



March 2018

Naturalists

EXPLORE. LEARN. CONSERVE.

Contents

- In the Native Plant Garden1
- March Field Trips.....2
- February Hikes.....3-5
- Lecture Series/Workshops6
- Native Plant Society Program .7
- Odds and Ends8-9
- Poetry 10
- Photographs.....11
- Website Leader Training12
- Contact Info.....12

In the Native Plant Garden

Wait! Winter may still seem to rule, but flowers still can play the fool. Blooming in winter? Some do. Here's what I found in the garden:



Ribes sanguineum – red-flowering current



Anemone is a wannabe

 [Facebook](#)

 [Flickr](#)

March Field Trips

Sign up online under Explore, Find Activities and check exploring nature (or click the register buttons below).

Gary is passionate about mosses and has worked hard to be able to explain how to distinguish them. He is also a fine photographer of small things and this is an opportunity to learn some of his methods. These hikes will give you the best of winter mosses and lichens.



Bowman Bay

APRIL 1 – GORDIE SWARTZMAN

This hike includes great birding and early meadow wildflowers around Deception pass. Our exposed western meadows have many flowers that usually grow on the east side of the mountains. See young flowers feeling their oats.

[Register Here](#)

Wahclella Falls, Memaloose Hills and Catherine Creek

These hikes need to be signed up for together, since the drive down is so long. The Columbia gorge in early spring feature waterfalls and associated western WA wildflowers and then, farther east, typical east side flowers, all within a 60 mile, easily navigated, roadway. We will plan to carpool, leaving early Saturday and we will stay down there, either at a motel or campground. Camping is possible, but affected negatively by trains that come through the gorge through the night. We have stayed in motels in Hood River (OR) or Lisle (WA). We will try to have overnight options delineated in early March. The wildflowers at their peak occur early in the Columbia Gorge, hiking is splendid (rolling hills) and birding is not too shabby either. These hikes have been great fun in the past and I encourage you to consider them and sign up early. One other note: Wahclella falls hike is closed at this time due to wildfires last year. If it remains closed we will have a west side option, but near Portland, to break up our driving.

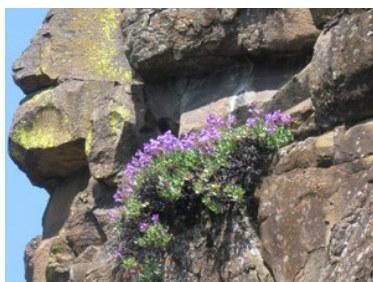


DRY FALLS & WAHCLELLA FALLS

APRIL 7 – STUART HOUGEN

We will hike both Wahclella Falls and Memaloose Hills, looking at flowers, waterfalls and trees.

[Register Here](#)



CATHERINE CREEK: THE LABYRINTH & NATURAL ARCH

APRIL 8 – STUART HOUGEN

This hike will be combined with hikes the day before in the Columbia Gorge. We will plan to stay over Saturday night to be able to share botanizing in this special ecological region. Bring binocs as well, because birding can be good.

[Register Here](#)



Cowiche Canyon

APRIL 14 – DEEANN KLINE (OLYMPIA BRANCH) WITH GORDIE SWARTZMAN AND STEWART HOUGEN COLEADING

Eastern Washington Wildflowers bloom early and Cowiche Canyon has an abundance. We will walk the canyon, take photographs and then proceed up the Winery Trail to enjoy some time at the tasting room and grounds.

[Register Here](#)

February Hikes

Rosario Head

by Thomas Bancroft

The rain pattered through the canopy of Douglas firs. The overcast sky added to the cold feeling of this February morning. All nine of us were slipping on raincoats and rain pants as well as hiking boots, when Gary said, “The rain will stop in fifteen minutes.”

“How do you know that?” came from several in the group.

“I looked at the weather, first thing this morning.” His confidence seemed like a good omen for our outing. We planned to bird Whidbey Island after this first stop just north of Deception Pass.

Stewart pointed across the cars, “See that lichen hanging from the firs? It is a species found here and over in the Olympics. That’s canopy fishnet lichen, a kind of Ramalina.” Pale yellow-green thin hair-like strands hung down several feet from branches, contrasting with the dark green needles. Lichens had grabbed our attention; they stay still.



Two sea kayakers flushed a dozen cormorants—all three species—from rocks across Bowman Bay so we turned to look northwest into Deception Pass Underwater Park. The loud “wheeps” of two Black Oystercatchers drifted across the water. The birds were flying acrobatic loops out from Urchin Rocks, twisting, turning, zipping, and calling; courtship. Their long bright red bills projected in front of their sleek black bodies.

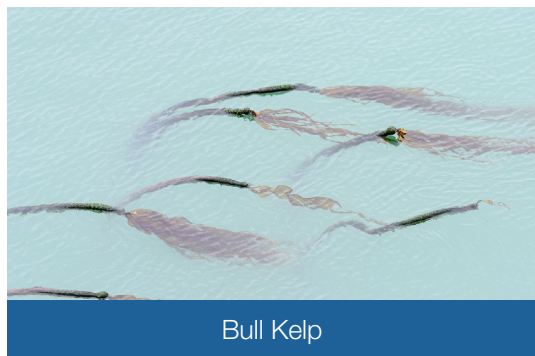
“Hey!—Harlequin Ducks,” said Joyce as she stepped back from her spotting scope to allow others to gaze at these gaudy odd-patterned birds. Somebody mumbled, “What would make a male look like that?”

“Oh, it has stopped raining,” uttered someone else; Gary just smiled.

Two male Common Goldeneye bobbed in the water across the lagoon, a hundred yards separated them, and they both were twisting their heads over their backs. A single female floated on the surface in between feeding dives; totally ignoring their flirtatious advances.



As we passed the totem, “The Maiden of Deception Pass,” Gary said, “Oh, look at the crustose lichen, that’s a new species, I’m not sure what it is.” He dropped to his knees at the base of a large Douglas fir to examine the yellowish-green matt covering several square feet of bark.



Bull Kelp

We popped through the trees to a ledge right above Urchin Rocks. The Harlequin Ducks had climbed onto the closest island. The Black Oystercatchers strolled the rocky outcrops, probing for morsels. Their yellow-green legs, black bodies, and bright red bills shined in the soft filtered light.

“Oh, look at this moss,” Gary said, and I turned to see him kneeling along the cliff’s side. A green grass-like moss

gripped the rocks around some pelt lichens. “This one is new; it’s a *Ditrichum* species, probably either *ambiguum* or *montanum*. See how the leaves break off.” He lightly brushed his fingers on its top. “Those



Cladonia Moss

(continued on next page)

matts of yellowish lichens are reindeer, a *Cladonia* species,” his arm pointing along the steep cliff above the *Ditrichum*.

Stewart said, “Let’s go up on top,” and started to climb an almost vertical trail. I grabbed my tripod, scope and big lens and started after him. Immediately losing my balance, almost falling over backwards, but fortunately Gary put both his hands on my back to steady me.



Crustose Lichen



Ditrichum Moss

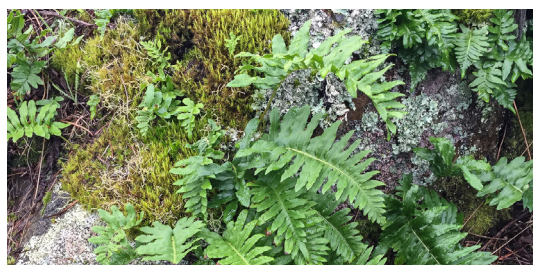
I puffed hard, only thinking about making it to the top without falling, but Gary was still looking. “See this fern, it’s a goldenback fern. This is another good species, unique, different from what we have in Seattle.” I was breathing too hard to walk back down to where he stood on the cliff face, but once he crested the top, he spotted another clump clinging to some rocks.

Gentle swells rolled into Northwest Pass and around Deception Island. The rough textured clouds gave a subdued touch to the almost calm waters. Below, long strands of bull kelp drifted in the current, forming abstract patterns. Two Bald Eagles, an adult and a three- or four-year-old sub adult, soared over us, almost within arms reach before settling onto a Douglas fir to gaze out over the bay.



Evernia

“Look, what’s that bird,” said Joyce. We worked hard to find the bobbing individual in the spotting scopes. Finally, the winter plumage Marbled Murrelet materialized into focus.



Pityrogramma triangularis

On the way down from the Head, a patch of antler lichens clung to the bottom trunk of a Douglas fir, and shield lichens wrapped around several dead limbs that had fallen from the canopy. The cormorants had returned to the rocks across Bowman Bay as we traversed the isthmus to the parking lot, finishing the first stop on our bird and bryophyte adventure.



Harlequin Ducks



Ramalina menziesii



Ramalina menziesii

March Point

by Thomas Bancroft



The Oystercatchers moseyed toward the right. One stopped to bathe in three inches of water, then flew to a small rock where it started to preen. The other ambled around the edge, probing into the debris but without putting much energy into it. They both seemed to be enjoying the late afternoon sun on this 45-degree February day.

Mt. Baker rose in the north above Padilla Bay and had overlooked our journey like a god watching the peasants work. “We should get a picture of the oystercatchers with Mt Baker,” Bruce said. Craig already down on one knee held his phone vertically and was snapping amazing photos. Their red bills glistened while the volcano sparkled in the distance.

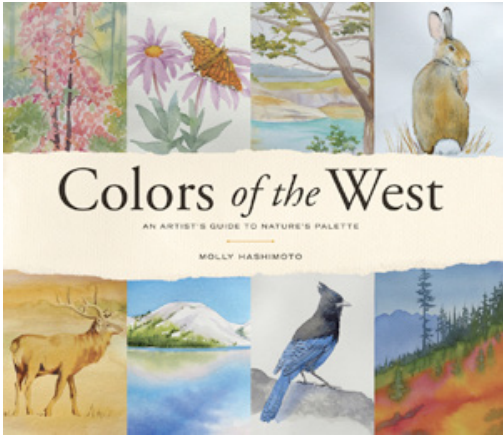
“Look, there’s Glacier Peak through the gap,” Craig pointed east across the water. A white pyramid rose above the Douglas firs on the east side of Padilla Bay. “The Peak is way back and only visible in a few places.” We had been discussing all the snow-covered peaks on this cloudless day; my friends knew them while I was working on learning their names.

Our gaze returned to the Oystercatchers who had drifted another dozen yards down the surf’s edge. “Let’s stop at one more place around the point before we head back,” I said. Bruce, Gordie, and I had left Seattle early this morning and birded the Stillaguamish Flats before heading north to meet Craig on Fir Island. Identifying fifty bird species had warmed our souls on this chilly winter day.

“Oh, look, two Black Oystercatchers are in the rocks,” Craig said. One bird stood on a seaweed-covered rock a foot above the water. The other waded in the shallows; the gentle swash was only coming an inch up its tarsi. My three buddies and I had been scanning Padilla Bay for 20 minutes, watching the Surf Scoters, Common Goldeneyes, and Buffleheads that were feeding offshore. Our three spotting scopes had been straining to find a loon, murrelet, or grebe while right, almost at our feet, were these two black birds that blended into the rubble in spite of their long red bills.



Lecture/Workshop



Colors of the West: Watercolor Sketching with Molly Hashimoto

APRIL 6 WITH A FOLLOW UP FIELD TRIP APRIL 8

Limit of 25 people. For study group members only! Molly is awesome! This is not limited to artists; drawing and sketching is a key to observing.

Learn techniques for painting the natural world of the west. You'll sample easy lightweight materials to bring outdoors, as well as try studio methods for subjects like mountain meadows, conifers, red rock formations and much more. All techniques are featured in Molly's book, *Colors of the West: An Artist's Guide to Nature's Palette*, published by Mountaineers Books.

All supplies are included, but feel free to bring your own if you have them.

Lecture: April 6, 7-9pm at The Mountaineers

Field Trip, April 8, time and destination to be determined, but we will stay local and in a spot that is easy and quick to reach. (Not a hike)

Limit of 25 participants. Opens for registration to members of the Naturalist Study Group (badge holders) on January 31. \$15 for Mountaineer members, \$25 for non-members. For questions, email Danielle Graham at pedergraham@gmail.com

REGISTER NOW

2017-18 Naturalists Lecture Series. All are at Seattle Program Center, 7 pm



WED., MARCH 14, 2018

Cascade Room

What's the Matter with Worms? Our Favorite Soil Engineers have a Dark Side

Everyone knows earthworms and red wigglers are beneficial, right? In fact, worms have a dark side that appears when they're introduced to places where they are not native. Earthworms are ecosystem engineers that have fundamental effects on the soil environment — including temperature, moisture, nutrient content, structure, and soilfoodweb biota. This can have cascading effects on natural ecosystem functions and processes. Are there

native worms? Are there effective pesticides or treatment protocols for invasive worms? Is anyone working on this problem in the Northwest?

Clay Antieau is a horticulturist, botanist and environmental scientist with Seattle Public Utilities, and lectures and leads tours throughout the Northwest. He is past president of the Washington Native Plant Society.

Entry is FREE for members of the Naturalist Study Group. All others \$5 at the door.

WA Native Plant Society Program

A Four Dimensional Mountain: Plant Associations in our Shrub-Steppe

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 7:00PM, MIKE MARSH

Mountaineers Program Center, Seattle, Goodman Room
Doors open at 6:00 PM for the Native Plant Identification Workshop
Program begins at 7:00 PM.

In eastern Washington, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife manages shrub-steppe lands (Wildlife Areas) that, under lease agreements with private ranchers, are grazed by livestock in late spring. Some of these lands are winter habitat for elk herds. We wondered how different the vegetation is on those lands without livestock grazing from those with livestock grazing. Two wildlife areas in eastern Kittitas County, the Quilomene and Whiskey Dick, seemed to offer an opportunity to find out. Dr. Marsh will share his findings from this study which was supported in part by the Washington Native Plant Society.

Mike Marsh and his wife, Jane, have been members of the Central Puget Sound Chapter of the WNPS since 1996. During that time, he has made numerous and wide ranging contributions to our organization, from serving as conservation chair to conducting research studies. Two enduring themes of his life have been a passion for the natural world and his geographic mobility. He was born in Pt. Limon, Costa Rica and has lived in Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Australia. In the United States, he has lived in the states of Arizona, California, Michigan, and Kentucky. Since 1985, he has resided in Washington. He completed his PhD in Zoology at U.C. Berkeley in 1961. Since that time, he has held multiple research and teaching positions. He retired from his position at the Environmental Protection Agency in 1999, where he had been conducting research and developing educational materials.



Upcoming Programs

- 3-1-18 Mike Marsh on Kittitas County vegetation studies (Mountaineers Program Center)
- 4-5-18 Daniel Matthews “Early Days of Natural History in the Northwest” (Mountaineers Program Center)
- 4-10-18 Jon Bakker “The Prairies of Western Washington”
Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center
- 5-3-18 Frederica Bowcutt “The Tanoak: An Environmental History of a Pacific Coast Hardwood”
Mountaineers, Cascade Room
- 6-12-18 Eric Mader “Native Plants and their Pollinators”
Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center

Gear Grab – February 12

There was a gear grab at the mountaineers in part to introduce new or prospective mountaineers to the different activity groups. Both Gordie and Tom Bancroft were there to meet and greet. Hopefully, this will lead to new interest in the Intro to Natural World Class. This occurs about 3 times a year. You too can be in this picture.



photo by Anita Elder – Man working!

Odds and Ends

Daniel Matthews speaks April 5

For those of you who have been enjoying Daniel Matthews book you will want to note that he is speaking on April 5, sponsored by the Native Plant Society. There will be more on this in the next issue, but set the date aside. It could be a full house.

Mason Bees - They can help save our planet!

By Anita L. Elder

I started raising mason bees five years. My Asian pear trees were failing and I thought honey bees could help. But, a beekeeper told me that honey bees don't really get active until the weather is warmer and after most fruit trees are done blooming. Within two years, my pear trees were producing more fruit that was sweeter, too! Last year, I had so many pears that the branches were bowed!

When most people think about pollinators, they think of honey bees. Honey bees are great in that they produce honey, but there are a lot of negative aspects of raising honey bees.

Over the past decade or so, honey bee populations have been in decline due to diseases. This is worrisome to farmers who understand the importance of the bees' relation to his crops. If the crops don't get pollinated, they start to fail.

But there are a lot of other pollinators that people don't often think about. Birds, of course, can help pollinate. And there are many bee species that do more work than the honey bee.

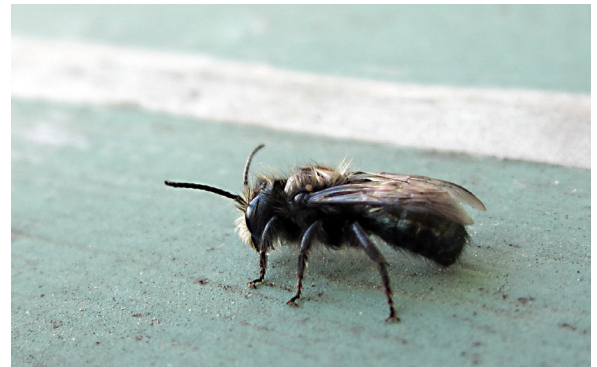
Here's a comparison between the honey bee and a native mason bee:

HONEY BEES

- Prone to disease
- Build hives and defends them
- They can swarm if overcrowded
- They are aggressive and can sting, causing pain and anaphylactic shock, in some cases
- They make honey
- If they don't produce enough honey for the winter, the colony can die
- Equipment to raise them is expensive
- Need for protective clothing
- Not native to North America
- Needs a queen (these bees are social)
- Worker bees live about 40 days; a queen lives up to five years

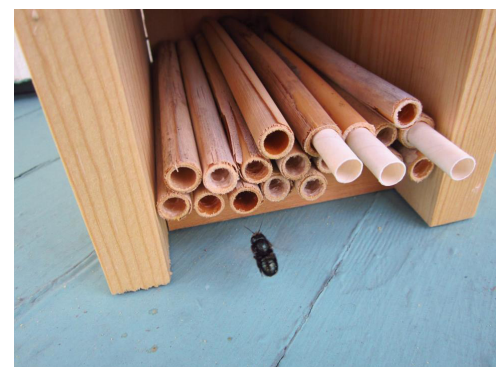
I noted that mason bees are better pollinators than honey bees. Here's a better comparison - in an orchard of one acre, you may need 20,000 to 30,000 honey bees to pollinate all the trees. You would only need 400-500 mason bees for the same size orchard. That's because honey bees wet the pollen to make it stick to their legs. Not much drops off as they go from one bloom to the next. Meanwhile, a mason bee will do a belly flop to get as much pollen as possible all over their body. As they to the next bloom, a lot of that pollen falls off, making them superior pollinators!

If you are interested in raising your own mason bees, I recommend that you go to crownbees.com. Dave has turned a hobby into a passionate business, shipping all over the US. He strives to educate people, so there are a lot of how-to videos and step-by-step instructions. I got my start with cocoons from Dave...and he's local (in Woodinville).



MASON BEES

- No hive to defend, so they aren't aggressive
- They pollinate up to 100 times more effectively than honey bees
- They don't make honey
- Easy to raise with minimal cost
- They don't induce anaphylactic shock and they rarely sting
- They are native, so they won't become invasive
- Only needs holes/tubes to reproduce
- Each female is it's own queen (these bees are solitary)
- Dies within six weeks (after laying eggs)



Trumpeter Swans

by Thomas Bancroft

Eight trumpeter swans stood in the muddy water, their necks bent in an “S” shape curve, and their bills half submerged in the mucky mess. Their heads moved sideways, in quick even movements, and their mouths opened and shut rapidly. Four bright white adults fed not more than fifty yards from me as well as four equally large, grayish-white young of the year. Their elephantine legs held their bodies above the muddy water as they crept through the quagmire, gradually approaching where I froze, transfixed by their size. A thin layer of water covered the fallow field, and the temperature hung in the high 30s.



Slurping Sound



The slurp-slurp-slurp followed by a pause then more slurping put me into a trance. I was standing on the side of Wylie Slough Road with headsets over my ears and a directional microphone pointing across the road. My digital recorder was capturing every nuance, and the headphones emphasized the mesmerizing sound. Weekly for three years, I would visit my daughter at her Georgetown apartment. We would head out someplace: going for a walk, picking up supplies, or hitting a movie, often stopping on the way back for a fortified fruit smoothie. She'd order tropical fruit, and I'd pick raspberry. My daughter would insist they add antioxidants to mine. We'd grab a corner table where we could chat and slowly drink our concoctions. Slurping came when we were trying to get the last few sips from the bottom.

These swans are huge, twenty-five pounds, as much as a beagle, but larger because birds have hollow bones and large air sacks that displace fluids in their body cavities. In spite of their weight, they are graceful, strong fliers that return each winter to the Skagit from breeding grounds in the north. Two pairs—each with their two full-grown young—were having breakfast. These two families probably had flown together from an Alaska wilderness to winter in these agricultural fields.

These swans were pumping the slurry through their mouths, filtering out plant material. The back and forth motion of their heads moved the bills through the brown suspension, continuing to churn up the water. Their bill lamellae acted like a sieve, and occasionally, a green stem or white root disappeared into a mouth. I had watched Trumpeter Swans dig potatoes and graze on grass or growing grains, but never filter plant material from the dirty ooze.



Nervous Sound

When the cygnets first hatch, the parents take them to good feeding areas, often stirring up the water to make aquatic plants and animals more readily available. The young must eat on their own; the parents don't feed them. These thoughts made me think about my younger days and what we ate at home. We had some variation but often certain nights were specific main courses of chicken, beef, or pork, always with potatoes. The vegetables did change with the seasons. I probably bucked eating beans and spinach. Now, one of the things I enjoyed most was trying new recipes, especially when traveling. Swans had learned to exploit novel foods that weren't part of the environment before Europeans arrived.

It is hard to imagine that the known Trumpeter Swan population was only 69 individuals in 1935. A few additional unrecorded flocks, however, were hiding at the time in Canada and Alaska. Shooting them for their feathers, skin, and meat had decimated the once widespread species. Protection and reintroductions have allowed these swans to recover. In 2005, ornithologists estimated that their numbers had climbed to more than 34,000. Two families, perhaps sisters with their spouses and children, traveling together were right across from me.

The adults started to honk sporadically and softly. A nervous gesture, so I grabbed my gear to leave them in peace.

Poetry

Lines Written in Early Spring

By William Wordsworth

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Source: The Longman Anthology of
Poetry (Pearson, 2006)*

Early Spring

by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Once more the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And domes the red-plowed hills
With loving blue;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The throstles too.

Opens a door in Heaven;
From skies of glass
A Jacob's ladder falls
On greening grass,
And o'er the mountain-walls
Young angels pass.

Before them fleets the shower,
And burst the buds,
And shine the level lands, And flash
the floods;
The stars are from their hands
Flung through the woods,
The woods with living airs

How softly fanned,
Light airs from where the deep,
All down the sand,
Is breathing in his sleep,
Heard by the land.
O, follow, leaping blood,

The season's lure!
O heart, look down and up,
Serene, secure,
Warm as the crocus cup,
Like snow-drops, pure!
Past, Future glimpse and fade

Through some slight spell,
A gleam from yonder vale,
Some far blue fell;
And sympathies, how frail,
In sound and smell!
Till at thy chuckled note,

Thou twinkling bird,
The fairy fancies range,
And, lightly stirred,
Ring little bells of change
From word to word.

For now the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And thaws the cold, and fills
The flower with dew;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The poets too.

The Echoing Green

by William Blake

The sun does arise,
And make happy the skies.
The merry bells ring
To welcome the spring.
The skylark and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around,
To the bells' cheerful sound,
While our sports shall be seen
On the echoing green.

Old John with white hair
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say:
'Such, such were the joys
When we all, girls and boys,
In our youth-time were seen
On the echoing green.'

Till the little ones weary
No more can be merry;
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end.
Round the laps of their mother
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest;
And sport no more seen
On the darkening green.

Photographs

The eye of Monya Noelke:



icy cladonia



imagine this as a jigsaw puzzle!





by Thomas Bancroft

Website Leadership Training

March 8, 7-9 PM

This is a training for members of the naturalist group who want to be able to learn how to list hikes, list destinations, create courses and become more familiar with how to work the website. It is on March 8 from 7-9 PM and is taught by Tess Wendel, who is more than capable with the website. I'd suggest this workshop for anyone in the study group who would consider leading or co-leading trips in the future. There is plenty of space available and this is a stellar opportunity to contribute to the naturalist program.

[Register Now](#)

Seattle Naturalists Committee Officers and Subcommittee Chairs

Committee Chair	Gordie Swartzman	g.swartzman@gmail.com
Committee Co-Chair	Danielle Graham	pedergraham@gmail.com
Study Group Coordinator	Stewart Hougen	sehougen@comcast.net
Native Plant Garden Co-Chair	Rob Stevens	dlibfrom@yahoo.com
Native Plant Garden Co-Chair	Sandy Bowman	bowman@seanet.com
Website Page	Maggie Willson	maggienum@yahoo.com

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