

The Heron Reporter

Kokanee Salmon of Lake Sammamish



A small population of Kokanee salmon in Lake Sammamish is fighting for its life.

Kokanee are a smaller, land-locked form of sockeye. Unlike their larger cousins, Kokanee don't have an ocean phase as part of their life history. Instead, they spend their adult lives in Lake Sammamish. Kokanee used to be common in Lake Washington, Lake Sammamish, the Sammamish River, and their tributaries.

Today, Kokanee are known to spawn only in Lake Sammamish and some of its tributaries. These spawning streams include Lewis Creek (downstream of I-90), Laughing Jacobs Creek, Ebright Creek, and Pine Lake Creek.

Because much of the east side of Bellevue eventually drains into Lake Sammamish, there's a lot that we can do to help the Kokanee out. Here's three:

1. **Don't Pollute:** Kokanee have to spend their entire lives in Lake Sammamish and its tributaries. Remember, storm drains in Bellevue flow unfiltered into our lakes and streams.
2. **Conserve Streams:** Plant native trees and shrubs along water-courses and on steep slopes. Streamside vegetation provides shade, erosion control, as well as tasty insects that fall into the water. You can also join the *Bellevue Stream Team* to help collect valuable salmon data.
3. **Lawn Care:** Practicing salmon-friendly lawn techniques is the most accessible way that we can give Kokanee a helping hand. If a section of your lawn never grows well, consider putting in native plants. If you need to fertilize, remember to use "slow-release" varieties. Consider installing a rain garden.

Learn more at Mercer Slough this fall...

Guest Lecture Series: "Kokanee and You"

When: Sunday, September 23, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Course #: 66981 (registration is free)

The Green Corner: Gabion Walls



The gabion walls at the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center are simple; galvanized steel baskets with rocks inside. This type of retaining wall is environmentally-friendly because it allows rainwater and runoff to flow through it and into the groundwater, filtering it and reducing erosion along the ends of the walls. Local rock can be used to make the walls blend in.

Did You Know?

Salmon swim up the Mercer Slough on their way to their spawning beds in Kelsey Creek and its tributaries. At the northern end of the Slough (on 118th Ave SE, just South of SE 8th Street) is a fish ladder built by the city of Bellevue. The ladder allows passage for salmon, cutthroat trout, peamouth minnows, and more. The ladder is open year-round, but mid-October is the best time to see the salmon as they make their way upstream.



To Register for City of Bellevue Programs:
Call: (425) 452-6885
Online: MyParksAndRecreation.com

To Register for Environmental Education Program with
Pacific Science Center:
www.pasci.org or call 206-443-2925



The Heron Reporter

Puget Sound's Amazing Prairies

An Introduction to Western Washington's Little-known Gems



Endangered Golden Paintbrush

Washington may be known as the “Evergreen State”, but our landscape is quite varied. Soil, rain shadow, wind, and fire favored prairie ecosystems for millennia in some parts of the Puget Sound.

Today, our west-side prairies are one of the rarest habitat types in America. Fire suppression, invasive species, conifer encroachment, land conversion, and development have reduced Puget Sound's native prairies to approximately 3% of their original extent. Multiple wildlife species that live in Puget Sound's prairies are “Candidate Species” for the Endangered Species Act.

The public can visit high-quality native prairies today at preserves scattered on the north and south ends of the Puget Sound. To the north, prairies can be seen at Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve, San Juan Island National Historic Park, Fort Casey State Park, the Yellow Island Preserve, and

Naas Natural Area Preserve. In Thurston County, you can visit prairies at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area, Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve, and Glacial Heritage Preserve (during Thurston County Parks sponsored events). A Discover Pass is required at state-owned lands.

These preserves represent a wide variety of ownership, including county, state, federal, and nonprofit lands. These entities, as well as citizens putting in countless hours, have worked to restore Washington State's prairie gems.

The best time of the year to visit is spring when the wildflowers are in bloom. Go in the morning or evening to have the best experience possible.



Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly

Learn more at Mercer Slough this fall...

PUGET PRAIRIES (ADULT ENRICHMENT PROGRAM)

November 10th, noon - 12:30 p.m.

FREE! No registration required.

Every Saturday at the Slough...

Mercer Slough Nature Walk

2 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, 1625 118th Avenue SE

Meet a park ranger at the Visitor Center for a free guided tour and learn about the fascinating flora, fauna, and history of the Mercer Slough Nature Park – Lake Washington's largest remaining wetland. Please dress for weather. All ages welcome. **FREE.**

Spooky Nature Film Playing Just in Time For Halloween

For October's *Movies at Mercer Slough* nature film, we will be showing “*Planet Earth - Caves*” just in time for Halloween. Lots of people – all around the world – are a little uneasy about caves and the creatures that live inside them. Join us for this amazing episode of the *Planet Earth* series. It shows just how amazing caves, and their bizarre wildlife, can be. We'll pop the popcorn!



MOVIES AT MERCER SLOUGH: “PLANET EARTH CAVES”

Friday, October 26th, 5 – 6 p.m.

Go Paperless

If you would like to receive *The Heron Reporter* by email, send request to: MSEEC@bellevuewa.gov

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