



VOICE of the WILD OLYMPICS

Vol. 29 No. 1

Olympic Park Advocates

Spring-Summer 2021

Welcome to Olympic Park Advocates

After more than 70 years of environmental activism in defense of Olympic wildlands, Olympic Park Associates is changing our name to Olympic Park *Advocates*. We're still OPA, the

same scrappy grass-roots organization dedicated "to protecting the wilderness and ecological integrity of Olympic National Park and the Olympic ecosystem." Our board of trustees, advisory board, and membership will remain. We'll keep publishing *Voice of the Wild Olympics* and we'll continue to focus intensely on issues facing the park and surrounding public lands.

But we wanted a fresh name, one that reflects our advocacy for the park and ecosystem as we face a cavalcade of threats to the place we love.

Not long after its creation, Olympic National Park faced repeated efforts to remove its spectacular temperate rain-forest valleys. Northwest conservation leaders, many who worked to create a large and ecologically diverse park only years before, rushed to its defense. Conservationists soon realized that a stand-alone group was needed to "watchdog" the new park and head off efforts to compromise its wilderness or sell off Olympic's invaluable rain forests to the highest bidder.

Men and women from a variety of conservation and outdoor groups came together in 1948 to form Olympic Park Associates. The name reflected colleagues united for a cause. It

was apt enough for its time, but less specific as to the nature or purpose of our organization today. "Advocates" makes it clear. We're here to publicly support the park and its spectacular wilderness and defend it against incompatible uses.

We face a time of increasing use and competing demands on park resources, compounded by woefully insufficient federal funding. Olympic is in need of outspoken advocates. And OPA is ready to step up.

Please join us in this important work. Contributions and bequests made to OPA under either name will still go to the same place and fund the same important work. Contact us through our website, olympicparkadvocates.org. Bring us your ideas, and ask how you might become involved. Join us in our three-quarter-century long tradition of defending Olympic wilderness. Become an advocate for Olympic National Park!



Lake Lacrosse reflects Mount Duckabush, early morning light. Photo by Pat O'Hara

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Senate: senate.gov

US House of Representatives: house.gov

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Olympic Park Advocates

Meetings

Next: Early fall, time and place to be announced.

Regular Meeting Schedule:
4th Tuesday of odd-numbered months,
except 3rd Tuesday in November.

No meeting in July.

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Masthead photo by Pat O'Hara

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Chopper Madness

By Rob Smith

If a Navy helicopter lands in the Daniel J. Evans Wilderness inside Olympic National Park, does it make a sound if no one is around?

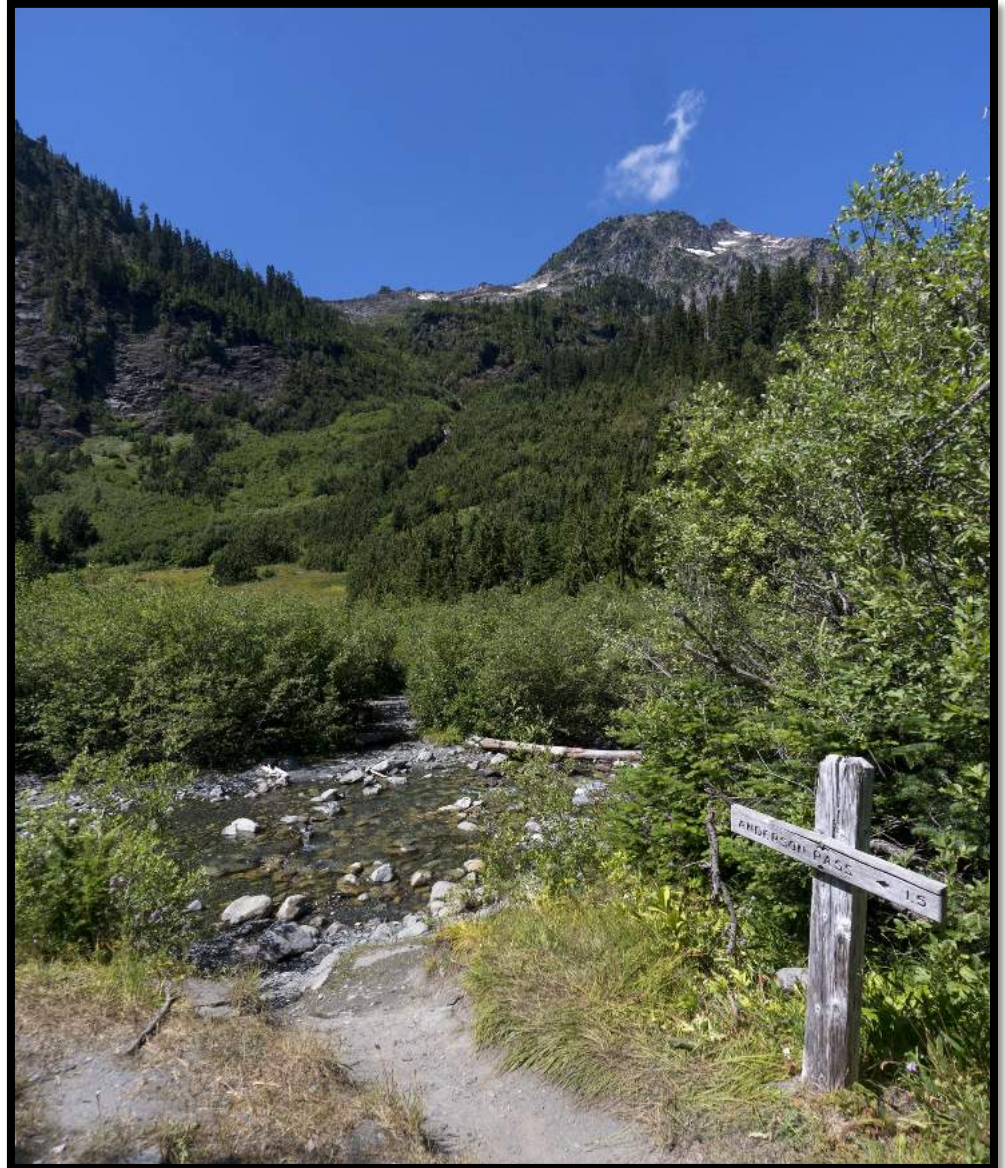
But last July 15th someone was around -- a couple of wilderness campers enjoying the backcountry of Honeymoon Meadows -- when a large helicopter set down not far from their tents. They hurried over, thinking an emergency had occurred and perhaps they could help.

What they came upon was a Navy helicopter with crew members on the ground walking around. After a few minutes, all but one crew member boarded the chopper, which then rose and flew to the far side of the meadow. In a few more minutes it returned to pick up the remaining crew member in a harness before flying down the valley with two Navy personnel dangling from below.

The campers complained to park officials, but the dispatch office at first claimed this was an authorized exercise even though it was within the wilderness area where this would typically not occur. But then things got murky. Further inquiries to the park revealed that this was not authorized or even known about. Initial questions from the park to the Navy base on Whidbey Island, where the helicopter was likely stationed, garnered no immediate information.

On behalf of National Parks Conservation Association, I filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to see what the communications between the park and the Navy could reveal, and to demonstrate that others were paying attention to this breach of wilderness rules.

It took until February – almost 7 months to the day after the incident – to get the fuller story from both federal entities. According to the FOIA email chain, the park investigated the initial complaint and found no record of a training event of this nature or an



Honeymoon Meadows by John Gussman

agreement for such exercises within the park. After several messages to the Navy base commander, it appears that the Navy at first denied it was their helicopter, then later said it was an authorized training exercise, then finally said that if they can't train in the park then they may not conduct rescue missions when requested there.

The upshot has a happier ending: the park and the Navy have agreed to work towards a formal agreement on search and rescue training at Olympic National Park in non-wilderness areas where such activities would be allowed and made known ahead of time to park visitors.

Thanks to the Honeymoon Meadows campers for pursuing this, to public laws like FOIA, and to the park managers for trying to work out an agreement with the Navy so their search and rescue capacity can be used while respecting the wilderness of the Olympics.

Hope for Legacy Roads and Trails Fund



Decommissioned Slab Camp Road, Olympic National Forest by John Gussman

By Tom Hammond

The U.S. Forest Service's Legacy Roads and Trails (LRT) program was defunded in 2018, effectively ending federal watershed restoration projects in Washington State. The LRT program was a tremendous success on the Olympic Peninsula. Major restoration efforts in the Skokomish watershed improved habitat significantly. Projects on the Dungeness River system have gone through planning and approval and are "shovel ready" for restoration. OPA participated in the Dungeness plan, making the cancellation of the LRT program troubling.

In April, OPA has joined with 100 conservation groups calling on elected representatives to restore funding for the LRT program. We asked that the program be reinstated in the FY 2022 Interior-Environment Appropriations Bill with a budget of \$100 million. The Legacy Roads and Trails program has benefitted visitors to national forests and improved waterways across the U.S. for a decade. From 2008-2018, thanks in large part to the support of Washington's Congressional delegation, this unique, job-producing bipartisan program invested over \$32 million in Washington State leading to the following results:

- Protected rivers and streams by reclaiming 313 miles of unneeded roads, preventing sediment from entering waterways, many of which supply drinking water to rural and urban communities;
- Restored fish passage by fixing culverts at 55

road/stream crossings, boosting Washington's \$1.1 billion sport fishing industry and advancing salmon restoration goals;

- Improved trails by repairing 105 miles, keeping the \$535 million national forest recreation industry going strong; and

- Ensured vehicle access to Forest Service lands by maintaining and/or storm-proofing 2,298 miles of roads.

Without dedicated funding, critical restoration projects have been left on shelves or not completed. Last year, fish passage barriers were removed in only one of Washington's six national forests and only with timber sale revenues. Without direction from Congress, the proposed LRT trails projects cannot be funded from the general road maintenance budget.

As a result of our efforts, on Earth Day, Representatives Derek Kilmer (WA D-6) which includes the Olympic Peninsula, Kim Schrier (WA D-8) and Mike Simpson (ID R-2) introduced legislation that will create a specific authorization for Legacy Roads and Trails Funding through 2030. The legislation ensures that annual appropriations are targeted toward projects that address impacts to watersheds from roads and trails. Please express your thanks to these representatives for their leadership on this issue.

(Marlies Wierenga of Wild Earth Guardians and Tom Uniack of Washington Wild contributed to this report)



Old Growth, Sol Duc Valley by John Gussman

By Annie Cubberly

As I drive and hike on the Olympic Peninsula, I am troubled by seeing acres of forests clear-cut, leaving large piles of dead wood on barren landscapes. Barely a sword fern survives, much less the birds and animals that once lived there. I learned that most of those clear-cuts are second growth on private land owned by big timber companies like Weyerhaeuser and Green Diamond, among others. Private companies grow and harvest trees on short cycles of 40 to 60 years. Washington State is the second largest timber producer in the nation. Only about 12% of forests are owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and of that about 50% west of the Cascades are in conservation areas.

Most remaining old growth is protected either as critical habitat for endangered species or under the Northwest Forest Plan. Forests under state jurisdiction are managed by the DNR's Habitat Conservation Plan. Of course, no logging is allowed in the Olympic National Park.

So I wondered, what exactly is old growth? Old growth is commonly used to refer to forest stands that are ecologically mature. DNR defines old-growth stands as those containing trees at least 160

It turns out that the real fortune from our forests is not from cutting them down but letting them stand.

years old or existing prior to European settlements. Moreover, it's less about the age of single trees but rather a description of an area of trees that has attained great age without significant disturbance. Old-growth forests like those in the Olympics are

characterized by a rich biodiversity of plants of varying ages that provide abundant wildlife habitat for a variety of creatures, including mammals, insects, and birds. Old-growth stands are a last oasis for endangered species like the Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet. For the nonscientist like me, you will recognize old growth by observing really big trees, layers of understory, nurse logs, dead snags, mushrooms and woody debris among berry bushes, flowers, mosses, lichens and ferns.

These forests are an immeasurable treasure. They are our best defense against climate change. In that capacity, old-growth trees provide far more value alive than as lumber products. Linda Mapes reported in the *Seattle Times*, "Trees--especially in mature forests --are the cheapest, fastest, most reliable form of carbon storage." I still feel sad at the sight of clearcuts but I am encouraged that the tide is turning toward preserving old growth forests wherever they are found.

An Outstanding Spring

SNOWPACK

By Tom Hammond

We have one heck of a snowpack after the winter of 2020-2021! As measured by the four Snow Telemetry (SNOTEL) stations in the NE portion of the Olympic Mountains on April 1, it appears we have the largest snowpack since 2012--a whopping 135% of historic normal.

Just a reminder for our readers: Snowpack is often used synonymously with depth of snow, but more important is the water content of the snow, "Snow Water Equivalent," or SWE. Buckinghorse station is in the upper Elwha in the park; Dungeness is up Silver Creek in the Dungeness headwaters; Mount Crag is above Quilcene, and Waterhole is on the Morse Creek-Lillian River divide (eastern portion of Hurricane Ridge).

As of this writing, our spring season is forecast to be below average temperature so perhaps we can get well into May before we start losing what we have up there. In any case, there should be plenty of snowmelt to supply our rivers this summer.



Information kiosk at the end of Hurricane Ridge Road on March 26 (top) and Feb 19. The kiosk is about 9 feet high.

By Tom Hammond



Conservation Groups Sue to Protect Spotted Owl Habitat

By Tim McNulty

Credit: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

In an eleventh-hour flip-off to conservationists, the Trump administration released a rule change that removed habitat protections for the threatened northern spotted owl, iconic symbol of Northwest old-growth forests. In January, outgoing Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, a former oil and mining industry lobbyist, slashed 3.4 million acres of critical owl habitat in Washington, Oregon and California. That amounts to more than a third of the old-growth forest habitat identified as necessary for the owl's recovery. The move, carried out without prior notice, was cheered by the timber industry.

The Olympic National Forest was not included in the cut; spotted owls here are perched at the edge of extinction. But up to 40% of nesting habitat in other Washington forests could be open to logging, putting the endangered owls further at risk. Spotted owls

face double-barreled threats: competition from barred owls and climate change.

Fortunately, the Biden administration temporarily delayed the new rules pending review and in March, the Western Environmental Law Center, Earth Justice and other groups filed suit in U.S. District Court in Portland challenging the rule change. Plaintiffs charged the decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service "to eliminate — without warning, justification or lawful process — approximately 3.4 million acres of federal forestland from the designated critical habitat for the threatened northern spotted owl" was utterly unwarranted.

Thirty years after U.S. District Court Judge Dwyer shut down logging on Northwest national forests, this small, retiring, forest-dwelling owl is back in the courts.

WA Supreme Court Accepts Conservation Lawsuit for "All the People"

From Olympic Forest Coalition

Olympic Forest Coalition (OFCO), Conservation Northwest, and Washington Environmental Council report that on March 3, the Washington Supreme Court granted direct review in *Conservation NW, et al. v. Commissioner of Public Lands et al.* This historic case asks the Court to interpret the terms of the Washington State Constitution providing that state forests managed by the Department of Natural Resources are held in trust "for all the people."

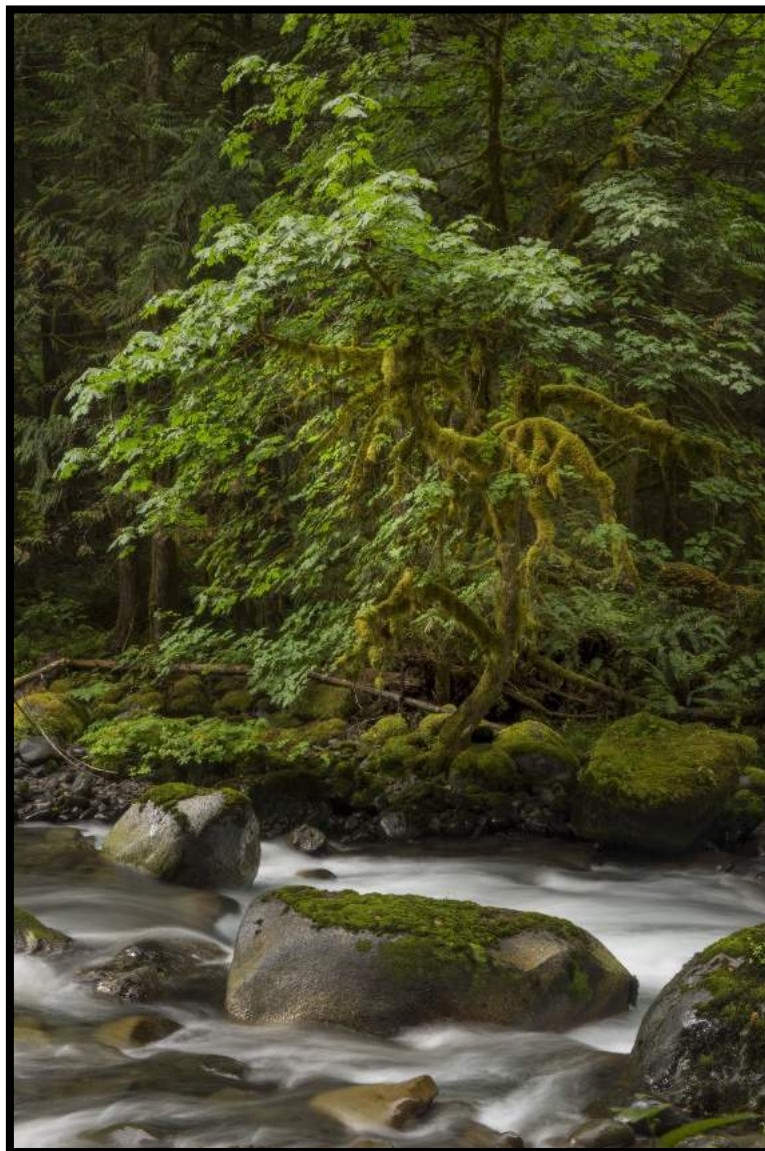
The organizations are urging the Court to hold that the plain terms "for all the people" and

Washington's unique federal land grant history authorize and require the State to manage its five million acres of public lands not just for income maximization but also to consider factors like climate change (carbon sequestration), tribal treaty rights, clean water, habitat for threatened and endangered species, and other public benefits. As they advance this historic appeal, the organizations are also genuinely committed to working with the specific economic beneficiaries to ensure any reforms in how Washington's state forests are managed will be sustainable, equitable and fair to the communities who have been historically dependent on the state forests.

Wild Olympics Passes U.S. House for a Second Time

Early in this Congress, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act passed the U.S. House for a second time. It passed with bipartisan support. Attention now turns to the Senate where two environmental champions, Senator Patty Murray who sponsored the bill in the Senate and Senator Maria Cantwell who sits on the powerful Energy and Natural Resources Committee, will determine its fate.

In the House, thanks to years of effort by Derek Kilmer who represents the peninsula, the bill passed as part of the Protecting America's Wilderness Act. OPA has been advocating for Wild Olympics for more than a decade. The landmark legislation protects the best of the



Proposed Dungeness Wild and Scenic River by John Gussman

peninsula's remaining ancient forests and free-flowing rivers and salmon streams for future generations. It designates more than 126,500 acres of Olympic National Forest roadless lands as Wilderness, including some of the most popular hiking areas in the eastern and southern Olympics. It also protects 19 rivers and their major tributaries as Wild and Scenic Rivers, the first ever on the peninsula.

We're close, but there is more work to do. Please contact your senators. Remind them that protection of wilderness and healthy wild rivers are critical to our country's health, economy, and long-term security. Ask them to make sure the Protecting America's Wilderness Act passes quickly in the Senate and is signed into law this year.

For more information on the Wild

Olympics campaign, visit www.wildolympics.org.

OPA vice-president Tim McNulty published the following letter in the March 26, 2021 Seattle Times in response to a Times opinion piece endorsing Wild Olympics.

Editors,

The *Times* editorial "Extend Olympic wilderness protection" is timely and astute. The Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act recently passed the U.S. House and is now before the Senate. Wild Olympics is a popular and visionary proposal that will enhance the protection of one of our planet's most biologically rich natural preserves.

Near-record crowds that flocked to Olympic National Park and National Forest last summer underscore the need for additional recreation areas on the peninsula. Forest

Service wilderness lands would more than double under the legislation, and 19 new Wild and Scenic Rivers would be designated — the first ever on the peninsula. Clean water, critical wildlife habitat, and carbon storage in old-growth forests make this legislation increasingly important. President Joe Biden's pledge to conserve 30% of American lands should send this proposal to the top of the Senate's docket.

U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell are now in positions to see these protections enacted this year. The time has come, and Wild Olympics deserves the support of Washingtonians everywhere.

--Tim McNulty, Sequim

[<https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/editorials/olympic-wilderness-deserves-improved-federal-protection/>]

A Virtual Wildlife Encounter

—of the Best Kind

By Tom Hammond

The pandemic of the last year-plus has caused many of us to do our interactions virtually. I am not one to live through a computer screen—I desire and require real interaction with the physical world around us. But there are two kinds of virtual living: spatial (the one we're most familiar with thanks to Zoom, as we are together at the same time, but in disparate places) and temporal (where we may be in the same physical space, but at different times).

It is in this light that I share an amazing wildlife encounter...

I was skiing along Hurricane Ridge this winter and was fortunate enough one morning to be the first person out to the end of the road-turned-ski route. All along those first couple of kilometers, there were snowshoe hare tracks all over the place--apparently the rabbits of winter are just as happy about a good snowfall as us winter sports enthusiasts are.

Just as the ridge became too exposed for me to safely ski, I spotted something in the snow/hoar frost surface. I almost skied right over it but literally screeched to a halt just in time. Hare tracks came in from the right and disappeared. From the left there

were impressions in the crystals much like someone had taken a paint brush and feathered patterns in the snow. Then right in front of my skis the story became clear: there were two perfect imprints of wings in the hoar-frost. An owl had nabbed a hare right off the ridge only a short time before! (I believe it was an owl based on wing size and other factors that I discussed with park rangers later that day.)

I have been skiing for nearly 40 years in the backcountry and front country of the North Cascades and Olympics and I've never seen anything like it--profound beauty and savagery and amazing art all at the same time. The early bird may get the worm or the rabbit, but the early skier gets to see things that minutes later would be obscured by wind, blowing snow and a hundred skiers making their way out along the ridge...

I should like to think the artists in my life find inspiration in the photo just as I found inspiration on that cold, wind-swept ridge.

I stood there for a good 15 minutes taking it all in--high snow-capped peaks, art, life and death etched in the snow--true solitude in a place not usually known for it.



Sounds of Science:

Thinking about aircraft noise in Olympic National Park



By Lauren Kuehne

Many people who visit or live in and around Olympic National Park are familiar with the sound of the Navy's Growler jets crisscrossing the sky. The Navy's electronic warfare trainings entail 60- to 90-minute sorties, often with multiple aircraft operating simultaneously. Growlers are fast, powerful aircraft, and they can generate a lot of noise. The Navy estimates that jets operating between 10,000 and 30,000 feet can be audible up to 16-18 miles distant. The Navy currently conducts about 2,300 sorties in the area annually.

So, it's no surprise that in a recent research study tracking aircraft contributions to the Olympic Peninsula soundscape, we found that a majority (88%) of aircraft noise in this area was military. In that study, we found that on weekdays residents and park visitors might typically expect to hear an hour of aircraft noise, coming and going throughout the day.

A much thornier question is what noise from military aircraft might mean for local wildlife? This includes the many special and unique birds and mammals that people cherish seeing during their

Olympic marmots by John Gussman

visits to Olympic National Park, such as Roosevelt elk, Olympic marmot or numerous birds. Unfortunately, relatively few species have been assessed for their sensitivity to any kind of noise, let alone noise from military aircraft, making it a challenge to predict specific impacts without implementing more studies.

The good news is that the overall body of research on how noise affects wildlife is growing and it's revealing truly remarkable and underappreciated acoustic relationships between animals and their environments as well as with each other. For example, we now know that birds and small mammals rely not only on alarm calls from their own type to detect threats but also pay attention to alarm calls from other species. For acoustic predators like owls and bats, even small increases in noise can reduce their hunting success. Even plants may not be immune to impacts of noise, as indicated by recent studies showing plants responding to the sound of harmful insects by increasing defensive chemicals, and the sound of bees by

Continued on P11, Sound



Washington State Forest Land on Dabob Bay by John Gussman

Dabob Bay Natural Area Additions

By John Bridge

The Dabob Bay Natural Area is near Quilcene on the Hood Canal and was established in 1984. In an effort spearheaded by the Northwest Watershed Institute, conservation groups, tribes, community members and shellfish farmers have banded together to press the state to expand the Dabob Bay Natural Area. The proposed expansion includes a rare, "globally imperiled" rhododendron forest that is the largest known such forest of Pacific rhododendrons—the state flower—in existence, and one mile of steep pristine shoreline. Some of the land has been eyed for timber harvests in recent months by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

In March, OPA and more than 50 organizations signed a letter urging Washington legislative leaders to include funding for the Trust Land Transfer (TLT) program in the Capitol budget to complete funding transfer for four priority areas in the state.

On May 13, DNR will hold a public presentation and hearing at the Quilcene School District Multi-Purpose Room to discuss a proposed Inter-Trust Exchange that would allow for the future transfer of up to 826 acres of forestland into the Dabob Bay Natural Resources Conservation Area.

DNR is accepting written comments about the proposed land exchange until 5 p.m., May 27, 2021. Email comments to exchanges@dnr.wa.gov. Mail written comments to the Department of Natural Resources, Conservation, Recreation and Transactions Division, Attn: Dabob Bay Inter-Trust Land Exchange, PO Box 47014, Olympia, WA 98504-7014. For more information and to view maps, visit, dnr.wa.gov, Managed Lands, Land Transactions, Dabob Bay Inter-Trust Land Exchange. More information on this can be found on the Northwest Watershed Institute's website, nwwatershed.org/

Sound *Continued from P.10* increasing sugar content of their nectar.

Surprising? Well, yes, results from these kinds of studies can seem extraordinary to us because we simply don't rely on our ears for finding food, finding mates or avoiding predators the way that many animals do. But missed opportunities due to noise can be high-stakes for, say, busy bird parents trying to feed and protect their young from predators. For these reasons, researchers have actually measured reduced use of chronically noisy habitats by some birds and this can actually cascade over time into changes in the composition of the plants and trees in those areas -- all because of noise!

So, while it's very difficult to predict the exact consequences of noise from military aircraft on Olympic Peninsula wildlife, we also cannot assume that they aren't happening. If nothing else, perhaps these noise intrusions offer a way for us to more closely consider and appreciate the value of quiet, both for ourselves and for the larger environment.

Commissioners Approve Military Training in State Parks Despite Widespread Opposition

From the Sierra Club, North Olympic Group
On January 28, The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, in a close vote, approved the Navy's request to conduct military training in our state parks.

The Sierra Club North Olympic Group was disappointed by the ruling, especially given the outpouring of public opposition to the Navy's proposal. At the January 26 hearing, the Park Commissioners appeared to be caught off guard by the overwhelming public opposition, with public testimony running 9-1 opposed.

Community members had numerous concerns about this project, among which was the fear for public safety and the protection of public lands. Many raised concerns that women would not feel safe using our parks with men hiding in the bushes in camouflage, and that it would be impossible to distinguish Navy personnel from extremist paramilitary groups. The use of simulated weapons invites disaster if these are mistaken for the real thing, and that the Navy owns more than enough shoreline in Washington in which to conduct this training. And, the most compelling argument was just this—our parks are for recreation and are a sanctuary for many, particularly now during the pandemic.

A legal appeal of this misguided and inappropriate decision has been filed. And an opportunity exists to tilt the balance on the State's Park Commission with a commissioner who fully understands and supports the mission and goals of State Parks. The Parks Commission currently has a vacant seat. Not in Our Parks is urging everyone who cares about our state parks to contact Governor Inslee. Tell him to appoint a commissioner who will "keep our parks free of military training." <https://www.governor.wa.gov/contact/contact/send-gov-inslee-e-message>



Voice of the Wild Olympics
Amy Youngblood, Editor

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