Salmon Sanctuary!

A sk why Olympic National Park was protected in 1938, and you’ll get answers like elk, big trees or rain forest. No one will say fish. Yet over the last 75 years, the park’s role as a fish sanctuary is becoming more evident.

Olympic National Park has large lakes and over 4,000 miles of rivers and streams radiating out from the Olympic Mountains. These waters are home to 31 species of native freshwater fish, from 2-3-inch Olympic mud minnows to thick-bodied Chinook salmon the size of a grade schooler!

Anadromous fish—species that are born in freshwater, migrate to the ocean, then return to the rivers of their birth to spawn and usually die—have been ascending the watery spokes of this wheel of rivers for millennia. Given all those years, they’ve spread themselves out not just in space, but also in time, evolving into at least 70 unique populations of Pacific salmon, trout and char. Each season welcomes a different run. Many rivers always have salmon in them, whether it’s eggs, tiny fry, or exhausted adults using their last reserves to spawn before dying.

Nourishing the Food Chain

That biomass, from eggs to carcasses, gives back to park ecosystems. More than 130 species of wildlife feed on salmon. Black bears drag fish from streams to fatten up in the fall. Eagles, ravens, raccoons, otters, shrews, insects and the next generation of fish, feast on this gift from the sea. Carcasses even fertilize the streams and nearby forests with phosphorous, nitrogen and carbon.

...great salmon threshed in the water all night long...every few yards was to be seen the remains of a fish where cougar, coon, otter, or eagle had made a meal.

Private Harry Fisher, Queets River, 1890 O’Neil Expedition

“Fish contribute ecologically, economically and culturally” park fish biologist Sam Brenkman explained. The park functions like a nursery or savings account of fish for the region, he added.

Olympic National Park is a stronghold for many species that face challenges elsewhere, including five runs listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act: Puget Sound Chinook, Puget Sound steelhead, Lake Ozette sockeye, Hood Canal summer chum and Puget Sound/Coastal bull trout.

Common threats to fish—often called the four H’s of habitat, hydroelectric, harvest and hatcheries—are minimized in the park. Towering forests still shade glacier-fed rivers, ideal habitat for cold-water loving trout and salmon. Dams on the Elwha River are being removed, freeing up 70 miles of habitat. Fishing emphasizes catch and release methods, and park fish biologists work with neighbors to protect wild runs of fish from hatchery influence.

So next time you walk in a cathedral of ancient trees or search a rain forest valley for elk, be sure to peer into the nearest stream. You might also spot a silver-flanked shape resting in a clear pool finding sanctuary in Olympic National Park.

Winter Fish Watching in the Park

Quinault Valley – 10.3 miles up the North Shore Road look for sockeye salmon in Big Creek in November and December. Or watch coho in the East Fork Quinault River by Graves Creek Road.

Hoh – From November into January, watch coho salmon spawn in Taft Creek, near the Hoh Rain Forest Visitor Center.

Sol Duc – At Salmon Cascades overlook (7.3 miles up the Sol Duc Road), look for leaping coho in the fall and steelhead in the spring.

Staircase – Schools of bull trout spawn in the Skokomish River from October to December.

Elwha – As dams are removed, fish are beginning to return (see update page 8). Though visibility will be limited in the main river, look in clear tributaries for coho this winter and steelhead in spring.
**National Park Campgrounds**

The following campgrounds are closed this winter: Alaide, Deer Park, Hurricane and South Beach. Others may be closed by snow, storms, high winds, flooding or downed trees. Several have primary winter camping with permit. Private lesions are available with limited services in the Pyramid, North 7, and West Fork of the East Fork of the Elwha. Information on current conditions is online or by calling (360) 565-3131 or see [www.nps.gov/oly/plan/visitcurrent-conditions.htm](http://www.nps.gov/oly/plan/visitcurrent-conditions.htm), or call (360) 457-2879 for recorded messages. The following campgrounds usually have some loop open year-round.

- **Quinault:** North Fork (primitive year-round); Graves Creek (primitive in winter)
- **Kalaloch:** Kalaloch Campground. Reservations can be made for Kalaloch campground May 1 through September 24, 2013, by calling (877) 444-6777 or [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or more than 6 months ahead.
- **Hoh:** Hoh Campground
- **Mora:** Oregon Campground
- **Hurricane Ridge:** Campground (walk-in if it snows)
- **Staircase:** Staircase Campground (primitive in winter)

**Roads**

Some park roads regularly close under winter in other conditions may be closed temporarily by weather. Call (360) 565-3131 or see [www.nps.gov/oly/plan/visitcurrent-conditions.htm](http://www.nps.gov/oly/plan/visitcurrent-conditions.htm) for current conditions. Over Park Road is closed at the park boundary 9 miles from Highway 101, 200 feet past the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Dungeness Point Road is closed mid October until late June; 2013, (360) 522-4473. Lodging and Food Service Outside the Park

Local Lodging Options: Lodging and food service are available all year. Contact the Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau at (800) 942-4042, [www.olympicpeninsula.org](http://www.olympicpeninsula.org).

**Utilities and Services**

- **Enforcement and other Recreational Fees:** Fees apply after a 10-day period. Pet services available at Port Angeles, (360) 452-5144. Snowboard and boot rental at Hurricane Ridge Resort, $22 per day.
- **Emergency:** (360) 565-3131 or [www.nps.gov/oly/](http://www.nps.gov/oly/) for current conditions.
- **Linear Park Information:** [www.nps.gov/oly/](http://www.nps.gov/oly/)
- **Services and Facilities:** [www.nps.gov/oly/](http://www.nps.gov/oly/)
- **Lodging and Food Service Outside the Park:** [www.olympicpeninsula.org](http://www.olympicpeninsula.org)
- **Snowshoe with a Ranger:** Snowshoe walk for groups of 7 to 30 people. Walks are offered at 10:30 a.m. on weekends and holidays. Clubs, youth groups or schools can schedule a free reserved snowshoe walk. Call (360) 565-3136 for a 24-hour recording. For the winter season, current road conditions can be monitored by calling (360) 565-3131 or see [www.nps.gov/oly/plan/visitcurrent-conditions.htm](http://www.nps.gov/oly/plan/visitcurrent-conditions.htm).

**Points to Remember:**

- If you intend to drive to the park in winter, please be prepared. Roads, trails and parking areas can be hazardous.
- Practice good winter driving habits.
- Take your time and stay on the main road. Do not attempt to drive several miles up the roads in winter weather.
- Keep a full fuel tank.
- Park services may not be available on weekends or holidays.
- Bring extra food, water and fuel.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Keep emergency supplies in your vehicle including a shovel for breaking snow; probes, and a gas can nearby. Call (360) 565-3131 for current status.
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**Snowshoe with a Ranger:**

Participate in a ranger at Hurricane Ridge to experience the wonders of winter on snowshoes. If you can walk, you can snowshoe! The National Park Service provides snowshoes and instructions on this ranger-led program. A $5.00 donation per participant helps the park provide these snowshoe walks and funds snowshoe repair and replacement.

Participants should prepare with weather in mind, cold, snow, wind or even rain. Dress in layers, wear waterproof boots and bring hats, mittens, sunscreen and sunglasses. If the road is closed, walk are cancelled.

**Snowshoe Walk:**

Snowshoe permitting, this easy to moderate walk is offered at 2:00 p.m. on weekends and holidays (December 1, January 1, and February 18) from December 15, 2012 through March 1, 2013. The walk lasts 1.5 hours and covers less than a mile. Reservations MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE, by calling (360) 565-3136.

**Snowshoe Walks for Community Groups:**

Clubs, youth groups or schools can schedule a free snowshoe walk for groups of 7 to 30 people. Walks are offered at 10:30 a.m. on weekends and holidays (December 1, January 1, and February 18) from December 15, 2012 through March 1, 2013. The walk lasts 1.5 hours and covers less than a mile. Reservations MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE, by calling (360) 565-3136.

**Women’s Outdoor Evening:**

Join a women at Hurricane Ridge to learn more about your gear at this free winter program series. Programs are 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month, November through April, at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center, 3002 Mt. Angeles Road, Port Angeles.

**March 12 – It’s More Than Mud: Sediment Monitoring on the Elwha River:**

Senior scientists with the United States Geological Survey will join Olympic National Park Hydrologist Andy Ritchie to learn more about work to monitor and understand this fluid situation.

**February 12 – Extending our Understanding: Olympic Archaeology:**

Join Dave Conca, park Chief of Cultural Resource Management, for a presentation on the latest insights we are gaining from discoveries that confirm at least 8,000 years of human occupation in what is now Olympic National Park.

**March 12 – Human Ecology of the Olympic Peninsula:**

Strengthening what we love provide insights into our values. David Banis of Portland State University’s Ian Miller provides the latest information on traditional basket making among the Peninsula’s native peoples.

**Lodging and Food Service Outside the Park:**

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March 12 – Human Ecology of the Olympic Peninsula: Stories of Places Where we have provided insights into our values. David Banis of Portland State University will explain how Human Ecology Mapping offers a new approach to gathering data on social and cultural values about public lands.

April 9 – From the Hands of a Weaver: Olympic Peninsula Basketry Through Time: Native artists have crafted baskets using plant materials and meticulous skill for millennia. Park anthropologist Jaci L. Wray will discuss From the Hands of a Weaver: a new book she edited on traditional basket making among the Peninsula’s native peoples.
Before heading out, check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current avalanche conditions. Wear an avalanche beacon, carry a probe, snow shovel and the 10 essentials (see page 8), and avoid avalanche terrain such as cornices, gullies and steep lee slopes.
Cross-Country Skiing & Snowshoeing

With its easy access and 15 to 20 miles of routes, Hurricane Ridge is the focus of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in Olympic National Park. Though winter explorers of all abilities can enjoy the area, flat, easy, beginner ski terrain is limited to the meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Backcountry skiers can explore several slopes and bowls in the area. No trails are groomed or marked; however, two routes use unplowed roads which can usually be navigated.

NOTE FOR SNOWSHOERS, WALKERS AND SNOWBOARDERS: Skiers, walkers, snowshoers and snowboarders can safely share this area. Snowshoers, walkers and snowboarders, please stay to one side to avoid damaging ski tracks on trails, and do not snowshoe or walk through the downhill ski area.

Before heading out on any trip remember to register at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center and check current avalanche conditions. Below are descriptions of routes in the Hurricane Ridge area.

The Meadows
The meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center offer gentle, easy terrain for everyone and excellent views in fair weather. Because the meadows are exposed to the wind, they are sometimes icy or wind packed.

Hurricane Hill Road
This route begins just west of the visitor center, this trail first descends steeply, then follows the rolling, moderate ridge line above the hurricane Ridge Highway. Experienced skiers can use this trail to reach the Hurricane Ridge Route (see Most Difficult), as well as several bowls for backcountry skiing. In clear weather there are good views to the north and south, especially at the trail’s terminus at the Hurricane Ridge trailhead. Much of this ridge top trail is sheltered by a subalpine forest, making it a good choice in windy, inclement weather or when there is elevated avalanche hazard.

Wolf Creek Trail
This route begins 0.6 miles west of the visitor center along the unplowed Hurricane Hill Road (see above) and descends through meadows and forests into the Elwha Valley. There are several south-facing slopes near the beginning which are good for backcountry skiing. The Wolf Creek Trail is seldom snow-covered at lower elevations and skiers must often walk the last several miles. Check at the information desk for current conditions.

Most Difficult

Hurricane Hill Route
1.6 miles one way
This route starts at the end of the Hurricane Hill Road and climbs 700 feet to the summit of Hurricane Hill. There are several very steep side slopes, so use extreme caution under icy or avalanche conditions. As an alternative, skiers can follow the ridge line. Be careful to stay off cornices. Under good conditions, advanced skiers will find this a rewarding trip with good views and some nice slopes. Check with the information desk before venturing out.

Obstruction Point Road: Waterhole to the end
4.3 miles one way (Obstruction Point Road is 7.8 miles one way)
This route begins at the midway point on the unplowed Obstruction Point Road (see description above for the first 3.4 miles to Waterhole). After Waterhole, the route gains 900 feet, climbing steeply for 0.5 miles to open slopes on Eagle Point. In clear weather, views can be spectacular out steep side slopes and exposure to storms makes this a difficult route. It is recommended only under good conditions for experienced skiers. Travel beyond Obstruction Point can entail steep terrain with high avalanche potential.

Sunrise Ridge
2.1 miles one way
Begin this route by crossing the intermediate rope up and climbing to the right of the ski hill (right of the trees). From the top of Alpine Hill, above the downhill ski slope, this route follows a narrow ridge toward the south side of Mount Angeles. There are several avalanche prone areas along the way, so check conditions and use caution under unstable conditions. The ridge begins by going off cornices that form along the ridge side ridges. Several nice slopes on the east side descend to the Hurricane Ridge Road.

Other Areas
Depending on the snow level, other roads and trails in both the park and in Olympic National Forest may be snow-covered. Check at the visitor center for current snow levels. The Dyer Park Road may provide skiing or snowshoeing opportunities. For safety, this steep, narrow road is closed to cars at the park boundary, 9 miles from Highway 191, at around 2,000 feet elevation. The road climbs steeply about 9 more miles from the park boundary up to Blue Mountain. If the snow level is low enough, the road may be skiable from the boundary; but users usually need to hike several miles before reaching snow.

For other routes on the Olympic Peninsula, refer to 100 Best Cross-Country Ski Trails in the Pacific Northwest by Dan Nelson. For your safety, be sure the path is clear of hazards and that you are not alone. Collisions can result in injuries. Watch for skiers and snowshoers crossing the road.

Cross-country skier at the end of the Hurricane Hill Road ski area route, with Hurricane Hill rising in the background.

Avalanche!

Olympic Mountain terrain and weather create ideal conditions for avalanches. Before heading out, check the Northwest Avalanche Center forecast at www.nwac.org, and check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current conditions. Wear proper avalanche gear and snow probe and snow shovel. The hazard levels range from low to extreme. Even in low hazard conditions avalanches can occur on some slopes. With extreme conditions backcountry travel should be avoided. Certain terrain features, for example steep gullies that funnel snow, unstable cornices (see below), or dark cliff faces on warm spring days, can increase avalanche hazard. The survival rate for avalanche victims is extremely low. If you or a group member are caught in an avalanche, take these steps in your rescue attempt:

- Ensure the safety of survivors.
- Mark where victims were caught and last seen.
- Quickly search downhill from the last seen points for clues.
- Search the avalanche debris below the last seen points by probing in a grid pattern with probes, ski tails or poles.
- Keep searching! The victim could be inches away from your boots.
- Send an extra person for help.
- If you are caught, make swimming motions and try to keep yourself on top of the snow. As the snow begins to slow down, push the snow away from your face to create an air pocket.

Hey Kids!

Hurricane Ridge is a fun place in the winter but would you want to live there? By Herb Crisler, a famous film maker who spent a winter in the old Hurricane Ridge lookout (right). Imagine their experience...

- How did they travel? Hurricane Ridge receives an average of 32 feet of snow each winter. If your house were up in the mountain, it could be buried! With such deep snow, snowshoes or cross-country skis are essential for efficient travel.
- Batten down the hatches! Winter storms with hurricane force winds (over 73 mph) are not uncommon in the Ridge. Last winter, gusts over 100 mph were recorded! Notice the cable anchoring the lookout in the photograph.
- Who are your neighbors? Despite what we might consider pretty tough conditions, Herb and his wife weren’t alone on the mountain that winter. Look for tracks of snowshoe hares, squirrels, weasels, bobcats and more on your visit. The snow always has stories to tell!
- Unexpected danger! At 5,242 feet elevation there’s less atmosphere between us and the sun, so ultraviolet radiation levels are up to 20% higher. While sunscreen didn’t exist in Herb’s day, sunglasses and sunscreen are important parts of your winter survival kit.

Snow Play

Snow sliding is a favorite pastime for some, but it has also been one of the most dangerous activities at Hurricane Ridge. Serious injuries, even permanent disabilities occurred when people collided with trees, other sliders, or lost control and ended up in the road.

For your safety, sliding/tubing is permitted in only two locations:
- The Small Children’s Snowplay area near the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center where children right and under may slide.
- The tubing park operated by the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club in the downhill ski area.

Skiing is not allowed anywhere else in the Hurricane area or along the Hurricane Ridge Road.

If conditions are too icy to allow safe sliding, the sliding areas may be closed. For the safety of participants, metal or hard plastic runner sleds and wooden toboggans are not permitted. Only tubes provided by the ski area will be permitted in their tubing park. Pressurized air for inflating inner tubes is not available. To be as safe as possible, observe the following rules:

- Slide only in the designated areas.
- For your safety, be sure the path is clear of hazards before starting to slide. Collisions can result in injuries. Watch for skiers and snowshoers crossing the road.

February 2012 slab avalanche in Sunsite area above Hurricane Ridge Road. (note person for scale). NPS photo by Dave Turner.
Exploring Olympic in Winter

Olympic is a park for all seasons. Visitors prepared for unpredictable weather can experience the beauty and solitude of winter without summer crowds. But winter is the wet season. Snow and rain can swell streams overnight, making crossings treacherous and washing out trails. Camp above flood plains. Boardwalks and bridges are very slippery when wet or icy. On the coast, storms push tides higher, creating huge waves that easily move beach logs or trap hikers on rocks. Winter storms can blow down trees, blocking trails. Be prepared, always carry the 10 essentials, even for short hikes: extra clothing, extra food and water, map, compass, flashlight, knife, sunglasses, matches, fire starter/candle, first aid kit.

But don’t let winter chase you inside! There are always options for exploring. Use your phone to learn more about locations on the park’s audio tour. Stop at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles for maps, tide tables and trail reports or check the park website: www.nps.gov/olym. For you and your pet’s safety, pets are not allowed on trails in the park. If you plan to camp overnight in the park’s wilderness, get the required permit, bear canisters and information on fees at the Wilderness Information Center (WIC) in the Visitor Center. May through September some popular spots have limits, including parts of the coast. Call the WIC (360) 565-3100 for details or reservations. The options below are usually accessible, depending on snow level and storm damage.

Low-Elevation Hiking

Elwha Valley: Geyser Valley Loop, West Elwha, Griff Creek, Cascade Rock trails and lower parts of the Elwha River trail.

Lake Crescent: Marymere Falls and Spruce Railroad trails.

Ozette: Cape Alava or Sand Point trails.

Mora and La Push: James Pond, Second, Third and Rialto Beaches.

Kalahoch: Short trails to beaches, beach hikes and the forest nature trail.

Hoh: Hall of Mosses and Spruce Nature trails, or lower Hoh River trail.

Quinault: Nature trails on both sides of the lake, Irely Lake and Cascading Terraces trails, or lower parts of the North Fork and Graves Creek trails.

High Country Trips

Snow camping requires preparation and many safety precautions, but offers a glimpse into a season that few truly experience. Weather can change quickly. Places like Hurricane Ridge and Blizzard Pass earn their names, and whiteout conditions can occur anytime. Be prepared!

Hurricane Ridge offers the easiest access to winter high country. For safety, please observe these rules:

- Overnight campers must get a permit at the WIC, and register and check with a ranger at Hurricane Ridge for camping and parking locations.

- Plan trips for weekends since the road is usually closed Monday through Thursday. If a storm forces a road closure, you may need to install tire chains and have a shovel in case of a snowy descent. Use caution as plow operators may not see you! If you are locked in uphill from the gate, call (360) 565-3000 ext. 0 (before 5:30 p.m.) or (360) 417-2459 after hours.

- Because of the risk of sudden storms, winter overnight parking is not allowed at Hurricane Ridge. You must park 3.3 miles below the Ridge at Third Peak (see map pages 4-5). Check with rangers at Hurricane to see if a shuttle is available.

- Winter camps must be 1/2 mile away from the Hurricane Ridge parking lot and out of sight of ski/snowshoe trails. Check with a ranger for suggestions.

- Use a camp stove. Campfires are prohibited.

- Share the trails—avoid walking or snowshoeing in ski tracks.

- In emergencies, dial 911 from the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center foyer.

- Check avalanche conditions and carry beacons (see page 7).

Restoring the Elwha

A fter years of planning and preparation, the largest dam removal in United States history began September 2011. Only one year later, removal of the Elwha Dam is complete and less than 40 percent of Glines Canyon Dam remains. By this coming summer, the Elwha River will be flowing freely from its headwaters in the Olympic Mountains to the Strait of Juan de Fuca for the first time in 100 years.

As the dams come down and the river returns to its historic channels, the Elwha Valley is experiencing dramatic changes. The Lake Mills and Lake Aldwell reservoirs have drained, revealing an ancient forest floor now blooming with new life. Millions of cubic yards of sediment, once trapped in the reservoirs behind the dams, are washing downstream, replenishing beaches and creating critical habitat for spawning salmon and other marine life. Chinook and pink salmon, as well as steelhead trout have returned to stretches of the river once blocked by the Elwha Dam, carrying with them marine-derived nutrients to restore a vital link between sea, river and forest. And the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, inhabitants of the Elwha Valley since time immemorial, have renewed access to their sacred creation site, long covered by the waters of Lake Aldwell.

While removal of the dams will be complete by summer 2013, the story of Elwha River restoration is just beginning. For more information, frequent updates and links to project webcams, visit Olympic National Park’s website www.nps.gov/olym, share or interact with ‘Elwha River Restoration’ on Facebook, pick up a brochure at a park visitor center, or take a walk to one of the viewpoints along the Elwha River.