



Vine Maple
COURTESY DAVID SAYDOR

Hoary Marmot
COURTESY MICHAEL SEVERMAN

Rainbow Falls, 312 feet high
NPS / MICHAEL LUNGS

Desolation Peak Fire Lookout
COURTESY BAKE TSMOYAN

Climbers on Mount Challenger, North Picket Range
© JOHN DITTL

Harlequin ducks
© ROBERT KUNZEL

Top: Looking south from Sourdough Mountain Trail
NPS PHOTO

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

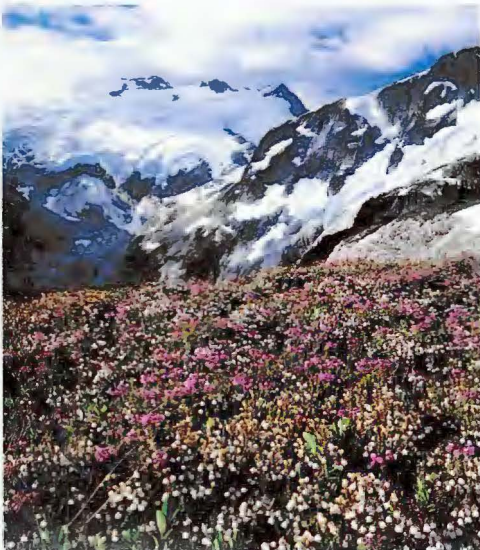
area’s species diversity. These parklands—North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area—are the North Cascades Ecosystem’s protected core. The ecosystem extends from the Columbia River on the east to Puget Sound and from Canada’s lower Fraser River on the north to the Snoqualmie River. This is an opportunity to save a landscape-scale working sample of nature’s dynamic, inter-connecting 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, which they

traded over a wide area. The 270 archeological sites here trace the human presence back nearly 10,000 years. The National Park Service mission is to preserve for this and future generations these parklands’ majestic mountain scenery, glaciers (more than any other national park outside Alaska), and other natural and historic features. The Skagit River hosts all five species of Pacific salmon, coastal cutthroat and rainbow (steelhead) trout, and two species of native char, the bull trout and Dolly Varden. The river also hosts hydroelectric dams that provide electricity to surrounding communities. An important job of the National Park Service is to inventory and monitor—to find out what plants and animals

are here and then to track their health. This groundwork is vital to our vision for preserving nature. In 1988 Congress designated 94 percent of these parklands for protection as the Stephen Mather Wilderness under the 1964 Wilderness Act. Mather was the first director of the National Park Service. Wilderness is meant to protect forever the land’s natural conditions, 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 toward the land, which ultimately feeds, clothes, and houses all.



Kayaking on Devils Creek near Ross Lake



Heather, with Mount Challenger and Whatcom Peak



Upper Curtis Glacier on Mount Shuksan in North Cascades National Park

North Cascades National Park

Majestic 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 U.S. Forest Service facilities at the Park and Forest Information Center in Sedro-Woolley or at information centers in Newhalem, Marblemount, Stehekin, Glacier, or Chelan. Service animals are welcome. For firearms regulations check the park website or ask a ranger.

Bookstore Sales Books, maps, and various gifts are sold at park headquarters and ranger or information stations by North Cascades Institute.

Trails and Hiking Nearly 400 miles of maintained trails allow hikers to experience North Cascades National Park Complex and adjacent national forest lands. Trails and lakes at lower elevations are usually free of snow from early April to mid-October. Some trails at higher elevations are not snow-free until

be had on clear days from North Cascades Visitor Center and North Cascades Highway at Goodell Creek, Diablo Lake Overlook, or other points. The 23-mile Cascade River Road (only the first 10 miles are paved) gives summer and fall access to the park and to Cascade Pass Trailhead. Most hikers enter the national park from trailheads along the North Cascades Highway. Others may enter from trailheads along Cascade River Road and Stehekin Valley or via Forest Service trails next to the park.

From some park trails endless views unfold of glacially sculpted mountain landscapes. Flower-sprinkled hillsides and meadows persist long into summer at high elevations. For flowering plants on high passes and in alpine meadows, spring and fall may occur in the same week. There are over 1,700 plant species here: many ferns and fungi; hundreds of birds, reptiles, and amphibians; and thousands of insects. Many scientists feel our planet’s future lies in biological diversity that is preserved in protected natural areas.

Naturalist Activities Enjoy self-guided trails, evening programs, and other ranger activities in the summer season. North Cascades Institute offers family-friendly educational programs at the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center. Find summer activity schedules on the North Cascades website.

Accommodations Lodging can be found on Ross Lake, in Stehekin, and at the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center.

Ross Lake National Recreation Area

Recreational Opportunities Abound

Ross Lake National Recreation Area protects the lake it is named for and stretches of the Skagit River below the dams. Bald eagles feed in midwinter on salmon along the river near Bacon Creek and farther on downstream. In the high mountains these parklands protect, glaciers release water all summer. The Skagit River provides



Climbing Desolation Peak above Ross Lake

Campgrounds Vehicle-access campgrounds at Goodell Creek, Newhalem Creek, Colonial Creek, and Hozomeen are first-come, first-served. Reservations are required for group campsites at Goodell Creek and available for a limited portion of Newhalem Creek.

Backcountry Permits Backcountry permits are required year-round for all overnight backcountry stays. They are also required for boat-in campsites, except on Lake Chelan. Voluntary registers for climbers are available at all ranger stations.

Boating Gorge Lake has a boat launch near the town of Diablo. Diablo Lake has a boat launch at Colonial Creek Campground. Ross Lake has a boat launch at Hozomeen—accessible from Canada, not from Highway 20. Ross Lake Resort rents canoes,

clean, cold water year round—and river recreation all summer. Just off the highway near Newhalem, the North Cascades Visitor Center is open daily May through October. It provides information, exhibits, audiovisuals, 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. Skagit General Store in Newhalem sells fishing supplies, food, and souvenirs. Ross Lake Resort (no road access) offers lodging, boat gas, a water taxi, boat rentals, and a portage between Diablo and Ross lakes. A gravel road from Canada, at the north end at Hozomeen, reaches the only launch facilities for Ross Lake.

kayaks, and small motorboats, and offers portage service between Diablo and Ross Lakes. Skagit River has a raft launch at Goodell Creek Campground. Chelan, Manson, Lake Chelan State Park, and Twenty-five Mile State Park offer boat access to Lake Chelan. Summer boaters on Lake Chelan must have a dock pass (fee) to use U.S. Forest Service or National Park Service docks.

Safety Considerations Weather can change quickly in all seasons. Dress in layers and know the potential conditions of your surroundings. • The waters of Ross, Diablo, and Gorge lakes and Lake Chelan can be extremely cold from glacial runoff and melting snowfields. • Treat all water from creeks, rivers, and lakes before drinking. • Use caution when crossing streams, especially in the spring and during rainfall.

Lake Chelan National Recreation Area

Gateway to the Wilderness

Lake Chelan National Recreation Area is at the north end of 50-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 traveled Lake Chelan on their journey to Cascade Pass to trade. Later, miners and homesteaders traveled the Stehekin Valley on their way to



Passenger ferry on Lake Chelan

Leave No Trace Plan ahead and prepare for outdoor recreation by learning the Leave No Trace principles at www.lnt.org. You can help keep waters clean, minimize impacts from campfires, reduce negative encounters with wildlife, and prevent damage to sensitive ecosystems.

Food Storage Proper food storage is a critical consideration for the health of wild animals and human safety. Bears and other wildlife are attracted to food and other odorous items, such as toothpaste and fuel. Please keep a clean camp and store food and related items in a hard-sided vehicle or storage container. In backcountry sites without containers, please borrow a bear-resistant food canister from the park for free or hang your food properly. Please do not feed wild animals, even unintentionally, and help us keep wildlife wild.

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, fly, or hike into Stehekin. Passenger ferries and a float plane travel between Chelan and Stehekin and provide visitors views of the fjord-like lakeshore, 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 beginning in the Stehekin Valley lead into surrounding wilderness areas. The Golden West Visitor Center, just up the hill from the Stehekin Landing, provides information, camping permits, exhibits, video, and ranger-led programs. 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.

Fishing and Hunting Fishing is allowed in North Cascades National Park Complex. Washington state fishing licenses are required and state laws apply. Hunting is permitted only in Lake Chelan and Ross Lake national recreation areas. Washington state hunting licenses are required and state laws apply. Trapping is not permitted anywhere in Washington State.

Pets Pets are allowed on leash in Ross Lake and Lake Chelan national recreation areas and along the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

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

Exploring North Cascades

North Cascades Highway

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

State Route 20 passes Gorge, Diablo, and Ross lakes in Ross Lake National Recreation Area. Only Gorge and Diablo can be reached by a 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 offers 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 Over 94 percent of the park and recreation areas is designated as the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area.

North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake and Lake Chelan national recreation areas are three of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

DO NOT USE THIS MAP FOR HIKING



North Cascades Highway detail

