

ACOW Field Trips for October 4, 2003

Please note on your registration form which field trip you'd like to go on so we can plan accordingly.

1. Northwest Trek Wildlife Park

NW Trek in Eatonville is a 615-acre park that is home to more than 200 animals in beautiful natural exhibits. The entrance fee, which ranges from \$4.00 for 3 and 4 year olds to \$8.75 for adults, includes all features and exhibits. There is a tram ride from which you can see bighorn sheep, deer, Roosevelt elk, woodland caribou, mountain goats, bison, and more. Walking trails through forested areas feature grizzlies, black bear, wolves, bobcats, lynx, cougars, owls, and eagles. The admission fee also allows entrance to the Cheney Discovery Center. All the trails and trams and other facilities are fully ADA accessible. Autumn is the breeding or rutting season at the park, and also, of course, when the leaves turn gold and red. NW Trek is about 1/2 an hour from Pack Forest.

2. Mt Rainier – Meadow restoration

Carolyn Dobbs is a faculty member at TESC, teaching in environmental studies with an emphasis on land use and protected areas in the United States and in other countries. For several years she has worked as a volunteer at Mt. Rainier National Park on the meadow restoration project, and this summer has worked part time at the park with the plant ecologist to inventory rare plants. Carolyn will lead this trip in the Paradise area of the park primarily focusing on meadow restoration work. She will discuss the restoration process from the collection of seeds and cuttings to be grown in the Park's greenhouse to the new plant's return to the original site. She will also discuss trail repairs, and monitoring of plants in the park, and will identify plants in the meadows, although few plants will still be in bloom. This trip will entail hiking to Glacier Vista and Panorama Point. That is probably a total of 5 miles and about 1400 feet of elevation gain. Therefore we advise at least light hiking boots, and clothing for the weather, which on Mt Rainier can very quickly change from lovely to unlovely. Carry snacks and water, wear sunscreen, and have sunglasses. There is a \$10 charge into Mt Rainier National Park.

3. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, where the Nisqually River and McAllister Creek meet Puget Sound, consists of about 2800 acres of a unique combination of estuaries, tidflats, freshwater marshes, riparian woodlands, dikes, and grasslands. It is preserved primarily as a wintering area for waterfowl, but also supports a wide diversity of raptors, shorebirds, and songbirds, and many other critters as well. The river and creek also provides spawning, rearing, or passage areas for anadromous fish. We will walk the short loop trail, and probably have time to walk out to McAllister Creek as well. Much of this loop is on boardwalks, and all of the trails are level ground. As with any field trip, be prepared for any weather. There is an entrance fee of \$3 per person into the refuge.

The drive to Mt Rainier (Paradise) is approximately one hour each way, as is the drive to Nisqually NWR, from Pack Forest.

4. Mt Rainier mini-geology field trip

Pack Forest is located near the western edge of the Cascade Mountains and sits along the historic Road to Paradise, the first highway to be constructed from the Puget Lowland to the alpine meadows of Mount Rainier in 1916. The highway rises from near sea level at Tacoma to about 5400 ft at Paradise Meadows. We will take a short excursion to Paradise to see geologic deposits and features that reveal some of the recent history of the Mount Rainier volcano. Weather permitting, there will be plenty to see, including rocks that predate Mt Rainier, evidence for the interaction of large lava flows with glacial ice, lahars (volcanic debris flows) and buried forests---evidence of Mt Rainier active geologic past, and glaciers.

From Pack Forest to the east, our route follows the Nisqually River valley, whose broad upper reaches once held large valley glaciers that extended from an icecap in the Mt. Rainier area during the ice ages.

Coal-bearing sedimentary rocks of the the Puget Group (Eocene Age) and volcanic and intrusive rocks of the ancestral Cascades (Eocene to Miocene in age) are visible en route.

During the past 10,000 years, many lahars have flowed along the Nisqually River valley from Mt. Rainier. Some of these volcanic slurries were enormous and buried forests as far downstream as Puget Sound (although in distal areas they stayed within the confines of the Nisqually River valley).

About 23 miles east of Pack Forest, the road reaches the Nisqually entrance to the Mt. Rainier National Park. The landscape changes dramatically as we rise onto the south flanks of Mt. Rainier volcano through ancient forests of enormous trees, across rushing glacier-fed rivers, through a ghost forest killed by debris flows at Kautz Creek, and along enormous ridges of lava and fragmental debris from volcanic eruptions and glacial advances.

The glacially carved canyons reveal spectacular views at every turn of the road, and the vegetation changes dramatically as the road climbs into the timberline environment.

This field trip will involve some light hiking. Participants should wear sturdy footwear and be prepared with all-weather attire. Sunglasses and a hat are advised. Camera and binoculars might be helpful

5. Pack Forest

Spend the afternoon exploring the approximately 4300 acre research and demonstration forest owned and managed by the University of Washington College of Forest Resources. At present there are just over 200 unique stands in the forest that vary in age from zero to 200 years old that are largely typical of the lowland Douglas Fir region. Pack Forest is guided by a 1981 Comprehensive Management and Development Plan which basically incorporates the philosophy of ecosystem management. Ecosystem management is becoming widely encouraged as a solution to many local, regional, national, and international forest management issues, and strives to preserve and sustain the ecosystem while producing a range of goods and services for the present and the future. In 1997 Pack Forest incorporated a Landscape Management System which is an evolving computer application designed to facilitate the analysis and communication of landscape-scale forest management decisions. In essence LMS simplifies and speeds up the landscape management process by combining growth models, visualization, and inventory software into one understandable package.