



March 2020

Naturalists

ONE STEP AT A TIME

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In the Native Plant Garden



George Macomber is our weeding king

No flowers to show, but flowers in waiting and lots of labels. If you want a real challenge, try identifying plants by stems only, or stems and leaves. The garden is now a joint project with the Washington Native Plant Society.

A visit there will provide peeks of birds, lot of examples of our native trees and shrubs labeled for easy identification. It is an oasis in an exposed, parking-lot-like part of Magnuson park. On your next visit to the Mountaineers club take a moment to visit the garden and connect with the natural world and memories of your hikes through it.

There will be several work parties into the spring. Working alongside native plant society members is an opportunity for us to learn more about native plant habitats and care. Those of you that are interested in participating can e-mail George Macomber (georgems@98115.net). He will put you on the mailing list for work parties.

Check out the garden. It is just by the climbing rocks on the north end of the Seattle clubhouse. No watering needed right now! The garden is a spot of pseudo nature in the midst of a concrete accretion. It is a sign of promises to come as its flowering precedes most natural blooming times.

February Naturalist Hikes

MOSS WORKSHOP HIKE - FEBRUARY 1



Rough skinned newt

FEBRUARY 9 – PORT ANGELES AND NORTH OLYMPIC COAST



FEBRUARY 8 – PADILLA BAY



Snow geese on the wing



Harlequin ducks



Our national birds considering secession



Juvenile mew gull(s)

February Hikes (Continued)



Sandpiper peeping for food

FEBRUARY 14 – EDMONDS MARSH AND MARINE COAST



Red breasted merganser



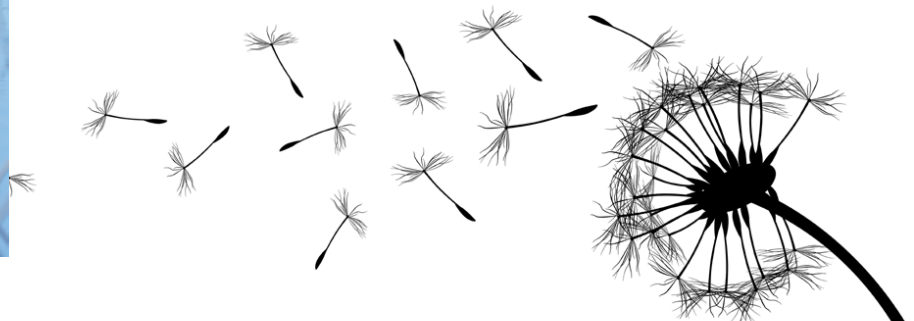
Osoberry in flower



Anna's hummingbird



Common goldeneye female

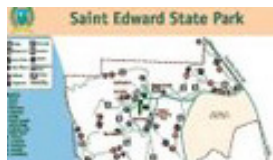


Upcoming Hikes

Sign up online under *Explore, Find Activities* and check exploring nature (or *Activity Listings* button below).

The mountain hiking season is nigh upon us, and we nats have many offerings to enjoy.

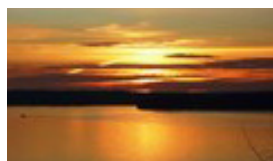
[Activity Listings - Click for Full List](#)



Saint Edward State Park

FEBRUARY 28 – GORDIE SWARTZMAN

Gordie and Stewart walk at St Edwards Park on Lake Washington, then bird Juanita Bay and walk O.O. Denny Park to see the largest Douglas fir in king county (woowoo).



Lincoln Park

FEBRUARY 29 – SHELLEY WILLIAMS

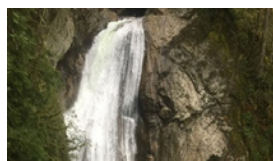
A leisurely walk around Lincoln Park to spot and photograph winter birds.



Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary

FEBRUARY 29 – JOHN & TRACIE BELL

This will be an all day field trip into a top birding spot in Canada, not far from the US border.



Twin Falls

MARCH 7 – STEWART HOUGEN

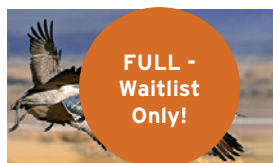
An easy river walk with many mosses, geological features, fine falls and signs of spring.



Tule & Lower Klamath Lakes

MARCH 12-16 | LINDA MOORE

Birding in deep south Oregon at Tule and Lower Klamath Lakes. Migrating ducks abound as do many other spring migrants.

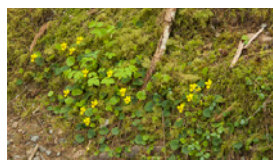


FULL -
Waitlist
Only!

Coulee Corridor Birding Trail

MARCH 27-29 – ANITA ELDER

Grab your camera and join us on this 3-day road trip along the birding trail where we could see migrating sandhill cranes, raptors, and hundreds of other birds.



Shady Lane & Staircase Rapids

APRIL 4 – OLYMPIA BRANCH NATURALISTS

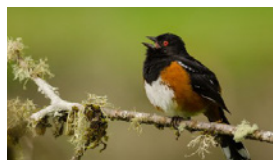
We'll hike down the Shady Lane and adjoining Staircase Rapids Loop trails, enjoying early spring wildflowers, wildlife -- potentially including the NF Skokomish Elk, and geologic features.



Catherine Creek

APRIL 4-5 – GORDIE SWARTZMAN AND STEWART HOUGEN

Gordie and Stewart will lead a weekend flowerganza to waterfalls and flower abundant sites along the Columbia Gorge. Hope for the rare Columbia kittentails as we preview our flower season and see some fine birds as well.



Stillwater Unit

APRIL 4– ANITA ELDER

Join us as we explore the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area - Stillwater Unit in search of birds to identify and photograph!

Naturalists Fall-Winter Lecture Series

SEATTLE PROGRAM CENTER, 7 PM

Free to Naturalist Study Group members, public welcome – donation

MARCH 11, 2020 (WED) | DAVID GIBLIN



Burke Museum Web Resources and Apps

David Giblin, Collections Manager, University of Washington Herbarium, Burke Museum, will give a talk on the various web resources and apps that are available through the Burke Museum Image Collection and affiliated resources and the many ways amateur naturalists might be able to benefit from these resources

Central Puget Sound Chapter/Washington Native Plant Society Program

Insights into the Flora of the San Juan Islands

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2020, 7:00PM,

PETER DUNWIDDIE



Seattle Program Center, Goodman C, 7700 Sand Point Way N.E., Seattle

Refreshments, Public Invited, Admission is free.

Donations are appreciated!

Doors open at 6:00 PM for the Native Plant Identification Workshop

Prior to 2005, the flora of most islands in the San Juan archipelago had never been studied. Over the past 15 years, our understanding has begun to change as a result of detailed surveys we have conducted documenting the vascular plants found on over 125 islands. While such a large number of species lists might seem eye-glazing to an extreme, these data provide a remarkable resource for exploring diverse, fascinating questions regarding the biogeography of islands in the Salish Sea. In this talk I

will draw on these data to trace some surprising patterns relating to the abundance and distribution of species, and how characters such as mode of dispersal, species origin (native versus non-native), rarity, island size, and remoteness (distance from the mainland or other source areas), affect the composition of species on different islands.

Upcoming Programs:

4-2-20 WALTER FERTIG | STALKING THE WILY YETI PHLOX: ADVENTURES IN RARE PLANT HUNTING IN WASHINGTON

The Mountaineers, Goodman C

4-14-20 DONOVAN TRACY | EXPANDING OUR INTEREST IN NATIVE PLANTS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

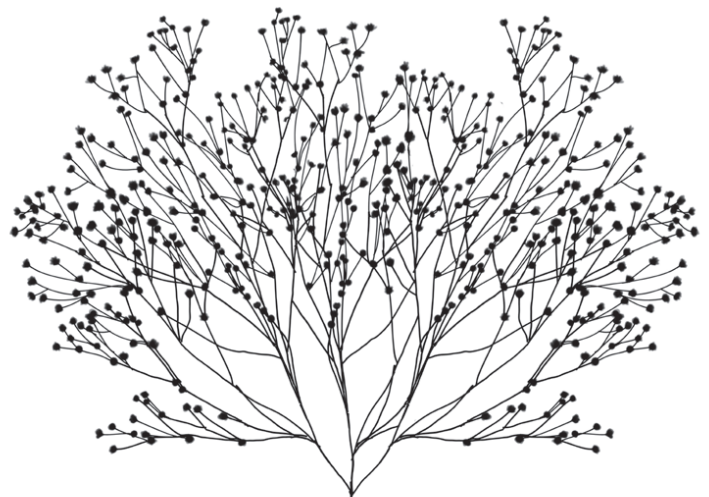
Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center

5-7-20 PROGRAM TO BE DETERMINED

Center for Urban Horticulture

6-23-20 RAY IZUMI | SNOQUALMIE SEEPS"

Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center



Seattle Youth Clubs at the Mountaineers

The Youth Clubs are building a schedule for the spring and summer. They are hoping that some volunteers from the Naturalist Group would be interested in working with them to bring some learning about the natural world to their effort. They have three age groups: Pioneers (aged 7-9 with parents), Explores (aged 10-13 with parents), and MAC (aged 14 -18).

Tentatively, they are planning a Stewardship Weekend for April 4 & 5 for the Pioneers group and would love to include nature-based lessons and hands on activity that might help children connect with the natural world and begin to learn about it.

If interested please contact Tailor Dolgin, Youth Field Coordinator at the Mountaineers, tailord@mountaineers.org – 206-521-6046

Odds & Ends

Naturalist facebook group:



The Facebook Group is a group of Mountaineers who have a passion for the natural world and want to learn more about it.

It is called The Mountaineers Naturalist Group. It is open to Mountaineers Members who are affiliated with the Naturalist Program, either as a current or past student of the Intro to the Natural World course or as a member of the Naturalist Study Group. It provides a place for members to share photos of their hikes and trips, as well as to help with identification of species.

People can search for it on Facebook and ask to join. If they are a current member of The Mountaineers and affiliated with the Naturalist Program, they will be added.

The group is open only to Mountaineers Members as it helps us build camaraderie among our members. (There are many other Facebook groups open to all such as the Washington Native Plant Society and Western Washington Birders.)

Poetry

ODE ON THE SPRING

By Thomas Gray

Lo! where the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Fair Venus' train appear,
Disclose the long-expecting flowers,
And wake the purple year!
The Attic warbler pours her throat,
Responsive to the cuckoo's note,
The untaught harmony of spring:
While whisp'ring pleasure as they fly,
Cool zephyrs thro' the clear blue sky
Their gather'd fragrance fling.

Where'er the oak's thick branches stretch
A broader, browner shade;
Where'er the rude and moss-grown beech
O'er-canopies the glade,
Beside some water's rushy brink
With me the Muse shall sit, and think
(At ease reclin'd in rustic state)
How vain the ardour of the crowd,
How low, how little are the proud,
How indigent the great!

Still is the toiling hand of Care:
The panting herds repose:
Yet hark, how thro' the peopled air
The busy murmur glows!
The insect youth are on the wing,
Eager to taste the honied spring,
And float amid the liquid noon:
Some lightly o'er the current skim,
Some show their gaily-gilded trim
Quick-glancing to the sun.

To Contemplation's sober eye
Such is the race of man:
And they that creep, and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.
Alike the busy and the gay
But flutter thro' life's little day,
In fortune's varying colours drest:
Brush'd by the hand of rough Mischance,
Or chill'd by age, their airy dance
They leave, in dust to rest.

Methinks I hear in accents low
The sportive kind reply:
Poor moralist! and what art thou?
A solitary fly!
Thy joys no glitt'ring female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
No painted plumage to display:
On hasty wings thy youth is flown;
Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone—

Odds & Ends (Continued)

We frolic, while 'tis May.

SPRING, THE SWEET SPRING

By Thomas Nash

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king,
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to witta-woo!
Spring, the sweet spring!

THE WALK

By Thomas Hardy

You did not walk with me
Of late to the hill-top tree
By the gated ways,
As in earlier days;
You were weak and lame,
So you never came,
And I went alone, and I did not mind,
Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day
Just in the former way;
Surveyed around
The familiar ground
By myself again:
What difference, then?
Only that underlying sense
Of the look of a room on returning thence.

SWEET WAS THE WALK

Poem by William Wordsworth

Sweet was the walk along the narrow lane
At noon, the bank and hedge-rows all the way
Shagged with wild pale green tufts of fragrant hay,
Caught by the hawthorns from the loaded wain,
Which Age with many a slow stoop strove to gain;
And childhood, seeming still most busy, took
His little rake; with cunning side-long look,
Sauntering to pluck the strawberries wild, unseen.
Now, too, on melancholy's idle dreams
Musing, the lone spot with my soul agrees,
Quiet and dark; for through the thick wove trees
Scarce peeps the curious star till solemn gleams
The clouded moon, and calls me forth to stray

Thro' tall, green, silent woods and ruins gray.

LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

By William Wordsworth

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

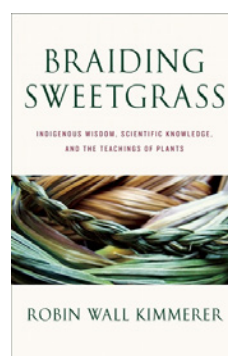
To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?



Book Review

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER'S BOOK BRAIDING SWEETGRASS

By Gordie Swartzman

As far as I remember we've never had a book review in the Nat's newsletter. It seemed appropriate to write about this one.

Every once in awhile a book comes along that strikes a chord in study of the natural world. It is not a field guide, nor a scientific treatise. However, it combines three strands of background; a naturalist and lover a nature, a scientist, and a native American by heritage. Kimmerer (I'll call her Robin, since it feels familiar like the book) reveals her stance on tender issues in America's relationship to both native cultures and to the natural world through a series of anecdotes, short bios of people who are making a difference, historical facts, native lore and beliefs all told with a love and respect for nature.

For me this was a book to be digested and pondered on. I think it is easy for native Americans to demonize our

Odds & Ends (Continued)

approach to ecosystems, but Robin does it tenderly and admits her own compromised nature because she was trained as and works as a scientist and because she is, like most of us, a consumer of resources. I was impressed by her vulnerability shown through as she learned lessons humbly, and as she revisited and tried to relearn her native past, as many native Americans are now doing. She walks a tightrope between blame and hopefulness around some issues such as Lake Onondaga, next to where she lives having three superfund sites. Here she lays out the facts pretty graphically and with anecdotes, but ends on reconstruction efforts that she is witnessing and the positive changes they are making to both the environment and self esteem of the (mostly non-native American) inhabitants (homo sapiens) of the area.

I was surprised that Robin wrote about forest reconstruction in Oregon (since she is from Oklahoma and lives in the East) and that she knew a lot about moss ecology and life history. I later found out that she has written a recent book about mosses, also in a similar style to Sweetgrass.

Most unique in the book are many anecdotes and much information on native plant use, collecting and processing. I learned a lot here, for example the value of hawthorne and shelf fungus as medicines.

Sweetgrass is used as a metaphor for the special value of plants that may often be seen as weeds. In some ways the strands braided together are like her separate histories as teacher, scientist, mother, native American, curious hiker and witness of the effects of historical attitudes about natives (Carlyle Indian School where they 'Killed the Indian, but saved the man'), ecosystems and development.

Robin takes time to share her learning about native cultures. She includes synopses of many native myths, with explanation of their meaning, and the Onondaga Thanksgiving Address in its entirety—a paean to the earth, waters, sun, moon, and “all our relations”. Here she contrasts it with the pledge of allegiance, a mythical pledge with mostly empty words and argues that recital of the former would reflect a more nurturing side of humans. Who pledges allegiance to a flag anyways?

Robin asks a lot of questions and lets us supply our own answers. Yet her take is always clear and I think it will resonate with many of you. Robin can even wax eloquent, and we must remember the spiritual nature of our being in nature. We must be thankful we still have it, and we must show our thanks in any way we can.

I found the book continually surprising, always entertaining, and frequently poetic. Where will Robin go next?

Volunteers Needed!

Social Naturalist Get Together and Volunteer Opportunities

MARCH 9, 2020 | 7PM | GOODMAN A

We are hosting a social get together on March 9th in Goodman A at the Seattle Program Center to chat, mingle, and solicit help with our 2020 course. Our hope is to be joined by new and returning volunteers and to help you find or return to the volunteer role you are most interested in.

We are looking for aid with the following roles:

- helping at lectures with hands on work, sitting with students at tables and helping with identification using apps, charts, and books
- seasoned field trip leaders who would like to mentor new volunteers/assistant leaders
- folks who want to volunteer as field trip leaders or assistant leaders
- curriculum review: reviewing discreet portions of our curriculum before we teach it (can be done from home)
- presenting in the class: we have the course all plotted out, but are always happy for new people who are interested in giving some of the lecture portions
- collecting specimens before our classes (ferns, tree clippings, cones). Can be done on your own or with groups Stewart Hougen will be organizing
- helping with set up and break down of the tables and chairs and greeting students as they arrive
- suggestions of a short ice breaker exercise that we can use for students sitting at round tables at the beginning of each lecture
- other tasks I might have missed, but you see and want to take on? Let me know!

We will have sign up sheets at the event on March 9th and volunteers who will be able to explain the tasks. If you cannot attend the March 9 event, but want to help out, that is no problem. Please email Danielle (email on last page) your interest area and dates/classes/field trips you have in mind.

RSVP

Odds & Ends (Continued)

Going Macro for Mosses

BY HEIDI WALKER



Sweet sounds of rain splattering on the window remind me of all the glorious greens growing in the forest – budding leaves on bushes, sprouts pushing up through the soil, ferns unfurling their fronds, mosses soaking up the rain. I think mosses and lichens add the most variety in the tones of green in these winter months with gold grasses in the meadows and leafless trees lining the trail. Look closely at those bare trees and you will find that they are not so barren after all. Delightful mosses, lichens, and liverworts decorate the dormant trees – and pretty much every surface you see as you look around your environment.

I love to photograph the fantastic variety of these little plants with their beautiful and intricate details. And if I am ever stumped while looking at them, I can look at the photos later when trying to identify what they are. Most of the time I'm just happy to tell the difference between a lichen and liverwort. But with photos, I can take them home to examine without disrupting the ecosystem when pulling up plants to take home. To do that though, good photos need to be made; photos that are clear to see the details.

I'd like to share with you some tips and tricks for photographing smaller specimens of the plant kingdom for yourself.

EQUIPMENT:

First, let's talk about working distance. Ever notice that when you're trying to get a close image of a plant sometimes the plant is out of focus but the background is in focus? That is because

the lens on your camera has a distance that it's required to be from the subject to focus on it. Much like your eyes. If you bring something too close to your eyes, you can't focus on it. If you find this happening with your photos, do as you would do with your eyes - back up a bit. But then you come into the problem that you want to be closer because you want to photograph all those details. Well there are certain things you can do to help minimize the working distance. We'll go through them next.

Any camera can record macro images, you just need the right lens or accessories to help you get there.

First are diopter filters or close-up filters. These are filters that attach to the front of your lens and are similar in appearance to a magnifying glass. They are generally cheap and quick to use – just screw them onto the front of your lens. They come in varying magnifications and you can stack them so you can get really close to your subject. One downside is that sometimes the image is out of focus near the edges, but generally it's not the edges you are concerned about. When I'm hiking, I opt for diopter filters because of their ease in use and I love the softness around the edges.

Another relatively inexpensive accessory are extension tubes. These attach to your camera then the lens is attached to the tube – so between the camera and lens. This helps add a magnification distance between the lens element and sensor. These are a little more cumbersome to use and often you must make a menu adjustment in camera to be able to release the shutter if it can't find the lens sensor. I just keep my camera programmed to release



Odds & Ends (Continued)



the shutter without a reading from the lens. You also end up with less light hitting the sensor so increasing ISO or shutter speed is a must. I use extension tubes when I'm hanging out in a park or garden and want to take my time and experiment.

If you can afford to buy a macro lens, then this is the best way to go. A good quality macro lens will be sharp on the edges and you don't have to mess around with attaching various accessories. But they can get expensive.

Point-and-shoot cameras have a program adjustment for taking macro images. Look for the icon that looks like a flower. But remember your working distance – check your images to make sure the camera is focusing on your subject. If you are using a smart phone, there are macro lens attachments that you can pick up that are inexpensive and help you get super close for all those fine details.

Now that you have what you need to get in close on these little beauties let's talk about some things to keep in mind while getting lost in a miniature world of mosses and lichens.

Look for decent light conditions. While we think the best photos are taken on clear days with a bright sun beaming down and warming the earth, bright sunlight actually doesn't make pretty photos. They are often filled with harsh highlights and dense shadows that obscure the details of your subject. The very details you want to photograph. Go out instead on overcast days when the clouds help disperse the light to fall more evenly on your subject. If you're out on sunny days, look for subjects in the shade or bring a friend who would be willing to stand in the sun for you.

Remember your composition ideas such as Rule of Thirds, Balance, and Leading Lines. Even though you're photographing a world in miniature, you'll want to make the image pleasing to your eye. Play with your composition by moving left and right, up and down, in and out. With digital, the only limit to how many images you can create is your willingness to edit through them all.

If you have a camera where you can manipulate the aperture, then play. A large aperture in macro images will have a very narrow plane of focus. You can create stylistic images with only a little portion in focus. If you want more of the plant in focus, close down the aperture. However, with macro you still might not get everything you want in focus even with a small aperture. This is when you want to reposition your camera. Look at how the plant is laying and the area you want in focus. Now make sure the back of the camera and with it the sensor is parallel to the plant. If you are photographing a plant in profile there is more surface distance to get into focus, but if you position the camera parallel to the "face" there is actually less surface distance. Try it – it's a fascinating experiment.

FINALLY, HAVE PATIENCE. PHOTOGRAPHING A MICRO WORLD TAKES PRACTICE AND PATIENCE. BUT IS SO MUCH FUN IN THE TRYING.



Schizophyllum commune Split gill fungi by Anita Elder



Sarcoscypha coccinea posted for Valentine's Day by Kelli Marks



Saxifrage by Grace Winer



Robin by Grace Winer





Heron City. Photo by Donna Hahn

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We welcome comments, ideas, information to share, original short articles, and photos. If you have information you'd like to have appear in the newsletter, please send it to Gordie (g.swartzman@gmail.com).