

# Mountaineer

E X P L O R E • L E A R N • C O N S E R V E



in this issue:

30 Before 30 Project

Failure and Growth, Courtesy of El Cap

The Olympic Mountain Project

Out of the Ashes

Life of a Trail Angel



Fall 2020 | Volume 114 | Number 4

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



On the cover: Nate Brown on Lightening Peak. Photo by Nate Brown.

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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.



Seeing people come together for the benefit of the common good is inspiring. While the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on all of us is palpable, watching Mountaineers members wear masks, recreate responsibly, and continue to give back to our organization serves as a daily reminder of the importance of our work. In a way each hour, day, and week that we walk through

together is an exercise in discovery; discovery of self and discovery of our collective power as individuals.

COVID-19 has also been tremendously difficult for organizations like The Mountaineers. Overnight we shut down nearly all our outdoor programs, our sales at Mountaineers Books went to almost zero, and our facilities were closed. Most Mountaineers staff were furloughed during the shutdown and a number were laid off. In the early days of the pandemic, many of us spent sleepless nights wondering if The Mountaineers would survive.

I no longer worry about our survival. Which is not to say that the coming months will be easy, and in fact, I think the year ahead could be one of the most challenging in our 114-year history. Yet in the face of this tremendous challenge, I have more confidence than ever that we will survive. My confidence in our future is because of you: The Mountaineers community. Our donors are generous, our volunteers and staff are dedicated and innovative, and our members are inspired to stay connected and be supportive, even if it’s from six feet away.

There are many examples of the generosity, creativity, and commitment of our community since shutting down programs in March. We created a Virtual Education Center to provide members and volunteers with a place to advance skills and create new content. Using these tools, volunteers created innovative virtual courses. Thomas Bancroft’s Birding in Quarantine and Travis Prescott’s Digital Trip Planning were both exceptionally well-received and helped fill the revenue gap created by cancelled in-person courses (look for more from Tom at the end of this magazine). Other leaders created new, blended learning courses - a mixture of online and in-person small group outings as well as 100% virtual events. Beta and Brews, from our Seattle Climbing Committee, and the Backpacker’s Pajama Party, hosted by the Foothills Branch, were both incredibly popular in bringing people together to celebrate people and places.

In yet another example, our Books division and the Bookstore at the Seattle Program Center collaborated to launch curbside pickup for Mountaineers Books purchased online. Now our members can get what they need while connecting, in a small way, with community.

And finally, because we weren’t able to gather in person for The Mountaineers Gala, our largest fundraiser of the year, we moved the entire event online. This was a monumental task, especially because our community has come to expect first rate events from us! Our Development Team and the gala committee put together an incredibly fun, inspiring, and successful July event, surpassing our fundraising goal of \$425,000 by more than \$35,000.

Through all of this we’ve discovered new ways of engaging and connecting with one another. We’ve uncovered new passions for things like birding, gardening, and bread making. Watching our outdoor community embrace the changes with open arms and a spirit of discovery is truly inspiring.

Tom Vogl

Tom Vogl, Mountaineers CEO



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

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Photo by Nate Brown.



Hailey Oppelt  
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Photo by Paige Madden.

Growing up in the Northwest gave me the chance to see and explore some incredible places. I spent summers camping by Vantage, chasing dogs and roasting in the sun like a Thanksgiving turkey. Holidays at the great-grandparents' in Port Angeles dancing around cow pies. Swimming in Puget Sound, catching crabs with water bottles filled with rocks and cheap bait. (Pro tip: tie a piece of line to the water bottle and lower it off a long dock. Watch your fingers.)

As adults, we often think of self-discovery as this grandiose thing; uncovering hidden parts of ourselves that we didn't know existed. But sometimes, it's a lot simpler than that. It's about returning to the moments that bring us home and remind us of where we come from - the woods, the water, the plains. Whether you grew up outdoors or not, we're all part of the earth. We remember that when we step outside, take off our shoes, and start looking for crabs again.

As we explore the theme of self-discovery in this edition, our stories run the gamut of what that can mean. From our contributors we have a tale of attempts (and failures) on El Cap, the story of a woman who rebuilt her life through climbing after a traumatic divorce, and a PCT Trail Angel who shares what it's like to host 2,500 people at your house. Our cover story is from Nate Brown, a U.S. Army veteran who's exploring the Olympic Mountains by climbing 30 peaks he feels showcase the beauty and diversity of the range. We also hear from Theresa Silveyra, an accomplished mountaineer who climbed Mt. Hood 30 times in the last few years as part of a self-created "30 Before 30" challenge.

Our regular features are jam-packed with exciting stories as well, offering an in-depth interview with Mountaineers Books luminary Helen Cherullo, the story of a close call on a canyoning trip in Outside Insights, a special edition of Did You Know? from birding expert Thomas Bancroft, and a Retro Rewind about pioneering trail advocate and WTA founder Louise Marshall.

I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge a mistake our editorial team made with our summer edition of *Mountaineer*, which celebrated the 60th anniversary of Mountaineers Books. We selected longtime Mountaineers members Maria Hines and Mercedes Pollimeier - who recently released *Peak Nutrition*, published by Mountaineers Books - for the cover. They were chosen because as two strong, accomplished women, we felt they represent the future of Mountaineers Books. However, we failed to explain this connection in the body of the magazine, and we apologize for that lost opportunity and the confusion it caused for many. We should have highlighted their book and many other accolades with more intention. If you'd like to learn more about Maria or Mercedes, check out our interview with Maria about *Peak Nutrition* in our spring edition, and keep your eyes peeled for an upcoming interview with Mercedes about her climbing coaching.

There are so many ways to get outside, and each is valuable as we learn to slow down and feel the world around us. The many lessons and experiences in this edition truly show that self-discovery can happen anywhere. We all have those places that help us know ourselves best - the top of a hike, the crux of a climb, spotting a bird through binoculars. It's probably not that much different than the flutter you felt as a kid on your first camping trip. In light of that, perhaps we should question what "self-discovery" really means. It may just be recognizing what was there all along.

Hailey Oppelt



*In My COVID-19 Experience, Super Volunteer Anita Elder shared an account of her symptoms and experience with the novel coronavirus while day hiking in another country. The notes of support poured in:*

"Thank you for sharing your story with us. We all often need to be reminded of our surroundings and needs for staying healthy and not passing on our illnesses to others. More power to you for following through on getting tested. Looking forward to going on a hike and photo outing with you in the future."  
-Barbara Retelle, 16-year member

"I'm glad you're all well and healthy now. In these uncertain times where it is hard to understand what's happening just from the news, it is comforting to hear such personal anecdotes. Take care and hope to see you outside soon."  
-Komal Sanjeev, 3-year member

"Thanks for sharing. Learning about people's actual experiences is so important - keeping me on the ball to be taking care. As a 72 year old with high blood pressure, I try to stay hyper-aware."  
-Char Davies, 28-year member



*One reader was so happy to have received her summer edition of Mountaineer that she sent us a note just to say so. Thanks Marsha!*

"I just wanted to confirm that I read every page of the magazine. Not always as soon as it comes in... sometimes it is saved until I have to take a plane, a bus, etc. But I enjoy being able to put it in my travel bag and offer it to other passengers when I am done. With COVID

I am reading more at home, and it is much easier to enjoy a magazine than an internet newsletter. Thank you for keeping

me subscribed. I received this month's issue last week."  
-Marsha Sullivan, *Mountaineer* magazine reader

*We pride ourselves on a culture of safety and skill, and it shows in how our members handle stressful situations. A blog reader had kind words of support to share:*

"I am moving back to the UK after twenty years here. I will miss the professionalism of The Mountaineers. I'm experienced as a mountaineer in Europe, but I did not hesitate to join The Mountaineers to gain local knowledge of hiking and kayaking in particular. I also soon realized that the greatest benefit of The Mountaineers was being able to join an ad hoc group any day and know that the group would be capable of self-support while waiting for more extensive help if needed. In four years in Royal Air Force Mountain Rescue, there was the same sense as we trained. I will miss The Mountaineers."

-Bob Hankinson, 15-year member, responding to the accident report "Commonwealth Basin Snowshoe - The Fall Looked Minor"



*We love giving our members tips and tricks on how to maximize their time outside! A few readers were excited to see what we had to share:*

"Jessica, thanks for this article. I bought a Volkswagen e-golf in June 2019 and thus far have used it only for commuting and city driving. We've still used my husband's Subie for hiking. This has inspired me to use my EV to get out on the trails. As soon as the current SIP lifts, I'm inspired to give it a try!"  
-Barbara Rose, 4-year member, responding to "Footprints: Hiking vs. Carbon"

"Wow, this was a great read. Your writing made it easy for me to understand and follow your tips. Checking out the planning spreadsheet now..."  
-Melodi Yanik, blog reader, responding to "How To: Lightweight Food Packing & Preparation"

"Great read! From another (mostly) vegan!"  
-Doug Cassidy, 1-year member, responding to "Tips and Tricks for the Vegan Backpacker"





**Name** Alicia Pierce  
**Hometown** Air Force Brat. Grew up all over the U.S.  
**Member Since** September 2017  
**Occupation** Paralegal  
**Favorite Activities** Hiking, snowshoeing, gravel cycling

Harry's Ridge at Mount St. Helens, June 2019. Photo courtesy of Alicia Pierce.

How did you get involved with The Mountaineers?

I first started hiking in 2017 and wanted to learn all about how to safely explore the outdoors and connect with the outdoor community, so I joined The Mountaineers.

What motivates you to get outside with us?

The passion that The Mountaineers has for developing conservation champions, recreating safely and responsibly, and striving towards an inclusive and equitable outdoors so that we can all enjoy, and feel safe, in the wilderness. I'm a black woman and did not grow up camping, hiking, or exploring the outdoors. I'll be 45 years old this year and only started exploring the outdoors 3.5 years ago. Since then, I've gone hiking, backpacking, snowshoeing, and kayaking, and I'm in love with the outdoors. It's never too late to start, and the outdoors is for all.

What's your favorite Mountaineers memory?

One of my greatest fears is drowning, so I decided to face my fears and sign up for the sea kayaking course with The Mountaineers. We had one full day in the classroom, and the next day we practiced strapping ourselves into the kayak in a sprayskirt and getting flipped over underwater (which honestly, I did not enjoy). But I decided to continue on to the open water instruction at American Lake the next weekend. At American Lake it was 40 degrees, gray, and windy. Not ideal for my first day ever on the water. After completing wet exits from the kayak in freezing water and battling white caps, wind, and rain, all outside my comfort zone, I safely made it back to shore. Still fearful, I determined to go back the next day for the second day of instruction at the lake. After completing the second lake day, a six-hour paddle at Port Gamble, and a six-hour paddle at Quartermaster Harbor near Vashon, I graduated from the Sea Kayaking Course. I earned the Golden Towel award for persevering through

fear and awful weather conditions while maintaining a good attitude, and would not have completed the course without the expert instruction, encouragement, sense of humor, and kindness of the Tacoma Branch Sea Kayaking Instructors. Truly an awesome group of people!

Who/what inspires you?

I'm inspired by all of the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color), and LGBTQ folks who are out enjoying the outdoors and advocating for an inclusive and safe place for us all. As a member of The Mountaineers Diversity & Equity Steering Committee, I'm excited to help further these efforts to break down barriers and make the outdoors a place of sanctuary and peace for us all.

What does adventure mean to you?

Adventure means experiencing the beauty in nature all around us, from the smells of the forest to the sounds of the wind through the trees and the water in the lakes and streams, the glimpse of wildlife, and the magnificent views. Adventure is about getting outside your comfort zone, connecting with people in the outdoors, and appreciating the natural world.

LIGHTNING ROUND

- Sunrise or sunset?** Sunset
- Smile or game face?** Smile
- What's your 11th Essential?** Dog hair
- What's your happy place?** A quiet place in the forest where I hear the sounds of nature.
- Post-adventure meal of choice?** Pizza and beer.
- If you could be a rockstar at any outdoor activity overnight, what would it be?** Ultra running



Strengthen Postural Muscles in the Upper Back

By Courtenay Schurman, MS, CSCS, PN2

Photo by Doug Schurman.

In the last issue, we suggested home variations on the plank for developing the horizontal pushing muscles in our shoulders, chest, triceps and core. Below we offer several movements for the opposing muscle groups: the horizontal pulling muscles of the rhomboids and shoulders.

Even among mountaineers who tend to be more active than the general population, we often find climbers have fairly strong lats (from all the vertical pulling they do) but lack development in the rhomboids: muscles in the middle of the back that help bring the shoulder blades together. Some climbers develop abnormal posture. Forward-slouching shoulders, tight pectorals, and “belay-neck” (from constantly looking up at climbing partners) can all contribute to lower back pain.

To improve your posture and provide balance to your home workout, consider incorporating horizontal rowing movements that involve squeezing the shoulder blades together. Two great exercises are the Corner Reverse Pushup and Reverse Band Flyes.

Corner Reverse Pushup

SET UP

Find a vacant corner anywhere in your house that allows you to snug into a corner (facing the room) with upper arms parallel to the floor. Position your heels 1.5 to three feet away from the corner, and hold your body straight from head to heels. Keep your elbows parallel to the floor, shoulders away from the ears, and hips away from the walls throughout the movement. You may need to adjust your elbows every few repetitions to prevent them from dropping below parallel.

MOVEMENT

Engage the muscles in your middle upper back to press both elbows into the wall. This will propel your entire body forward. Pause and hold for two seconds, then lower your torso into the

corner. The farther out you position your feet and the longer you hold the end position, the harder the exercise becomes. Perform two sets of 10-20 repetitions, then drop your head forward and stretch clasped hands in front of you to stretch the rhomboids.

Band Reverse Fly

If you train outside or you are unable to find a vacant corner, consider working with a light to moderate resistance exercise band or surgical tubing.

SET UP

Grip the band with palms facing down. Hold it directly in front of your chest, hands about 12-18 inches apart (less for a stretchy band, more for a tight band).

MOVEMENT

Pull your hands away from each other, concentrating on squeezing your shoulder blades together, almost as though you are trying to crack an egg between them. Keep both arms straight as you pull the band apart and back toward your chest. Perform two sets of 10-20 repetitions.

Both of these exercises are great movements for canoers and kayakers to add to their programs, and may help backpackers prepare to carry heavier packs. If your program focuses on vertical pulling, consider adding horizontal rowing and one or both of these exercises for program (and body) balance. An ounce of prevention today is worth a pound of rehabilitation in the future. ▲▲

*Courtenay Schurman is an NSCA-CSCS certified personal trainer, Precision Nutrition Level 2 Certified Nutrition Supercoach, and co-owner of Body Results. She specializes in training outdoor athletes. For more how-to exercises or health and wellness tips, visit her website at [www.bodyresults.com](http://www.bodyresults.com) or send a question to [court@bodyresults.com](mailto:court@bodyresults.com).*



# Frodo's Birthday

## An Excerpt from *Journeys North*

By Barney Scout Mann

In *Journeys North*, legendary trail angel and thru-hiker Barney Scout Mann spins a compelling tale of six hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail on their trek from Mexico to Canada. This ensemble story unfolds as these half-dozen hikers – including Barney and his wife, Sandy (Frodo) – trod north, facing a once-in-a-generation drought and early severe winter storms that test their will. In fact, only a third of all hikers who set out on the trail that year would finish.

As the group approaches Canada, a storm rages. How will these very different hikers, ranging in age, gender, and background, respond to the hardship and suffering ahead of them? Can they all make the final 60-mile push through freezing temperatures, sleet, and snow, or will some reach their breaking point? Catch a glimpse into the world of a thru-hiker in the following excerpt from this recently-released Mountaineers Books title:

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2007

Blazer couldn't feel her toes. In the predawn gloom, the twenty-five-year-old stomped a path over a foot of fresh snow, but the effort barely blunted the cold. This was the second blizzard in three days as the Gulf of Alaska hurled once-in-a-generation storms at Washington's Cascade Range. After five months hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, Blazer was wearing her fifth pair of running shoes, and the studded soles were ground flat—much like her muscles, sinews, and joints. She'd come over 2600 miles—only 40 left to reach Canada. She'd sworn days before, "I'll crawl if I have to."

Right behind her, Frodo and I brushed fat snowflakes from our bent shoulders and packs. A dim light penetrated the pine and spruce thicket. "Happy birthday, Frodo," Blazer piped up. We jerked as if poked. In the thirty years we'd been married, I'd never forgotten Frodo's birthday. But this time, focused on the cold, on not getting lost, and on surviving, we both had.

"What do you want for your birthday?" Blazer asked.

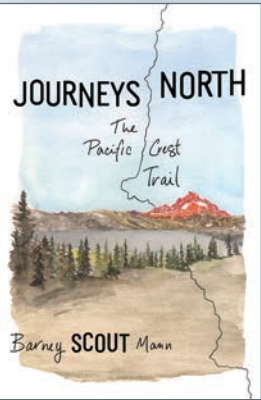
Frodo, her breath visible, didn't hesitate: "I want to finish the day alive."

Two more storms swept in over the next three days, smothering the Pacific Crest Trail in thigh-high drifts. On Thursday night Seattle KING 5 TV News reported: "Three Pacific Crest Trail hikers are missing." Chatter lit up the internet within minutes. "Goodness, it's so cold now." "May the Lord protect them." Past

midnight, one of sixty soon-to-be-rescuers wrote: "I am headed out to Stevens Pass to work the search."

But they weren't searching for us. They were searching for Nadine.

*Journeys North is available at the Seattle Program Center Bookstore, mountaineersbooks.org, and everywhere books are sold. See page 34 to read more about Barney's experiences as a trail angel.*



## Winter 8000: Climbing the World's Highest Mountains in the Coldest Season

By Bernadette McDonald

While you wouldn't expect climbing an 8000-meter peak in winter to be a popular activity, more than 175 expeditions have been to the Himalayas and Karakoram during the cruelest season to do just that. Polish alpinist Voytek Kurtyka termed the practice the "art of suffering." *Winter 8000* is a collection of stories of high-octane alpinists who've taken on these ascents. The feats recorded range from the French climber Elisabeth Revol's solo winter attempt of Makalu to American Cory Richards and his dramatic effort on Gasherbrum II with famed Italian alpinist Simone Moro and Kazakh hard man Denis Urubko. Award-winning author Bernadette McDonald traveled extensively to interview many of the climbers featured in this book – including Revol, the climbing partner of Tomek Mackiewicz, and Anna Mackiewicz, his widow, meeting them just a few months after Mackiewicz's death on Nanga Parbat. McDonald's many personal relationships with profiled climbers and her ability to tap into emotions and family histories lend *Winter 8000* an intimacy not often found in mountaineering histories.

## Raven's Witness: The Alaska Life of Richard K. Nelson

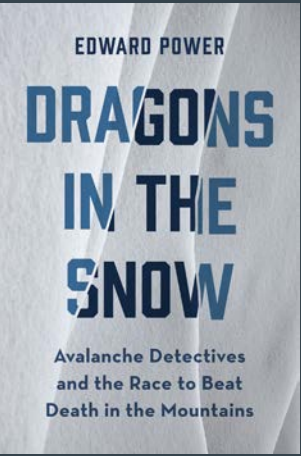
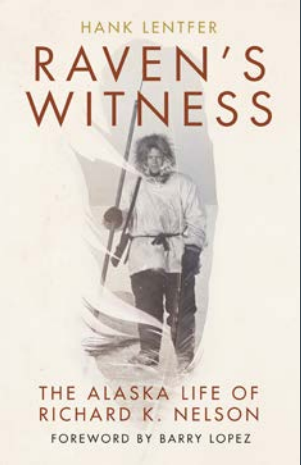
By Hank Lentfer

Decades spent in the wilds of Alaska – traveling by starlight over the frozen Arctic, feeding countless driftwood fires on the shores of rainforest islands, listening to the clicking hooves of caribou on the tundra – afforded Richard K. Nelson (affectionately known as "Nels") a depth of knowledge shared by few. A cultural anthropologist, award-winning author, and radio producer, Nels lived for extended periods in Athabaskan and Alaskan Eskimo villages and spoke both Inupiaq and Koyukon. Before his death in 2019, Nels's work focused primarily on the indigenous cultures of Alaska and more generally on the relationships between people and nature. His stories grew from days working with hunters and trappers and evenings listening to indigenous philosophers, and he was eager to share all he learned from the place that ignited a lifelong passion in him. In *Raven's Witness*, author Hank Lentfer explores Nels's remarkable life, showing how and why this blond kid from Wisconsin joined a group of Inupiat hunters and harnessed up a team of sled dogs to mush across the frozen, shifting sea toward a fierce and influential life on his own terms.

## Dragons in the Snow: Avalanche Detectives and the Race to Beat Death in the Mountains

By Edward Power

With engaging characters and fast-paced narration, *Dragons in the Snow* explores the world of avalanches. Journalist Edward Power sets the reader down in the midst of a January 2017 blizzard that raked the Uinta Range as nine snowboarders made their way into the backcountry for a day of intense adventure. Meanwhile Craig Gordon, one of the lead avalanche forecasters at the Utah Avalanche Center in Salt Lake City, was tracking the storm and its impact, and found himself posting one of the direst avalanche advisories in his 17 years of forecasting. From this fast-paced opening sequence, Power expands his focus to include perspectives and experiences of men and women who have been caught in avalanches, the R&D of avalanche forecasting and equipment, the role of avalanche dogs, the effects of climate change on winter sports, and so much more. In this book you'll find profiles of leading experts from avalanche research and rescue communities around the country, including Nancy Bockino, Titus Case, Doug Chabot, Bruce Tremper, and Andrew McLean, as well as ski and snowboard notables Warren Miller and Stephan Drake. Don't miss out on this riveting new title documenting avalanche country.







MAC member Aiden Flynn climbing Liberty Bell via the Beckey Route. Photo by Carl Marrs.



A leader and students from Aki Kurose Middle School on a stewardship day.



A family on a hike with the Seattle Pioneers at Cherry Creek Falls. Photo by Carl Marrs.

# The Power of Community

By Andy Bassett, Youth Education Manager

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to take a group of incoming college freshmen on a rafting trip in Arizona. I scrambled to get all my gear together before we launched, and that first night I realized that I had forgotten to pack my tent. Thankfully we were in the desert, and I was sleeping on my boat, so I didn't have to worry about insects and other critters on the beach. The first night I lucked out with a light breeze coming off the water and a crystal clear sky. I slept like a rock.

The second night was less fortunate. Shortly after the sun went down, clouds began to gather. Around midnight a patter of raindrops started hitting my sleeping bag. I packed up my bag and created a makeshift shelter with two sleeping pads draped over my back, but as the rain became stronger, the pads acted less like a roof and more like a funnel, directing water straight down my back. For the next four hours, the rain continued as I sat hunched over the front hatch of the boat, sopping wet.

I've been reminiscing about stories like these from my time working in the field a lot recently. River crossings on 33-degree days, getting a cactus spine in the tip of my middle finger on day two of a 14-day climbing camp, and eating a breakfast of cheesy grits only to realize an hour later than they were not instant grits. Each of these moments were marked with sub-optimal circumstances, and I had to remind myself that it's a temporary setback. And, in nearly all of these scenarios, I was lucky enough to be enduring the misery with others. My bouts with adversity and uncertain situations ended up as a team effort.

### Transitions

These past few months have been tough for all of us. When we made the decision to cancel youth programs due to COVID-19 concerns, we entered the uncertainty of not knowing when and how we would resume, or when we would all be able to see each other again. Thankfully during this time, I have been able

to rely upon one of The Mountaineers core values to weather the storm: community.

The youth community at The Mountaineers is truly impressive, spanning multiple branches, consisting of hundreds of families and kids, taught by over 200 volunteers, and supported by nearly a dozen staff. This community has remained nimble, creative, supportive, and thoughtful during this unprecedented time.

When it became clear we were suspending programming, our staff in the youth department worked tirelessly to find a way to continue to provide high quality educational experiences to students in a safe and effective manner. Clubs trips were redesigned countless times to address group size limits and border closures. Camp Directors created multiple camp options based on different levels of re-opening to ensure we could provide some type of summer camp experience for our youth.

New virtual resources and activities were created, like our 10 week "Youth: Stuck Inside" blog series or our online "Summer Quest." We provided dozens of activities for youth and families to do over these past few months. Though programs and activities looked a little different this last spring and summer, we kept one main goal in mind: to figure out a way to keep our youth community connected.

### Community

We are fortunate to have a cohort of passionate, dedicated volunteers to administer a large part of our programs. As our annual Mountaineers Adventure Club (MAC) summer trip went through each of its iterations, our youth volunteers provided valuable insight, quality education, and most importantly, their time. This allowed our teens to not only experience a memorable summer, but also to continue to learn new skills and develop mastery over existing ones.

So many of our families and parents have reached out with emails, texts, and phone calls. You've been checking in to see how we were doing and how we might be able to still run programs. It can be hard to think you're moving in the right direction, but when we get a quick note of support and concern from a member of our community, it makes all the difference. One of my favorites read, "In this new uncertain world of outdoor education, I thought you'd appreciate knowing that your enthusiastic championing for getting out into the wild is paying off."

And from the bottom of my heart, I must tell you, these mean the world to me.

### Looking forward

We are still planning for the future, and hope to offer open enrollment for youth clubs starting in September. For kids aged 7-18, we have four separate aged-based clubs designed to provide community programming and education for youth and their families. These clubs run October through August and offer monthly skill-building meetings and weekend activities, including climbing, snowshoeing, hiking, and many others. For more information on our clubs visit our website at [mountaineers.org/youth](https://mountaineers.org/youth), or contact one of our club managers:

Kitsap: Debbie Lynn, [debbeel@mountaineers.org](mailto:debbeel@mountaineers.org)

Olympia: Becky Nielsen, [beckyn@mountaineers.org](mailto:beckyn@mountaineers.org)

Seattle: Carl Marrs, [carlm@mountaineers.org](mailto:carlm@mountaineers.org)

Tacoma: Sarah Holt, [sarahh@mountaineers.org](mailto:sarahh@mountaineers.org)

As I sat huddled under my lousy makeshift shelter on the river, I knew it would eventually stop raining. Today I have to remind myself that this, too, is temporary. Find the good, embrace learning, and seek out the important people in your life, because they become the scaffolding that supports you through the hard days. During a challenging time, it has been calming to know the community that surrounds us is strong, capable, and kind. Thank you to everyone for your continued support of The Mountaineers and our Youth Programs. Please continue to take care of yourselves, I look forward to seeing you all in the mountains. ▲▲



# When Passion and Purpose Align

## An interview with Helen Cherullo

By Brianne Vanderlinden, Assistant Director of Development

Helen with a Douglas fir in Moran State Park on Orcas Island. Courtesy of Helen Cherullo.

It's always a joy to visit with someone who speaks passionately about the things they love. For Helen Cherullo, her passion is books. Helen's love is about more than a simple bound text; it's about imagery and place-based storytelling, and their subsequent ripple effects move communities to act.

As we continue to celebrate Mountaineers Books 60th anniversary, I wanted to learn more about the woman who has influenced such an extraordinary history, first as Director of Prepress, twenty years as Publisher, and now as our Executive Director of Conservation and Advancement. Not only that, but Helen has myriad gifts and hidden talents. A graduate from the University of Montana, Helen earned a degree in editorial journalism with a major in fine art. A far cry from her Chicago upbringing, the mountains of western Montana were a revelation. Missoula reminded her of summers gardening with her grandparents in Wisconsin, an experience that likely inspired Helen to become a King County Master Gardener when she and her husband moved to Seattle. For many years she volunteered to help school children grow food relevant to their lives (hello pizza gardens!) and build worm bin composters.

But it was her experience as a master gardener that had me longing to sit in her yard for our interview. Still in the time of COVID, we opted for a laughter-filled video chat and wrote a rain check for a future garden party. I listened for hours as she wove a narrative about the history of publishing, new beginnings, and how she feels about the organization's shift toward philanthropy. Even from a distance her passion for

Mountaineers Books shined through, making for a fascinating and uplifting conversation.

### Celebrating 28 years with Mountaineers Books

When Helen joined Mountaineers Books in 1992, she was hired to navigate a revolutionary shift facing the entire publishing industry. "Helen was a forward-looking risk taker," said former CFO (and Publisher) Art Freeman, "She arrived during the start of the 'desktop publishing revolution,' a challenging time for publishers who were all trying to transition from stone age methods of book production (imagine gluing typeset pages and illustration onto boards that were then photographed by printers!). She skillfully guided us through that, and much later, the ebook revolution."

Nearly 30 years later, Helen continues to elevate a talented and experienced leadership team. She is most proud of guiding the company through changes in the book marketplace, the recession, consolidations in the publishing industry, and the 2001 Nisqually earthquake that wreaked havoc on the warehouse. Earlier this year, Helen announced that she would be handing over the reins as Publisher to focus efforts in a new role where she will continue to build capacity by establishing a stronger and more stable base of philanthropic support for Mountaineers Books and Braided River.

With over 750 books published in the course of her tenure, I asked Helen to give us a tour of the most influential title

by decade. She resisted at first, noting there are too many amazing publications to choose from, but eventually agreed to name names:

### 1990s: *The Ghosts of Everest: The Search for Mallory & Irvine*

"What started as a modest biography of George Mallory quickly turned into an international sensation when our author team on expedition discovered the body of Mallory on Mount Everest. Before we knew it, three major publishing houses were in a race to the finish line. After condensing a multi-year effort into a four-month window, we released first. This title cemented the reputation of Mountaineers Books as a preeminent publisher of mountaineering history and literature around the world, selling more than 50,000 copies worldwide and generating over \$1 million in revenue through book sales and co-publications." (To read more about this story, visit our website at mountaineers.org/when-passion-and-purpose-align)

### 2000s: *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land*

"The development of *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* was transformational for many reasons. This book is credited with playing a role in protecting the Refuge from drilling at the time, held up on the Senate floor during a passionate debate. Having the opportunity to work with photographer Subhankar Banerjee inspired a new approach for shaping stories, working with strategic partners and donors, and becoming a galvanizing force for change. This book inspired the launch of the Braided River imprint of Mountaineers Books, supporting some of the most exciting and consequential conservation work in North America today."

### 2010s: *Living Bird: 100 Years of Listening to Nature*

"*The Living Bird* partnership with Cornell Lab of Ornithology and photographer Gerrit Vyn was the first time Mountaineers Books appeared on the *New York Times* best seller list. Our association with a highly respected institution like Cornell led to an interview with Terry Gross on *Fresh Air* in a Peabody Award-winning segment on one of NPR's most popular programs. The accomplished editorial and production staff, under the leadership of Editor in Chief Kate Rogers, made this book as well as many other titles possible, including Kate's vision of Mountaineers Books outdoor lifestyle imprint, Skipstone."

### New beginnings

The shifts we've experienced in 2020 have impacted our personal lives, our businesses, and our world significantly. But Helen's relentless commitment to Mountaineers Books is not stopping anytime soon, and she's recently taken steps to embrace new beginnings by joining both Peak Society and Summit Society. This is just one way she's committed to further ensuring the lasting impact of our mission.

"Over the years since I became an accidental fundraiser for

our conservation work via Braided River, I've recognized how important unrestricted support can be. This was a big part of me joining Peak Society. Realizing I could make a monthly donation made it an easier lift financially. We have a very solid strategic plan and many initiatives are just waiting to be funded. It's not about keeping the lights on, it's about ensuring future generations have the same life-forming experiences living closely with the natural world. That's what philanthropy can do."

When Helen talks about her decision to join Summit Society by leaving a bequest in her will, she reminds us how important it is to have a plan.

"If you want to have some control over what happens and to leave the world a better place on your terms, it is important to be very clear. For me, I've chosen to leave Braided River and Mountaineers Books in my will. My advice is to go through the formality of including the tax ID, just so there isn't any confusion. I chose a DIY estate-planning option and it was very easy. Depending on circumstances, you may need to invest in hiring a lawyer. For me, it gave me tremendous peace of mind having it done. I also took the time to share my wishes with my family."

### Leaving a legacy through philanthropy

One of Helen's primary motivations is ensuring that The Mountaineers, Mountaineers Books, and Braided River are set up to thrive for future generations. Her personal connection with the natural world, and her passion for supporting the health and wellbeing of society, continues to drive her commitment today.

"You have to get people outdoors—ideally from a young age—to build that connection to nature and wild places. This is something The Mountaineers has done beautifully for over 100 years. Mountaineers Books provides guidance and inspiration to live a full life grounded in the outdoor experience - from day hiking in urban areas to ambitious, high-altitude climbs. Images and stories can take people to wild places they might not otherwise experience. This trusted wisdom captured in books will continue to be important for people to live healthy, fulfilled lives, build community, and offer a foundation for generations of future conservationists and advocates."

As an observer, I believe Helen has truly answered her calling to celebrate and develop a culture of shared purpose in the outdoors. Choosing to plan for the future of Mountaineers Books with a gift in her will is just another example of how she can make a difference in a way that aligns with her passions. If you're considering taking this step and would like someone to talk to, Helen would be happy to be a resource for you. Her servant leadership and tireless efforts have already left an enduring legacy, and choosing to support the outdoor community in this way is one more step toward supporting generations of conservationists and outdoorspeople to come. ▲▲

*Helen can be reached at [helenc@mountaineersbooks.org](mailto:helenc@mountaineersbooks.org). If you have general questions or would like to notify The Mountaineers about a bequest to become a member of Summit Society, please reach out to [development@mountaineers.org](mailto:development@mountaineers.org).*





# Trial by Ice

## Risk Assessment in Uncharted Terrain

By Jake Huddleston, Canyoning Leader & Guide

Taking a rest in the heart of the canyon. Photo by Kevin Steffa.

It was a bitterly cold day in early November, and our small group of four canyoneers had just donned our wetsuits on the hillside above the canyon. The cold weather meant water levels in the glacier-fed river were at their lowest for the year, a key consideration when descending a deep, narrow slot canyon that has never been explored before.

Canyoning is the sport of descending steep watercourses, which often involves a combination of rappelling, jumping, swimming, downclimbing, and hiking. Obstacles can include waterfalls, deep pools, and swift water with recirculating currents. Wetsuits, harnesses, and helmets are standard gear. Canyoning is in its infancy in the PNW, with many “first descents” yet to be done. The four of us were an experienced first descent team, having explored many canyons together, and we had been eyeing this canyon in Tieton for months, waiting for the right conditions to make an attempt.

On a reconnaissance trip in October, we dropped into the canyon and ran only the final rappel sequence. In the process we caught a glimpse of the upper, still undescended section. The exploratory season for canyoning typically reaches its peak in September. We knew conditions wouldn’t be ideal for a full descent without a streak of cool, dry weather, unlikely after October. However, we spotted a potential window and decided to try for a run of the entire canyon.

### The Descent

We woke up early and began our approach hike in the dark. Our team was a group of five, with four of us planning to descend the canyon and meet the fifth at the bottom at the end of the day. This was a big endeavor, particularly with the limited daylight in November. Nevertheless, we made good time and several hours later we were suited up and dropping in. We were excited. We knew this was going to be one of the most beautiful canyons we had explored yet.

As we expected, the water was very cold. Our first waterfall was 30 feet high and coated with ice around the main fall line. We found a spot to rig an anchor and began descending, kicking off sheets of ice as we went. Several drops later, we reached the entrance rappel into the main narrows. Undeterred by the conditions so far, we descended and pulled our ropes. We were committed.

As the canyon narrowed in around us, we encountered the first of our real problems. The normally dry ledges of rock next to each pool were covered in thick sheets of ice from the fine spray in the canyon. Most attempts to climb out resulted in sliding back into the pools. It didn’t take long for us to realize the seriousness of the situation. Not being able to climb out and move about the rock impeded our ability to escape the freezing cold water, as well as our ability to look for safer rappel routes out of the main flow.



Thick ice coats the canyon walls as the team leads a rappel. Photo by Kevin Steffa.

We managed to make slow progress down several rappels, though the biting cold was beginning to affect us all, both physically and mentally. With little warning, our efforts were interrupted by a huge splash in the pool just a few feet away from our group. We all stared in horror as a massive icicle, weighing at least 50lbs, bobbed in the water. We realized that the sun had come out, warming the rim of the canyon and causing chunks of ice to detach, the consequences of which were the same as falling rock. It was no longer just a matter of navigating the cold and icy conditions to get through the canyon – we had to get out before one of us was struck by falling ice, a potentially deadly situation.

The sense of urgency in our team was immediately apparent. Our priority now was to make it out as quickly as possible using any means necessary. We broke out our emergency bolting kit, and one of my teammates belayed me out to an edge to look for a suitable location to place one. The slippery ice prevented me from reaching a spot where I could access bare rock. I resorted to chipping away at the ice with my hammer, desperate to find enough surface area to place the bolt.

It took me 45 cold minutes to set the anchor and rappel forty feet down to the next pool. My teammate who had belayed me at the top came down next. He yelled for help upon entering the pool, and I had to pull him out myself. He told me that while standing in the chilly pool above, his legs had gone numb through his wetsuit, making it very difficult to swim or stand. I helped him to the side of a gravel bar and sat him down. He was shivering and was having difficulty communicating. I immediately knew that he was in the early stages of hypothermia.

The rest of the group came down and we discussed our teammate’s condition. We had to decide whether to spend

time and energy getting him warm again, or to keep moving as quickly as possible to get to a safer location. We decided to keep moving, taking care to monitor and assist him. Even with dry clothes and warming supplies in our packs, spending a night in these frigid conditions could be deadly for all of us.

Fortunately at this point, we realized we were very close to the end of the canyon. After navigating several more obstacles, we reached the final rappel sequence. We offered to lower our cold teammate first if he could not rappel on his own, but he insisted on doing it himself, despite the pain of the feeling in his legs beginning to return. He yelled in agony as he rappelled, struggling just to keep himself upright through the flow.

Soon, we were all down and out. Our saving grace was our fifth team member who hadn’t joined us in the canyon. Anticipating that we would be cold, he had made a fire. He had nearly put it out to meet us at the trailhead when we made our exit from the canyon. We spent a very long time by that fire. Four hours later we were all back at the cars, warm, dry, and most importantly – alive.

### Reflection

I have thought about this day many times, wondering how we could have approached this trip differently and considering the warning signs we may not have taken into account.

First and foremost, I think our group made a number of assumptions that day about the canyon’s conditions which should have required further discussion. Perhaps the most obvious factor of all was the unusually icy conditions. Even though we had run icy canyons before, we underestimated the amount of ice and the problems it would cause. In hindsight, the ice was a red flag that we should have discussed as a team as soon as we encountered it.

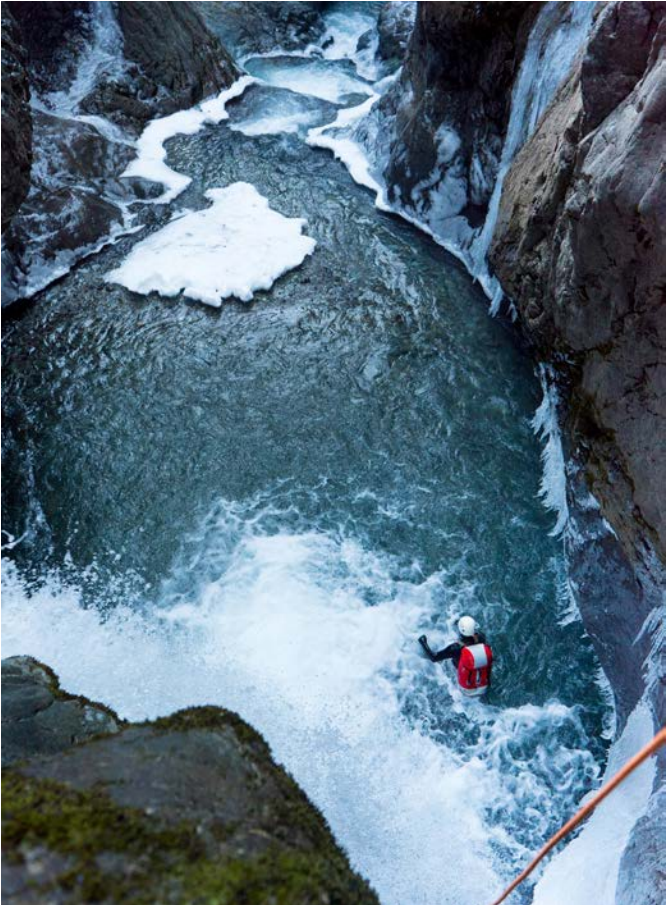


Another assumption we made was that because neoprene wetsuits had worked fine on all our cold canyon trips in the past, that they would be sufficient this time as well. It did not occur to us that the conditions we encountered were quite a bit more serious than they initially seemed. Therefore, critical solutions such as drysuits in place of wetsuits, microspikes/crampons for traction, or a beefier bivy kit for colder conditions, did not cross our minds.

In the mountaineering world there is a condition known as “summit fever.” When a lot of time and energy is invested into a goal, it can cause otherwise obvious risks to be overlooked in pursuit of completing that goal. Would we have tackled this canyon if we hadn’t been looking forward to it for months, driven several hours from home, and camped and hiked many miles in the cold? I am inclined to say no, or at the very least, we would have been a lot more hesitant.

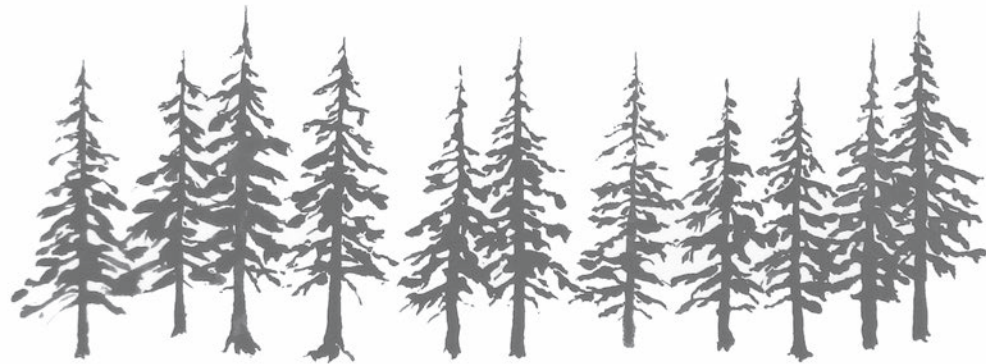
Despite all of our difficulties that day, we also realize that by pushing the limits of a sport, we must also accept an elevated level of risk. Exploration involves a lot of unknowns, which is part of its appeal, but also introduces additional hazards. We continue to improve our technical and risk management skills, and we owe our ultimate escape from the canyon to our existing training and experience. We use each descent as an opportunity to learn and grow, and we have no doubt that the lessons in risk assessment we gained on this frigid descent will serve us in all of our future outdoor endeavors. ▲▲

*Canyon descent team: Jake Huddleston, Ryan Ernst, Haruka-James Clay Lipscomb, and Kevin Steffa.*



Navigating a frigid pool in the upper canyon. Photo by Jake Huddleston.

## 465,000 REASONS TO SAY THANK YOU

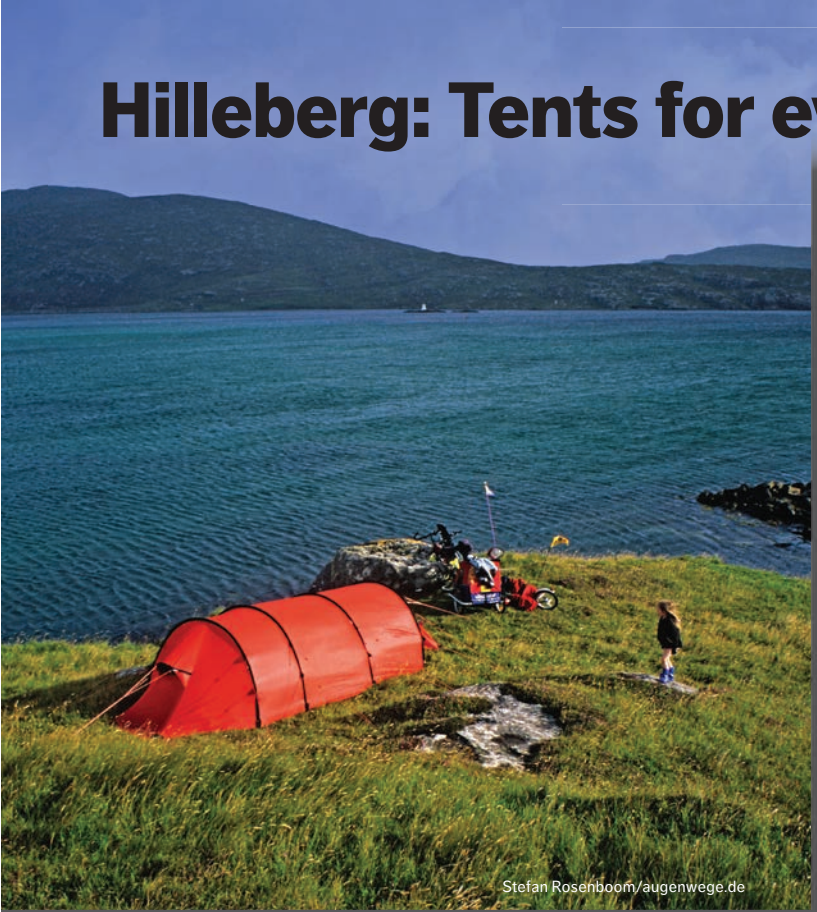


This year, The Mountaineers Gala went virtual not once, but twice. Between April 4 and July 23, our community came together to raise our original goal of \$425,000, then vastly surpassed it! Gifts continue to trickle in through donor advised funds and employer matching gifts, and we’re elated to share that you helped us to raise more than \$465,000 in support of outdoor education!

Thank you for standing with us in celebration of our people, places, publishing, and programs. Thank you for making a difference by giving what you can.

But most of all, thank you for making The Mountaineers such a meaningful and inspiring community. You play an important role in making the mission of The Mountaineers a reality, and we thank you for making this a gala to remember!

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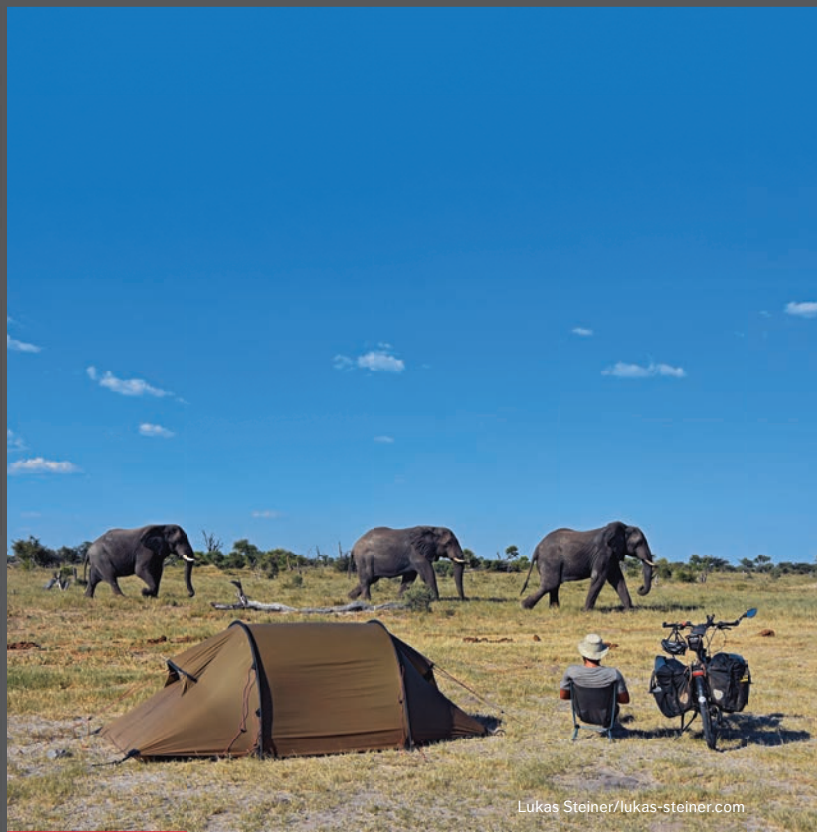
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# Speaking up for Public Lands

## An Interview with Thomas O’Keefe

By Betsy Robblee, Conservation & Advocacy Director



Being an effective advocate for wild places and free-flowing rivers comes from personal experiences outdoors that Tom enjoys with friends and family. Photo by Joel McCune.

Thomas O’Keefe is a conservationist who is equally comfortable paddling a Class IV river as he is testifying before Congress (wearing his trademark bow tie). The longtime Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director for American Whitewater, Tom has dedicated his life to protecting whitewater rivers. Tom works closely with The Mountaineers to advocate for our wild places and provides strategic advice as a member of the Advisory Council. Here, we get to know Tom and learn what sparked his passion for protecting and stewarding public lands. Plus, we learn a great trick for recruiting Mountaineers members!

**We’re catching you in between paddling trips. Tell us about your last trip and how you like to get outside.**

I just got back from two weeks kayaking in the Idaho backcountry with my family. Given all that’s going on in the world, it was a great escape to just go out and spend time with family on public lands. Time outdoors with my family is one of the things I enjoy most. My parents took me outside to experience public lands, and I had that same opportunity with my kids over the past couple weeks.

**What inspired you to get involved in conservation and advocacy?**

I’ve always been interested in the stewardship of public lands. I

grew up scouting. Civic engagement is part of the requirements for the Eagle Scout badge. I can still remember the first letter I wrote to my member of Congress as a teenager expressing my concern for the impacts of acid rain on the wild places and activities I enjoyed. At a very early age, I learned that I have a voice and can speak up to my member of Congress.

I got involved with American Whitewater shortly after I started seriously whitewater kayaking. Around 1996, I discovered that a river I had been paddling was impacted by a hydropower project. With the help of American Whitewater, I began to understand that there were opportunities for the public to speak up to government regulators.

Later on I did some contract work for American Whitewater, and then one day it was 40 hours a week. Reflecting back, I think some people go into conservation work as an intentional career choice, and then there’s other individuals such as myself who come in with a passion and enthusiasm. It begins as a volunteer endeavor and suddenly becomes much more than that.

**How did you first get involved with The Mountaineers?**

Shortly after I came to the Northwest I was on a project tour and someone wanted to get a picture of all the Mountaineers members. I wasn’t a Mountaineers member at the time so I was standing off to the side. The person organizing the photo said, “Oh Tom, you need to get in this photo, you’re part of The

Mountaineers!” So I got in the photo, and it was published in a Mountaineers publication. I thought I’d better join if I’m being publicly identified as a Mountaineers member!

Aside from that, what drew me to the organization is its long history of conservation, education, and stewardship around public lands in the region. I can’t think of a better organization that connects to the importance of these places by recognizing that conservation is equally important as educating people on how to enjoy places safely and sustainably. I thought that if I’m going to live here in this region and these places are special to me, then I should join an organization that’s both working to care for these places and educating people on how to use them safely and sustainably. That’s something I wanted to support.

**What advice do you have for Mountaineers members who want to do more to protect the places they love?**

Identify the place or the project that really resonates with you personally. Whether it’s management decisions on a river, management decisions on climbing areas in Icicle Canyon, policies on backcountry use in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, or even something as mundane as the policy on bathroom use in the era of COVID-19, it’s trying to find that issue or project that resonates with you. Then you can identify the users, the land managers, and the decision makers. Starting to develop relationships with all three of those entities is a critical starting point.

**Why should outdoor enthusiasts get involved in advocacy work?**

I think about the adage “the world is run by those who show up.” The simple act of showing up and making your voice heard is important. There’s so many competing interests for our public lands, so articulating their value and importance is really critical. I’ve heard various conversations in the halls of Congress about the idea of selling or transferring public lands.

### HOW TO GET ENGAGED

#### Stay up-to-date

Sign up for our Conservation Currents e-newsletter (on the “preferences” tab of your My Profile page). We use it to send Action Alerts and the latest conservation and advocacy news.

#### Take our Protecting Public Lands eLearning course

This free two-hour online course breaks down the basics of our national public lands system and explains how you can best advocate for our wild places.

#### Visit our Legislative Trail Map

Our Legislative Trail Map guides you through some of the legislation we’re working on and supporting.

All this and more at [mountaineers.org/conservation](https://mountaineers.org/conservation).



Tom on a trip to DC to testify before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on outdoor recreation earlier this Congress. Photo by Caleb Hargett.

There’s been pretty significant blowback to most of those proposals, but that’s only because the people who use these places speak up and make their voices heard.

**Why is it important for organizations like The Mountaineers and American Whitewater to work together?**

None of us can do this work alone. All the critical successes I’ve had have only come about through a diverse spectrum of partners working together. Just look at what’s happening right now in Congress. I would argue that two of the biggest legislative achievements we’ve seen this Congress are related to public lands. There’s the Dingell Act, protecting over a million acres of wilderness and 600 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers, which passed in 2019, and now we have the Great American Outdoors Act, which the President has signed into law. If someone had said 18 months ago the two biggest achievements in this Congress would be in the public lands space, no one would have believed you. But it happened because of partnerships: if those bills had just been a priority of The Mountaineers or one other organization, it wouldn’t have moved the needle. Those of us who value public lands should be really proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish by collectively working together in an extremely challenging political environment.

**In your view, what makes The Mountaineers an effective advocate for protecting wild places?**

I think it’s the authenticity of The Mountaineers. There are a lot of organizations that protect public lands, but what I really appreciate about The Mountaineers is that it’s an organization that authentically represents people who experience these places. When I’m interacting with elected officials, they can really tell if you’re just speaking from a bunch of talking points versus someone who can say “I climb every weekend at Vantage, and we need a toilet there!” You can deliver this authentic story and make it real. That’s what I think makes The Mountaineers so effective, is just the authenticity you bring to the dialogue on public lands. ▲▲



# 30 BEFORE 30

Featuring Theresa Silveyra and Amber Chang

Theresa Silveyra and Amber Chang are both accomplished climbers and mountaineers. They recently teamed up for Theresa's #30Before30 project: an ambitious plan to climb Wy'east (Mt. Hood) 30 times before Theresa turned 30. Amber joined her for a celebratory summit number 31!

Theresa's plan included fundraising for Climbers of Color, Outdoor Afro, and Decolonizing the Music Room. To highlight Theresa's project, Amber started a Q&A session on Instagram during their climb to discuss how they, who both identify as women of color (WOC), found themselves in white, male-dominated outdoor spaces, and what they are doing to change the narrative about who belongs in the outdoors. We sat down to review those questions, and ask a few more.

**Q: How did you come up with this project?**

**Theresa:** In December I was trying to come up with a fun "30 Before 30" challenge for myself to celebrate a new decade. I wanted it to have something to do with climbing, and it didn't take long to come up with the idea of climbing and summiting Wy'east 30 times (especially since I was already at 15 summits at the time). Wy'east is the mountain that inspired me to get into mountaineering, so it seemed fitting that it would be the focal point of the challenge. The fundraising aspect is something I added for the final five climbs after being inspired by another friend's fundraising efforts. If I was going to go out and do this inherently selfish, personal goal, why not use it to bring attention to and garner support for the work being done by BIPOC-led organizations (Black, Indigenous, people of color), particularly ones helping to diversify the outdoors?

**Q: How did you get started in the outdoors?**

**Amber:** I started hiking to avoid the winter blues when I moved to the PNW, and it spiraled into backpacking, mountaineering, backcountry skiing, rock climbing, and now mountain biking.

**Theresa:** After getting burnt out in grad school and my career path, I turned to the outdoors to find joy again. I knew I wanted to climb mountains, and gradually eased into it through hiking, backpacking, trail running, gym climbing, then ultimately taking my first classes with Timberline Mountain Guides and American Alpine Institute. Unfortunately, it did not feel like a particularly welcoming or safe space for me. I would love to have started with an organization like Climbers of Color, where I would've been learning from and supported by other POC, or even an all-women's mountaineering course (which weren't readily available/accessible at the time).

**Q: What did you do to prepare for big mountaineering pursuits?**

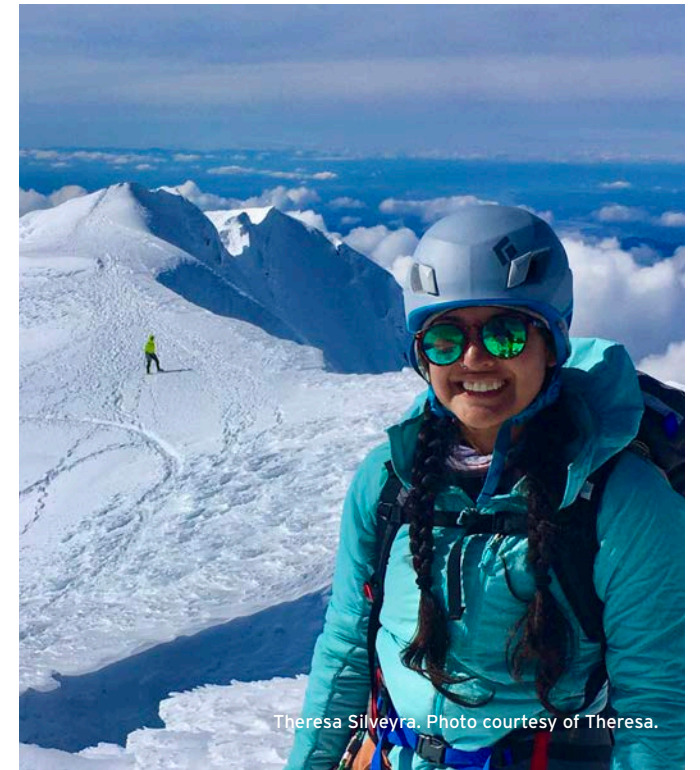
**Amber:** I've taken avalanche courses, ski lessons and workshops, trad lead courses, and a wilderness first responder course. I've been fortunate to gain a lot of my learning from amazing mentors that showed me the ropes (literally) for glacier travel/crevasse rescue and helped me stay fresh on the formal courses I've taken. I'm often the only female and only POC in a lot of these courses and on my climbing teams. It can feel a little overwhelming when you're taking all these in a wilderness setting - there can be a lot of self-inflicted pressure on my part trying to prove that I can be as good as everyone else in order to "represent my group" to the best of my capability.



Theresa climbing out of the Pearly Gates. Photo by Camille Schacht.



Amber Chang. Photo by Jason Hummel.



Theresa Silveyra. Photo courtesy of Theresa.

**Theresa:** Over the past few years, I've taken classes on glacier travel, crevasse rescue, anchors and belaying on steep snow, sport and trad climbing, as well as getting WFR certification, Leave No Trace master educator training, and an AIARE 1. Similar to Amber, I've usually been the only woman or POC (or both in some cases) for many of these experiences. Seeing very few WOC in these settings has definitely contributed to my continued self doubt and imposter syndrome in the mountains. It takes a considerable amount of mental and emotional energy to enter these spaces knowing you'll very likely be the "only one."

**Q: How do you think your presence as a WOC is changing the narrative of who belongs outdoors?**

**Theresa:** Representation is such an important step in changing this narrative. By being present in the mountains and sharing my experiences with other WOC, I am hopefully encouraging more WOC to get out there and showing them that they belong and deserve to be there. I'm still incredibly privileged in many ways, and it's those privileges that allow me to climb as often as I do. One thing I'm trying to do more of is use my privilege and mountaineering experience to be a source of support for other WOC who may have the same fears or concerns about entering a space dominated by whiteness and patriarchy. I think there absolutely needs to be more WOC in leadership positions in the climbing community, and I'm currently working on improving my own skill set and gaining more experience so I can mentor and be a competent leader.

**Amber:** I think by being out there, just doing the things I love and being engaged with the outdoor community helps to change the narrative of who belongs in the outdoors. The more people see that diversity exists in the outdoors, the less

"strange" and more "normalized" it becomes. Even when I first started, I felt like I saw virtually no BIPOCs out there. I see more and more today just going to Camp Muir!

**Q: What does it mean to you to join Theresa for the 31st climb?**

**Amber:** The last month of social unrest made me look back through all the people I've climbed with the last few years. One glaringly obvious trait of most of my climbing partners is that they are primarily men. And the other trait... mostly white. I can count on one hand all the BIPOC climbing partners I've had since I started climbing. It was cathartic to be able to share similar experiences with Theresa being a woman of color in the outdoor space.

**Q: Can you share what completing the project means to you?**

**Theresa:** The project started out as something fun and trivial - a personal challenge for my sole enjoyment and personal growth in the mountains. However, it showed me something completely unexpected: never underestimate the power you hold as an individual to promote change and contribute to a collective effort. Using the project to not only fundraise for BIPOC-led organizations, but also speak out more publicly on the lack of inclusivity and representation in the climbing community, was kind of terrifying. The practically guaranteed backlash of continuing to speak up still terrifies me. Despite my fears, this project, and the many women of color who have reached out to me as a result, has motivated me to keep showing up and keep doing this work. ▲▲

Thanks to community support, Theresa's 30 Before 30 project raised over \$1,500 for each organization. You can learn more about Amber and Theresa, and follow along on their adventures, on Instagram at @amberkchang and @theresasilveyra.



# FAILURE AND GROWTH, COURTESY OF EL CAP

By David Gladish, climber and backcountry skier

Contemplating our position high up on El Cap. Photo by Dirk Rogstad.

In the past several years, climbing El Capitan in Yosemite National Park has blown up in the mainstream consciousness. With *Free Solo* winning an Oscar and the Dawn Wall ascent getting publicized in the New York Times, it seems as if everyone has a clear picture of what climbing El Cap is like. It is easy to imagine being up on the side of the wall when you see it on a high definition movie theater screen. But is it as easy as people make it look?

As a passionate rock climber based in the Northwest, I have worked my way up from bouldering, to sport climbing, and finally to traditional climbing. I cut my teeth on Cascade classics like the North Ridge of Stuart, Prusik Peak, Liberty Bell, and multi pitch routes at the Index Town Walls. With each climb, I felt like I was building up my climbing resume and was ready for a bigger challenge.

The holy grail of rock climbing, particularly as it's portrayed in climbing media, is El Capitan. I've long had it in my head that I, too, would climb El Cap someday. I was so confident that the ascent was completed in my mind before even setting out.

## The Salathe Wall

In 2017 I met up with a friend from Utah to climb the Salathe Wall, a 35-pitch grade VI aid climb on El Cap. I had zero previous experience on a big wall, having led two pitches of aid, juggled a few lines, and never hauled a haul bag. As Ross had already successfully climbed El Cap, I was confident that under his leadership we would get up the route.

I quickly realized that climbing a big wall is much different than climbing a standard multipitch climb. I was certainly capable; I managed to lead, jug, and haul, but I was so overwhelmed by

the compilation of new skills, the constant exposure, and the thought of being on the wall for several days without touching ground. It was too much for me, and we bailed after one night and 12 pitches. I might have chosen to see this as a good first effort and a positive learning experience, but instead I was crushed. I felt like a failure and was embarrassed that so many other climbers I knew had completed the climb when I bailed. I left the Valley determined to come back again.

## The Nose

In 2019 stars aligned, and I was back to Yosemite. This time I took my training more seriously. I spent time at the aid climbing practice area at The Mountaineers facility honing my aid climbing skills. Having a dedicated space to train such specific skills was a game changer for me. I completed a few classic aid lines at Index and slept in a portaledge for several nights. I once again began to experience the familiar feeling of “knowing” I could reach the summit of El Cap if I showed up to Yosemite; it was all but in the bag.

We set our sights on The Nose. I had a new climbing partner, new strategies, and more experience. The plan was to spend three or four nights on the wall, depending on how fast we were climbing. Day one went smoothly. Our haul bags were too heavy, and we were tested with new maneuvers we'd never done on real rock, but we set up our portaledge feeling like we'd made good progress.

As dusk came and we settled into our bivy, my anxiety began to build. It was easy to be distracted by tasks during the day, but alone in my sleeping bag, perched on the side of the cliff, it dawned on me how high we were off the ground. This was

nothing like the exposure I had experienced on alpine climbs in the PNW. This exposure was sheer, and dead vertical. There were no ledges below us to break up the thousand-foot view straight down.

It was hours before I slept.

I woke with a start. Rock, rock, rock!!! I peeled open my eyes just as a massive rock came whizzing by, mere feet from our precarious position. We felt lucky to be alive. What happened to my image of climbers making 5.13 moves on El Capitan big walls with no helmet, dancing up the wall carefree and making it look like cragging at a local cliff? The magazines, podcasts, movies, and Instagram feeds made climbing El Cap seem trivial, so why was I sweating profusely, terrified and feeling in danger for my life?

The next day we woke up to a splitter forecast, the route was not overcrowded, and we had plenty of food and water. But I had made up my mind to go down. I was ready to get the hell off the wall. Finding myself in fight or flight mode, decided to flee. My partner was ready to keep going, and calmly tried to talk me into continuing, but I was having none of it; and so, for the second time in three years, I found myself rappelling down the side of El Cap, bailing on my dream.

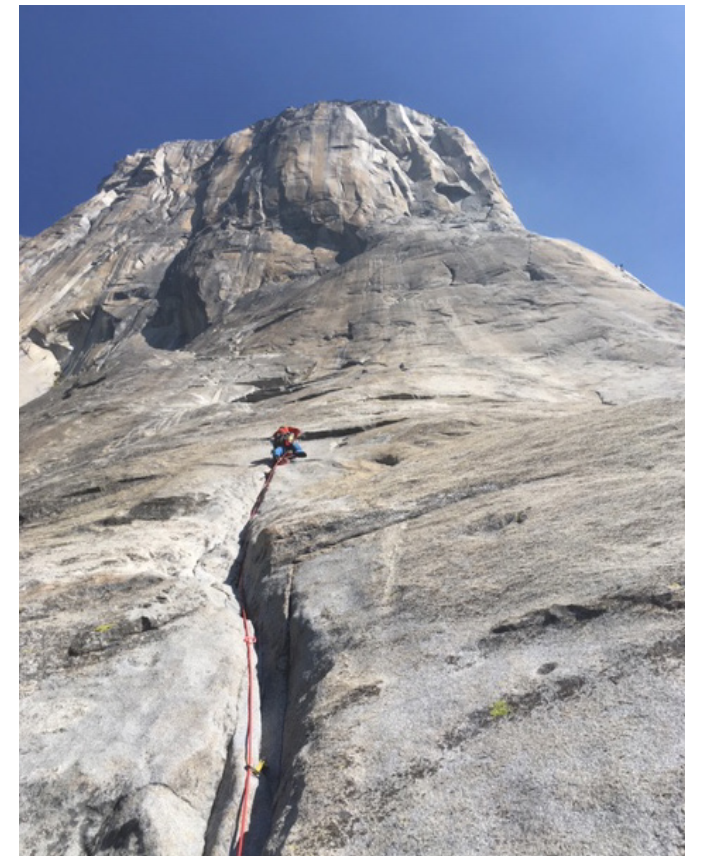
My perspective changed almost immediately once I was back on solid ground. The instant relief and security of being able to walk around untethered and the freedom of movement quickly outweighed the insecure feelings of being exposed, feeling trapped, and wanting to get down. When I called “off rappel” and disconnected from the rope, back on terra firma, I felt both relief and shame. What was the big deal up there? Why was I so scared? We were being safe, conscious, and calculated, so why was I so eager to get down? In the same moment, I felt both great relief and an eagerness to get back on the climb even though just hours ago I had felt utter fear.

In the few days we had left in Yosemite, we managed to climb the South Face of Washington Column, a “beginner” big wall climb by many standards, but something to be proud of. We spent the night on a bivy ledge big enough to walk around unroped. The climbing was straightforward, the scenery was spectacular, and Dirk and I had a fantastic time together. We marveled at the beauty of Half Dome directly across the Valley. We shared whiskey and stories on our spacious platform. And we enjoyed smooth climbing and Type 1 fun for two glorious days.

## Big wall lessons

Climbing in Yosemite and attempting El Capitan built deep connections for me, solidifying my friendships with Ross and Dirk. My partners never ostracized me or harbored negative feelings, even though I was the one that insisted we turn around both times. Instead of being angry about spending their precious vacation time trying and failing to climb El Cap, my partners moved on and focused on other climbs. While I was having a hard time not beating myself up, they were focused on the beauty of our surroundings, the fun climbing we were still able to enjoy, and relaxing in the Camp 4 campground.

It took me quite some time to stop being angry with myself for my decision to bail on El Cap. When I look back on those two trips to Yosemite, I do think about what it was like on the wall



Top: Blasting off on the Salathe route. Photo by David Gladish.  
Bottom: Lowering out on the Nose. Photo by Dirk Rogstad.

and I still have hopes to try again. As I've let go of some of the disappointment and self-deprecation of not accomplishing my goal, I have also realized that getting to the top of El Cap was never the real goal. Fostering connections through shared experiences in challenging and high consequence situations are the true rewards. I came away from Yosemite with a new sense that my partners had my back, that climbing is not about the summit, and that my strongest connections are developed through shared experiences in vertical terrain. ▲▲



# THE OLYMPIC MOUNTAIN PROJECT

By Nate Brown, 6-year member and U.S. Army Veteran



Nate climbing towards the summit of Mount Washington in the winter. Photo: @TheWildOutsiders.

I always wondered what it would feel like to be in snow in the middle of August.

Growing up in the flatlands of the Midwest, I would stare at National Geographic magazines and marvel at the mountainous giants in photos. I could not wrap my young mind around the thought of a place so high up that it had snow year-round; how was that possible? Sitting in the 100-degree heat of the Midwest summer, it sounded pretty good to me.

I may not have known the mountains, but I knew that I felt drawn to them. It was like I could feel a force pulling me towards their craggy, snow filled peaks.

## The Front Range

I wouldn't come to meet the landscapes of my dreams until I reached adulthood. When I was 18 years old, and fresh out of Army Basic Training, I scored the jackpot of assignments for my first duty station: Fort Carson, Colorado.

I drove west across the prairie, and I vividly remember first seeing signs of what lay ahead, so small against the horizon. The bumps grew bigger and bigger until my entire field of view was filled with the Front Range of Colorado. I could hardly contain my excitement, which my Platoon Sergeant squashed the moment I arrived. Upon learning I couldn't wait to get out into the mountains, he laughed and said, "Yeah, it's going to be awhile before you can do that. On that note, don't even bother unpacking your bags." Just a few weeks later I was on a plane to Iraq.

I had come so close.

For the four years I was stationed in Colorado, I spent most of that time in Iraq and Afghanistan. I never got to experience the Front Range like I wanted to - they were always slightly out of reach. Just when I started to get back into them, it was always time to leave again. This frustrating pattern continued until I came home from my second deployment in Afghanistan, at which time I was swiftly relocated to Fort Riley, Kansas.

Banished back to the prairie, go figure.


While in Afghanistan on yet another deployment in 2012, my contract with the Army was coming to an end. I told the career counselor that I would sign another one, but only if they sent me to a mountain state. In exchange for five more years of service, I was offered an assignment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. I signed on the dotted line, raised my hand to renew my oath to the constitution, and began dreaming of the mountains once again.

## Rainier, Olympics, and North Cascades

I arrived in Washington in 2013 and hit the ground running; I did not want a repeat of Colorado. I started hiking right away, exploring the well-known and fairly short trails at first, then slowly diving deeper into the forest and exploring higher and higher elevations. I started eyeballing bigger and more challenging looking peaks. How can I get to the top of those, I wondered? I set about doing some research and found the Olympia Branch of The Mountaineers.

I enrolled in Basic Alpine Climbing to ramp up my outdoor education and experience. I learned the basics of glacier



A photograph of a lush green valley in the Olympic Rainforest. In the upper middle ground, a wooden bridge with a railing spans across the scene. A person wearing a blue shirt and dark pants is walking across the bridge, facing away from the camera. The foreground and middle ground are filled with large, moss-covered logs and rocks, interspersed with vibrant green ferns. The background is a dense forest of tall, slender trees with thick canopies. The overall atmosphere is serene and verdant.

"To me a lush carpet of pine needles or spongy grass is more welcome than the most luxurious Persian rug."

-Helen Keller





An alpine ridge trail near Hurricane Ridge in summer.



Springtime descent of The Brothers.

travel technique, alpine climbing, wilderness navigation, mountaineering-oriented first aid, and other essential outdoors skills. I also met some of my best friends, and we continued to learn and grow with each other well beyond the end of that year.

My education did not stop there. A flatlander, I grew up without any knowledge about skiing or anything else mountain-related in the winter. I took myself to the bunny slopes of the local ski resorts to teach myself to ski. I enrolled in AIARE I so I could learn to identify avalanche terrain and how much I really, really want to avoid it. I took a backcountry skiing course through the Olympia Mountaineers so I could experience the joy of skiing down a snowy summit I had just climbed. Around this time I also bought my first camera, a small point and shoot, and learned how to operate it manually so I could try to get better photos of the amazing areas where I was spending so much of my time.

I kept developing and honing all these skill sets, getting more comfortable both in the outdoors and behind the lens. I was completely immersed and dedicated to learning and improving. Every so often a friend would ask me a pretty simple question, “What’s your goal here? What are you trying to accomplish?” And I really didn’t know. Typically I’d just shrug my shoulders and say I was having fun and that was all I needed.

But I was pursuing something, even if I wasn’t aware of it yet.

## A special connection

The Olympic peninsula and I have a special connection.

When I arrived in the Pacific Northwest in 2013, I found an

apartment to rent in Olympia because it was near my base and appeared to be in a great city. Two weeks later I found myself with an extended four-day weekend for a holiday. I thought a cool way to check out my new home would be to take a road trip on Highway 101, which runs in a loop around the peninsula. The stunning beauty I witnessed during that long weekend is when I first began to fall in love with the PNW. The stark contrast of lush rainforest, the snowy alpine mountain areas, and the coastline with its epic sea stacks was overwhelming and intoxicating. I had never experienced such a variety of beautiful terrain in my life, and all in just four days! I was hooked.

The allure of the Olympic Mountains for me is specific: its peaks seem to go on endlessly into the interior of the peninsula, offering only a glimpse of what lies beyond. Therein lies one of the unique challenges in even reaching them in the first place. Unlike your typical mountain range with roads crossing and winding their way through a linear progression of peaks, the Olympics are a circular cluster of mountains, with no road access through them. The closest most people ever come to seeing the interior is from one of the many viewpoints on the edges, like the gorgeous panoramic view from the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Standing at one of these overlooks, scanning over the countless mountain ridges and river valleys of the interior, it looks so close - yet remote and wild. The Olympic Mountains truly invoke a sense of mystery and remote wilderness, and I wanted to experience their grandeur and see for myself what it’s like from the inside.

I wanted to climb enough mountains in the Olympics to say that I had truly seen this incredible range.

But how to do it?

## The Olympic Mountain Project

After a ton of planning and scrutiny, I created a list of 30 mountains that both highlight the diversity of the range and cover the most ground, serving my purpose of seeing as much of the Olympics as I can.

I knew from the start that I was not interested in including only the tallest or most technically challenging mountains. I wanted to spread out the peaks enough that it would cover every part of the Olympic mountain areas without too much overlap. The tallest mountains in the Olympics are generally in the same area, meaning I wouldn’t get to explore nearly as much as I want. I’m also not the best alpinist, so technically challenging peaks hold little appeal. If there is an easy way and a hard way up a mountain, most of the time I will happily take the easy route.

Many of the thirty mountains are so remote that they require an expensive entry ticket in the form of a 20-50 mile hike to get in and out of the area, not including the climb to the top. With my knees and back already upset with me for the camera gear, I’ll happily leave the rope at home if I can.

I would like to complete the project within three years, but being smart and safe are my top priorities, because speed can so often lead to poor choices.

Given the level of commitment, I had anticipated many challenges: the weather, seasonal availability of the mountain interior, my "normal life" requirements outside of the mountains, and the availability of climbing partners. I’ll admit, I had never thought a global pandemic would be a challenge as well, but it is the reality we face. With the stay-at-home order for Washington state and a closed National Park, I watched as all of my meticulously thought out plans for 2020 evaporated into thin air.

But, distance makes the heart grow fonder.

## 10 down, 20 to go

I began the Olympic Mountain Project in June 2019. A little over one year into this multi-year effort I have completed 12 unique peaks, with one bonus peak that I completed in both the summer and winter. I hope to do this same thing with several of the peaks on the project; the difference between summer and winter is shocking, and really gives me an appreciation for the power of what a few months’ difference can make in the mountains.

In total, I’ve hiked 207 miles and climbed over 62,000 feet in 20 days and nine nights. I could also estimate the number of gummi bears consumed during all those miles, but I sort of don’t want to know. Let’s just say it’s a lot.

Most of the 10 peaks are on the outskirts of the range and relatively low in mileage, apart from Sentinel Peak, which was a 46-mile trip by itself. The summit holding the record for most feet climbed is Henderson Peak, which required nearly 12,000 feet of gain, due to a very circuitous route which took me up and over several mountains, then back over those same peaks

on the way out. I earned my post-climb meal that weekend, without a doubt!

If I had to pick a favorite out of the bunch so far, it would probably be my winter climb of Mount Washington with a bonus traverse to Mount Ellinor. A winter summit of that beautiful peak was already high on my list, even prior to the project.

## Looking Ahead

As of late June the Olympic National Park is still closed to backcountry camping, but National Forest lands recently began reopening! I am finally free to plan trips within the Forest land, such as my two most recent summits of The Brothers and Lightning Peak. However, since most of the remaining summits are within the National Park and require at least one night spent in the park, the project is on hold until everything is open. I am hopeful that I will have the opportunity to attempt several more peaks this summer, and I have tentative dates scheduled for Mount Deception and Mount Constance!

Even with all of the uncertainty that 2020 has brought, something I do know is that I will get back out there eventually. A whole childhood spent dreaming of craggy summits and mountain layers - and all those years I was so close, yet so far from the mountains - gave me two amazing gifts that have proven invaluable: patience and perspective. The pursuit of happiness and mountains is a lifelong dream of mine.

They are worth the wait. ▲▲

## Giving back

Climbing these peaks to see them for my own enjoyment does not seem like enough. I want to use my photography skills to both document the journey and use it to shine a light on these rarely-seen areas of the Olympics to highlight their fragility and beauty. I also want to help give back to the National Park that has meant so much to me.

So I decided to partner with Washington’s National Park Fund as the official philanthropic partner of Washington State’s National Parks, which includes the Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks, all which I love dearly. WNPF does incredible work for parks, like helping fund research and park maintenance to make up for the lack of funding we all know the National Parks face. To help support them and give back to the area I love, I donate 25% of the proceeds earned from all Olympic photography prints purchased on my website.

*To follow Nate’s Olympic Mountain Project and see more of his stunning alpine adventure photography, visit [natebbrown.com](http://natebbrown.com). Nate also wrote a story for us in our Summer 2019 Mountaineer. You can find it by searching for “DIY Gear Room” on our website.*



# OUT OF THE ASHES

## Creating a new life in the mountains

By Christine Kuebler, 7-year member

Mount Adams summit, May 2018. All photos courtesy of Christine Kuebler.

Every night after putting my boys to bed, I ran. On dark nights my feet would thud against the pavement, headlamp shining through the rain. I did it because I had to - it pushed out the despondency and grief that had been following me for almost two years. I knew pushing my body would bring me closer to what I needed: self-confidence, a distraction from the pain, physical and emotional strength. I moved toward my goal, one foot at a time.

### The collapse

It started in 2012. My marriage was not good - I thought *oh it's marriage, you go through bumps*. I had been with my husband from the time I was 15 years old, and we were married with children by the time I was 25. We had two boys together, and my oldest had significant medical challenges from the time he was born: sensory processing, ADHD, anxiety, Tourette's. My husband was gone a lot for work in those days, and I was 35, working as a teacher in public school, and raising my two boys mostly by myself. Self-care, outdoor pursuits, and the time to draw and express myself as an artist all took a back seat in those days. It was hard, but we were working on our issues and I thought things would turn up.

One summer day when I was in my classroom getting ready

for the school year, a friend came up and asked me if I knew what was going on. Time stood still as she explained that my husband was having an affair. Worse, it was with a woman who, at the time, was my coworker. She was also my best friend.

In one moment my whole world collapsed, ballooning around me. The life I had known and built for myself was immediately and devastatingly dismantled. I knew I had to get a divorce.

### Rediscovering the mountains

I went about my daily life doing my best to hold it together, always feeling an intense weight bearing down on me. I felt isolated, alone, and worthless. The aftermath took a heavy toll on my career and sense of self-worth. This wasn't the kind of life I wanted for myself or my children, and I had to do something to pull it together.

It wasn't a quick process. It took a year for the numbness to subside. I'd worked so hard, had a long list of accomplishments under my belt, and now had a heap of ashes to sift through after my world was destroyed. I'm not the type to give up, and I resolved to find what I needed to be whole again.

I had been an avid hiker and backpacker in my 20's, and although it was something I truly loved, I'd done it with my



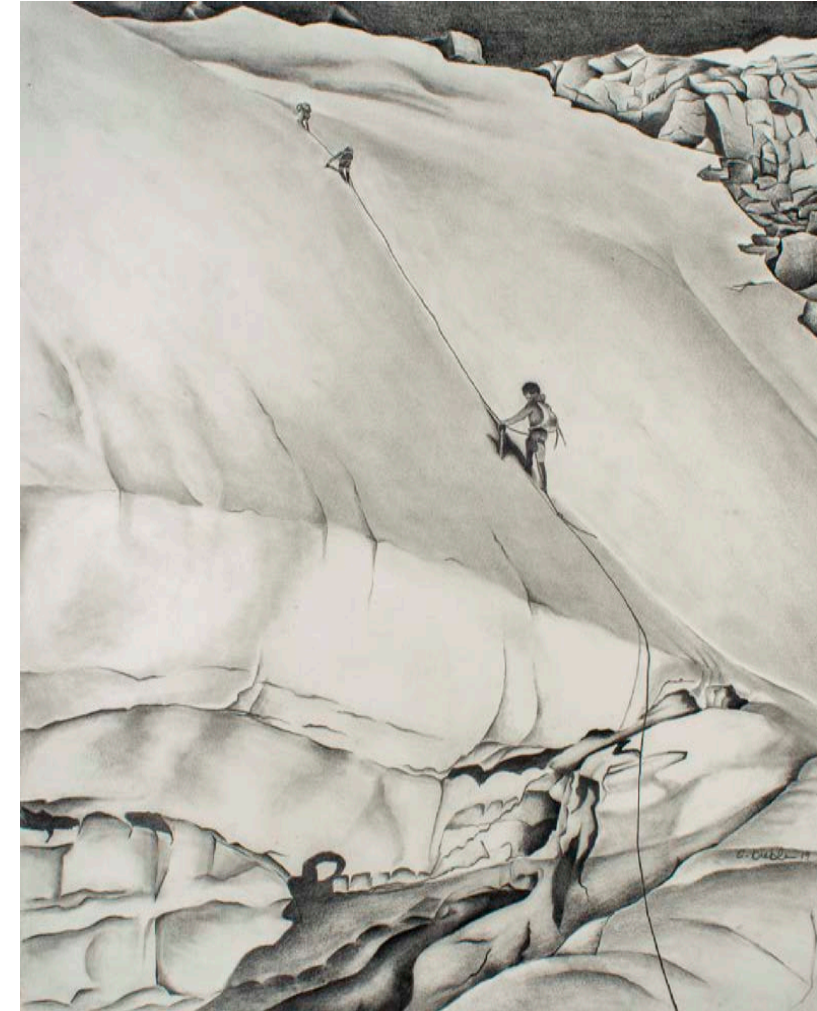
Christine happy at home in her art studio.

then-husband and had self-doubts about my ability to do it myself. I eventually convinced myself that I had the skills to travel in the mountains alone. Dusting off my gear, I went to the place I knew better than any other: the Olympic Mountains. Setting out alone toward Tubal Cain Mine, I cried the entire time.

Years before any of this happened, I'd had a feeling that I wanted to climb Mount Rainier. It went against everything I was taught to be as a young lady: be safe, follow the rules, do as expected, please others, get married, have a family. That mountain intrigued me, and I spent those long weekends hiking (and crying) in the Olympics looking at her peeking back at me from behind the trees. I'd never considered myself to be like "those people"; the alpine climbers and risk-takers. I wondered if little, old, broken me could climb that massive mountain.

As a broke single mama and school teacher, my salary balked at the exorbitant price of alpine gear and classes. For a year I saved whatever I could to pay for The Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climbing Course, scraping and hustling for gear along the way. One piece of equipment was bought a month, and hand-me-downs were found. Finally, I was able to pay for the course in full. I figured I could climb Rainier through The Mountaineers and maybe acquire some new skills along the way. At the time, I had no intention of climbing anything beyond Rainier.

I walked through the doors of the Tacoma branch for my first lecture, feeling insecure, terrified, and still housing that crushing feeling that I had been carrying for so long. That first day I was in foreign territory. I struggled through the course - ropes, carabiners, and rescue systems all challenged me as I am not naturally mechanically inclined. I pushed on, fighting self-doubt the entire way. My first climb was Glacier Peak, and it was brutal. I did not summit, gassing out just before we reached our goal. That first performance haunted me for a year and drove me to work harder. My three graduation climbs were eventually completed that summer, and Mount Baker



"Strong hearts, strong minds." Graphite on paper.

was the first glacier climb I summited. I silently cried under my glacier glasses as we stepped off of the Roman Wall and stood on top of that massive mountain. The sun was shining bright as our rope leader made his way to the highest point. An unbelievable feeling of strength came over me. I had never done anything like that before in my life.

### Beyond Basic

I graduated from Basic and considered what was next. I hadn't connected with many people in the class and was not the strongest member, certainly not at the top of anyone's list to invite on a climb. It bothered me immensely. We are not entitled to climb, we have to work very hard for it, and I felt I had to prove myself. So I put my head down and conditioned. I winter scrambled as much as I could and I started running. In the evenings after my boys were in bed, I hit the pavement. Even if that meant I would be out at nine o'clock at night with a headlamp on in the rain. During that time I fell in love with winter scrambling and met a wonderful leader out of Seattle, Andy Cahn, who gave me every opportunity to get out in the mountains. I always felt like I was enough on his trips, and he became an extraordinary friend to me.





A self-portrait of Christine's summit of Mount Rainier, entitled "Behind Blue Eyes". Graphite on paper.

Slowly, things started to change - my body was changing, my mind was changing, and I was beating that awful crushed feeling right out of my heart and mind. I felt as though I was rewiring my head, and I could feel my thoughts and my feelings shifting. Even then, so much pain still lingered.

The following summer I climbed with The Mountaineers and with Peaks of Life, an organization that raises money for the Children's Hospital. The next thing I knew I had a list of 30 summits, and found myself in a community where I felt accepted and loved. I met people from all walks of life, and my isolated world slowly started opening up. I saw people differently, experienced the world differently. My perspectives on things drastically changed. My children watched their mom transform and enjoyed the stories I told them and the pictures I had to share.

I kept going. I kept scrambling, I kept climbing, I kept connecting. I am at 61 summits. My goal is 100, because why not? I've been criticized along the way. I've heard that it's just a phase and it will pass, that I had something to prove and I've done enough now. I've been told to take it easy, that I'm putting myself out there too much, that counting summits is ridiculous. There are a million and one ways in which the world will try to sneak in and hold you back.

### Bringing art to life

Another beautiful thing the mountains have brought is a resurgence in my art. I went to art school in my 20's with the intention of being an artist and a teacher. Before I knew it I was working long days and raising children, and the energy to be creative was sucked out of me. That part of myself was neglected for a long time, but it slowly blossomed again the more time I spent outdoors.

It began the way I started with mountaineering: a little bit at a time. I was doing an abstract mountain scene and a friend suggested I add a little climber to it. I hemmed and hawed, but eventually added the climber. Then I decided to draw a self-portrait to celebrate my climb of Rainier, and it turned out better than any drawing with people I had done before. Before I knew it I was drawing climbers non-stop; something about capturing small moments in the mountains became more magical to me than anything I'd created before. I've since had the opportunity to participate in art shows, and am in the process of building a website to showcase my work. It's grown more than I ever could have expected.

I've realized that this is what happens when passion meets purpose. Mountaineering helped me rebuild my life after a

major tragedy, allowing me to recognize my strengths. It has also brought so many wonderful people into my life, friends that have become support systems that I can't imagine myself without now. I capture and celebrate them through my art, taking photos on climbs then coming home to draw. Art is a way for me to express myself, and as much a part of my world as climbing now. I feel so fortunate that this part of myself has been reignited.

### A new day

Things are different now. I still workout constantly, but I no longer do it because I have to. I do it because I love it, and because it makes me feel good. I have a boyfriend who I got to know over mountain summits and lead belays. I left the public school system, trading burnout for one-on-one time with my students. In fact, it was a couple of Mountaineers who helped me land the job.

For four years I carried this heavy "ick" around, a weight in my gut from what had happened. Infidelity is something that can be soul-crushing; it made me feel like I might have deserved it, or that something was wrong with me. It's a really damaging

thing. But through climbing all of that has fallen away.

Mountaineering has become part of who I am, and I don't think I could feel whole without the mountains in my life. My next goal is to become a climb leader and lead alpine trad. That will be a huge leap for me. I have my doubts and fears, but I know I can work through them. It's important to me to give back to others, and to maybe give someone else the idea to reimagine themselves and their life the way that I did. I plan on climbing, scrambling, and hiking for as long as my body will allow me to. My boys are still home with me, but older now. We're not entirely out of the woods yet, but I'm stronger than I was before and fully believe that all will be ok as time goes on. I couldn't be more grateful for The Mountaineers, its dedicated volunteers, and the opportunity it has given me to change my life and heal.

In the beginning I never realized what would come of this. I just wanted to get back into doing something I loved, create a new part of my world that was for myself. Now I see the world differently. I see myself differently. I chose to return to the mountains, and it saved my soul and changed me as a person. ▲

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# LIFE AS A TRAIL ANGEL

## The Reality of 1200 Houseguests

By Barney Scout Mann, Thru-Hiker & Mountaineers Book Author



Hikers starting their PCT thru-hike at the Mexican border in April 2019, having slept at Scout and Frodo's house the night before. All photos courtesy of Barney Scout Mann.

You quit your job, sublet your apartment, and sold your car. Standing on the curb at the San Diego airport, everything you know has been left behind. There's just you and your backpack, and a dream so big you wonder again: *Will it fit that five-month hole I've carved out of my life?* You're looking for a yellow pompom. Just like more than 6,000 others before you.

You've come to thru-hike the Pacific Crest Trail. Strangers you've never met – Scout and Frodo – said they'd put you up for a night, feed you, and drive you out at sunrise to the trailhead.

*Do people notice I'm different? This is the only shirt I'll wear for five months.* You ache from five hours on the plane. Your ears echo with the voices of family and friends. "You're crazy." "I wish it were me." "I'd never do that." And you shut out those three questions you've repeatedly heard: "Why are you doing this?" "Are you carrying a gun?" "You're not going alone, are you?"

Then a hand taps your shoulder. It's a woman in hiking togs clutching her own pack. "Thru-hiker?" she asks. Then you both notice a tan van driving up. There's the yellow pompom.

The van pulls to the curb, hikers grinning at you from inside. The woman driver opens the back gate and extends her hand. "I'm Frodo." This is real. You've held your breath for months and now you can finally exhale. *I've come home. I've found my people. I'm actually starting my hike.*

### PCT hopefuls

Each spring a PCT hiker migration arrives in San Diego as faithfully as Puget Sound's gray whales. The PCT southern monument – five legendary fir pillars perched on a desert rise sixty miles inland – is their immediate goal. But getting there can be a nightmare. Without a local friend or relative, it takes three trips on public transportation totaling at least a half day. When you step off the bus over a mile from the PCT trailhead, there's not even a sign telling you where the PCT begins. If you camp nearby, you invite a gruff midnight wake-up by Border Patrol. Some hikers have called "Day Zero" the worst day of their hike.

In 2006, my wife Sandy and I were PCT dreamers, planning a thru-hike attempt for the following year. We live in San Diego in a suburban home on a quiet cul de sac. Sandy was a high

school biology teacher; a 5'2" empress of her classroom who stayed up late baking pumpkin muffins for her students. I was managing partner of a small law firm; my lanky frame felt chained to a desk. We were going to trade it away for six months off to hike the PCT. For 10 years we'd clutched our PCT dream tightly. We planned to celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary on our thru-hike. After all, Sandy and I never had a first date – we had a first backpack.

Not long before our own hike, our youngest left for college. Was it those four empty bedrooms? Was it our urge to meet PCT hikers? Either way, our desire to connect with the PCT overruled the conventional wisdom of "don't invite strangers into your house," and that spring we hosted 17 hikers. We thought we were pretty hot stuff.

In 2007, we hosted 35 hikers before setting out on our own Mexico-to-Canada trek. That thru-hike gave us trail names, innumerable blisters, one broken rib, and two cracked front teeth. Sandy became "Frodo" and I became "Scout." Between us we wore out eight pairs of jogging shoes. In October, 50 miles from Canada, we plunged forward through knee-deep snow. Nothing would stop us.



Hikers are picked up at the "P" zone at the San Diego airport by a vehicle sporting a yellow pom pom.

The next spring, in 2008, we hosted 125 PCT hikers, over a third of that year's thru-hiker class. By 2011, we topped 200. Then the book and subsequent movie *Wild* burst on the scene, and PCT hiker numbers skyrocketed.

### A few extra mouths to feed

What began as home-cooked meals for a few extra mouths soon exceeded the dining table's capacity, even with all three leaves in place. One night 65 slept in our home – our bedrooms, tent trailer, living room floor, and tree house were stuffed to the gills. The tents in our backyard were pitched as close as sardines in a can.

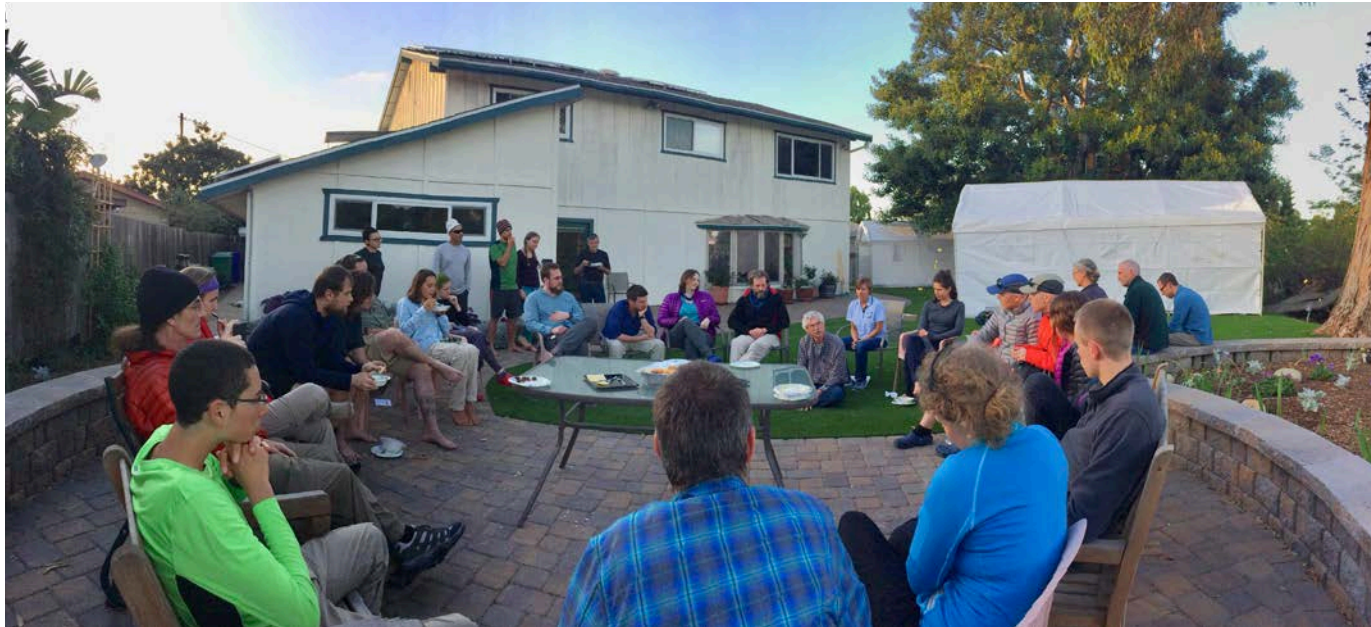
We tried to set sanity limits for ourselves. A one-night stay for those from the U.S. and three nights for international hikers. We set a limit of 40-ish people a night – and felt bad. We made exceptions as often as we enforced the rule.

In 2008, we had our first ad hoc volunteer. "Scout and Frodo, can I help?" That one morphed into a legion of good Samaritans. In 2019, I wrote 81 thank-you letters to volunteers. Twenty-two of them were live-in volunteers. Nowadays, during our eight-week season, at least three are here at a time.

Five years ago, one volunteer began a standardized hosting chore list. It's now up to fourteen separate categories and 46 items. They include clean and set up coffee makers, alphabetize incoming hiker boxes, change treehouse mattress sheets, run pack shakedown, shuttle hikers to the trailhead, to gear, grocery, or AT&T stores, and pick up hikers at the airport, Amtrak, Greyhound, or hostels.

Every morning without fail, four to 10 vehicles drive hikers to the trail. Usually only one is ours. The rest are from a team of more than 50 volunteer drivers. They arrive at 5:30am, join the hikers for breakfast, and the last taillights disappear from the cul de sac by 6am. It's 120 miles round trip. Many volunteers drive five, 10, or even 15 times in a season.





The evening backyard "dinner talk" led by Scout and Frodo.

Every day, we make six to 10 airport pickups, grouping hikers who arrive within an hour of each other. A hiker might see our tan van, our green or silver Prius, or any of the score of vehicles driven by our volunteers. How do hikers know what vehicle to expect? We don't decide who's driving until the night before. The solution was as close as our back closet. We're former University of Oregon Ducks, and there in the closet we had a half dozen bright-yellow pompoms.

## Systems within systems

But how does all this run? And what about the cost? In 2006 we were clear: no gifts, no donations. Fourteen years later, it's still all free to hikers. Our website homepage says: "We provide our services at no charge and we do not accept donations." We make Costco runs twice a week, \$500 or more a pop, and our utilities bill is crazy, but we simply don't think about it. Every night when we flop into bed, alarms set for 4:30am, we turn to each other and say, "We are so lucky to be able to do this."

As for organizing it all, one hiker wrote; "They have systems within systems. It's like a freak'n cuckoo clock factory." He wasn't that far off. To get the time we want to spend with hikers, the back end of the operation has to run like a fine clock. We have mastered google doc spreadsheets. Hikers sign up online, their information instantly populating one spreadsheet, then that spreadsheet feeds a separate online volunteer sign-up sheet. At any hour a volunteer driver can see how many hikers are going out on a given morning and how many seatbelts we still need. When they sign up, they get the satisfaction of seeing that seatbelt number immediately go down.

For Costco, Frodo had a stroke of genius. For years we made a new list every time: 10 pineapples, 12-dozen eggs, etc. Then she made a standardized list of all the things we might buy and all we had to do was fill in the quantity. However, the genius part was when she put the list in the order in which you walk through the store. Armed with that, I can get in and out in

under an hour. Half the time the checker will ask, "Where's the party? Can I come?"

## Priceless connections

Since 2008, over a third of each year's PCT thru-hiker class stay with us. Word of mouth, hiking blogs, guidebooks, and even the Pacific Crest Trail Association's official website report, "Stay at Scout and Frodo's." We'd get emails that began, "Never in my life have I asked a total stranger to pick me up and give me a place to stay. But they tell me it's okay."

The moments we get to share are priceless. One night the dinner conversation was being dominated by boisterous French, German, and Italian hikers. A quiet young man from Portland, Oregon, silently chewed his food. In a lull someone turned to him and asked a question. His answer cut us to the quick. "Two days ago I got out of the Army." He'd served in Iraq. "My days consisted of 12 hours standing erect as a Humvee turret gunner." One night back at base, he chanced upon a PCT trail journal. He was hooked, mesmerized in his plywood-wall quarters. He read about all of us. That's when he decided to thru-hike the PCT. As he finished his story and just before he picked up his fork again, he looked at us all on the eve of his own PCT hike and said, "Why am I thru-hiking? When I look back on my youth, I don't want the seminal event to be Iraq."

Every day at our house offers a graduate class on people. Even something as small as our "hiker box" has taught me an important lesson. Every PCT re-supply town has a hiker box. It's a bin or box where hikers leave cast-off gear that still has a useful life, leave their excess backpacking food and supplies, all for other hikers to pick through and take. It may be at a small hotel, post office, or store. At our house we have "Hiker Box Zero."

With our numbers now over 1,000 a season, the volume of stuff left in our hiker box is huge. *I guess I don't really need a 2-pound mallet for tent stakes.* Every day we cull the totally inappropriate, weird things people thought they couldn't hike



Two of the many hikers who volunteer to help with meal preparation.

without. The worst make great stories. I once found a marine emergency flare, with the pull-string hanging loose, capable of shooting a rocket 1500 feet into the sky – or knocking a hole in our ceiling. For a year one of my favorites was a four-pound, six-inch-thick stack of trail maps, each page individually laminated. Someone had carried it here and then left it in the hiker box secured by a rubber band. All that season it sat alongside our hiker box for laughs.

The next year we had a new live-in volunteer, a young woman from Australia. She heard me tell the tale and when the last laugh subsided, she pulled me aside. "Scout," she said, "Those were mine. I brought them last year. My dad didn't get my hike at all. He was afraid for me and wouldn't talk about it. Still, he saw me off at the airport. Just before boarding he gave me those maps. He'd spent weeks printing and laminating them by hand."

All that time, I'd thought those maps were ridiculous. I'd had no idea what they really represented: a father's love for his daughter.

## The unseen magic of trail angels

Our hosting has an impact far beyond us and our hikers. Our local post office was short-listed to close until thousands of priority mail re-supply boxes started issuing from our house. Today the American flag still proudly flies over the University City Post Office. We pack the local AT&T store many days with international hikers needing U.S. phone plans, numbering over 400 last year. Sometimes the manager drives to our house and opens up AT&T in the living room.

Early on we realized we have a tremendous opportunity to affect hiker behavior for the good. We do an after-dinner talk every night, more than 60 times a season. Between jokes and stories about the guy whose trail name is Cuddles, we talk about being a good trail ambassador, Leave No Trace, and stream crossing safety.

My saddest moment as a trail angel was in 2017, three months



The author and his wife, Sandy "Frodo" Mann, on their 2007 PCT thru-hike.

after our hosting season ended. I was in my tent at midnight, thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail. I had cell coverage and I reached Frodo back at home. It had been a high snow year on the PCT. Frodo told me about Tree and Strawberry, two strong, slender young women, both competent hikers. One was from mainland China and the other from Japan. They'd each stayed with us for three days and we got to know them well. Frodo's voice caught and choked up. "They found Tree and Strawberry's bodies this week." They were at two different Sierra stream crossings. Each had tried to cross high water alone.

In our dinner talk I mention their names every night. I describe a series of crossing strategies, including, "If you're alone at a hard stream crossing, stop and wait. Someone else will come along."

Last summer, good friends told me they'd come on a lone hiker at a dangerous Sierra stream crossing. He told them he'd been waiting for three hours. "Why?" they asked. "These folks, Scout and Frodo, that's what they told me to do. Frodo said I should make wise decisions." The three of them crossed safely together.

Many people ask, why do Sandy and I host hikers? We host to help people at a vulnerable time in their life. We want to pay back the incredible kindness we received on our 2007 thru-hike. We get to meet the most amazing people from around the world. We positively affect hiker behavior up the trail. We send an incredible wave of kindness into the world. But most of all – we do it because we can. ▲▲

*Barney Scout Mann is a thru-hiker and the author of Journeys North: The Pacific Crest Trail, published by Mountaineers Books. Hitting shelves this year, Journeys North tells the story of 6 PCT hikers - including Barney and his wife Sandy - as they face a once-in-a-generation drought and severe winter storms that test their will in this gripping adventure. Journeys North is a story of grit, compassion, and the relationships people forge when they strive toward a common goal. To view an excerpt, visit page 8. Get your copy at [mountaineers.org/journeys-north](http://mountaineers.org/journeys-north).*



# Revelations After More than 30,000 Miles on the Trail

By Craig Romano, Mountaineers Books Guidebook Author

As an outdoors writer and guidebook author, former backcountry ranger in New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest, former mountain guide in the Spanish and French Pyrenees, and dedicated adventurer, I've spent a fair amount of time on the trail. It totals more than 30,000 miles hiking and backpacking, and who knows how many miles running. I've hiked on trails from Nova Scotia to Florida, Alaska to Argentina, and in Europe and Asia. I've seen a lot of spectacular natural places. And I've learned quite a bit along the way – some trivial, some life changing – about nature, humanity, and myself. In a stream of

consciousness (just as my mind works while I'm hiking), here are a few of the things I've learned while putting thousands of miles on the trail:

The trail less taken often offers the greatest rewards. I cherish solitude, but often welcome company when deep in the backcountry. I don't mind sharing the trail with hundreds who walk softly and respect the land, but abhor sharing it with just one clod.

I hike not to be seen nor to be popular. I hike to get away from the ills of society and the noise and distractions of the human world.

But sadly I am encountering more and more unenlightened behavior in the backcountry – and in places I least expect it.

I want to commune with nature, not consume it. I want to be part of nature, not control it. I want to return from the woods refreshed, from a place where life works exactly the way it was meant to.

I've hiked in the Yukon, Patagonia, the Andes and Pyrenees, yet some of the most stunning scenery is right in my backyard in Northwestern Washington. However, there is beauty everywhere in the natural world. I've seen it in Mississippi swamps and along the Appalachian Trail in New Jersey. Mount Rainier is stunning, but it shouldn't be used as a barometer to measure the beauty of other places. There is no comparison between a snow-capped volcano, a rolling prairie, and a pine barren. I don't compare country music to classical or alternative rock. I enjoy listening to them all.

When I want to see biomass, I hike in the Olympics. When I want to see biodiversity, I hike in the Appalachians. I love the sheer rugged and raw in-your-face wildness of the North Cascades. And I love the rolling rounded ridges of New England. One instills a sense of awe in me, the other has me wax poetic. They both instill a sense of excitement and discovery in me every time I step foot into them.

I love the vastness of the desert and Great Plains, too. And there is so much more out there I need to explore; but I've accepted a long time ago that time is limited (and precious), and you just can't do it all.

In cities I see chaos; in nature I see order. One I try to avoid as much as possible. The other I jump at every opportunity to roam free.

The most ecologically diverse places aren't usually the most visually stunning. Mountain tops are full of rocks and ice. Swamps teem with life. Ecosystems are fragile, yet nature can be resilient. Thoughtless hikers can trample an alpine meadow. Mount St. Helens can alter an entire landscape, then recolonize it so that it once again flourishes with life.

Nature heals, but can also be cruel. I have felt spiritual redemption in the Olympic Mountains. And I have faced my mortality in a wildfire in the Cascades and during an electrical storm atop Mount Shasta.

I've encountered grizzlies and aggressive off-leash dogs on the trail – the latter concern me more and have given me reason to fear for my safety. I have encountered hundreds of black bears in the backcountry that have given me little concern. Bears for the most part are predictable and flee within moments of our encounter. I have happened upon a handful of questionable people in the backcountry that have given me concern. Man is the least predictable creature on the planet.

I can always pack lighter, but choose comfort and preparedness over streamlining.

Not all backcountry water sources need to be filtered, but all it takes is just one miscalculation to contract giardia.

Supporters of parks and wild places come from all political

backgrounds and walks of life – opponents too. I have encountered motorcyclists who cherish the land, and hikers who couldn't care less. Not all opponents of parks and wilderness are motorized recreationists and extractive industry folks; they have allies in the hiking and mountain biking community as well.

Entitlement and rule breaking seem to be on the uptick. Funding for our parks and trails continuously dwindles, while recreational demands escalates. Balancing preservation and access in our public lands is no easy act.

The most polarizing topics in the hiking community are not politics and religion, but dogs and guns. It's a paradox leaving a light carbon footprint on our hikes when we drive, boat, and fly to our parks and trails.

While I can easily cover 20 miles on the trail in a day, unfortunately and sadly, many folks can't cover even one due to a sedentary lifestyle. Even more dismaying is the growing number of young people who are inactive and will never feel the exhilaration and sense of accomplishment of being able to push their body deep into the wilderness or high upon a mountain top.

I have on average a half dozen pairs of different hiking and running shoes that I use throughout the year. When I hiked in the Andes I met folks who didn't own any shoes. When I retire a pair of hiking shoes I donate it to charity. I need to do more.

I actively belong to and support (both financially and through in-kind donations) nearly a dozen land trusts, conservation organizations, and hiking and trail advocacy groups. I feel though I should support more – and my fellow hikers need to step up their conservation game as well.

Ticks repulse and fascinate me at the same time. There are lots of little yellow birds and pretty flowers that I need to become more familiar with. My soul birds are the oystercatcher (Pacific and Atlantic, depending on which coast I am hiking) and the common loon. The latter is to me the symbol of the north woods. It's a place I feel most at home.

Trail users before me – First Peoples, explorers, and homesteaders – continue to fascinate and intrigue me. Their stories can be messy, but need to be told. We have much to learn from them – the good, the bad, and the indifferent. Thoreau wrote, "In wildness is the preservation of the world." Muir wrote, "The clearest way into the universe is through a forest wilderness; In God's wildness is the hope of the world." They are philosophies I subscribe to.

The backcountry is the place I want to be when I am depressed, anxious, and coping with a loss. During the current Pandemic, it's my lifeline to sanity, salvation, and overcoming one of the biggest challenges I've ever faced. ▲▲

*Craig Romano is an award winning author who has written more than 25 books. His latest release, Day Hiking North Cascades 2nd edition (Mountaineers Books) highlights 136 hikes in Skagit, Whatcom and Okanogan counties, as well as along the Mountain Loop Highway. Some of his other titles includes; Urban Trails Seattle, 100 Classic Hikes Washington, and Day Hiking Olympic Peninsula (2nd edition).*



# Louise Marshall

## Mountaineer, WTA Founder, and Pioneering Trail Advocate

By Joan Burton, 69-year member and Mountaineers Books author

An avid hiker, community organizer, and Mountaineers member, Louise Marshall was a passionate outdoorswoman and a key figure in Washington’s history. As a young woman I not only had the opportunity to meet Louise and hike with her, but reaped the benefits of all that she brought to the hiking community and the broader Washington outdoors community. I am excited to share with you the trials, tribulations, and triumphs that Louise experienced as a pioneer in the outdoor industry.

Louise Marshall was born in Boston in 1915, into a family that held the unusual perspective that physical education was key for girls. Her father was a physician who valued outdoor recreation, and so she spent her summers in the birch-filled forests of New England horseback riding, canoeing, hiking, and backpacking. As she entered young adulthood, Louise earned her Master’s Degree in physical education, then spent several summers in her early 20s bicycling across Europe. Imminent war kept her at home in 1939 and prompted her to join a local outdoor club, where she met her adventure partner and eventual husband Bill Marshall.

The couple moved to Seattle several years later, settling in a rural unincorporated area north of the city in 1952. They joined The Mountaineers seeking local information on how to access the outdoors. Although many hike leaders had information on local trails, they were hesitant to share the information with newcomers from New York. Undaunted, Louise volunteered to serve as a hike leader herself, and her file on trail information rapidly filled. By the mid-1960s she had enough to write a guidebook. Inspired by European guidebooks she had fallen in love with, Louise embarked on this new effort.

### A guidebook author

Out of this was the birth of *Trail Trips: An Introduction to Hiking Near Seattle*. Her book was among the first guides in the region and was a tool sorely needed in the area. Unable to find a publisher, Louise typed the manuscript herself and had a few copies printed. When she realized the need for up-to-date trail information in 1966, she began publishing a weekly mimeographed newsletter, *Signpost*, churning it out every Sunday with an ancient duplicator



Louise on a day hike in 1969. Her blue fanny pack contained her notebook and pencil for trailnotes, as well as her 35mm camera. All photos courtesy of the Marshall family collection.

machine. Louise enlisted the help of her two teenage daughters and hand-published the newsletter on the dining room table of their farmhouse.

Although initially designed for Mountaineers hike leaders, the publication quickly caught on in the broader outdoor community. Louise soon found herself printing copies and mailing them to any interested party. I remember receiving the first few copies; having access to current information on trail conditions, accessibility, and road status was a new concept to local hikers. We were astonished and delighted that Louise had been able to do this by herself. The information offered in *Signpost* introduced us to trails we hadn’t thought of hiking and allowed us to explore the area in new ways.

Still considering the need for a published guidebook, Louise wrote a more detailed guide on trails near Seattle. The Mountaineers volunteer-led Literary Fund Committee had been considering something similar, and photographer Ira Spring was willing to take the photos. Louise’s proposal came at just the right time: she chose 100 of her favorite trails and the guidebook *100 Hikes in Western Washington* was born. According to Ira, the all-male committee said, “She’ll do; although she doesn’t know much about trails, at least she can write.”



In the early 1980s Louise had t-shirts designed for *Signpost* subscribers. The entire *Signpost* staff posed for a promotion photo. Back row: Louise, Ruth and Carl Munson, Janet Garner, Ann Marshall, Plum Moore. Front row: Amber Stagg and Marshall Stagg, two of Louise's grandchildren who frequently helped around the office.

The guidebook was enormously popular, with the first printing selling out in weeks. Reprints required updates and corrections, and Louise always had a file at the ready. When she heard that The Mountaineers Literary Fund Committee planned to start a series of hiking guidebooks for other regions of the state, she assumed she would be asked to write them. However, the committee chose local author, conservation activist, and hiker Harvey Manning instead. Louise was never explicitly told why she was passed over to continue the series she had helped start; neither the committee volunteers nor Ira Spring would discuss it. Louise felt she couldn’t compete with Harvey Manning, a beloved climbing course leader who had authored the first edition of *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills* and had the volunteer committee standing behind him. She believed she was penalized for being relatively new to the Northwest and a woman, and this bothered her for many years. She later said to her daughter Ann, “I can’t worry about it anymore. It’s in God’s hands and I’ll get my reward in heaven.” (Ann has said that she never knew what to make of that remark, as her mother was an atheist.)

The *100 Hikes* guidebook series went on to become a well-known Harvey Manning and Ira Spring joint enterprise, eventually encompassing guidebooks for the North Cascades, Glacier Peak region, Mount Rainier, South Cascades, and the Olympics. Louise went on to write three more guidebooks, all self-published.

### An environmental activist

Throughout this time Louise continued her outdoor pursuits, never seeming to tire on-trail. She spent her weekends hiking and took long trips with the family dog into the backcountry every summer. She worked on updates to one of her guidebooks, a Pacific Crest Trail book entitled *High Trails*, and spent weeks hiking the trail from the Canadian border to the Columbia River, often on Mountaineers trips and sometimes alone.

Louise also continued in her efforts with *Signpost*, and as the newsletter developed so did its message and purpose. Conservation, stewardship, and local activism became priorities along with trail information, and the newsletter was utilized to tell readers how to advocate for our public lands. *Signpost*-organized work parties began to be listed in 1972, and a culture of volunteerism started to develop.

One large win came in 1980, when the newsletter was used to call on hikers to protest the Department of Natural Resources’ plan to conduct a timber sale along Ashland Ridge in the Sultan-Pilchuck Recreation Area. Their proposal involved the introduction of new roads, a large bridge, and the destruction of many of the hiking trails near the Ashland Lakes. The efforts made by Louise and the dedicated *Signpost* readers were successful, and the department cancelled their original timber sale. It was through





A few of Louise's hiking guides: *100 Hikes in Western Washington*, the *Packrat Papers* Volume 1 & 2, and *Trail Trips: an Introduction to Hiking near Seattle*.

this success and several others that the idea of formalizing a conservation and stewardship-oriented organization developed. Fourteen years after its inception, *Signpost* magazine became the nonprofit Signpost Trails Association, which officially became the Washington Trails Association (WTA) in 1985. WTA then went on to establish its signature trail maintenance program in 1993, carrying on Louise's legacy as an environmental steward.

But before these sweeping changes took place, Louise kept herself constantly busy over the years, organizing trail maintenance work parties and establishing hiking groups. She started a local housewives' hiking group in the late 1960s, called the Happy Hikers. Located in South Snohomish County, it's through the Happy Hikers that I had the opportunity to meet and get to know Louise as we hiked together. I always enjoyed our brisk midweek walks on a rural county road, finishing in time to get back before my kids came home from school. Once again, she had anticipated a need and filled it.

## Pioneering national advocate

As she grew more interested in nation-wide advocacy efforts, Louise took advantage of her husband's airline employee flight privileges and often flew to Washington D.C. to advocate on behalf of our trails to officials in the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service. She also cofounded the American Hiking Society, serving as President and Chairman of the Board from 1986-89. As these efforts grew she helped the Washington Trails Association become a political force, with the advocacy arm of the organization taking on controversial issues of the day. Louise gradually turned the institution over to a competent board of directors, planning for the day when she would no longer be here.

In addition to her guidebooks, newsletter publication, and co-founding of both WTA and the American Hiking Society, Louise was the first woman to be elected to REI's Board of Directors. At

various times she was president, executive director, board member, and newsletter publisher at the Pacific Crest Trail Association. In 1996 she received the PCTA's Lifetime Achievement Award.

She was never a mountain climber, but Louise believed it was important to save public lands, keeping them wild and limiting our impact. She loved to feel the breath of cold wind coming off a snowfield or glacier. She enjoyed traveling under her own power, and the feeling of self-reliance she got from long backpacking trips into the mountain wilderness.

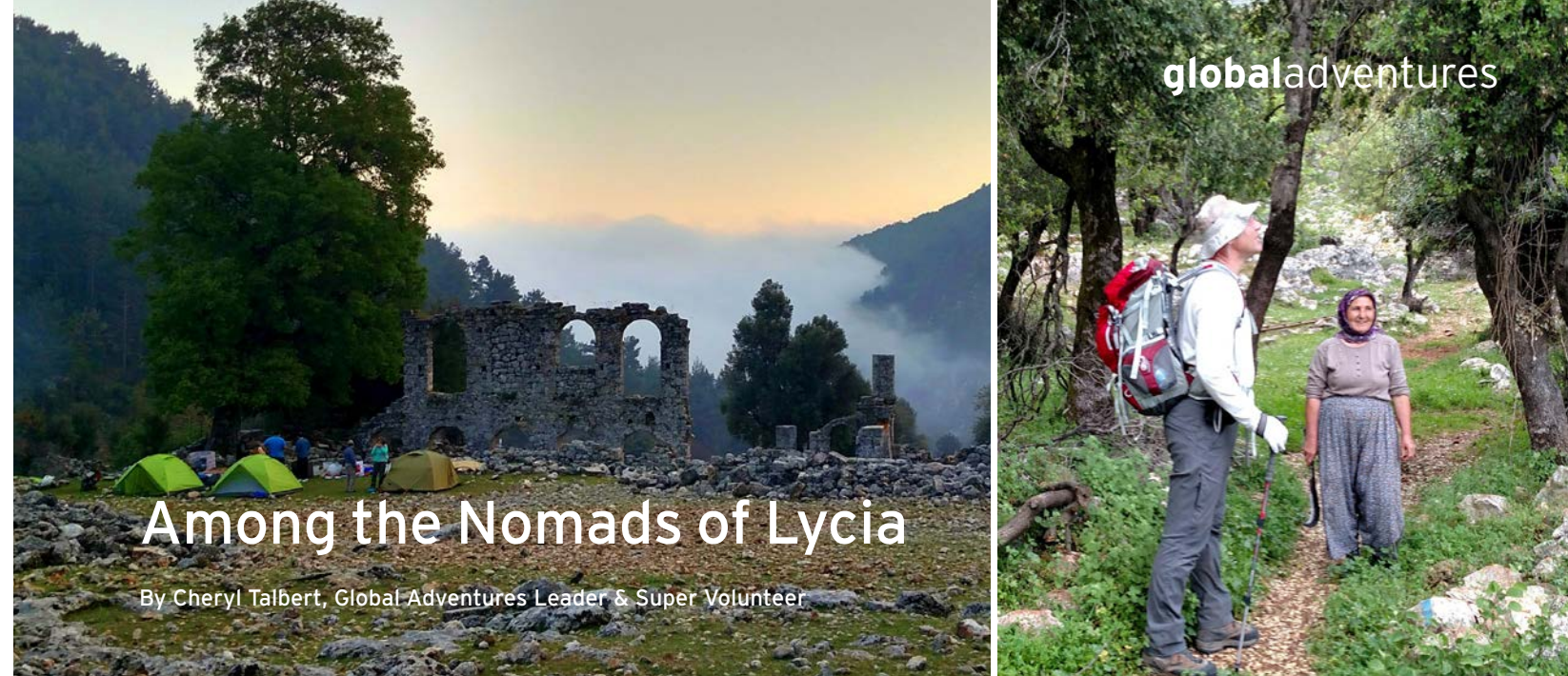
The last time I saw Louise, she was using a walker. Her daughter Ann was stepping down as editor of the magazine *Pack & Paddle*, and had scheduled a farewell party. I had hiked with both women and kayaked and canoed with Ann. I respected their strength and expertise. I told them how grateful I was for all they had contributed.

Louise asked what I had been up to, and when I said I had recently gone backpacking, she responded, "I am so jealous. Sit down, and tell me all about it."

Louise Marshall died in 2005 at the age of 90. Her legacy continues today with the strength and influence of all that she created, and the communities that formed around her work. We thank Louise for her tireless work championing our trails, seeking equality, and breaking ground on and off-trail. ▲▲

*Joan Burton is a 69-year member, lifelong outdoorswoman, and the author of the Mountaineers Books editions of Best Hikes with Kids: Western Washington & the Cascades. Joan is currently writing Early Women Climbers, Conservationists and Chroniclers in the Pacific Northwest, in which Louise Marshall will be one of her subjects.*

*Today our publishing division, Mountaineers Books, is run by a professional publishing staff who has strived to bring more women's voices to the outdoors through numerous guidebooks, narratives, and photography projects.*



## Among the Nomads of Lycia

By Cheryl Talbert, Global Adventures Leader & Super Volunteer

Chunks of rough rock covered our trail in the dry, scrubby foothills of the Taurus Mountains. The Mediterranean Sea glittered below us as we climbed, 85 miles into our 115-mile, 14-day journey.

Our Mountaineers group was walking the Lycian Way, a 500-kilometer coastal trail in southwestern Turkey that snakes through ancient Lycia. Built from old footpaths and mule trails, this trail offers a glimpse into the Bronze Age against the backdrop of a stunning coastline. That day we climbed past toppled Lycian sarcophagi and tumbled ruins of ancient stone wrapped in elegant red strawberry trees, a local variety of madrone.

As we crested the hilltop, maneuvering around boulders and clumps of vivid euphorbia, a compound of plastic-draped shacks emerged from the fog. Two big, cream-colored dogs rose and shook. The peeling of bells and the child-like screams of goats reached us through the murk.

Suddenly, tumbling through the trees, the goats arrived – black, white, spotted, horned and bearded, elderly and babies, pushing and shoving for a prime spot on the narrow path to look at us. As we walked forward they jostled to follow. If we turned to look at them they stopped short, their beady goat-eyes staring and beards quivering. Few creatures do curiosity better than a goat.

Bustling down the hill behind the goats was a compact and vigorous-looking woman in a headscarf, her long sleeves pushed up her arms and blousy pants gathered at the ankle in the local village style. Her face was creased with a cautious smile and she carried a large, curved machete (our Turkish guide later learned that it was for cutting branches to feed the youngest goats).

She was Yörük, a member of the nomadic herder population thought to be among the oldest-surviving inhabitants of the Taurus Mountains, and the last example of a traditional way of life that once dominated Anatolian culture. Since the eleventh century, the Yörük have made the long summer trek into the Taurus Mountains to pasture their goats, sheep, and horses,

returning to their coastal villages before the autumn snows. Though some remain nomadic, the vast majority now live and work in local towns, visiting their ancestral highlands for a picnic or family holiday.

The pride and richness of the nomadic tribes of southern Anatolia was on full display at a festival that came upon us unexpectedly in Demre the day before. We had spent the morning taking in stunning frescoes in the 5th century Church of St. Nicholas, Lycian cave tombs from the 12th century BC, and a first-century AD Roman amphitheater. Suddenly a bustle of music and color burst onto the sidewalk alongside our cafe. Several local tribes had gathered to connect and celebrate their distinctive music, crafts, and heritage. Each had their own brightly-colored traditional dress, musical instruments, beribboned donkeys and camels, and big smiles.

The next day's trekking route took us into a remote rocky valley where we camped under an arched wall from the sixth-century Alakalise church. Up the valley from the ruin, a pair of Yörük women set up a temporary compound, including a pen made of sticks and wire. As night fell the women and dogs brought in their herd of at least 50 goats and kids from the surrounding rocky pasture. A cacophony of frenzied bleating ricocheted between the valley walls. The women quickly milked the nanny goats, gently pushing away the young ones. As they finished, the animals quieted and peace settled over the valley. By early the next morning, the women, dogs, and goats had vanished into the day's pastures, and we began our own descent through the rocky hills that held a culture – both modern and ancient – in its arms. ▲▲

Interested in your own international experience? Though we've had to postpone our 2020 adventures, watch for more Global Adventures trips in 2021 and beyond, led by our experienced volunteers. For more information, visit [mountaineers.org/globaladventures](https://mountaineers.org/globaladventures).



## Virtual Education Center and Calendar

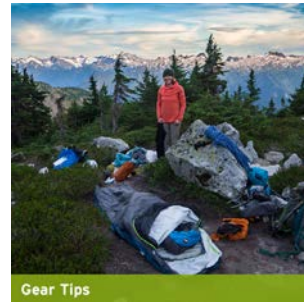
We're excited to invite you to check out our new Virtual Education Center and Calendar, your home base for accessing all of our great virtual learning tools! Find activities, events, and classes held online and browse our educational resources for skills and more.



Conservation & Advocacy



Fitness & Performance



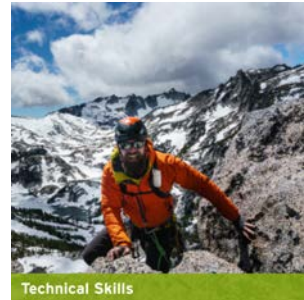
Gear Tips



Leadership Skills



Preparedness & Planning



Technical Skills

## How to Get Involved

### Step 1: Visit [mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center](https://www.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.

3

Online Courses

## What You'll Find\*

140

Educational Blogs

13

Virtual Events & Activities

\*As of August 15, 2020

## How to Sign Up for Activities

### Step 1

Visit our website

[www.mountaineers.org](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://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 our BeWild 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](mailto: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 assure 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 sending them an email. You can always email our member services team with questions at [info@mountaineers.org](mailto: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.



Due to COVID-19 risks activities, courses, and events may be cancelled or postponed. Please visit [mountaineers.org/covid19](https://mountaineers.org/covid19) for more details.

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](https://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**  
[mountaineers.org/bakerlodge](https://mountaineers.org/bakerlodge)

Our rustic Mt. Baker Lodge is nestled in the spectacular North Cascades and is a beautiful getaway all year round. Located within walking distance of the Mt. Baker Ski Area and numerous summer and fall hiking trails, enjoy the mountains and valleys in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and surrounding wilderness from the comfort of Baker Lodge.



**Meany Lodge**  
[mountaineers.org/meanylodge](https://mountaineers.org/meanylodge)

Located off I-90 at exit 62 (Stampede Pass exit), Meany Lodge provides a warm, family-friendly environment. We offer our own ski hill and backcountry skiing, hiking, and biking are only steps away. As soon as safety permits, we'll open for work parties with opportunities to learn new skills, meet new friends, and contribute to the community. The lodge sleeps 97 people and is available for meetings, conferences, and wedding rentals.



**Stevens Lodge**  
[mountaineers.org/stevenslodge](https://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 the fall, 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.



**Kitsap Forest Theater**  
[foresttheater.com](https://foresttheater.com)

Theater inspired by a magical place! Join us for a grand adventure as you stroll down the forested trail to our breathtaking theater and create a treasured family tradition. Due to COVID-19 concerns, both 2020 shows have been postponed to 2021. Tickets are available online, save on our two-show package. Tickets already purchased are valid for next year's productions. Please see our website for show dates and more information.

**Disney's Beauty and the Beast:** Showing spring 2021, this "tale as old as time" is perfect for the entire family. Be our guest for this heartwarming tale of true love and transformation, filled with unforgettable songs and thrilling pageantry.

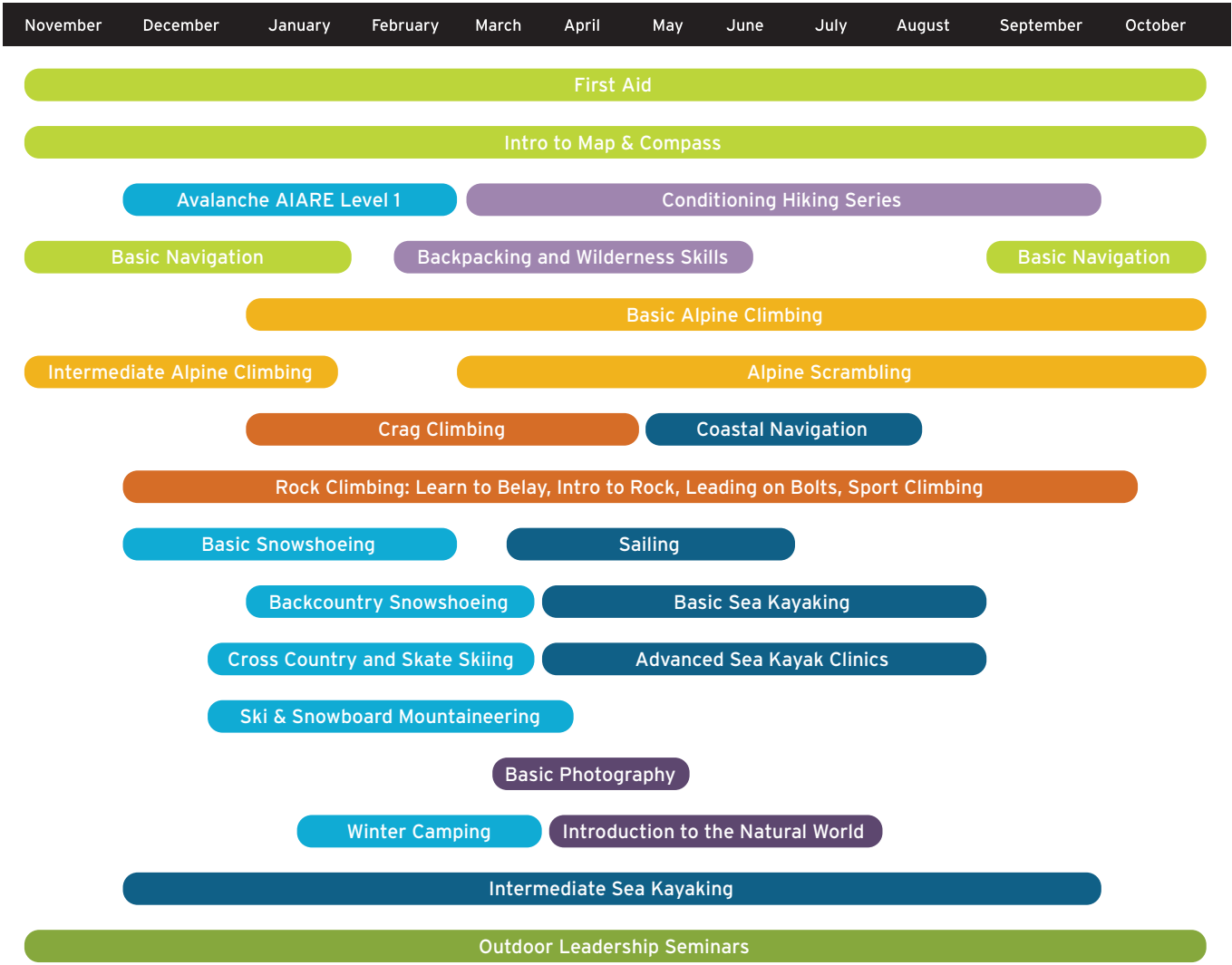
**Bend in the Road - The Anne of Green Gables Musical:** In summer 2021, join us for the Northwest premier of this high-energy, reimagined musical based on the beloved classic *Anne of Green Gables*. Retaining the heart of the original story, this warm, funny musical is perfect for all ages



## The Mountaineers Course Overview

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:



You can access all of our offerings online, with up-to-date information on subject matter, materials, and rosters. If you already have the skills covered by one of our introductory courses and want to participate in that type of activity, contact member services at [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org) to find out how to qualify for equivalency. To see our courses, visit [www.mountaineers.org](https://www.mountaineers.org). We hope to see you outside!



Due to COVID-19 risks activities, courses, and events may be cancelled or postponed. Please visit [mountaineers.org/covid19](https://mountaineers.org/covid19) for more details.

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](https://mountaineers.org/locations-lodges).



BELLINGHAM

**Chair:** Krissy Fagan, [kristenfagan@hotmail.com](mailto:kristenfagan@hotmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/bellingham](https://mountaineers.org/bellingham)

**Courses & Activities:** climbing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, scrambling, and stewardship.

You'll find the Bellingham Branch tucked alongside the craggy expanse of the North Cascades. Our close-knit community offers climbing courses, hiking trips, and more. 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:** Elaina Jorgensen, [elaina.jorgensen@gmail.com](mailto:elaina.jorgensen@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/everett](https://mountaineers.org/everett)

**Courses & Activities:** aavalanche 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 over a dozen programs. As a smaller branch, we value companionship and regularly host events including monthly open houses and annual gatherings like 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 and continues to maintain the historic Mt. Pilchuck lookout.

KITSAP

**Chair:** Bill Bandrowski, [bill.bandrowski@gmail.com](mailto:bill.bandrowski@gmail.com)

**Secretary:** Christine Grenier, [highroadhiker@wavecable.com](mailto:highroadhiker@wavecable.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/kitsap](https://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:** Bill Ashby, [wsashby@gmail.com](mailto:wsashby@gmail.com)

**Chair Elect:** Jared Pearce, [jared.pearce@gmail.com](mailto:jared.pearce@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/seattle](https://mountaineers.org/seattle)

**Activities & Courses:** 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, and stewardship.

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. Our branch is growing rapidly, and we are actively seeking people to support our community - no prior experience required. Visit our branch calendar for details

FOOTHILLS (I90-I405 CORRIDOR)

**Chair:** Cheryl Talbert, [cascadehiker@earthlink.net](mailto:cascadehiker@earthlink.net)

**Websites:** [mountaineers.org/foothills](https://mountaineers.org/foothills)

**Courses & Activities:** AIARE avalanche safety, backcountry and downhill skiing, conservation and stewardship, cross-country skiing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, scrambling, snowshoeing, and trail running - and a brand new climbing program!

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 stewardship

events with the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, film screenings, guest speakers, and other community events. 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, [cstock34@msn.com](mailto:cstock34@msn.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/tacoma](https://mountaineers.org/tacoma)

**Activities & Courses:** 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.

OLYMPIA

**Chair:** Bob Keranen, [keranen@hcc.net](mailto:keranen@hcc.net)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/olympia](https://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 speaker series and potluck** is postponed until further notice due to COVID-19 concerns.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held on Zoom the second Wednesday of the month. Members are encouraged to attend. Contact Bob Keranen for info.

Get Involved With Your Branch

**Visit Your Branch Page** Go to [mountaineers.org](https://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](https://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](https://mountaineers.org/events). From this page, you can select your branch calendar.

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

**Branch eNewsletters** Branch eNewsletters are a great way to stay up to date. To opt into these emails, visit [mountaineers.org/profile](https://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.*

Board & Branch Elections October 1-21, 2020

As a volunteer-led, nonprofit organization, The Mountaineers depends on the generosity, initiative, and leadership from volunteers to further our mission to transform lives and protect wild places for generations to come. Each fall we host elections for our Board of Directors and participating branch leadership. Your vote is important, and we value your participation in the election process for these volunteer leaders!

The Mountaineers will be sending members an electronic ballot on October 1, 2020. Electronic ballots are preferred, but mail-in votes will also be accepted if postmarked by October 21. To learn about the 2020 Board of Director candidates, our branch elections, and how to vote, please visit [mountaineers.org/elections2020](https://mountaineers.org/elections2020)

This year, voters will weigh in on:

- Four Directors at Large positions on the Board of Directors
- Branch elections for Foothills

At The Mountaineers Virtual Annual Meeting on Tuesday, September 15 from 6-7pm, we will present the board endorsed candidates for Directors at Large positions on the Board of Directors. This meeting also offers an opportunity for The Mountaineers membership to make At-Large Director nominations from the floor for the 2020 election season.



Rich Johnson  
(4-year member)



Maya Magarati  
(16-year member)



Manisha Powar  
(12-year member)



Paul Stevenson  
(30-year member)





# BIRDING BASICS

## Start a lifelong journey of bird watching

By Thomas Bancroft, Ornithologist & Mountaineers Leader

On the boardwalk at the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Donna Hahn.

The Black-capped Chickadee flitted through the fir branches. It was about the size of two ping-pong balls, and nimble – it twisted, turned, and darted through my Seattle neighborhood. This bird is common across much of North America and always brings a sense of joy each time I see one. In fact, it may be one of the first birds I learned to identify when my mother caught me sitting in the kitchen sink, watching birds coming to her feeders. I was five, and she patiently stood behind me naming each species. Almost 65 years later I remain delighted by these incredible creatures, and I would like to share with you some of the lessons I have learned in my many (well-spent) years of birdwatching.

### Why choose birding?

Curiosity and patience are the only prerequisites to birding. It's a hobby that can be done anywhere; out the kitchen window, in your neighborhood, or on a backpacking trip into the backcountry. Most birds are out in the day, and they occur in all habitats; busy cities, wild deserts, oceans, and from valleys to mountaintops. I've watched Pied-billed Grebes and Buffleheads dive for food in the little ponds at Magnuson Park, Dark-eyed Juncos sing from branches sticking over the meadows at St. Edwards Park, and American Pipits feed in the alpine meadows of Mt. Baker. As a birder, I know there is always more to see and something new around the next corner. One spring in Umtanum Canyon, a hen turkey shot out from behind a shrub and began to charge us. She spread her wings and darted toward us before running off, squawking and flapping her wings. We had inadvertently scared her off her nest, and left quickly so she could return to her mothering. Being able to identify and understand these animals adds an entirely new dimension to our time outdoors.

### Tools of the trade

One of the best parts of birding is the ease of entrance; a pair of binoculars and a method of identification are all you need to get started. A seven or eight-power pair is perfect, as more power can make it harder to hold the binoculars still. Audubon's nature shops or an outdoor retail shop will often have multiple kinds to let you get a feel for what works best for you. For instance, glasses wearers should find binoculars that work with them.

A good bird book and the Merlin App for smartphones will get you far. Books come in many forms; some use paintings, others drawings or photographs, and they often present the characteristics to check in different ways. The most important thing is to pick one that works for you. Another big decision is choosing a national or regional birding book. For a starter book I often recommend one for the west, because it will be focused on just the birds west of the Mississippi. Peterson and Sibley make popular western ones, and regional ones by John Shewey or Tom Aversa are good too.

Available for both iPhone and Android, the Merlin app is free and produced by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. The app is interactive and very helpful to new birders developing their identification skills. Cornell has produced bird identification packs for most of the world, making Merlin an excellent travel partner.

### Key tips

It's easy to be overwhelmed with the vast numbers of birds found in the northwest, each with a different set of plumages, calls, and behaviors. Here are a few tips to keep in mind to start you out on the right foot:



A Black-capped Chickadee in Seward Park. Photo by Thomas Bancroft.



A Bullock's Oriole in Moses Lake. Photo by Thomas Bancroft.

### See past the feathers

Top birders don't focus on the fine details of a bird's plumage. Rather, they focus on five characteristics: size and shape, color patterns, behaviors, habitat, and sounds. They try to find at least three things out of these, though more is better. Behaviors such as how they fly, how they feed, and what they eat are all unique to the lifestyle of a species. Similarly, birds must make a living and are therefore often tied to a habitat – forests, wetlands, grassland, shorelines, or oceans – for all their needs. For example, when visiting Discovery Park in Seattle or Marymoor Park in Redmond, I look for Savannah Sparrows giving their three-part song from a grass stem in the fields, Spotted Towhees and Song Sparrows flicking dead leaves under bushes, or Pacific Wrens belting out their songs – a tumbling series of trills – in the dense woods. Size and shape can separate birds into groups. Many birds can even be identified from a silhouette alone.

### Mistakes are okay

New birders should not fear making mistakes in identification. I still make errors, and I've been doing this all my life. On a field trip for a class last winter, I identified five birds on the breakwater near Edmonds Pier as Rock Sandpipers. That evening when I looked at my photographs, they were all Surfbirds – a different sandpiper. Embarrassed, I projected the images in the next class and showed everyone my error. We laughed and learned together.

### Start slow & have fun!

My final advice for birding is to go slowly and not to put pressure on yourself to identify everything. Sometimes just identifying the group to which a bird belongs is perfect. You might recognize that it's a sparrow, warbler, or duck, and that's a great start. Bird with other people when you get a chance. We all see the world in different ways; learn from them.

Start with local birds in your neighborhood or a nearby park and expand out as your confidence and interest grow. A trip to a National Wildlife Refuge such as Nisqually, Protection

Island, or Columbia will add many species of ducks, shorebirds, and others. I've backpacked into subalpine lakes in the North Cascades to look for winnowing Wilson's Snipe and singing Hermit Thrushes. A summer trip to Sinlahekin or Okanogan can add species like Yellow-breasted Chat, Eastern & Western kingbirds, calling loons, and breeding goldeneyes. Friends that mountain climb tease me that they've seen Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, a bird of the high elevations, on their ascents of Mt. Rainier or Baker.

I've been an ornithologist my entire life, but I still feel like a little kid when I see birds. These little feather balls offer a view onto the natural world, revealing things you may not have otherwise seen. Throughout the Stay at Home order I watched birds out my windows, in my yard, and on neighborhood walks. I began to expect certain birds at particular places, like the junco singing from my neighbor's dormer, the crow greeting me when I stepped out to fill the feeders, or the chickadee giving his "Hey Sweetie" song by the neighborhood playground. As spring came, I started to look for Western Tanagers, Yellow Warblers, and Black-headed Grosbeaks that had spent the winter farther south. As summer approached, I anticipated recently-fledged juncos, finches, and bushtits visiting my feeders. With fall others have come, as the ducks that moved far north to breed return to Washington, the Hermit Thrushes that went up into the mountains for the summer move to lower elevations, and the Snow Geese from the Arctic winter in the Skagit. The orioles, tanagers, and many of the warblers will head south, leaving Washington until the next spring. Birds deliver a lifelong journey of discovery, learning, joy, and solace. I encourage you to take the first step into their incredible world.▲▲

Thomas Bancroft is career biologist, ornithologist, photographer, and former Chief Scientist for the National Audubon Society. You can see his photography at [thomasbancroft.com](http://thomasbancroft.com), or look for one of his birding courses at [mountaineers.org/courses](http://mountaineers.org/courses).



## **YOUR RETIREMENT PLAN CAN PROTECT THE FUTURE OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

You can plan for the future of outdoor education and take care of your heirs by naming The Mountaineers or Mountaineers Books as a beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k), or other qualified retirement plan. This flexible giving option is quick and easy: you simply sign a paper or online form to designate The Mountaineers as a full, partial, or contingent beneficiary. Planning your legacy today will ensure the strength of The Mountaineers tomorrow and may help your heirs to avoid income and estate taxes – and you can change your mind at any time.

To learn more or let us know about your legacy gift, call Assistant Development Director Brianne Vanderlinden at 206-521-6006 or visit [mountaineers.org/legacy](https://mountaineers.org/legacy).

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