

PEAK EXPERIENCE

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Page 4: Improvements aplenty in 2020 trails season

Help us meet our end-of-the-year goals!

Page 6 and 7: Fall hiking — the healthy hobby for body and mind

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The relativity of Wilderness time



In Walden, Henry David Thoreau writes: “Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars.”

The Covid Crisis has warped our sense of time. All at once, time both stalled and sped up. People recalling a conversation, meeting or event have come to say some version of “that was three days or maybe three months ago.”

Many of our cultural time markers are gone. May graduation ceremonies canceled. June weddings scaled back or delayed. Summer fairs and festivals put on hold. Major sports schedules cancelled, delayed and shifted seasons. From the Boston Marathon to Bloomsday, running events were held virtually.

Yet, natural time moves on, most vividly displayed in Wilderness. The sun rises and sets. The moon waxes and wanes from full to empty and back again. The solstice still marks the longest number of daylight hours. Each day is a little bit shorter until it’s winter when snow flies and Orion, the Hunter, returns to the night sky.

In September, around the equinox, Deb and I took a hike to a favorite lake. The air was cool and crisp. Alpine larch had the earliest tinges of yellow. We wore multiple layers just to hike. An early frost turned the brush covered slopes golden yellow and red. Huckleberries remained, but many were squishy and fell from the slightest touch. Near camp a plump black bear bounded up the mountain slope.

Elsewhere, bright red kokanee are already spawning. As we move into October and November mountainsides will come alive with bugling elk, swaths of golden birch, aspen and larch. Rocky Mountain maple will offer red accents. Call them the wilderness markers of autumn.

Lengthening shadows will foretell winter’s pending arrival. Snow will tell us it’s here. Layers of tracks will tell us who passes where and relatively when. Time will move on, snow will melt, streams will thaw, and osprey will return. It will be spring before we know it and we will start again.

If we pay attention to these markers of time, the rhythm of our own lives may make more sense.

-Phil Hough, FSPW executive director

Spread a little holiday cheer by supporting FSPW!

I’m writing this on the last Monday of September. Fall is in the air. I’m singing “That Time of Year” from Olaf’s Frozen Adventure in my head.

The song is getting me to think about winter holidays though. This year has been so strange that the weather feels like the only accurate measure of time. I’m realizing the holidays are coming up faster than I know it.

I have a few things to check off my list before the holidays sneak up on me: Take a nice, easy hike surrounded by

fall colors and that unique smell that fall has; buy an Elsa Halloween costume for my 3-year old; carve pumpkins with my family; plan a rather small Thanksgiving; shop for Christmas gifts for family and friends; make donations to a few of my favorite nonprofits before the year is over.

The CARES Act has a couple things in it that help out with that last one. It expanded charitable giving incentives for folks that take the standard deduction. **You may be able to make up to \$300 in contributions to qualified charities, like**

FSPW. For folks who itemize deductions, the CARES Act allows for cash contributions to organizations like FSPW to be deducted up to 100% of your adjusted gross income for the 2020 calendar year. Take advantage of those deductions today at scotchmanpeaks.org/donate.

-Britta Mireley

Cover photo: Sue Sayer hiked Scotchman Peak Trail #65 to commemorate her 65th birthday. Happy belated birthday, Sue!

False Hellebore, the plant that hurts and heals

A few years ago, a False Hellebore appeared in an open area on my wooded acre at the base of Schweitzer. I knew what it was and was rather pleased with its presence, watching it grow to about three feet tall, blossom, and disappear after the following winter, never to return. Its tall, coarsely veined leaves, growing alternately in the manner of cornstalks, and even the manner of its tasseled bloom-head, probably gave it its nickname of “corn lily,” and it is indeed a member of the Liliaceae family.

At the time, I checked it out in my old copy of Jeff Hart’s “Montana- Native Plants and Early Peoples” and discovered that it had a background “both medicinal and poisonous, depending on the amount ingested.” Hart reported that Flathead, Kutenai and other area tribes knew it as “sneeze-root” after the manner in which they used it. They sniffed the dried and powdered rootstock as a decongestant, with the following – “sometimes violent” – sneezing serving to clear the nasal passages. Its powerful action resulted in the users decision not to allow its use on children.

Newly arriving Europeans incorporated hellebore into their medicinal stores, and in 1750, Hart quoted Swedish naturalist Peter Kalm as reporting its use in “washing scorbutic parts with the water or decoction” which was said to cause some pain. But boiling the root in water and putting a comb into the decoction to comb children’s heads was said to kill lice most effectually.

Hart went on to say that “the principal medical use of hellebore in recent times was as a heart depressant and

spinal paralyzant”, and that scientists recently found its medicinal action to be due to veratrum, an alkaloid chemical. Doubtless the reason for its listing as *Veratrum viride*.

Fast forward to today. Lee Peterson’s “A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants” of the Peterson Field Guide describes its appearance, captions it as “poisonous” and warns not to mistake it for Skunk Cabbage. I personally would never make such a mistake, since the leaf color, texture, growth pattern, and most of all the odor – are dead giveaways.

Gregory Tilford, in his “Edible and Medicinal Plants of the West,” did not give False Hellebore such short shrift, but took a good half- page for description; habitat (deep moist mountain soil, wet mountain

meadows, swamps and streambanks from Alaska to southern California {*Veratrum californicum*} and east throughout the Rocky Mountains); and medicinal uses.

The latter pretty much followed Hart’s descriptions, but added the note that the “powdered root is used as an insecticide” – thereby giving the amen to the natives using it for lice. Tilford, too, discounts trekkers’ ability to identify plants by stating False Hellebore in its early stages bears a “frightening resemblance” to other lily family members such as Glacier lily, Twisted Stalk and False Solomon’s Seal. Again,



False Hellebore

I don’t agree, but then I’m a “plant person” and perhaps pay closer attention than some. His final end-of-paragraph caution is well-meant, though, for he prints in boldface type: **WARNING! Do not mess with this plant.**

I’ve seen False Hellebore in various North Idaho sites, mostly in boggy areas in the mountains around Priest Lake, and up in the Trestle Creek area. I am always pleased when I run across it. It’s a handsome plant, pretty when in bloom, and that’s enough for me. I have no intention to “mess with it” – just appreciate its place in the ecosystem.

-Valle Novak

Improvements aplenty in 2020 trails season



If there's one thing about this year, it sure has a way of giving you 20/20 vision.

With a delayed summer season of two months, we decided to

focus on new programs. We introduced a new idea: Your Wild Place, a podcast. We expanded options for volunteering individually. We were proud of our creative solutions to challenges. We worked from home and spread word of our programs online.

Despite the challenges 2020 has thrown at all of us, we had some very dedicated volunteers and completed work on trails within the Scotchman Peaks proposed wilderness. We were able to make many new connections and cleared miles of trail with group trail crews and volunteers. It has been a great success thanks to our volunteers.

I'm proud to say our Ambassador program has been extremely successful this season. We educated hundreds of hikers who may not have known about distancing from goats and the implications of goat contact.

Thank you to all our volunteers who showed up time and again to get this much needed work done. We couldn't do it without you.

-Autumn Lear



Ambassador Program by the numbers (2016-2020)

97

VOLUNTEERS
have hiked
Scotchman Peak as
Ambassadors since
2016

1,612

VOLUNTEER HOURS SPENT
driving, hiking, enjoying the view

0

INCIDENTS
reported between
mountain goats
and humans

HIKERS ENCOUNTERED

2018



2019



2020*



= 300 hikers

*Season ~3 weeks shorter

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Volunteer spotlight : Getting the job done



Bernard Sheldon

Wendy Lawrence and Bernard Sheldon were two of the many volunteers that made the 2020 trails season possible.

We asked them a few questions about how the season went for them.

What inspired you to volunteer this year?

WL: Last year we met someone at an IPA Tap Takeover, and they told us all about how great the volunteer program was. Then, a friend was volunteering as an Ambassador, and I decided to tag along. I thought it would be nice to meet new, like-minded people and get to know our area trails.

BS: It just occurred to me that this was something that I could do to give back. The concept of having something that I could do on my own was compelling, as well. I wasn't sure that you'd want me given my age and COVID (the

questionnaire online had me admitting to risk factors, primarily my age). But working outdoors well separated seemed to be very low risk for me.

What was your most memorable section of trail?

WL: My most memorable trail experience in the Scotchmans this summer was volunteering as a Trail Ambassador. I was pleasantly surprised to find hikers so receptive to stopping and talking about the wild mountain goats. Everyone on the trail seemed so happy. Another part of the Scotchmans was memorable in the Ross Creek Cedar trailwork. Learning about how trails are made was really fun and interesting. These trails aren't just made by hiking on them, but actually take thought and effort to create a useable trail.

BS: All the trails I've worked on have been memorable, for different reasons. Goat Peak for the climb too get to the worksite and trail building conditions were a chore- lots of loose rocks embedded in a little bit of soil makes for hard labor to create trail tread! The Ross

Creek trail we worked on parallels the creek- very pretty and suggests some great camping spots. And finally the trail that's "mine," to adopt and thus maintain, had a surprise at the end: an old mine shaft on a cool, flowing creek (in early September).

Would you recommend volunteering with us again? Why?

WL: Definitely. It's a great way to get out, learn about our area, and meet people.

BS: Can't wait! I've been introduced to some interesting, sometimes gorgeous, territory. Gotten great workouts and had an excuse to play in the dirt! Met some nice people. And gained some bragging rights — "Yup, been doin' trail maintenance. Nothin' like swinging a pick mattock for a few hours to straighten out the old attitude."



Wendy Lawrence

For our annual Old Goat volunteer of the year award, the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness chose someone who has touched the lives of many over her years volunteering and working with FSPW. That someone is Annie Gassmann of Libby, Montana. Annie has dedicated herself to the Scotchman Peaks and Lincoln County communities over the past five years.

Her work for the Scotchman Peaks began in 2017 when she was hired as the

Lincoln County Outreach Coordinator. She left that position in 2019, but her commitment to the Scotchmans never did. She has led a hike each year and tabled booths across northwest Montana.

Annie is especially vital to the Friends' Winter Tracks outdoor education series. Her hard work and passion has brought the magic of the outdoors to countless students in Lincoln County. Annie is also a leader in the community, volunteering with the Libby Chamber of Commerce

to help navigate the challenges this year has brought for small businesses.

Annie was awarded the Old Goat award at this year's socially distant State of the Scotchmans event streamed live in July. The Old Goat award is the highest FSPW volunteer honor.



Annie Gassmann

Getting outside in fall 2020

Need peace of mind in a year of uncertainty? Take a hike!



Baby Larson Styer gets an early taste of nature.

Wilderness is always a godsend for mental and physical health. But that's especially true during 2020, the year of social distance.

When it's important to limit time spent in crowded public places, the wilderness is always waiting to give a safer environment for exercise and peace of mind. It's a chance to get away

from the stress and challenges of everyday life and enjoy a little peace.

"Hiking is so many things," Jesse Johnson told us on Facebook. "It's fitness, it's mental health, and it's unplugging. Despite everything around us that we experience on a daily basis you realize there is a huge world that is alive no matter how big our problems seem."

It's a chance to slow down and sort out the many things that clutter our minds. And it doesn't hurt that hiking in the Inland Northwest includes some of the

most beautiful scenery the world has to offer.

"At its best, hiking is moving through wild country more observant, aware and connected, awestruck by the wonder of it, feeling exhausted, and always knowing that you're not the baddest predator around," said Preston Andrews on Facebook.

Hiking isn't just good for your body — it's good for your mind, too. People

have a lot to be worried about these days, and the American Hiking Society recommends spending at least 10 minutes outside each day for your own mental health. A good hike should more than meet that recommendation.

It's far easier to stay safe while hiking compared to most other activities. That's because the isolation is a feature, not a bug. Experienced California hiker Scott Turner offered the following tips to news outlet KPBS to make sure safety comes first.

-Start early so that you encounter fewer people on the trail. If that's not

a possibility, pick a wider trail so that you can step aside to let others pass.

-Bring a mask and cover your face when you come within 20 feet of another person.

Remember that you can find maps of Scotchman Peaks hiking trails in several downtown Sandpoint, Libby, Troy and Thompson Falls locations. Check with local district rangers to hear their recommended hikes throughout the region as well.

So get out and enjoy a hiking trail this weekend. Your body and your mind will thank you for it.

-Cameron Rasmusson

"At its best, hiking is moving through wild country more observant, aware and connected, awestruck by the wonder of it, feeling exhausted, and always knowing that you're not the baddest predator around."

-Preston Andrews

How to stay safe and make the most of late-season hiking

Autumn hiking reveals a different shade of nature

There is a bite in the cold wind as it hits your cheeks, you pull your hat down a little closer- snug over your ears ... the wind is at your back as you crest over the summit. You take a deep breath of crisp, fresh air. Backpacking season is over, but you still feel compelled to climb mountains!

Fall can be one of the best times to get outside; less people, less bugs, less heat. And if you live near Scotchman Peaks, you're in a great position to enjoy some of the best fall colors in the world. No need to travel when that kind of natural beauty is right around the corner!

There are plenty of local spots to check out if you're looking for fall beauty. Try out Mickinnick, Gold Hill, Star Peak (via trail #999), Napoleon Gulch, Lakeview Mountain Trail or Continental Creek Trail near Priest Lake, just to name a few.

Remember, it's hunting season and you'll want to watch for signs of hunters and animals. Often times this is where you'll run into animals getting the last of harvest or looking for cozy den spaces for winter.

Check out this interactive map at www.backpacker.com/skills/fall-leaf-map to find the best fall hiking in your neck of the woods!

Backpacking in the fall can be fun! Here are some things you can do to prepare for a great experience in the fall. Plan on fall colors, where is the

most beautiful exhibit of changing foliage in your area?

With weather becoming more unpredictable in the fall, it's a good idea to check out weather reports and bring clothing for all possible conditions. Checking out trail conditions isn't a bad idea either — you can do so at the FSPW website.

It's impossible to know exactly what can happen in the wild. Make sure a friend or family member knows where you're going. That information will let the authorities know where to start looking in the case of an emergency. After all, it's always better to be safe rather than sorry!

Don't forget the fall backing essentials, either: a good tent, a warm sleeping pad and bag, a good headlight with extra batteries, a warm hat, extra socks, clothing layers, a good rain jacket, gloves or mittens and gaiters to protect from moisture/mud.



Barbara Levine shows her best side plank atop Scotchman Peak.

Photo by Lexie de Fremery.

Bring more water than you think you'll need.

Remember to bring blaze orange colors- It's hunting season! Extra food isn't a bad idea either. I like Mary Janes Farm backpacking food (shop. maryjanesfarm.org)

-Autumn Lear

Make fall delicious with cast iron apple cake

One bowl, one skillet – easy cleanup!

This recipe pairs a couple of fall favorites, crisp apples and plump pecans, baked in an 8" cast iron skillet. Recipe serves 1 (no judgement!) to 4 people.

Ingredients

Apple layer:

1 tart apple, sliced into thin rings, with small round cutter to cut out seeds/core
Dozen pecan halves
1 tbs cold butter
2 tsp sugar
½ tsp cinnamon

Batter:

1 egg
½ tsp salt
⅓ cup butter, melted and cooled
¾ cup whole milk
1 tsp vanilla
½ tsp fresh ground nutmeg
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp baking powder
1 cup flour
½ cup chopped pecans (optional)

Instructions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees, butter the bottom and sides of skillet, sprinkle on sugar and cinnamon, tilt pan to coat well.

In a clean, large bowl, whisk the batter ingredients, one at a time, in the order listed. Once everything is added, and well-whisked, let rest while you prepared the skillet.

Layer and overlap apple slices and pecans onto buttered skillet, pat into place. Heat on medium burner until the sugar begins to caramelize and the apples start to wilt. Pour the batter on top of the apples, make sure apples and pecans are covered. With hot pad, carefully remove skillet from burner and place on middle rack of the pre-heated oven. Bake for 25-30 minutes.



This cast iron apple cake is sure to please. Photo by Marcia Pilgeram

Remove from oven, invert onto a plate (apple side will be up). Carefully slide back into the cast iron skillet. Cool slightly on rack. Serve warm, from skillet, with ice cream or lightly whipped cream.

-Marcia Pilgeram

'Your Wild Place:' The podcast that keeps on giving



Have you been keeping up with Your Wild Place? Since launching in the late spring, the FPSW podcast has taken off. As of publi-

cation, there are 22 episodes ready to download or stream.

One great thing about podcasts is how the format allows us to highlight so many different kinds of voices. Libby High School graduate Ryan Goodman's scholarship-winning essay, "Elk, Grizzly and Misplaced Bear Spray," describes a tense encounter with a bear during a hunting adventure.

Speaking of hunting, our friend

Kenton Clairmont offered advice to help us get in shape for the season in the episode "Train to Hunt." Kenton talks about his Train to Hunt events and programs aimed at keeping hunters healthy and successful. To learn more, check out the website www.traintohunt.com.

Get caught up on Your Wild Place on our website or wherever you listen to podcasts.

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Winter educational programming for all



Sagle students learn about their environment in a previous Winter Tracks season.

Each year, communities surrounding the Scotchman Peaks look forward to the FSPW Winter Tracks series with anticipation. Buses packed full of young folks head to nearby campgrounds and parks. Teachers divide the students into groups. Volunteers share their passion for the outdoors. And everyone enjoys a cup or two of hot cocoa by the fire.

This year is going to look a little different. Despite disruptions to the typical school year, we're committed to providing a high-quality outdoor education experience for the winter of 2020-21. While we won't be able to convene in person, we'll do our best to keep the magic of Winter Tracks alive.

We are working with schools and volunteers to develop an engaging remote curriculum covering many of the same topics our teachers and students expect. Think mammal adaptation to winter environments, orienteering, and animal

track ID, to name a few.

Our series will also have to adapt to the realities of remote learning. That means more hands-on activities for students in the classroom. It also means looking at new and creative ways of exposing students to the outdoors. With a little elbow grease and a willingness to try new ways of working, we'll do our best to help local students explore their wild backyard.

A little older than a fifth grader? Fear not, Winter Tracks isn't the only outdoor education experience we have lined up for this winter. We'll be offering a series of educational winter hikes led by local experts in a variety of areas. Keep your eyes peeled for more information in the weekly FSPW Insider and on the events page of our website.

-Henry Jorden



To pass on a Scotchman Peaks Wilderness for our children and grandchildren.



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Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, Inc.
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- **Donate to FSPW** to save the incredibly wild Scotchman Peaks for our children and grandchildren. To donate, visit our website or mail in the form below to: PO Box 2061, Sandpoint, ID 83864.
- **Volunteer** your time whether it's breaking a sweat on the trail, talking to folks at an outreach table, or helping with office work.
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