



A Wilderness Mountain Kingdom

"If there is magic on this planet," Loren Eiseley wrote, "it is contained in water." The diverse magic of the North Cascades—its craggy peaks and blanketing forests, bald eagles and mountain lions—begins as sky-borne waters stored in mountain glaciers and snow pack. Precipitation that falls on protected upper watersheds and headwaters works its way down, all year long, to the Skagit and Stehekin rivers. It arrives still cold, still clean, still clear, life's crucial fuel for astonishing biological diversity. These high mountains, wet on west slopes and dry on the east, provide plants and animals with many niches to exploit. Their complex geology breaks down into many soil types, encouraging

the area's species diversity. These parklands—North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area—are the 10-million-acre North Cascades Ecosystem's protected core. The ecosystem extends from the Columbia River on the east to Puget Sound and from Canada's lower Fraser River on the north to the Snoqualmie River. This is our last chance in the Northwest to save a landscape-scale working sample of nature's dynamic, interpenetrating pathways of life. Everything is connected here: bears, salmon, eagles, humans, forests, glaciers. Indigenous people used this land seasonally, taking salmon or gathering berries, mountain

goat hair, or chert (for stone tools and points) they traded over a wide area. The 260 archeological sites here trace this human presence back 8,000 years. The mission of the National Park Service is to preserve for this and future generations these parklands' majestic mountain scenery, glaciers (more than in any other national park outside Alaska), and other natural and historic features. Despite the dams, the Skagit River still hosts all five species of salmon and two of anadromous or sea-running trout: the steelhead and cutthroat. We know these fish facts, but how much don't we know? Can we save what we don't know we have? A most important job of the National Park Service is to inventory

and monitor—find out what plants and animals are here and then track their health. This groundwork isn't glamorous, but it is vital to our vision for preserving nature. In 1988 Congress designated 93 percent of these parklands for protection under the 1964 Wilderness Act. Wilderness is meant to protect forever the land's natural conditions and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and scientific, educational, and historical values. In wilderness people can sense being a part of the whole community of life on Earth. Preserving wilderness shows restraint and humility—for what we don't know about the land, which ultimately feeds, clothes, and houses all.



Kayakers at Fields Point, Lake Chelan



Heather, with Mount Challenger and Whatcom Peak beyond



Harlequin ducks



Beautiful, nameless waterfalls abound



Copper Lake, one of many alpine lake treasures here

North Cascades National Park

Breathtakingly Beautiful Mountain Scenery

North Cascades National Park contains some of America's most beautiful mountain scenery—high jagged peaks, ridges, slopes, and countless cascading waterfalls. Glaciers scored by crevasses, permanent snowfields, sheer-walled cliffs, spires, and pinnacles challenge mountaineers. Few roads reach into the park, but views can



North face of the southern Picket Range

Planning Your Visit

Information Find information about National Park Service and Forest Service facilities at North Cascades Headquarters in Sedro-Woolley or at national park or forest information or ranger stations at Newhalem, Marblemount, Stehekin, Glacier, or Chelan.

North Cascades National Park
810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
360 854-7200
www.nps.gov/noca

Publication Sales Books, maps, and pamphlets are sold at park headquarters and ranger or information stations by the nonprofit Northwest Interpretive Association. For a free sales list, write to the association at the park address (above), or visit www.nwpubliclands.org.

Seasons and Weather Trails and lakes at lower elevations are usually free of snow from early April to mid-October. Some trails at higher elevations will not open until mid-July. More than 300 miles of maintained trails take you into the park, recreation areas, and adjacent national forest lands. Parking at some trailheads requires a Northwest Forest Pass (fee) available at national park or forest offices and some stores. The western side of the North Cascades gets more rain, is cloudier, and has lower temperatures than the eastern side.

Naturalist Activities Enjoy self-guiding trails, evening programs, and other naturalist activities in the summer season. Get information at any park campground, visitor center, or ranger station.

Accommodations Services are limited, and lodging is found only in the national recreation areas.

Ross Lake National Recreation Area

The Skagit River's Wild Stretches and North Cascades Highway

Ross Lake National Recreation Area protects its namesake lake and stretches of the Skagit River below the dams. As the North Cascades Highway corridor, it also divides the national park units. Bald eagles feed in midwinter on salmon along the river near Bacon Creek and farther downstream (see map). In the high mountains



Ross Lake

Vehicle-access campgrounds on North Cascades Highway are at Goodell, Newhalem, and Colonial creeks, first-come, first-served (no reservations). Group campsites (reservations required) are at Goodell and Newhalem creeks in Ross Lake National Recreation Area, Harlequin in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, and Bridge Creek in North Cascades National Park.

Backcountry Permits Backcountry permits are required for all overnight backcountry use and for boat-in campsites (except on Lake Chelan). The permit system helps to prevent overcrowding and damage to fragile mountain environments. Climbers: please register before making ascents. Most climbing accidents occur when climbers ignore recommended procedures. Ask a ranger for advice and a report on local conditions.

these parklands protect, glaciers release water all summer. The Skagit River provides clean, cold water year round—and river recreation all summer. Just off the highway near Newhalem the North Cascades Visitor Center is open daily spring to fall and on weekends in winter. It provides information, exhibits, audiovisual and ranger-led programs, and short trails. Snow closes the highway from about mid-November to mid-April. Watch for fallen rocks on the road in any season.

Seattle City Light sponsors regular, scheduled tours of Diablo Lake. The reservoirs are scenic water gateways to remote areas. Ross Lake—24 miles long and up to two miles wide—covers 12,000 acres, Diablo Lake 910, and Gorge Lake 210. Newhalem Store sells fishing supplies, food, and souvenirs. Ross Lake resort offers lodging, boat gas, a water taxi, and boat rentals. The only launch facilities for Ross Lake, at its north end at Hozomeen, are reached by a dirt-and-gravel road from Canada (see map).

Warning! The waters of Ross, Diablo, and Gorge lakes and Lake Chelan can be extremely cold from glacial runoff and melting snowfields. Sudden summer storms can lead to hypothermia, the life-threatening rapid loss of core body heat. Take proper precautions.

Boating Diablo Lake has a boat launch at Colonial Creek Campground and Ross Lake at Hozomeen (accessible only from Canada). Gorge Lake has a small launch near the town of Diablo. You can rent small boats at Ross Lake Resort and North Cascades Stehekin Lodge. Skagit River raft trips put in at Goodell Creek Campground. Chelan, Manson, Lake Chelan State Park, and Twenty-five Mile State Park offer boat access to Lake Chelan. Boaters on Lake Chelan must have a dock pass (fee) to use Forest Service or National Park Service docks. There are docks at the lake's lower end that do not require this pass.

Lake Chelan National Recreation Area

The Gateway to the Wilderness

Lake Chelan National Recreation Area is at the north end of 55-mile-long Lake Chelan, a natural lake set in a glacier-carved trough. At 1,486 feet, it is the nation's third deepest lake. Native people started at Lake Chelan on their journey to Cascade Pass to trade. Later, miners and homesteaders arrived at the head of Lake Chelan on



Passenger ferry on Lake Chelan

Hunting and Fishing Hunting is not permitted in North Cascades National Park. Trapping is not permitted in the park or recreation areas, but hunting is permitted in parts of the recreation areas in season. A valid Washington state hunting license is required, and state laws apply.

Washington state fishing licenses are required, and state laws apply.

Regulations and Safety Pets are prohibited in the national park, except on a leash on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Pets are permitted on a leash in the recreation areas.

Fires are permitted only at authorized locations. No firewood gathering in campgrounds—use local firewood vendors.

their way to the Black Warrior mine at Horseshoe Basin. Today, travelers visit the small wilderness-edge community of Stehekin, set along the Stehekin River amid towering mountains. Visitors must boat, hike, or fly into Stehekin. A passenger ferry travels between Chelan and Stehekin and provides visitors views of the fjord-like lake-shore, waterfalls, and wildlife.

Visitors to Stehekin enjoy the 312-foot Rainbow Falls and the historic Buckner Orchard. Hiking, fishing, kayaking, river rafting, and winter skiing are just a few recreation opportunities found in the Stehekin Valley. Numerous trailheads along the interior Stehekin road lead into surrounding wilderness areas. The Golden West Visitor Center, just up the hill from the Stehekin Landing, provides information, camping permits, exhibits, an orientation video, ranger-led programs, and guided hikes. Lodging, meals, postal service, and limited convenience items are available in summer in Stehekin. No cell phone service or cash machines are available, so come prepared.

Before you drink any water from any untreated source, treat it by an approved method. Use extreme caution outside the developed areas. Falls in rugged terrain have resulted in fatalities. Cross unbridged streams with caution, especially during spring's runoff; slippery stream bottoms and swift currents can knock you down and sweep you away.

Bears Bears and other wild animals are attracted to food odors and to many other odors—like toothpaste and fuel—that may not say "food" to you. Lock food and associated items—dishes, cooking equipment, ice chests—in your vehicle at night or anytime you are away from camp. In the backcountry keep a clean camp and hang your food and other odorous items properly. You can borrow a bear-resistant food canister from the park staff. Do not feed wildlife, even unintentionally. Help keep wildlife wild.

Exploring North Cascades

North Cascades Highway

Access To reach the North Cascades, drive Washington State Route 20, the North Cascades Highway, from Burlington on the west and Twisp on the east. It is considered the most scenic mountain drive in Washington. Vehicle access to Ross Lake is by unimproved road from Canada only. Stehekin is reached only by boat, floatplane from Chelan, or trail; there is no vehicle access.

DO NOT USE THIS MAP FOR HIKING

The highway passes Gorge, Diablo, and Ross lakes in Ross Lake National Recreation Area. Only Gorge and Diablo can be reached by vehicle from State Route 20. Stop at the Diablo Lake Overlook for great views of Diablo Lake, Sourdough Mountain; Davis, Colonial, and Pyramid peaks; and the Skagit River drainage.

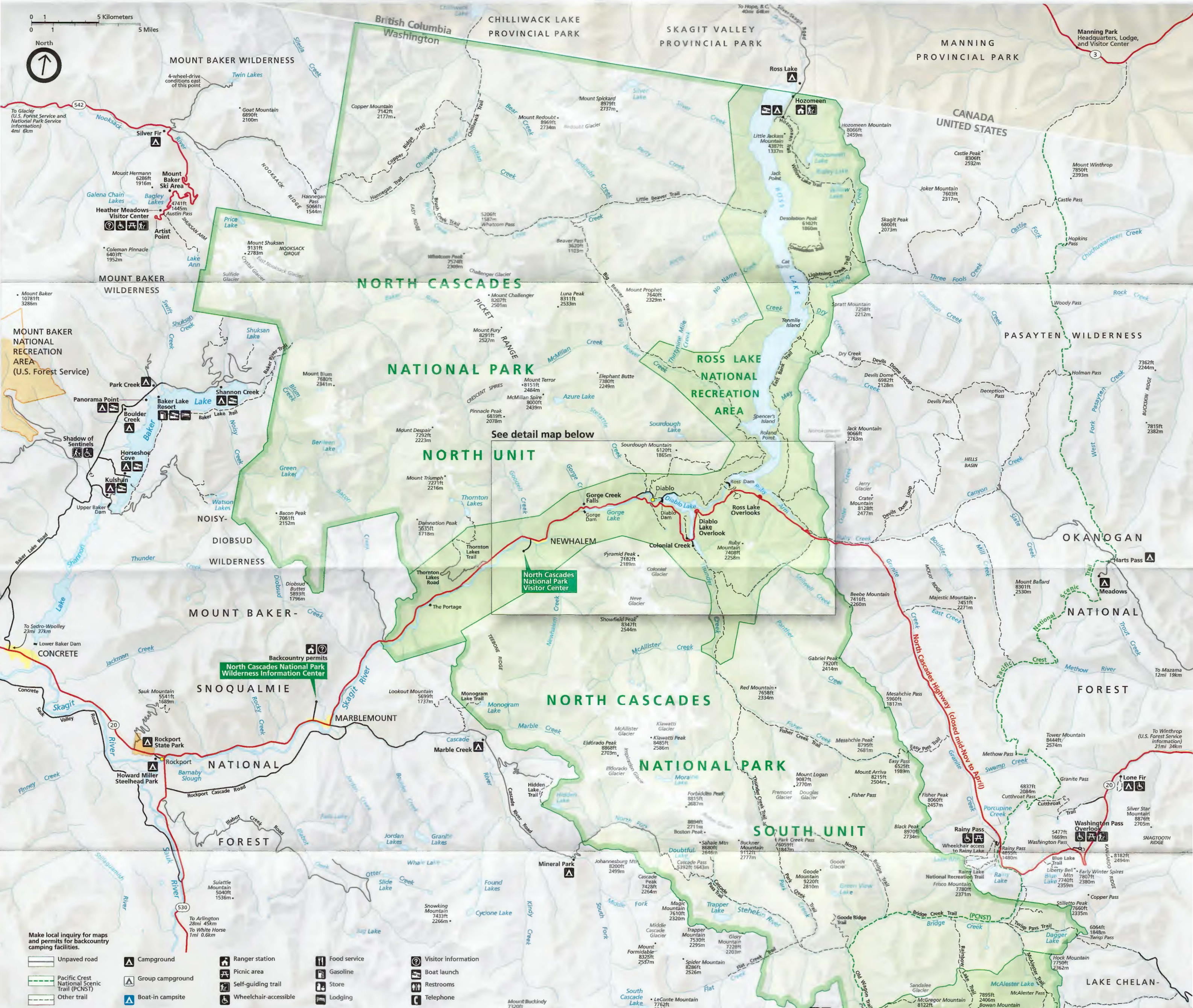
Happy Creek Forest Walk is a short, wheelchair-accessible boardwalk through an old-growth forest. Accessible trails are also at Gorge Creek Overlook and near the North Cascades Visitor Center in Newhalem. Wayside exhibits and views of Ross Lake and other points of interest are found at roadside turnouts in the Ross Lake area. The North Cascades Visitor Center at Newhalem introduces the natural and cultural history of this diverse and rugged park. Ask about other accessible trails in the area.

Rainy and Washington passes in Okanogan National Forest to the east provide rest stop and picnic facilities. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail crosses the highway at Rainy Pass, elevation 4,855 feet. A one-mile walk to a subalpine lake, Rainy Lake National Recreation Trail begins near the Rainy Lake rest stop and is wheelchair-accessible. At Washington Pass, elevation 5,477 feet, near the rest stop and picnic area, an overlook has breathtaking views of the Cascade Mountains. Baker Lake area of Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest has camping, boating, fishing, hiking, and picnicking.

Posted speed limits for State Route 20 are often lower than the statewide limit; obey them. Use the roadside turnouts to see the scenery safely. Drive with caution and watch for pedestrians or hikers on road shoulders, rocks in the roadway, wildlife, bicyclists, and drivers who may be less careful.

Wilderness Some 93 percent of the park and recreation areas is designated as the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Mather served as the first director of the National Park Service.

North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake and Lake Chelan national recreation areas are three of over 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.



North Cascades Highway detail

