

DISCOVERY PARK NEWS

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Discovery Park Cougar Now Roams the Mountains

By Anne Bentley

A little over a year has passed since a second cougar showed up in **Discovery Park**. In late August and early September 2009, people in the Magnolia neighborhood started reporting sightings of a cougar. The Thursday before Labor Day weekend, those reports were consistent enough that biologists from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) closed **Discovery Park** and



started tracking the cougar. The park remained closed until Sunday.

Discovery Park's cougar rests after capture.

Early Sunday morning, the cougar was treed in a big leaf maple located near the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center. WDFW shot the cougar with a tranquilizer dart and transported it back to the wild near Skykomish in eastern Snohomish County. Brian Kertson, a wildlife biologist and, at the time, a University of Washington graduate student, fitted the cougar with a collar that had a Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking device so he could monitor its movements.

The cougar that enjoyed a taste of urban life for about two weeks in 2009 turned out to be a 2½ -year-old male that weighed about 140 pounds. WDFW biologists thought that this cougar was the perfect candidate for relocation because while he was in the Seattle area, he never became aggressive or stalked people. It seems they made the right call.

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Park Cougar Roams Cascades

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A recent e-mail from Kertson, who now works in Idaho, reports the **Discovery Park** cougar was still alive and kicking as of November 2010, when the last transmissions were received. Kertson stated that as best he can tell, the collar's battery went dead sometime in late November or early December. "This was to be expected," Kertson commented in his e-mail. "I put a spacer in the collar that is designed to rot away, allowing the collar to fall off so he doesn't have to wear it the rest of his life."

According to Kertson's e-mail, transmission from the collar was hit-and-miss over the summer and fall. This was likely because the cougar roamed areas without Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) cell coverage. It is difficult to get good cell coverage in those mountains, eh? Despite the poor transmission, Kertson was immensely satisfied with the information he received from the **Discovery Park** cougar. "The collar yielded great data, really cool stuff because we could see his exact movement path following the relocation," Kertson wrote. "He appeared to have set up a territory with consistent use, movements, and predation events throughout the year. This is a great sign for his long-term prospects, both from biological and sociological standpoints.

"The whole effort was a great success, a win-win for all involved," Kertson continued. "Hands down, the most incredible, unusual, and remarkable wildlife situation I have ever been part of. A cougar in **Discovery Park**, and the second one at that, really amazing."

A first cougar was captured in **Discovery Park** in 1981. That one, a 110-pound 2-year-old, was relocated to outside of Enumclaw in eastern King County. Electronic tracking systems did not exist then, so it was not possible to follow its movements.

Upcoming Events at Discovery Park

Trained **Discovery Park** docents lead these programs. Check at the **Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center (ELC)** for current information. To register, call the ELC (206-386-4236). Unless otherwise specified, children must be accompanied by an adult.

A Park for All Seasons

Ages 18 and older

Experience **Discovery Park** as the seasons change. This is a new series of monthly hikes that will vary from three to five miles with some elevation gain. A section of this loop hike is done in silence to listen to the sounds of the season. Be prepared for muddy trails and rain. These hikes take place on Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m. Meet at the ELC. Free.



A snowy day in the South Meadow.

Wed, Feb 9 Course Code **#63754** **Wed, Mar 9** Course Code **#63755**

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Upcoming Events

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Tot Treks

Ages 2–3

Adults – grow outside with your children! In a local park where the trees and ferns grow, there is a special place for you and a child to explore. Join with a park naturalist to discover unique settings in your parks and make new friends. All tot treks take place 10:30 a.m.–11:45 a.m. and meet at the **Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center**. **\$8 for each child/adult, \$4 for each additional person.**

Winter Wonders

Wed, Feb 2 Course Code #63766

Sat, Feb 12 Course Code #63767

Rain Rain Don't Go Away

Wed, Mar 16 Course Code #63768

Sat, Mar 19 Course Code #63769

Full Moon Trek

Ages 8 and older

Experience **Discovery Park** from a different angle. Full Moon Treks are guided hikes that allow visitors to learn what makes the park special after dark. After a quick lesson inside, we venture into the moonlit park to explore. Please come prepared with warm clothes. **\$8 per person.**

Fri, Feb 18 7 p.m.–9 p.m. Course Code #63758



Fantastic Frogs

Ages 8 and older

Are you hoppy it's spring? It's got the frogs singing. Let's jump into their lives and learn what makes them such spectacular creatures. **\$8 per person.**

Fri, Mar 25 7 p.m.–9 p.m.

Course Code #63757

Discovery Park Discoveries

Trails Report Board Now in ELC

Starting in February 2011, the **Discovery Park** staff is going to try to report on trail conditions in the park, and it would be extremely helpful if park users added to this board. The small, white board is located in the **Environmental Learning Center (ELC)** just to the right of the front desk. If you are out in the park and notice a tree down or a particularly muddy area, come in and write it on the board. Staff can help you with trail names if you are unfamiliar with them. If you want to know about trail conditions, stop in at the ELC and check out the board.

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Discovery Park Discoveries

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Capehart Landscaping Plan Being Downsized

According to Project Manager Gary Gibbons, the level and variety of work being proposed in the current design for **Discovery Park's** newly annexed **Capehart** parcel cannot be supported with the existing budget. Therefore at the next **West Point Community Action Committee** meeting and subsequent public meeting, a much-reduced plan will be presented.

In general, the following is expected to change: Grading operations will be severally reduced and the demolition plan will change, which in turn will require contractors to export concrete and asphalt from the site. Site preparation for soils and plantings will also be reduced, with a focus placed on locating appropriate areas for planting and concentrating efforts at those places. Irrigation will be limited to a few points for quick couplers, and planting will be confined to a few strategic locations where spaces can be created for volunteer efforts.

Pints for Parks

Every Wednesday since Oct. 13, **The Noble Fir** pub in Ballard has supported habitat restoration in **Discovery Park** with **Pints for Parks**. After 6:30 p.m., \$1 from every pint sold is donated to the **Discovery Park Habitat Fund**. Pub co-owner **Rick Weersing** taps special kegs each Wednesday, so park supporters should keep coming and raising their glasses for more



Steps from the 500 Area

plants. If you're already on the park mailing list for this newsletter, you'll get weekly reminders with information on the special kegs being tapped that night. Visit the Noble Fir at 5316 Ballard Ave. NW or www.thenoblefir.com.

Ask Discovery Park

*I frequently run the steps between the **Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center** and the 500 area, a vestige of the former Army fort. This winter the steps have been incredibly cleared, not a leaf or branch in sight despite the stormy weather. Is someone responsible for keeping these steps clear? I saw someone sweeping them one day when I passed. --Interested Jogger, Ballard*

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Ask Discovery Park

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Dear Jogger,

The grounds maintenance staff does clear the steps with a blower, as well as the loop trail in that area. Laura Nealer is the crew person responsible for that area of the park. She commented that she does have a “helper” with those stairs, a gentleman with a broom that she sees sweeping the stairs on occasion. This gentleman, though, is not an official **Discovery Park** volunteer, so his identity is a mystery.



What's the story on this decorated tree? It was decorated about five days before Christmas, in one of the reforested pods within the 500 area near the South parking lot. First the ornaments went up, then the sign...on Christmas Eve, it was all gone. Does the park have a policy against something like this?—HT, Magnolia

Dear HT,

No staff member was able to shed any light on what happened with this tree or why. All of the decorations showed up in our visitor center in a bag. The assumption is that a park visitor took them down. No staff person here took them down.

However, this sort of decorating in the park is against park policy for two reasons. First, this could be considered littering, which is

against the law. In addition, based upon the 1982 Development Plan, no memorials are allowed in **Discovery Park**.

Have a Question? Ask Us!

If you have any questions about **Discovery Park**, here's your chance. Send questions to anne.bentley@seattle.gov, and Anne will direct them to the appropriate staff person or park volunteer for the answer. Please include your name, phone number and the neighborhood where you live. Answers will be published in future issues of *Discovery Park News*.

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