

# One Step at a Time

Newsletter of the Mountaineers Naturalist Group  
December 2016

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## Photos from our November naturalist hikes



Examining an ephemeral liverwort fructing body for the moss workshop (it is the orange orb)



Wallace Falls hike – mosses, mushrooms and waterfalls. Chanterelles growing among lanky moss



Buck Lake park native plant garden at Hansville Greenway. Mushrooms in niches with cattail moss. What made the holes?

## In the Garden – What's happening in our species garden?

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The garden is mostly senescent. I'm including a bit of something I wrote about the garden with an idea to publish it in the mountaineer's magazine. It is a work in progress.

Why a species garden?

The species garden provides a nearby place to see both rare and common plants, mostly labelled, and to thereby have a better chance at identification of these when encountered on the trail. Surprisingly, many people recognize different plants, yet know very little about them. While birding has become something of a national pastime, 'flowering' is something mostly appreciated at the level of their beauty, rather than their place in the ecosystem. By having plants divided by habitats we promote an understanding of differences in form and function that work in different habitats. For example, many of the plants in the alpine habitat grow close to the ground and have a gray tinge to their foliage, to deal with the high winds and high ultraviolet from the sun in alpine areas. Plants growing close to the ground experienced reduced wind levels. Gray foliage makes more reflection of sunlight and these plants also commonly have wax on their foliage to reduce UV exposure. They too suffer from 'sunburn'.

The species garden is used as part of the Introduction to the Natural World class, an introduction to nature study offered annually in the spring and summer. A stewardship session is offered where students learn how to examine flowers up close using a magnifying loupe, and also how to identify plants using keys. A series of find-it games give students a chance to roam the garden looking closely at the plants to be able to identify them at the family level (plants following the great Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus are organized into similar species call genres and these are grouped into families). Since plant diversity is so great, learning how to distinguish plants by family and what features are commonly used to do so gives students confidence in plant identification, since there are so many fewer common families than species. These sessions also have a stewardship component with weeding, watering, laying down chips and planting new additions. One benefit for the beginning naturalist is to learn to tell the weeds from the native plants. Weeds are quite enterprising and tend to come into newer planting areas. Our gardening strategy is to persist with plants that are ground covers that eventually will overcome the weeds. Fortunately, our natural system abounds with woodland plants that form great ground covers, such as kinnickinick, strawberry and wood sorrel. In some cases we will depend on rangy shrubs to outcompete the weeds. Again we are blessed with many, such as ocean spray and serviceberry.

Our species garden is tucked away in a relatively untraveled part of Magnuson park and as such is surprisingly isolated in feeling, thereby attracting many birds that do not tolerate crowded conditions (and some that do). It is a good place to stroll and browse, much like the larger libraries were before the advent of the internet as a major information source. It is a good place to have a lunch or snack and take in the ambiance; a good place to be quiet.

Because we are growing only native plants in our garden we have an opportunity to learn about the growth habits and best cultivation conditions of different native plants. As usual we learn from our failures and this led us to mound our alpine garden and use a granitic sand base in the soil, to mimic more alpine conditions. We also learned what conditions were too good for some native species allowing them to take over larger areas than anticipated. Thus, we found an 'outbreak' of the yellow monkeyflower as it spread through and out of the wetter streamside conditions it favors, taking advantage of the wetter west side to thrive.



Building an alpine garden area

## December Field Trips for Mountaineers' Naturalists

There have been intermittent rains in the mountains, the temperatures are dropping and the flower season is close to done. Our hikes will emphasize birds, conifers, mosses and lichens. There is a workshop on lichens (December), which will combine a lecture session and a field trip. There is still space available. Look for the listing under LEARN and find courses (click on exploring nature). There is a small fee to contribute to material and room charges.

### Lichen Workshop - Seattle - 2016

Wed, Dec 7, 2016 - Sun, Dec 11, 2016 Wednesday lecture and Saturday field trip

No Prerequisites

Availability: 11 participants

Registration closes Dec 5

Seattle Branch

Leader: [Stewart Hougen](#)

## Here are the December and early December hikes:

The Twin Falls hike (December 15) is a hike of the month. This means that study group members can assume they have permission to register (i.e. check the *I have permission* box) and that we will take all study group members who register on the hike (even if you are on the wait list). We will, if the hike is in national forest, split the trip officially in two to obey the rules.

### Day Hike - Vashon & Maury Islands Circumnavigation

Exploring Nature Trip

This is a birding trip with a focus on duck identification.

Difficulty: Easy

Sat, Dec 3, 2016

No Prerequisites

Availability: 0 participants

Registration closes Dec 1

Seattle Branch

Leader: [Stewart Hougen](#)

### [Day Hike - Twin Falls \(Olallie State Park\)](#)

Exploring Nature Trip

Twin falls has water, mosses, lichens and solitude in winter as well as proximity to

Difficulty: Easy

Sat, Dec 17, 2016

No Prerequisites, Leader's Permission Required

Availability: 1 participant

Registration closes Dec 15

Seattle Branch

Leader: [Gordie Swartzman](#)

### [Day Hike - Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge](#)

Exploring Nature Trip

Nisqually Wildlife Refuge in the Winter is a birders paradise, with large flocks of ducks,

Difficulty: Easy

Sat, Jan 14, 2017

No Prerequisites

Availability: 2 participants

Registration closes Jan 12

Seattle Branch

Leader: [Stewart Hougen](#)

### [Day Hike - Seahurst Park to Lincoln Park](#)

Exploring Nature Trip

This trip will include several West Seattle birding locations and hiking in Lincoln Park, which

Sat, Jan 21, 2017

No Prerequisites, Leader's Permission Required

Availability: 8 participants

Registration closes Jan 19

Seattle Branch

Leader: [Gordie Swartzman](#)

## 2016-2017 Naturalists Lecture Series Seattle Program Center, 7pm

**The Naturalists Study Group lectures continue:**

Wed., Jan. 11, 2017

7 p.m. Seattle Program Center Cascade Room

Remember hearing how the Big One will leave everything west of I-5 toast? Maybe not. Nick Zentner, senior lecturer in geology at Central Washington University, reviews the tracks of previous **great earthquakes in the Pacific Northwest**, and helps us separate fact from fiction.



**Come early to ensure a seat!**

**No registration needed. Open to the public.**

More here:

<https://www.mountaineers.org/about/branches-committees/seattle-branch/committees/seattle-naturalists-committee/course-templates/naturalist-lecture-series/naturalist-lecture-series-2017>

**Upcoming lectures:**

**Thurs., Feb. 9, 2017**

We blame a lot on **global warming**. Climatologists have a more informed view. **Nick Bond**, state climatologist and UW research scientist and associate professor, explains why.

**Thurs., March 9, 2017**

Janneke Hille Ris Lambers, UW biology professor, tells us about **Meadowatch**, a citizen-science program that monitors the link between climate and wildflower reproduction at Mount Rainier National Park.

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Native Plants, Native Knowledge, Local Roots: Native Plants in Washington Schools  
Rob Efird, Ph.D.

How can native plants be incorporated into the curricula of K-12 schools and universities in Washington State? What can the plants teach us? In his presentation, Dr. Efird will introduce the creation and use of Seattle University's taqwsheblu Vi Hilbert Ethnobotanical Garden, and discuss his current project to promote the adoption of native plant gardens in Washington State middle schools. This program will be extended with a tour of the SU Ethnobotanical Garden, lead by Dr. Efird, in the spring. In a phrase from the Lushootseed culture, "The Earth is our First Teacher".

Rob Efird is an applied cultural anthropologist with a special interest in environmental education and collaborative research with community partners. He is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Asian Studies in Seattle University's Department of Anthropology, Sociology and Social work and also has an Associate appointment in the Asian Studies Program and in Environmental Studies. His Ph.D. in Socio-cultural Anthropology was completed at UW in 2004. He also holds degrees from Yale and Harvard. Dr. Efird's current research is focused on children's environmental learning both in China and here in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to being an active volunteer on the Discovery Park Advisory Council, Rob also worked with the Seattle University grounds crew and the local Native American community to create the taqwsheblu Vi Hilbert Ethnobotanical Garden at Seattle University.

**Thursday, Dec 1, 7:30pm,  
UW Center for Urban Horticulture, 3501 NE 41<sup>st</sup> St, Seattle**

(Doors Open at 6:00 PM for the Native Plant Identification Workshop; Program begins at 7:30 PM.) For details, see [wnps.org](http://wnps.org)  
Refreshments, Public Invited, Admission is free.

**Upcoming programs**

Jan 5, 2017 Mark your calendar, it's our annual holiday pot luck!

Feb 2, 2017 Mark Darrach "Floristic Surprises in the Blue Mountains"

March 2, 2017 Peter Stekel "Best Wildflower Hikes in Western Washington"

**Seattle Audubon Society Field Trips - December**

**Saturday, December 10, 2016 – Limit 10 in three cars**

**Port Townsend and Marrowstone Island**

**Co-Leaders: Neil and Carleen Zimmerman (day of trip cell 206-200-6700)**

**6:00 AM, North Jackson (N.E.145<sup>th</sup>) P&R**

A perfect trip for coffee drinkers: chilly weather and plenty of bathroom stops. Even a coffee stop at the Nordland store. Birding stops will include Mystery Bay, Fort Flagler, and Port Townsend. Black Turnstones, Long-tailed Ducks, Marbled and Ancient Murrelets are a possibility. We'll travel mostly by car and take short walks. Scopes a plus. Bring a lunch and money for the ferry, gas, and lattes. Dress for blustery weather. Return by late afternoon or early evening. Carpool cost: \$30 each car shared equally by riders (plus cost of ferry). Discover Pass needed by drivers.

**Sunday, December 11, 2016 – Limit 6 in 2 cars**

**The Three S's (Stilly, Skagit, Samish) in Winter**

**Leader: Jon Houghton (206-601-0773)**

**7:00 AM, Green Lake (Ravenna) Park & Ride**

This trip will visit several winter hot spots for raptors, waterfowl, and shorebirds in the Stillaguamish, Skagit, and Samish flats. We'll [start](#) at the Nature Conservancy's newly constructed tidal restoration site in the Stilly Delta, go on to Thomle Road (if reports there are positive), and Eide Road to transition into the Skagit Flats. Depending on recent sightings and time, on Fir Island we may visit Wiley Slough and Dry Slough WDFW game access points. We'll then continue on to Padilla Bay, and the fabled West 90 on the Samish Flats, finishing up in the Bow-Edison area. Some short walking for better viewing is possible, but not mandatory at each area. Warning! Hunting seasons will be in progress so this could limit waterfowl viewing. Bring: rain gear and warmth, rubber boots, lunch and drink, and an interest in discovery! Scopes will be a plus for shorebirds. Carpool costs: Maximum of \$50 each car shared equally by riders. Drivers should bring a current Discover Pass. Anticipate return to Ravenna around 5:30 PM (earlier if the weather is really awful!).

**Saturday December 17, 2016 - Limit 12**

**Green Lake**

**Co-Leaders: Louis Kreemer (day of trip 206-849-2602) and Martin Muller**

**9:00 AM, Bathhouse Theater, West Beach (between water and bathhouse)**

Green Lake is an excellent place to observe birds up close. This time of year most winter ducks are around as well as resident pied-billed grebes. The local eagles should be here. We should encounter some goldfinches and kinglets as well as Bushtits, nuthatches, and chickadees. And who knows what else? Besides bird identification and bird behavior, Green Lake history and ecology are also on the menu. Dress for standing still. Layers are advised. 'Tis better to shed than to shiver! Bring snacks and water. If you have a scope please bring it. Over by noon or whenever we've worn out the hardest of you!

**Sunday, December 18, 2016 - Limit 10**

**Spencer Island, Everett**

**Co-Leaders: Jan Bragg (206-234-7196, day of trip only) and Travis Keay**

**8:30 AM, Green Lake (Ravenna)P&R, or 8:45 am SE corner of Ash Way P&R (exit #183 off I-5)  
(Indicate at time of sign-up where you will meet leaders)**

We will be walking around the south half of this island in the Snohomish River Estuary, looking for wintering sparrows, hoping for a raptor or two. Between the parking lot and the island, we will scope out the myriad of ducks and gulls on the Everett [Sewage Treatment](#) Ponds. Expect ~3 miles of walking on uneven, wet, level ground. Return early to mid-afternoon, depending on whether we swing by the Everett waterfront for an optional extension...and on weather! Carpool cost: \$15 per car, to be shared equally by passengers in each car.

**Tuesday, December 20, 2016 - Limit 10**

**Magnuson Park, Seattle**

**Leader: Joe Sweeney**

**9:00 AM, Promontory Point Environmental Learning Center, Magnuson Park**

Directions: Magnuson Park is in NE Seattle. Take bus #30 or #75 to the park entrance at NE 65th St and Sand Point Way NE. Meet at the Promontory Point Environmental Learning Center, which is the red-metal-roofed shelter next to little drive-in road at the west edge of parking lot #E-1. Link to: [http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/Parks/Magnuson/magnuson\\_map.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/Parks/Magnuson/magnuson_map.pdf). Magnuson Park offers a variety of habitats, including ponds, forest, fields, and a lake named after a president. This outing is very suitable for beginner bird-watchers. We will walk 2-3 miles on mostly level terrain, searching for birds and bathrooms along the way. Bring binoculars, hat, snacks, layers, rain gear and a sense of humor. Please leave your pets at home, even if they have a good sense of humor. Over by 11:00 am.

## Odds and ends

### Poetry

Crisply the bright snow whispered,  
Crunching beneath our feet;  
Behind us as we walked along the parkway,  
Our shadows danced,  
Fantastic shapes in vivid blue.  
Across the lake the skaters  
Flew to and fro,  
With sharp turns weaving  
A frail invisible net.  
In ecstasy the earth  
Drank the silver sunlight;  
In ecstasy the skaters  
Drank the wine of speed;  
In ecstasy we laughed  
Drinking the wine of love.  
Had not the music of our joy  
Sounded its highest note?  
But no,  
For suddenly, with lifted eyes you said,  
"Oh look!"  
There, on the black bough of a snow flecked maple,  
Fearless and gay as our love,  
A bluejay cocked his crest!  
Oh who can tell the range of joy  
Or set the bounds of beauty?

### Sit with Me

Could you sit with me awhile?  
    You need not speak.  
    You need not listen.  
Just sit and look, scan the yard,  
    watch the trees as they shed their leaves,  
    see the holly and its bright berries  
    turning red against the green.  
Watch closely and soon you'll see a leaf

floating gently to the ground  
and there on a distant tree  
a nuthatch flitting down the trunk.

Sit awhile.

I know your restlessness as the day moves on,  
so much to do, places to go  
being busy, obsessed by your responsibilities.

Just a moment longer please.

Listen now, only a minute more  
this subtle quiet wakes your soul,  
it feeds your mind and heart.

It brings you back  
to who you really are.

Do you feel it deep within your bones  
and recognize the you you've always known.

Please, sit with me, speak your heart and soul  
and

I will do the listening now.

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## Pictures



Stairsten moss Oregon Beaked Moss, Slender Beaked moss by Gary Brill

