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# THE WILD CASCADES

THE JOURNAL OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

SPRING 2010



## THE WILD CASCADES ■ Spring 2010

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COVER: *Springtime in the North Cascades. Camping below Mix-up Peak (left) and The Triplets (right) offers a front-row seat on avalanche action — just don't get too close!* — TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

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## The Wild Cascades

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EDITOR: Betty Manning

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and Rick McGuire

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*The Wild Cascades* Editor

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### THE NORTH CASCADES

**CONSERVATION COUNCIL** was formed in 1957 "To protect and preserve the North Cascades' scenic, scientific, recreational, educational, and wilderness values." Continuing this mission, NCCC keeps government officials, environmental organizations, and the general public informed about issues affecting the Greater North Cascades Ecosystem. Action is pursued through legislative, legal, and public participation channels to protect the lands, waters, plants and wildlife.

Over the past half century the NCCC has led or participated in campaigns to create the North Cascades National Park Complex, Glacier Peak Wilderness, and other units of the National Wilderness System from the W.O. Douglas Wilderness north to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness, the Wild Sky Wilderness and others. Among its most dramatic victories has been working with British Columbia allies to block the raising of Ross Dam, which would have drowned Big Beaver Valley.

The NCCC is supported by member dues and private donations. These contributions support the full range of the Council's activities, including publication of *The Wild Cascades*. As a 501(c)(3) organization, all contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Membership dues for one year are: Living Lightly/Student \$10; Individual \$30; Family \$50; Sustaining \$100; Other, \$\_\_\_\_\_.

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## The President's Report

Spring 2010

Finding sources of green energy is only one effort that faces us in our effort to save the planet as we know it, and I am personally committed to helping the process. The idea of small hydro can work to help our overall goal, along with solar, conservation, and possibly tidal, geo-thermal and other concepts being researched. I personally support small hydro on the condition that it does not disturb otherwise valuable resources such as fisheries, wilderness, wildlife, reasonable forestry, and the like.

In the case of the North Cascades, small hydro projects have the potential to disrupt existing ecosystems for the following reasons:

- The extensions or upgrade of roads into forested and/or roadless areas.
- Construction of power lines typically require clear-cutting a corridor to route the power to consumers.
- In cases with low head, higher volume, small dams or weirs are necessary to provide intake structures and storage for the generation facilities themselves.
- When regulating water levels in the streams it is difficult to replicate nature to the extent that fisheries will not be affected.
- There is the potential to block recreational access to stretches of the affected streams in order to protect the facilities and the public.
- Wildlife is always impacted by construction and maintenance activities as well as from displacement caused by habitat loss.
- Other multiple-use options such as forestry, and recreation, etc., are possibly ruled out by a single use of an area.
- By definition, small hydro tends to be somewhat uneconomic because the economy of scale is just not there. In other words, it takes quite a lot of environmental and fiscal capital to produce very little in return. As a result, the economic justifications are difficult to honestly make in many cases.

Having said all this, I would certainly support small-scale projects in some areas, particularly where development is already a fact. Personally I do not think it makes much sense to build electrical facilities in the backcountry, far from electrical load centers and that have a lot of environmental questions difficult to answer. The proposals in the North Cascades tend to look good in some cases because land seems to be "free" since it is in public ownership and there tends to be a lot of water with high-energy availability (high head). Unfortunately, it is easy to overlook wilderness, fisheries, and wildlife. There are locations where small-scale hydro projects make sense. They tend to be where there are small loads in the vicinity of high head-low water volume sources or are close to developed areas. A good example of this, I think, are the communities in Stehekin and Holden Village. The NCCC, along with other river protection groups, will continue to keep investigating small hydro proposals.

*Marc Bardsley*

# Two Cycles of the Sun in the Early Winters Headwaters, June 2010

Tom Hammond

Harvey Manning once said that to really experience the mountains, or actually anything in life, it is best done “at human speed”. That is, to best appreciate something, do it at the pace of a walk, not at the pace of mechanization, be it a motor bike or an airplane. He noted reality tends to become a blur when engaged in mechanical travel, and to this I agree. I take that concept a step further, preferring to spend at least two nights in a given place to really get to know it. Since I began my backcountry travels and explorations, I have determined that getting to a summit isn’t the reason to go to a place, the reason to go is to BE in that place. And to best understand even a sliver of that locale’s reality requires at least two cycles of the sun.

A mission of better understanding the wheres, the whats and the whys of the American Alps Legacy Project provided the impetus to watch the sun twice rise and set on the Washington Pass area: Liberty Bell and Early Winters Spires — the headwaters of Early Winters Creek, a principal tributary of the Methow River; and the headwaters of Bridge Creek, a principal tributary of the Stehekin River.

Truth be told, this is only the second time I’ve ever been to these icons of the Methow mountains because I prefer REAL Wilderness. The proximity of Highway 20 diminishes the backcountry experience due to increased machine noise, and of course the large number of people the road brings to this otherwise remote and spectacular landscape. And so I have avoided the area save a trip 15 years ago in November when the temperature hovered around 10 degrees below zero F.



*Methow headwaters: Early Winters Creek, a principal tributary of the Methow River, gathers below Kangaroo Ridge.*

— TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

This time, I’d be one of those using the road for quick access — you see, I’m in the worst shape I’ve been in since 2002 (car-bike accident) thanks to a cool, wet Spring. So a short hike was called for — indeed, the healthy snowpack, my physical ability, fine weather, and American Alps research combined to make this a very attractive alternative, despite the crowds I would see, and the motor bikes I would hear. How silly of me to have not visited Early Winters more often in early summer . . .

Many in the NCCC are opposed to overflights of national parks and other protected areas (notably wilderness, but not confined to just those two), and so it was a couple weeks ago that some of us overflew Washington Pass as part of an aerial evaluation of the American Alps areas of interest. It was a wonderful experience, but it went so fast. Too fast. On this visit, it took less than 45 minutes of humping my full pack over snow-covered slabs to say aloud “This is so much better than the overflight” — nothing like having multi-hued (mainly salmon colors of red, orange and gold) spires of Golden Horn batholith

rising thousands of feet straight up to the sky.

I love high country exploration in June: tons of snow, overland travel is usually easier, water is easy to come by, bugs are suppressed, peaks are dramatically contrasted (color, texture and appearance), the sounds of water and life roaring near and far, and the ability to camp in otherwise un-campable areas.

The peaks of this area are profoundly spectacular. Much like the Dolomites of the European Alps, or dare I say the Concordia area of the Himalaya, the (GH batholith) rock

formations are remarkably vertical and colorful. And not just one or two peaks — there are several waves of mountains, indeed, all of the Methow mountains — that exhibit the unique character that makes this place World Class, and worthy of recognition as national park or wilderness. Even though Liberty Bell and Early Winters Spires get all the publicity due to the highway wending along their bases, the real beauty is in the integrated landscape — the relation of high peaks and low valleys that create, then distribute life-giving water. So many rivers! The Twisp, the Bridge-Stehekin, the Early Winters-Methow, the Granite-Skagit. My favorite, and what I came to appreciate the most over the three days was the collection of Early Winters Creek below the fangs of Kangaroo Ridge. I learned that the south end of Kangaroo Ridge actually forms the headwaters of the Twisp River. The pine forests along the base of the crags were that much greener thanks to the snow and the color of the rock. I actually glimpsed the geological process that laid down this rock 47 million years ago — the direct

connection between far away Golden Horn, and Wamihaspi (the peak I was living on), and Silver Star many miles to the east. This whole realization, recognition and awareness came to me in the first day I was there — I love the time machine aspect of the North Cascades.

I was camped at 7,400 feet, a mere 400 vertical feet from the summit, debating whether to summit on the first day, or wait until Saturday. I had intended to camp in a nice flat basin, but avalanche danger was actually high, so (thanks to snow) I was able to camp on the craggy ridge that connects south Early Winter Spire and Wamihaspi. I have pictures of the summit area of Wamihaspi “before” and “after” avalanches swept the mountain Friday afternoon between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. — and with a huge cornice looming over the basin, it was a good campsite.

A good campsite became better thanks to my decision to summit on Saturday and stay two nights. Yes, I had considered bailing after one day, but just knew there'd be more to see, learn and experience by exercising some patience and “living at human speed”. As expected, I did see many many people. The advent and proliferation of ski technology has opened up the backcountry as never before. I visited with people from age 20 to age 60+, all out enjoying the North Cascades, and all quite proficient skiers. I think I counted 25 skiers over the weekend, and a few hikers too. Everyone supports the idea of increased protection for this area — some thought it was already wilderness or park.

\* \* \*

The summit was more difficult than I figured. The huge cornice spanning from the true summit to the lower east summit was pretty exciting visually, some three to four meters high, especially on approach crossing steep snow that had been scrubbed by avalanches!

Indeed, the summit was so steep that I was turned back about 100 vertical feet short, but not so short that I did some extreme mixed climbing, hands seeking holds while my feet churned in near-vertical patches of snow, triggering avalanches that tumbled and roared down the cliffs below my feet . . .

Unnerving sounds to be sure, especially knowing that if the entire snowfield let go, I'd be tumbling right along. Nothing like the perspective a mortality-reminder (read: fear) those moments offer.

So I settled for the lower east summit and took in sweeping views from

across the entire North Cascades. Wave after wave after seemingly endless wave of snowy peaks in every direction. Once again I was impressed with how much farther the mountains extend to the east beyond what I consider the far east portion of the range [see notes from 2007 Golden Horn visit]. I was also impressed with the diversity of terrains, mountains, valleys and all the living things supported by this great range. The realization that the Twisp, Stehekin, Methow and Skagit rivers radiate away from virtually a single point (Copper Point, just south of where I was, but not on the Skagit) was worth the trip alone.



*This image reminds me of the waves at Second Beach, Olympic National Park. The cornice is made of the same stuff as the ocean, and provides summer water for the apples, cherries, fish and people of eastern Washington.*

— TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

\* \* \*

Back at camp, I napped for a couple hours, mainly to keep out of the blistering sun. As with Friday, most everyone was gone by 5 p.m., or on their way out, and I was alone for the evening. Sadly for them, not a single party spent the night up in the high country, at least not human...

Not long after I returned to my favorite viewing perch, I saw a mountain goat about a kilometer away. I got all of my photo stuff going, cackling about how great the telephoto shots would be with the rugged peaks beyond. I snapped about ten photos, then lost sight of the goat. Next thing I knew, Nanny was walking right in to camp, and there would be no need for telephoto anything. It was great — almost as if Nanny knew exactly where to stand to maximize the photo. About 30 minutes later, along came her two kids — a yearling male and female. I'm not sure if the presence of so many people has resulted in these goats knowing to visit in search of mineral licks/lose their fear of

humans, but Nanny seemed comfortable with me after a short time, and the kids eventually accepted me as well, at least with Nanny around. They ended up staying with me (or is that me with them) for about 16 hours — for only the third time in my life I was fortunate enough to live with mountain goats. Like 2001, Nanny wanted nothing to do with the kids, and was quick to give them her horns if they tried to get close to her. Tough love in a tough landscape, for sure. It was fun, even humorous to watch the little ones spar, giving each other the horns. The male was usually the aggressor, but finally the young gal stood up for herself and gave him a good butt or two. Heck, the little guy even approached me, coming within a meter, and stamped his left front hoof to get me to move.

The youngsters (yearlings) were especially rambunctious -- long after Nanny wandered off for the night they kept trying to come in to the tent. It got to the point I had to yell at them to “Go to bed!!” about 1:30 in the morning. Small though their horns might be, that's not a fun wake-up poke. Nanny's horns are a whole different story -- she tried to get close a couple times, but I prefer my nature encounters to be bloodless, so I let her know I'd protect myself.

As the four of us watched the sunset together, eyeing the last two climbers scampering back down to their automobile, I was moved to consider once again why I do what I do: it takes AT LEAST two nights in a place to get to know it — I am so humbled and thankful for the opportunity. I'm sure glad I stayed that “extra” night, and will certainly return to better learn and know this place that needs our recognition and protection. There has been much handwringing about the change in land-management for this area. Certainly there would be changes —that's the whole point. Superfund mine clean-ups are underway within miles north and south of this area. Even folks with dogs are up in arms. Fact is, I believe most dog owners would prefer to experience goats and other wildlife in THEIR habitat — the alpine area that is the last remaining place in which wild things can exist. One would think being with a pet for 99 per cent of the time would be enough, especially considering the opportunities offered by the North Cascades landscape. Hunting is another important aspect of this effort. Proper hunting has value for family and culture alike, and will be respected in most places. Of course, I'm confident the goats prefer a hunting-free national park...

# REMEMBER BACK WHEN?

## — Our fight to protect Miner's Ridge

### *Swap adds Miner's Ridge to Glacier Peak Wilderness*

May 7, 2010 — DARRINGTON — A wilderness area that once was the subject of a protest by a sitting U.S. Supreme Court justice has now been preserved for good.

The U.S. Forest Service has gained control of 372 acres of Cascade Range wilderness once targeted for a giant copper mine. The land, nicknamed Miner's Ridge, is located just inside Snohomish County. It will officially be added to the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and the Glacier Peak Wilderness area.

The Chelan County Public Utility District, which has owned Miner's Ridge in recent years, ceded the acreage to the Forest Service in exchange for a small site near property the utility manages that officials would like to use to measure snowpack.

In 1966, the Kennecott Copper Corp. proposed a large open-pit mine at Miner's

Ridge and a 15-mile road leading to it. Environmentalists decried the plan as "an open pit visible from the moon," said Gary Paull, wilderness and trails coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service in Darrington.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, an outdoor recreation enthusiast, led a protest hike up the Suiattle River trail. Eventually, copper prices took a tumble, the Forest Service discussed severe restrictions on the project, and the company abandoned the plan.

"At some point they must have realized political pressure probably would keep them from doing anything up there," Paull said.

Earlier in the '60s, the Chelan County PUD flew helicopters to Forest Service land at Lyman Lake, just inside Chelan County, to measure snowpack. The Forest

Service, however, later prohibited helicopters in the area.

In 1986, the PUD bought Miner's Ridge from Kennecott for a nominal fee, Paull said. The utility used the area to measure snowpack but found the information gathered there was not as useful as that collected at Lyman Lake, said Scott Lynn, a realty specialist for the U.S. Forest Service in Wenatchee.

The PUD approached the Forest Service about the exchange and it was formally approved late last month, Lynn said.

In exchange for 1.8 acres at Lyman Lake, the Forest Service received the 372 acres at Miner's Ridge.

"It's permanently preserved," he said.

## Appeals court rules against Blanchard Mountain

Ken Wilcox

In May, the Washington Court of Appeals sided with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) by issuing a ruling that reversed our lower court victory for Blanchard Mountain issued by King County Superior Court in 2008. The lower court had determined that the DNR failed to adequately consider the environmental impacts of its logging plans and instructed the agency to prepare an environmental impact statement. The judge acknowledged the mountain as

a unique and very popular recreational area — "a slice of near-wilderness," said the judge.

The appeal court's cranky reversal described Blanchard Mountain at first as a "treasure," then told the DNR to go ahead and log it anyway. The decision leaves the public no opportunity to evaluate the cumulative impacts of DNR's plan to intensify logging across two-thirds of the mountain's 4,800 acres.

The ruling also mischaracterized the plaintiffs' positions on several key issues, thus we are filing for correction of misstatements and reconsideration, with little expectation that the court will rethink their conclusion. It's an important step, however, in the continuing litigation, including a number of issues that have yet to be heard in court.

Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark, had informed NCCC board members during his 2008 campaign that he planned to "take care of the Blanchard Mountain issue" and that "things are going to change" if he was elected. Apparently, we missed the wink and the nod that went along with

that promise. Goldmark has steadfastly defended the pro-logging plan brokered by his predecessor and offering only a couple of very minor adjustments.

We need your support if we're going to save this "Issaquah Alps by the Sea" — the largest remaining roadless area on the shores of greater Puget Sound, and the last large green space between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, designated by Congress in 2009, runs through the heart of Blanchard Mountain and is heavily used by Seattle area hikers. More than two miles of the trail will be logged and roaded under Goldmark's plan.

Visit our co-plaintiff Chuckanut Conservancy's website for more information or to donate online, [www.chuckanutconservancy.org](http://www.chuckanutconservancy.org).



### Errata

The "Pacific Fisher" shown in Philip Fenner's trip report in *The Wild Cascades*, Fall-Winter 2009-2010, was just a plain old Pine Marten.

# “Small” hydro threatens Cascades

Rick McGuire



*Hidden Creek near its outlet at Baker Lake.*

— PHILIP FENNER PHOTO

The name is seen and heard so often that it's simply taken for granted. But how many other mountain ranges get their very name from falling water? Fortune has favored Washington state with a range of mountains where thousands of noisy rivers, streams and falls have given the mountains themselves the name “Cascades,” entirely fitting for a place where one is seldom far from the sight and sound of falling water. Unlike many other mountain ranges, much of it still runs and falls freely, down river and creek beds large and small, over rocks, in canyons, even spilling over the occasional cliff top. Water is a big part of the Cascades, just naturally going where gravity takes it. But once again plans are being laid by some to divert that water away from its natural courses and into pipes, where it can be made to spin turbines and generate electricity.

But, not very much electricity, though, compared to the disruption to the streams of the Cascades and the creatures that inhabit them. This isn't the first time the Cascades have been eyed by small dam builders. The years around 1980 saw a big push to construct small hydro projects. Headlines about the specter of electricity shortages were a regular sight in those days, often accompanied by dire predictions that unless more dams, nuclear plants, and generating facilities of every kind were built, and soon, the lights would start going out across the Northwest. But they didn't go out. That particu-

lar crisis just sort of faded away, and most of the numerous applications to build new dams were quietly shelved.

Why? Those warning of electricity famine made the common mistake of extrapolating trends of the day out to infinity. Consumption was predicted to keep rising forever. It didn't. Higher prices and conservation measures slowed it. More importantly, much of the aluminum industry, which was consuming titanic amounts of cheap subsidized power, decamped for places such as Brazil where power (and labor), were even cheaper than the Northwest, freeing up immense amounts of generating capacity. Even though the population of the Northwest has grown considerably since those days of predicted famine, there is still plenty of juice to go around.

So the crisis never materialized. The lights didn't go out. Now, three decades later, the prospect of new “small” dams up and down the Cascades again raises its head. This time, there is little talk of crisis, but much talk of “green power,” and “low impact hydro.” Judging by the rhetoric of some promoters, one might think the single best way to combat climate change and insure energy security would be to start damming up creeks in the Cascades.

Hydroelectric power has undeniable advantages over most other ways of generating electricity, with “free” fuel, no emissions or toxic waste, and great flexibility in matching power generation to

*Continued on page 8*

## Cascade Streams at Risk

Since a topographic map is all that's needed to identify potential hydroelectric sites, any Cascade stream outside existing park or wilderness areas can be threatened. Of the many that have been targeted in recent years, just a few notable ones include:

- **Clearwater Creek**  
This tributary of the Middle Fork Nooksack has been looked at by a number of different developers. Conservationists hope to include it in any potential Wild & Scenic bill along with parts of all three forks of the Nooksack, an important salmon stream.
- **North Fork Skykomish**  
Deer Falls on the upper North Fork Sky has long been a tempting target for hydro builders. It was recently in the sights of Snohomish PUD, despite one bank of the river now being in the Wild Sky Wilderness. Although the PUD appears to have backed off for now, others may still try. Any project there would require many miles of road and transmission line construction.
- **Youngs Creek**  
A classic example of a stream that would yield significant power for only a short period in late spring, Youngs Creek, a tributary of the Skykomish River, joins it between Sultan and Monroe. A classic case as well where private profit would far outweigh any public benefit.
- **North Fork Snoqualmie**  
“Ernie's Canyon” on the lower N Fk Snoqualmie has been eyed for power generation more than once, though it has escaped so far. Bellevue has also tried to construct a water supply and power dam. Although the “Cascade Water Alliance” says it has no designs on the North Fork, the river's proximity to King County population centers may once again put it at risk.

# Why Not a Mount Saint Helens National Park?

John S. Edwards

Ever since Mount Saint Helens blew its top (and side) 30 years ago there has been the vision of a national park in the spectacular volcanic landscape.

The 110,000-acre national monument was created in 1982 under the United States Forest Service administration. The unique opportunity to study the aftermath of the catastrophic eruption at an accessible site close to centers of scientific research was quickly seized upon. As a result Mount Saint Helens ranks with Surtsey Island, near Iceland, as the most comprehensively studied volcano. (The products of that research are brought together in "Ecological Responses to the 1980 Eruption of Mount St. Helens." Springer 2005.)

The supervisors of that erstwhile logging area had to retool and adjust their view of statistics from board feet to visitors' feet. Roads were built or rebuilt and

visitor centers were opened. The Army Corps of Engineers deemed the post-eruptive Spirit Lake a potential hazard should it breach its banks (a view not shared by many informed geologists). The corps punched an access road to bore a tunnel that would lower the lake's water level and that gave limited access for research studies. Pressure for more road access has been resisted over the years and access to much of the monument is still by foot.

The arguments for national park status – the unique landscape, the historic significance, the research opportunities and the national and international magnet for visitors have been countered by those who saw commercial possibilities. A proposed cross-monument highway would have sliced through the blast zone, rainbow trout were introduced to Spirit Lake, essentially putting an end to a long-term

study of its natural regeneration. Local voices have stressed the need for greater access.

Under Forest Service administration the monument and its facilities have been chronically underfunded. A key visitor center was closed in 2007 for lack of funds. While Mount Lassen in California has an annual budget of \$4.5 million, Mount Saint Helens has but \$500,000 for recreation support. The arguments for national park status went to a federally appointed advisory committee whose April 13, 2010 report to Congress recommended retention within the Forest Service, albeit with significantly better funding. But the story is far from over.

For the next installment watch this space...

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## Hydro

*Continued from page 7*

power demand. That doesn't mean it is a good idea to dam and divert the creeks of the Cascades. It is really creeks more than rivers that are targeted here. Most of the really productive hydroelectric sites in the Northwest are already taken. Dams were built on them decades ago. It is the smaller creeks and streams, the leftovers, that are in peril now. There are good reasons why they haven't been dammed, mainly that dams on them would not produce much power. Profits, yes, for whoever might manage to lay claim to and build a dam on one of them, but not much power at all when compared to what is produced by dams on "good," existing sites, and barely a drop in the bucket when compared to how much power is consumed in the Northwest.

Moreover, as one might expect, dam proponents are much given to exaggerating the amount of energy produced by any dam. Unfortunately they tend to get away with it since few people know the difference between power and energy, which is power averaged over time. Energy, not power, is the important number. So-called "nameplate" numbers, the maximum theoretical power that might be produced at one point in time during highest flows, are used to rate them. A fairly high percent-

age of that theoretical maximum might be produced on a river such as the Columbia, where a chain of big dams with large storage reservoirs can be operated as a single system. But for lone dams on smaller creeks where flows vary widely, maximum output is only achieved during times of high runoff, usually just a brief period in late spring. Most of the time these dams on smaller creeks produce very little, with many producing no power at all during times of low flow.

Along with overstating the power benefits, dam proponents understate the costs, often using euphemistic language such as "damless," "run of river," "micro," and such. But the unavoidable fact is the amount of power produced by any hydro project is directly proportional to how much water is taken from a stream and how far it drops. To be at all economical, any hydro project will be made as large as possible. Many of these projects are small in name only. Two megawatts is sometimes looked upon as a dividing line between small and regular hydro projects, but some "small" ones are far larger, and there is no real definition of small. Under some definitions, the Elwha River dams now slated for removal would qualify.

The plain fact is that new dams on smaller creeks have high costs and don't produce much energy. Not only do they take water out of streams, they require new roads and powerlines in areas that are still natural. Europe's Alps are perhaps the prime example of what a landscape looks like where nearly ever stream, large or small, has been diverted into pipes. Switzerland has been hardest hit of all. A few waterfalls are turned on at partial flow in a few beauty spots during tourist season, but apart from that, the sound of falling water that so characterizes the Cascades is absent. The Swiss passed a referendum in the 1990s to save the very few small streams that weren't yet dammed, a case of too little too late.

NCCC wants Cascades water to keep flowing in streambeds instead of pipes. The small amount of additional power which might be generated by dams on smaller creeks doesn't come close to justifying the kind of transformation they would inflict on the landscape. For those who like their water in pipes, there is the Alps. For those who prefer the sound of a thousand waterfalls, there is the Cascades.

# Wild & Scenic River Bill a Possibility

Rick McGuire

River protection activists are looking at the possibility of a Wild & Scenic Rivers bill to protect certain rivers in Washington state. Candidates include parts of the Nooksack, the White Chuck, the South Fork Stillaguamish, the North Fork Skykomish and North Fork Snoqualmie, along with others.

Comparisons have often been drawn between Oregon's many designated W&S rivers and Washington's relatively few. Although Oregon leads in the W&S department, Washington's acreage of parks and wilderness far exceeds that of Oregon, arguably a much greater achievement. W&S designation could provide a bulwark against dams on some Washington rivers, such as the North Fork Snoqualmie which has been twice threatened in recent decades. Concern has been raised in some quarters that W&S designation needs to be pursued outside rather than inside existing wilderness areas, in places where it will make a real difference on the ground, or water in this case. NCCC hopes a good bill can be crafted that makes it harder to dam up the free flowing rivers of the Cascades.

## IN MEMORIAM Stewart Udall

Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior under presidents J.F. Kennedy and L.B. Johnson, passed away at age 90. It is unusual, and indeed strange, to refer to a cabinet member of the federal government as a "conservation giant", but that's what Secretary Udall was. He was a thinking man, connected to the planet in meaningful ways, and this was reflected in his leadership at the Department of the Interior.

Secretary Udall was directly involved and helped with the creation of North Cascades National Park (among many achievements). Harvey Manning and the NCCC wrote this of Udall in the book *Wilderness Alps: Conservation and Conflict in Washington's North Cascades*:

"The more distinct turning point [for conservation in the United States] occurred when [President Kennedy] appointed Arizona Congressman Stewart L. Udall as his Secretary of the Interior." ... "In the backing of the [1964] Wilderness Bill, three national seashores, and Redwoods National Park, [Udall] established himself as the greatest interior secretary since FDR's "Old Curmudgeon" Harold Ickes."

Indeed, Secretary Udall invited NCCC chairman (and current American Alps participant) Patrick Goldsworthy on a tour of Mount Rainier National Park, and while on that tour, assured Goldsworthy that THERE WOULD BE A NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK. This was in 1961, and the park was created in 1968. Now, in 2010, we're trying to complete that vision of an integrated, ecosystem-oriented North Cascades National Park.

I highly recommend reading *Wilderness Alps: Conservation and Conflict in Washington's North Cascades* — there is an amazing amount of information on the conservation history of this area, much of it is still pertinent and helpful to this very day, as we try to secure a way of life now, and for generations to come.

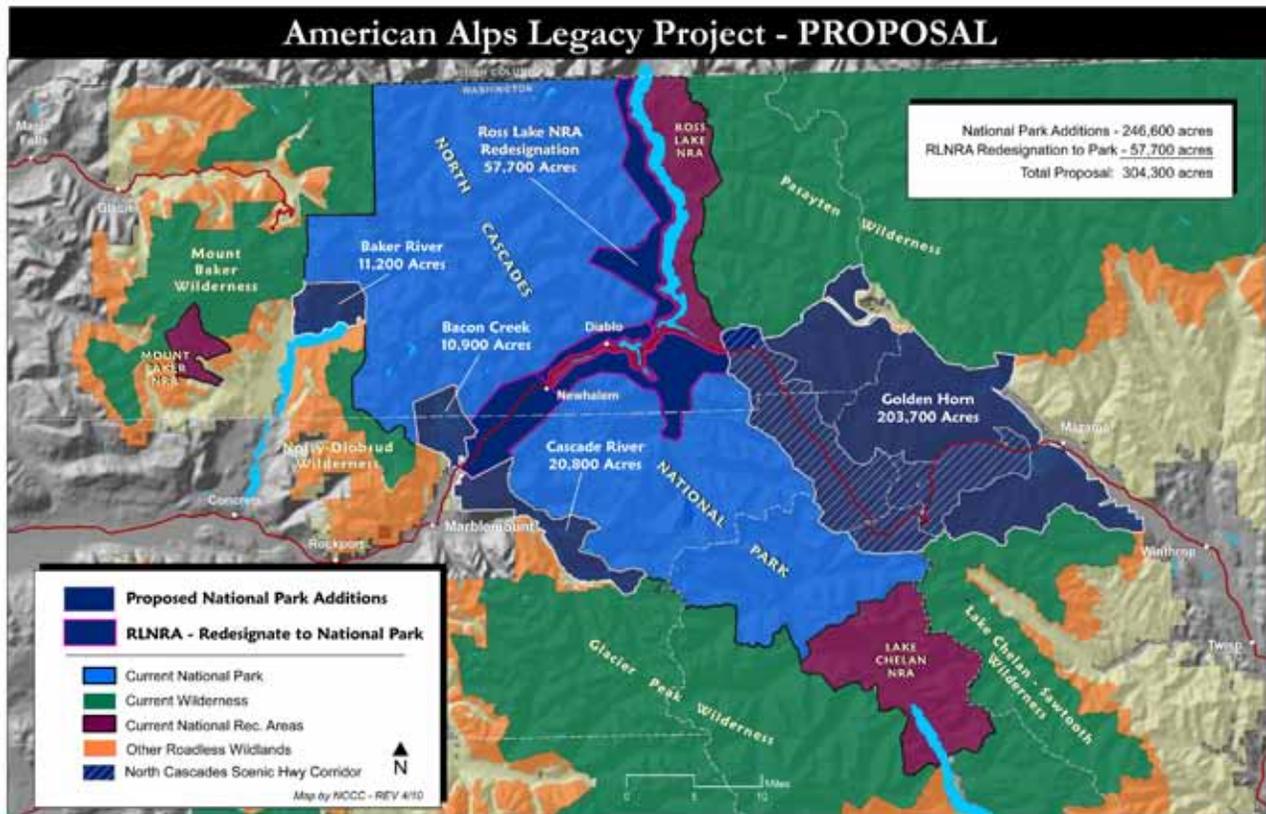
Thank you Secretary Udall!

— Tom Hammond

From Table Mountain — MIKE ANNÉE

# American Alps Legacy Proposal

Jim Davis



## Release Date Approaches

NCCC and partner organizations have been working for more than a year to develop the American Alps Legacy Proposal. This ambitious effort to complete the conservation vision for the North Cascades National Park, increase family-friendly front-country recreation in the park, and enhance economic benefits in park gateway communities is nearing a critical stage.

The American Alps outreach program has completed more than 100 meetings with individuals and groups interested in the North Cascades. Numerous presentations have been given and short articles on the American Alps have appeared in multiple organization newsletters. Newspapers from Twisp to Seattle to Portland have covered the initiative. And, a recent trip to Washington D.C. revealed substantial interest in the American Alps Legacy Proposal.

During May we released an economic study (conducted by Power Consulting Inc., from Montana) that documented the

substantial economic benefits of the American Alps Legacy Proposal for businesses in gateway communities surrounding the North Cascades National Park. Turn to page 11 for a quick overview.

We need to conduct additional outreach this summer to further educate the public and stakeholder groups about the American Alps proposal. Additional presentations will be given, more articles will be distributed through newsletters, public meetings will be held, and hopefully, additional media coverage of American Alps will be achieved.

Details of the American Alps Legacy Proposal are starting to take shape. Visit the American Alps website to view our latest map and the list of recreation amenities that will be part of the proposal ([www.americanalps.org](http://www.americanalps.org)). We expect the details of the proposal to come together this summer and the full proposal to be released mid to late summer.

To celebrate release of the American Alps Legacy Proposal, we are planning a cross-cascades hike/bike/paddle this summer. The North Cascades Challenge will occur August 7 thru August 14. Put it

in your calendar and join us in the North Cascades for all or a part of this week to celebrate the American Alps. Details are still under development, but we expect to register numerous individuals and groups to cover sections of the trek from Marblemount to Winthrop via Cascade Pass, Park Creek Pass, Diablo Lake, the Pacific Crest Trail, and down into the Methow. Watch for details on the American Alps blog at <http://americanalps.blogspot.com/>

Your continued support for the American Alps Legacy Project would be much appreciated. We need volunteers to help with the North Cascades Challenge. Anything you could do to educate the public and community leaders about American Alps would be very valuable to us. Please join our outreach campaign. And, of course, your financial contributions would be most welcome.

Contact us at [info@americanalps.org](mailto:info@americanalps.org) if you would like to participate in the next phase of the American Alps campaign.

# American Alps

*Continued from page 10*

## Economic Study Shows Job Creation Potential of North Cascades National Park

PRESS RELEASE May 19, 2010 – Efforts to complete the original vision for the North Cascades National Park received a major boost with the release of a report documenting the economic benefits of the American Alps Legacy Proposal. The economic study, conducted by Power Consulting from Montana, found that designating more park land along State Route 20 and adding new family-friendly attractions will create more than 1,000 new jobs in rural communities surrounding the park.

More than 40 years after the North Cascades National Park was created, magnificent mountains, pristine rivers, old-growth forests, and wildlife habitats adjacent to the park remain unprotected. “We have also failed to achieve the potential recreation and economic benefits of the North Cascades National Park,” said former Governor and US Senator Dan Evans. Evans was a key proponent of the North Cascades National Park more than 40 years ago and currently serves on the American Alps Legacy Project Advisory Committee.

The North Cascades National Park is one of the least visited national parks in the lower 48 states. This wild and nearly inaccessible park receives fewer visitors than Isle Royale National Park in the middle of Lake Superior. Combined visitation to the North Cascades National Park and the adjacent Ross Lake National Recreation Area is still only 1/10 that of Olympic National Park. Low visitation translates directly into low economic benefits for gateway communities.

Conservation and outdoor recreation advocates seek to add more than 300,000 acres to the park, nearly a 50 per cent increase. The new proposal will add low elevation, front-country lands to the park to make it more accessible to visitors. It will also support development of new park visitor centers in gateway communities, 25 miles of new family-friendly trails, new ecotourism sites, expanded campgrounds, and other amenities that will attract more families to the North Cascades. The proposal will affect only National Forest Service lands and Park Service National Recreation Area lands. Private lands will not be converted to national park.

“The economic study clearly demonstrates that bringing the park to the people and creating new attractions for families will dramatically increase park visitation and economic benefits for local businesses,” said Marc Bardsley, North Cascades Conservation Council President.

The American Alps Legacy Project is a collaborative effort of the North Cascades Conservation Council, the Mountaineers, Republicans for Environmental Protection, Seattle Audubon, the University of Washington Climbing Club, and other partner organizations. For more information on the American Alps Legacy Project, visit [www.americanalps.org](http://www.americanalps.org).

A detailed proposal for completing the North Cascades National Park will be released later this summer. “The American Alps proposal will provide conservation, recreation, and economic benefits for all

Washington State residents,” said Peter Jackson, son of Senator Henry M. Jackson, leader of the original campaign to create the park.

The North Cascades Conservation Council played a key role in creation of the North Cascades National Park in 1968 and wilderness areas throughout the North Cascades (e.g., Pasayten Wilderness, Glacier Peak Wilderness, Mt. Baker Wilderness, Boulder River Wilderness, and Wild Sky). For more information, visit the Council website at [www.northcascades.org](http://www.northcascades.org).



*Aerial view of the Bacon Creek drainage. This entire valley, save the uppermost reaches, is outside North Cascades National Park, or any federally protected designation.*

— TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

# Trip Report: Thunder Knob Trail

Philip Fenner



*View into South Unit of North Cascades National Park from Thunder Knob.*

— PHILIP FENNER PHOTO

Unlike most previous trip reports that have appeared in *TWC*, this one is not such an extreme adventure. It's a short, sweet little trail that takes you through a variety of life and topography zones from the side of Hwy. 20 at the lower Colonial Creek Campground up to a high knoll with excellent views of the surrounding peaks and lakes. The trail is exquisitely designed and built to "near-accessible" standards. It's one where you may want to slow your pace and "smell the proverbial roses" of our spectacular North Cascades.

Thunder Knob itself is the remnant of what was probably a much higher peak that was not high enough to remain above the glacial ice during the Ice Age, and thus was ground down from a peak to a rounded "knob." Its steeper side is down-valley, consistent with the flow direction of the glacial ice. It's located in a notch south of Diablo Lake where the Thunder Creek valley to the east would tumble into the old Skagit Gorge, were it not filled with the reservoir known as Diablo Lake today. Hwy. 20 approaches from the west up a steep climb from Gorge Lake below

Diablo to above the level of Diablo Lake, then traverses the saddle west of Thunder Knob where Thunder Pond sits alongside the highway, finally dropping down to the level of Diablo Lake again at the Colonial Creek campground. Take a left into the lower unit of the campground and park just off the road (parking in the campground itself is only for campers). Take a few moments to read the excellent interpretive sign that NPS put up at the parking area about the trail and the country it crosses.

The "summit" elevation is just 1,830 feet, starting from 1,231 ft. at the parking lot. So no challenge here — or rather, the challenge is in seeing and appreciating as opposed to proving one's stamina or endurance as is so often the case in the Cascades. Also because of its low elevation it's accessible almost year-round. Except in the heaviest snow situations, the winter gate is closed further up the valley at the Ross Lake trailhead, so you can come here just about all year. Of course it's most enjoyable on a clear day for the views.

From the far north end of the last loop in the campground, follow the trail out across the Colonial Creek debris field. A couple of foot-logs with nice steps on the ends and handrails will take you across the creek, but before and after these logs you'll be walking across a boulder-strewn alluvial fan left during seasonal deposition events since the recession of the glacier that filled the Skagit in Pleistocene time. A quick look at a topographic map will show you exactly where all this debris came from, up-slope in the cleft between Pyramid and Colonial peaks. Late-winter avalanches and high spring and fall flood events bring more rocks down now and then. But the trail is nicely built so that you can make it through here without too much trouble (unless some fresh rocks have appeared since I was there in January). This little section is actually the most difficult part of the entire hike.

Beyond the debris field, the trail makes its way through typical dense west-side spruce/fir/hemlock forest and winds its way around a small pond. Take your time on this walk, slow your pace and enjoy the surrounding living environment. As you go up a couple of little switchbacks, on a nice day you'll start getting views of the peaks to the south. Pyramid, Pinnacle and Colonial to the south, glimpses of Tri-couni and Red further south, are seen as you get higher. As you continue to ascend gradually up onto the top of the hump-back, you enter a lodgepole pine grove, which is both unusual on the west side of the Cascade Crest and also provides excellent views to surrounding peaks between the slender, widely-spaced tree trunks.

It's interesting to see this dry-side tree species here. The rocky, high, barren knob is one reason — it's dryer and the soil is very thin up here, so the common west-side tree species would not find it favorable. But also I suspect there may be a tiny bit of a "rain shadow" effect from the large mountains immediately to the west, blocking some fraction of the moist maritime air. Remember, the North Cascades really have two "crests," one that the PCT follows, over in the Golden Horn/Hart's Pass area, which is now the true drainage divide, of course. The other is the crest that the National Park axis follows, including the Northern

*Continued on page 13*

# Holden Mine Update, June 2010

Tom Hammond

See also "Holden Mine Cleanup Problem," Philip Fenner, TWC, Spring 2009, page 5.

While the NCCC focuses efforts on moving the American Alps Legacy Project forward, important events and projects continue apace across the greater North Cascades. One of the most important projects underway right now is the cleanup and remediation of the Holden Mine site on Railroad Creek, a major tributary of Lake Chelan, draining the highest non-volcanic peak in all the Cascades.

Like the Azurite Mine/Gold Hill mine cleanup plan within the American Alps area, the Holden cleanup plan is many years in the making — choices made and plans drawn now will impact the health of a key North Cascades drainage for decades, even centuries to come. A recent article in the *Lake Chelan Mirror* has disturbing news. Anyone who has visited Lucerne during low pool times (winter), or hiked around Holden has seen the sickening orange/red/yellow multi-hued mining waste that has poisoned Railroad Creek and stained the watercourse. The article speaks of plumes of this mining poison plainly visible as it enters Lake Chelan during high flows of Railroad Creek. More distressing is the impact on all living

things in the area: the ecosystem is significantly damaged. The 1997 Department of Ecology report on the impacts of Holden Mine on Railroad Creek is heartbreaking for anyone who has wandered a wild mountain stream, especially in the North Cascades:

"Results show the Holden site is having a devastating effect on the water quality and aquatic life of Railroad Creek." Since the 1960s, when scientific measurements began above and below the mine on Railroad Creek, and to this day, the numbers of invertebrates drop notably from more than 3,000 above the mine to 50 below and 361 where the creek meets the lake. Fish are few and far between in the more than TEN MILES of Railroad Creek between the mine and Lake Chelan. There are elevated levels of zinc, copper and iron. Mine drainage has high concentrations of iron, manganese, copper, zinc and aluminum, as well as lead and other metals. Downstream from Holden, those concentrations increased from a factor of three to ten. The water is so contaminated it doesn't meet state drinking water regulations.

It is believed that it will be more than two hundred years, and likely more than three hundred years before heavy metals stop leaching in to the drainage. So a proper cleanup now is important.

As this edition of TWC goes to press, there are public meetings being held in Holden, Chelan, Seattle and Wenatchee to get comments from the public on the preferred cleanup plan, so called "Alternative 14". Alt. 14 is a compromise between the US Forest Service, the mining companies (Rio Tinto and Intalco), and Holden Village. Surprisingly, the Holden Village Board of Directors took a most disappointing position opposing the best cleanup option (Alt. 11, favored by the USFS), and instead favored a more expedient, less thorough cleanup job.

Make your voice heard on which alternative you prefer. More importantly, inform yourself about issues happening in our North Cascades. The USFS has put forth preliminary alternatives for cleanup of the Azurite Mine in the American Alps area on the headwaters of the Skagit River (Canyon Creek/Granite Creek). Comment on that too, as every note, email or phone call matters to the fate of a healthy, vibrant North Cascades.

Please see the *Lake Chelan Mirror* website for the full article. <http://www.lakechelanmirror.com/main.asp?SectionID=5&SubSectionID=5&ArticleID=2503&TM=39864.93>. (Erin Unger, reporter.)

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## Thunder Knob Trail

*Continued from page 12*

and Southern Picket Range, which is cut by the Skagit Gorge. In a little-known but remarkable turn of geologic events, this gorge was carved through a ridge in the late Ice Age, and the flow direction of the upper Skagit reversed! So, before the Ice Age, the true drainage divide was along the crest of the Picket Range, and here at Thunder Knob we'd already be "east of the crest." The gorge is pretty narrow, so I like to think once I've reached Diablo I'm already over the western crest. Here you'll find lots of big, west-side cedars and firs in the low river valleys, but on high exposed rocky knobs like this one you end up with lodgepole pine, about as far west as you'll ever find it.

And now, on top of Thunder Knob, are the payoff views. All around you stand the

high peaks of the North Cascades! You're directly across Diablo Lake from Sourdough, to the northwest Terror and Fury stand in their majesty behind Davis Peak. Ruby and Jack to the east complete the scene. There are a couple of nice benches up on top to enjoy a snack and rest and soak up the view.

All of the Thunder Knob area, of course, is still within the Ross Lake NRA, not national park. It's a fine example of an area that really deserves full Park protection.

Among all the short hikes you can take right off off Hwy. 20 to view destinations, this one is an all-time favorite. It makes a great part of a series of short day-hikes in the area, including hiking down to Ross Dam and up Thunder Creek a couple miles — do all three in a day easily and

see some of the best of what the west side has to offer — and see three areas the American Alps Legacy Project seeks to add to national park status.

Photos at: <http://picasaweb.google.com/pfitech.seanet.com/20100206RossLakeThunderKnobHikes>

# Let them eat bread

Harvey Manning



*Yearling mountain goat siblings visit high camp on WamiHaspi Peak (aka Blue Lake Peak), headwaters of Early Winters Creek, June 2010. The Liberty Bell-Early Winters Spires area, key to the American Alps Legacy Project, epitomizes the need for congressional recognition and protection.*

— TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

Reprinted from:

*Pack and Paddle*, 1991

THAT FIRST MEAL AFTER THE TRIP IS SOMETIMES THE BEST PART. . .

The best milk I ever drank was in the hamlet of Glacier, on the Nooksack River, in July of 1950. The nine of us were the only customers in the little restaurant, newly opened.

Several days earlier, we nine had doubled the number of humans ever to set foot in the Luna Cirque. I ordered a hamburger steak and a quart of milk.

“A quart?” asked the waiter (the husband).

Hauling a 70-pound pack over Hannegan Pass, Whatcom Pass, and across the East Whatcom Glacier and Challenger Glacier, pounding pitons in Mount Challenger’s granodiorite and toiling over the moraine of Luna Cirque and up across the hot scree of Luna Peak, retreating over the glaciers in a blizzard and retracing the trail to the car — eight days I’d been thinking about this.

“Yes, a quart.”

That sounded good to the other guys. The waiter reported to the cook (his wife), she checked the refrigerator, and he hot-footed down the highway a quarter-mile to the grocery store and returned with a wheelbarrow of milk.

Nine cold bottles ringed the table. Milk doesn’t get any better than that.

\* \* \*

My best milkshakes were the day after our July, 1949, night in the crater of Mount Rainier.

Friday evening’s three-hour dash from Paradise to Camp Muir absolutely destroyed my appetite. On the ascent to the summit Saturday, during the night at 14,400 feet, and on the descent Sunday to Paradise I was unable to take solid food.

Nor could I eat at Paradise, but I ordered a milkshake there, drank two root beers while waiting, had a second milkshake and another root beer, and bought a triple-scoop ice cream cone for the road.

We stopped at Puyallup, where I had two peanut butter milkshakes; at the time Puyallup was the only known place in the world to get peanut butter milkshakes. They were the greatest, never surpassed.

\* \* \*

*Continued on page 15*

## Bread, *continued from page 14*

My best hamburgers were in August of 1948. Betty and I had been five days in the Olympics, climbing Anderson and LaCrosse (getting even for my defeats in 1939), dallying through Pretty Basin and napping beside a tarn at the toe of Anderson Glacier.

This was the second summer of our marriage and she was walking faster than the first but not yet at a pace that a Parsons Scout would recognize as definite motion.

To keep her pack light I was carrying all the food and to keep my pack comfortable there wasn't much of it. Our first night out, at Camp Siberia, there'd have been no supper (we'd eaten it for lunch, a meal I'd planned to skip) had we not cadged trout from a fisherman.

At 7:30 of the fifth morning a giant hand pressed the liferaft sail down on our sleeping bags and held it firmly there until 9 o'clock. The cloudburst then eased to a deluge that plainly wasn't about to quit this month.

At noon we breakfasted on the last of our lunch food (three crackers and enough cheese to bait two mouse-traps), jettisoned the dregs of our provisions (a handful of oatmeal and a handful of macaroni; we'd run out of sugar and powdered milk and even salt), and set out for the road-end at Constance Creek, two minds with but a single vision.

A vision that was not to materialize. That night's supper was half a roll of fruit Lifesavers discovered in the dirt and lint and sleeping-bag feathers at the bottom of a pack.

Next day we sat by the river at Elkhorn Camp, eating no breakfast, no lunch, and preparing to not eat supper. In the dusk, however, the bulldozer that had been laboring all day managed to open the Dose-wallips road through the blowout debris of a creek gone mad in the cloudburst.

I held the gas pedal of the 1935 V-8 Ford to the floor and raced along the Olympic Highway at 45 miles per hour, bluing Hood Canal with oil smoke.

We fumed into Port Ludlow at 15 minutes to 10 o'clock, departure time of the day's last ferry. We had two hamburgers apiece at the landing restaurant, and two stubbies of beer. During the two-hour crossing to Edmonds we ate one hamburger apiece and jointly drank a six-pack. In the University District at 1 a.m. I bought two hamburgers at a take-out to eat in our garret room. My life has been blessed with

hundreds of great hamburgers but those were my four best.

\* \* \*

For bread, the winner was Cle Elum, September of 1947. The afternoon of our second day on the trail Betty and I arrived in the granite fairyland of La Bohn Gap.

That night, at an elevation of 6000 feet, 20 miles from the V-8, we spread our bags on a lawn of soft grass and closed our eyes on stars.

Our eyes opened on a dense gray sky sliding swiftly from the southwest. The cloud lowered to the fairyland. It misted. It drizzled. It rained. It poured. Almost it snowed — slush slapped our cheeks — before nightfall the fairyland would be turning white.

As I sat on a chunk of granite, teeth chattering, watching the rockslide for my bride of four months to materialize in the mists, I reflected that our gang of good ol' boys from Parsons would have pulled up our socks and done those 20 miles before nightfall. That was long ago and far away. She kept getting her boot stuck in the cracks between boulders.

By dusk we'd made just 6 miles, down from La Bohn Gap to the headwaters of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River, up to Dutch Miller Gap, and down the east side of the Cascade Crest to Lake Ivanhoe.

Near the lip of the lake basin I found a tight-limbed subalpine fir sheltering a circle of dry ground and bedded Betty down while I built a fire to cook up a ten can of Krap Dinner. Betty wanted none of it.

I wasn't as hungry as I'd thought, either; while the fire warmed one side of me the rain kept the other side wet and cold. I threw out the dinner and joined Betty, who was half-wrapped around the tree to stay within the dry circle.

I half-wrapped round Betty to stay within the circle of less-than-total wetness. But when the tight limbs of the fir became saturated they no longer kept out the raindrops, simply made little ones into big ones.

Our bags were soaked through to our clothes, which were already soaked, but now received a freshening of cold water.

As soon as we could make out the trail we stuffed soaked bags into soaked Trapper Nelsons, pulled soaked boots over soaked socks, brushed soaked hair from eyes, and set out to do the 14 miles down the Waptus River to the trailhead.

Our Parsons bunch would have made the V-8 by noon. But this was not Camp Parsons. This was marriage. You can't be a Boy Scout all your life.

Another dusk was deepening as we reached the car. Though I'd not yet given the roof its winter coat of tar, it was barely raining at all inside the V-8 and our spare clothes were virtually dry. Had the heater worked we might even have been comfortable.

But we were not dismayed; even though we'd been the entire day without food and also the entire previous day since breakfast, save only — for me — a half cup of Krap Dinner. Bouncing along through potholes of the Cle Elum River road in the night we could anticipate . . .

The waitress brought glasses of water, menus, and a platter of bread (one stack of white, one of wheat) five slices each, and a plate of butter pats.

Returning to take our order, she couldn't fail to note that the bread and butter were all gone. With our soup she brought a second full platter of bread, a second plate of butter.

Returning with our main course (whatever, it didn't matter) she had guessed in advance what she'd find missing and brought a third helping of bread and butter.

We could have handled another but began to feel conspicuous. When we left the restaurant the waitress was merry, the cook was merry, the other customers were merry — and none was merrier than Betty and I.

# Sitec and Tomorrow in the North Cascades

“Sitec and Tomorrow in the North Cascades,”

by Scott Brennan, is excerpted from a chapter of the book *Impressions of the North Cascades*, edited by John Miles, first published by Mountaineers Books, 1992.

An online edition of the book, *Impressions of the North Cascades*, is available free at <http://www.northcascades.org/imp/imp/index.htm> with thanks to long-time NCCC member, Randall Payne.

A paper copy can be purchased from Village Books in Bellingham.

*NOTE: “Sitec” in the title is the Nooksack word for “soul” or “life force.”*

*“An ecosystem is in many ways a living thing with its own ‘sitec.’”*

— Scott Brennan

The upper Baker River begins as countless trickles on the western flanks of the Picket Range in the heart of North Cascades National Park’s northern half. It flows south and west from the Pickets toward Mount Baker. It rolls beneath the lee side of Mount Shuksan’s imposing 9,127-foot green-schist summit and into civilization — the Baker Lake reservoir behind the black concrete hulk of Baker Dam. Sean Cosgrove, a university student, and I left Bellingham for the upper Baker at 7:15 in the morning on January 23, 1995. For more than an hour we drove through farmland, private forests, and federal and state clearcuts whose stumps were often as big as small cars. We were on the trail at 9 a.m.

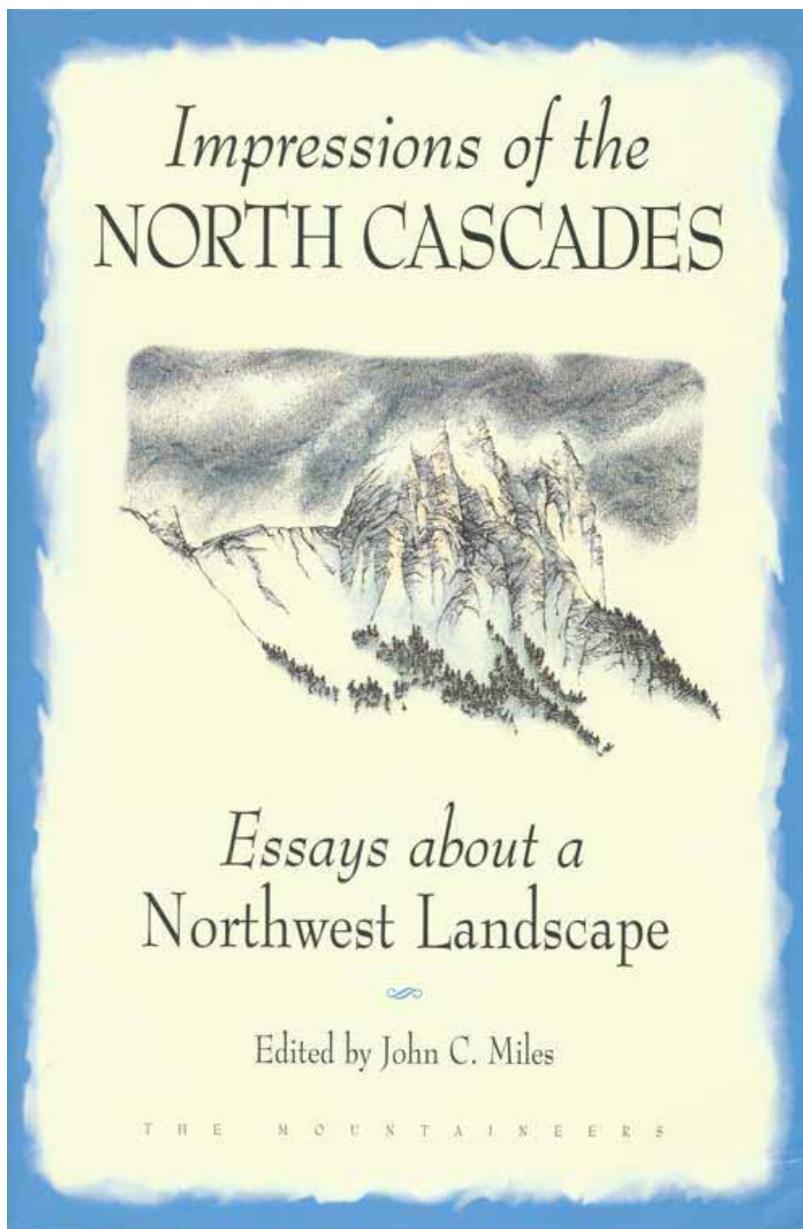
Sean had moved to the Northwest from Utah four years earlier and had worked as an intern for the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA), an Alliance organization. He has since been the coordinator of the Environmental Center on Western Washington University’s campus in Bellingham and a grassroots organizer in the national movement to save unpro-

to walk, unmolested and unhindered by humans and their inventions, to Colorado, to Mexico. He wants to help the wolf, salmon, and lynx return to their historical range. He wants us all to realize and eliminate the hubris that defines our relationship with the other residents of Earth.

He doesn’t believe humans should hold any special position in the hierarchy of living things. If at all, he says, we should demonstrate our supposed superiority through acts of compassion and restraint, not through the wholesale conversion of the natural world to dollars, boardfeet, and kilowatt hours. His beliefs, along with those of other supporters of the international park, remind me of Gottfried Withehn Leibniz’s insight into such matters. “It is certain that God sets greater store by a man than a lion,” Leibniz wrote. “Nonetheless, it can hardly be said with certainty that God prefers ... a single man to the whole of lionkind.”

Sean has written several articles for the Cascades International Park newsletter to explain the park proposal. He joined me on the trip up the Baker to explain his reasons for supporting the international park and to simply spend a day outside. We parked by an 8-foot-high heap of plowed ice and snow near the road’s end and checked our packs for lunch, hats and water. We hiked the last, snow-covered mile of Forest Service Road 1168 and passed through a flat, open camping area near the river.

The snow was 2 feet deep in places and firm as styrofoam block. Hoary frost covered the snowpack. It hadn’t snowed there since it last rained, and it hadn’t rained for weeks. It was the cold, hard snow of a midwinter drought. It squeaked beneath our feet.



tected ancient forests. He cares greatly for salmon, bears, wolves and wilderness.

Sean believes humans should be much better neighbors to large predators such as the wolf and grizzly bear. He argues for big wilderness, unbroken wildlands that would allow grizzly bears in Alaska

*Continued on page 17*



*Falls above Holden Lake*

We followed the broad trail through a frozen swamp. A cliff face was close by on the left. Sword ferns grew from the wall, and icicles hung from the moss beneath the ferns. My breath floated in front of me in white clouds and my vision blurred as I stepped through it. Cedar and hemlock of all ages lined the path and the Baker ran low and gray as steel to our right and below. Boulders, 10 feet high, had fallen from a cliff sometime since the last Ice Age. Foot-deep moss covered them. Trees 8 feet in diameter lined the path. The moss glowed green; the tree trunks were a solemn brown. My toes ached from the cold.

There were no clouds. The river, 30 yards wide, rattled in its bed. . . . Water swirled through pools, clear as molten crystal. An hour later we walked from the forest onto open ground. It was swampy again and we looked beyond to an icy beaver pond. The water level had fallen since last thaw and the ice hung magically above it.

Thick mist rose from the snow. Sublimation — when snow turns directly to vapor at temperatures below freezing — had wrung the moisture from the snow. Steep red cliffs rose to our left and a glacier, smoothed by winter snows, met the sky across the valley and up a steep, forested ravine to our right. Three rock pyramids

waved banners of morning mist as they roughened the skyline above the glacier. We walked across a steep hill and into deep forest and passed a paper sign tacked to a young cedar. “NPS Boundary Marker.”

When we walked into the park and its federally protected wilderness, we came ashore onto an island of protection in a sea of clearcuts. Green earth, green forest, green mind, green spirit. Snow in plots beneath the sky. Luxuriant mosses beneath heavy canopy. Ferns growing from dead trees.

Suddenly, willows. Sulphide Creek and its crib, the south face of Shuksan. Shuksan’s glaciers looked like marshmallow creme, slathered on the mountain’s back steps. From the west, Shuksan is a photogenic mountain. Its hanging glaciers and symmetrical summit pyramid have graced numerous calendars and commercials. From the east, our view, it is a broken mountain, its gray spine shattered and thrust into the sky. . . .

. . . We stood inside North Cascades National Park’s Stephen Mather Wilderness in Shuksan’s shadow at the joining of two wild rivers. We also stood at the junction of times that have been and times that will be. Four or five sets of footprints marked the rock-hard snow. Quarter-inch-long [hemlock] cones, petals splayed, cov-

ered the snow in places. . . . They helped me keep my footing, like sand on an icy walk. There was no sound but the river’s. Farther up the Baker, a gray ouzel dipped and dove, hunting his lunch and shedding water from his teflon wings. The fat bird, about the size of a robin, dove and rolled like a seal, or an otter. He worked the river like a fly fisherman, but with everything in reverse. He dove beneath the surface to hunt insects with his beak. He flew upstream and rafted down, dipping and diving rather than working gradually upstream. His work was smooth, a quiet dance. We stood, knees stiff in the cold, watching him raft around a bend and out of sight.

“I want to see grizzlies fishing from the banks of this river,” Sean said. “I want to walk around this corner and see a pack of wolves bringing down a deer.”

We had spent the morning walking, staying warm and talking about the future of protected places. . . .

We talked a bit about the past, how the Baker must have changed when it was dammed and how this pristine upper stretch of river would be perfect for salmon spawning, as it was free of clearcuts and their silty runoff. The gravel looked ideal and lush forest shaded its channel.

Above the mouth of the Skagit, thousands of tourists gather every winter to watch bald eagles feed on the salmon still spawning there. As we walked upstream, Sean asked, “Have you seen any eagles this morning?”

I hadn’t; eagles knew better than to fish above dams having no fish ladders. The black front of Baker Dam is impenetrable and indifferent to the salmon shadows that gather and bruise their bodies against its base. We sat on a flood-stranded log and watched the river, the forest, and the sky. When a high, gray gauze of clouds began moving across the sun we decided to head home. We walked downstream on snow-covered gravel bars.

It was just above the confluence of the Baker River and Sulphide Creek that we found it. At first it looked like a gray rag, partially buried in snow. I stepped closer and saw silver flecks and a few bones resting at the bottom of a shallow depression in the snow.

We scraped the frost away and realized that the gray rags had once been a huge

*Continued on page 18*



fish. Its gill cover, or operculum, was as large as my hand and the few remaining vertebrae and ribs hinted at a fish at least three feet long, maybe more. It was a salmon, apparently carried here by a bird whose wing beats had swept away the snow and whose talons had pitted the ground around its meal.

“Did the bird carry this fish here all the way from the Skagit, just to eat it?” Sean asked.

“I wouldn’t think so, but how else would it end up here?” I answered. We stood staring for a while and wondering at what was left of the fish before we headed home in silence. In an hour the gravel bar led us to a dead end. A wide stretch of river blocked our way. We had walked onto a pea-gravel peninsula exposed by winter’s low water. We headed back upstream, hopping frozen rivulets and ice-choked channels. As we reached the north shore we found a second fish trapped in a slough that had apparently been an active channel during flood stage.

As we stood and watched the moldering fish we wondered how it had come so far, beyond a dam and back into wilderness. Baker Dam is at least 100 feet high — black, mossy, and brutish — and it has no fish ladders. Two weeks later we learned that salmon do indeed return to the upper Baker to spawn. Their return is artificial, by way of trucks, nets, and pumps, but, as Sean pointed out, humans had a lot to do with their disappearance from the river thirty-five years ago. . . .

. . . Most land managers say they must cooperate with their neighbors to do their

jobs. They also say that science is a vital part of all effective management. Lately all of them have been talking about ecosystem, or big-picture, management. So everyone agrees that cooperation, science, and ecosystem management are compatible, important, and desirable.

But few make the protection of biodiversity, including the great bear, their number-one priority. Few are working to assure the grizzly bear and the salmon a place in the world of our great-grandchildren.

Critics argue we cannot protect species or control ecosystems and therefore should not even try. The systems are too complex, they tell us. And extinction is inevitable, change is natural, and ecosystem health nothing more than a sentimental notion. Whether these critics are right or

wrong, there is an important lesson to be learned from another branch of science which has long dealt with the management and protection of such complex systems.

Medical professionals know that the human body is a vastly complex and inherently unpredictable bundle of systems, often impossible to control or protect. But they agree sometimes, perhaps all the time, that protection and restoration are worth a try. And we all agree with them when they tell us there is a difference between healthy and sick, living and dead.

We should use scientific principles, data, and action, therefore, to protect biodiversity in the North Cascades. Yes, it is a complex system. No, we do not understand it fully. Yes, we will make mistakes. Some species will become extinct despite our best efforts, just as some patients die despite the finest medical treatment. We should, I believe, act rapidly on the best available data and we should work ceaselessly to increase our knowledge of ecosystems and their components even as we begin treatment.

As I lay thinking under the stars I struggled with the meaning of all the debate about ecosystem management, ecological integrity, and the future of the North Cascades ecosystem.

*Sketches by DALE HAMILTON.*

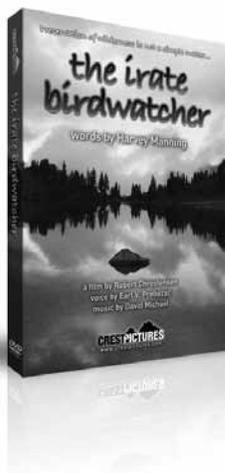


*The Kellers' cabin*

# The Making of a Movie ...

## *The Irate Birdwatcher*

Kathy Chrestensen



We've always enjoyed hiking and backpacking especially with the Sierras in our backyard ... but it was never a passion like it is with so many around here. Being young parents in the 70s we had plenty of other distractions and interests, including sailing that we took up shortly after moving to Washington from a small town in the foothills of Northern California in the early 80s.

In 2000, my husband Robert had to spend six months in the UK for work, and while there he picked up a video camera for the first time and started experimenting with it on weekend getaways with his buddies. While he was doing this I took up hiking solo at Mount Rainier where I rediscovered my deep connection to the mountains. After returning from Europe I talked Robert into doing a hike at Rainier. I said, "Don't worry ... it's a short trail, only about 3½ miles and 2300 feet." Crystal Lakes. Well, for a 50-something, with an on-again, off-again smoking habit that was only exacerbated by spending a lot of time in the London pubs with friends, this was like trying to climb Everest without oxygen. But he made it, and that day decided to stop smoking forever, cold turkey. He made Camp Muir his goal by end of summer. From then on the mountains returned to our lives — big time.

Long story short, day hikes came first, then moved quickly into backpacking again. Not since our youth — early twenties — had we donned packs for extended trips into the deep wilderness. We quickly realized how much things had changed. There were a lot more people on the

trails now, and a more concerted effort by hikers to practice minimum impact. We realized this need right off, and educated ourselves about Leave No Trace — the updated version of the old 60's "Tread Lightly" ideals. We embraced it and began practicing it passionately.

Eventually, we took an alpine scrambling class from The Mountaineers to learn about safe travel on snow and the use of an ice ax; and a glacier climbing class from the Bushwhackers Climbing Club so we could get higher and out on the ice. While we aren't especially peak baggers *per se*, we have managed a few in a short time, including Whitney, St. Helens, Rainier, Adams, Baker, Olympus — but unfortunately just falling short of Glacier Peak — though we're headed back there this summer to finish the job. But, truth is, our hearts are in the lowland forests and meadowlands with the ferns, fungi and moss gardens and the wildflowers and huckleberries — and with all shapes and forms of wildlife. We love the soft shadows, sweet fragrances, gentle breezes and change of seasons, the lakes and rivers and tarns, and the songs. And, it can be just as wild there as on ice and in the rocky reaches of the alpine zone.

Robert didn't set out to make nature films. He's an artist first and was just experimenting with this new medium — video. On his return from Europe he bought a compact mini-DV camcorder and tripod (a hefty one at that with a fluid head for making smooth pans) and carried it on every hike, climb, backpack and snowshoe trip we took from then on — even on Mount Si conditioner hikes (you never know what you might run into — surprisingly once an elk on the old trail). But, it was really just to document our trips, for our own enjoyment. But eventually he started experimenting with editing and creating short video "films" with some of the footage — set to music from our personal album collection. He put together a beautiful six-minute piece from video while shooting along the Hoh River trail — we called it "Lifespring." He thought he'd like to enter it in the local Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Festival, so I worked diligently to get the rights to the music we had set it to, from the famous keyboard player, Lyle Mays. It was a long and trying

process, but I finally got them after six months (hence my role as big-time movie producer was born). To his surprise it was accepted at the Hazel Wolf, and so then he realized he had a new creative outlet — nature videography. With his unique artist's eye he was already seeing the subtleties of color, form, texture, and composition — and as a filmmaker he was now adding the dimensions of movement and sound. It was a perfect match.

After four years, 600 miles and nearly 190,000 feet of elevation gain he had accumulated over 50 hours of some incredibly stunning and unique footage on Mount Rainier — shot during our many amazing and memorable visits. So "Below the Clouds", our first feature-length film came to life. It was our tribute to "The Mountain."

After his success with the Hazel Wolf I started looking around at other possible venues where we could show this film, and found the KCTS 9 Television's "About Us" series — it features Northwest independent filmmakers. I submitted it and amazingly it was accepted and aired on TV to thousands. After the broadcast they were inundated with requests for the DVD, which we didn't have at the time. We rushed to get one done just in time for the holiday season (delivering them to eager buyers out of the back of our car), and so Crest Pictures was born in 2006.

Our hope for "Below the Clouds", as well as everything we produce now, is to encourage respect and appreciation for all wild places. These are precious lands, living legacies, food for our souls, and we feel very strongly about the need to preserve and protect them for future generations. But we also realized the film would encourage wilderness adventure, and as filmmakers we felt obligated to let our audience know about practicing low-impact backcountry travel. So, it seemed only natural when we put the film on DVD to include a short piece about the seven principles of Leave No Trace — an affirmation of our passion to protect the wilderness.

With "The Irate Birdwatcher", our approach was a little more deliberate, at least in the beginning. With the making of the "Below the Clouds" I had contacted a few

*Continued on page 20*

## Making of a Movie

Continued from page 19

local notables and asked if they would preview it and give us their honest thoughts and possible endorsements. I sent it to Harvey Manning, who watched and enjoyed it. Afterwards, he and I exchanged a few letters about “stuff” for a while, and then I heard nothing. But, I knew this was a man I wanted to get to know — and hoped we would become friends.

A month or so before Harvey’s passing — we had no idea how sick he was at the time — I had a light-bulb moment and in my last letter to him I pitched an idea for a new film. I told him we had hours of video footage that we hadn’t used yet and instead of shelving it just to collect dust, we wondered if he might be interested in collaborating on a movie together. I said it could be anything he wanted — him on his usual soapbox about conservation issues or just a personal journal recounting his many great adventures in the mountains — or maybe a little of both. But, sadly he passed away soon after, and our letter was returned by Betty, opened, unanswered. We were shocked and saddened. Eventually, I decided the idea shouldn’t die, too. In fact, I wanted to do it even more now, entirely in Harvey’s words, as if he was still here with us, to keep his legacy alive and teach others about wilderness preservation. So I pitched the idea to Betty, and she went for it; the rest is history. I read all his books and I had pages and pages of Harvey quotes — at least two hours of film time. My theme was wilderness preservation. Essentially, we’re all in it for the cause (wilderness preservation), and for Harvey (his huge influence on each of our lives) and for our various crafts — but definitely not the money.

“Irate Birdwatcher” was Harvey’s pen name while he wrote for and edited *The Wild Cascades*, the journal of the North Cascades Conservation Council, Seattle, Washington (1957).

Robert Chrestensen’s beautiful video amazingly fit just perfectly to Harvey’s words, and his editing skills are incredible as you will agree — he is a true artist.

So, there you have the story of Crest Pictures and “The Irate Birdwatcher”.

## A Film for Hikers, Climbers, Strollers and Backpackers

*“You feel like you’re sitting around the campfire or huffing up a steep brushy trail, breaking out into the meadows and surveying the peaks alongside Harvey Manning himself. For me personally, it’s as close as I’ll ever get to listening to the John Muir of the Cascades.”*

— PHILIP FENNER

*“We are inundated these days by eco-porn: prettified, commoditized, and often garish scenery in calendars. ‘The Irate Birdwatcher’ in contrast is sensitive and lyrical to the eye and the ear from the inimitable pen of Harvey Manning.”*

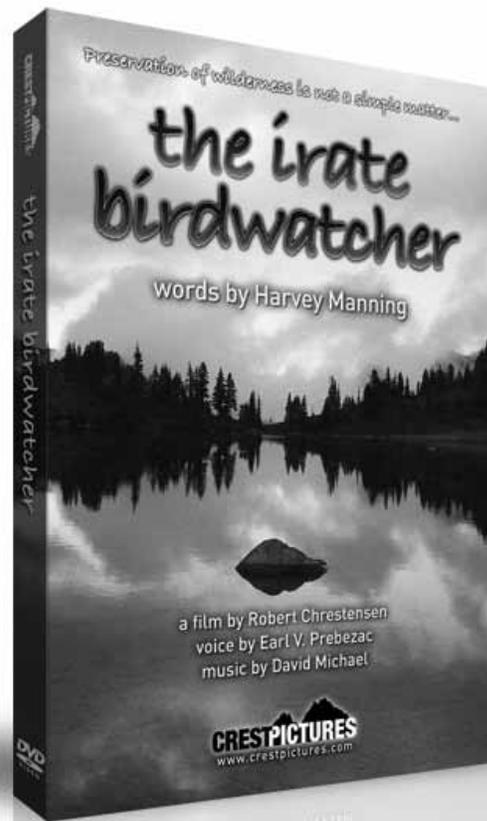
— JOHN S. EDWARDS

*“The gorgeous wilderness cinematography in ‘The Irate Birdwatcher’ provides the North Cascades imagery that was missing from the Ken Burns film on National Parks, and it’s a fitting visual counterpart to the words of wildlands defender Harvey Manning.”*

— KARL FORSGAARD

*“Harvey Manning’s love of the Pacific Northwest wilderness is expressed poetically that puts the listener deeply into the backcountry, while Robert Chrestensen’s mountain scenes envelope the senses. Together they show us what we have and must protect.”*

— MARY LOU KRAUSE



This film is a beautiful testament to the man and his lifework. It reveals his great wit and charm, his thoughts and experiences over the years, his deep love for the wild and, his hopes and dreams for the future. Plus there’s a bit of him on his usual soapbox. It’s quintessential Harvey.

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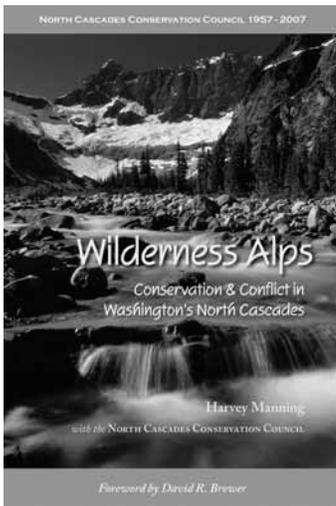
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## *Wilderness Alps: Conservation and Conflict in Washington's North Cascades*

by HARVEY MANNING  
AND NCCC

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480 pages, with maps, historic photos, and beautiful color images by Pat O'Hara, Dave Schiefelbein, Tom Hammond and others.

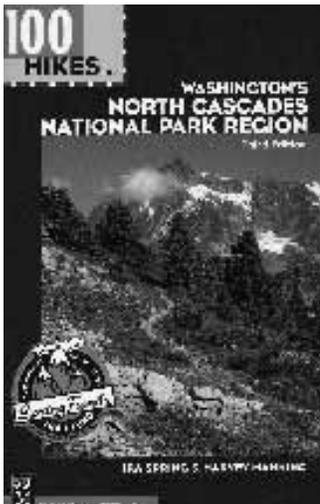
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—Brock Evans



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# National Park Overflights: What's Wrong with Them?

John S. Edwards

**B**irds fly over the rainbow, so the song says. Himalayan geese certainly fly over Mount Everest. Eagles and ravens soar over our national parks and wilderness. Even hummingbirds fly high in the mountains to visit red flowers, and red flags too. We love them all — and they are like the ideal Victorian child — seen but not heard.

That's what is wrong with powered scenic flights — the noise, the intrusion into the relative quiet of the natural world. And that is why they should be excluded everywhere and at all times over national parks and wilderness. It is true that a few benefit from these scenic flights — the scenic flight operators of course, and their passengers who, few in proportion to those on the trails, pay for their brief birds-eye view. Those on the ground, the silent majority, pay dearly for the assault on their auditory landscape. The whine, whirr and clatter of small fixed-wing planes and helicopters is the real price paid by the majority of park visitors.

In fact park landscapes in general are not best seen from the air for altitude flattens topography, although a close aerial encounter with an alpine face can be a thrill, impressive but fleeting. As Harvey Manning insisted, mountains are best enjoyed at walking pace. And if one cannot, for any reason, walk through the mountains one can drive through them thanks to the legacy of scenic highways stemming from the rise of automobile tourism and the dreams of Stephen Mather.

Since 2000, when Congress decreed that the National Park Service, and the FAA, are required by the National Parks Air Tour Management Act (NPATM) to work in cooperation to generate management plans progress has stalled. That process is still in limbo; so far no plan has been completed, due largely to different agency conceptions of their role in implementing the law.

On December 15, 2000 Senators Ron Wyden and Lamar Alexander sent a letter to the two agencies asking for responses to specific questions, including the following:

Why have no air tour management plans been completed? What are the impediments to completing these plans and what action is your agency taking so that these

issues can be reconciled?

Do you agree that the FAA is responsible for ensuring aircraft and airspace safety and that the NPS is responsible for determining the significance of noise impacts on park resources, the visitor experience, and park employees?

So far the National Park Service responded March 18, 2010 but the FAA has not yet done so. The NPS in response to question 1 commented that “the biggest challenge has been the different agency policies and procedures for complying with NEPA regulations”, and to question 2 that “Yes, the NPS agrees that National Parks Air Tour Management Act and its legislative history makes clear, when developing ATMPs, the FAA is responsible for ensuring aircraft safety and that the NPS is responsible for determining the significance of noise impacts on park resources and the visitor experience”.

The process is under way for Mount Rainier, for which an air tour management plan is in gestation. The period for public comment has passed, but watch out for notice of a public hearing this fall.

Sean Smith, speaking for the NPCA has expressed opposition to flights over Mount Rainier, for reasons of intrusive impact on the park experience, and for the welfare of the animals of the mountain landscape.

There is a long and convoluted history of concern about scenic overflights dating back at least to 1926 at Grand Canyon National Park. Today scenic overflights there exceed 50,000 a year; on busy days at least 100 helicopters may be above the canyon at one time. Canyon air tours are said to have contributed \$504 million to the Nevada economy in 1996 so economic aspects of the issue are not trivial.

Nearer home opposition mounts against helicopter overflights of Crater Lake National Park and discussion continues for Mount McKinley National Park. Overflights are advertised on websites for scenic trips through the North Cascades but in the absence of proposed regular flights over the park there has not yet been a requirement for an Interim Air Tour Management Plan.

Commercial airlines are of course not subject to route limitations over national parks or wilderness. They are, in general,

at high altitude and we have become inured to their omnipresence. It is a revealing aspect of their ubiquity that on the fateful day of September 11, 2001 backcountry hikers became aware that something big must have happened because of the conspicuous absence of flights.

Lower altitude flights are a different species. There are some valid reasons for local flights over and into national parks — emergencies and rescues for example, but there is no good reason for joyriding scenic overflights in national parks, beyond the profit motive. In the opinion of this Irrascible Bug Swatter, they should be banned outright.

Thanks to Sean Smith for help with this essay.

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## North Cascades Study Reports available online

In the last edition of *The Wild Cascades* an article by Philip Fenner referenced the “North Cascades Study Report” from 1965. The entire editcontent of that study is online on the NPS History Website at:

[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/noca/study\\_report/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/noca/study_report/index.htm)

A copy of Luxenberg's “Historic Resource Study” is also online at:

[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/noca/hrs/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/noca/hrs/index.htm)

These resource documents can be downloaded.

—Randall D. Payne



Whistler Mountain — Cutthroat Peak massif above State Creek (and Highway 20), a principal tributary of Bridge Creek fork of the Stebekin river. This area falls outside congressional protection, something the American Alps Legacy Project hopes to amend.

— TOM HAMMOND PHOTO

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*This family of mountain goats allowed me to stay on the ridge that connects Wamibaspi Peak (behind, out of view) and Early Winters Spires. Silver Star massif seen in distance right — Early Winters fork Metbow River. Congressionally unprotected — visit [Americanalps.org](http://Americanalps.org). — TOM HAMMOND PHOTO*

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