



Koma Kulshan Chapter WNPS Newsletter

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Find Koma Kulshan Online

Website: www.wnpskoma.org
Facebook: WNPSKomaKulshan

Past Zoom Meetings

Despite the pandemic, the Koma Kulshan Chapter continued to hold meetings in 2020, and will do so in 2021, but in an online format.

Past WNPS seminars are archived online: <https://tinyurl.com/yan3hh6c>

Past Koma Kulshan presentations:

Chasing Blue Carbon on the Arabian Peninsula:
<https://tinyurl.com/ybz2f226>

The Evolution of Temperate Vegetation in North America:
<https://tinyurl.com/y86lnqqa>

Summer Adventures with Koma Kulshan Chapter Members:
<https://tinyurl.com/y7n7psp5>

Reconstructing Past Climate using Tree-ring Data from Ancient Bristlecone Pines:
<https://tinyurl.com/ydfr3de3>

There are more presentations archived at <https://tinyurl.com/yan3hh6c>. Topics include virtual fieldtrips, plant microbiomes, native plant gardening, attracting birds, and native plant identification, among many others.

Winter (January, February, March) 2021

President's Corner

by Allan Richardson

Your WNPS chapter is active, despite the coronavirus pandemic. It would be wonderful to have in person meetings again with so much botanical sharing, as well as human contact and socializing. Maybe we can meet together in the spring, but that will depend on the COVID situation. As you can see elsewhere in this newsletter, we are resuming field trips with strict limitations. A group of six masked native plant enthusiasts meeting at a trailhead is certainly better than no outings at all! These limited field trips are likely to continue into the spring, with normal field trips in the summer. Our spring series of introductory plant walks may or may not happen. A decision on holding the Native Flora Fair in the end of April is mostly up to Bellingham City Parks, but we could have a plant sale on our own if the big event is cancelled.

We are reasonably confident that the virus will be under control and we will have the planned native plant stewardship class late in 2021. The class will be taught by Abe Lloyd and is tentatively set to begin on August 26. The City of Bellingham and WNPS are committed to the plan, but it needs to be an in person, hands on class. Our new chapter efforts in native plant conservation detailed below should not be impacted much by the pandemic, but in person activities will be welcome as soon as they are allowed. We will continue to follow guidelines from the CDC, the governor's office, and the state WNPS office, so in the short term most of our activities will continue to be virtual.

Wild Relatives of US Crop Plants Require Urgent Conservation Action

by Jim Davis (cont'd p 2)

An article by Colin Khoury and colleagues¹ has identified the wild relatives of major crop plants in the US and developed an inventory to select priorities for wild plant conservation. Important US crops referenced in the article include cereals, fruits, nuts, oils, pulses, roots, tubers, and vegetables. The authors argue that conservation of the wild relatives of these crop plants is critical for maintaining access to the genetic diversity that will allow response to changing climates and other conditions affecting US crop plants (e.g., crop diseases).

The study compiled occurrence information, modeled potential distributions, conducted threat assessments, and developed a conservation gap analysis of the wild relatives of these US crop plants. The results include 600 native plant taxa with predicted distributions across the US, Canada, and Mexico. More than 57% of these taxa were determined to be critically endangered or endangered across their natural habitats. The study also determined that 59% of the taxa were in need of urgent conservation action.

The highest predicted hot spot for taxonomic richness of the crop wild relatives in the US (for native plants most closely related to crop plants) included multiple Midwest/northeast states from Missouri to Pennsylvania. Important native taxa in this area are primarily fruits, nuts, oils, and vegetables. Western Washington and Oregon were also found to be a diversity hot spot relative to other areas in the continental US. Important native taxa in our area are primarily fruits and vegetables. Most of these native species are included in the *Vaccinium*, *Rubus*, and *Ribes* genera. Hot spots for other important native taxa included most western states (cereals), the Mississippi River valley (nuts), and southern coastal states (sugars).

Native plant enthusiasts in Whatcom County of course recognize the importance of the vaccinium, rubus, and ribes genera to our natural ecosystems. Taxa from these genera are found primarily in subalpine meadows; avalanche chutes; burns less than 30 years old; forest openings caused by

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Wild Crop Relatives (cont'd from p1)

insects, diseases, wind, and old-growth tree fall; shoreline margins along rivers, streams, and lakes; and open forested habitats along the coast. For better or worse, many species in these genera are also found in logged areas, crop field margins, pastures, and urban areas.

It was rewarding to encounter this whole new reason for loving our native plants. Now we have even more motivation to protect and restore our diverse flowering plant habitats in Whatcom County.

1 C. K. Khoury et al., Crop wild relatives of the United States require urgent conservation action. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America. December 14, 2020 (<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2007029117>).

Stewardship and Conservation

by Allan Richardson

The stated mission of the Washington Native Plant Society is “To promote the appreciation and conservation of Washington’s native plants and their habitats through study, education, and advocacy.” In practice, conservation activities include stewardship, conservation in a narrower sense, and much of our work in education. Since the Koma Kulshan chapter has recently formed a Stewardship Committee and may soon add a Conservation Committee, it seems a good time to clarify what we mean by stewardship and conservation in the WNPS.

Stewardship emphasizes hands on work, as is evidenced by our chapter stewardship committee's vision statement: “Native plant stewardship is the care, protection, and responsible use of native plants and the habitats where they grow, and the enhancement and restoration of those habitats. Stewardship activities include the following: protection of natural areas from destruction and damage; public education regarding the value of native plants and natural habitats, and the need for their care, protection, and responsible use; removal of invasive species; restoration of degraded areas to a more natural state; improving the habitat value of areas of mixed native and non-native vegetation.”

Conservation focuses more on policies and their implementation. The WNPS Conservation Statement posted on the state website includes: “The Washington Native Plant Society advocates for ecological land management practices and policies that conserve native plants and native plant habits on public and private lands in Washington....Advocacy includes, but is not limited to, endorsements, statements, research, and intervention activities that support the protection of native plant diversity, native habitats, and associated ecosystem services.”

The chapter conservation proposal states: “The Committee will draft policy statements, educate the public, write letters, circulate petitions, develop legislative proposals, and provide support for and/or endorse the conservation initiatives of partners.”

In conclusion, stewardship and conservation are two complimentary aspects of the active care of native plants and habitats. Both include educational activities beyond education for young students, which is the main emphasis of the state WNPS Education Committee. Never stop appreciating native plants, but don't forget they need our help for their survival!

WNPS Strategic Plan

The Washington Native Plant Society has completed its strategic plan for 2021-2023. The organization's mission is “To promote the appreciation and conservation of Washington's native plants and their habitats through study, education, and advocacy.” Strategic goals include:

Create Programs and Resources for Everyone: We will provide entry points for a wide range of audiences - from beginners to professionals - including audiences currently underserved by WNPS.

- Define the programs and resources we currently have and their intended audiences; identify gaps; then develop or refine programs and resources to fill those gaps.
- Design an intentional sequence of programs to ratchet up people's engagement over time.
- Identify and share at least one introductory program that every chapter can offer locally.
- Provide K-12 resources that meet Next Generation Science standards and expand the materials to include Eastern Washington.

Become a More Inclusive Organization

- Establish a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to identify and recommend ways WNPS can be more inclusive and be an effective promoter of racial, social, and environment justice.
- Each chapter builds a connection with at least one group that is not well represented in WNPS.

Build Leaders

- Have all chapters and committees thriving and reactivate the Northeast Chapter.
- Form chapter and committee councils to share ideas and identify ways WNPS can support its chapters and committees; put at least three of these ways into practice.
- Design on-boarding tools for new chapter leaders, committee leaders, field trip leaders and presenters.
- Improve leadership succession planning throughout the organization.

Winter (January, February, March) 2021

Chapter Meetings

Meetings begin at 7pm and have been moved to a Zoom meeting format, except where noted. For updates on future webinars, watch for announcements on our chapter website (wnpskoma.org) and the wnps-koma email list. To register, go to the state events website (<http://wnps.org/events>) and click on Koma Kulshan events. There you can also find other Zoom webinars sponsored by WNPS.

(7 PM start time) January 21 (ZOOM): Exploring the Pasayten High Country

The Pasayten Wilderness, just east of Ross Lake and nestled against the Canadian border, encompasses over 500,000 acres of land. Mark and Brian Turner spent a week honeymooning there in mid-August, backpacking a 40+ mile "lollypop loop" to Rimmel Lake, Upper Cathedral Lake, Cathedral Peak, and Amphitheater Mountain. There were few people and lots of flowers, although peak bloom appeared to have been a week or two earlier. With a four-night base camp on the shore of Upper Cathedral Lake at 7400' they meandered across lithosol meadows, tiptoed through wetlands, scrambled up Cathedral Peak's summit ridge, and explored the three highest points on windswept Amphitheater Mountain with a peak elevation of 8358'. Wildflowers, grasses, and trees all caught Mark's eye. He'll share some favorites from the trip in this presentation, including a few that were new to him. Mark is a long-time chapter member, professional photographer with Turner Photographics, co-author of two books (*Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest* and *Trees and Shrubs of the Pacific Northwest*) and the Washington Wildflowers mobile app. You can preview some of his photos at pnwflowers.com.

(7 PM start time) February 17 (ZOOM): Shifting Plant Communities in the North Cascades

Climate warming has driven many species to higher elevations and latitudes in recent decades, but not all species are shifting upwards at the same rate. Unequal shifts can create communities with new combinations of species that look unlike the communities of the past. Dr. Amy Angert, the Canada Research Chair in Conservation Ecology at the University of British Columbia, will discuss work in which she and colleagues are re-surveying forest vegetation along elevation gradients in the North Cascades to detect recent climate-driven changes in community composition, and conducting experiments to help predict how our future forests will look and function.

(7 PM start time) March 17 (ZOOM): Sonoran Saunterings

Let's get away from the green and wet, and join Vikki Jackson on a virtual walk in the Sonoran Desert. She will share images and tales of wandering the desert backcountry with a focus on desert plant ecology. Vikki is a retired wetland ecologist who now dries out during the winter by wandering the desert in Ajo, Arizona.

Field Trips

Field trips are back! WNPS field trips have been suspended for quite awhile, but now with state office support, Koma Kulshan is ready to once again host field trips. Below are descriptions for two great field trips that we are hosting in January. These are much like field trips of years past, but with a few new requirements for COVID safety, listed below. Please consider yourself invited to join the field trip as long as you accept these new requirements:

- * Only six participants are allowed per field trip, including the leader. You must contact the leader in advance to request a spot.
- * All hikers must carry face masks and use them when 6-foot distancing cannot be maintained, unless you have a legitimate medical exemption as determined by a physician.
- * All hikers must carry hand sanitizer.
- * No carpooling allowed between members of different households.
- * A separate liability release form is required for each participant, to be signed at the start of the field trip.

You may read more on the state WNPS web site's new page "WNPS Risk Management and COVID 19 Resources" at <https://www.wnps.org/home/covid-19resources>.

January 1, Friday & January 18, Monday, both 9 am-4 pm: A Dozen Tenacious Trees to Hug.

A pleasant two mile Chuckanut Hills forested walk brings us to some admirable trees, each with a survival story. Forest ecology, fire and logging history examples will dominate our journey to the heartland. A few driving miles from town; about 4 miles round trip and 400 feet vertical of hiking; additional prowling if group desires. Expect and prepare for rough road (though passable by most cars), trail and weather. Meet, sign release at 9:00 am, South Bellingham Park N. Ride, WEST of I-5 at 1801 32nd St.; only after pre-registering, or query now with Bob Lemon lemprev@alphahunt.com, (360) 714-8629 for the one date that fits your needs.

Saturday, January 16. The Hunt for Chuckanut Mountain Cranberries (and other bog flora).

Meet at the Cyrus Gates Parking lot at 10AM. While most of our native fruit are long gone by Halloween, Bog Cranberries are amazingly resilient to cold and rain. The Chuckanut Mountains contain numerous small bogs at various stages of formation. We will descend the spectacular Rock Trail, on our way to some wetlands near Lost Lake and Mud Lake, covering close to 7 miles in total with about 600 feet of elevation gain. The pace will be relatively brisk (for a WNPS hike) to allow time for exploration at a few stopping places. Access to the bogs will involve some wading through shallow water, over slippery logs, and through a short distance of brush. Getting there from Bellingham: Drive South of Chuckanut Dr for 6.7 miles. Turn left on Hiline Rd and continue on Cleator Rd for 3.6 miles to the Cyrus Gates parking lot at the end of Cleator Rd. Note that Cleator is a gravel road with some rough spots, but with care is usually passable in a low clearance vehicle. Just watch out for some protruding bedrock towards the top. What to bring: Lunch, warm clothes, hiking shoes and rubber boots (optional). Contact Abe Lloyd to reserve a spot (arcadianabe@yahooDOTcom).

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If you would like to join WNPS

Please return the membership application form to:
Washington Native Plant Society
6310 NE 74th St., Suite 215E
Seattle, WA 98115

Please make checks payable to WNPS
(outside US add \$5 to dues)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Koma Kulshan Chapter Total Enclosed: _____

Membership Category:

\$20 Budget (Senior/Student)

\$40 Individual

\$55 Family

\$75 Club/Institution

\$100 WNPS Friend

\$250 Special Friend

\$500 Best Friend

\$1000 Sustaining Member

The Koma Kulshan chapter of WNPS is dedicated to the preservation and study of native plants and vegetation of Washington State and the education of the public to the values of native flora and its habitat.

WNPS -- Koma Kulshan Chapter
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