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Extend Your Experience: The Northwest's Natural and Cultural Landscape

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Andrea Kueter, Jane Carlin, Lori Ricigliano, Donna Bachmann, and Peggy Firman

Extend your experience

The Northwest's natural and cultural landscape

Approach Puget Sound from any direction and its grand design—a sinuous union of land and inland sea—is revealed.

This article is a snapshot of this beautiful and fascinating environment, and of the first peoples who inhabited it. We hope you'll step back and take time to explore, appreciate, and expand your horizons during your visit to the Pacific Northwest for the ACRL 14th National Conference.



Roll on Columbia, roll on

Commencing from its headwaters in southeastern British Columbia, the Columbia River flows through basalt carved cliffs and past more than 70 waterfalls. The great river then flows through eastern Washington and snakes west to form nearly 300 miles of border between Washington and Oregon, before gracefully merging with the Pacific Ocean.

Continue up the Pacific coastline, where early March is a great time to view grey whales as they make their annual migratory journey up the west coast to their Pacific feeding grounds. Past the smooth sandy beaches in the south to the rocky beaches and cliffs of the northern coast, you'll find a perfect paradise for tide pool exploration and windy wild walks on the beach. Turn east into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, around the San Juan Islands, and meander down Puget Sound to Seattle and you'll discover that Washington State offers a myriad of opportunities to get out on, or near, dynamic, thriving waterways.

Seattle is practically surrounded by water—Lake Union and Lake Washington to

the north and east, Puget Sound to the west. Puget Sound is the southernmost section of the Inside Passage, a 1,000-mile long, glacier-carved waterway that stretches north into Canada and Alaska. Described as one of the largest systems of estuaries in the world, Puget Sound is made up of a series of bays, inlets, and passages that were scraped out by an enormous sheet of ice 10 to 12 millennia ago. Nestled between the Olympic

Peninsula and the Cascade Mountains, Puget Sound is, for the most part, protected from the open ocean. Abundant marine life and habitat can be found throughout Puget Sound.

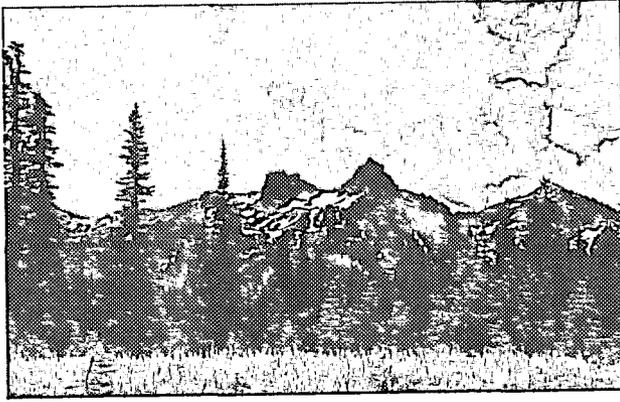
Flowing into Puget Sound north of Seattle is the Skagit River—home to the largest winter nesting ground for the American Bald Eagle. The eagles are drawn to the river's crystal-clear cold mountain water and abundant salmon runs. March is the end of the winter season for the bald eagles, and there are many opportunities to view eagles both from land and from the river.

Go tell it on the mountains

The majestic mountains of Washington State

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The Tatoosh Range in Mt. Rainier National Park. Photo credit: Lori Ricigliano

are symbols of the exceptional natural beauty found in the Pacific Northwest. In the Puget Sound region, two distinct mountain ranges dominate the skyline: the Olympic Mountains and the Cascade Range. And while the mountains may not always be visible, you can always feel their presence.

The Olympic Mountains rise above the Olympic Peninsula, which lies between the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the north. Shaped by glaciers, the Olympic Mountain range is a mass of jagged peaks and ridges surrounded by a diverse environment of rain forests, alpine meadows, lakes, and rivers. Near the center of the Olympic Peninsula, Mount Olympus, at 7,965 feet, is the highest peak in the range. Less than 33 miles from the ocean, Mount Olympus receives more than 200 inches of precipitation a year and has a large glacial system. The best views of the Olympic Mountains are from the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center, which is nearly a mile above sea level.

The Cascade Mountains form the backbone of the state and stretch from Canada to Oregon. To the north, the Cascades form a maze of alpine ridges with three impressive glacier-covered peaks: Mount Baker, Mount Shuksan, and Glacier Peak. The North Cascades have been compared with the European Alps, but with "better weather, more diverse forests, and richer wildlife."

As you drive along State Route 20, you can experience breathtaking views of moun-

tains, waterfalls, and glacier lakes.

The southern Cascades have a more rugged appearance and are made up almost entirely of volcanic rock. Mount Rainier, with its massive size and its extensive glacial system, dominates the horizon and is simply known as "the Mountain" by Washingtonians. It rises almost three miles from the lowlands and more than 2,000 feet higher than the second highest peak in the range, Mount Adams. A

visit to Mount Rainier National Park provides opportunities for scenic drives and miles of hiking trails. South of Mount Rainier, one of the Cascade's most active volcanoes, Mount St. Helens, erupted in May 1980 and lost more than 1,300 feet of elevation. The explosion was heard as far away as Canada, and volcanic ash was carried throughout eastern Washington and beyond. The Johnston Ridge Observatory offers close up views of the lava dome and crater, and a fascinating look at how the ecosystem is slowly coming back to life.

The Evergreen State

Washington has more than 20 million acres of forestland, ranging from ancient old growth rain forests on the Olympic Peninsula, to subalpine forests in the Cascade foothills, and hillsides of ponderosa and lodgepole pine in the high desert areas of Eastern Washington. The apt nickname for our state, chosen in the 1800s by pioneer newspaperman and realtor, C.T. Conover, is etched in our collective minds. Washington indeed is "The Evergreen State."

Less than 120 miles from Seattle, within the Olympic National Forest, the special conditions needed to nurture a rare rain forest exist. Mild coastal temperatures, summers of moisture-replenishing fog, and more than 12 feet of rain per year support the complex rain forest ecosystem. Two-hundred-year old Sitka spruce, douglas fir, western red cedar, and western hemlock tower 250 feet

in the air, providing a canopy for broad leaf maples, mushrooms, giant sword ferns, and the abundance of animal life that thrive in the moist, dark interior below. Fallen and decaying "nurse" logs, thickly painted with club moss in varying shades of green, become a seedbed for colonnades of young saplings that replenish and renew the forest in a self-sustaining cycle of life. More than 90 species of mosses, ferns, and lichens can be seen in the Hoh Rain Forest on the self-guided Hall of Mosses trail.

The rain forest is but one of three ecosystems and six vegetation zones in the Olympic National Forest. Two hundred miles of trails take hikers from Olympic Mountain subalpine forests, through ancient old growth forests, and finally to windswept coastal beaches, where they can dig for geoducks (pronounced "GOO-ee-duck"), the world's largest burrowing clam.

President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Executive Order creating Columbia National Forest (renamed Gifford Pinchot in 1949) on July 1, 1908. Located in southwest Washington, it is one of the oldest national forests in the country. Expanded over time to 1.3 million acres, it includes both Mount Adams and the Mount St. Helens National Monument. A variety of ongoing activities and events are scheduled to celebrate this year's centennial.

Across the dividing line of the Cascade Mountains, near the town of Vantage, resides the most unusual forest in Washington: the Ginkgo Petrified Forest (State Park). Millions of years ago, cypress, elm, oak, and ginkgo trees grew in tropical swamps. Volcanic eruptions spewed lava over the waterlogged trees and hardened into sheets of basalt. Over time, silica penetrated the wood and the logs became petrified in perfect detail to the original

Seattle nature and culture on the Web

- **Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area**, www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia/

- **Exploring the Coast-Olympic**, www.nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/exploring-the-coast.htm

- **Washington State Ferries**, www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/

- **Skagit Wild and Scenic River System**, www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/skagit-wsr/

- **Olympic National Park**, www.nps.gov/olymp/index.htm

- **North Cascades National Park**, www.nps.gov/noca/

- **Mount Rainier National Park**, www.nps.gov/mora/

- **Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument**, www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/mshnvm/

- **Symbols of Washington State**, www1.leg.wa.gov/legislature/statesymbols/

- **Olympic Temperate Rain Forests**, www.nps.gov/olymp/naturescience/temperate-rain-forests.htm

- **Gifford Pinchot National Forest**, www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/

- **Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park**, www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File_Id=7396

- **Washington Park Arboretum**, depts.washington.edu/wpa/

- **Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden**, www.rsfcitymax.com/page/page/1083572.htm

- **Kubota Garden**, www.kubota.org/

- **Bloedel Reserve**, www.bloedelreserve.org/

- **Pacific Northwest Garden History**, www.halcyon.com/tmend/nwgardenhistory.htm

- **Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture**, www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/

- **Suquamish Museum and Cultural Center**, www.suquamish.nsn.us/museum.html

- **Seattle Cultural Guides: Native American Heritage**, www.visitseattle.org/cultural/guides/native/default.asp

- **Raven Brings Light to this House of Stories**, www.lib.washington.edu/about/libdirections/Spring95/raven.html

trees. In 1975, petrified wood was chosen as the official state gem of Washington.

How does your garden grow?

The Puget Sound region is gifted with a temperate climate, abundant moisture, and mild growing conditions. These factors encouraged the development of parks and gardens early in the region's history. In 1886, Edward O. Schwagerl, a nationally recognized landscape gardener, was hired to design Wright Park in Tacoma. In 1892, Schwagerl became the superintendent of Seattle parks and created a plan for four city parks to ring the city connected by boulevards and drives at Alki Point, Ft. Lawton, Sand Point, and Seward Park. In 1903, the Seattle city council engaged John Charles Olmstead, one of the famed Olmstead brothers (designers of Central Park in New York City), to develop a comprehensive plan for Seattle parks. His master plan laid out a 20-mile long system of parks.

The Northwest is known for its trees, and there are 230 acres of them to enjoy at the Washington Park Arboretum. Described as "a living plant museum emphasizing trees and shrubs hardy in the maritime Pacific Northwest," it was established by the University of Washington on land owned by the City of Seattle. In March, camellia, flowering cherry, corylopsis, daphne, forsythia, heather, hellebore, magnolia, rhododendron, and witch hazel will all be in bloom. Located within the Arboretum is the three-and-a-half acre Japanese Garden. This formal garden was designed and constructed in 1960 under the guidance of world-renowned Japanese garden designer Juki Lida.

The Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden encompasses 22

acres, and houses one of the world's largest collections of rhododendron and azalea species. Peak bloom time in the garden starts in mid-March. Located next to the garden is the Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection.

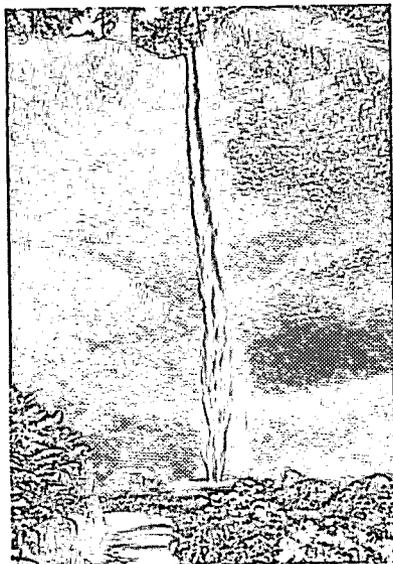
Kubota Garden is a public garden owned by the City of Seattle and maintained by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Originally created in 1927 by Fujitaro Kubota, a self-taught gardener, this park features 20 acres of hills, valleys and water features and combines Pacific Northwest and Asian styles.

The Bloedel Reserve on Bainbridge Island (a short ferry ride away from Seattle), also designed by Olmstead, offers 150 acres of forest, gardens, meadows, and bird refuge. It received the 2008 Award for Garden Excellence from the American Public Garden Association in recognition of its design, displays and environmentally friendly practices.

Native culture and the environment

Suquamish, Puyallup, Duwamish, and Snoqualmie are among the names that

comprise the rich Native American cultural heritage that is so much a part of the Pacific Northwest. In fact, Seattle is named after a hereditary chief of the Suquamish and Duwamish peoples, Chief Seattle (Sealth). In 1855, Chief Seattle signed a treaty with the Governor of the Washington Territory, Isaac I. Stevens, that provided the land for the establishment of the city. A speech attributed to Chief Seattle on the occasion of signing the treaty is still considered one of the most passionate and thoughtful statements on the rights of indigenous peoples and the importance of protecting the environment. The white settlers named the new town in his honor.



Waterfalls in the Columbia Gorge area.
Photo credit: Lori Ricigliano



Tsagaglial (She Who Watches) is one of many Native American petroglyphs and pictographs located near the Columbia River Gorge. Photo credit: Lori Ricigliano

Building on the traditions of their native neighbors to the north, the coastal Salish tribes of what is now Washington and Oregon became skilled wood carvers and embraced the tradition of totem pole carving. These poles, carved from plentiful and hardy cedar trees, symbolize family ancestry. Often placed outside of family longhouses, or used as structural supports, totem poles proclaim identity and status.

One of Seattle's most well-known totem poles is in the center of Pioneer Square. Other totem poles as well as many examples of Coast Salish art, are on display in local galleries and museums. The University of Washington's Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture is an excellent place to explore many unique carved objects and other works of native art, such as textiles and basketry. The cedar tree played a pivotal role in native culture. Cedar was split into planks for building, the bark was shredded and served as swaddling for infants and used for pillows, and strips of cedar were used to weave blankets and rain capes, as well as distinctive conical hats to protect individuals from the rain.

Families lived together in long houses and the rhythm of their lives followed the natural cycle of the salmon. Families migrated to take advantage of the salmon runs. In addition to salmon, the rich assortment of

shellfish—clams, oysters, mussels, and crab—along with the abundance of natural berries and game, provided a wealth of food.

The Native American tribes of Puget Sound also have a strong spiritual legacy rooted in myth and legend and closely associated with animals, especially the Raven and the Thunderbird. As you explore native cultures, you will quickly become aware of the many powerful images of the thunderbird, as well as the killer whale, the owl, the deer, and the eagle. Affinity

with nature and the close connection with the environment is a powerful component of Northwest native spiritual beliefs. Perhaps one of the most striking interpretations of native spirituality is an exhibit located in the lobby of the University of Washington's Allen Library. This collaborative installation consists of four parts, each reflecting an aspect of Pacific Northwest Native American lore. Forty ravens are suspended from the library ceiling having brought light from east to west, the light symbolizing the knowledge housed within the building. Two collages, along with a central pedestal called "Table of Knowledge," merge together to form an inspirational work of art titled "Raven Brings Light" symbolizing the power and spirit of learning and libraries, as well as the heritage and wisdom of the Native American cultures.

*This we know,
The earth does not belong to man;
Man belongs to the earth.
All things are connected,
like the blood which unites
one family.
Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons of earth.
Man did not weave the web of life.
He is merely a strand in it.
Whatever he does to the web
he does to himself.*

—attributed to Chief Seattle ♪



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