



FIELDREPORT

Northwest Region | Fall 2016



Searching for the Ghost Bears of the North Cascades

By Bill Gaines, Ph.D.

Summer of 1993

We'd been hiking for hours, past the point of conversation to where the brain begins to calm. We were traveling cross-country to an alpine basin, about to reach the tree line. As I walked along a game trail, I focused on where to place my feet in thick brush. Ahead, a log blocked my path, limiting my sight.

Once I reached the other side of the log, I saw dark brown eyes peering at me from perhaps 30 feet away. The eyes were attached to a bear — this was dangerous. The bear and I assessed each other. My next move depended on what it did. It was a blonde color, not unusual for bears on the east side of the North Cascades. What was unusual was its small ears and large, round face. There seemed to be a hump on its back — a telltale sign of a grizzly. But when the bear moved, the hump seemed to disappear. The bear soon slipped into a thick patch of trees and was gone. The encounter only lasted a few seconds. I jumped forward to see if I could get another look, but the forest was too thick. I immediately searched along the edge of a nearby stream, thinking that perhaps the bear had left some sign of what it was. I had to know: Was that a grizzly bear, the “ghost bear” of the North Cascades?

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NATIONAL PARKS Our National Legacy

By U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (WA)

It is no surprise to Washingtonians that the National Park Service has such a significant presence in our beautiful state, with 24 historic landmarks, 18 natural landmarks and three world-renowned national parks. We boast soaring mountains, alpine forests and scenic waterways. Mount Rainier awes the most avid climbers, and Olympic National Park is simply unparalleled.

We are able to enjoy so many of these protected places, thanks to the nation's most successful conservation program—the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Originally created by U.S. Senator Scoop Jackson of Washington in 1965, the LWCF provides opportunities for hunting, hiking and other recreational uses in national parks. The program provides funding for additions to national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests and other federal public lands. It is the principal source of funds for federal acquisition of lands for outdoor recreation and habitat conservation.

Outdoor recreation sustains more than 6 million jobs nationwide. In 2014, visitors spent a combined 33 million days on federal lands in the state of Washington, and in doing so, spent more than \$1.3 billion. According to a recent report prepared by the Jackson Foundation, in the state of Washington alone,



outdoor recreation provides an estimated 227,000 direct jobs, generating more than \$7 billion in wages and salaries. Outdoor recreation generates more than \$11.7 billion annually in Washington, proving that the LWCF is good for both the economy and the environment.

I am especially proud that the Senate energy bill permanently reauthorizes the LWCF. As the energy bill conference negotiations with the House take place, I will continue to fight for this reauthorization to protect our national parks.

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Top: Wizard Island at Crater Lake National Park ©John Pohl **Above:** Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) at Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Photo courtesy of Office of Senator Cantwell

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NORTHWEST CORNER BY REGIONAL DIRECTOR ROB SMITH

I was recently part of an NPCA Parkscaapes tour of Acadia National Park in Maine. One hike ended on Sand Beach, a stretch of shoreline that had drawn lots of other park visitors.

Surprisingly, there wasn't a ranger in sight, and we hadn't seen one all day. Since I was wearing an NPCA branded shirt I looked official to several people, and they started asking me about trails, bus stops and you-name-it. I soon had to retreat to rejoin my group before I was mobbed. Visitors hungered for ranger contact, a sadly scarce opportunity after years of budget cuts.

Closer by, at Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve, there is a crumbling historic barn right next to the park's headquarters. At the most popular trailhead there is an information plaque describing the area, but it's barely readable. The money to fix these problems just isn't there.

These are all symptoms of a National Park System which, though never more visited and appreciated, is under serious stress from lack of Congressional funding. Road and building upkeep has been so delayed



that there now exists a \$12 billion backlog of deferred maintenance, and it grows with each year.

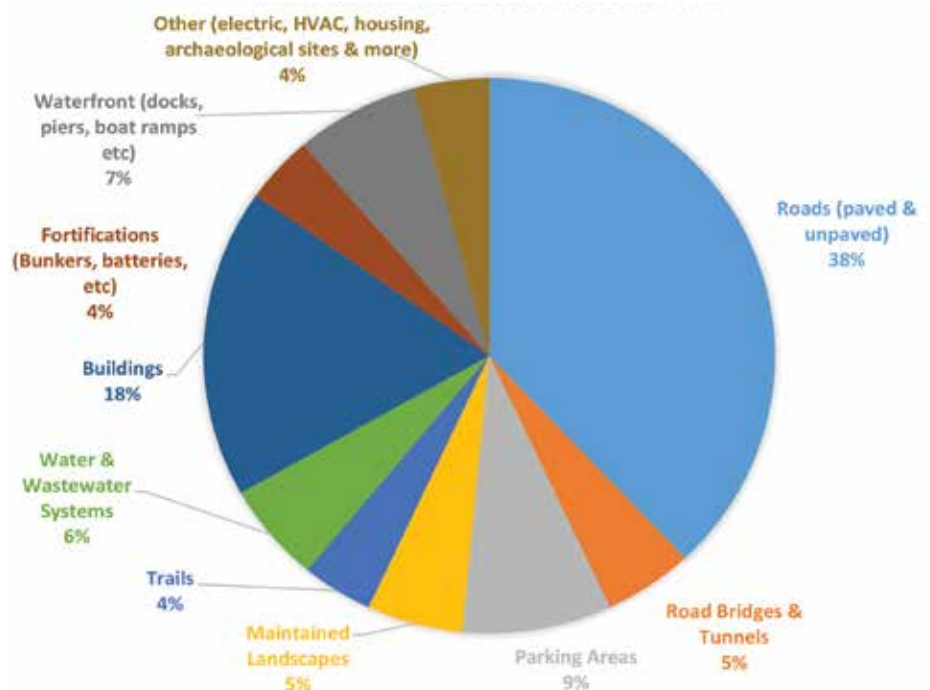
In response, NPCA is seeking out new constituencies to become national park supporters, including The Mission

Continues military veterans group, which has helped on trail and grounds projects at Crater Lake and Fort Vancouver and joined us in advocating for park protection and renewed funding. We're teaming up with other groups and communities to campaign for greater federal investment to pay down the park maintenance backlog.

During the National Park Service's 2016 centennial year we're redoubling the call for solving the nagging lack of resources for our national parks. "America's best idea" deserves America's best effort.

Above: Rob Smith at Mount Rainier ©Shannon Brundle **Below:** Transportation costs (roads, bridges, tunnels, and parking) amount to \$6,021,133,945 of the backlog. Non-transportation costs total \$5,987,031,864. Pew Charitable Trust analysis based on National Park Service data, 2015; graphic by NPCA.

NPS \$12 Billion Backlog of Infrastructure Repair Needs



Searching for the Ghost Bears of the North Cascades

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Summers of 2010-2015

It had been two decades since that day during the summer of 1993. I still didn't know if that bear was a grizzly bear or a blonde black bear. I did know that there once was a thriving population of grizzly bears in the North Cascades, but that human persecution greatly reduced their numbers. Because we lacked more information about their status, we began a scientific search for the last remaining grizzlies in the North Cascades. We utilized hair-snagging and remote camera technologies to access some of the most remote terrain and to try to document the grizzly.

And so, I became the leader of an effort to try to find a grizzly bear in the remote and wild North Cascades. The project took me to some of the loneliest terrain that remains in the lower 48. I carried huge packs over hundreds of miles of trails, crossing raging rivers, fighting through thick brush, battling flies and mosquitoes, and climbing cliffs



and snow chutes. It was an experience that I will always cherish, an excuse to do what I love: to search for rare species in wild places. Unfortunately, we never found those elusive bears.

Fall 2015 from our camp on a high ridge deep in North Cascades National Park

From my tent I could see a storm rolling in. Winter was coming and soon these mountains would be coated with snow. The bears would be tucked away in their dens, and I would be glued to my computer screen. Stretched

out before me was a vast wilderness. Yet this place was missing something. Yes, wolves and wolverines were returning. But the grizzly bear struggled; its population was simply too small to survive without human intervention.

How ironic that the North Cascades is one of the largest remaining wild areas in the US, but the very symbol of wilderness — the grizzly bear — barely hangs on. We as a society have a critical decision to make: Do we reach out to help save a species or do we stand by and watch as they become ghosts of our past?

William Gaines is an independent Wildlife Ecologist and a recently retired, 25-year veteran of the US Forest Service. He works on a variety of research and management projects in the North Cascades and elsewhere. Gaines is an adjunct faculty member in the Biology Department at Central Washington University, and sits on the Graduate Faculty in the Geography Department also at Central Washington University.

Above: Grizzly bear cub ©Donyanedomam | Dreamstime.com



Hear Our Olympics: Speaking Up for Natural Quiet

Julia Tesch

There's no mistaking the sound of an EA-18G "Growler" jet flying overhead. The US Navy uses this aircraft, one of the loudest in the world, to conduct electronic warfare training over the Olympic Peninsula. I recently encountered this sound at the magical Hoh River Valley. My colleagues and I had come here to follow natural sound expert Gordon Hempton to "One Square Inch of Silence," a small space in the Hoh designated to draw attention to the importance of natural quiet on our public lands. As Gordon explained how endangered species such as the northern spotted owl need natural quiet to hunt and survive, an unmistakable Growler roared in the background.

We found temporary reprieve from the warplanes after the three-mile hike to One

Square Inch. There, the sounds of the Hoh — one of the most ecologically and acoustically diverse places in our country — finally came into focus. This calm provided a stark contrast.

The harmful effects of military jet noise reach far and wide. Hearing damage is the leading occupational health hazard to Navy sailors. Some military veterans living near this noise suffer heightened PTSD symptoms triggered by the jet noise. The jets can interfere with wildlife that relies on sound to hunt or to detect predators. The issue raises challenging questions about our park system itself: How much noise pollution can we tolerate in our national parks? Can we preserve natural quiet and diverse natural sounds? Can this military training be done elsewhere?



With so much at stake, we cannot simply accept this intrusive noise over Olympic National Park.

We must find an alternative that minimizes damage to ourselves and to this unique natural resource. NPCA is launching a campaign called "Hear our Olympics" and working with the Navy and other federal agencies to protect the natural sounds of our national parks. Have you heard the jets? Tell us your story and find out how you can help by emailing jtesch@npca.org.

Above: Hoh Rainforest, Olympic National Park ©Galyna Andrushko | Dreamstime.com **Inset:** U.S. Navy EA-18G "Growler" jet. U.S. Navy photo by Paul Farley



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NATIONAL PARKS Our National Legacy

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Our national parks not only protect beautiful places, but also historical ones. The Manhattan Project National Historical Park is one of those places. Its designation as part of the Park Service will ensure that the Hanford B reactor won't be torn down, and that this part of our collective history will endure for generations to come. I'm proud to have worked for years on including the B Reactor in the park system.

The National Parks Conservation Association is a key player in these successes. Thank you for your support of our national parks! Washingtonians know that participating in activities and opportunities in these remarkable places can lead to lasting memories, an abiding sense of identity and a growing outdoor recreation economy. Your work to protect them is so important to achieving these goals.



NPCA celebrates the first National Monument for LGBT history at the 2016 Seattle Pride Parade ©2016 Paul Gordon Pictures

MEET OUR DONORS

By Paul Balle

Northwest Regional Council member and avid outdoorsman **Matt Rudolf** has been a member of our

Council since 2009 and an NPCA donor even longer. He grew up in Spokane and his family has lived in Washington for over 125 years! He loves living here and says this region offers many natural wonders and a great quality of life.

Matt originally learned about NPCA through his long friendship with Sally Jewell, current Secretary of the Interior. Sally was on the NPCA Board of Directors at the time and knew of Matt's outdoor passions.

Matt says "As I've gotten older, I have tried to concentrate my philanthropic activities on areas where I'm passionate. Protecting national parks and outdoor landscapes and supporting youth education fit that bill."

Matt feels blessed to have parks like Rainier, Olympic and North Cascades in his backyard, but Yellowstone is his favorite, and it's where he's had some "incredibly religious experiences" in the backcountry. An extended family



Matt Rudolf at Grand Teton National Park ©Bob Murphy

backpacking outing in Glacier a few years ago was especially memorable, as his three daughters and wife Amy faced challenges that tested their abilities and provide lessons today.

Why support NPCA? "I believe we all have an obligation to take care of Mother Earth. Our parks are also a responsibility that we must take care of; they're the soul of our country and need nurturing! Not just for today, but for the legacy we leave our children. NPCA helps ensure that our parks are funded and protected and will remain so forever."

**Please consider NPCA at year-end.
Go to npca.org/donate**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Space is limited for all events:
RSVP to jtesch@npca.org

Tuesday, Oct. 25
Grizzly Night in Concrete, WA
Annie's Pizza • 6:30-8pm

Join us for a special trivia night! Learn about the ongoing effort to save the North Cascades' grizzly bears, and enjoy pizza, beer and a game with prizes!

Friday & Saturday, Nov. 18 & 19
Elwha River Replanting
Matt Albright Greenhouses
9am-4pm each day

Help restore native plants on the banks of the Elwha River following the nation's largest dam removal project.

