

CORPS NEWS



Icicles form near a waterfall at a crew site as winter quickly approaches. Photos courtesy of Sarah Price.

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OREGON SPOTTED FROG HABITAT RESTORATION

By Alex Mesick, Nisqually Crew Member

The week of October 21st was my first week working with the WCC AmeriCorps crew at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. The beginning of term was a brief grooming period for me, much like the scene in the Karate Kid where Mr. Miagi has Daniel doing menial tasks around the Miagi home in order to prepare him to fight the good fights later.

At Nisqually, the crew took care of our home. Cleaning out the workshop, sorting through rain gear, sharpening tools, and beginning to understand how our AmeriCorps mission fits into the bigger picture at the refuge. After taking care of things at home, the crew was ready.

We met the biologist from the refuge in an empty field. There was no reason for me or any of the other crew members to believe that this pasture was of any significance as we looked at it. But the biologist explained to us that this was a breeding ground for the Oregon Spotted Frog—a species protected by the state. In the shallow sitting waters of this flat and mucky ground, the frogs lay their eggs in hope of survival.

(FROGS continued on pg. 6)



Oregon Spotted Frog. Photo courtesy of the US Department of Fish and Wildlife.

WCC CREWS POWER THROUGH COLD WEATHER



Evan Smith, Dallas Barron, Leo Arias, Jesse DeBock, and Erik Anderson, of the Kittitas Crew, work through freezing temperatures and snow. Photo courtesy of Ernie Farmer.

“The activist is not the [one] who says the river is dirty. The activist is the [one] who cleans up the river.”

-Ross Perot



Sarah Price of The Mountain to Sound Greenway Trust Crew hard at work in the cold.



Josh Knight, Nick Gale, Ian Tate, and Evan Oliver, of the Spokane Ecology Crew, buck trees in the snow. Photo courtesy of Sierra Mazie.

Tim Christiansen, Duncan Graham, Julia Martel, Hattie Palmer, Zack Wagner, and Ashlie Arthur of the Pierce County Crew work despite a frigid frost. Photo courtesy of Ashlie Arthur.



TEAM COBRA BACK FOR A SECOND YEAR

By Michael Shubert, Olympic National Park Crew Member

One year in the WCC was not enough for “Team Cobra.” Our Supervisor, Luke Wigle, decided to go with all second year crew members for the 2013-2014 service year. With three months down and seven to go, our crew has clicked. Every crew member is clearly dedicated to the work we are performing. With each individual bringing a positive attitude to work each day, there is no slowing us down. It is great to see that everyone has a strong work ethic. Olympic National Park (ONP) is going to see some serious results with Team Cobra striking!

Rain or shine we are laughing, laughing, laughing. Making jokes and sharing funny WCC experiences from last year have really kept spirits up. If you are not having fun at work, you are doing it all wrong. We regularly do stretch circles, and if that is not enough to keep us loose, someone will randomly yell

out, “WIGGLE TIME!” After hearing this, each person goes into a full body wiggle. Josh Coulter usually goes for the wiggle robot. The small things our crew does keeps everyone happy, focused, and motivated.

We all have a deep appreciation for nature. Luckily, we are completely surrounded by Mother Nature herself in ONP. Each week someone points out an incredible view or snapshot of something special. This could be a crazy looking cloud shifting though the mountainside, a jaw-dropping sunset or sunrise, a specific tree, the clear, Gatorade-colored lake water, or simply a cool rock. It is awesome to know we are building positive memories that will stick with us forever.

Using knowledge we picked up from last year, our crew is teaching each other native plants. We quiz each other to make sure the plant names stick. This is the perfect time for this activity because we are currently planting for the park. ONP is aiming at planting roughly 106,000 native plants this year between both drained lake reservoirs, Lake Aldwell and Lake Mills. The two WCC crews working out of the park will plant the majority of those.

We will be planting until March. Then we begin performing trail work out towards the coast. Following our second training in June, we will begin our eight-day spikes and the rest of the year, we will do trail work in the Sol Duc area of the park, as well as out on the coastal trails.

Crew swap with us to check out the beautiful area!

I can speak for everyone on our crew when I say that we are excited for the remainder of the year.



Olympic National Park Trail Crew, AKA: “Team Cobra.” Katz Kiendl, Josh Coulter, Michael Schubert, Scottie Meinke, Amelia Bethke.

“It’s awesome to know we are building positive memories that will stick with us forever.”

SALMON ON THE PLAYGROUND

Larry Montague, North Olympic Salmon Coalition IP

In the office there were file cabinets marked “Salmon Education Curriculum,” an entire wall of stinky hip waders, and a giant fiberglass sculpture of a phase of the Salmonid life cycle that I conveniently forgot during my interview.

“So, which aspect of the position are you most interested in?” Reed asked. Without hesitation—and relieved he didn’t ask me about the sculpture—I said, “Working with kids. I really enjoy working with elementary students.”

A couple weeks after my interview with Reed Aubin, Volunteer and Education Program Manager at the North Olympic Salmon Coalition, I started my AmeriCorps Individual Placement (IP) position.

My first chance to work with kids came at an afterschool program run by the Jefferson County YMCA called Chimacum After The Bell. After The Bell is a weekly program that introduces Chimacum Elementary students to a variety of interesting topics such as acro-yoga, cooking, archery, and—my favorite—salmon.

I walked into the classroom one Wednesday afternoon and was greeted by the program instructor, Trevor Smith of the Y, and two little people with big smiles and a lot of energy.

“Who are you?” said a kindergartner with a blonde mop as he lifted one of his Hot Wheels from the track.

“I’m Larry. I’m the salmon guy. What’s your name?”

“Johnny.”

“And I’m Riley 2! There’s another girl in the class named Riley. She’s Riley 1.”

Trevor walked over and dropped a peanut butter sandwich on a purple plate in front of Riley 2. “Hey Larry. Nice to see you. Would you like a PB and J?”

“Definitely.” My philosophy on education spawned right then and there, and it was this: in order to teach children, you need to think like them—and to think like them, you should eat like them.

A few minutes later two more kids, Riley 1 and Reed, ran into the room and threw down their backpacks.

I laid out a game board on the table and we all gathered around to go over the rules. The object of the game was to be the first salmon to make it all the way around the board and back to the spawning grounds. As in real life for a salmon, there would be many challenges to overcome along the way: floods and low water events, oil spills in the estuary, hungry herons and orcas, and commercial fishing nets out at sea.

We played for a half hour, taking a moment to discuss our plight each time someone landed on an obstacle. By the time the first two salmon made it back to their spawning grounds, the sun was low enough to spill into the classroom window, and I could see that the kids were looking longingly outside at the playground. I was confident everyone understood that a salmon’s journey from little Chimacum Creek to sea and back again was no small feat. I recapped some of the major challenges we faced in the game and asked if they wanted to keep swimming upstream or go outside.

“OUTSIDE!!” was the unanimous response.

The kids were already sweating when Trevor and I reached the playground. I stood on the gravel admiring their impulse and freedom, and contemplating more effective ways of keeping their interest during the next lesson.

Suddenly, Johnny yelled out from the top of the wooden playhouse. “Hey! Let’s play a game!”

“What’s the game called?” asked Reed.

“Salmon!” Johnny responded proudly, adding, “Quick—follow me up the fish ladder! It’s the only way over the dam.”

I looked across the set of large, plastic steps Johnny had ascended to reach the top. Wow, that really looks like a fish ladder, I thought.

“Come on, Larry! Follow us back to the river!” Johnny called.

I jumped up the steps then followed the group down the fireman’s pole on the other side.

“Watch out for the fish net!” warned Reed. I glanced at where he was pointing and, sure enough, there it was: a wide rope ladder leading to another playhouse. “Don’t get caught in the net! Here—follow me up the waterfall.”

Opposite from the rope ladder were two blue slides cascading from the top of the playhouse. The kids and I fought our way up the waterfall and across a narrow ledge to the foot of the jungle gym.

Excited for what they were going to come up with next, I waited patiently for one of the salmon to speak. I looked

Do you have a story to share?

Appear in Corps News by emailing

kate.nagel@ecy.wa.gov

(SALMON continued on pg. 6)

WCC ALUMNI: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Experience as a WCC Member:

Andrea Nesbitt joined the Yakima crew, formerly supervised by Kirk Sandberg. She served a one-year AmeriCorps term in 2009. Her favorite projects were Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) Surveys that her crew completed for the Bonneville Power Association. This involved traveling to areas flooded by dams and collecting biological survey data.

As a member, Andrea took the Wetlands & Proper Functioning Conditions (Watershed Restoration) and Ethnobotany trainings offered by WCC. Andrea credits the teamwork aspect of the program as helping her crew overcome many challenges, saying, "I loved my year. If it weren't for my team... we bonded together!"

Where is She Now?

Although her title is Environmental Education Coordinator, Andrea actually performs a wide variety of tasks for the Puget Sound Energy (PSE) Wild Horse Wind and Solar Facility.

You might find her leading tours on the spectacular PSE property in Ellensburg. She also organizes events there such as the springtime Wildflower Walks or the Run Like The Wind Running Festival. When the visitor center is closed, Andrea monitors decibels. Her duties tend to change with the seasons.

Andrea is also involved with tower rescue trainings and conducting conditions assessments on the turbines, which involve a lot of

climbing. "You can't work in wind energy if you're afraid of heights or get motion sickness!"

Advice to Career Seekers and Potential WCC Members:

Andrea got her start at PSE by joining as a seasonal intern while in school. Each year PSE hires 1-2 interns starting in the spring. At Central Washington University (CWU) Andrea earned a Bachelor's Degree in Geography and Specialized Environmental Science, which led her to a career in the environmental field.

She wishes that she would have found the WCC before college, though, so that she could have had a better idea of what to study after gaining some hands-on experience.



Above: Andrea Nesbitt
Background: Wind turbines fill the landscape at Wild Horse Wind and Solar Facility in Ellensburg.

Photos courtesy of Janna Ryan

Facts About Wild Horse Wind and Solar Facility:

- The facility houses 149 Wind Turbines, spanning 10,000 acres.
- There are 273 megawatts of electricity generated, enough to power 80,000 homes.
- The turbines can produce electricity at wind speeds as low as 9 mph and as high as 56 mph. Peak production is 31 mph.
- Total height of towers with blades fully extended is 351 feet.
- Total weight including blades is 223 tons.
- Each generator can produce 690 volts, which is increased to 34,500 volts by an on-board transformer.

Information courtesy of
Puget Sound Energy,
pse.com

FROGS (CONTINUED FROM PG. 1)

What was once a much greener pasture is now a strong hold of the invasive reed canarygrass—a grass so vicious that it has pushed out everything but the air between its tough reeds. Our job was to cut out a square in the wetland as a control area in order to observe the effects of our efforts on the breeding ground of the Oregon Spotted Frog.

The crew put on our waders, picked up our brush cutters, and trudged into the heart of the wetland. My arms got used to holding the brush cutter out of the water at all times and, with earplugs in, I could only hear a faint drone in my ears.

Confined to the field, and silenced by the engines I was left to think—about how menial tasks train us for more important work, that working towards common goals forges great bonds, and how death to one plant can create the opportunity of life for a frog.



Alex Mesick, Jose Garibaldi, Russell Greer, Sean McGrath, Elaine Erwin, and Kate Aiello. The Nisqually crew enjoys a moment after a long day of Oregon Spotted Frog habitat restoration.

Oregon Spotted Frog *Rana Pretiosa*

- The Latin name, *pretiosa*, means precious.
- These frogs like to keep their feet wet, staying near ponds, lakes, and slow streams.
- The Oregon Spotted Frog has disappeared from at least 78% of its original range.
- Primary reason for decline is habitat loss, due to humans and non-native plants and animals.

(U.S. Fish and Wildlife)

“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, [they] find it attached to the rest of the world.”

-John Muir

SALMON (CONTINUED FROM PG. 2)

up at the rings hanging down from the monkey bars, and at the platform ten feet away from where we stood. I wondered: Can these kids really pull themselves across to the other side? Can I pull *myself* across this thing?

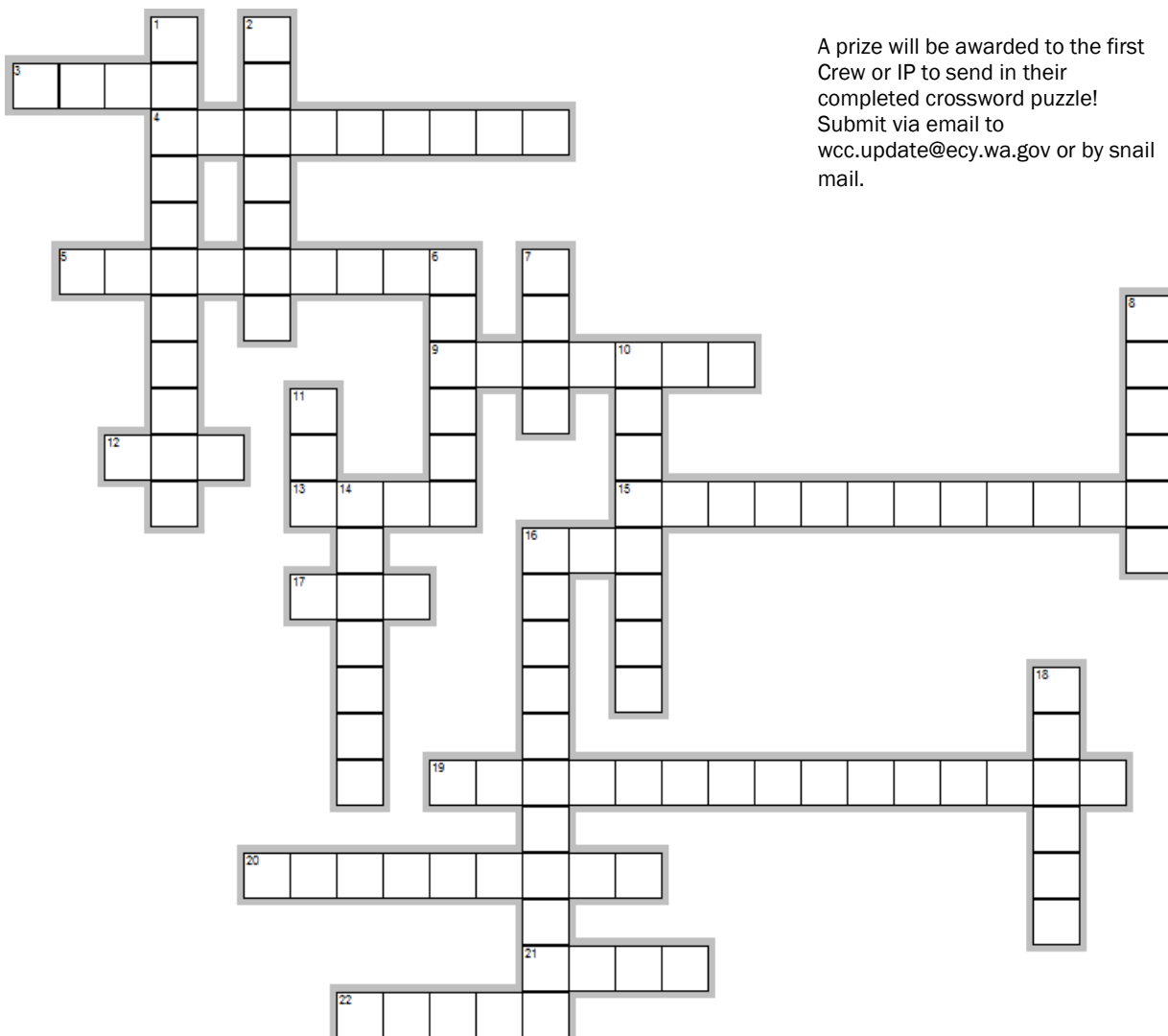
A few seconds passed before Riley 2 took command of the group. “Everybody swim underneath! Don’t get caught by the swatting bear paws!”

The kids ran across to the other platform, but I stood motionless and in awe at the extent of their imagination. I looked again at the dangling rings and instead saw giant brown paws careening into the creek.

We finished our journey by digging redds in the shade and protection we found under the playhouse. The gravel made the adventure feel even more real and gave the students a tangible example of something salmon use in the wild.

In their wild world, I learned the four young salmon I spent that afternoon with use every object in front of them as a clue to help them make sense of things. It is this innate power of wonder that many of us long to retain throughout our passage into adulthood. It is a power possessed by children and salmon alike. It was also the lesson I learned the day I tried to teach a group of salmon about the epic adventures they lead every day.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



A prize will be awarded to the first Crew or IP to send in their completed crossword puzzle! Submit via email to wcc.update@ecy.wa.gov or by snail mail.

Across

3. To walk a long distance in the woods.
4. A person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task.
5. Lushootseed for "people of the river."
9. To return it to what it was.
12. Soaked earth
13. A group of people who work closely together.
15. A family of Mustard.
16. Mediterranean, Bering, Okhotsk
17. To grub.
19. Shortest day (2 words).
20. A dame with spores (2 words).
21. Soggy feet are unwelcome in this shower.

22. Unclean

Down

1. A plant that is a feind's weapon (2 words).
2. Mount Baker, AKA
6. November's plant of the month.
7. A flyers dwelling of sticks.
8. Peppered Moon, Lungwort, Bark Barnacle
10. Pojar's name for botanical oddities.
11. The organization WCC was based on (abbr.)
14. Sun and rain, or the fish
16. A fishy fruit.
18. Original name for "the Mountain."

November Crossword Puzzle Answers

Across

5 Willow Goldfinch, 6. Paintbrush, 8. One, 9. One hundred twenty, 10. Seattle, 12. Square Dance, 13. Loowit, 14. Glaciers, 18. Dragonfly, 21. WA, 22. Olympia, 23. Tsuga Heterophylla, 24. Bluebunch Wheatgrass

Down

1. Spokane, 2. Jimi Hendrix, 3. Pink Rhododendron, 4. Idaho, 6. Petrified Wood, 7. George, 11. Apples, 15. Cape Flattery, 16. Walla Walla, 17. Columbia, 19. Rainier, 20. Steelhead



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WHAT WE WASTE

By Kate Nagel, WCC Outreach Assistant and Garden Coordinator IP

On November 6th staff at the Department of Ecology donned white suits and rubber gloves, and sifted through the garbage collected in the building from the previous day. What was the purpose of this smelly endeavor? To better understand what we throw away, areas we can improve on, and to educate staff on what garbage can be composted, recycled, and prevented altogether.

The Results

At the November Waste Audit, we sorted 184 pounds of trash into five categories:

Compostable – 40% of the trash
Items such as food scraps, paper towels, coffee grounds, and wooden coffee stirrers, can be composted.

Disposable Food Packaging – 19%
This category includes all one-time use food containers that cannot be recycled. Examples are coffee cups, frozen food containers, candy wrappers, chip bags, tin foil, etc.

Commingled Recycling and Mixed Paper – 15% combined
Commingled recycling includes aluminum cans, milk cartons, plastic bottles, and more. Mixed paper is all non food-soiled or wax-lined paper.

Miscellaneous recyclables (1%), reusable items (1%), and actual garbage (24%) accounted for the remainder of the day's trash.

Room for Personal Change
Changing habits on a personal level is important in

regard to waste prevention. Learning what can be recycled, composted, and reused in order to divert waste from going to the landfill is a huge first step. To go even further in this process is to make small adjustments in our lifestyles to prevent waste from occurring in the first place.

For example, disposable food packaging made up 35 pounds of Ecology's one-day waste, and all of this will head to the landfill. However, a large portion of this waste could be avoided with a little planning ahead and a change in habits.

Consider bringing a reusable mug and water bottle with you wherever you go for your beverage needs. Use reusable containers from home for lunch and buy food with less or without disposable packaging. Even taking an added waste prevention step just once or twice a week makes a big difference in the long run.

What are waste prevention steps that you currently take or have thought about taking? What strategies have you used to make it an easier transition? Post waste prevention ideas to the WCC facebook page: www.facebook.com/washingtonconservationcorps

November Waste Audit: Breakdown of Ecology Headquarter's Solid Waste Stream

