

*Ozette*

*The*  
**INDIAN VILLAGE  
NATURE TRAIL**



*Indians,  
Settlers  
&  
the Land.*

• O Z E T T E •



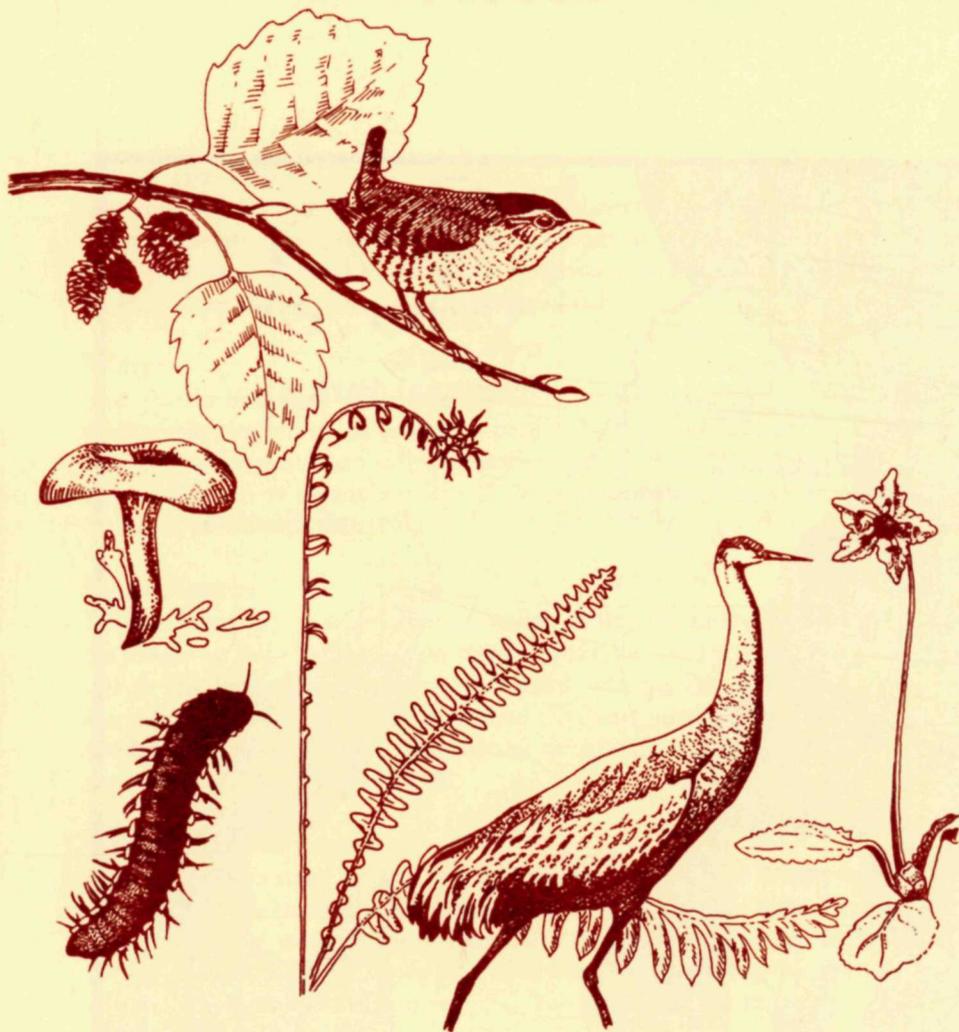
Published by: Olympic Branch, Pacific Northwest National Parks  
and Forests Association, 1983.

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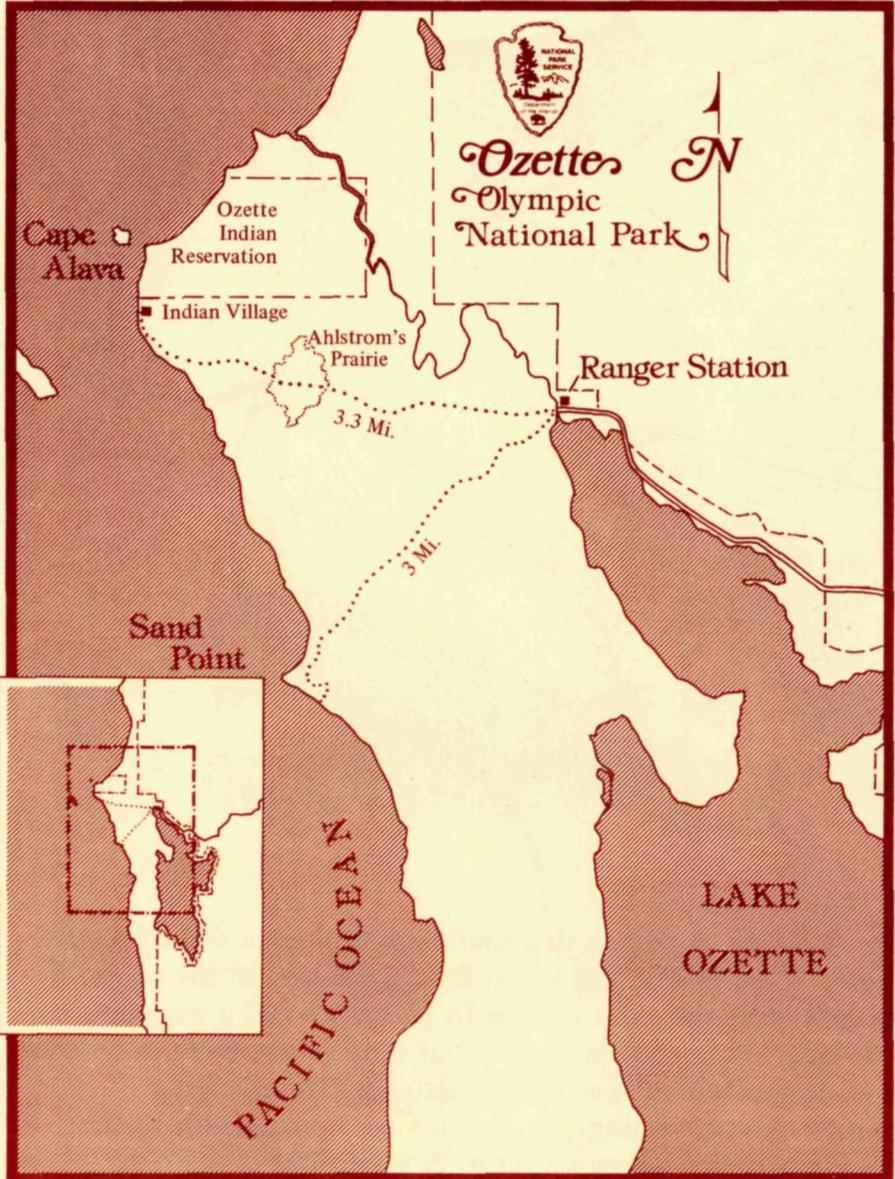
Cover: Wallpaper pattern, timeworn and stained, from the  
living room of an Ozette settler's homestead.



A Nature Trail . . .

Cedar planks. A ribbon that undulates through a dense coastal forest. Worn boards pass under foot. They lead to the ocean. In geologic time the earth is worn by glacial ice and a pounding sea. The land sustains hardy people, but time wears away their marks. It swallows their villages and homesteads. The changing continues—the wearing. Air currents are worn smooth by the passing wings of migrating birds. A wren sings in the forest, sandhill cranes converse in the prairie. Waves cause beach cobbles to sing, but there is quiet between breakers.

• O Z E T T E •



### Using the Trail

The trail divides into two forks which are connected by a stretch of beach to form a triangle. The northern (right) fork leads to Cape Alava. The southern (left) fork leads to Sand Point. Some portions of this booklet specifically refer to attractions found along the Cape Alava Trail.

### Water

You should not drink water from streams and lakes unless it has been treated with recommended chemicals or by boiling for one full minute. A contaminating protozoan called Giardia which is spread by animals and people is found in waters throughout the U. S. and has been reported at several locations in Olympic National Park.

### Place Names

Indians living in the southernmost Makah settlement knew the lake as **Ka'Houk**—a large body of fresh water—while they called their ocean side village **Ho-Selth**. White settlers, unfamiliar with the Indian language, altered the village name to **Ozette** and applied the same name to the lake. **Cape Alava** was named for Jose Manuel de Alava, Commissioner for Spain at the Nootka Convention of 1790.

### Climate and Weather

Climate sets the stage for the lush forests that occur on the Olympic Peninsula. The peninsula's rainfall is legendary, exceeding 100 inches annually along the coast. Prevailing westerly winds blow in from the Pacific Ocean, drenching the evergreen forest which absorbs part of the moisture allowing the balance to return to the sea by short run streams. The peninsula is a microcosm of the water cycle.

Winds can be violent. The fierceness of hurricane-like winds was exemplified by the historic 1921 blowdown, during which wind speeds above 120 mph were recorded before the wind gage blew away. The Lincoln's Day Storm of 1979 that resulted in the loss of much of the Hood Canal Floating Bridge, savagely uprooted large western hemlock trees along the Cape Alava Trail. Watch for the blown down trees which resulted from this storm.

The year-round climate is generally quite mild with winter temperatures seldom dropping below 40° F. The warming influence of the Japanese Current in the Pacific Ocean is an important stabilizing factor.

## **Man and Nature**

The story of man's uses of the Ozette country over the years is evident on this nature trail.

Ozette Indians lived on relatively even terms with the environment, generally living in harmony with, and controlled by the elements. The Indians' life was oriented towards immediate survival and the wilderness surroundings rarely suffered over the long term.

Settlers, mostly of Scandinavian origin, began arriving in the 1890's to homestead the densely forested land around Lake Ozette. At one time there were approximately 130 homesteads surrounding the lake. The method of travel was by foot, boat, or horseback. Sturdy cedar canoes were purchased from the local Indians for as little as \$25. Clallam Bay was the closest source of supplies until a store was established on the lake shore at Swan Bay around the turn of the century. Easy access to the outside world was restricted until the new road was completed in 1930. By that time many of the original settlers had left the area. Today remnants of their homesites which dotted the shoreline of the lake fade as the forest gradually reclaims the once cleared land.

The pioneers who came to this area had a basic knowledge of land cultivation, and practiced more direct control over their surroundings than did the Indians. Natural resources were thus subjected to heavier use as the numbers of settlers increased.

The area through which you are walking today is only slightly different from the days of the Indian. Today, the land is a natural wilderness of plant and animal communities set aside for the enjoyment of the people. You can sense the primitive America known to the Indians and early settlers.

## **Ice Sculptured Land**

Many milleniums ago this area was covered by a massive glacier. The ice sheet originated in the northern valleys of British Columbia and advanced to the south into the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound. A lobe of that ice sheet extended west through this area to the ocean, overriding the landscape and sculpturing the undulating terrain you see today. A warming of the climate about 13,000 years ago caused the ice to melt and retreat.

Note the low, rounded ridges about Ahlstrom's Prairie (signed) formed by the heavy bulldozing action of the moving ice. The ridges enclose an obvious basin which may have been occupied by a post-glacial lake. This lake eventually filled with sediments to create the bog you see today. It appears that these

natural openings were enlarged by the Indians with the aid of fire, and the settlers later expanded them for farming and ranching. The fire-nurtured openings insured a better growth of bracken fern and other edible plants which were favored by the Indians. As an important food source, starch was extracted from bracken root stocks and used by the Indians.

Natural disturbances such as lightning-caused fire, flood, insects, disease and windstorms have always affected the coastal forest. The charred skeletal remains of western redcedar snags standing among younger trees along the trail are reminders of the continuous cycle of life.

All along this trail you will find granite boulders that were transported here by glacial ice from British Columbia thousands of years ago. Since granite is not a native rock to the Peninsula, the boulders are called **glacial erratics**.

### **Lars Ahlstrom**

For 56 years, bachelor Lars Ahlstrom, native of Sweden, resided at the edge of his prairie on the westernmost homestead of the conterminous United States.

Lars came here in 1902 and he remained rooted to his isolated, self-sufficient way of life until a foot infection forced him to leave in 1958. The last of the original pioneers to leave the Ozette country, he died in Port Angeles in 1960 at the age of 88.

Ahlstrom originally built a two-story house that burned down in 1916. He planned another house of the same size, but never got around to building it. He lived the remainder of his days at Ahlstrom's prairie in a small cabin that was partially supported by tree stumps serving as corner posts. The shed beside the trail, and several other buildings nearby, are the weathered remains of Ahlstrom's homestead.

His immediate neighbors were the wild animals which he greatly cherished as company. His human companions were the settlers at Ozette Lake, whom he visited as often as possible. About twice weekly he hiked the trail to the lake for mail and supplies. Like most of the settlers at the lake, Ahlstrom could not fully support his needs on the homestead. Much of this income for food and supplies came from fall and winter jobs in the mills or logging camps.

A good part of his time was spent maintaining the Indian Village Trail, mostly out of necessity. This was also true of the other settlers who used the route. Many of the original crosswise puncheon planks on the trail were put in by Ahlstrom. Ahlstrom also put in some of the long, crosswise planks which make up a few of the bridges along the trail.

## Cape Alava

Cape Alava is the westernmost point in the conterminous (48) United States. Until about the turn of the last century, the Ozette Indians lived here with the forest and the sea for at least 2,000 years. A census taken around 1870 indicated that there were 188 Ozettes with 15 houses in this area. The Ozette population grew in the 1880's from outside Indian families (mostly from Neah Bay) who resisted the pressure of sending their children to the Indian Agency boarding schools. The village was abandoned by the Ozettes about 1900, when day schools began at Neah Bay, as education was compulsory and there were no schools at or near Cape Alava.

The Ozettes, like the rest of the Makahs, garnered most of their livelihood from the sea. Whaling and the colorful ritual of going to sea in the long, hand-hewn canoes was a way of life not typical of all the Indians of the Northwest Coast. Besides the sea mammals—salmon, halibut, and shellfish were also valuable food resources.

A short distance north of the juncture of the trail with the beach is the site of Washington State University's archaeological digs which took place over a period of years beginning in 1970. The digs revealed the well-preserved contents of several Indian houses which had been covered by sudden mudslides hundreds of years ago.

Considered one of the most important archaeological sites in the United States, the digs uncovered intricate tools, household implements and ceremonial objects. Today the dig site is closed and buried, but many of the artifacts are on display in the superb museum at the **Makah Cultural Center** in Neah Bay.

Opposite the former excavating site is Indian Island, (Cannonball Is.), one of the many islets and sea stacks that lie off the mainland. At low tide, it is possible to walk out to the island and see the curious "cannonballs" at the tidal zone. The cannonballs are sandstone concretions that are weathering out from the surrounding rock to form these almost perfect spheres.

This is often a wild coast in the winter. Storms lash the rocky coastline with unabated fury that have sent to the bottom both ships and men. On January 30, 1887, the 1,300 ton **Austria** never reached her destination at Tacoma, but ground herself to pieces on the rocks off Cape Alava in the wrath of a furious winter storm. All of the ship's crew were aided to safety by the Ozette Indians and survived the misfortune. Today, a rusted anchor is often exposed by the low tides to reveal that ominous day for the **Austria**.

### Spirit-quest on Ozette Beach

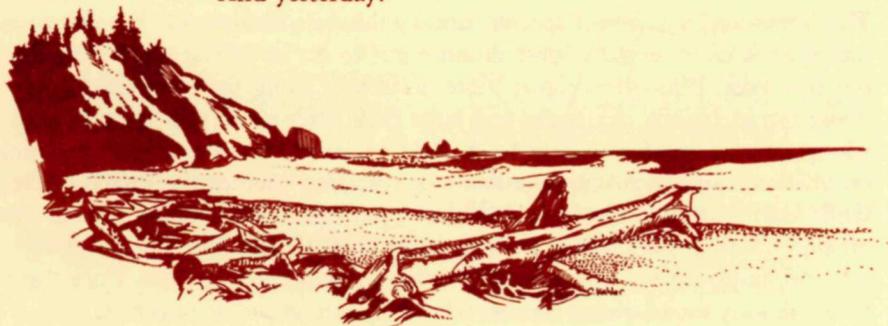
by David R. Stuart

*(May 5, 1981, Olympic National Park)*

Wet black woods melt behind ravens  
rioting on smooth sand.  
Sculpted ghost logs tangle on slaty berms.  
Otter etches earth, bounding to foamy rills  
where rain finds sea.  
Always the sea, the surf.  
Over the reefs, ever again bringing the salmon people.  
While eagles and elders soar in clouds  
looking through crimson skies.  
Through time.

The village. A house. Home.  
Remembered in minds and mud.  
And furseals.  
Offering themselves to Makah brothers  
who come no longer.

Time is slow here.  
Trekking in nylon stride by,  
laughing into tomorrow.  
And yesterday.



## NATURAL HISTORY OF OZETTE

### The Coastal Forest

The coastal forest is a biological habitat or ecosystem, that provides food, shelter, protection and breeding sites for many organisms. The list ranges from minute insects in the soil up to amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

Mice, shrews and insects populate the forest floor, searching for food and protection. The Douglas Squirrel will identify itself by its characteristic scolding voice high up in a spruce or hemlock.

Black bear, blacktail deer and raccoons can be seen foraging the prairie and beaches during the later part of the evening.

### The Coast and Offshore Waters

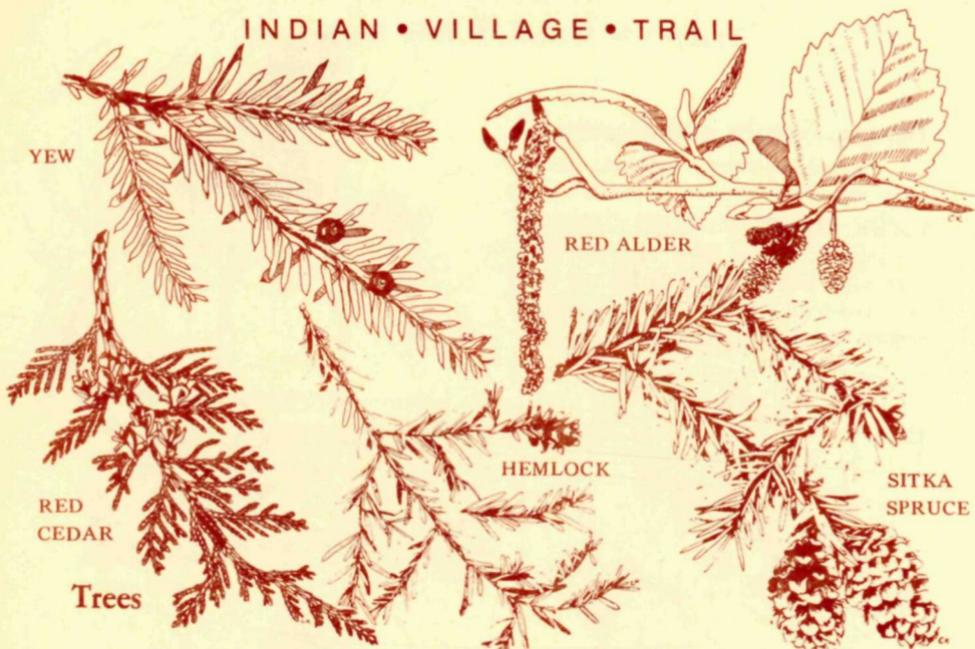
The environments where the land meets the sea contain countless forms of life that make this coast a place for unlimited study and inspiration.

Tidepools provide homes for various organisms. Sea anemones, common sea star, Hermit crabs and other forms of marine life. The very low tides of summer offer the best opportunities for observing the richness of tidepool communities.

Offshore, the prominent marine animals are harbor seals and gray whales. The whales may often be seen short distances offshore, moving north or south, in their spring and fall migrations. On the offshore rocks, you might see seals; mammals that are not completely committed to the sea for survival, but spend much of their lives on the spray-washed rocks. The sea otter occupied the kelp beds off this coast not many years ago, but heavy harvesting of the animal, for its luxuriant pelt, eliminated the species from these waters. The sea otter has been re-introduced to this area and can be seen at times near offshore rocks or sea stacks.

The river otter, a different species, usually inhabits fresh water, but the animal has often been observed a short distance out to sea or on the rocky islets that dot this coast. Bird life becomes more noticeable along the coast than in the dense forest. Islands, sea stacks and large cliffs offer protection for nests and young, in an area of abundant food. Bald eagles are commonly seen perching on offshore rocks opposite Cape Alava or wheeling overhead in search of prey. Gulls, surf scoters, cormorants and black oystercatchers are found near or just offshore. Seeing black oystercatchers, easily identified by their bright orange bill and loud peeping call, is a good omen for wilderness seekers, since these birds are only found along beaches where human impact is minimal.

## INDIAN • VILLAGE • TRAIL



### Trees

**WESTERN REDCEDAR**—(*Thuja plicata*) Spreading, drooping branches form flat sprays with small, upright flower-like cones. Scale-like leaves arranged in tight, overlapping joints. Stringy bark shreds vertically into long, narrow strips. Of all the plants utilized by the Indians of the Northwest Coast, the redcedar figured most importantly in their everyday lives. Whaling canoes, boxes, bowls, and ceremonial pieces were favored from this tree. Redcedar was also used for diapers, pillows, mats and hats.

**WESTERN HEMLOCK**—(*Tsuga heterophylla*) Small, flat needles, blunt and of unequal lengths, spread horizontally from opposite sides of twig to form spray-like branchlets. Tree top droops. Indians often boiled the juice out of hemlock bark to make a reddish dye for the decoration of ceremonial masks or to make their woven baskets water-tight. The wood also was used for securing bone halibut hooks.

**SITKA SPRUCE**—(*Picea sitchensis*) Seldom occurs great distances from salt water. Drooping branches give weeping appearance. "Bottlebrush," needles stiff, flattened and very prickly. Cones have papery scales. Bark purplish or reddish-brown, flakes in large

scales. The Indians ate the young leaf shoots of Sitka spruce as part of their diet.

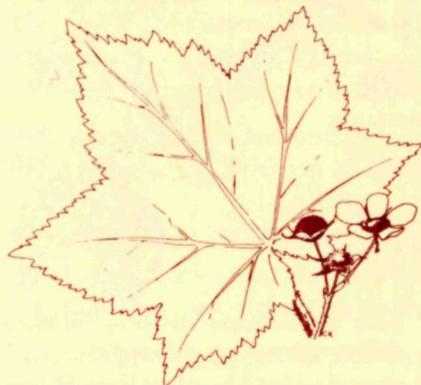
Spruce roots were recognized by the Indians as being tough material, usable for making durable baskets and rain hats. Spruce pitch was used to caulk their dugout canoes and also for protecting harpoon points.

**RED ALDER**—(*Alnus rubra*) Grows in moist, sunlit clearings. Leaves egg-shaped, 3-6" long, have rounded teeth, dark-green above, woody cones green, then brown. Showy male catkins hang like tassels in late March. Red alder is characterized by its white trunk and deciduous habit. The main use by the Indians was for smoking fish (mostly salmon).

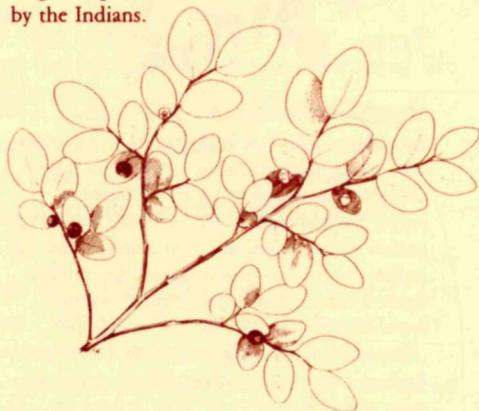
**PACIFIC YEW**—(*Taxus brevifolia*) Unique among our conifers because it produces its seed in the form of a small red berry. It thrives in the shade of forests, canyons and here, in the understory of the bog-edge forest. Its flat needles resemble those of western hemlock but are pointed instead of blunt. Patchy scale-like bark reveals beautiful shades of red and purple. Indian people prized yew wood for its resiliency and strength and from it fashioned bows, harpoons, clubs, paddles and wedges.

## Berries, Shrubs and Flowers

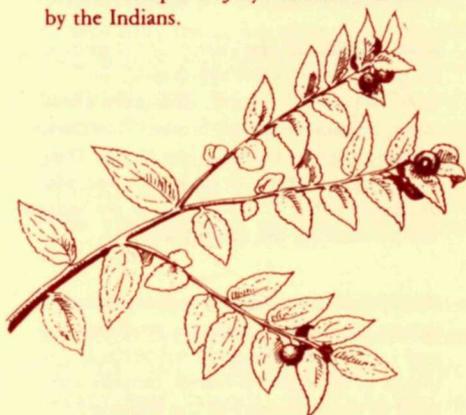
**PACIFIC RED ELDER**—(*Sambucus callicarpa*) 5-7 opposite, toothed leaves. Large shrubs, 6-18' high, yellowish-white flowers May until June. Has small, smooth, red berries July and August. Found along streams and roadsides.



**WESTERN THIMBLEBERRY**—(*Rubus parviflorus*) Widespread shrub with large, hairy maple-like leaves. White flowers in June become bright red "raspberries" in July and August. Sprouts and fresh berries were eaten by the Indians.

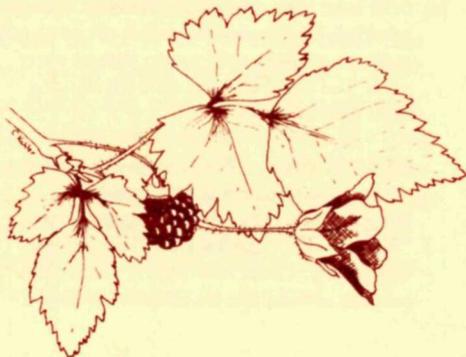


**RED HUCKLEBERRY**—(*Vaccinium alaskaense*) Small, oval, bright-green leaves. Flowers bell-shaped, greenish-white, bloom in May, tart, red berries ripen in July. Berries were eaten by the Indians.

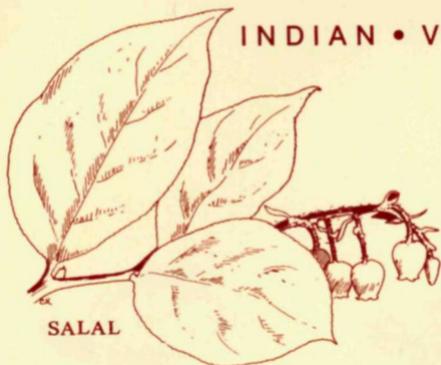


**EVERGREEN HUCKLEBERRY**—(*Vaccinium ovatum*) Grows 3-6' high and has crowded, rather thick leaves. Flowers are pale pinkish bells. Berries were sun or smoked-dried, pressed into cakes and wrapped in leaves for winter use by the Indians.

**SALMONBERRY**—(*Rubus spectabilis*) Brown stems have scattered weak spines. Leaflets usually in threes. Dark pink flowers bloom April to June. Yellow to orange-red berries late June through July. Indians ate the berries fresh and the sprouts were eaten with dried salmon.



## INDIAN • VILLAGE • TRAIL

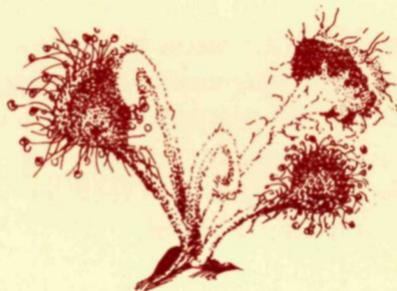


SALAL

**BUNCHBERRY DOGWOOD**—(*Cornus canadensis*) Whorled leaves have parallel curved veins. Clusters of tiny flowers surrounded by showy, white bracts, blossom May to June. The plant has bunches of bright red berries. A miniature copy of the dogwood tree. The Makah Indians ate the berries fresh.



**WILD GINGER**—(*Asarum caudatum*) Brownish-purple flower in May and June often hidden from view beneath heart-shaped leaves. Slight ginger odor. Not used commercially. Found in moist, partially shaded places.

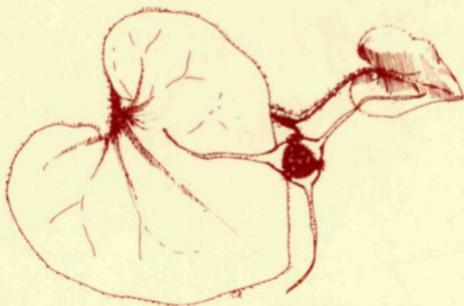


**SALAL**—(*Gaultheria shallon*) Shrubby, grows 1–6' tall. Leathery evergreen oval leaves, white-pink flowers urn-shaped. Blossoms late May through summer, develops hairy, dark berries late July. Indians mashed the berries and dried them in cakes which would be soaked whenever they were needed for food.

BUNCHBERRY



**LABRADOR TEA**—(*Ledum grenlandicum*) It has leathery, elongated leaves. Margins are turned under. The undersides of the leaves are woolly with rust-colored hairs. Clusters of small, white flowers of fifteen or twenty. Tea was made from the dried and boiled leaves of this plant by the Indians and pioneers alike.

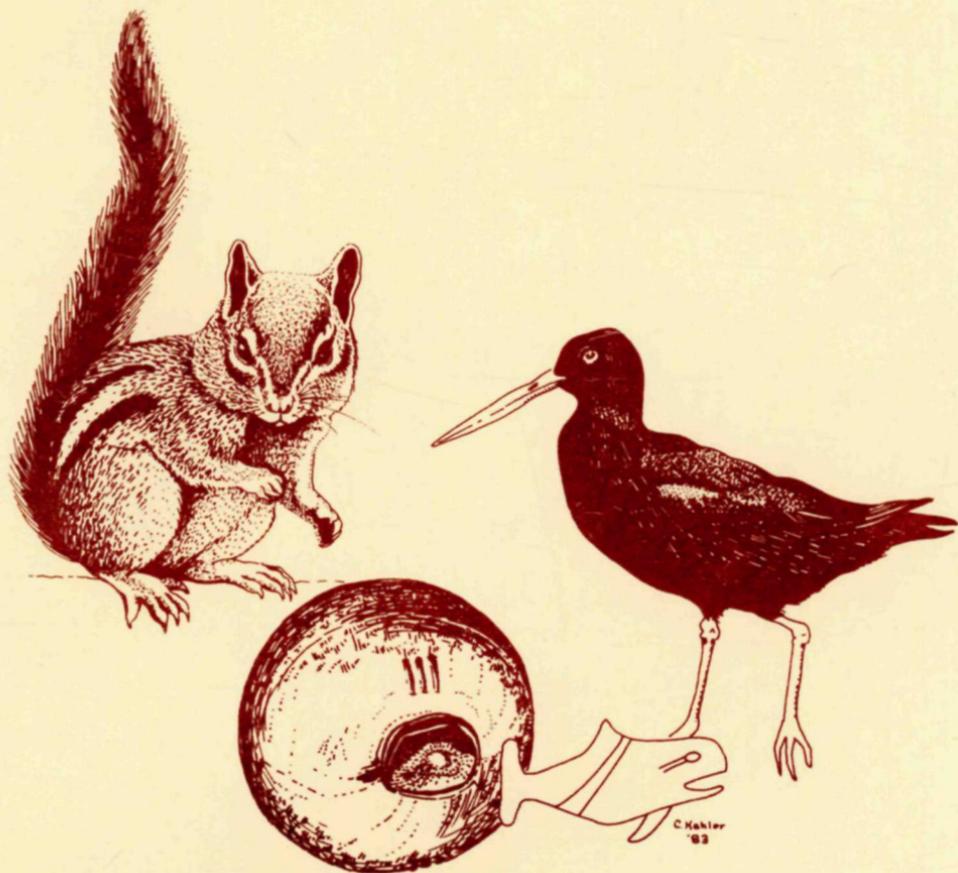


**SUNDEW**—(*Drosera rotundifolia*) Perhaps one of the most unusual flowering plants found along the trail, the Sundew is carnivorous, snaring small insect prey in the sticky, knobbed hairs on the upper surface of its leaves. The few six-petaled white flowers may go unnoticed, since they open only briefly near midday. Look for this plant in Ahlstrom's prairie.



### EPILOGUE . . .

A continent and an ocean meet—thick salt air mixes with the fragrances of a tangled forest. A boundary between two teeming worlds, both rich in their own life forms. They overlap briefly, in a thin line we call the beach. Migrating sea-birds cry above the treetops where flying squirrels sleep. Black-tailed deer feed on nutrient-rich algae stranded on the sand after a storm.



A magnet to people—for centuries we've gathered here, attracted by the awesome expanse of the sea—protected by the shadowy recesses of the forest.

A multitude of forms co-exist. Many strands from two directions merge—in the breakers we hear them collide.



Pacific Northwest National Parks & Forests Association