



*Dedicated to the preservation & promotion of the Klickitat Trail*

**Klickitat Trail Conservancy**  
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**The Mission** of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy is to preserve and promote the public use of the 31 mile Klickitat Trail as a recreational, cultural, natural, educational, and economic asset of Klickitat County.

**Members** strongly support the purposes, goals, and objectives of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy.

**Trail Notes** is a semi-annual publication of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy. Submissions are welcome. Articles, photos and comments can be sent to PO Box 512 Lyle, WA 98635 or emailed to info@klickitat-trail.org.

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Become a trail  
steward.  
See how on page four.

## The Oaks of Klickitat County

By Donna Enz

Every October magic happens along the Klickitat Trail. Amber hues turn green hills to cinematic bliss. Spring brings a show of wild flowers. In autumn it's the oaks that become headliners. So what's the fuss all about?

The charm of this tree lies in centuries of cold winters, hot dry summers, wind and rain. *Quercus garryana*, commonly known as Oregon white oak, or Garry oak, is slow growing to 90 feet with strong gnarled branches that seem to defy gravity. It can sometimes reach an astonishing age of 500 years. It is Washington State's only native oak and 90% of the great Oregon white oak stands are found in Klickitat County. Some of the best places to see them is along the Klickitat Trail. These savannahs and combined oak-pine woodlands offer important habitat for at-risk mammals and birds that rely on the insects, nesting cavities, roosting habitat, and acorns that the oaks provide.

According to the Oregon Oak Communities Working Group, Oregon white oak savannahs and woodlands are among the most endangered ecological communities in the Pacific Northwest. Human activities have left only a few strong stands in Oregon, Washington, California and British Columbia. Prior to European settlers, Native Americans regularly set fire to the forests, which played an important role in natural oak regeneration. This practice was abandoned by Europeans leading to oaks being replaced by dense mixed conifer forests. Grazing cattle and timber conversion have also led to oak decline. Oregon white oak cannot compete within these forests for light which they require to grow and thrive. Groups like the Columbia Land Trust and many land owners are thinning oak woodlands to bring them back to a healthy state which will benefit at-risk animals like the Western gray squirrel, Lewis' woodpecker and the Acorn woodpecker.

Large oak stands can be seen along the Klickitat Trail throughout the Klickitat River Valley and lower Swale Canyon. Mid to late October is the best time to witness the hills aglow and marvel at the history that this long lived tree has witnessed. October is my favorite time to ride my bike through Swale Canyon. Crisp air is enticing, but it is the trees showing their autumn best that draws me in.



## Fall Bird of Note—The Sharpie

By Cathy Flick

*Klickitat Rails-to-Trails'* fall bird of note is the sharp-shinned hawk. Better known as "sharpie," this accipiter is the most common migrant flying over the *Bonney Butte HawkWatch International* site on the Mt. Hood National Forest (<http://www.hawkwatch.org/publications/Technical%20Reports/Bonney%20Butte%202008%20report.pdf>). The sharp-shinned hawk gets its name because the "shins" of its legs are unusually sharp.

"The sharp-shinned hawk is a small, slender, feisty accipiter, with short, rounded wings and a long, narrow tail. Like other accipiters, it is a pursuit-hunter that does not remain in view for very long. "Females are almost *two times* larger than males - being the most sexually different in physical structure within the hawk world.

The sharpie is confused with the Cooper's hawk. Ever-so-subtle differences between the two include "a proportionally smaller head in the sharpie—a feature that is used to identify the bird when on the wing and perched. The adult sharp-shinned also lacks a prominent dark cap of the Cooper's hawk (cap and back color do not contrast strongly in sharp-shinned), while the juvenile sharp-shinned has a more prominent eyebrow stripe, more underside streaking (some birds streaked, some with spotting), and less white on tip of tail than juvenile Cooper's hawk."

Most frequently, we KTCers see sharpies in winter at our backyard bird feeders. These hawks are not after seed but after small birds as their preferred food. According to Cornell Lab of Ornithology, *All About Birds'* website, "The habit of hunting around bird feeders has been suggested as an explanation for the decrease in numbers of sharp-shinned hawks seen at eastern hawk watch [sites]. Fewer hawks may be migrating south, preferring instead to stay farther north near a dependable food source: feeder birds."

"The sharpie's extremely secretive nature on its breeding and wintering grounds generally works to its advantage. It is [and historically has been] most vulnerable during [spring and fall] migration."

An often-asked question is if it is okay to shoot an accipiter on our own accord if it is killing our backyard chickens. The answer is no, all accipiters are Federally protected under *The Migratory Bird Treaty Act*, amended in 1972 to include **ALL** raptors. This means that we can *best care* for our chickens by thoughtfully using our amazingly creative minds to develop a secure shelter to protect them from their numerous natural predators.

Join Cathy Flick and Franklin Petersen on September 27th for a *Hood River Community Education* fieldtrip (<http://www.hoodriver.k12.or.us/coe/site/default.asp>) to the Bonney Butte *HawkWatch International* site to watch the spectacular fall movement of hawks overhead. A *HawkWatch* site educator will share some interesting facts about hawk migration in this area of the Pacific Northwest. We are also likely to see a banded hawk close-up and see it released into the sky.

**Reference:** Bildstein, Keith L. and Ken Meyer. 2000. Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/482>



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## "A real asset to the area"

To KTC March 31, 2009

My two daughters and I had a delightful ride on the trail during spring break. We left from Lyle and stayed overnight at Rhonda's Cottage and were picked up the next day at Warwick.

My girls rode simple mountain bikes and I rode an old 1981 Schwinn road bike. We took our time and made our way very well. The youngest girl was 9 years old. We were very proud of her.

We only encountered one other trail user at the toilets in Pitt. We found the trail quite friendly. The rough spots gave it some character and we were happy throughout. It was pretty neat being able to turn it into two day trips and dine out and sleep in real beds.

I was hoping for more wild flowers. The flowers were best on the river section.

We definitely will do it again. A real asset to the area.

Thank You  
> Michael Young, The Dalles

**Note: The best flower show on the trail comes between late April and May**

## KTC Hiking Schedule, Fall 2009

The following are KTC scheduled events. Everyone is welcome! Please visit [www.klickitat-trail.org](http://www.klickitat-trail.org) for more details, schedule changes and maps. Always remember to bring plenty of water and lunch or a snack. The Trail has little elevation change. It can be rocky in places, so good hiking boots are a must. Dress accordingly for the weather. **Pets and smoking are not allowed** on KTC sponsored events. Please stay on the Trail at all times.

### DIRECTIONS

**Lyle Trailhead** is located on the west end of Lyle, WA on the corner of SR-14 and SR-142. Look for the Klickitat Trail sign. From Portland, take I-84 east to the Hood River Bridge. Cross into Washington and turn east on SR-14, to Lyle. From The Dalles, cross The Dalles bridge (Hwy 197) and turn west on SR-14 to Lyle. There is a portable toilet at this location.

**Old Mill Building** is in the town of Klickitat, on the east side of Hwy. 142, just past Huntington's Bar and Grill on the north end of town.

### Saturday, October 3 Geology Auto Tour and Hike Hike Leader: Jim Denton

Meet at Lyle and drive up the Klickitat River at least as far as Wahkiacus, and possibly to Harms Rd and Warwick stopping at points of geological interest along the way. The auto tour will be followed by a 2-4 mile hike either from Wahkiacus to the Klickitat Mineral Springs or on the section of trail between Harms Rd and Warwick.

**Meeting Place:** 9:00 AM at the **Lyle Trailhead**.

### Saturday Oct. 10th - 7th Anniversary Hike Hike - Fisher Hill Bridge to Pitt, WA Hike Leaders Barbara Robinson, Jim Minick and Donna Enz

Easy to Moderate; 4 or 8 miles, 100-ft. elev. Gain  
Come to the Klickitat River Valley, enjoy the fall colors and join Klickitat Trail Conservancy members for their **7th anniversary hike**. This relaxed hike, with little elevation gain, is great for families and hikers who enjoy leisurely outings. This can be a short 4 mile hike or, for those more adventurous, an 8 mile hike from Fisher Hill Bridge to Pitt. We will follow the Wild and Scenic Klickitat River on both of these hikes. Water, lunch and hiking boots advised.

**Meeting Place:** 9:30 AM at the **Lyle Trailhead**

### Saturday, October 17 Bike Maintenance Basics 9:00 AM until Noon

In this three hour class learn to evaluate your brakes, gears and wheels to prevent mechanical problems on the road. Bring your bikes, tools, and portable repair stands if you have them. We'll make adjustments to brakes and gears that would be appropriate before or during a ride.



Fee: \$10 per person includes instruction and handouts  
Class size limit: 10 people

Instructor: Portia Masterson, retired bicycle retailer and professional bike mechanic with 25 years experience.

To register call Portia Masterson 509-281-0631 or email her at [portia.masterson@gmail.com](mailto:portia.masterson@gmail.com)

**Meeting Place:** 9:00 AM - **Old Mill Building**

### Saturday, October 24 Swale Canyon Bike Ride Bike leaders: Donna Enz and Jim Denton

Moderate/Strenuous: 12 to 15 miles 1,000-ft. elev. LOSS.  
Pace of the ride will be moderate. Come with us and be prepared to be amazed, enjoy the ride and refresh your soul in the cool fall air. We will ride from the high prairie of the Goldendale plateau down to the Klickitat River. Experience fall colors as we follow Swale Creek through the oak, pine and Douglas fir riparian habitats. The trail surface varies from small gravel to large gravel, packed soil and some obstacles to walk around. It also includes a couple of short trestle crossings.

Helmets, a spare tube and front suspension required.

**Meeting Place:** 9:00 AM at the **Lyle Trailhead** *Please contact Donna Enz, or by e-mail [atdenz@hughes.net](mailto:atdenz@hughes.net), if you plan to participate so that appropriate shuttle arrangements can be made in advance.*

### Saturday January 30 Eagle Spotting at Klickitat-Balfour Park Led by Wildlife Biologist Cathy Flick

Experience an educational winter field outing for bald eagles at Balfour Park. Cathy Flick will come armed with a spotting scope, give a life-history overview, and introduce you to specific year-round pairs in the area. Part of the outing will involve a short walk. Bring binoculars, or a spotting scope, and dress warmly. There are toilet facilities at the Park.

**Meeting Place:** 10:00 AM **Klickitat-Balfour Park**

Access from **SR-14** - heading east just before the Klickitat River turn left (north) onto Old Hwy 8. Follow Old Hwy 8 for approximately 1/4 mile to the parking lot on the east side of the road.

### KTC Salutes Laurie Wilhite

KTC is saying farewell to a dedicated four year KTC board member, Laurie Wilhite. Laurie has been an active part of KTC "Work Parties" along with her husband Don, and two sons Fletcher and Casey. Laurie's driving force for "Kanyon" Kids Mapping program was noted in the Trail Notes fall 2007 which involved putting mile numbers on rocks along the trail. The Klickitat county schools have been involved for several years with the Klickitat Trail through hiking, science, and history activities coordinated by Laurie. Teaching, family, and other worthwhile pursuits are taking her in other directions but Laurie still plans to be in the background supporting the Klickitat Trail.

\*\*\*Thank you Laurie\*\*\*

## Trail Work and Progress 2009

### Before



By Jim Denton

This spring the KTC began the large and long awaited project of decking the trestles in Swale Canyon. There are 7 old railroad trestles on the Swale Canyon section of the trail varying in length from about twenty feet to over 200 feet long. Our plan is to start at Harms Rd and work down stream repairing and decking the trestles as we go. Each trestle will require the removal and replacement of rotten or badly split ties and the installation of 2x12 planking across the width of the trestle. At the time of this writing the Harms Rd trestle is done and fully ready for use. It took 4 full days of labor on site for KTC crews to do the work, plus many more hours behind the scene to gather tools and stage the materials.

Harms Rd trestle was of medium size as the Swale Canyon trestles go and had by far the best access, so several of the other trestles will

be considerable bigger projects. In the fall of this year we are hoping to get two additional trestles done. The next trestle down stream from the Harms Rd trestle is a small trestle over a small dry tributary, which will be followed by what I believe, is the largest trestle in the canyon. No dates are yet set, but I am hoping to do the small trestle during late September and the larger one during October and November.

### TRAIL STEWARDS NEEDED

The time has come for KTC along with Washington State Parks and the US Forest Service to set up a stewardship program so that annual trail work gets done in a timely manner than we have been able to do by scheduling work parties every week or two during the spring and early summer. Way too much of the work needs doing at nearly the same time all along the trail. With a stewardship program more work can be done concurrently. We intend to divide the trail into 2 to 4 miles sections that can be readily maintained by a couple, a small group of individuals, or other entities. Each stewardship section should require a pair of stewards to spend 2-3 eight hour days maintaining their section. Larger projects like the trestle work and the removal of large winter slides would still be done by larger KTC work crews.

If you are interested in becoming a trail steward please contact me by phone at (541) 354-1604 or email at [Wildthings@gorge.net](mailto:Wildthings@gorge.net).



After

## Fun and Adventure Await You



### Become a KTC Member

Your membership in the Klickitat Trail Conservancy (KTC) is critical to our success. The annual renewal notices are mailed twice a year, in the Spring and in the Fall. If you already renewed your annual membership earlier this year, we thank you for your support. If you receive a renewal letter this coming Fall, we hope you will take action to continue your support. Here are some of the ways your membership dollars are utilized:

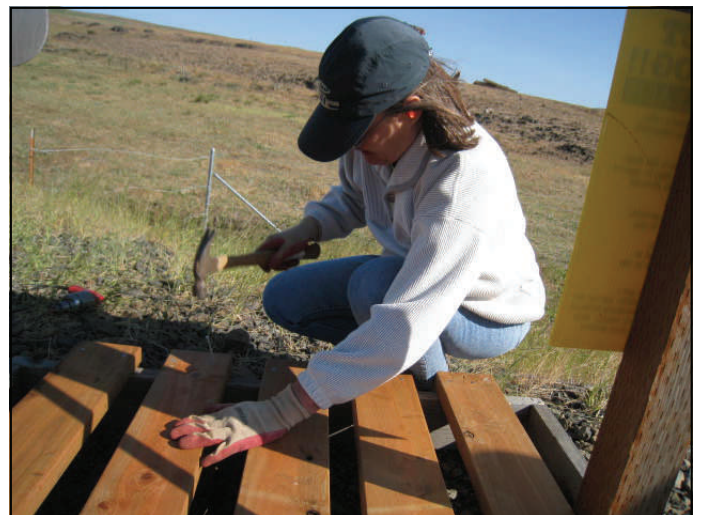
- Enables us to keep you abreast of new trail developments and happenings via our listserv, website, and newsletters.
- Supports our ability to provide portable toilets at trail heads and install new gates and fences.

100% of your annual membership contribution is used to help us continue to preserve and promote public use of the Klickitat Trail.

If you are not an existing member of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy and would like to become a member, please complete the form in this newsletter, or copy the one on our website at <http://www.klickitat-trail.org/membership.htm>, and mail it to us. Your continued support is vital and keeps our mission alive. **Thank you – we couldn't do it without you!**



**Now is the time to volunteer for a work party. Volunteers are needed for everything from removing railroad ties to nailing down boards. Work party dates will be announced by email on the list serve. You are needed!**



## Oct. 10th Anniversary Hike

Join KTC board members for our 7th anniversary hike from Fisher Hill to Pitt.

**We will have two hiking options.**

One group will do a short out and back.

The other group will do the entire 8 miles, your choice.



**A tailgate breakfast will be provided by the KTC board.  
See hike schedule on page three for details.**

**See you there!!**

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