

# Ross Lake National Recreation Area

**T**HIRTY MILES OF the North Cascades Highway meanders through the upper Skagit watershed among forests and soaring peaks. A variety of activities can be accessed from the corridor including challenging hikes and paddling. A number of scenic vistas, picnic areas, campgrounds and short trails are available for those seeking a more relaxing trip.



Top: Kayaker on Diablo Lake  
Left: North Cascades National Park Visitor Center



Below Newhalem, the free-flowing portion of the Skagit River offers excellent wildlife viewing and rafting opportunities. A launch is located next to Goodell Creek Campground, but careful planning is required to float the swift Skagit as there can be seasonal hazards and closures.

Diablo Lake offers the only easy access for launching watercraft off of State Route 20. The lake, surrounded by glaciated peaks, is a brilliant turquoise blue in summer. This unique color is caused by fine rock sediment called glacial flour, carried into the lake by glacier-fed streams. There are three boat-in campgrounds where a backcountry permit is required.

Ross Lake, the largest of the three reservoirs, winds nearly 25 miles from Ross Dam to Hozomeen on the Canadian border. The only vehicle access is via Hope, British Columbia but small motor boats (14' and under) and canoes/kayaks can be portaged around Ross Dam from Diablo Lake. Nineteen boat-in campgrounds (backcountry permit required) and the Ross Lake Resort are available for those looking to spend multiple days in this remote landscape.

## Popular Trails along the North Cascades Highway

Trail Name	Milepost	Round-Trip Distance in miles	Difficulty	Remarks
Sterling Munro	120	0.1 (0.2 km)	very easy	Accessible boardwalk with view of the Picket Range
River Loop	120	1.8 (2.9 km)	easy	Accessible, forested path to the Skagit River
Rock Shelter	120	0.3 (0.5 km)	easy	Accessible trail to historic site used by Native People 1,400 years ago
Gorge Overlook	123	0.5 (0.8 km)	easy	Accessible trail with views of a deep gorge and waterfall
Pyramid Lake	127	4.2 (6.8 km)	moderate	Moderately steep hike through diverse habitat leading to a lake, no camping
Diablo Lake	128	7.6 (12.2 km)	moderate	Offers views of glaciers and peaks, located on north side of Diablo Lake
Thunder Knob	130	3.6 (5.8 km)	easy	Hike through dry forest terrain, views of Diablo Lake and surrounding peaks
Thunder Creek*	130	1.6-46 (2.8-74 km)	easy-difficult	Excellent day hikes, extended trips to Stehekin Valley via Park Creek Pass
Thunder Woods	130	0.9 (1.5 km)	moderate	Nature trail that highlights the unique habitat near Thunder creek
Ross Dam	134	1.5 (2.4 km)	moderate	Short, steep trail down to Ross Dam
Happy-Panther	134	10.5 (16.9 km)	easy	Follows south shore of Ross Lake, connects Ross Dam Trail to East Bank Trail
Happy Creek	134	0.3 (0.5 km)	very easy	Accessible boardwalk interpretive trail through ancient forest
East Bank*	138	0.5-62 (0.8-99.8 km)	easy-moderate	Winds along forested path, loops around Desolation Peak to Hozomeen

\*Obtain a permit at the Wilderness Information Center in Marblemount for all backcountry camping.

## North Cascades Wild

### Canoeing and Conservation for Teens

Established in 2006, North Cascades Wild is a tuition-free wilderness conservation service program for underserved youth on Ross Lake. The program is designed as a gateway for young people - especially kids from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds - to jumpstart their lifelong engagement with nature, stewardship and community through powerful experiences in their national parks.

During four 12-day canoe, camping and backpacking trips this summer, 40 high school students from Skagit County and Seattle will complete conservation service projects while learning leadership, community building, Leave No Trace and the natural and cultural history of the region.

One student from Seattle wrote:

*"This program not only showed me another side of the world I had never seen before, but led me to discover who I am and what I stand for. It got me thinking about what I can do to make this world a better place. Now I want to volunteer in any part of wilderness...because this is what I learned, to give back."*

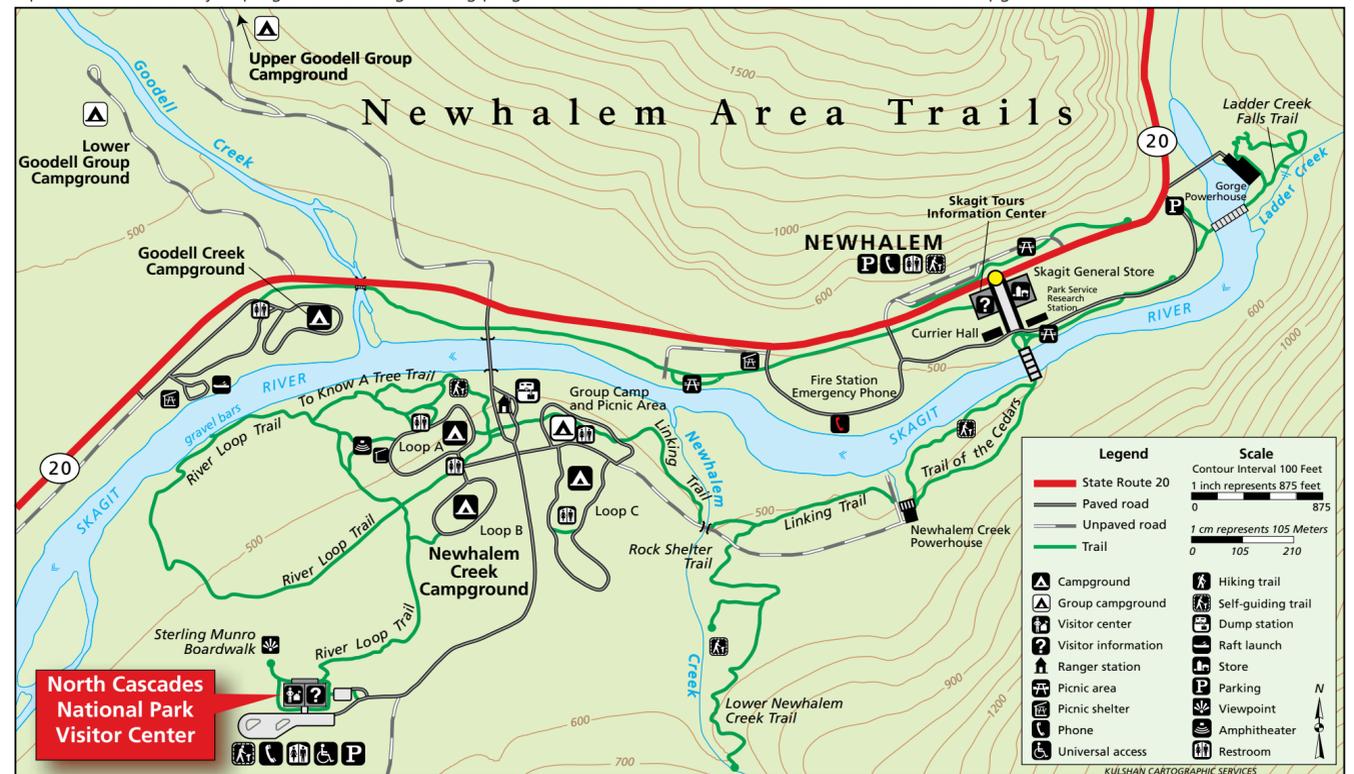
Key partners for NCW include North Cascades Institute, the Student Conservation Association, North Cascades National Park and the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center. For more information call (360) 856-5700 ext. 274 or visit [www.ncascades.org](http://www.ncascades.org).



Top: North Cascades Wild members pose for a group photo.  
Left and Right: North Cascades Wild members volunteer time to service projects.



The North Cascades were still remote and wild in the 1910s, when the power of the Skagit River was first being harnessed. Newhalem was built as a company town for the men who worked at the dams and their families. Learn about the area's natural and cultural history by exploring interactive exhibits, watching theater presentations or talking with rangers at the North Cascades National Park Visitor Center. The interpretive staff at the center present a wide variety of programs including evening programs at both Colonial Creek and Newhalem Creek campgrounds.



## Teacher to Ranger to Teacher

During the summer of 2007 Gwen Peterson, a K-5 elementary school science teacher at Juan Seguin Elementary School in Houston, Texas, participated in the new Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program at North Cascades National Park. Gwen spent eight weeks working closely with park interpreters to develop environmental education curricula.

"The experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity that made me think outside myself and realize the sheer grandeur of this country," Gwen said.

Upon returning to Houston, Gwen shared her experience at North Cascades by bringing the park to the students. The week of May 12 - 16, 2008, was dedicated as National Park Week at Juan Seguin. Over five days, students enjoyed variety of lessons focused on North Cascades National Park. Dave Williams, a 15-year-veteran of the park service and retired teacher, assisted Gwen with the execution of activities and each day presented engaging illustrated talks.

Students and faculty spent the week prior to the event decorating different classrooms to resemble a particular park: pre-kindergarten and kindergarten - Yellowstone NP; first grade - Everglades NP; second grade - Saguaro NP; third grade - Big Bend NP; fourth grade - Denali NP; and fifth grade - Yosemite NP.

Each student received a special Junior Ranger booklet specifically designed for their grade level (pre-school through fifth-grade). The booklets were printed in either English or



Students feel a bobcat pelt with Gwen.

Spanish. Upon completing nine booklet activities each student was awarded a Junior Ranger badge. Of the 619 students in the school 605 of them completed the requirements.

The students, faculty and staff of the school were enthusiastic and dedicated to the program. The students, none of whom had ever visited a National Park, had a truly unique experience and opportunity to become more familiar with the National Park system.

On May 16, a school-wide awards ceremony was held - the choir sang, the violins played, a video of the week was shown and the Junior Ranger badges were presented.



Students use soil and twigs to build dams.

"Having Ms. Peterson introduce the importance of National Parks has enriched the educational experience of our students. Now more than ever children need to understand the importance of preserving and enjoying our natural resources," said Seguin Elementary School Principal Angie Miranda.

Regina Reyna, from McAllen Memorial High School in McAllen, Texas, is welcomed to the North Cascades as the 2008 teacher participant.

**North Cascades National Park Visitor Center**  
Open daily May through October  
Open Saturday & Sunday, November to May  
Daily Ranger Programs: July 4 to September 1