

## Meadowbrook Farm Park



**Winter 2020-2021**

**Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association**

### **Winter at Meadowbrook Farm Park is an Adventure . . .**

by Tim Noonan



The leaves are off the trees. You can see further into the woods than you thought possible and new things are catching your eye.

Meadowbrook activities change just as the seasons do. The waters rise in the meandering soughs that wind through the park. You may find that the trail that you walked on regularly now has low areas that fill with water and cannot be navigated without rubber boots.

Along with the inconvenience of standing water and colder weather comes the excitement of a different type of adventure. The wildlife is still living on the property, the beautiful mountain views are still spectacular and the opportunity to stretch your legs is still there.

What is important is to dress appropriately for the visit. If you layer up with winter clothing and bring

an empty back pack, you will be ready to explore. By starting off warm and bundled, you can peel off the extra layers and pack them in the bag as you create the extra heat. The extra coverings will be ready to be put back on if you slow down or stop.

#### **The views change**

Those familiar trails may no longer be the path that you choose to travel. As the harsh weather moves across the valley, the tall grasses and thick forests thin out and become an intriguing place to explore.



It is easy to see the wildlife corridors and trails now that the grass has stopped growing. You can see the muddy trails emerging from the marshes and crossing the open fields.

When snow is on the ground it is easy to see the foot prints of the animals that have passed by. You may find a deer or elk print, but also pay attention to the small, and even the tiny prints. Mice, voles and

weasels traveling across muddy ground or snow can be fun to follow and discover the behavior patterns of the wildlife. You might find a set of tracks crossing open ground, only to disappear in a mass of disturbed snow. A closer look may show wing imprints from a predator that made off with a meal.



Frost formations make wonderful photos. As the cold weather continues, water vapor in the air attaches to ice crystals, growing the fragile and beautiful formations on the ground and on plants. The crystals are called surface hoar frost and can grow to be quite large.

Silver frost is different and can be dangerous. It is the result of warm rain from above falling onto the frozen surfaces near the ground. The rain freezes, coating everything with clear ice. When the sun shines onto the frozen surfaces, it is extremely beautiful. The hazard lies in the weight of the ice. Alder branches and trunks can begin snapping under the weight of the ice and can be deadly to hikers

walking beneath. If you find yourself in this situation, go out into an open field to watch from.

## Things to do



Beaver are busy all of the time repairing and improving their dams. Two dams and their ponds are easy to visit and I suggest taking a folding chair. They are located across Boalch Ave NE, from the Interpretive Center. Follow the loop trail through the field. After the trail enters the woods, look for Gardiner Creek on your right. The creek edge is uneven so be careful not to step into a water trap.

The beaver have to cut branches and stash them so that they have a food supply for the winter. Beaver only eat the bark from the trees and branches that they cut and the bark is not high in nutritional value. They have to eat a lot. You can find the stripped branches along the shore of Gardiner Creek, with

nicely penciled ends. They make attractive walking sticks.

Beaver are shy at first and it takes a patient person to watch quietly as they work on their pond.





Snowshoeing and cross country skiing are a fun way to navigate the snow covered park. The colder the weather, the easier it is to get about in the deep snow. Since the grasses are generally knocked down, new fields seem to appear. When sliding across these new open areas, be aware that there may be waterways under the snow. If the weather had been dry and cold prior to the falling of snow, there is likely no need for caution. But if the snow came before the ground froze, beware. Skis spread your weight across a large area and make it easier to glide across unseen bogs without breaking through. I enjoyed this last year but found myself slowly sinking into a bog as the snow was giving way. I was anxious and got out of the mess relatively dry, but had I fallen over? Splash!



### **Hockey on a pond?**

Growing up on Snoqualmie Pass, we had our favorite hockey pond. It was about 3 feet deep in the middle, so we figured it was less dangerous than other lakes. It worked well if the weather was really cold before the snow fell. We had to earn the skating rink by shoveling it each time it snowed, as snow is an insulating blanket that allows the water to thaw from the warm ground beneath the snow. If this attracts you, start looking for shallow standing water and get your shovel ready. Avoid ponds that are more than knee deep and stay away from sloughs and creeks. Moving water is always deadly! Ice may not support one person let alone several. Always pair up and prepare an evacuation plan in the event that you get wet.

ponds that are more than knee deep and



Fun in Summer, fun in Winter. Your pets will really have a good time running through the fields. Most dogs enjoy the snow adventure as much as we do. Remember that dry in the cold is generally safe. If your pet chases the ducks out of a pond, keep an eye out for hypothermia. A wet dog will eventually begin to experience pain from the cold and will need to get into a car very soon.



Although we have limited funds, the staff at Meadowbrook reserves a budget to keep the parking open in the three parking lots on Boalch Ave. NE. As the park has organic status, herbicide and pesticide free, we do not use de-icers either. Expect to find snow removed with compact snow and ice on the surfaces. It may be just as slippery in the parking lots and shoveled paths as it was on the roads to the park.

Remember to utilize masks and social distancing and do your best to promote winter safety. Happy Holidays from the Meadowbrook staff!

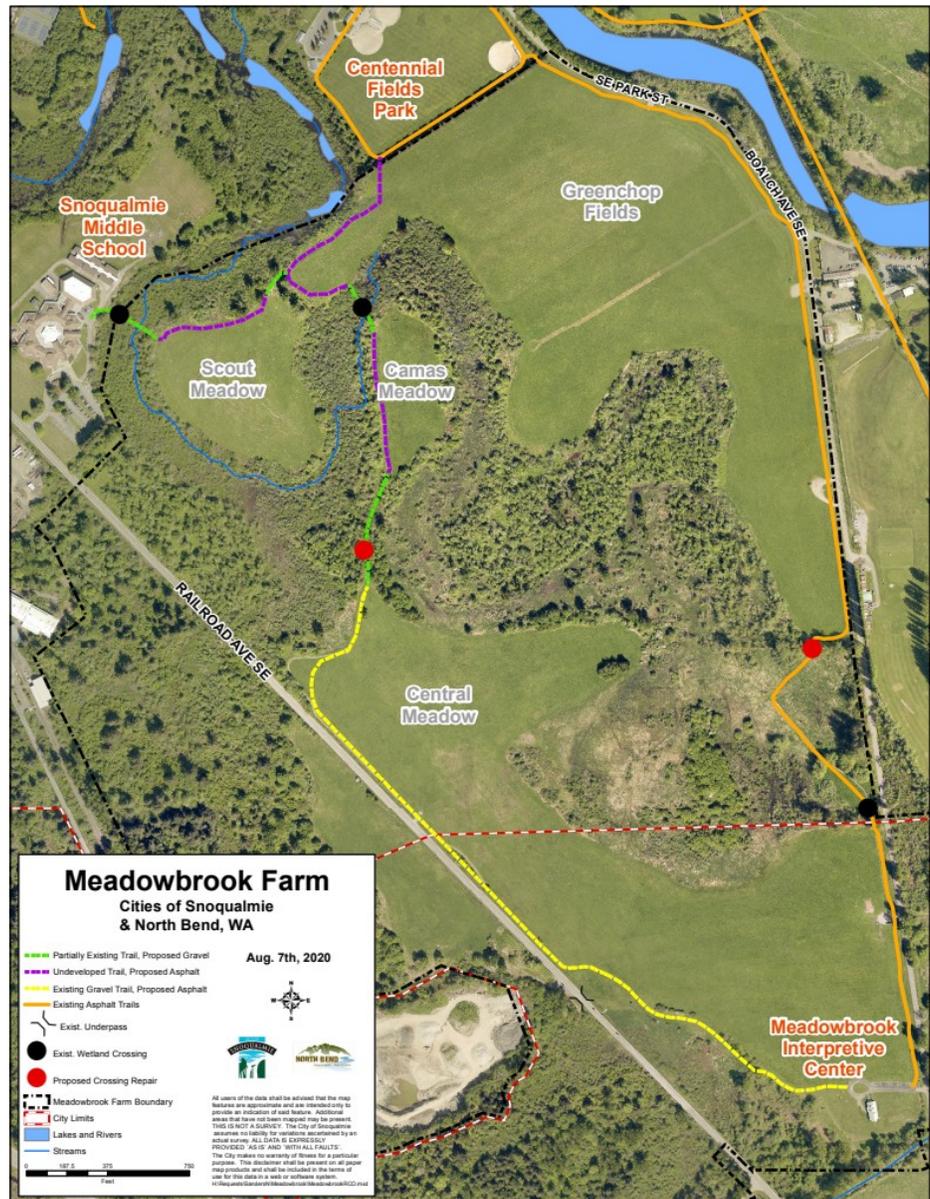


Author Tim Noonan is a long-time MFPA board member and present Site Manager for Meadowbrook Farm Park. He lives in Snoqualmie.

# Prairie Loop Trail Progress

by Mike McCarty

The Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association and staff from the City of North Bend, City of Snoqualmie, and Si View Metropolitan Park District have been planning for a future Prairie Loop Trail at Meadowbrook Farm. The proposed 8' wide ADA-accessible trail is planned to eventually create a continuous 2.6 mile paved recreational loop (joining with the existing Boalch Trail) around Meadowbrook Farm, with connections to the Meadowbrook Farm Interpretive Center, Centennial Fields Park and to Snoqualmie Middle School. The trail would provide access to backcountry areas of Meadowbrook Farm that are currently difficult to reach, offering the public opportunity to see some of the more remote fields where one can turn 360-degrees and see no signs of human settlement, giving an experience of what the original Snoqualmie Prairie, known in the Lushotseed language as "Baquab," might have looked like thousands of years ago. Staff from North Bend, Snoqualmie, and Si View Parks jointly applied in 2020 for a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant in 2020 to fund a Prairie Loop Trail at Meadowbrook Farm. While we were not awarded funding for the trail project from that grant, the staff from those agencies will apply in 2021 for another grant for the same project, from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We hope to build on the excellent community support and interest in this project to make it happen!



## **Be Safe with Elk!**

It's always exciting to see wildlife while visiting Meadowbrook Farm Park, but remember that wild animals, including elk, can be dangerous to both people and pets. The Snoqualmie valley floor is home to about 500 elk, and they often utilize the protected habitat of Meadowbrook's meadows and forests. If you encounter an elk, stay at a safe distance. If you have a pet with you, leash and control them; do not allow them to chase or disturb the animals. Do not try to pose your pet—or child—"closer" for a photo! Full grown elk are about 6 feet tall (not counting antlers!) and can severely wound or kill smaller animals if they are seen as a threat.

If you unexpectedly get too close to an elk, do not turn your back to them. Move away slowly and purposefully. The elk may try to drive you away by advancing towards you in an intimidating manner. If this happens, try to protect yourself by placing a large object (tree or car) between you and the elk. While elk typically try to avoid human interaction, a bull elk during mating season (September—October) or a cow with a calf may be unpredictable and dangerous. Be safe while you respect and enjoy our local elk!



## **Facility Rentals at Meadowbrook Farm Park**

The Meadowbrook Farm Interpretive Center and Recreation Fields are open and available for you to reserve at this time. To help ensure the health and well-being of all persons onsite, including facility renters and park and trail users, we are guided by the DOH and CDC and have procedures in place to provide a safe environment. In phase 2, the Interpretive Center is able to host both wedding and celebration of life ceremonies and receptions for groups of up to 31 total persons, and other indoor social gatherings for groups of up to 6 persons. The recreation fields can be reserved for groups of up to 16 persons, regardless of event type. 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 transition through stages of the Reopening Plan, our procedures will be updated. For the latest COVID-19 updates, have questions, or are interested in reserving space at Meadowbrook? Please contact Ryan Goodman with Si View Parks at [rgoodman@siviewpark.org](mailto:rgoodman@siviewpark.org) or 425-831-1900.



## Watch for Signs of Spring!

One of the first birds to return to the Snoqualmie Valley in the spring may be a very visible one at Meadowbrook Farm Park: the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). These large birds can easily be seen soaring over the fields and forests of the valley floor. Sometimes called “buzzards”, vultures are related to hawks, eagles, kites and condors; our Turkey Vultures are one of three North American species. With their feather-less heads, and light colored bills, Turkey Vultures might be mistaken for a wild turkey when standing on the ground.



Our local vultures winter south, perhaps as far as Mexico or Central America, and return to the valley to nest and spend the summers. Their hooked bills are specialized for tearing and eating carrion--their main food--but unlike hawks and eagles, their weak feet are not adapted to catching live prey. Their feather-less heads help keep them clean while eating carcasses. While vultures nest alone, they roost together, and feed together. Soaring on air currents over the valley, a vulture is able to find food by both sight and smell, and the sight of one bird descending down in spirals to food will alert others at a great distance. If attacked, a vulture is able to vomit stomach acids to defend itself. If vultures become too hot, they may urinate down their legs to cool by evaporation.



If you see a number of vultures circling in one place, a food source may be present. Walking into the area can be surprising: there may be many more vultures than you expected, waiting their turns to eat! Enjoy the opportunity to watch these unique and interesting birds.



### Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association

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