

Meadowbrook Farm Park



Winter 2021-2022 Newsletter

Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association



SNOQUALMIE HOP RANCH,

420 ACRES HOPS. LARGEST HOP RANCH IN THE WORLD.
SNOQUALMIE, WASHINGTON TER.

The Snoqualmie Hop Ranch in 1889, the center of which is now Meadowbrook Farm Park. The present Meadowbrook Bridge is at the site of the cable ferry/boats (left corner), and the present Mount Si High School is near the large Hop Ranch Hotel (center). The road shown is now Boalch Avenue in North Bend, and Park Street in Snoqualmie. Note the train in the distance—the tracks were completed only months before Washington became a state!

Happy New Year !

This year, we who love Meadowbrook Farm Park can celebrate 13,000 years of stewardship of this prairie homeland, 141 years of private ownership and farming, and 26 years (and counting!) of unique public open space dedicated to education, wildlife habitat and public recreation. We hope to resume our regular tours, hikes, and classes this year, pending health advisories. And we hope to meet you at a class, or on the trail, as we enjoy this beautiful place together.

Mary Norton, Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association

Interlocal Agreement Update

Meadowbrook Farm Park was purchased as public open space in 1996, using city, county and state taxpayer grant funds, and is co-owned by the cities of Snoqualmie and North Bend. Since 1998, the non-profit Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association has managed the day-to-day operations of the park under a 25-year Interlocal Agreement with the two cities. With support from the two cities, the volunteer organization has guided the development of trails, built the grant-funded Interpretive Center building, and maintained the park property for public use.

Adopted goals include preservation of iconic scenic views, historic and natural history interpretation, wildlife habitat, ongoing agriculture, public recreation, and a community gathering place. The MFPA contracts with Si View Parks to manage rental activities at the Interpretive Center and for field events, and this rental income provides over half of the park's operations funding.

The present Interlocal Agreement will expire in 2023. Discussions are underway to develop a revised agreement that provides maintenance, funding, recreation and interpretive functions more efficiently. Public use of the park and maintenance needs have increased greatly since 1996, and a new agreement will better utilize the capabilities and strengths of the two cities, Si View Parks, and the MFPA. Watch for more news as discussions continue!



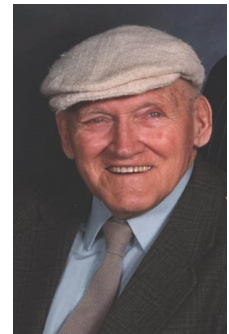
Newport School 7 year olds visit the Big Cedar on an MFPA-led pre-Covid trip.

Whitaker Foundation Grant!

The Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association has again been awarded a \$5,000 grant from Snoqualmie's Whitaker Foundation, towards maintenance and operations of the public open space park! Specifically, these funds will be used to help replace the smaller tractor/loader damaged in a fire in 2021.

The Whitaker Foundation was established by the Whitaker family in memory of Dr. John and Mary Whitaker, to continue the Whitaker legacy of support for educational and community causes. Whitaker Park in the Snoqualmie Ridge neighborhood also commemorates the long valley medical career of Dr. Whitaker, and the family's many public contributions.

This award was kindly facilitated by MFPA board member and farming advisor Bill Whitaker. The MFPA greatly appreciates Bill's active role in the operations of this historic and beautiful public park. Thank you, Bill Whitaker, and thank you, Whitaker Foundation!



Dr. Whitaker was a trusted valley physician.



Mary Whitaker especially valued education.

The Historic Importance of Swing Rock on Meadowbrook Farm

By Dave Battey



Rock outcroppings in the agricultural land of the Upper Valley are quite rare. Very obvious to anyone driving SR-202 between Snoqualmie and North Bend is the large outcropping about half-way between the cities, on the east side of the highway. There is a convenient place to pull off the road, park and explore.

That this rock still exists is somewhat miraculous, since most of Swing Rock has been quarried by the county and others, over the years. But when Meadowbrook Farm was purchased as open-space in December of 1996, the property line for Meadowbrook Farm protected what is left of this once massive geographic feature.

A quick scan of the area shows a very large concrete barn foundation in the blackberries and just toward Snoqualmie from the barn, the concrete base of a silo about twenty-feet in diameter. Serious dairying was once performed here.

A glance at SR-202 will show four reflective signs, two on each side of the highway, defining the ends of the cow underpass (moo-through) created by the county when the new highway split the huge milking barn off from the primary pasture. During dry weather, you can walk underneath the highway, and most people will not even need to duck :) In the future, it is expected that this easy-to-use safe passage will be part of an extended trail system that will connect the Meadowbrook Interpretive Center with the Northwest Railway Museum buildings on Stone Quarry Road and provide a shorter path to Tollgate Farm Park.

How did this interesting chunk of basalt receive the unusual name Swing Rock? Arthur Ballard (1876-1972) listened carefully to knowledgeable Indian tribal storytellers, starting in 1916, writing down what they told him. One of his most knowledgeable sources was Snoqualmie Charlie, who was born in 1850 and lived at Tolt. To quote Arthur, “This informant was exceptionally well versed in the folklore and culture of his people.”



This large dairy barn's foundation is still visible today at the Swing Rock site. Cows took an underpass to pasture on the east side of SR 202. Note Swing Rock in the background behind the barn.

Snoqualmie Charlie shared the Snoqualmie tribal beginnings and Yay-do-ad or Swing Rock, is a critical part of this adventure. To the Snoqualmies, this rock is recognized as the ‘petrified’ remains of a cedar rope that fell from heaven. Two young Snoqualmie maidens were digging Bracken fern roots on Meadowbrook Prairie and decided to sleep there and continue harvesting in the morning. As they nodded off, they dreamed of being married to two stars in the night sky. When they awoke the next morning the girls were in Star Heaven with their new husbands. Expected to dig Bracken roots in heaven, they were warned by their new husbands not to dig too deep – so they did – and broke through and saw earth below and created the rope to escape.

By then, the oldest girl had a baby, and the two sisters and child (named Moon) climbed down the rope and were greeted by their happy families. People took turns swinging on the rope, between Mount Si and Rattlesnake Mountain, until Rat decided to chew it loose, where it fell to be transformed into a monstrous rock outcropping. Moon grew up to be the ‘changer’ or ‘transformer,’ turning the Snoqualmie’s world into what we enjoy today. A powerful example is Snoqualmie Falls, which Moon created from a fish weir.

So now you know a condensed and Americanized version of what Snoqualmie Charlie told Arthur Ballard and are much more aware of the Snoqualmie’s intimate closeness to the land we so appreciate.



Dave Battey is the official historian for both Snoqualmie and North Bend. He is a board member of the Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association.

How Do Elk Survive a Cold Winter?

The upper Snoqualmie Valley is home to around 500 elk, and some spend their time on Meadowbrook Farm Park's low-elevation open fields and forests, where they often can be seen. But how do they live in the winter?

Elk have several biological adaptations to help them survive winter weather successfully. Growing a thick winter haircoat is important. An elk's winter coat is estimated to be 5 times warmer than their sleek, shiny summer coat, and has two important layers. The outer, long coarse guard hairs are thick and honeycombed with air pockets that help insulate the elk. Underneath, elk grow a thick, dense, woolly undercoat. The elk can also make the hairs stand on end, to create a thicker or thinner coat as needed. This insulating coat is so efficient, elk may even carry unmelted snow on their backs! When spring comes, the thick coat is shed, and you may find clumps of hair on the ground or rubbed on trees.



Evergreen trees provide shelter from snow and wind protection in cold weather.

Elk use the summer and fall months to build up a layer of fat, which both helps provide insulation for the winter, and acts as a food store. As ruminant herbivores (like cows, sheep and deer) elk have a four-chambered stomach, and elk, unlike some of the other ruminants, are generalists—they eat a wide variety of food types. This is helpful in winter. When grasses and clovers are covered with snow, an elk may paw the snow away to find food and graze. But they can also browse on branches, tree stems and bark, and are tall enough to reach high to do this. Vine maple, alder, cottonwood and willow twigs are favorites. In some areas, they become a problem because they will eat haystacks stored for livestock or browse orchards, and sometimes are deliberately fed elsewhere to discourage this. (You can see daily elk feeding at the WaDFW's Oak Creek station on the Tieton River near Yakima.)

Shelter is another issue for elk in winter, and many move to the warmer temperatures and lessened snow cover of lower elevations. Spending time in tree cover helps reduce wind exposure, and dense evergreen tree canopies,



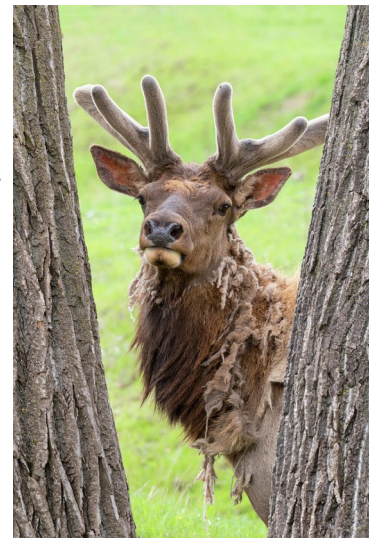
Elk may chew tree bark as a winter food source.



Quietly resting elk are often "chewing their cud", or regurgitating partially chewed food from the first of their four stomachs and re-chewing it for better digestion.

like Meadowbrook's groves of large old Sitka Spruce trees, can provide shelter from snow and rain. When elk lie down, they fold their legs underneath them, which also helps reduce heat loss. When the sun is out, elk will frequent southern slopes and exposed areas to take advantage of the extra heat.

Winter is hardest on the youngest and oldest animals. As elk age, their teeth become worn and less efficient. Young, or very old animals may not be able to build up sufficient fat stores to help survive the winter. Decreased forage availability can force elk to eat less nutritious feeds (like holly leaves) or even unhealthy ones (like rhododendrons in landscaping). When spring comes, the warmer temperatures and emerging vegetation can help some animals, but not every elk will survive the winter. Fortunately, the linked areas of open space habitat across the upper valley that surround Meadowbrook Farm Park provide a variety of areas for most elk to be able to winter successfully.



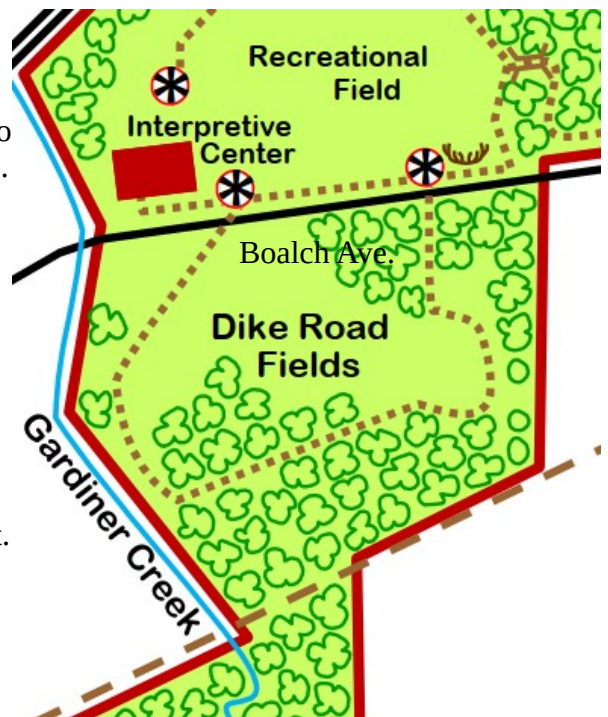
In spring, an elk sheds its thick woolly winter coat and grows new antlers.

Thank you, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, for information!

Elk Signs Field Trip/Hike at Meadowbrook!

Enjoy a winter hike around the Dike Road Field loop to see signs of elk activity at Meadowbrook Farm Park! Be sure to dress for the weather, with boots suitable for wet conditions. Park at the Meadowbrook Interpretive Center, and begin by walking north along the paved trail towards Snoqualmie.

At the Dike Road kiosk near the city line, cross Boalch Avenue and walk east (towards Mt. Si) to enter the Dike Road field. Take a side trip from the trail, and walk north (towards the golf course) across the field to the woods at the field's edge. Look for bark damage and rubs on the trees. This is an area of buffer restoration by Mountains to Sound Greenway, funded by a Snoqualmie Watershed Forum grant. Notice the protective coverings of some small trees, and how they have helped the protected trees. Return to the gravel trail.



Before the easterly end of the field (don't take the bridge to the Snoqualmie Valley trail!), leave the gravel trail to follow the field path that leads behind the Mary Louie art installation, and along the eastern woods edge. Watch for elk tracks, marble-like elk manure, bitten-off twigs and stems, and tan hairs snagged on twigs and blackberry vines. Elk may shelter under the large Sitka spruce trees along the easterly wetland. If elk are present, you may even smell them!

Follow the grassy path along the woods edge, and as it turns west near Gardiner Creek. Look for where elk have crossed the creek, and see the damage sharp hooves can do to the soft bank, and to the soft trail! Follow the path through an older stream buffer restoration area, and look for elk hair snagged on the stiff spruce branches. Continue west on the path across the open field (which may be wet) and up the bank to cross Boalch Avenue and return to the Interpretive Center.

Facility Rentals at Meadowbrook Farm:

The Meadowbrook Farm Interpretive Center and Recreation Fields are open and available for you to reserve at this time. We are guided by the DOH and CDC and have new procedures in place to provide a safe environment. We have also taken several other steps to try to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as: mandatory mask use, promotion of social distancing, limiting of equipment sharing, and requiring a specific plan for each rental group on how they are able to adhere to the latest guidelines while onsite. As the county and state offer specific guidelines, our procedures will be updated. Have questions or are interested in reserving space at Meadowbrook? Please contact Ryan Goodman with Si View Parks at rgoodman@siviewpark.org.



Traffic Safety in an Elk Area

The upper valley's elk population enjoys freedom to roam in most of the valley, thanks to the large publicly owned open spaces, conservation areas, pastures, yards and parks. Meadowbrook Farm Park is central to these connected areas, and is an area to take special caution when driving. Colliding with a 600 lb elk is dangerous to drivers, vehicles and elk!



Elk feed typically in early mornings and evenings, so are more active at these times. Drive cautiously when approaching areas where elk may be seen, especially at night or in mist when visibility is limited. If one elk is seen, watch for others: as herd animals, they often travel as a group and more may be nearby, ready to jump out. If you see brake lights, slow down--the person ahead may have stopped for an elk, and there may be more of them. If you want to watch elk, pull completely off the roadway, don't stop in the lane! Be especially cautious along SR 202, and along Boalch Avenue/Park Street, where elk sightings are common.

Pull-outs along Boalch Ave, and Park Street are good elk-watching areas, and future plans include an elk-watching area along SR 202. Planning and funding for an SR 202 viewing area are more complex and involve multiple agencies, so this is a longer-term project. **Meanwhile, drive cautiously in elk areas!**



Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association

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