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# Popular Trails



featuring trails in:  
North Cascades National Park &  
Ross Lake National Recreation Area

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## Introduction

These trail descriptions were prepared in response to visitors' requests for information about the trails in North Cascades National Park (NCNP) and Ross Lake National Recreation Area (RLNRA). The descriptions were written by the park staff—people who have hiked the trails and “know them with their feet.” Read the descriptions carefully. Consult a map for better understanding of distances, trail junctions, and campsite locations. The graphs will give you a picture of the “up and down” character of a trail. Note that the graphs do not show every little up or down, just the basic trend of the trail.

## Hiking Season

Trail and weather conditions are best from about mid-July through September. For up-to-date reports on conditions, check at the Wilderness Information Center at Marblemount, the North Cascades Visitor Center in Newhalem or any other ranger station.

The trails described in this booklet have been categorized according to their difficulty when they are snow free. Each trail will be more difficult and more hazardous when it is even partially covered by snow. Generally, trail segments above 4000 ft. are under snow until early July.

For hiking information in the Stehekin area and in the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area in general, see *Day Hiking in Stehekin* and *Backpacking from Stehekin*, available from Northwest Interpretive Association (NWIA) sales outlets at most ranger stations in the park.

Enjoy hiking in North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area!

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# **For Your Well-being and for Minimum Impact Hiking and Camping:**

## **REGULATIONS**

### **Permits**

Written permits are required for all backcountry overnight stays. They are free and are issued on a first-come first-served basis at Marblemount, Hozomeen, Glacier and Stehekin. They will not be issued more than 24 hours before your departure. Permits help keep use and impacts at an acceptable level and help you plan a trip where there are fewer other campers.

### **Group Size**

The maximum group size on trails is 12. For example, a group may consist of 12 people, 8 people with 4 horses, 6 people with 6 horses, or some other mix that adds up to 12 pairs of eyes. The limit has been imposed because of the disproportionate impact made by larger groups. This applies to day hikers, backpackers, and horseback riders.

### **Pets, Firearms, Fishing, etc.**

Pets and firearms are prohibited in North Cascades National Park. However, pets on a leash are permitted in Ross Lake National Recreation Area, Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, and on the Pacific Crest Trail when within 50 feet of the trail.

Current Washington State fishing regulations apply. Please note the special fishing regulations for the Ross Lake area.

## **MINIMUM IMPACT TECHNIQUES**

Protect park resources and the wilderness experience of others. Practice the following minimum impact techniques.

### **1. Take Along Proper Equipment**

Carry a stove and warm clothes to minimize firewood gathering and campfire impact. When possible, purchase tents and outerwear in non-bright colors. Bright colors make you much more visible, and decrease the sense of solitude for others.



## **2. Keep Party Size Small**

Large parties “overload” camping spots, and spread impact. The party size limit for trails in NCNP, RLNRA, and LCNRA is 12. The party size limit for most of the cross-country zones is 6.

## **3. Select Resistant and Appropriate Campsites**

This is a particularly important skill to prevent slow-to-recover vegetation damage. Along trails, camp only in designated campsites. In cross-country zones, camp on snow or bare soil. If you must camp on vegetation, sedge (grass) is preferable. Heather and huckleberry damage easily, and are especially slow to recover. Always avoid lightly impacted sites because they are likely to deteriorate with further use while, if left unused, they will slowly recover.

## **4. Be careful With Use of Fire**

In alpine and subalpine zones, campfires can change ecosystems that took hundreds of years to establish. Fires kill vegetation at the site and change the chemistry of the soil. Your wandering from the campsite to gather wood also results in social trails and decreased organic materials in the surrounding areas. Build fires only in designated metal fire grates; use only dead and down wood for fuel. Keep fires small to minimize consumption of wood. Limit fires to cooking and evening social time. Be sure the fire is cold before leaving camp. No fires are permitted when camping off-trail. Use backpacking stoves instead and eliminate the need for fires.

## **5. Avoid Site Engineering**

Do not level or ditch tent pads or build rock walls as windbreaks.

## **6. Minimize Site Pollution**

Pack out all garbage. If you find what others have left behind, pack it out, too. If there's too much for you to carry, tell a ranger and it will be removed. Carefully police the camp and the fire grate to collect the small pieces of litter that may have been unwittingly dropped. Use only biodegradable soaps in small quantities and **away** from water sources.

## **7. Properly Dispose of Human Waste**

Pit or vault toilets are located at designated camps. Deposit only human waste and toilet paper in them. To make these facilities last longer, use them only for their designed purpose. Where toilets are not provided, use

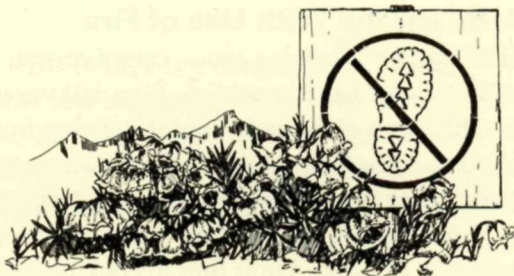
the “cat-hole” method. Choose a site at least 200 feet from water bodies and campsites, and dig a shallow hole 6 to 8 in. deep; this is in the natural biological layer of the soil. When you’re finished, fill in the soil and replace the sod plug.

## 8. Minimize Damage to Vegetation

Carefully locate tents and where you walk (particularly avoiding tree seedlings, heather, and huckleberry). Wear smooth sole shoes or sandals in camp to minimize soil and vegetation damage (they’re also great for stream fording, and feel wonderful after hiking in heavy boots).

## 9. Stay on the Trail

Please stay on the trails. Shortcutting a switchback or avoiding a muddy trail results in the establishment of multiple trails and erosion problems. Soil is often held onto steep slopes only by plant roots. Where trampled by careless boots, a green slope can become a bare and dusty scar.



## 10. Keep Wildlife Wild

Carry easy-to-cook food to minimize odors and the attraction of wildlife. Hang food and all scented toiletries. Bears are a concern, but the mice and deer are much more common and will aggressively try to raid your supplies if given the chance. Also hang sweaty equipment. Deer will chew packs, socks, and shoes for the salt in the sweat. Urinate on bare soil (such as trail tread) to prevent deer from pawing vegetation to obtain the salt that is in urine.

## SAFETY

**Be thoroughly prepared!**

### Maps

Maps and current information on trail/route conditions are available at all ranger stations to help you plan a safe, enjoyable trip.

## Water

The cold, clear streams of the North Cascades may harbor *Giardia lamblia*, a protozoan that can result in a long-lasting and uncomfortable disease. It is recommended that you boil all of your drinking water vigorously for one minute; chemical treatments or filters may or may not be effective, depending upon such things as water temperature, turbidity, and filter condition.

## Stream Crossing

In the spring and after heavy rains, stream crossings can be extremely hazardous. Early morning fording is usually best as daily fluctuations do occur. Check downstream for logs or other hazards; consider what will happen if you lose your footing. Unhook your pack waistbelt so you can jettison it, if you are swept away. Two or three people linked together are more stable than one alone; face each other, hold onto each other's shoulders and move together. If you must cross alone, find a good, sturdy stick for support: lean hard onto it—don't just use it as a walking stick. Turning back may be the safest alternative. Do consider it.

## Hypothermia

To prevent this number one killer of outdoor recreationists, stay dry and warm (a wool hat can help you retain up to 50 percent of your body heat); seek shelter from wind; maintain energy by nibbling high energy food and not overexerting. Drained energy reserves result in mental and physical collapse, lowered body temperature and possible unconsciousness, coma and death. All backpackers should know the symptoms of hypothermia and how to treat it. You could save someone's life.

## Equipment: Carry the Ten Essentials!

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Matches, in waterproof container        | 6. Compass        |
| 2. Firestarter (candles or fuel tablets)   | 7. Knife          |
| 3. Flashlight, extra batteries             | 8. Extra food     |
| 4. Map                                     | 9. Extra clothing |
| 5. First aid kit (more than just bandaids) | 10. Sunglasses    |

## Consider extra "essentials," as appropriate depending upon your circumstances:

- |                     |                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| —Sunburn preventive | —Whistle and/or signalling device |
| —Insect repellent   | —Ice axe and crampons             |



# Bears

All bears, whether they are black bears or grizzly bears, are powerful and potentially dangerous. Despite their presence in the North Cascades you can enjoy the area, provide for your personal safety, and usually prevent bear-human conflicts by taking a few precautions:

## **REMEMBER...**

- Bears are wild animals
- Bears don't like surprises
- Bears are attracted to food and odors

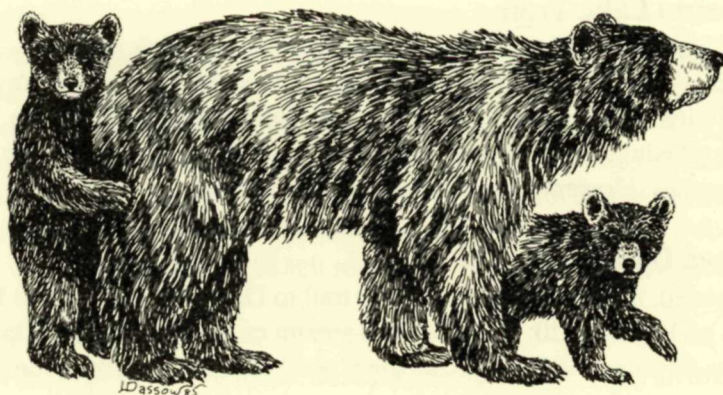
Bears usually avoid people, but their responses are unpredictable. A female may be quickly provoked if her cubs are disturbed or if you come between her and the cubs. If you see a bear—but it doesn't see you—avoid it by quickly and quietly leaving the area.

Use caution where visibility or hearing is limited. Make sounds that will alert a bear to your presence and the bear will leave the area; so sing, talk, shout or make other loud noises as you walk!

- Keep a clean camp and store food out of a bear's reach by hanging it from a pole or tree branch at least 12 to 15 feet above the ground and at least 4 feet out and away from the tree trunk. **DO NOT** "store" food in a tent. Carry a rope with you to store/suspend food.
- Deposit garbage in bear-proof containers where they are available or pack it out. Never bury it. Do not burn it in a campfire. The odor of any partially burned food will attract bears.
- Avoid cooking smelly or greasy food. Separate your sleeping area from the smells of food. That means, when possible, sleeping uphill and away from the cooking area and food storage area. Keep sleeping bags and personal gear clean and free of food odors.
- Use tight plastic bags to store odorous materials as though they were food. Don't use deodorants or perfumes. Bears have raided packs for toothpaste and first aid cream!

## Other Critters

Wild animals will not normally seek human contact, but they are opportunists. When careless campers leave food and garbage, wild creatures find it and acquire a taste for human food. They quickly make the association between food and campers. When wild creatures become problem animals, it often becomes necessary to destroy them. Apply the guidelines given regarding recreation in country inhabited by bears and you will help all the wildlife remain wild.



## EASIEST TRAILS

### Diablo & Colonial Area Day Hikes

#### Summary

The Diablo/Colonial area offers a variety of trail experiences ranging from easy walks along valley paths to strenuous hikes up the steep valley walls. In the following descriptions, the distances are for one-way trips. Be well prepared, have good, current information. Have proper shoes, clothes, first-aid kit, extra water, food, map, and flashlight. Be sure a responsible person knows your route and schedule.

#### **1** Thunder Woods Nature Trail

This loop trail starts 300 yards up the Thunder Creek Trail. The nature trail is 0.9 miles and moderately steep. Interpretive brochures are available at the trailhead.

#### **2** Diablo Lake Trail

Mostly level, 3.8 miles. Accessed from Sourdough Creek parking area, 1 mile across Diablo Dam. Round trip can be done by boating one way on Seattle City Light tugboat. Check at a park information desk for the current schedule. Fee charged. Variety of vegetation, mountain, lake, and forest scenes. Flowers bloom early on sunny slopes.

#### **3** Ross Dam Trail

Well graded, moderately steep .8 mile trail to Dam or Lake. Access from MP 134 on Highway 20. Cool, bridged stream crossing at .1 mile. Open Douglas-fir forest. Views of Ross Dam and Lake. Return hike is uphill!

#### **4** Happy Creek Forest Walk

Three tenths of a mile boardwalk nature trail accessible to people using wheelchairs. Access from mile 134.5 Highway 20. Interpretive plaques tell of the life systems of this old creekside forest.

#### **5** Ruby Creek Trail

Short, two-tenth-mile, shady, moderately steep walk to Ruby Creek. Walk can be extended up or down creekside trails. Forest flowers, birds, clear pools. Interpretive plaques of mining history near bridge. Closed to fishing to allow native rainbow trout spawning.



In addition to these short trails, a number of longer trails in the Diablo and Colonial Area attract day hikers:

Thunder Creek see description on page 15

Fourth of July Pass, Panther Creek see description on page 16

Pyramid Lake see description on page 26

Stetattle Creek 10 see description on page 13

Sourdough Mountain 11 see description on page 41

## **12 East Bank Trail**

### **Summary**

The East Bank Trail, 31 miles long, with moderate elevation gains, lowland forests, and lakeside views is an excellent choice for family day hikes or an extended backpack. At mile 16 the trail leaves Ross Lake, looping eastward around Desolation Peak through remote mountain valley settings.

### **Access**

The trailhead/parking area is located near mile 138 on Highway 20 (North Cascades Highway). An interesting option for longer trips might include boat transportation from Ross Lake Resort (206-386-4437). You can choose from a variety of drop points along the East Bank Trail or other trailheads along Ross Lake. Access to the north end of the trail at Hozomeen Campground on the US-Canadian Border requires a 40-mile drive on the gravel Silver-Skagit road from Hope, British Columbia.

### **Ruby Creek**

From the East Bank Trailhead, descend .3 miles to the Ruby Creek Bridge. This quiet place was the scene of a gold rush in the 1880s, with every foot taken up in placer claims. Few signs of these activities exist today. Find interpretive plaques near the bridge. Across the bridge turn left, west, to the East Bank Trail. (A turn to the right, starts a very pleasant side trip with a series of small streams and lush growth.) After a short distance, the trail widens. This is the end of a road building attempt made in the 1930s to link the Skagit River with Harts Pass.

### **Hidden Hand Pass**

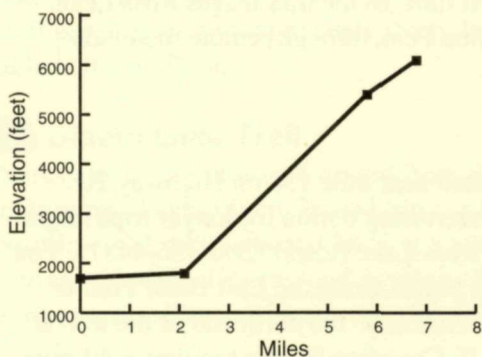
At 2.8 miles there are trail junctions with a .8-mile trail to Ross Lake, Hidden Hand Camp, and the steep Little Jack Mountain Trail heading

northeast. The main trail climbs gradually through the forested notch of Hidden Hand Pass. According to miners' stories, Jack Rowley was guided by a pointing hand through this route in 1879 to find gold on Ruby Creek. Jack Mountain is named for Rowley.

## Along Ross Lake

Descending through forests for several miles from Hidden Hand Pass, the trail joins Ross Lake and continues with fine lake views for 7.5 miles to Lightning Creek. A favorite place to enjoy this setting is from the high bridge across the mouth of Devil's Creek Canyon. The distance from Hidden Hand Pass to Lightning Creek is 12.5 miles.

## 13 Desolation Peak



A rather steep and often hot 6.8-mile side trip from Lightning Creek Junction leads to fine views, open meadows, and an historic fire lookout station. Jack Kerouac, a "beatnik" poet who served as lookout here in 1956, described his experiences in the book *Desolation Angels*. The lookout is not open to the public.

## Lightning Creek

From Lightning Creek Junction the trail turns east, switchbacking up 1000 ft. in .5 miles, affording excellent and final views of Ross Lake before dropping into the secluded Lightning Creek Valley.

## Deerlick Crossing

This is an enchanting place. The trapper's log cabin is maintained as an historic structure and is not open for public use. Just across the log bridge is the trail junction up Three Fools Creek into the Pasayten Wilderness. The story goes that three young prospectors were well up that canyon when they realized that they had been duped by a "hot tip" which caused them to leave their claim on Ruby Creek. A few miles beyond is Freezeout Creek and Nightmare Camp. One might wonder about the implications of these names.

## **14 Willow and Hozomeen Lakes**

Highlights of this trip are two very beautiful and different lakes. Willow Lake is a long shallow basin, a perfect habitat for water related plants, mammals, birds, and insects. The trail parallels the lake with a spur trail down to the meadowy area on the north end. 1.8 miles north of Willow Lake is a .5 mile side trail to Hozomeen Lake.

Hozomeen Lake is quite deep, clear, and a reflective foreground for the granite spires of Hozomeen Peaks which rise to the north. The lake is closed to use during early summer to protect nesting loons. Gray wolves and evidence of Grizzly Bears have been observed in the Hozomeen area. This is truly a place to appreciate and protect.

### **Hozomeen Camp**

A three-mile gradual descent brings the hiker to trail's end at Hozomeen Campground. This is a favorite drive-in camping and fishing area on the north end of Ross Lake near the US-Canadian Border. Many people return here for vacations year after year.

### **Camping**

There are many boat-in and trail camps along Ross Lake and the East Bank Trail. Fires are permitted with dead and down wood where fire-places are provided. This area becomes very dry in midsummer. Be careful with fire! Many animals, including black bear, live in this rich habitat. Hang your food and keep a clean camp. Keep the permanent residents healthy and wild!

## **15 Trail of the Obelisk**

This trail begins along the Silver-Skagit Road near the Hozomeen Ranger Station at the north end of Ross Lake, just across the border from Canada. Moderately steep, .75 miles. Ascends into thick forest, crossing a cascading stream several times, passing a small marsh with evidence of beaver activity and a monument (obelisk) marking the international boundary. Rejoins the road a few hundred yards from the trailhead. An interpretive brochure describing features along the trail is available at the ranger station.

### **Maps**

Green Trails: #49 Mt. Logan, #48 Diablo Dam, #16 Ross Dam, #17 Jack Mountain



## Newhalem Area Day Hikes

### Summary

The trails in the Newhalem vicinity offer hours of exploration for both the novice and the expert hiker. From valley paths to steep alpine treks, there is a range of difficulty and rewards for everyone. Be well prepared and have good, current information. Have proper shoes, clothes, first aid kit, extra water, food, map, flashlight. Be sure a responsible person knows your route and schedule. Enjoy the North Cascades!

### **16** "To Know a Tree" Nature Trail

Accessible from points near the Newhalem Creek Campground entrance station and amphitheater. Mostly level, 0.5 miles, with packed gravel surface. Suitable for strong wheelchair users. Skirts the campground, follows the river, wanders among large evergreen and deciduous trees, and lush understory growth. Find plaques interpreting common trees and plants along the way.

### **17** Lower Newhalem Creek Trail

Starts .3 miles along the service road past Newhalem Campground loops C and D, 40 yards beyond the steel-grated Newhalem Creek bridge. Turn right on an unsigned trail. Narrow path with easy grades, 0.4 miles one way. Dense, young hemlock give way to a mature cedar-fir forest. Birds, chipmunks, ferns, moss, and squirrels. Ends at a lovely creekside glade.

### **18** Upper Newhalem Creek Trail

Starts just beyond the Newhalem Creek hydroelectric intake 1.3 miles straight ahead past the Newhalem Campground entrance station. Limited space for turn around and parking. This hiker-only trail follows an old logging road up a beautiful mountain valley. Some nice fishing holes (State fishing license required). Enters National Park at 0.5 miles (pets and firearms prohibited). About 4.5 miles of easy grade. Camp at end. Permit required for overnight stay.

### **19** "Trail of the Cedars" Nature Walk

(Courtesy of Seattle City Light.) Starts at the suspension bridge near the store at Newhalem or from the Newhalem Creek Powerhouse at the end of the service road past C and D loops of Newhalem Campground. The 0.3-mile level loop trail passes among large old cedars. Interpretive plaques.

## 20 Ladder Creek Falls Trail

(Courtesy of Seattle City Light.) Located behind Gorge Powerhouse in upper Newhalem. Cross suspension bridge to powerhouse, follow signs. Flower gardens, colored lights, beautiful pools and falls. The 0.4 mile loop has some steep steps and handrails. Flashlight advisable at night.

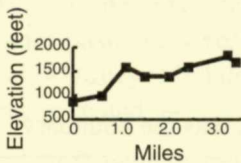
### New Trails

New trails are being developed near the North Cascades Visitor Center. Descriptions of these trails will be added to this booklet when the trails are ready for use.

### Other Trails

A longer trail that attracts day hikers in the Newhalem Area is the Thornton Lakes Trail 21, described on page 42.

## 10 Stetattle Creek Trail



### Summary

The Stetattle Creek Trail is a pleasant day hike for those seeking a leisurely, peaceful day with the plants and animals of the cool, moist, westside forest. The lower trail is well suited for families with small children.

### Access

The trail begins just past the Stetattle Creek Bridge at the entrance to the town of Diablo (near mile 126 on Highway 20). Parking is on a small turnout to the right. The trail follows the creek through a housing area before entering the woods.

### Creekside Glades

The first mile is creekside. Find a spot on a rock and enjoy the lush carpet of moss and ferns and the pools and sounds of water. A creekside resident is the American Dipper, a slate gray feathered dynamo. Watch for this plump bird as it sits on a rock in midstream bobbing up and down peering into the water. The bobbing motion allows the bird to have depth perception in the water. In a flash it will dive into the current and come up some distance away with an insect or larvae in its beak. A special

treat is the seldom heard bubbly song of this bouncy little bird. Another forest sound is the drawn-out up and down chittering of the Winter Wren. This tiny, gregarious brown bird, habituating the brushy under-story, is recognized by its pert, upright spike of a tail.

## **Glacial Flour**

Tributaries of Stetattle Creek originate high in the snowfields and glaciers of McMillan Spires and Davis Peak. In their downward flow, glaciers grind rock into tiny particles that are carried in the water. Light refracting around these particles gives Stetattle Creek its cool blue-green hues.

## **Forest Flowers**

In spring, the trillium, bleeding heart and calypso orchid welcome the new season. Soon there are the foam flower, fairy bells, bead lily, followed by Canadian dogwood, tiny, pink twin flowers, western star flower, Indian Pipe, and barber pole. With the moderate environment and great diversity of the old canopied forest, flowers show early with some species offering blooms throughout the summer.

## **Spirit Boundary**

This quiet creek, in the heart of the Skagit Gorge, was the boundary between the Upper Skagit Indians and their northern enemies from the Frazier River. The word "Stetattle" may have originated from the Skagit name which referred to these warlike people from the north. That name also referred to the fearful "Country Spirits" which dwelled in this place.

## **Forested Slopes**

Leaving the creek, the trail continues on through a forest carpeted with green and draped with goats beard lichen and some of the finest huckleberries anywhere. Look and listen for owls and deer. The trail crosses several streams before gradually succumbing to the forest in about 3 miles. Be careful when crossing streams on slick stepping stones or walking along the narrowing trail.

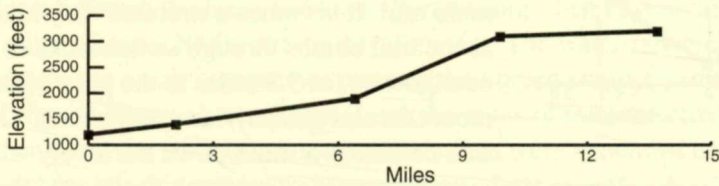
## **Maps**

Green Trails: #48 Diablo Dam, #16 Ross Lake



## 6 Thunder Creek Trail

### Summary



This is an ideal trail for a short walk, a long dayhike, or an extended backpack. Along this mountain valley are ancient forests, streamside openings, and, from higher points, magnificent views. A recommended walk is to the trail junction at 1.5 miles. An additional 3 miles up switch-backs leads to Fourth of July Pass or a continuation along Thunder Creek for the same distance provides mountain views. Thunder Creek Trail divides at 10 miles to go up Fisher Creek and Easy Pass (10.5 miles further) to some exceptionally fine meadows and vistas, or climbs to Thunder Basin and over Park Creek Pass (9 miles further) and on to the Stehekin Valley. Find descriptions for Fourth of July Pass and Easy Pass on pages 16 and 34

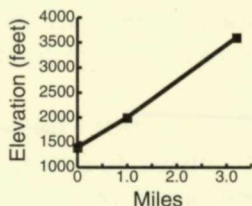
### Access

Follow Highway 20 to Diablo Lake. Enter the south side of Colonial Creek Campground at mile 130. Park in the lot above the boat ramp. The trail starts uphill from there or you may begin at the south end of the campground near the amphitheater.

### Thunder Arm

The first .5-mile follows Thunder Arm of Diablo Lake. Note the colors of the lake and stream. Thunder Creek carries a heavy load of "glacial flour" ground by the many glaciers of its headwaters. This trail was opened by prospectors and trappers. Mining developers and the U.S. Forest Service made major improvements in the early 1900s. Look for old blazes, telephone insulators, and a few cut stumps along the way. At .8 miles, a modern bridge crosses at the historic bridge site.

## 7 Fourth of July Pass



## 8 Panther Creek

To reach Fourth of July Pass, follow the Thunder Creek Trail for 1.7 miles, then take the Fourth of July Pass Trail to the left of the main trail. It becomes a strenuous day hike as the trail climbs through switchbacks in open forests for 3.3 miles to the pass. Nice mountain and glacier views at the pass. The trail continues 5 miles down the lovely

Panther Creek valley to Highway 20 near the East Bank Trailhead. The most difficult part of the trail is the steep, one mile long, 800ft. climb that lies between the Panther Creek bridge and Highway 20.

### Old Forest

The trail winds past some exceptionally large old cedar and fir trees. Forest flowers abound in season. This is the home of many birds, including owls and woodpeckers. Look for deer and other animal tracks in the sandy soil.

### Forest Fires

Along Thunder Trail, the first large open view is from a 1970 burn at about 4.5 miles. Here find an emerging forest of young Douglas-fir and a profusion of seed bearing herbs and shrubs that attract birds, rodents and their predators. Across the valley, note a newer burn from lightning strikes in 1990. Rock cliffs and McAllister Glacier provide natural fire breaks and are a splendid backdrop for this evolving forest scene.

### McAllister Camp

McAllister camp at 6.5 miles is a popular overnight destination. It is in a forested, creekside setting isolated across Thunder Creek from the main trail.

### The Junction

You are soon to leave the valley bottom. A relentless 2-mile climb leads to a high ridge and a major trail junction. Here find an expansive view of Boston Glacier and Tricouni Peak. This is a tough decision point. One trail leads to Easy Pass (described on page 34), and the other goes on to Park Creek Pass. Either way leads to grand trail experiences.

## **Mining History**

Continuing to Park Creek Pass from Junction, the trail drops steadily for 2.8 miles into the valley through stands of old fire-scarred Douglas-fir and even-aged lodgepole pine. Then, a steep 1-mile climb through silver fir forests brings the hiker to Skagit Queen Camp. Just beyond the camp are relics of early 1900s mining development. The water-powered generator ran an air compressor that supplied piped compressed air to drill rigs up Skagit Queen Creek. Look for signs of mining activity further along the trail. Much money and effort were expended before developers left this remote and rugged land.

## **Thunder Basin**

Above Skagit Queen, the trail rises steeply for a mile into the mouth of Thunder Basin, a hanging glacial valley. More hiking through avalanche paths and stands of silver fir leads to the fringes of the subalpine zone where Thunder Basin camp is located.

## **Park Creek Pass**

The trail continues its climb through steep meadows and snowfields to the pass (6,100'), a notch between Mt. Logan to the east and Mt. Buckner to the west. An ice axe is recommended for travel on steep snow through midsummer. The subalpine meadows surrounding the pass have eroded from past uses. With camping restrictions in these fragile meadow areas, the delicate plant life is beginning to recover.

## **To Stehekin Valley**

From Park Creek Pass, the trail descends quickly through heather and wildflower meadows into a hanging valley and Buckner Camp. Switch-backing down the forested slopes of Park Creek valley, the trail intersects the Stehekin Valley Road at 2,100' elevation. Check shuttle bus schedules and make a reservation in advance to take the Park Service transportation to Stehekin Landing.

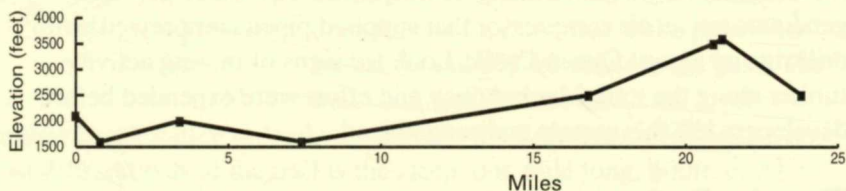
## **Maps**

Green Trails: #48 Diablo Dam, #49 Mt. Logan



## MODERATE TRAILS

### 22 Big Beaver Trail



#### Summary

The Big Beaver trail covers 20 miles (one way) between Ross Dam and Stillwell Camp where it joins the Little Beaver Trail. It offers a pleasant hike of 1 to 4 days among groves of big cedar, clear and sparkling streams, and lush undergrowth. However, this is an area noted for biting insects. From Stillwell Camp it is possible to continue on the Little Beaver Trail for 11 more miles to Ross Lake, or head upstream 6 miles to Whatcom Pass.

#### Access

Most hikers start at the Ross Dam Trail, which begins at a parking area near mile 134 on Highway 20. The trail drops steeply for .8 miles to a gravel service road. Go left on this road for a short way, then turn right down an incline to the top of Ross Dam. Cross the dam and continue north along the west shore of Ross Lake. A scheduled drop off or pickup by Ross Lake Resort's water taxi service (206-386-4437) can be arranged.

#### Along Ross Lake

It is 6 miles of easy walking to Big Beaver Creek from the Dam. Look for evidence of a 1926 forest fire that burned a large area in the upper Skagit Valley. The trail crosses several small creeks and offers glimpses of the lake through stands of lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir.

#### Big Beaver Creek

The trail up Big Beaver Valley begins just beyond the steel foot bridge. Note that the creek is closed to fishing to allow spawning of native rainbow trout from Ross Lake.

## **Ancient Trees and Beaver Marshes**

The trail up Big Beaver is a “tunnel of green,” a rich spectrum of forest and water communities. About 3 miles above the bridge the hiker enters one of the finest and last stands of ancient red cedar trees to be found anywhere. Some measure over 18 feet through and are over 1,000 years of age. The trail skirts acres of active beaver ponds and marshy areas teeming with plant and animal life.

## **Research Natural Area**

Watch and wait. Patience may be rewarded with sightings or sounds of beaver, otter, black bear, or deer. Careful observations will reveal marsh birds, Common Yellowthroat, Barrow’s Goldeneye and possibly tree nesting ducks like Common Merganser and Wood Duck. In 1991 the rare, unspoiled Big Beaver marshland was designated a Research Natural Area, a place to observe and learn from ongoing natural processes.

## **McMillan, Man and Mountain**

Seven miles above Ross Lake one can look up the gorge of McMillan Creek toward McMillan Cirque and McMillan spires. These places were named for mountain man John McMillan who came here in 1884. John began a homestead in this beautiful, lonesome Big Beaver valley where he brought his bride Emma to join in a life of subsistence (trapping, prospecting, packing), and adventure. Emma and friends buried John beside Big Beaver Creek in 1922.

## **Beaver Pass and the Beaver Loop**

At 13 miles from Ross Lake, Beaver Pass, a forested saddle, is reached. From here, you can continue for one downhill mile to the Little Beaver Trail junction, or return the way you came. The semi-loop hike from Big Beaver to Little Beaver Landing on Ross Lake is 34 trail miles. A boat taxi from Little Beaver can be prearranged to complete a loop trip. There are no connecting trails from Little Beaver.

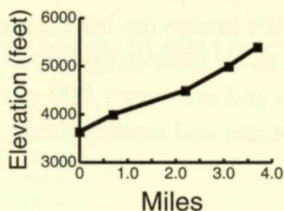
## **Camping**

There are many campsites along the Big Beaver Trail. Stock parties must use designated livestock camps. Please check with the ranger for availability and limits.

## **Maps**

Green Trails: #48 Diablo Dam, #16 Ross Lake, #15 Mt. Challenger

## 23 Cascade Pass Trail



### Summary

The Cascade Pass Trail is a moderate 3.7 mile (one way) hike with spectacular views of peaks and glaciers. Elevation gain: 1800 ft. Hikers may explore in several directions from the pass or descend 2,600 ft. in 5.5 miles to the

Stehekin Valley Road. The Cascade Pass trail is also a popular starting point for climbing routes to Sahale Mountain, Boston, Mixup, and Magic Peaks, and the Ptarmigan Traverse into the Glacier Peak Wilderness.

### Access

The Cascade River Road leaves Highway 20 at Marblemount and extends 22.3 miles to the trailhead. The graveled road becomes narrow and steep near the end. Drive carefully. Views from the parking area are breathtaking. Listen for the roar of falling ice from hanging glaciers on Johannesburg Mountain and the sound of water from the many falls which give the Cascades their name.

### To The Pass

This well-graded trail can be hiked one-way, in about two hours. It switchbacks through cool forest for 2 miles with occasional glimpses out at Johannesburg's precipices then traverses through meadows to the pass. As you reach the summit, you are following the footsteps of travelers from ancient times. Native Americans used this route as a passage through the rugged cascades. In 1811, fur trader Alexander Ross is believed to have explored this route. Later, prospectors with dreams of gold and silver came this way.

### The Subalpine

Cascade Pass is in the subalpine life zone, a place of deep snows and brief summers. A show of yellow glacier lilies and a multitude of other brightly flowered plants quickly follow melting snow. Look for mountain heather, a short, woody evergreen shrub with pink blooms. Although heather thrives in this harsh environment, its brittle stems easily succumb to careless steps.



## Revegetation

Cascade Pass is the site of a major revegetation effort. Seeds and cuttings are collected here, nurtured in greenhouses, and replanted here to heal old scars. Please stay on designated trails. Do not picnic on the vegetation. Use the compost toilet at the pass.

## Wildlife

Look and listen for marmots and pika on rock slopes. Deer, and sometimes black bear, may be seen in meadows. Ptarmigan chicks are often seen tagging along behind their mother across snow patches. American Pipits play in the glacial streams. Watch for raptors soaring overhead; hawks and Golden Eagles fly through this pass during autumn migration.

## Cascade Pass to Stehekin

To the southeast, the trail descends into Pelton Basin. Care must be used in rock hopping across Doubtful and Basin Creeks, especially during hot afternoons with heavy snow melt. After the Basin Creek crossing, a .5 mile side trail climbs to Horseshoe Basin, a spectacular steep walled cirque with waterfalls, wildflowers, and an historic mining site. Inspired by the grandeur of this area, the Mazamas, in 1906, made the first formal proposal for a National Park in the North Cascades.

## Stehekin Valley

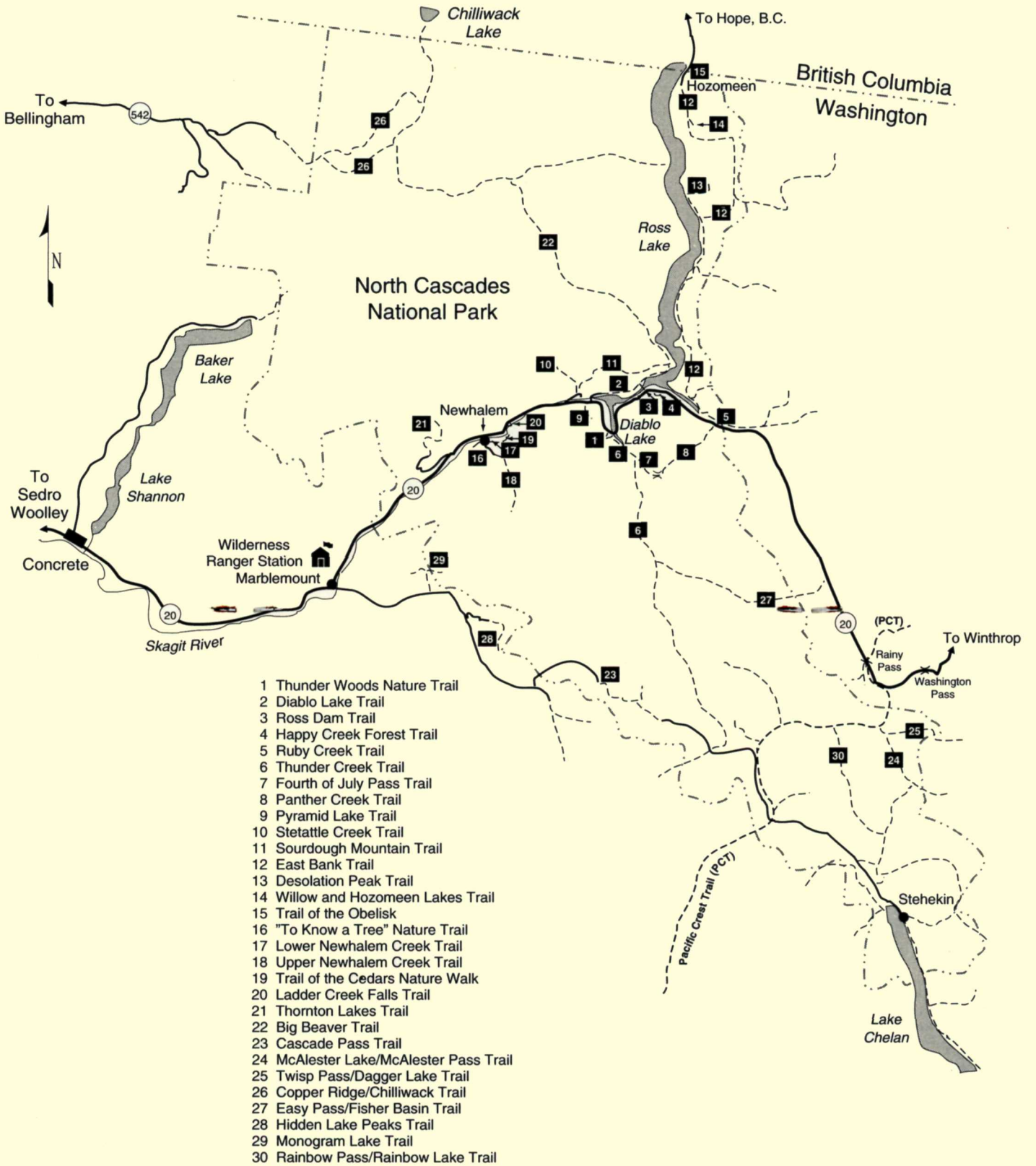
Back on the main trail, a .5 mile descent brings the hiker to the river and a level 1.5 mile hike to Cottonwood Camp. Numerous trails join the Stehekin Valley, including the Pacific Crest Trail, leading to beautiful mountain country. A shuttle bus operates in the Stehekin Valley each summer. Check for current fees and schedules, and make a reservation in advance.

## Camping

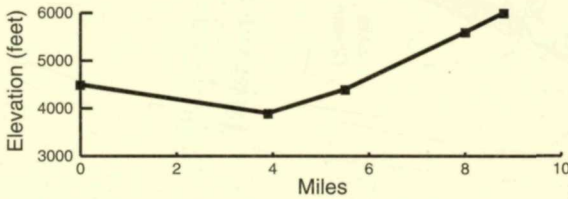
Camping and fires are not allowed in Cascade Pass to protect the delicate subalpine environment. Johannesburg Camp, with three sites, is located near the parking area. Camping is by permit at designated sites in Pelton Basin (one night per group), at Sahale Glacier, Basin Creek, and Cottonwood camps adjacent to the Cascade Pass Trail.

## Map

Green Trails: #80 Cascade Pass



## 24 McAlester Lake/ McAlester Pass Trail



### Summary

McAlester Lake (elev. 5,500 feet) and McAlester Pass (elev. 6,017 feet) offer scenic views of subalpine forests,

meadows and lakes. Western hemlock, subalpine fir, and alpine larch are among the trees you will encounter in this spectacular Cascade crest area.

### Access via Hwy. 20

The Bridge Creek trailhead is 1.2 miles east of Rainy Pass, near mile post 159. The trail heads south, while parking is across the highway, to the north. Bridge Creek Trail follows a section of the 2,600 mile Pacific Crest Trail. You enter North Cascades National Park after 1.4 miles. Another 1.7 miles brings you to the junction of the Twisp Pass Trail where you will turn left (east) and continue for .4 mile to the junction with the McAlester Creek trail. Turn right (south) and after 1.7 miles you will enter the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area and another 2.6 miles takes you to McAlester Lake. Total hiking distance is 7.8 miles to McAlester Lake and 8.7 miles to McAlester Pass.

### Creek Crossing

Shortly after the junction with the trail to Dagger Lake, the McAlester Pass Trail crosses the East Fork McAlester Creek. There is no bridge over the creek making this a potentially hazardous creek crossing. Small logs may be spanning the creek. Crossing this creek safely can be difficult or impossible in early summer (June, July), during the peak of snow melt. Many hikers have been forced to turn back. Be sure to inquire at the ranger station about the current condition of this crossing.

### Access via Twisp River Road

The South Pass Trail begins at the South Creek Campground along the Twisp River Road. After 1 mile in the Okanogan National Forest you enter the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness. It is another 5.8 miles to South Pass where you enter the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. An-



other 1.4 miles brings you to McAlester Pass. Total hiking distance is 8.3 miles to McAlester Pass and 9.2 miles to McAlester Lake.

### **Access via Stehekin**

Take the Stehekin Valley road to the Lower Rainbow Loop trail. It is a 2 mile hike to the Rainbow Creek trail and then 7.8 miles up to McAlester Pass.

### **McAlester Lake Camps**

McAlester Lake has a hiker camp on its north end and a stock camp on the south. These are the most heavily used camps in the area. Fires are permitted at both the stock and hiker camps. Camping is no longer permitted on the lake shores to allow these fragile areas to recover. The camp is 7.8 miles from Hwy. 20, 10.1 miles from the Twisp River Road, and 10.7 miles from the Lower Rainbow Loop in Stehekin.

### **High Camp**

Located at the north end of McAlester Pass, this one site hiker-only camp offers a splendid opportunity for solitude in a subalpine setting. Fires are not permitted. Camping is not permitted in the revegetated front site in order to allow the recovery of plants and soil in this denuded area.

### **Hidden Meadows Stock Camp**

At over 6300', this stock camp is nestled in a spectacular subalpine meadow. Fires are allowed in the established fire pit.

In Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, grazing of stock is permitted. These activities are not permitted in North Cascades National Park. A grazing permit must be obtained at the same time as the wilderness permit. Off trail travel, when permitted, is limited to a combination of six riders and stock.

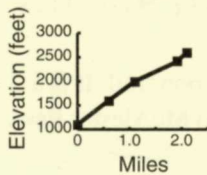
### **Cross-Country Camping**

The McAlester Pass area offers outstanding off-trail camping opportunities. A permit can be obtained for cross-country overnight stays. Cross-country travelers must camp at least 1 mile from an established camp and at least one-half mile from a trail. Fires and camping in meadows are prohibited. Off-trail group size is limited to six persons.

### **Maps**

Green Trail: #50 Washington Pass, #82 Stehekin

## 9 Pyramid Lake Trail



### Summary

Pyramid Lake is an ideal short day hike for those able to hike on moderately steep trails. There is a broad diversity of plant and animal habitat along the way and some mountain views from near the lake. The Pyramid Lake area is closed to camping.

### Access

Park near mile 127.5 along Highway 20 on a pull-out on the north side of the road. Find the trailhead across the highway near the cascading waters of Pyramid Creek. Elevation gain to the lake is 1500' in 2.1 miles. Open areas can be hot. Bring ample drinking water. A popular climbing route continues from the lake to Pyramid and Colonial Peaks.

### Forest Fires

A short way up the trail, notice the blackened trunks of large old Douglas-fir trees and thickets of young fir and lodgepole pine. Both these trees are "fire types." Lodgepole pine requires intense heat for seeds to be released from their seed cones. Old Douglas-fir have very thick bark, allowing a few to survive fires and reseed burns. Both species must have exposed soil and open sunlight for seeds to germinate and grow.

### Diverse Life

This slope, with open areas, old trees, new growth, and varying amounts of light exposure and wetness, provides many niches for wildlife. Watch and listen for bird life. Snags and partially dead trees host woodpeckers, squirrels and many other cavity dwellers. The upturned trill of the Swainson's Thrush rises from forest tops, while the chattering song of the Winter Wren permeates the shadowy forest depths.

### Forest Glade

A highlight of the trail is the stream crossing at .9 miles. Here, especially on a hot day, is a place to rest and enjoy the coolness and beauty of the stream and forest glade. Some of the large cedars are over 500 years old.

## Pyramid Lake

The main attraction of the trail is this small, deep mountain lake. Created by an ancient land slide, it is now a place of life. Many insects skim the surface . . . their larvae feeding in the rich ooze on the bottom. A top order consumer is the aquatic rough-skinned newt. Another fascinating life form is the insect eating plant, the sun dew, found growing on decaying floating logs. Mountain scenery can be viewed from the ridge around the lake.

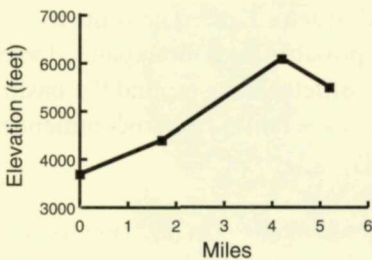
## Research Natural Area

Here, unlike so many accessible lakes, there has been little human influence on natural processes. With the diversity of life and gradual natural changes, Pyramid Lake and surrounding lands have been protected as a "Research Natural Area" (RNA). RNAs are places set aside for ongoing scientific study of natural processes and life systems. Pyramid Lake is a place to visit, study, and enjoy. In order to maintain the pristine quality of this mountain lake as a Research Natural Area, camping is not allowed.

## Map

Green Trails: #48 Diablo Dam

## 25 Twisp Pass/Dagger Lake Trail



### Summary

Twisp Pass is the center point of a variety of trails and cross-country side trips. It is close enough to a crest to view both east and west sides of the Cascade mountains, but often displays the sunnier, drier climate of eastern Washington. The trail can be accessed from Twisp River road or from Highway 20.

### Access From East

From Twisp, drive west 25.5 miles to a parking area at the end of Twisp River Road (3,700'). The 4-mile trail begins by ascending moderately through woods, with glimpses of pyramid-shaped Twisp Mountain. At 1.5 miles is a junction with the North Fork Twisp River Trail and a log



crossing to continue to Twisp Pass. This is the last dependable water source until the tarn lake outlet just north of the pass. The trail continues fairly steeply to gain views at 2.5 miles of South Creek Butte, Crescent Mountain, and the lush forested valley below. The trail emerges from trees to traverse an open rocky sidehill in the last mile before leaving Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness (USFS) and entering North Cascades National Park at Twisp Pass (6,066').

### **Access From West**

From Highway 20 at Bridge Creek Trailhead, the trail can be accessed from the west. The initial 3 miles is a section of the Pacific Crest Trail. At Fireweed Camp, the junction east to Twisp Pass leads a moderately steep 4 miles more through forest and wildflowers to Dagger Lake and on to Twisp Pass. Water is available at a small stream 2 miles beyond Fireweed and again 1 mile further at Stiletto Creek.

### **Camping**

At Twisp Pass, camping is permitted only on the Forest Service (east) side. It is recommended that campers find a bare ground site, out of sight and sound of the pass. National Park Service camping opportunities can be found at Dagger Lake, 1 mile west of the pass. Cross-country camping is available near Stiletto Lake.

### **Side Trips**

Fishing is good at both Dagger Lake and Stiletto Lake. The route to Stiletto Peak and lookout site is another possible hike for expanded views of distant peaks. The route is taken from Stiletto Lake around the basin to the west through a small pass. The peak is a scramble and recommended for experienced cross-country hikers only.

Various loop trips are possible for backpacking also. In addition to the above approaches, the area can also be hiked from the 2-mile long Stiletto Peak trail. This trail leaves the Stiletto Spur trail, which parallels the Pacific Crest Trail from Bridge Creek at Highway 20. Upon reaching the end of the switchbacks in Stiletto Meadows, the trail is sketchy at best. This route is recommended only for those desiring a cross-country outing and knowledgeable with map and compass.

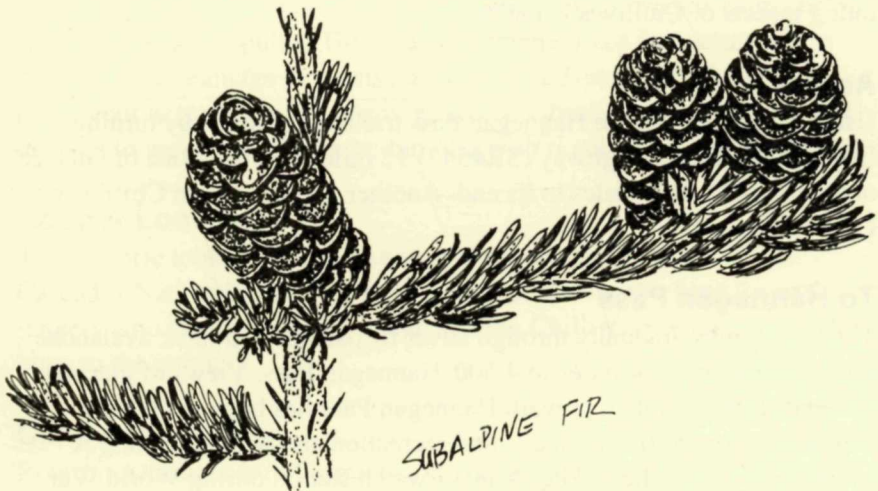
Another unmaintained, but moderately-used trail goes from the Stiletto Spur trail up Copper Creek to Copper Pass. It is possible to connect with the Stiletto Peak trail, making an interesting part trail/part cross-country loop.

### **Safety Consideration**

As described above, the Twisp Pass/Bridge Creek area has a variety of trails, many of which are unmarked and unmaintained. Hikers should take topographical maps with them even when following the maintained trails, and should note their location frequently on the map if choosing to use unmarked routes. Cross-country hiking is more difficult in the North Cascades than most mountain ranges due to extreme terrain, and only experienced hikers should attempt it.

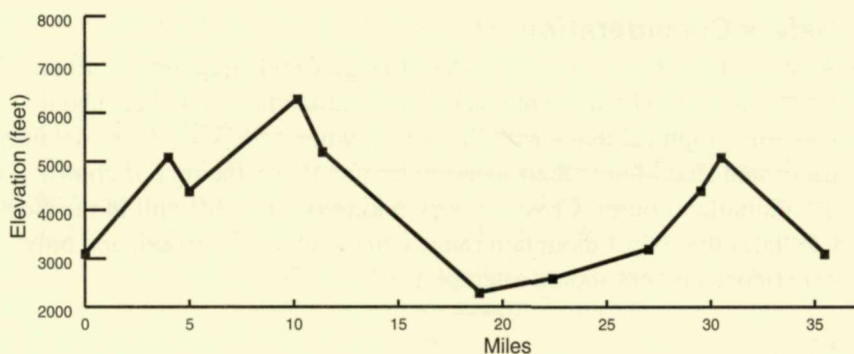
### **Map**

Green Trails: #82 Stehekin



## STRENUOUS TRAILS

### 26 Copper Ridge/Chilliwack Trail



#### Summary

This trail system provides access to a remote part of the North Cascades National Park, best suited for experienced hikers. Much elevation is gained and lost. The system is noted for the magnificent mountain vistas and extensive meadows of Copper Ridge, dense old forests, and the biting insects of Chilliwack Valley.

#### Access

Usual access is from the Hannegan Pass trailhead reached by turning from the Mt. Baker Highway (SR#542) 12 miles past the town of Glacier onto USFS#32 for 5 miles to its end. Another access is from Chilliwack Lake in Canada.

#### To Hannegan Pass

The trail climbs gradually through silver fir patches and thick avalanche track vegetation for 4 miles to 4,500' Hannegan Pass. Views of glacier-covered Ruth Mountain prevail. Hannegan Pass has been a route for explorers, prospectors, trappers, and recreationists for many years. A cabin was built in the saddle as an air watch station during World War II. Vegetation and soils were devastated. The trail has been relocated away from the meadows to allow scars to heal.



## **Boundary**

The trail drops from the pass into an open basin, the head of the Chilliwack drainage. Here at the USFS/National Park boundary is Boundary Camp and a major fork in the trail. The Chilliwack trail descends into the valley and the Copper Ridge trail begins its steep 5.2 mile climb to the lookout.

## **Copper Ridge**

Surmounting the steep switchbacks, and the narrow trail through Hell's Gorge, earns spectacular rewards. From about 2 miles, the views become breathtaking. The hiker is surrounded by flowering meadows, fields of late lying snow, calls of marmots, and views of Mt. Shuksan, Baker, the Border Peaks, and many other peaks extending to the horizon. Chilliwack Valley lies far below. Egg and Copper Lakes lie nestled in cleavages on steep slopes. The last mile to the fire lookout gains 1100' elevation. The trail continues north along the ridge then drops abruptly to Chilliwack Valley.

## **Human Use**

High mountain meadows are free of snow briefly. Soils are extremely thin and usually loose and wet. Heather, sedges, and herbs must bloom and seed quickly to survive. There is little time or energy for vegetative growth. Quick emergence of succulent stems and flowers is from energy stored in roots and bulbs. This is a very fragile place for human use to occur without damage to plants and soils. The National Park Service seeks your help. There are ongoing efforts to heal old scars and prevent damage to meadows. Please be familiar with regulations. Walk softly!

## **Copper Lookout**

This historic lookout station is one of three remaining in the North Cascades National Park. It is now used in summers as a base for park rangers who care for Copper Ridge and the Chilliwack Valley. It is not open to the public.

## **Chilliwack Valley**

Returning to Boundary Camp, the trail drops steadily into the forested valley. Streamside camps are in forested settings. At 5.8 miles below Boundary is the Chilliwack River Crossing. A trail ford is used by horses. The river is cold, swift, and usually deep. Hikers should use the elevated trolley crossing, 1/4 mile above the ford, except when the water level is very low.

## Brush Creek to Ross Lake

The trail junction to Whatcom Pass and the Beaver trail routes to Ross Lake is 1 mile below the river crossing. This magnificent 27.3 mile hike over Whatcom Pass and down the Big Beaver Valley is described on page 18.

## Lower Chilliwack

The trail descends northward 12 miles to Chilliwack Lake through great stands of western hemlock, grand fir, and red cedar. Look for beaver activity between Indian and Bear Creeks, sometimes causing water to flood the trail. This is a classic temperate forest, a place of lush growth and great varieties of plant and animal life. Have your insect repellent at hand!

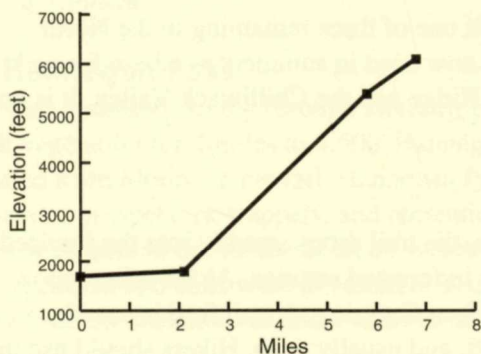
## Camping

While valley camps are plentiful, popular campsites on Copper Ridge are limited. The following mileages are from Hannegan trailhead. Boundary - 5 miles. Copper Ridge Route: Silesia - 7 miles, Egg Lake - 8 miles, Copper Lk. 10.4 miles. Chilliwack Valley Route: US Cabin - 10 miles, Indian Cr. - 15 miles, Bear Cr. - 18.5 miles, and Chilliwack - 20.5 miles.

## Maps

Green Trails: #14 Mt. Shuksan, #15 Mt. Challenger

## 13 Desolation Peak Trail



### Summary

Desolation Peak trail is a steep hike (4500' elevation gain in 6.8 miles) to open meadows, grand vistas and an historic fire lookout station. Only a fit hiker should attempt a round-trip day hike.

## **Access**

Access is from near Lightning Creek Bridge, mile 16 on the East Bank Trail, or by boat from Ross Lake. The East Bank trailhead is located near mile 138 on Highway 20 (North Cascades Highway). Boat transportation from Ross Lake Resort (206-386-4437) may be arranged to the Desolation Trailhead. Access from the north by trail or boat is from Hozomeen campground on the US-Canadian Border.

## **Views and Sun**

The trail begins gently, with nice lakeside views. At 2 miles, the trail turns east and begins to climb. Enjoy the cool forest. Trees soon give way to openings and direct exposure to the sun. In early summer there is a glorious mix of forest and meadow flowers. Openings allow views of Hozomeen Peak to the north, then Ross Lake to the west, and glacier-crowned Jack Mountain to the south.

## **Diversity of Life**

Desolation Trail not only takes the hiker from low elevation forests to subalpine meadows, it also allows hikers to discover plant species from the drier east side that grow on this west slope of the Cascades. Ponderosa and lodgepole pine and scattered clumps of aspen and tamarack can be found. Watch for wildlife: deer, bear, cougar, grouse, and many smaller species inhabit the area.

## **Desolation Ridge**

At 5 miles, the trees are gone and the trail traverses steeply through flowering meadows. At six miles, it attains the ridge crest with tantalizing peeks of the lookout.

## **After Fire**

Looking closely, one can find remains of charred wood. These meadows have been created by periodic fire, a major one in 1926(?). What seems to be "desolation" after a fire encourages the variety of life that makes this mountain a place of striking contrasts and beauty.

## **The Lookout**

Lookouts are places vacillating between an unreal experience far above the world and the thunderous realities of a mountain storm. Desolation is noted for extreme changes in weather. Time and circumstance give these



places an aura of mysticism. The people who came to work at lookout stations either possessed a fitting lonely and mystical character, soon gained it, or made excuses to leave the mountain in a hurry. Jack Kerouac, the author and beatnik poet, was the lookout here in 1956. He was inspired to write the book *Desolation Angels*, a beatnik classic, from that experience. Kerouac referred to the looming twin peaks of Mt. Hozomeen as “the void” on which star-angels danced in the night sky. The lookout is not open to the public.

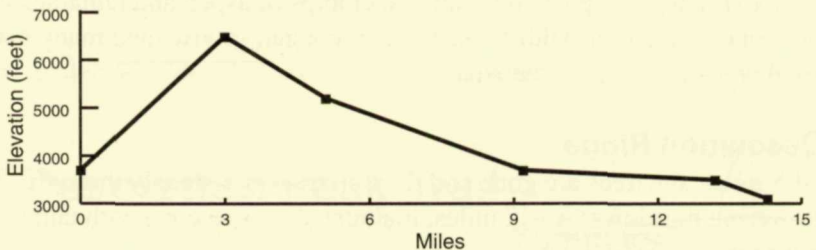
## Camping

A designated campsite is located on the ridge 1 mile below the lookout. The only water available is from melting snow which is gone by early July. Fires are not permitted.

## Maps

Green Trails: #16 Ross Lake, #17 Jack Mountain

# 27 Easy Pass/Fisher Basin Trail



## Summary

Many believe the Easy Pass/Fisher Basin area to be one of the most superb places in the North Cascades. Extensive meadows are crowned by glacial peaks. This can be a steep 3- to 5-mile (one way) day hike from Highway 20, or a leisurely several day backpack with an array of hiking and camping alternatives.

## Access

The Easy Pass Trailhead is off Highway 20 near mile 151. Many hikers begin or end a longer 24-mile trip from Colonial Creek Campground at mile 130 on Highway 20.

## **Granite Creek to Easy Pass**

A bridged crossing of the cold, swift waters of Granite Creek is 300 yards from the trail start. The trail is often wet from snow melt drainage. After 2 miles of western hemlock and Pacific silver fir forests, the trail emerges into avalanche paths on the flanks of Ragged Ridge. The pass can be seen high above. The trail now climbs steeply, crossing Easy Pass Creek 3 times, traversing steep rock slopes and avalanche meadows. Look and listen for pika and hoary marmots. The trail can be lost in lingering snow fields. An ice axe is advised in early summer. The pass is gained at 6500' in 3.6 miles.

## **The Pass**

The pass is spectacular, separating Granite Creek Valley with drier mountains to the East and the glacier-hung peaks ringing the Fisher Creek drainage to the west. Scattered clumps of trees include subalpine larch, subalpine fir, mountain hemlock, and farther up the ridge, whitebark pine. The larch, a deciduous conifer which turns gold before losing its needles in the fall, is found only in the northern fringes of the United States and the eastern ridges of the North Cascades.

## **Fisher Basin**

The trail into Fisher Basin is steep and scenic. Massive Mt. Logan looms ahead. Lush meadows bloom in pinks, reds, purples, whites, and yellows. Deer and smaller mammals abound. Black bear are often seen grazing in the meadows or eating huckleberries. Just prior to protection under the National Park Act in 1968, one of the last grizzly bears in the North Cascades was shot here. The Fisher name comes from the Fisher brothers who ran a trap line here in the early 1900s.

## **Fisher Creek Valley**

Fisher camp is at the edge of the meadows, 2 miles below the pass. Leaving the meadows, the trail descends gently, entering a mature silver fir forest. Creekside Cosho Camp is in the deep forest, 6 miles below the Pass. This is an entirely different life zone, the home of martin, owls and their prey; including the flying squirrel, voles, and deer mice. Continuing down valley, the forest gradually changes to mid-elevation species of red cedar, western hemlock and cottonwood in stream flats.

A mile from Junction Camp, an old trapper's cabin is semi-hidden just off the trail. Rock Cabin was built against a great rock, the rock becoming one wall. This unique cabin, reminder of the human history in this remote valley, has been stabilized by the National Park Service.

## Junction Camp

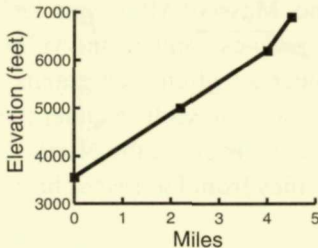
Junction camp is situated near Fisher Creek on the ridge overlooking Thunder Creek Valley. Although views are good from the camp, a short distance away is a magnificent view of Boston Glacier.

From Junction, the hiker may return the 14.2 miles to the Easy Pass trailhead, go down Thunder Creek Valley 10 miles to Colonial Creek and Highway 20, or go up Thunder Creek 12 miles over Park Creek Pass to the Stehekin Valley.

## Maps

Green Trails: #49 Mt. Logan, #48 Diablo Dam

# 28 Hidden Lake Peaks Trail



## Summary

Hidden Lake Peaks Trail is a short (4.5 miles), but steep (3330' gain), day hike or overnight backpack into the subalpine zone. It offers magnificent views, a high mountain lake, and an historic fire lookout. It is also an access route for climbers entering the Eldorado/Triad area.

## Access

USFS #1540, Sibley Creek Road, leaves the Cascade River Road about 2 miles beyond Marble Creek Campground. This 4.5 mile road is moderately steep and sometimes rough. Snow remains on sections of the trail and the lake remains frozen until late summer.

## Forest to Flowers

The trail climbs for a mile through the forest before breaking out into Sibley Creek basin at the base of Hidden Lake Peaks. The creek is



crossed twice in the next 2.4 miles as the trail switchbacks through avalanche and flower meadows. Look for the icy dome of Mt. Baker to the north. A long, open traverse angles through meadows and talus slopes to a saddle overlooking Hidden Lake. From this 6600' saddle and points along the ridge, are sweeping views of the North Cascades, including the Cascade Pass Area, Mt. Baker, and Glacier Peak. An additional .5 miles of steep, rocky trail leads down to the lake.

### **Hidden Lake Lookout**

The 6890' lookout cabin is only .5 miles and 300' above the saddle, but this pitch may require an ice axe and climbing experience to negotiate. The lookout, built in 1931, is no longer manned but is maintained by a volunteer organization under an agreement with the USFS.

### **Subalpine Life**

During the short summer season, the meadows below the lookout are alive with color and sound. At this elevation, summers are short and intense. Snow can come on any day of the year. Look for glacier lilies blooming through snow edges. Insects and birds gather nectar, distributing pollen and maintaining life for another season. Listen for the piercing whistle of marmots sunning on rocky slopes, perhaps knowing that they will soon be back in winter dens. Green snow algae protects itself from the intensity of high altitude sun by extruding a red covering, creating "watermelon" color in swathes across snow fields.

### **Lakeside Camping**

The National Park is entered on the descent to the lake. Pets and firearms are not permitted in the Park. Fires are not allowed in this fragile subalpine zone. Check with the park for information on the location of campsites.

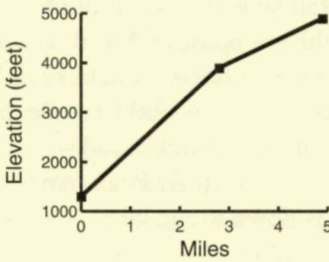
### **Map**

Green Trails: #47 Marblemount

## **29 Monogram Lake Trail**

### **Summary**

The Monogram Lake trail offers a steep (4200' gain in 4.9 miles) but scenic day hike or overnight backpack to a small cirque lake surrounded



by subalpine meadows and ringed by glaciated peaks. A side trip (1.5 miles) may be taken through mountain meadows to an abandoned USFS lookout station on Lookout Mt.

### Access

Drive the Cascade River Road 7 miles from Highway 20 at

Marblemount. Look for a trailhead sign on the left side of the road between Lookout and Monogram Creeks. Find a parking pullout to the right.

### A Steep Hike

The trail climbs steeply, switchbacking up a forested ridge between the two creeks, at one point briefly breaking into an avalanche opening with lush growth including false hellebore and stinging nettles (often overhanging the trail). While digging out the gaiters, look back for views of Eldorado Pk. A junction is at 2.8 miles. The left branch leads to Lookout Mt. and the right 2.1 miles to Monogram Lake. The Monogram trail enters the North Cascades National Park and soon opens into subalpine meadows, climbs to a 5400' ridge, and descends to the 4800' tarn lake.

### A High Lake

Monogram Lake usually is frozen until July. It is one of many small, jewel-like high lakes scattered throughout the North Cascade Mountains, legacies of past alpine glaciation. Most of the lakes are naturally fish-free due to their high elevation, deep freezing, and lack of spawning beds. Some, including Monogram, have been artificially stocked with fish. Introduced fish greatly change the chemistry and biology of otherwise pristine lakes. Activities associated with fishing and camping around these high lakes can cause serious degradation. Please follow minimum impact techniques (see page 2) and step lightly on these delicate and beautiful places!

### Subalpine Community

Monogram Lake is the hub of a subalpine community including plants like pink mountain heather, huckleberry, and glacier lilies, and animals like black bear, deer, a multitude of insects, birds, and small mammals.

All the residents fit into a web of interdependencies which can easily be upset by human influences. Please store food securely.

## **Camping**

Designated campsites are available near the shore of Monogram Lake. Fires are not permitted in these subalpine areas.

## **Map**

Green Trails: #47 Marblemount

# **30 Rainbow Pass/Rainbow Lake Trail**

## **Summary**

This area attracts a variety of wilderness users, including anglers, backpackers, horsepacking groups, and hunters during the fall deer hunt. The hike to reach Rainbow Lake or Pass is moderately steep from either side, and far enough into the backcountry that it is recommended for overnight backpack trips only. A loop trip is possible; one of the few in North Cascades National Park Complex.

## **Access From Highway 20**

Begin at the Bridge Creek Trailhead, a mile east of Rainy Pass. The first half of the trip follows a section of the Pacific Crest Trail, descending the Bridge Creek drainage. At 2.9 miles, Fireweed Camps (horse and hiker) are just east of the junction of Bridge Creek trail and the trails to Twisp Pass and McAlester Pass. Heading west down Bridge Creek, other camping options are at Hideaway Camp and South Fork Camp. At 5.4 miles from the trailhead, South Fork is the junction of Bridge Creek Trail and the Rainbow Lake Trail. A horse and hiker camp are also available here. Now it is continuous uphill (3000' gain) to Rainbow Pass. Three miles after leaving Bridge Creek, Dan's Camp is encountered. Another steep 3 miles puts one at Rainbow Pass, a short, narrow pass under Bowan Mountain. A one-mile descent through boulders puts one at Rainbow Lake (5630'), a beautiful subalpine spot, which is actually one of three lakes in the basin. A hiker camp only is located here.

## **Access From The Stehekin Valley**

The trailhead is located on the Stehekin Valley Road, about 3 miles from the Landing. The first few miles offer good viewpoints of Lake Chelan.



Rattlesnakes live east of the Cascade Crest, and have been seen on the lower sections of trails in the Stehekin area. Be aware as you explore!

### **Rainbow Creek**

The Boulder Creek trail junction is at 2 miles, shortly before the bridge crossing Rainbow Creek. At this point, the Rainbow Loop Trail which goes back to the Stehekin Valley road continues north, while the Rainbow Creek Trail begins switchbacking upward. The Rainbow Ford Camp is at the next crossing of the creek, and at Bench Creek Camp, another junction is reached. Bench Creek is a little over 5 miles from the road. To the right, the Rainbow Creek Trail heads to McAlester Pass. The lower 5 miles of the Rainbow Creek Trail have fairly long stretches between available water. It is recommended to carry a container full as this southward facing slope can be a hot and dusty hike in late summer.

### **Rainbow Lake**

Heading left, the Rainbow Lake trail follows the North Fork of Rainbow Creek to the lake. At Rainbow Meadows, popular horse and hiker camps are available. The 1.5-mile section of trail connecting the meadows to Rainbow Lake is very scenic with lots of striking rock formations, pools, and waterfalls flowing from Rainbow Lake and the slopes of Bowan Mountain.

### **As a Loop Trip**

This part of North Cascades National Park and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area offers more options for backpacking loops than any other area in the Complex. A loop that includes McAlester and Rainbow Passes makes a comfortable 4-day trip.

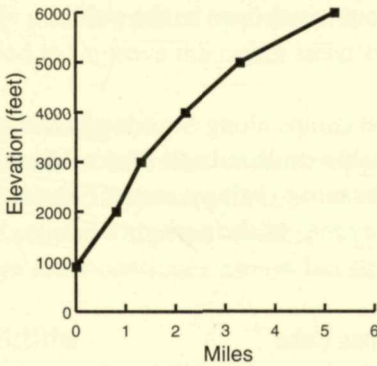
A less strenuous hike is to substitute the Bridge Creek Trail to the Stehekin Valley Road for either the Rainbow or McAlester Pass leg, using the NPS shuttle bus for trailhead connections.

Many hikers include a trip to visit Stehekin in their loop, or make a long one-way trip from Highway 20, to Stehekin, and then downlake to the town of Chelan. Transportation logistics are involved in doing this, but it is a popular way to visit a large part of the area.

### **Maps**

Green Trails: #50 Washington Pass, #82 Stehekin

## 11 Sourdough Mountain Trail



### Summary

Sourdough Mountain Trail offers a strenuous day hike or an overnight backpack with superb views plus a visit to an historic fire lookout.

### Access

The Sourdough Creek route begins behind the domed swimming pool in the town of Diablo, 22 miles east of Marblemount, off

Highway 20. The Pierce Mountain route begins at a signed trail junction about 2.5 miles from the Ross Dam Trailhead (mile 134 Highway 20) on the trail to Big Beaver Creek.

### Diablo to Summit

A 5,200-foot elevation gain in 5.2 miles makes this a memorable trek. In the first 3.5 miles, views are limited to occasional glimpses through the trees. Use caution in crossing the often snow-bridged Sourdough Creek. Efforts are grandly rewarded in the last 1.5 miles of meadow and ridge top. There, in lush meadows are wildflowers, birds, small mammals, and often deer and black bear. Views from the summit are spectacular. . . peaks and valleys spread in all directions, with lakes, glaciers, and the volcanic dome of Mount Baker highlighting the display.

### Pierce Mountain

This route is longer, about 7.5 miles, less steep, with nice diversity. The lower trail follows Ross Lake then ascends through Douglas fir/western hemlock, silver fir/mountain hemlock forest zones before breaking into the scattered trees and meadows of the subalpine. In a recent burn area (1978), the trail becomes overgrown with lush grasses. Follow rock cairns along the ridge to Sourdough Lookout.

### Sourdough Lookout

Truly a historic landmark, the summit of Sourdough was one of the first "lookout" points established by the U.S. Forest Service (1915). The present building, built in 1933, replaced the original built by Glee Davis

in 1917. "Bush" Osborne chose the location to try out his new fire-locating device. The Osborne Firefinder became standard equipment in lookouts across the country. The lookout is not open to the public.

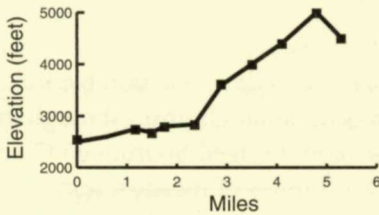
### Camping

Camping is available in two designated camps along Sourdough Ridge. Sourdough Camp is 4.2 miles from Diablo trailhead and Pierce Mountain Camp is .5 miles NE of the lookout. Be sure to bring a stove. Fires are not permitted in these fragile subalpine areas of the park.

### Maps

Green Trails: #48 Diablo Dam, #16 Ross Lake

## 21 Thornton Lakes Trail



### Summary

A strenuous day hike or an overnight backpack on a sometimes steep, rough trail to a series of three alpine lakes, 5.3 miles (one way) to first lake. A scramble route to Trapper Peak offers magnificent mountain views.

### Access

The steep 5-mile gravel road leaves Highway 20 near mile 117. The road is narrow and can be rough. For skilled drivers with high clearance vehicles. No trailers.

### Old Cuts, New Growth

The first 2.3 miles follows an old road through logging clearcuts from the 1960s. Unlike the lower clearcuts, these areas were not replanted. A natural mix of Douglas-fir, Pacific silver fir, hemlock, cedar, alder, maples, birch, and many shrubs and vines are returning. Look for showy fireweed throughout summer. This new-growth area is rich in birds and mammals. The view from the high point of the old logging clearcuts is great, but there is much more beyond!



## **Forested Route**

The trail now enters steep forested slopes. Much of this trail was originally a route created by fishermen and hunters, switchbacks have been added to improve the rather steep and direct route.

## **High Ridge**

After about 2.3 miles in the forest, the trail breaks out on an open ridge. From here, there are glimpses of Mt. Triumph ahead and excellent views of Teebone Ridge and numerous peaks across the Skagit Valley. The ridge route continues a short but steep distance to the top of Trapper Peak.

## **Wildlife**

This is a rich wildlife habitat. Look for deer, bear, marmot, pika, ground squirrels and birds such as the water pipit and ptarmigan. During autumn migration observe hawks and eagles overhead.

## **The Lakes**

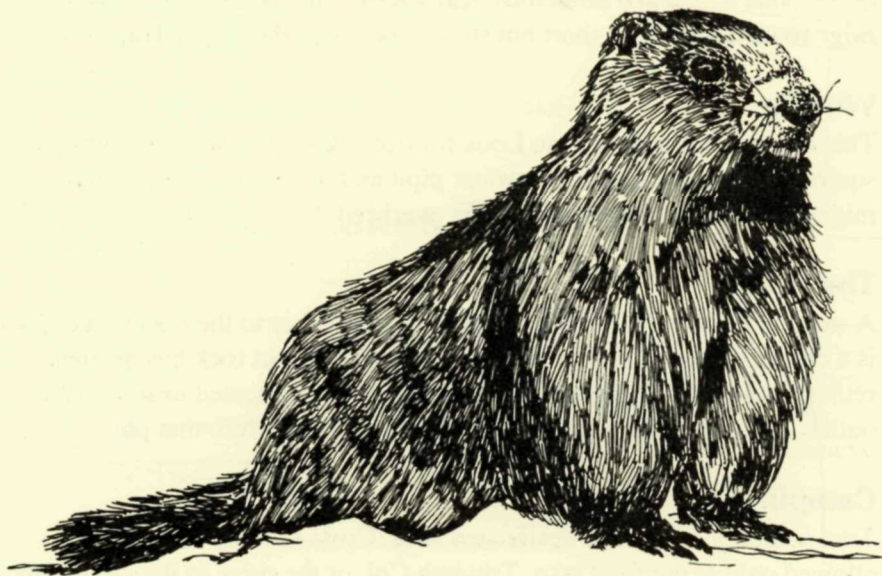
A steep .6 mile drop from the ridge brings the hiker to the lower lake. This is a classic cirque lake created as glaciers gouged out rock basins, then retreated. Three designated, popular campsites are located near the lake outlet. A primitive path to the upper lakes proceeds from that point.

## **Camping**

Trail camping must be at designated sites. Cross-country camping is allowed only at the third lake, Triumph Col, or the ridge to the west of the lakes. Generally in the backcountry of the North Cascades, bivouacs can be made when at least .5 mile away from trails, one mile from camps, and away from subalpine meadows. These areas are often difficult to access. A permit is required.

## **Map**

Green Trails: #47 Marblemount



HOARY MARMOT

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2105 Highway 20  
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284

North Cascades Visitor Center                                206-386-4495  
501 Newhalem St.  
Rockport, WA 98283

*"The view from here was fine and extensive in all directions of the compass. I leave it to a better pen to describe the sublimity of true Mountain scenery in the Cascade Mountains as seen from a point of such altitude; it must be seen it can not be described. No where do the Mountain masses and Peaks present such strange, fantastic, dauntless, and startling outlines as here. Whoever wishes to see Nature in all its primitive glory and grandeur, in its almost ferocious wildness, must go and visit these Mountain regions . . . Toward the east the Mountains reach a considerable altitude; and for the first time glaciers. . . were seen to cover the mountainsides to a considerable extent, dazzling in the reflected light of the sinking sun. To the southwest, Mt. Thuskan [Shuksan] and Mt. Baker elevate their hoary and icy sumits [sic] beautiful and majestic from whatever point you may contemplate them."*

*Henry Custer, Cartographer  
from Middle Peak, 1859*





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