



THE REDD

Dedicated to Restoring Salmon for Future Generations



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SKAGIT FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUP

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Salmon in the Schools

A Program That Unequivocally Inspires Passion

By Kat Martin, 2024-25 Education Intern

My roots did not start in the Pacific Northwest. I grew up in the desert and lived there for nearly my entire life, in the high desert with not a lot of flora and fauna to go around. When I was a young kid in school, we took field trips to go visit the state courts or planetarium. As soon as I walked out of those doors, I had a newfound fascination with the solar system and an oh-so-invigorating understanding of the state's judicial system. I attribute most of my early passions to the experiences I was exposed to. As an adult, I realized that while those experiences did not take me down the path I am at now in life, what matters is

that it did something to me, as a kid, that I think is more important than anything else. It got me to care, and it

What we give to these kids makes connections and lasting memories far more impactful than one could imagine.

ignited passion.

Now, nearly sixteen years later, I am a part of something bigger that

makes those same kinds of differences. As an education intern with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, I realize that I am a part of the building blocks it takes to inspire that connection and passion to the world around us and the kids we interact with. I have taken the knowledge and passion I have gained through my training and teaching with this organization and I impart it to the children participating in the Salmon in the Schools program. What I have seen, as an educator, has taken me by surprise more times than I can count.

Most of my experiences come from our classroom visits and field trips to

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Kids preparing to release the salmon they've watched grow in their classroom since mid January

REDD: A female salmon uses her tail to dig a nest in the gravel. After she deposits her eggs the male fertilizes them. The female then covers the fertilized eggs and the resulting nest is called a redd.

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Of Freshwater Mussels & Man

Victor Garcia, Retired Educator, Spawner Survey Volunteer

My name is Victor and I was given the gift of sampling Swede Creek this fall (as a Spawner Survey Volunteer). Recently retired and a lifelong lover of wild fish, these outings on Swede with my partner were eagerly awaited! They helped make my Fall!

From meeting the landowners and sharing their love of fish and the stream that flows through their land to the groups of wintering wood ducks on Pat's pond in the mornings, it only got better. Swede Creek is a fun challenge! Imagine an obstacle course set in a waterslide park and you have the up and over, ducking under and weaving your way through the intact lowland riparian zones of Swede. The many downed alders and cedars provide natural structure and hiding places for migrating fish. The riparian zone was always decorated by a changing palette of mushrooms and freshly gnawed beaver sticks. When the coho were running, the stream held a certain palpable electricity in the air. It was a delight

to see wild coho (we saw no hatchery strays) completing their life cycles as they had done for millennia, on their own! Ravens and pileated woodpeckers called to us and Dippers or Ouzel were seen when the fish were on the redds. As one might expect with any relatively intact local stream, Swede showed off its clean water via extensive beds of freshwater mussels.

But this raised a question: How does a bivalve colonize the upstream reaches of a stream with good current?

Inquiring citizen Scientists needed to know! Apparently, the females brood the tiny young, who are then expelled to find the gills of a fish, clamp on with their shells and hitch a ride! Once they're upstream, they release and start

their adult lives! Check out pnwmussels.org for more information on these incredible creatures.

Happy reading and we'll update you next season, I'll definitely be back!



Victor shows off a vibrant Coho half

A freshwater mussel found in Swede Creek.



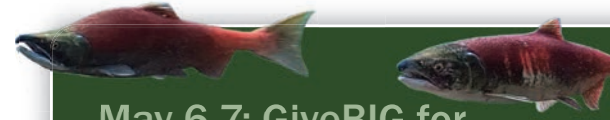
Freshwater mussels, like the ones shown in this mussel bed in Swede Creek, are impacted by environmental factors like water quality and pH levels.

various locations in the area. Some kids are familiar with salmon and their importance to the ecosystem. However, some had never even stopped to think about salmon! What we give to these kids makes connections and lasting memories far more impactful than one could imagine. Students learn the salmon life cycles through various presentations and solidify their knowledge through arts and crafts projects like bracelets and other art projects while they follow along with presentations. Better yet, children are

actually far more likely to retain what they learn when they incorporate visuals and art!

I have personally watched kids light up and explode with passion when learning about these salmon. Kids who went from quiet and reserved to excited and vibrant when showing me how much they have learned. As educators, we come in through those doors with nothing to give but the knowledge on our belts and we leave having inspired hundreds of children, over six hundred this academic year, to be exact! I am but a small part of the larger picture in these childrens' lives

and passions. It brings me great joy that I can, even if it is just for a little while, inspire these kids to care. What matters most is that they care. I look forward to seeing how this program develops and unfolds in the years to come. My hope is that it continues to change lives, just as it did mine.



May 6-7: GiveBIG for
Salmon in the Schools
(see page 7)

Community Connection and a Fresh Perspective

By Lauren Schwartzenberger, 2024-25 Education Intern

As an Education Intern with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, most of my time is spent helping with outreach, leading activities, and teaching about salmon and watershed health. My usual work involves preparing for lessons, engaging with students, and supporting the education program. However, attending two recent community events—Storming the Sound and Illuminight Winter Walk—gave me the opportunity to step outside my normal routine and experience environmental education from a different perspective.

Mid-January I attended 'Storming the Sound', a conference for environmental educators. While this wasn't my first time attending a professional development event, it was one I truly enjoyed. Throughout the day I was able to attend panels and discussions that expanded my understanding of environmental education and gave me insight into the many different facets of this line of work. It was motivating to hear from experienced educators who have been in the field for years, sharing ideas and strategies to engage students and communities in conservation work. As an intern, I sometimes feel like I'm just getting my footing, so being surrounded by people passionate about

environmental education gave me a fresh perspective on the impact this work can have.

On January 31st, the Skagit Riverwalk Plaza lit up for the 11th annual Illuminight Winter Walk, and I was lucky to be a part of it. This event brought people together to celebrate light, community and the Skagit ecosystem. People carried countless homemade luminaries and created a procession along the river—it was so fun to witness all the creativity and see the riverbank alive with light. For me it was a nice change of pace to engage with people outside of a classroom or formal program setting. I got to see firsthand how art and imagination can be used to spark conversations about nature.

Both Storming the Sound and Illuminight reminded me that environmental education is about more than just classroom lessons—it's about connectedness, community and creativity. These events allowed me to see my role as an intern in a new light, making connections with others who care about conservation and experiencing different ways of engaging people with the environment. Having the opportunity to step outside of my usual routine made me even more excited to keep growing in this field.



Kelly, Lauren, Holly and Devon attend an exceptionally rainy and windy Illuminight Winter Walk on January 31, 2025.

IN MEMORIAM

Celebrating the Legacy of Jim Johnson

We are deeply saddened by the loss of longtime volunteer Jim Johnson.

As a dedicated Board Member, ever present volunteer for tree planting and education programs, and our very first Dick Knight Volunteer of the Year recipient, Jim's impact on our community and the Skagit Valley was immeasurable.

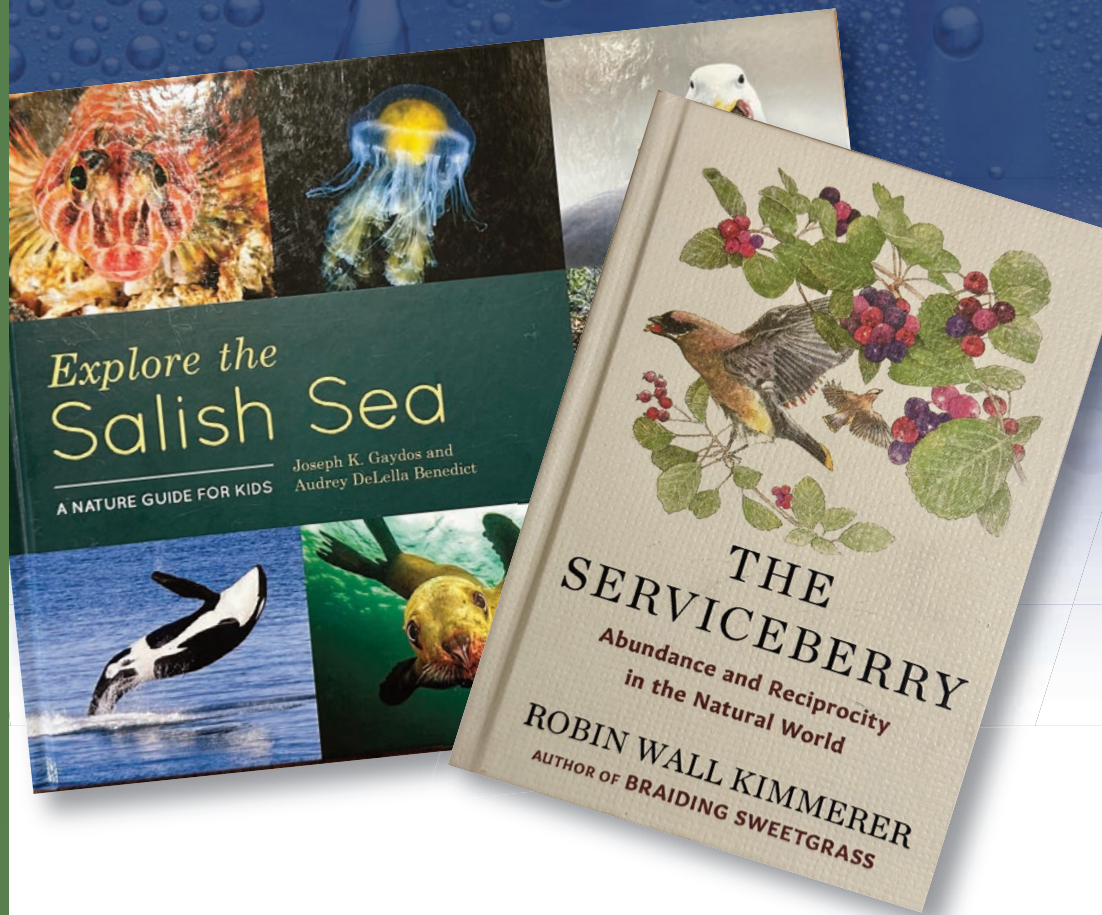
In honor of Jim's incredible dedication to the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and his passion for conservation, we are proud to establish the **Jim Johnson Memorial Fund**. This fund will continue his legacy by supporting the work he cared so deeply about, ensuring his commitment to restoring our watershed lives on through the education and involvement of our young people.



To contribute to the Jim Johnson Memorial Fund please visit SkagitFisheries.org/jim-johnson/ or scan the QR code

What Are We Reading?

By Kala Olson, 2024-2025 Education Intern



The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World by Robin Wall Kimmerer

The latest book from the bestselling author of *Braiding Sweetgrass* is short and full of musings on the lessons of gratitude and community from nature. As a professor of forest ecology and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Kimmerer's writing combines scientific and indigenous knowledge with beautiful imagery and thoughtful anecdotes. You'll find this book sets both a grounding and uplifting tone for the year!

Explore the Salish Sea: A Nature Guide for Kids by Joseph Gaydos and Audrey DeLella Benedict

SeaDoc Society Science Director Joe Gaydos and Cloud Ridge Naturalists founder and director Audrey DeLella Benedict joined forces to publish this ecology-focused cross between a picture book and chapter book. Younger kids will enjoy the beautiful photos of landscapes and cool animals, and older kids will enjoy the fun facts and calls to action. It's perfect to get your kids or grandkids interested in our local environment!

Both of these books can be purchased at local bookstores all around Western Washington. Our favorite is Village Books in Fairhaven near Bellingham!

Volunteer Spotlight

Tell us about yourself!

A little about me—having been born and raised in Burlington, I have always had a great appreciation of the Skagit River basin. I was able to attend Washington State University and received a degree in Forest Management and had enough soils classes for a minor in soils. My career with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources gave me a number of different opportunities. I really enjoyed the reforestation and plantation maintenance activities that followed timber harvests. Thirty years of my career were in the Forest Practices program which gave me the opportunity to work with small and large forest landowners and gain and share knowledge about the complexities of streams, riparian areas and wetlands. I have always enjoyed the outdoors and fishing is a passion of mine.

How did you first get involved with Skagit Fisheries?

I first got involved with volunteering for Skagit Fisheries nine years ago when I was selected for the board of directors. Starting as a volunteer then was a great way to learn first hand about our programs and the staff that administers them.

What's your favorite way to volunteer with Skagit Fisheries?

While growing up, it seemed I was always getting my hands dirty. The planting of trees and shrubs in riparian areas and also work at our Native Plant Nursery gives me a chance to keep getting my hands dirty, along with giving back to the resource. More importantly, it gives me a chance to meet and talk to the really great people who attend our volunteer events. The

Salmon in the Schools field trips are also a favorite volunteer event as well.

How has volunteering affected your life?

This is a hard question to answer—to say volunteering has had a beneficial impact in my life is a start. Knowing that we have had a positive impact, especially on the Salmon In the Schools children is priceless, because they can become the next generation of volunteers.



Volunteer of the YEAR

STEVE RANTEN

A Skagit Fisheries Board Member for nearly ten years, Steve was raised in Skagit County and thoroughly enjoys being in the forest, especially when going fishing. Steve has a degree in forestry and works with local landowners to help them understand forestry and riparian impacts. Steve was an active volunteer with Ducks Unlimited for 23 years and loves to utilize his time on the board to share his knowledge of forestry and streams with the Skagit Fisheries community.



To become a
volunteer contact:

360.336.0172

sfeg@skagitfisheries.org

SkagitFisheries.org/volunteer





The Thrill of Hands On Learning Experiences

By Kelly Williams, Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps Education Associate

Imagine this: you are standing on the edge of a roaring river facing the largest rapid you have ever seen and the only way down is on your raft. As you stand there, you make a plan based on the features in front of you. The moment of truth comes when you push off from the river bank and make your way into the rapid.

I often feel similar excitement when I'm out in the field with students in the Salmon in Schools program. We meticulously plan each field trip to ensure its success, but the unknowns are always there – will the weather hold up? How will the kids react to the outdoor adventure? But nothing compares to the thrill of seeing their faces light up when they experience

firsthand the healthy salmon habitat we've discussed in the classroom. Watching them connect the dots is a reminder of how powerful real-world experiences can be.

This academic year, we have reached over 600 students in grades 3 through 6. Our goal is for these students to gain the knowledge and tools needed to go into their communities and educate others about the importance of maintaining a healthy watershed. While the Skagit Valley is surrounded by abundant recreational and outdoor opportunities, many students do not have regular access to these experiences. The Salmon in the Schools program plays a crucial role

in helping these students make the connection between classroom learning and a hands-on appreciation for salmon and the Skagit watershed.

To continue to reach students, funding is needed. For the 2025-26 school year, \$25,000 in grant funds will no longer be available. We are seeking to raise \$25,000 and fill this funding gap so hundreds of students in the Skagit Valley can continue to get excited experiencing the outdoors and learning about salmon. Won't you help us reach this goal before the new school year begins? Visit SkagitFisheries.org/ways-to-give to explore all the ways you can give to Skagit Fisheries and support Salmon in the Schools.

May 6-7: GiveBIG for Salmon in the Schools

(see page 7)



GiveBIG for Salmon in the Schools



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Donate to help us ensure Salmon in the Schools can continue.

May 6-7, 2025



www.wagives.org/organization/SkagitFisheries

EXPLORE OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

www.SkagitFisheries.org/ways-to-give



DONATE

Show your commitment to the future stewardship of our local watersheds by making a donation today, or consider a recurring donation.



LEGACY GIVING

Make a lasting impact on the future of Salmon.



GIFTS OF STOCK

Skagit Fisheries accepts donations of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. These gifts may include significant tax benefits to the donor.



GIFTS OF IRA

Retirement plan assets can be used to make a charitable gift to Skagit Fisheries.



Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent that the law allows. Tax ID#: 94-3165939



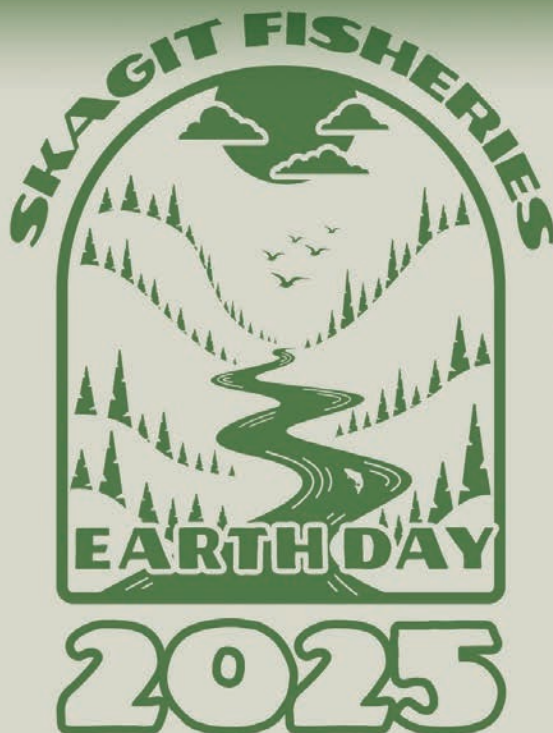
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EARTH DAY 2025



**Join Skagit Fisheries and Mount
Vernon Parks and Recreation
for an Earth Day celebration!**

Saturday, April 26th

9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at Edgewater Park

**Meet with 10+ local
organizations working to
protect and restore our
natural spaces. All ages
are welcome!**

**Scan the QR code to sign
up to volunteer to plant
native plants and remove
invasive English ivy!**



www.skagitfisheries.org/event/earth-day-2025/