

Volunteers Lead Hatchery Tours during Bald Eagle Season

By Lucy DeGrace

This winter a crew of trained SFEG volunteers will be available to lead guided tours of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Marblemount Hatchery. Why is SFEG involved in hatchery tours, you might ask? With all the visitors coming to the Skagit to see wintering bald eagles, many people are interested in learning about salmon as well. After all, the eagles wouldn't be here if it weren't for the salmon buffet.

The Marblemount Hatchery provides a location for learning about various aspects of salmon biology and fisheries management. Since there are few places in our area with public, safe salmon viewing opportunities, the hatchery and its proximity to the Cascade River offer an excellent gathering place for people to learn about and see salmon in the wild as well as in the hatchery environment.



Clark Creek merges with Jordan Creek and the Cascade River in a rich habitat popular with steelhead fishermen.



Hatchery manager Steve Stout (right) shows volunteers the trays in which the salmon incubate until they reach the fry stage.

Each Saturday and Sunday from now until February 1, you can visit the hatchery between 10am and 2pm and learn about how this facility operates, what species of salmon are raised here, and the work being done here to help wild Skagit Chinook salmon populations. Visit early in the season (December) for a chance to see spawning salmon. On guided tours you can also visit the incubation room where eyed eggs, alevin, and fry reside, feed the fish in the outdoor ponds, and walk the Clark Creek trail to its outlet at the Cascade River. Test your skill at finding our Salmon Letterbox while you're there. Eagles are also commonly seen at this location, and there will be a team of trained Eagle Watcher volunteers stationed here until February. For more information on hatchery tours, contact our office at 360-336-0172 or call the hatchery direct at 360-873-4241.

See you at the hatchery!