

New Splash



FALL 2008

Volunteers Needed!

Salmon are headed our way! After years in the ocean, chinook, sockeye, and coho will soon be returning to Bellevue streams to spawn and renew their lifecycle. Salmon Watcher Volunteers help us learn more about salmon populations in Bellevue by observing and reporting when, where and what type of salmon are returning to streams in Bellevue.



No prior experience is needed, and the more volunteer eyes watching the better!

Salmon Watcher Workshop

Bellevue City Hall

Thursday, September 11

7:00 – 9:00 pm



How Can I Become a Salmon Watcher?

- 1. Register** for a workshop by calling Bellevue Stream Team at 425-452-5200 or streamteam@bellevuewa.gov
- 2. Attend** one training to learn all you need to know and select a site to watch for salmon.
- 3. Observe** your stream site for 15 minutes twice a week during the fall spawning season, September through December, and mail in your data sheets.

For additional information and dates of workshops offered in other cities, contact Stream Team at streamteam@bellevuewa.gov, 425-452-5200 or Google "Salmon Watcher" to find us online.



Great Year for Salmon Watching!

2008 may be a fantastic year for Salmon Watching as predictions forecast a record number of chinook returning to the area!

A treaty between the US and Canada limiting fishing and protecting habitat may be partly to thank for the high numbers of returning chinook.

On the flip side, this year also appears to have record low numbers of sockeye despite the record high outmigration of fry a couple years ago that should now be returning.

Situations like this make volunteer data and local restoration efforts even more important to understanding and protecting our local salmon and streams.



The work accomplished by Salmon Watcher Volunteers is essential to local salmon recovery efforts. The information gathered indicates how salmon are using local streams, identifies possible fish passage barriers and helps target professional salmon recovery work.

City Expands Volunteer Opportunities for Enhanced Quality of Life

Volunteers make the world a better place, and the City of Bellevue is working hard to help them do just that. “Hundreds of exciting volunteer opportunities exist in our community,” says Shelly Shellabarger, the City’s volunteer program coordinator. “The trick is connecting potential volunteers with a program that appeals to them.”

To facilitate this process, the City of Bellevue has updated its web site to make the volunteer page more user friendly. Programs have been categorized as Environmental Stewardship (programs like the Stream Team, Waterwise Garden and Stewardship Saturdays), Civic Engagement (like the volunteer translators at Mini City Hall, Neighborhood Mediators and the many people who serve on the Youth Link Board) and Recreation

(such as youth sports coaches and the 212 volunteers who make things happen at the Bellevue Youth Theatre).

There are even listings geared specifically to teens and senior citizens. Visit the City’s website at www.bellevuewa.gov/volunteer.htm to check out all the possibilities.

The City is also working to develop new opportunities for volunteers, such as the innovative NeighborWoods program. This program includes residents in the process of determining where trees should be planted and encourages their involvement in planting and maintaining the trees. Citizens and organizations are invited to contact the City’s volunteer program

coordinator at 425-452-5375 to suggest new programs.

Finally, the City is developing a volunteer feedback mechanism wherein you can share your comments and opinions directly with the volunteer program coordinator. Your opinions are very valuable to us. Program ideas and comments are welcomed at volunteer@bellevuewa.gov.

Happy volunteering!

“We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give.”

– Winston Churchill

SAVE THE DATE! Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center Grand Opening Celebration

Join us Saturday, October 11, 2008, 10am – 5pm as we celebrate the opening of our new facility.

Come experience all the Mercer Slough and our new facility have to offer, with a day jam packed with hands-on activities for the whole family. We will have speakers, sampler workshops, interpretative hikes and tours throughout the day.

For more details, visit our Web site pacifsciencecenter.org/slough or contact Apryl Brinkley, Site Manager, Phone: 425-450-0207
E-mail: apryl_brinkley@pacsci.org



Take a Hike ●●●

We are in the midst of nothing less than another underrated summer up here in the Pacific Northwest. The rain has visited intermittently at best, leaving ample time to relax at the beach, cruise around on a bike or kick back in the shade with a book.

But here in Washington, we have something that has become an increasingly rare prospect in the United States—a rich connection with nature. With its population on the rise, towering cranes disfiguring our skyline and building plans occupying so many street corners, Bellevue is at the forefront of an unprecedented suburban expansion.

In all of this, however, careful measures have been put in place to maintain a healthy balance with nature, creating a vast network of parks begging to be explored in your free time. From the neighborhood park to the community nature trail, Bellevue upholds the Pacific Northwest's silent reputation as one of the last great nature refuges not under national protection. We have gone to great lengths to establish this amazing suburb while maintaining the natural beauty of the land. And nature has rewarded us!

Hundreds of native plants have been able to prosper in this healthy environment while a surprising number of non-native plants have been able to naturalize. When considering Bellevue's nature trails, Cougar Mountain

and Mercer Slough are usually among the most popular for nature enthusiasts. And for good reason, these parks are home to a wealth of native species which bloom late into fall.

Cougar Mountain is a great place to walk the dogs, and its trails are lined with a multitude of trees, flowers and other vegetation. Along the path, you may find that the sprawling ferns make for a subtle yet visually pleasing aesthetic. The massive cottonwoods obscure the sunlight providing a cool relief from the blistering heat. One other common tree to look for is the Western Hemlock, our state tree, a massive evergreen, native to the west coast.

Further north, the Mercer Slough offers an escape from the bustling energy of the city with 320 acres of wetland, trails and streams, all within view of the city skyline. While enjoying the intricacies of the slough's trail network, take a moment to observe the great variety of trees including multiple species of willows, black cottonwoods and other native species derived from the unique wet and dry habitat of the slough.

Trees are an integral part of our image here in the Pacific Northwest. So integral, in fact, that we seem to forget about them completely, even when observing nature. When considering what to



do with your next free weekend or early-evening activity, consider making the short trip to one of our local parks. Even a short trek along the trails will leave you with an appreciation for the gift that nature has given us in the Pacific Northwest.

Resources: http://www.wnps.org/plant_lists/exploring_native_plants.html

Article written by Kyle Baldock. Kyle is a 17 year old student at International High School in Bellevue. Writing is one of his favorite activities and would love a career in journalism one day.

Did You Know...?

Storm drains flow directly into streams, lakes, and wetlands without treatment.

In a recent phone survey of 400 Bellevue residents asking, “What happens to water running off of rooftops, streets, and lawns?” 52% correctly answered that the water flows to streams and lakes without treatment, while 28% believed it went to sewer where it was treated. The last 20% responded that they did not know or gave an answer that did not fit in the other categories. That means nearly half of our residents do not understand that stormwater is not treated!

The survey also revealed that most residents pay attention to information provided to them by their friends and neighbors. So, you can help keep Bellevue’s streams and lakes clean simply by having a conversation about protecting stormwater and streams with your friends and neighbors!

While only a few residents have the privilege of living next to one of our beautiful streams, we all live near storm drains. A storm drain may not be as pretty as a stream; however, it should be treated with the same reverence as the body of water to which it flows.

Coming to a storm drain near you!



Have you seen one of these markers in your neighborhood? Volunteers installed several hundred in the last year. This summer, thanks to a King Conservation District Grant, a student intern and a consultant have stuck down almost 2000 more! Some markers have the stream name such as Kelsey and Coal Creeks while others simply say they drain to a stream or lake.

While that number of markers may seem like a lot, there are over 20,000 public storm drains managed by the city in addition to several thousand on private properties! Several private properties have allowed markers placed on their drains including Bellevue schools, Honda of Bellevue, and the Lake Bellevue property owners. Bellevue Community College volunteers glued down markers on their campus as part of their Earth Week activities last April.

We still offer the storm drain stencil kits where you spray paint the message onto the pavement in addition to the new markers for volunteer projects. While the new markers last longer they are not easy

for young kids to apply so the stencils may still be the best choice for your group. Either way, the weather must be dry for a while before and after applying markers or stencils. If you would like to reserve either kit, call Karren Gratt at 452-452-6166.



Did You Know...?

Biodegradable soap is toxic to aquatic life.

Surprised? You're not alone. Most people assume "biodegradable" implies "safe for the environment." But, if you don't understand how it works it can be as harmful as regular soap.

While "biodegradable" does mean that the product will break down in the environment, the issue lies with how long it takes to break down and under what conditions. The label on the bottle should say to use it at least 200 feet from a body of



water. That's because it is harmful to aquatic life but also because it requires the organisms in the soil to break down. Without soil, the soap cannot break down as intended.

Soapy water is great for cleaning your car but is harmful to our streams, lakes, and wildlife. Soap, even biodegradable, makes breathing difficult for fish and kills good bugs. Dirty car wash water also carries fine sediment that clogs the spaces between rocks where macroinvertebrates and salmon eggs live. Not washing your car keeps the soap out of streams but allows the rain to wash

the dirt, grease, and heavy metals into the streams.

Be kind to our streams by taking your car to a commercial car wash where the used water is sent to the sewer system to be treated. Another great option, if you have the right space, is to park your car on the lawn or gravel at home where the soil can filter the pollutants.



There is a Fundraising Car Wash that is safe for salmon.

Selling coupons for a commercial car wash is the best way to earn money and protect local streams. Tickets can be purchased at a discounted rate from either Brown Bear or the Puget Sound Carwash Association. You can look them up online or call utilities at 425-452-6166 for more details.

Advantages of selling car wash tickets are that you can

- Sell tickets any time of year
- Not worry about bad weather on the day of your event
- Raise your potential earnings
- Have your group's name printed on the tickets
- Keep soap, dirt, and heavy metals out of local streams

Everyone benefits when you raise money, cars get cleaned, and the environment is protected.

Extra Special Thanks to 2008 Earth Day Arbor Day Volunteers

Thirty-two dedicated volunteers braved a chilly spring storm on April 19th to install over 1000 plants at the headwater wetlands of Lewis Creek. Volunteers endured snow, hail, and wind most of time they were working. The volunteers were amazing for seeing snow that morning and still showing up for the project! While we made the best of the bizarre weather, we would have preferred the usual Earth Day Arbor Day fear of sunburn to the fear of hypothermia.

While there was not enough snow for a snowman, one was improvised with empty pots.



Peamouth Minnow Update

Even after 6 years of collecting peamouth minnow spawning data, we are still learning more about when they return each spring. The biggest lesson learned this year is just how many times they may arrive in our local streams to spawn.



We recorded one spawning event for the first couple years but were surprised and delighted to see a second in 2005 leading us to believe that there may have been more than one event in the past when we just were not looking.

So, each year we've extended the window of time we watch. While most volunteers hung up their polarized glasses and mailed in their data sheets by the end of May, volunteer, Ken Mackey continued to keep an eye on Kelsey Creek under the Wilburton Trestle and the Mercer Slough Fish Ladder and was able to record two more spawning events at the end of May and mid-June.

Not only did Ken record 2 more spawning times than we had in the past, greatly widening the spawning window as we knew it, he also recorded another predator that had not previously been seen at that site – a bald eagle! The two were surprised to see each other. It was quite a reward for Ken's persistence.

We are currently working on a Peamouth Minnow Report to summarize all the data we have collected. The report will hopefully be complete before we start watching for peamouth again next April. Thanks to Ken, and all the other Peamouth Patrol volunteers, our understanding of peamouth minnows in Bellevue streams is constantly growing.

Documented Peamouth Spawning Times

2003 - April 29
2004 - April 28
2005 - April 27 & May 8
2006 - April 29-30 & May 11 & 12
2007 - May 7-9 & 24
2008 - May 6-7, May 17-18, May 29, June 14-15

Natural Yard Care ●●●



Attend these free workshops and discover how easy it is to grow a healthier lawn and garden! Your gardening practices can have a big impact on the health of your family and pets, our regional resources and the quality of our local streams and lakes. Register today and make a difference in your neighborhood. Free how-to natural gardening guides are provided at each class.

NATURAL YARD CARE CLASSES



Before you tackle the yard this fall, attend...

Fall Yard Care

Tuesday, September 30th
Speaker: Ladd Smith

Fall is an ideal time to get your lawn and garden back in shape. Act now for a thicker, healthier lawn with less moss and fewer weed problems. Choose the right garden clean up tasks to grow healthier plants, reduce weeds and help control pests and disease problems. These natural yard care techniques are the perfect choice for your yard this fall.

Fall Planting

Wednesday, October 8th
Speaker: Peggy Campbell

Time to revamp part or all of your yard? Fall is the best time for planting and planning for improvements. Learn how to choose the right plants and give them a good start. Find the inspiration for growing your own natural yard and take home lists of high impact, low-fuss plants that are proven performers for year-round color and interest.

Fall Soil Building

Wednesday, October 14th
Speaker: Lisa Taylor

Healthy soil is the key to growing everything and now is the best time to hit the dirt. Learn how to improve your soil and take advantage of fall leaves and yard trimmings. Get the facts on how home composting and mulching can pay off all year long. Build healthy soil for you, your plants and the environment, too!

Details (applies to all classes):

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Place: Bellevue Botanical Garden Visitor Center • 12001 Main Street, Bellevue, WA

Registration required. Call 425-452-6932 or email klafranchi@bellevuewa.gov today!



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streamteam@bellevuewa.gov
425-452-5200



If you are no longer interested in receiving Stream Team mail, please call or email the contact information above.

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Are you
Be a Salmon Watcher.
lookin' at me?

Coming soon to a stream near you!

