to receive nature's gifts.

Providing an environment for people to enjoy and learn about nature is the greatest reward I can have. It is all about storytelling and offering a place where all questions are welcome, where participants can reach their goal of seeing, identifying, learning, and maybe most importantly, receiving solace from the natural world.

Winter can be challenging with the cold, dreary weather, and rain here in the Pacific Northwest. When I accepted a job in Seattle and moved from the east coast, a close friend said, "How are you going to take that rain, those overcast, dark days?" I didn't know at the time, but nature has been the solution. Survival is about slowing down, helping others take the time to look, and finding beauty and wonder in new places. It's humbling to take the time to observe, think, and learn about this planet. A gift my mother gave me is the love of birds and nature. My goal is to give that present away. ▲▲

This article was originally published on our blog in December 2022. Our community loved the piece so much that we decided to share it again in print. It has been slightly edited from its original version. Visit our website for more opportunities to experience the solace of nature with Thomas and other Mountaineers naturalists.

Accepting Change in Life and on the Trail

By Craig Romano, Mountaineers Books Guidebook Author

A view of Diablo Lake from Sourdough Mountain, 2022. All photos by Craig Romano.

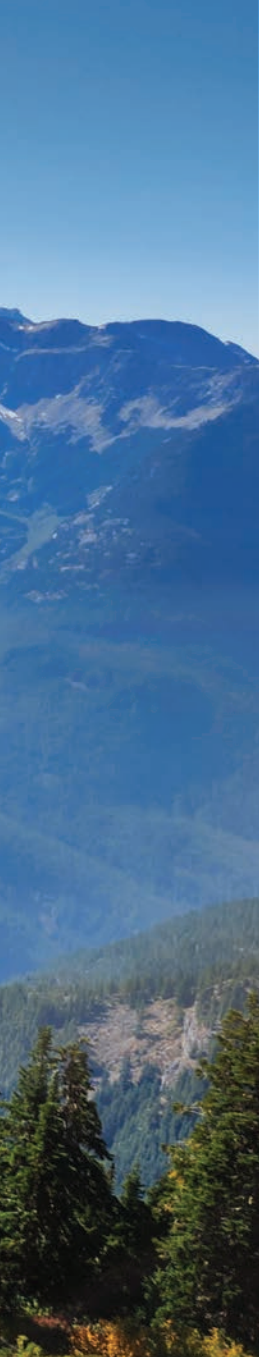
The only thing constant in life is change. You can never go home again. All things must pass. These thoughts continuously run through my mind as I progress further along my life journey. I've always had a strong sense of time and place, which leaves me melancholically longing for the past and lamenting the passing of moments which I perceive as being more favorable than the present. The world is changing rapidly, and often not in ways I welcome. Constant change can be exciting or, if you're wired like me, a source of anxiety. To counter the barrage of forces I can't control, I often seek the solace of wilderness, where I expect insulation from the rapid transformations of the outside world.

I have my sanctuaries – places I embrace because of their familiarity, places I expect not to change. Places where the ravages of the outside world are halted at their boundaries. Places where primeval forests still stand as they have for centuries; where waterfalls flow as they have for thousands of years; where wildlife roams free through intact habitat as they have for countless millennia.

When New York's Twin Towers imploded and a wave of fear, anguish, and despair swept the country, I retreated to the wilderness, my safe zone. When Covid spread its dark shroud across the country, I sought asylum in the backcountry. These natural refuges soothe my tormented soul, and I expect them to be there for me in the same state that I remember them. But what happens when my natural retreats inevitably – or worse, abruptly – change?

Facing change

This summer, I watched one of my most sacred natural shrines – a place I have sought validation and redemption from for the past decade – go up in flames. My dear Sourdough Mountain



was on fire and my immediate response was despair, sadness, and loss. Throughout the summer, I monitored the fire reports, hoping for the best all while the fire grew, consuming more of the mountain's forests. My hopes soon led to resignation. Sourdough Mountain would never be the same. One of my most coveted wilderness areas had been taken from me. I wondered whether I could ever go home again to this mountain that had brought me so much joy and peace of mind over the years.

Change is inevitable. In life. In the world. In nature. In everything. My first hike up Sourdough Mountain, July of 1985, is etched in my mind. A young black bear sprinting across glistening snowfields. A surrounding sea of ice, rock, and wildness. Sharing a beer with the fire lookout and being blown away by this new landscape. But that hike, those feelings, can never be replicated.

Every subsequent journey I've made up Sourdough, I've made as a different person. The mountain, too, changes. The summit snowpack has grown smaller and lingers for a shorter period of time. That sea of ice — a fraction of the size I remember from four decades ago — doesn't glisten and blind like it once did. And now, the forests have changed. The unbroken green canopy leading up to the alpine meadows, the canopy that shielded me from sun and rain and provided hues of green, is fragmented. Blackened snags, scorched timber, and toppled trees don't bring me solace. They remind me of death, destruction, and a world despoiled.

But death is part of life, and forest fires are part of the life of the natural world. No one, no thing, and no place is immune from the passage and transformation of time. I must accept my fate, and I must accept the fate of nature, lest I shun my sanctuary by forever clinging to memories. If I am to continue returning to the places that bring me redemption and validation, then I must accept that like my life, the natural world will change.

Hope for renewal

When I gather the mental strength to return to Sourdough, I must accept that this is the way things are now. Instead of lamenting the Sourdough I knew from the past, I need to be grateful that I experienced it through the years. I need to cherish the notion that Sourdough will rise from the ashes and continue to provide refuge for me and others.

The forest will recover. Seeds of colonizing plants helped by wind, insects, and birds will soon take root in the burn zone. Succulents and fungi will flourish, luring wildlife to return. Grasses and forbs will be overtaken by saplings, and the forest will move a little bit closer to its climax state each year. Sourdough will continue to be part of a vast wilderness complex providing habitat to a shrinking pool of biodiversity. The forest and all its components will be redeemed.

Craig's hiking companion walking through Sourdough Mountain's meadows.

By witnessing Sourdough transform, perhaps I may better understand the inevitability of change and the role of death. Perhaps the recovering forest, flourishing with new life, will instill in me a hope that I, in some form or shape, will also be renewed beyond death.

Craig Romano is an award-winning guidebook author who has written more than 25 books, including Backpacking Washington, Day Hiking Central Cascades 2nd edition*, and eight titles in the* Urban Trails *series (Mountaineers Books). Purchase his titles in our Seattle Program Center Bookstore, online at mountaineersbooks.org, and everywhere books are sold.*

WILDFIRE'S GROWING IMPACT ON RECREATION IN WASHINGTON

The growing impact of wildfire on Washington's lands, waters, and communities increasingly affects our outdoor experiences. Warmer temperatures mean drier summers and more severe wildfires. Larger, more intense wildfires are occurring more frequently, resulting in forest closures and unhealthy smoke that impacts our health and obstructs our views. As we grapple with these challenges, it's important to better understand how the wildfire crisis is playing out in Washington and how we as outdoor enthusiasts can advocate for critical solutions. Learn more by visiting mountaineers.org/wildfire-wa.

Medieval Babies and Overstuffed Ski Bags

Reflections on a Norwegian Global Adventure

By Jessica Hirst, 17-year member

The Northern Lights as seen from outside Gålå Hotell in Gålå, Norway. All photos by Kate Neville.

Jessica pausing at a waypoint on the Peer Gynt Trail System.

In the winter of 1205, two Norwegian Birkebeiner warriors donned crude plank skis and shuffled off into severely cold, windy weather to cross a snowy mountain, one of them carrying a swaddled baby on his back. Their mission? To safely transport the baby 54 kilometers from Lillehammer to Rena as a civil war raged. The child was heir to the throne and being targeted by a faction competing with the more dominant Birkebeiners, to whom he belonged.

Some time later — 808 years to be exact — I sweated beneath the weight of my heavy, orange backpack as I dragged an overstuffed cross-country ski bag filled with too many Smartwool layers through the hectic, labyrinthine corridors of Schiphol Airport, hoping to deposit my luggage in time to make my connecting flight to Oslo. My Apple Watch buzzed against my wrist as my heart rate rose: *Are you working out?*

It wasn't like I hadn't traveled before. But somehow — maybe during the pandemic — I'd apparently forgotten how to pack light. Or perhaps it was nerves. I hadn't been entirely sure what to expect when I signed up for my first Mountaineers Global Adventures trip, a two-week, classic-style cross-country ski tour through the rolling hills of the Gudbrandsdalen Valley in eastern Norway. With my squarely intermediate skills, would I be able to keep up with more practiced skiers? Would I get lost in a whiteout and have to hunker down in a barn with only a sheep's eyeball for food?

To prepare, I had skied miles along the Cascade to Palouse Trail at Crystal Springs Sno-Park nearly every weekend that winter, with the monotonous rumble of I-90 in the distance. I also spent five days on the sunnier ski trails of the Methow Valley practicing on hillier terrain.

As it turned out, that training paid off and my fears were unfounded. The nine-day ski portion of the trip took us through the rolling hills of the Gudbrandsdalen as we climbed, descended, and glided past flat, open meadows dotted by pine, spruce, and the low, brown barns of summer farms with glowing white mountains in the distance. We were lucky enough to have nearly perfect snow conditions and a lovely group that got along well. Throughout it all, covering about eight to 16 miles each day, my legs and lungs held steady.

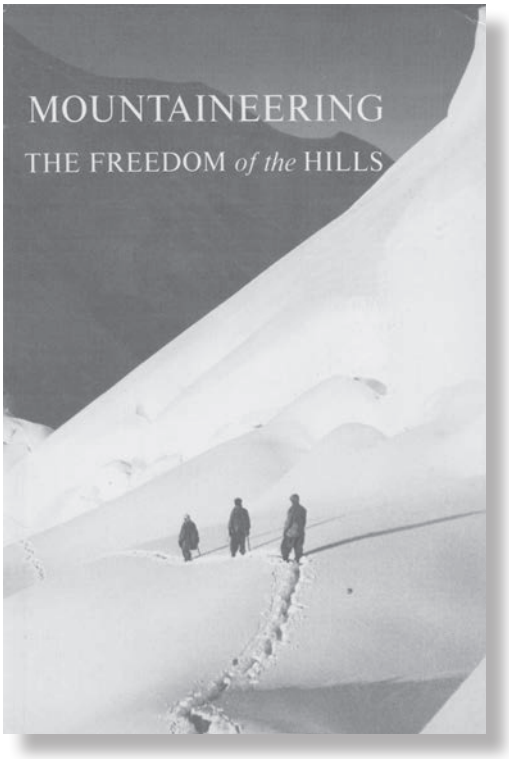
Of course, it didn't hurt that we stayed at traditional inns rather than rustic huts. Expertly selected by our trip leaders Cindy Hoover and Cheri Solien, each inn had a sauna — not to mention afternoon tea, expansive and colorful buffets at each meal, and ski-waxing stations, where Cheri gave lessons after dinner to anyone interested in learning the difference between blue and violet wax.

We practiced the cheerful everyday Norwegian greeting ("Hei hei!"), compared different brands of salty licorice (there are oh so many), and learned about distant kings. Some of us tried reindeer while others declined, thinking of Rudolph. One night, my roommate and I happened to look out our window to the Northern lights pulsing turquoise on the horizon.

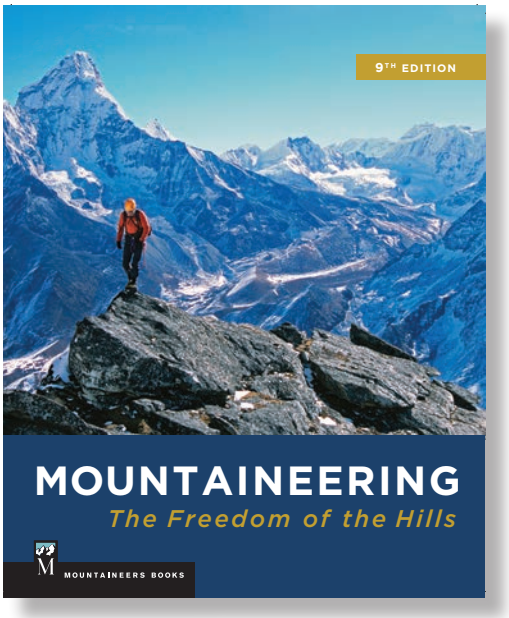
These days, the historic Birkebeiner Ski Race follows that ancient, baby-secreting path in reverse, from Rena to Lillehammer. On the last ski day of the trip, our route led us across the race's finish line. It was a fitting end to a trip full of small, surprising treasures — one that was well worth that long, sweaty journey through Schiphol with a bag that will surely be lighter for my next Global Adventure.

Be a Part of History

Add Your Name to *Freedom of the Hills*

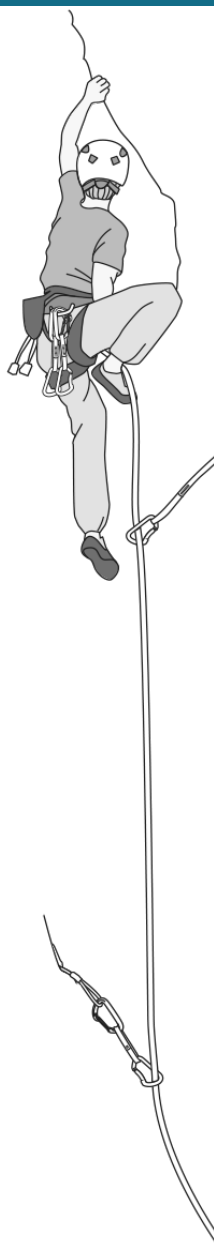


A common question often heard among mountaineers: "Which edition of *Freedom* was your gateway to the mountains?" Above, the original 1st Edition (1960); below, the 9th Edition (2017).



Our experiences in the outdoors are rooted in freedom. Freedom to roam. Freedom to explore. Freedom to scale peaks and navigate wilderness, limited only by our skills and the challenges of the environment itself.

For over sixty years, *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills* has been the primary source for anyone to hone mountaineering and wilderness skills—and, more profoundly, to learn how to overcome the steepest of obstacles, whether physical, mental, or emotional. A guidebook written by adventurers, for adventurers, *Freedom* captures generations of hard-learned lessons and the collective wisdom of thousands of volunteers across nine editions. Yet it is much more than a compilation of mountaineering history—for many, it is their first connection with The Mountaineers and the first step in a lifelong journey outdoors.

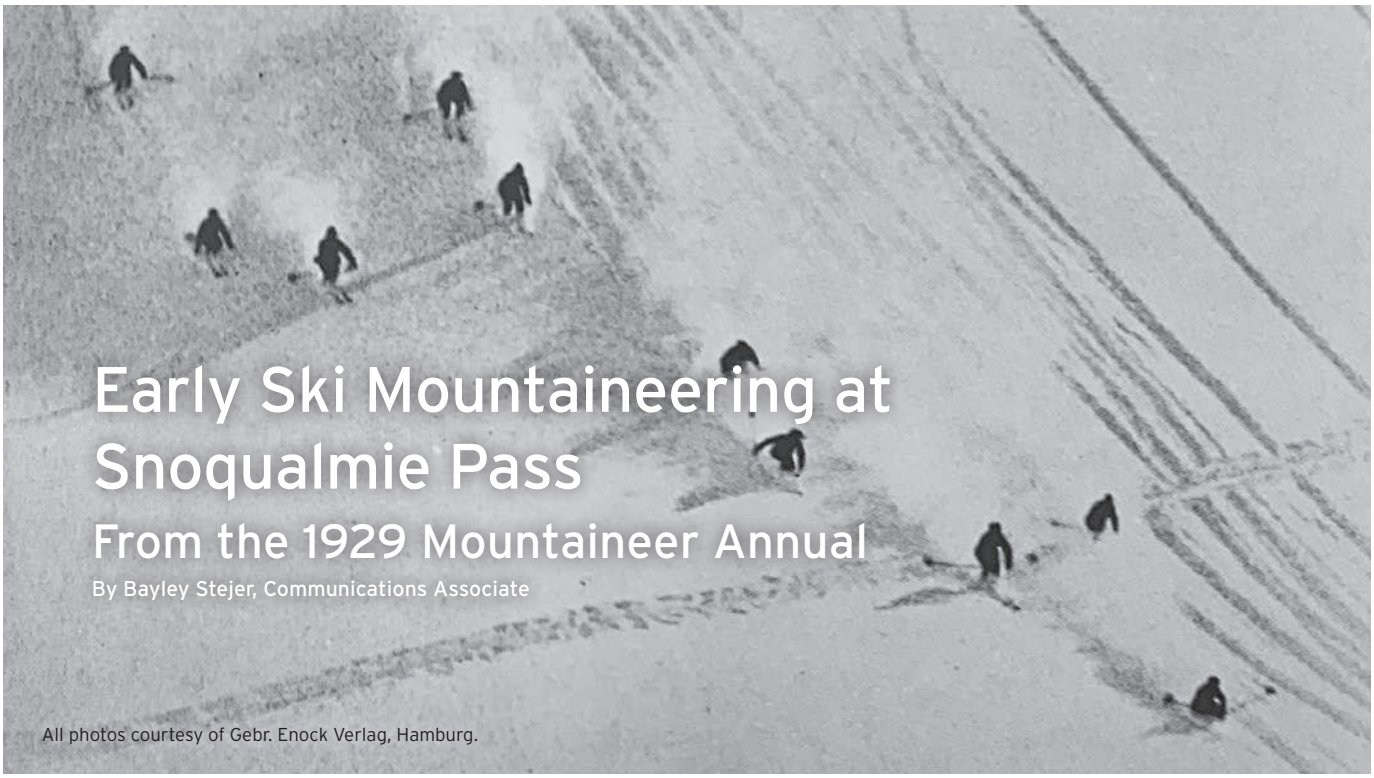


In September 2024, the 10th Edition of *Freedom* will be published. You can honor this milestone by having your name (or the name of a loved one) listed in the book. Your tax-deductible contribution will directly support Mountaineers Books and help ensure that future Mountaineers will be able to enjoy the feeling of freedom that comes from a first summit, from traversing an unspoiled landscape, or from discovering a guidebook that opens a world of possibility.

Your gift at the $250 level or above will be recognized with your name in the book and a copy of the new 10th Edition of *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills*.

MOUNTAINEERS BOOKS

Pledge your support by visiting
mountaineers.org/donate/freedom10
or call Bri Vanderlinden at 206-521-6006



Early Ski Mountaineering at Snoqualmie Pass

From the 1929 Mountaineer Annual

By Bayley Stejer, Communications Associate

All photos courtesy of Gebr. Enock Verlag, Hamburg.

Long before beacons, Gore-Tex, groomers, or even the assurance of a good helmet: Mountaineers were on skis. They were a curious group, dressed in thick wool, without the ability to check snow conditions or rest their tired legs on a chair lift between laps. Still, they remained eager, stubborn, and terribly enthusiastic about the variable winter season. With keen interest and experimentation, these skiers unknowingly laid the groundwork for generations of powder hounds to come.

From snowshoe to ski at Lodge Lake

The Mountaineers first rooted at Snoqualmie Pass in 1915, building a rustic lodge that would become a home base for members at Lodge Lake. Summers were spent venturing great distances into the Cascade Range, but, as seasons changed, so did accessibility. To counter winter's challenging and often unpredictable conditions, Mountaineers began exploring with snowshoes. Snowshoes successfully aided winter travel, but the sport didn't tend to members' persistent itch for speed and adrenaline.

In the early 1920s, skis were first introduced at Lodge Lake. The typical ski was made of hickory and had the long, narrow shape that we recognize today. Originally, Mountaineers lacked knowledge and training, so equipment was reserved for members who had learned to ski elsewhere. Nonetheless, when members were keen to learn, others were happy to teach, and soon the demand for skiing grew exponentially until, according to the 1929 Mountaineer Annual, "snowshoes became as rare at the lodge as had been the ski but a few years before."

Access to skis broke open new possibilities for Mountaineers. "Old acquaintances of summer days, peaks, and mountain parks, could be renewed in winter months on skis." Winter play was no longer limited, arduous, or inaccessible. Deep terrain became reachable, snow became a resource, and members' outdoor efforts could continue through conditions that once confined them. For a group whose mission is to explore, conserve, learn about, and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest, skis sure set them on the right track.

Now, all they needed was the proper gear.

Equipment

Within the greater group of Mountaineers skiers, "a smaller nucleus [formed] to whom proper technique and correct equipment was of paramount importance." This nucleus was committed to furthering skiing at Snoqualmie Pass through detailed reading and experimentation. They were the original gear heads, if you will - testing equipment from foreign catalogs against local conditions, researching and criticizing Norwegian and American skis, analyzing books on technique, and putting all their new toys and knowledge into practice on the slopes.

Results from these experiments were shared in the 1929 Annual, offering new skiers detailed instructions on gear selection. Some ideas are still in practice today: "ski boots are indispensable," "outer clothing should be windproof," "mitts are of vital importance." Other ideas were, let's say, appropriate for the time: "a cap with a brim is the most protective headwear, wool is better than goat hair and goat hair is better than camel, the average ski should be seven feet long."

No matter the specifics, some items were absolutely required to ski with The Mountaineers. Among them were things like seal skins, spare ski tips, candles, an avalanche cord, a waxing iron, and, of course, wax. Members took years to edit this

equipment list to their liking. They had many successes and many failures, but when something didn't work they kept on, reminded that "the ancients used dried fish [for wax], so they can do no less than try anything."

Stores in the city kept score on the suggestions of Mountaineers skiers, adjusting their inventory accordingly. This gave newer skiers an advantage, as they didn't have to endure the same trial and error of early members. Purchases could be made with confidence "that the articles are correct and best suited to the kind of skiing afforded in the Pacific Northwest."

As such, the learning curve began to settle and beginners were no longer content "merely being able to negotiate a straight run and remain standing." Skiers of all skill levels wanted more and committed to learning the proper techniques for progression and excellency.

Technique

Clothed in protective gear, Mountaineers tested fundamental, European techniques, such as skating, swing turns, and side-stepping. "For the first time, proper technique commenced to be appreciated and sought after," which greatly affected members' learning and potential.

A crucial element of downhill skiing is, in fact, being on top of a hill. Without the invention of chair lifts to aid in their ascent, members needed a way to climb on snow. Skiers glued seal skins to the bottom of their skis, whose angled hairs would stick in the snow, creating grip and preventing the skier from sliding backward. Once skiers had successfully climbed uphill, they would remove their seal skins before taking smooth, swing turns back down.

The downhill was where members bested or burned. Most Mountaineers took years to skillfully maneuver on skis. These members didn't make headlines, but they did engage with the humble and worthy pursuit of learning.

Among these beginners were experts who "performed on long sticks in such a way as to give a whole new understanding of the possibilities of the sport." These members excelled quickly, skiing with ease down steep slopes, navigating uncertain snow conditions, and even dominating annual club races. Their skill brought them to Silver Peak, Lost Lake, and other Snoqualmie Pass regions "of never-failing interest."

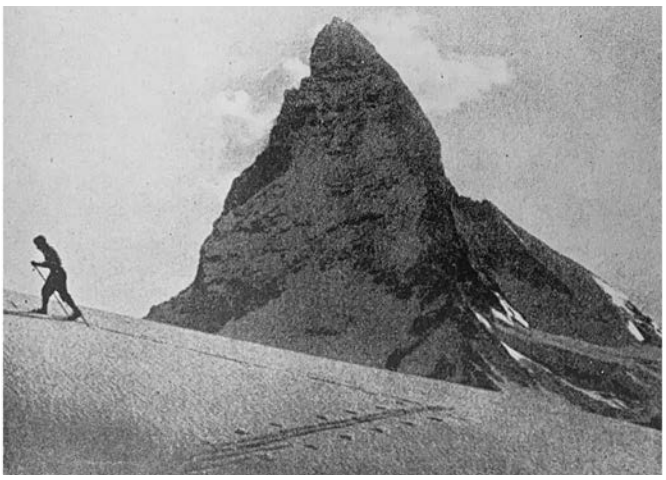
The Pacific Northwest held great potential for ski mountaineering. Unlike the snowshoe, flat and waxed skis contributed to efficient, productive exploration of local regions. The perpetual thrill of discovery encouraged members to enter terrain that had previously been unknown to them in winter months. "The steep slopes, the sudden rises and depressions, the twisting, bewildering runs through the timber" were all unearthed.

A lasting ski legacy

Early Mountaineers skiers, through ongoing product experimentation and development of technique, raised the standard of skiing. This group's fervent desire to progress instilled a prominence for The Mountaineers within the Northwest ski scene. In the winter of 1927, skiing in Snoqualmie Pass "attained such popularity that the lodge, for the first time in history, was filled to overflowing many weekends through the height of the ski season." To counter this growing enthusiasm, The Mountaineers Ski Committee was named and made responsible for leadership and management. The Ski Committee has since expanded, but the mission is the same: to support members' involvement in the local ski landscape; an industry that hasn't stopped advancing since the early 1920s.

Mountaineers skate skiing.

A Mountaineer practicing a swing turn.



A Mountaineer skiing uphill.

Virtual Education Center and Calendar

Check out our Virtual Education Center and Calendar, your home base for accessing all of our great virtual learning tools. Find activities, events, and classes held online, and browse our educational resources for skills and more.


Conservation & Advocacy


Fitness & Performance


Gear Tips


Leadership Skills


Preparedness & Planning


Technical Skills

How to Get Involved

Step 1: Visit mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center

This is your first stop to find everything you need for outdoor education and exploration.

Step 2: Choose what you want to learn

There's so much to explore! With a wide range of topics - from leadership tips to how to coil a rope - there's something for everyone. We also have a special 'Just for Fun' section if you need a laugh.

Step 3: Decide what kind of learning experience you want to have

Would you prefer to read a blog or complete an online course? What about attending a live webinar with an open discussion? We offer multiple educational formats to choose from so that everyone can find what works for them.

What You'll Find

18
Online Courses

200+
Educational Blogs

25
Virtual Events & Activities

How to Sign Up for Activities

Step 1
Visit our website

www.mountaineers.org
Click on the big green 'Find Activities' button, or hover over the 'Activities' tab and choose 'Find Activities.'

Step 2
Filter your activity search

Define your search using the filter options in the green column on the left. To view activities by location, choose 'Map' in the upper right.

Step 3
Select an activity & register

Click on the activity of your interest to learn more. If you like what you see, select the orange 'Register' button. You'll be added to the trip roster and receive a confirmation email.

*Note: Activities **require registration** unless otherwise noted. You will also need a current waiver on file with The Mountaineers to participate.*

How to Sign Up for Events

Step 1
Visit our website

www.mountaineers.org
Click on the 'Upcoming Events' button on the left of the main page, or click 'More' and choose the 'Events' tab.

Step 2
Browse for local events

Scroll down to view our most popular events, or choose a branch or program center calendar for more events in your area. Browse through your options, and click on an event to learn more.

Step 3
Select an event & register

Many events are free but require you to RSVP via the orange RSVP button. Events that require tickets will have a link for online ticket purchases.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I'm not a member? Many of our activities – especially day hikes and urban adventures – are open to the general public. You simply need to sign up for a guest membership at www.mountaineers.org/join. Guests can participate in two activities for free before joining.

What are some easy ways to get started? Sign up for an activity without prerequisites. These include day hikes, backpacking trips, stewardship activities, photography outings, and occasional sailing opportunities! Also, consider taking a basic or introductory course like Basic Snowshoeing, Introduction to Rock Climbing, Navigation, and much, much more! Visit www.mountaineers.org/courses to see what's currently available.

How are events and activities different? Activities are primarily daylong outings that require participants to use skills in an outdoor setting. Examples include hikes, naturalist walks, or snowshoeing – in short, you are outside doing something. Events are open to the community, and are primarily opportunities to see presentations and socialize. Examples include summer picnics, branch banquets, and speaker series like BeWild, Walking the Wild, and the Adventure Speaker Series.

What if I don't meet the prerequisites for an activity? Some of our technical activities, like climbing and kayaking, have prerequisite skill requirements. If you want to learn the prerequisite skills, we encourage you to take one of our courses. If you already have the prerequisite skills, you might qualify for equivalency. Email info@mountaineers.org and we will help you apply for equivalency so you can participate at the appropriate skill level.

Why do some activities say 'Leader Permission Required'? All of our Mountaineers activities are led by volunteers. To ensure everyone on a trip has a set of specific skills, some volunteers require you to contact them in advance to participate. Before signing up for a trip that requires leader permission, please contact the leader by clicking on their name in the course/activity listing and send them an email. You can always email our Member Services team with questions at info@mountaineers.org.

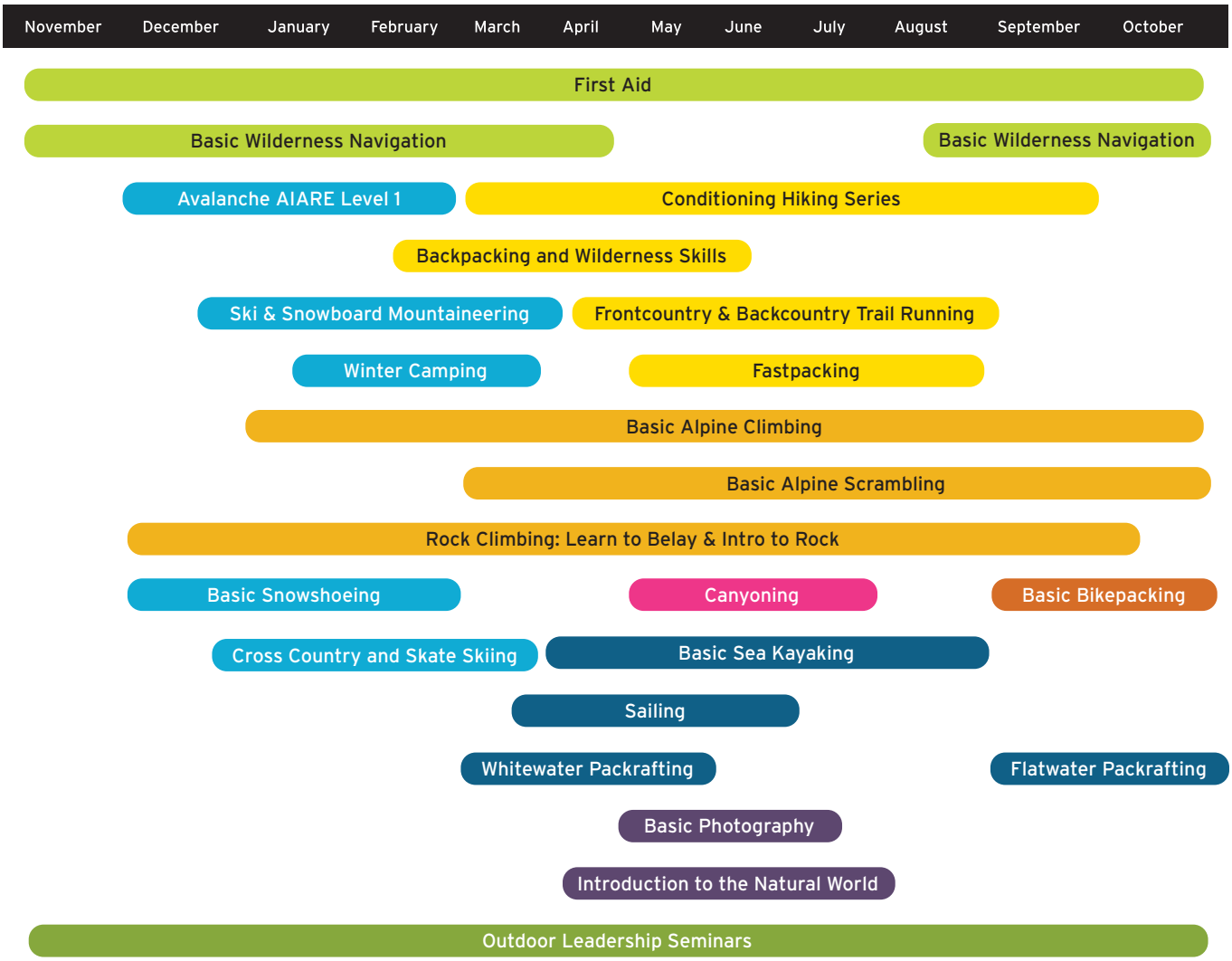
What if the activity is full? Sign up for the waitlist! Yes, it works. We have roughly a 10-20% drop-out rate in courses and activities, so spots often become available.

Introductory Course Overview

Updated October 2022

The Mountaineers is a volunteer-led community built around sharing knowledge and skills to safely recreate outdoors. We offer courses every season and some all year round. The same course may be offered by multiple branches, and you can take a course with any branch. Exploring our clinics and seminars is also a great way to refine or expand your existing skills. Practice skills taught in our courses, learn about new techniques or gear, and explore new possibilities within our organization, like becoming an activity leader. Our clinics and seminars are often open to both our membership and the general public.

To learn when our courses are coming, take a look at our course calendar:



Please visit **www.mountaineers.org** to see current course listings and to sign up.

Course selection varies by branch. Registration usually opens 1-3 months prior to the start of the course.

Open to Mountaineers members and the general public, our lodges provide visitors with unparalleled access to skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and more. The Mountaineers is also home to the Kitsap Forest Theater, a historic outdoor theater showcasing two musical productions a year which are open to the public and a family favorite.

LODGE WEBPAGES Information about schedules, availability, meals, group rentals, and special events can all be found on the lodge webpages. You can also book your stay online. To access our lodge webpages, visit the direct links listed below or go to mountaineers.org, click on 'More' in the top menu, and then click on 'Locations & Lodges' in the dropdown menu.

VOLUNTEER Our lodges and the Kitsap Forest Theater are run by dedicated volunteers, and they can use your help! Visit their webpages to learn how you can contribute to the teams that keep our outdoor centers running.


Baker Lodge


Stevens Lodge


Meany Lodge

Baker Lodge

mountaineers.org/bakerlodge

Mt. Baker Lodge, above Picture Lake and near Artist's Point in the North Cascades, is a gorgeous place for a winter get-away. The lodge is located within walking distance of the Mt. Baker Ski Area as well as numerous hiking trails.

Stevens Lodge

mountaineers.org/stevenslodge

Nestled near the Stevens Pass ski area, this rustic ski-in/ski-out lodge is open to PCT thru-hikers and mountain bikers in August and September, and skiers in the winter. Tired of the hustle and bustle of the big city? Come for a quiet respite to a cabin in the woods, with bunks for the whole family. Several trails are a short walk or drive from the lodge. The lodge is open Wednesday to Sunday during the winter when the ski area is open.

Meany Lodge

mountaineers.org/meanylodge

Meany Lodge is The Mountaineers oldest winter sports resort, located approximately 60 miles east from Seattle off I-90 near Stampede Pass and surrounded by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Meany Lodge provides a warm family environment for all - perfect for winter and summer adventures alike. During the winter, the lodge operates a rope-tow on our ski hill for ski lessons, cross-country skiing, and snowshoe excursions.

Kitsap Forest Theater

foresttheater.com

We're thrilled to set the stage for another enchanting season in 2024! Prepare to be swept away by the boundless imagination and storytelling of two lively and funny musicals — Roald Dahl's ***Matilda, the Musical*** and ***Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*** (Broadway version). These mesmerizing, family-friendly shows promise to light up hearts of all ages, and what better way to experience them than under the verdant canopy of the Kitsap Forest Theater?

Don't miss a single note! Secure your spot today with our exclusive two-show package. This is not just another theater outing; it's a tradition, an enchanted experience that brings families and friends together year after year. Make sure you're part of the magic! Let's make this season a celebration of imagination and wonder like no other.

Volunteer opportunities: property upkeep, cooking, helping with sets, costumes, ushering/parking during shows. We offer an Adventure Camp for grades K-4 and a Theater Camp for grades 5-8.

The Mountaineers is home to seven branches, each offering a number of courses and seminars. Our branches also host a variety of events like picnics, film screenings, and guest speakers. Regardless of which branch you join, you can sign up for offerings with any branch. Learn more at mountaineers.org/locations-lodges.

BELLINGHAM

Chair: Nathan Andrus, nathan.andrus@gmail.com
Website: mountaineers.org/bellingham; bellinghammountaineers.com

COURSES & ACTIVITIES: avalanche safety, navigation, climbing, first aid, hiking, scrambling, stewardship and conservation.

You'll find the Bellingham Branch tucked alongside the upper craggy expanse of the North Cascades. We enjoy easy access to the peaks that drain into the Nooksack and Skagit River basins. Our close-knit community offers climbing courses, hiking trips, and backcountry adventures in a diverse, inclusive, and supportive environment. We're also home to one of the most popular Mountaineers getaway destinations, Mt. Baker Lodge.

Branch Council meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Visit our branch calendar for details.

EVERETT

Chair: Nick Mayo, nicholas.e.mayo@gmail.com
Website: mountaineers.org/everett

COURSES & ACTIVITIES: avalanche safety, backcountry skiing, climbing, cross-country skiing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and stewardship.

Founded in 1911, the Everett Branch offers several programs. As a smaller branch, we value companionship and are excited to restart in-person events including our Salmon Bake, Gear Grab & Potluck, Annual Awards Banquet, and more. Check our branch calendar for details. Our branch is also known for our unique Lookout and Trail Maintenance Committee, which restored the Mt. Pilchuck Lookout and continues to maintain the historic Three Fingers Lookout.

Branch Council Meetings are held every other month to discuss new and ongoing initiatives and are open to all. We host a combination of hybrid and fully remote meetings depending on the month. As we ramp up our in-person events and programs, we are looking for talented and passionate volunteers to make an impact. Please reach out to Nick Mayo (email above) for details.

KITSAP

Chair: John Mackey, john@pttaxcpa.com
Website: mountaineers.org/kitsap

COURSES & ACTIVITIES: climbing, exploring nature, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and youth & family.

The Kitsap Branch draws members from throughout western Puget Sound, from Gig Harbor to the Olympic Peninsula, including Pierce, Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam counties. Join us at our program center, conveniently located in Bremerton.

Branch Council Meetings are held in February, May, August, and November. Our annual branch celebration is in October, please join us! Visit our branch calendar for details.

SEATTLE

Chair: Craig Kartes, c.kartes@frontier.com
Website: mountaineers.org/seattle

COURSES & ACTIVITIES: avalanche safety, canyoning, climbing, cross-country skiing, exploring nature, first aid, folk dancing, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, photography, retired rovers, sailing, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, stewardship, and urban walking.

The Seattle Branch began as the sole club location in 1906 when The Mountaineers was founded. Our Meet The Mountaineers open houses are held about once a month and are a great way for new and prospective members to learn about our many offerings. Our branch is also home to the Seattle Program Center, which features a book store, indoor and outdoor climbing walls, event spaces, and more.

Branch Council meetings are held every other month to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. We're growing rapidly and actively seeking people to support our community. Visit our branch calendar for details and reach out to the branch chair if you are interested in volunteering.

FOOTHILLS
(I-90/I-405 CORRIDORS)

Chair: Brad Peacock, bmpeacock@aol.com
Website: mountaineers.org/foothills

COURSES & ACTIVITIES: AIARE avalanche safety, backcountry and downhill skiing, climbing, conservation and stewardship, cross-country skiing, first aid, GoHike, hiking & backpacking, navigation, scrambling, snowshoeing, urban walking, and trail running.

The Foothills Branch is the club's newest branch, founded in 2004 and encompassing the eastside communities along the I-90 and I-405 corridors. In addition to our educational and activity programs, we host film screenings, guest speakers, and stewardship events with the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, Shadow Lake Nature Preserve, WTA, and other conservation-minded partners. We are also excited to be a close partner with Meany Lodge!

Our branch is growing rapidly, and we are actively seeking people to support our community – no prior experience required. We invite you to get involved in branch leadership and committees to get our communities outside. Contact the branch chair if you might be interested.

Branch Council Meetings are held every other month (except summer) to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. All branch members are welcome! Visit our branch calendar for details.

TACOMA

Chair: Curtis Stock
curtis@tacomamountaineers.org
Website: mountaineers.org/tacoma

COURSES & ACTIVITIES: avalanche safety, climbing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, photography, sailing, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and youth & family.

The second largest of all seven branches, the Tacoma branch maintains its own program center in the Old Town neighborhood of Tacoma, as well as the Irish Cabin property located near Mt. Rainier. A great way get involved is our Meet the Tacoma Mountaineers event, consisting of a meet-and-greet and a 90-minute interactive presentation giving you opportunities to learn about our history, our website, and how you can get involved.

Branch Council meetings are held every six weeks to discuss new and ongoing initiatives and general branch business. Visit our branch calendar for details.

OLYMPIA

Chair: Mandy Maycumber, manda_jo@live.com
Website: mountaineers.org/Olympia

COURSES & ACTIVITIES: avalanche safety, backcountry skiing, climbing, cross-country skiing, exploring nature, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, scrambling, sea kayaking, stewardship, snowshoeing, wilderness skills, and youth & family. Our branch is known for its robust stewardship program.

Our Adventure Speaker Series runs from November through March and has a great lineup. Visit our website for details.

Branch Council Meetings are held at 6pm on the second Tuesday of the month, alternating in person and Zoom, though Zoom is always available. Members are encouraged to attend. Contact Mandy Maycumber.

Get Involved With Your Branch

Visit Your Branch Page Go to mountaineers.org and click on 'More' in the top menu; then click 'Locations & Lodges' and select your branch from the dropdown options. On your branch home page, you'll find branch news, upcoming events, contact info, and more. You can also access your branch page using the direct links listed in the branch summaries.

Browse Branch Courses & Activities To see what's available, visit mountaineers.org and click the big green 'Find Courses' button or 'Find Activities' button. You can then narrow your search by branch using the filter options in the green column on the left. Remember, you can sign up for courses and activities offered by any branch.

Branch Events With picnics, open houses, banquets, guest speakers, and more, our branches host an array of events for you to get involved. To check out what's next, visit mountaineers.org/events. From this page, you can select your branch calendar.

Branch eNewsletters Branch eNewsletters are a great way to stay up to date. To opt into these emails, visit mountaineers.org/profile. Login, then scroll down and make sure the box next to 'Branch Communications' is checked.*

**The Seattle Branch doesn't have a branch-wide eNewsletter, but several activity committees publish eNewsletters, including climbing, navigation, photography, and naturalists, and many activities have a Facebook presence. To learn more, contact the committee chairperson. To find a committee, input the committee name into our search bar at the top of our website.*

Volunteer Our branches draw on people with a range of skills and interests to power their programs. Instructors, event planners, admin help, and more are all needed. Volunteering is a great way to plug into our community. Reach out to your branch chair to get started.

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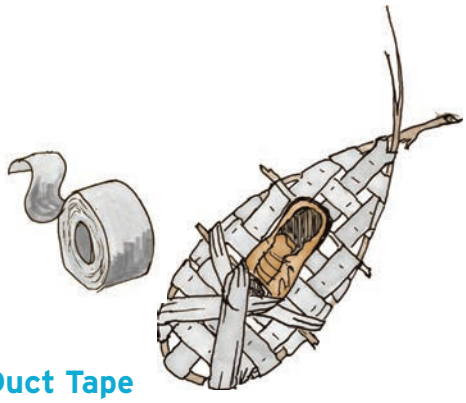
To learn more, visit **mountaineers.org/membership/benefits**

Photo by Mike Warren.

DIY Snowshoes

By Skye Michel, Associate Communications Manager
Illustrations by Mckenzie Campbell Davies, Annual Giving Manager

Getting new winter gear is usually great for the ego and painful for the bank account... but it doesn't have to be. Did you know you can make your own snowshoes? And for quite cheap, too. There are plenty of ways to equip your feet for the winter, whether it be a quick walk to the trash can or a lengthy alpine meander. All you need is time, ingenuity, and a little bit of grit. Here are a few ideas to get you started.



Duct Tape

Duct tape can solve anything, right? Scratch the complicated weaving and tape yourself shoes instead.

Sticks & Paracord

Gather and assemble twigs, using paracord to keep the frame together. Twigs can be left straight for longer frames or boiled in water and bent to create a rounded frame.

Tennis Racket & Bike Tire

A popped bike tire can still get you places. Weave the tube between the racket's webbing and tie tightly to secure your feet. Make sure your toes are snug and your heels can move up and down.

Recycled Materials

Have fun, be crafty, *and* save the environment. You can use scrap wood as a foot frame, plastic bottles cut in strips as webbing, or ripped plastic bags as string.

Last Resort

If you're sinking in snow and really in a pinch, tie yourself to some branches!

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