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NEW NATIONAL PARK PROPOSED

The Spectacular North Cascades

By NATHANIEL T. KENNEY *Photographs by JAMES P. BLAIR*
Both National Geographic Staff

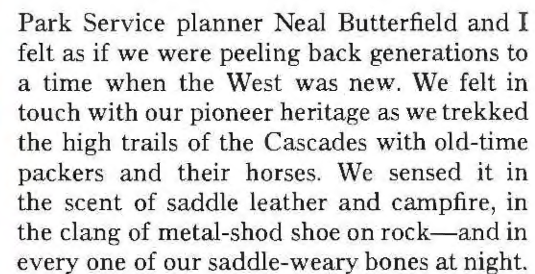
SHARP AS A COUGAR'S FANGS, *the Picket Range spikes a summer sky in the wilderness empire of the North Cascades.*

 KODACHROME © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

OUT IN THE NORTHWEST CORNER of the country, up against the Canadian border, lies a sparsely peopled land of snowy mountains and forest solitudes—the North Cascades wilderness, in Washington State. If Congress this session completes action on a bill already passed by the Senate, the choicest part of it will become our newest national park.

What is it like? Last summer I went to see, and now I can report that it is like nothing else—unique in itself—though at times it seemed composed of about equal parts of Alps, virgin forest, and the easy informality of the old West.

As we roamed this peak-studded wilderness, National



Park Service planner Neal Butterfield and I felt as if we were peeling back generations to a time when the West was new. We felt in touch with our pioneer heritage as we trekked the high trails of the Cascades with old-time packers and their horses. We sensed it in the scent of saddle leather and campfire, in the clang of metal-shod shoe on rock—and in every one of our saddle-weary bones at night.

Stehekin: Wilderness Portal

For the trappers and prospectors of old, the most popular jumping-off point into the area now proposed as the southern section of the national park was the head of Lake Chelan. Here came into existence the isolated village of Stehekin, which still outfits hunters and hikers as it did the pioneers. Its name is a Skagit Indian word meaning "way" or "pass," and it became my first doorway into Cascades country. I frequently used it as a base for forays by plane, helicopter, and horse (map, page 651).

The passing years have not greatly changed Stehekin's way of life. Its families still see mountain lions and mountain goats from their kitchen porches. It has no doctor or dentist. No road, no telephone line links it to the outside world. The people like it this way.

There are but 30 year-round Stehekinites. Most descend from homesteaders. Among these, Harry Buckner is postmaster, keeps a general store, and runs a radio transmitter used for emergency calls (page 648). Ray Courtney (page 665) and Guy Imus pack horseback parties into the wild lands. Ray's brother

From the lip of a living glacier, a hiker surveys Mount Challenger's snowfields on a sun-washed August day. A proposed new national park in this spectacular alpine region of Washington State would encompass more than 150 glaciers.

"Greatest concentration of natural beauty in the United States," one naturalist terms the wilderness. To keep it unspoiled and accessible only by trail, the National Park Service plans no automobile roads into the core of the new preserve; motorists would leave their cars on the perimeter and be carried to view points on the ridge by aerial trams, the first ever built in a U. S. national park.

Riding a log raft on Thunder Lake, a Seattle family soaks up sunshine in a Cascades valley. But they stay atop the water, so icy that only the most courageous dare swim in it.

KODACHROMES BY BOB AND IRA SPRING (LEFT) AND JAMES P. BLAIR © N.G.S.

Curt is the leading contractor and builder.

Others work for the United States Forest Service or the local electric cooperative. Nearly everyone owes part of his livelihood to an ever-increasing flood of vacationists.

I first went to Stehekin in July, when the back country was still impassable under a blanket of snow. I flew in from Chelan, at the toe of the lake of the same name, in a float plane with veteran bush pilot Ernie Gibson.

Settlement Cherishes Its Isolation

Most visitors take the boat that makes the 50-mile lake trip daily in summer, three times a week in winter (right). Some go off into the wilds, some vacation in Stehekin's resorts and lodges, others stay only for lunch and go back to Chelan with the boat.

In my plane was Neal Butterfield, whose home base is the Park Service's Seattle office. His mission was to assure the worried Stehekinites that the Park Service didn't plan to build a road in from the outside.

"If we get a North Cascades park," he said, "it will be one of the few in the country you can't enter by car. The only way in will be as now—by air, horse, or afoot."

Stehekin does have a motor road, but it goes no place in particular. About 20 miles long, it is simply a local link between the village wharf and the widely scattered homes and resorts in the Stehekin Valley. The elderly vehicles that use it came in by barge and will never travel another thoroughfare.

Hiring one of the captive cars, we drove into the valley. A ten-minute run brought us to the one-room schoolhouse. It was closed for the summer, but Mrs. Ed Strange, the teacher, was inside fixing the big chunk stove, and we stopped for a chat.

"I had six students last year," she told us. "The only girl was a beautiful little Alaskan Indian, adopted daughter of a lady who helped look after one of the resorts. The others were all sons of Ray and Esther Courtney."

Packer Ray Courtney, who was later to guide us on the most enjoyable horseback trip I have ever taken, is an unusual man. An expert skier and a wizard with horses, he is a true mountain man who loves the wilderness deeply and counts the day lost on which he must visit a city.

Ray designed and built his own house in the valley. It is a beautiful thing of peeled logs, along the lines of a Swiss chalet. From a giant fir he felled with his own hands, he hewed a solid staircase that is a masterpiece of craftsmanship.

Oil lamps light the home.

"Matter of principle," he explained. "I opposed the power plant when they put it in because it spoiled one of my favorite parts of the valley. It wouldn't be honest for me to use the electricity it makes."

From the Courtney place we drove on to visit Harry Buckner at his homestead carved out of deep forest. He was in his apple orchard inspecting trees scarred by powerful claws.

"Bears," he complained. "They've killed this tree. When the apples ripen, so many come to steal the fruit I have to sit up nights chasing them off."

Back on the road, we rounded a sharp bend and met two bears headed in the general direction of Harry's orchard. We sent them back up the valley with a blast of the horn.

Still far from road's end, a snowbank blocked us, and we turned around. Neal got down to guide me as I backed the car.

"I saw a moose track in the snow," he said as we started back for the village. A Stehekinite we picked up a while later said he'd seen the animal, a young bull. Moose are rare in the Stehekin Valley, but sometimes they stray in from Canada, 50 miles north.

"A small herd of elk wintered in the valley last year," said our passenger. "We have deer by the thousands."

Fresh-water Lake Yields "Salty" Catch

Later, on the wharf at Stehekin, I saw an angler proudly displaying a fish he had just caught, a 10-pounder that he called a "ling cod." More correctly, he had landed a burbot, which is a member of the codfish family, true enough—the only fresh-water cousin of all that salt-water clan. You can catch them, as well as large trout, in quarter-mile-deep Lake

KODACHROME BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES P. BLAIR © N.G.S.

Trim *Lady of the Lake* glides across snow-fed Lake Chelan. Passengers on the stern decks watch the banks for glimpses of white-coated, black-horned mountain goats. Every summer day the ferry churns 50 miles from Chelan, at the lake's southeastern tip, to Stehekin, at the head, and returns.

Wapato Indians named the 1,500-foot-deep lake—Chelan means "deep water"—that cuts its fiordlike way into the heart of the North Cascades. The bottom of the lake, a trough carved by an Ice Age glacier, lies 400 feet below sea level.

Famed for her cooking, Mrs. Beryl Courtney bakes four dozen apple and walnut pies a day in her Stehekin restaurant.

Only by radio can residents of phoneless Stehekin talk with the outside world. Postmaster Harry Buckner calls the sheriff in Wenatchee.

Breakfast never tasted better! Harold Olson (left), a cowboy turned packer, and Neal Butterfield of the National Park Service savor piping-hot pancakes and coffee brewed with brook water on a pack trip to Whatcom Pass.

KODACHROMES © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Giving his horse full head, author Kenney fords a stream en route to Park Creek Pass. He keeps one hand ready to grab the pommel should his mount stumble on a stone in the swift water.

Chelan, and, during summer months, satisfying numbers of small landlocked sockeye salmon, known as kokanee.

The lakeside village of Stehekin is one of but three hamlets in all the wild lands proposed for the park and its associated recreation areas. The other two are Newhalem and Diablo, in a neck of land between sections of the two-part park. All three settlements lie in the proposed recreation areas (map, page 651).

Newhalem and Diablo are company towns owned by Seattle City Light, which created Gorge, Diablo, and Ross Lakes by building power dams across the Skagit River between 1930 and 1961. Its workers live happily in the neat communities, and City Light's hospitality to vacationists is one of the heartwarming marvels of the Northwest.

You can visit the company's sizable wilderness holdings in your own car, or for a fee City Light will transport you by bus from Seattle. It will take you sightseeing on Diablo Lake (page 663), show you its power plants, and feed you to stupefaction in a vast dining room patterned after a lumberjacks' mess hall, complete with a sign asking you not to scar the floor with "calk boots."

Giants Created by Volcanic Eruptions

On a map of the Pacific Northwest, Diablo Lake is hardly more than a dot in the northernmost part of a mountain chain 700 miles long. Starting in California as an extension of the Sierra Nevada, the Cascade Range curves north through Oregon and Washington and ends at the Fraser River in British Columbia.*

The highest peaks are volcanoes: Rainier (at 14,410 feet the tallest), Shasta, Adams, Hood, Baker, Glacier, Jefferson, and Lassen, the only one still belching steam. Rains from moisture in the prevailing Pacific winds copiously bathe the range's western slopes. Eastward, the foothills taper into semidesert.

In the North Cascades, springlike temperatures last all summer, and you can expect the first breath of winter by October. Snow, in consequence, never melts entirely and piles up in layers until it forms the glaciers, which incidentally number twice as many in Washington as in all the other states combined, excluding Alaska.†

Since only 65 miles, as the golden eagle flies, separate the populous city of Seattle from 10,568-foot Glacier Peak, one would expect the North Cascades to be well explored

*See, in the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: "Washington Wilderness, the North Cascades," by Edwards Park, March, 1961; and "Northwest Wonderland: Washington State," by Merle Severy, April, 1960.

†See "Climbing Our Northwest Glaciers," by Bob and Ira Spring, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, July, 1953.

and fully described in print. Not so; they are not even completely mapped.

My visit to this high, wild country fulfilled an ambition dating back several years to a talk I'd had with George B. Hartzog, Jr., Director of the National Park Service. He described the area as a wilderness of rare beauty, hardly marked by the hand of man.

"As early as the 1930's," said Mr. Hartzog, "conservationists were worried about the disappearance of the American wilderness and urged the Park Service to establish a North Cascades National Park.

"After careful studies, the service made this statement in 1937: 'Such a park will outrank in its scenic, recreational, and wildlife values any existing park and any other possibility for such a park within the United States.'

"Except for Alaska, which has become a state since that time, the words still hold true. It is one of my fondest wishes that one day, before it is too late, we will have a North Cascades National Park in this unique commnnity of ancient forest, alpine meadows, snowy peaks, and plentiful glaciers."

A look at the accompanying photographs, especially of the needle-sharp complex called the Picket Range (pages 642-3), will explain why this wilderness has survived. Even the Indians avoided these savage mountains. Fur trappers, both American and British, kept to the low valleys where the beaver lived.

Harder Route "Never Fell to Man's Lot"

A journal kept by Alexander Ross, a Scottish fur trapper who pushed into the Cascades in 1814, helped me understand man's slowness in settling the area. Ross was probably the first non-Indian ever to enter the northern part of the range, and I was particularly interested in his impression. Here's what he had to say about the wilderness that lay to the west of Cascade Pass:

"Country gloomy, forest almost impervious with fallen as well as standing timber. A more difficult route to travel never fell to man's lot.... And the rocks and yawning chasms gave to the whole an air of solemn gloom and undisturbed silence. My companions began to flag during the day."

For "gloomy" I would substitute "inspiring," although I realize that 154 years ago these wilds sheltered grizzlies, wolves, and a few Indians, all of them deterrents to travel that no longer exist here. Otherwise I agree with Ross, and I can testify that some of my companions too began to flag—as I myself did—on more than one arduous day's trek.

After the trappers, however, came an influx of men whose energies were fired by the scent of gold, the result of a strike in 1858 in the Fraser River Valley. The first prospectors found scant reward, but later searchers discovered gold, silver, and copper, and have removed about 80 million dollars' worth since the turn of the century.

Take any trail, and the chances are that the early prospectors originally hacked it out for their pack trains. Everywhere you run across the mouths of old prospect holes, and occasionally there is an abandoned mine.

Old Claims a Threat to Wilderness

These diggings depress me. In the dark depths of the mines rusty ore cars yet stand on rusty rails. Picks and shovels lie where men dropped them as hope died. It is a sad thing to think of so much backbreaking labor gone, in most cases, for nothing.

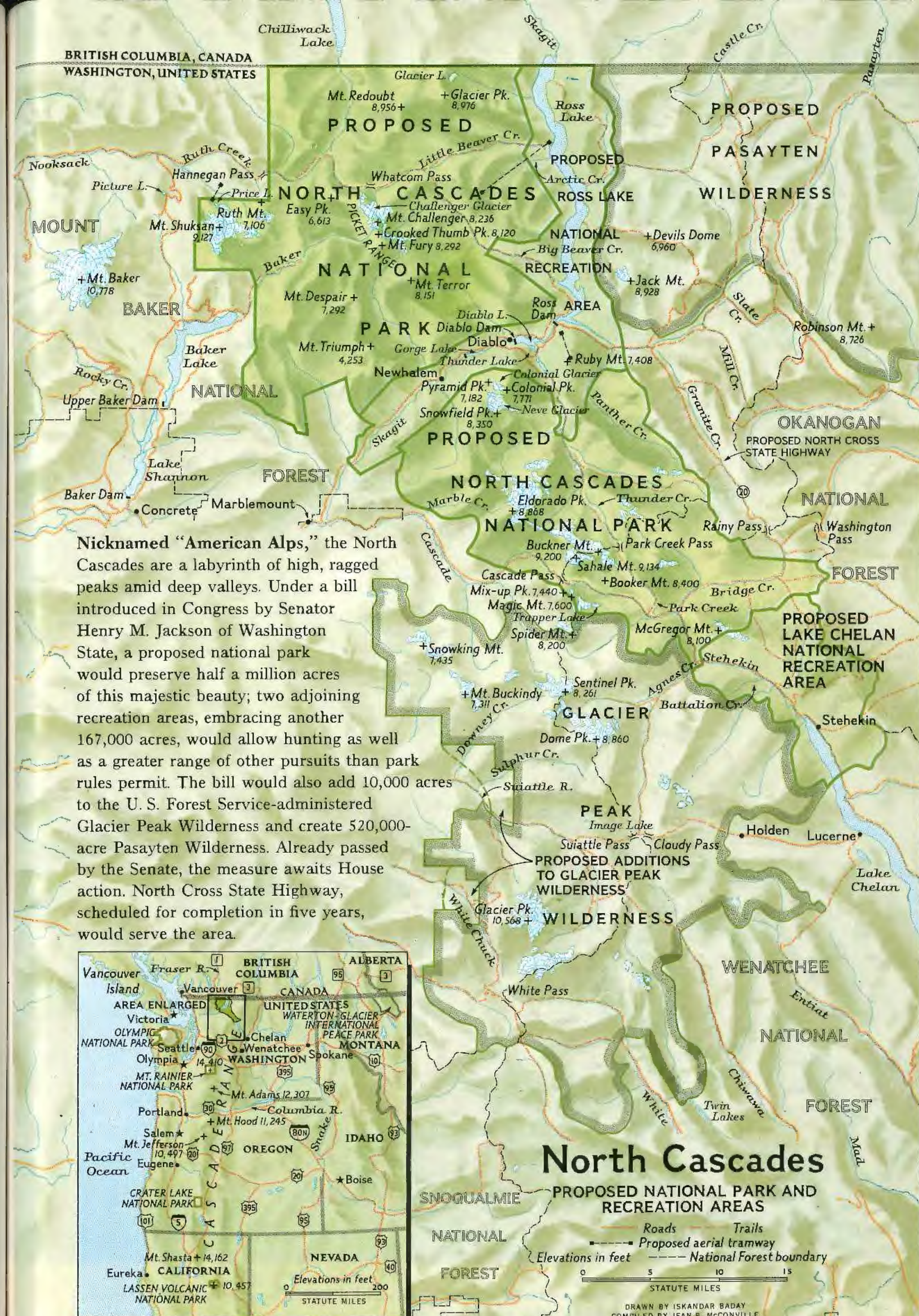
Scores of the old claims are still valid, nevertheless, and lovers of the wilderness fear them, for heirs still have the legal right to return and work them anew. In one instance, at least, this has already happened.

On the logging road that now goes from Marblemount to the west side of Cascade Pass, I ran out of gasoline and was rescued by a carload of men in lumberjack shirts and hard hats. Thinking them loggers, I asked where they were cutting.

"No place," one of them replied. "We're reopening an old silver mine up near the top of the pass. Some job, too. Nobody's worked it since the 1890's. But the price of silver has gone up, and the owners now think they might make some money."

Copper is another money-maker these days, and its discovery in quantity could cause the death of almost any wilderness area. A case in point is the 452,000-acre Glacier Peak Wilderness, west of Lake Chelan. Primitive and beautiful, it is one of the best parts of the North Cascades.

The area is now national forest, under the skilled and devoted management of the U. S. Forest Service. The parks bill passed by the Senate not only keeps it that way but would enlarge it by 10,000 acres. Without the "wilderness" label, the Forest Service under law would have to open it to a number of uses—lumbering for example—although permits are issued only if proposals fit long-range



Nicknamed "American Alps," the North Cascades are a labyrinth of high, ragged peaks amid deep valleys. Under a bill introduced in Congress by Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington State, a proposed national park would preserve half a million acres of this majestic beauty; two adjoining recreation areas, embracing another 167,000 acres, would allow hunting as well as a greater range of other pursuits than park rules permit. The bill would also add 10,000 acres to the U. S. Forest Service-administered Glacier Peak Wilderness and create 520,000-acre Pasayten Wilderness. Already passed by the Senate, the measure awaits House action. North Cross State Highway, scheduled for completion in five years, would serve the area.

KODACHROME BY BOB AND IRA SPRING © N.G.S.

Camped above a sea of clouds, a trail party at Cascade Pass can gaze across treetops toward snow-splotched peaks seemingly afloat. Indians and early settlers threaded this pass, perhaps the easiest of all trails through the North Cascades. The campers breakfast by a blazing fire before striking tents, packing up gear, and hiking deeper into the wilds.

plans. Other legal uses of national forest include mining, grazing, and hunting. One may apply for a permit to build a ski lodge or summer cabin, or ride a "tote goat"—a cross-country motorcycle.

The official "wilderness" status therefore closes Glacier Peak to most of these pursuits. Campers may not enter it with any sort of motor-driven vehicle, nor may an aircraft land within its boundaries.

Ray Courtney tells me that as a youth he used to wander the area for days without ever seeing another human being. But after World War II, hikers, mountaineers, and other outdoorsmen "discovered" it in increasing numbers. Now it is a favorite haunt of conservationist organizations, many of which favor its becoming part of the national park.

A year and a half ago, a threat to the area became known. It was learned that Kennecott Copper Corporation was studying the feasibility of mining copper on lands it owns near Glacier Peak itself, third in height after Rainier and Baker in the North Cascades. To reach its property, the company must cross wilderness sections of national forest. Access can be granted, however, under provisions of the Wilderness Act.

Relatively shallow deposits would dictate open-pit mining, which calls for removal of vegetation and topsoil to reach the ore. The operation would require roads, housing, and perhaps some processing plants nearby.

It is not fair, of course, to view the corporation as an ogre bent upon destruction of wilderness. It is operating within existing laws to produce a metal vital to our civilization.

Copper mining does change the face of nature, however. Anyone who doubts this should go to Holden, adjacent to the Glacier Peak Wilderness, 17 miles northeast of the namesake mountain itself (map, page 651). Here an underground mine, not nearly as destructive to the landscape as an open pit, operated from the 1930's until 1957.

I have seen Holden from the air. A broad yellow scar, waste from a processing plant, persists after 10 years. No grass, not even a blueberry bush, covers the poisoned tailings. Foresters tell me it may take nature a century to heal the wound.

After it ceased operations, the mining firm deeded its buildings to a church group, and Holden is now a useful summer camp.

To scout the high country I would visit later in the summer, I arranged an air tour with bush pilot Ernie Gibson. We took off from Stehekin in flurries of cold rain and snow.

"No guarantees today," said Ernie. "In a float plane you don't try to fly over 9,000-foot mountains. You detour through the passes—and if clouds suddenly close them behind you, you look for an ice-free lake big enough to land on until the passes clear up."

Peaks Look Down on Climbing Plane

We winged north and west up the Stehekin Valley. As we climbed, so did the peaks among which we threaded. I glanced at the altimeter. It read 8,000 feet, yet the summits still looked down upon us—Sentinel and Spider on our left, Buckner, Booker, and hoary Sahale,

His "sled" a plastic bag, a youngster streaks down a steep snow-packed slope in Cascade Pass.

KODACHROMES BY JAMES P. BLAIR © N.G.S.

Blades cleaving thin air, a Bell helicopter circles Neve Glacier south of Colonial Peak. Copters lift campers, fishermen, rangers, fire fighters, and mining surveyors to heights otherwise reachable only by three or four days of hard climbing.

with its gigantic glacial apron, over the aircraft's nose ahead.

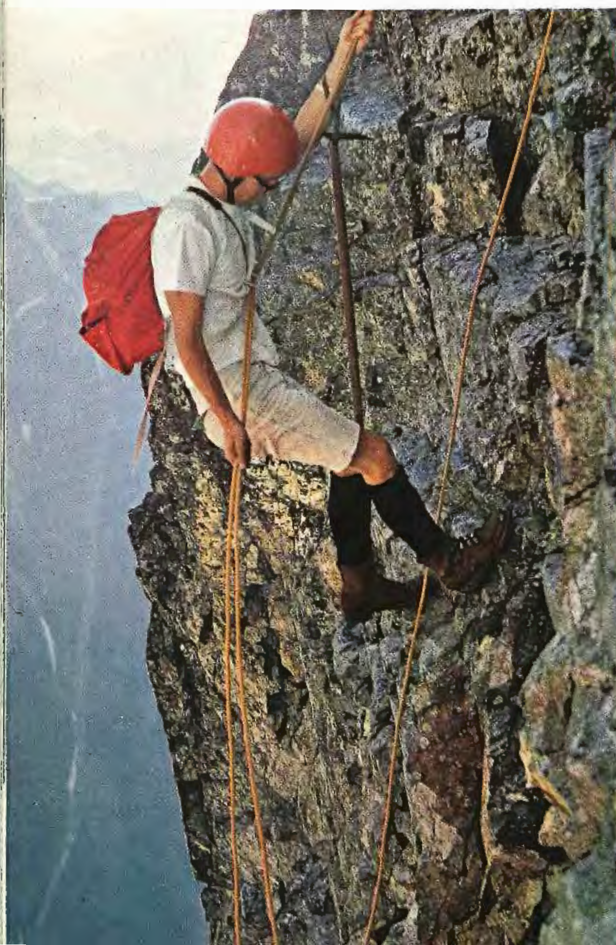
We passed over Trapper Lake, in which dwell some of the biggest trout in the Cascades. Ernie flies fishing parties to the lake in the summer, but when we circled it, we found it clogged with baby icebergs.

I was wondering whether any human beings were in the wilds beneath us, when Ernie banked steeply and dropped to within a hundred feet of a sharp ridge. Big round tracks ascended one snowy side of the spine, held the crest briefly, then dropped off down the other slope to vanish into heavy forest.

"Snow shoes," said Ernie. "A Forest Service snow ranger must be measuring depths so they'll know how much runoff to expect at Lake Chelan when the snow melts."

National Geographic photographer Jim Blair had an even more unexpected human encounter in the high country. Coming around the flank of Sahale in a helicopter, he found

Dangling above half a mile of nothing, Byron Ward rappels down 7,440-foot Mixup Peak. Last summer he and other students took part in a University of Washington climbing workshop in the rugged Cascades.



KODACHROMES BY M. WOODBRIDGE WILLIAMS (ABOVE) AND CHET HINMAN © N.G.S.

Icebergs sprinkle Glacier Lake, a cup of cobalt at the foot of 8,976-foot Glacier Peak, left, northernmost of two mountains of the same name in the Cascades. This panorama looks west toward snow-smothered Mount Baker, upper left, and the Canadian Cascades, right.

himself suddenly face to face with two mountain climbers no more than 50 feet from him.

"I poked my camera out the door," said Jim. "As anyone would, they began waving and striking noble poses.

"'Quit hamming!' I yelled. 'Look away from the camera.' But the engine was so loud it was 10 minutes and five gallons of gas later before they caught on to what I wanted."

Jim turned frequently to helicopters for photo trips into the high country, and sometimes I went with him. One day I joined him on what he described as a "glacier-hopping expedition."

For the first hop of the trip he picked one of the most heavily crevassed and jumbled rivers of ice in the North Cascades, Colonial Glacier, lying on the flank of Colonial Peak. Although small, it is steep, plunging nearly vertically into the valley it has carved in the mountainside over the centuries.

Our pilot was Bill Wells, who lifts fire fighters, the Geological Survey's mineral scouts, and other hardy folk into the mountains. He picked a flat-topped, bouse-size boulder on the glacier bank for a landing pad.

Icequakes Make Glacier a Scary Perch

Gusts of icy wind blew us away from the target the first few times we tried settling in. We made it finally with scarcely a jar, landing in the lee of an ice cliff 50 feet away.

Jim jumped to the ground with his cameras and started for a natural ramp leading to the top of the mass. I was about to follow when something deep inside the icy immensity let go with a sharp crack, followed by a roar like summer thunder.

The earth trembled. So did my knees.

"Can't we find a quieter glacier?" I asked, turning to Bill. But he was already on top of the mass with Jim.

I scrambled up and joined them, and there we stayed for an hour, jolted every now and then by icequakes as the great glacier ground on down from the heights. The steeper a glacier, I take it, the more lively it is.

Unexpected patches of color marked Colonial's snowy breast. Blue streaks were narrow crevasses of frightening depth. An opening in a wall of ice led into an azure cave. The lofty roof looked solid, so I went inside a few feet. Again the glacier moved, and a shower of ice chips fell on my head.

KODACHROMES BY PAUL GLINES (BELOW) AND JAMES P. BLAIR © N.G.S.

Popping from a snowbank, an avalanche lily defies the cold. In the high meadows its pristine white counterpoints blue lupine, flaming Indian paintbrush, and lavender mountain daisy.

Startled young buck, surprised at a salt lick near Battalion Creek, focuses wary eyes on an intruder. Black-tailed deer, a subspecies of mule deer, frequent the Cascades, as do black bears and cougars. Grizzlies and wolves vanished long ago.

Tawny flanks aproned with glaciers, Mount Shuksan casts a shimmering image in Picture Lake. The massive pinnacle, one of the Cascades' most accessible, rises to 9,127 feet.

I backed out of the cave, and also from the remainder of the expedition.

"Put me down on some sunny, ice-free mountain while you finish glacier-hopping," I said when we were safely back in the air again.

Ruby Mountain was handy, and there Bill left me. It was a happy choice. Not only does this round-topped, heather-covered peak afford one of the best views in the North Cascades, but it may become the site of an interesting experiment in wilderness transportation—the first of three tramways proposed for the area. Neal Butterfield had explained the idea to me:

"We'd like to build an aerial tramway to the top, like those in the Alps. The necessary towers and cable would go almost straight up, and would be a lot easier to hide in woods or a ravine than a zigzagging motor road.

"When the new Cross State Highway is finished [map, page 651], visitors will be able to park their cars near the foot of Ruby Mountain and step onto the tramway. From the top, if they want, they can hike on into the back country."

Jagged Picket Range Tests Climbers

One of the great views from Ruby Mountain is the Picket Range, containing the sharpest peaks in the entire Cascades. Resembling the fangs of some gigantic beast, the Pickets rank among the world's most difficult mountains, highly dangerous for any but skilled climbers. Even helicopters find no landing space on their heights.

There is, however, a horse trail skirting the range to the north. It cuts through mile-high Whatcom Pass. On our first mounted foray into the high country, Neal, Jim Blair, and I rode to Whatcom in mid-August. This, it happens, is the height of the wild-flower season, when the wilderness is in its gayest dress.

Normally, you can head into the Pickets from either end of the trail. If you go west, you start on the shore of Ross Lake—but winter storms, we were told, had washed out this route. So we went east instead, riding our horses up Ruth Creek from trailhead in a forest of Douglas fir, giant red cedar, and hemlock.

To our south lay oft-climbed Mount Shuksan (preceding pages). This peak is a near neighbor of Mount Baker, a skiers' paradise. Visiting Baker's slopes as late as mid-July, I have found them thronged with skiers—at least half from Vancouver in British Columbia—still enjoying good snow.

Succumbing after only five miles to first-day, saddle-bestowed aches and pains, we camped for the night under the crest of Hannegan Pass (page 664). Neal went off with his fly rod to look for a likely stream, promising us trout for breakfast.

KODACHROME BY BOB AND IRA SPRING © N.G.S.

Blue cheeks, blue lips, and blue bands spell blueberries, sweet and sun-ripened. On the shores of Picture Lake they hang heavy on the bush, as if begging to be picked. Two youngsters happily oblige. There may be a few left for the folks back at camp, but the prospect appears unlikely.

Next morning we saddled up at first light and pushed for Whatcom. Breakfast, I am compelled to say, consisted not of trout but of pancakes topped with sun-sweetened blueberries and thimbleberries Jim gathered in dewy meadows.

Trail traffic, for wilderness, was heavy. First we overtook a Forest Service crew carrying tools and camping gear on pack mules. They were bound over Whatcom to open the trail to Ross Lake, a job that might keep the men in the open for a week or two.

Next appeared a man on horseback, flanked by a pair of huge hounds. These beasts unnerved our horses, which started kicking in every direction. The only casualty was a saddle box splintered by a flying hoof.

Before we topped Whatcom at twilight, we had chatted with a dozen hikers. Two bronzed youths wearing backpacks filled with climbing gear said they were off to scale one of the many unclimbed, unnamed Picket peaks. Another pair had hiked in from the lake, and reported the Big Beaver Creek Trail in poor shape indeed.

Hornets Pose a Hazard

"Not only is the going bad, but the country fairly swarms with hornets," one of them said.

Often Cascades hornets build nests beneath rocks, likely as not in the middle of a trail. You can imagine what happens when your mount steps on a nest. The horse puts its trust in speedy departure from the scene. Personally, I prefer angry hornets to a frenzied gallop down a mountain, but I have yet to ride a horse that saw it my way, and I have more than once charged willy-nilly into the wilderness like a Light Brigade cavalryman at Balaklava.

We spent a day on Whatcom Pass, feasting our eyes on the jagged Pickets we had ridden so far to see. To the south rose Mount Challenger, and in a cirque on its flank, Challenger Glacier, glory of the Pickets. Easy Peak frowned down upon us from the west; I wondered what humorist had given this steep mountain its name!

Wild flowers bloomed in all the high meadows. I recognized white avalanche and yellow glacier lilies, closely following the snow as it receded up the slopes.

Two kinds of heather, bearing white and red flowers, shared the meadows with lupine, Indian paintbrush, and harebells, which are the bluebells of Scotland. Everywhere the wild phlox tinted the landscape with lavender and white.

When finally we tore ourselves away, it was to ride back to our starting point in one strenuous day, for both Neal and Jim had temporary commitments elsewhere.

In their absence I made a foreign voyage—

KODACHROME BY BOB AND IRA SPRING © N.G.S.

Time out for tired feet: Hikers on Magic Mountain revive sore soles in cold spring water. The North Cascades offer more peaks than a climber could scale in several lifetimes—all of them "new" mountains not yet rounded by erosion, their knife-sharp ridges still being chiseled by ice.

to Canada, by boat on Ross Lake. If one day you duplicate the trip, you will find it a complicated business, but the reward of a day on the lovely trout-filled lake, with perhaps a short hike or two into the unpeopled wilderness beyond either shore, is worth the trouble.

You drive to Diablo Lake Resort. Either the resort boat or the City Light workboat will take you upstream to near the foot of 540-foot-high Ross Dam, which makes the Skagit River a deep waterway reaching a mile into Canadian territory.

At the dam you will be met by Wayne Dameron's bus, which takes you to his blazingly fast motor catamaran, which speeds you to Wayne's Ross Lake Resort. This unusual place consists of offices, housekeeping cabins, and boat sheds built on huge rafts.

Renting one of Wayne's small, fast outboards, I shoved off with a near-gale at my back. I made Canada in less than two hours, seeing not another soul the whole way. Had I not been told that a log boom marked the border, I would never have known when I crossed it.

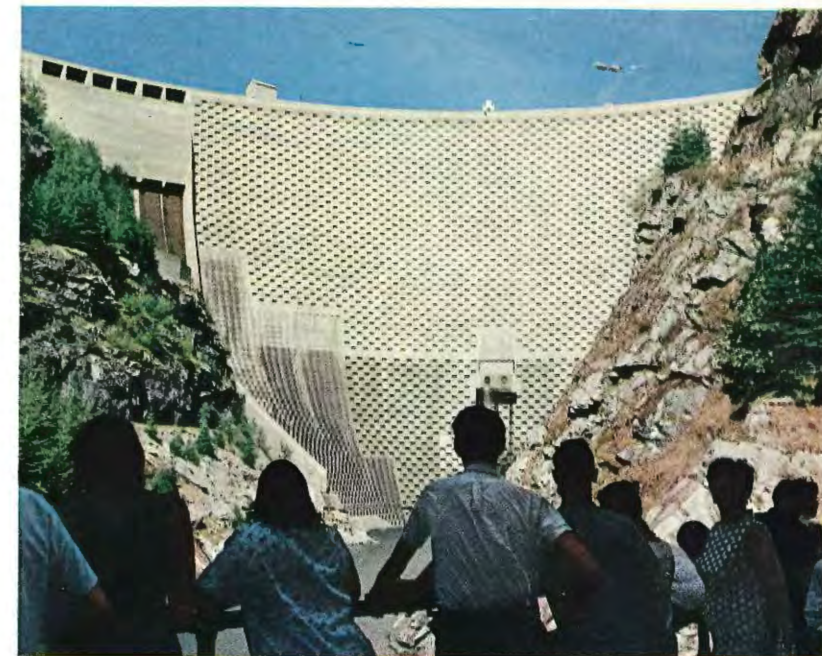
I went on through the opening in the boom, lunched on Canadian soil, and started back. Now I had wind and sea over the bow, and it was a wild, exhilarating passage.

Visitor Sips as Camper Sleeps

Although made prisoner and forced to do man's work, the Skagit is anything but a tame river. Powerful hidden currents struggle ceaselessly in the depths, and when they surface above rocky shallows, they form whirlpools that toss a small boat about like a chip.

Soon soaked, I landed several times to build warming fires in sheltered coves. Seeing smoke rising from the Forest Service campground at the mouth of Little Beaver Creek, I went ashore in hopes of finding a wilderness wanderer with a coffeepot bubbling on the fire.

Waffle-faced Ross Dam, key structure of the Skagit Hydroelectric Project, is 1,300 feet long and has a roadway along its crest. Its impounded waters form a lake 22 miles long, extending a mile into Canada. One of the dam's engineers inspects the huge concrete blocks for cracks.



KODACHROMES BY JAMES P. BLAIR © N.G.S.

One of the Nation's highest, 540-foot Ross Dam may later rise another 125 feet, far surpassing the Washington Monument.

Ribbon of white, new North Cross State Highway edges the foot of Ruby Mountain, right, and bridges an arm of Diablo Lake. When completed, the road will run 77 miles through the Skagit River Valley and serve as the primary route to the proposed national park.

I found both wanderer and coffeepot. The wanderer was sound asleep under a shelter. I poured myself a cup of hot coffee and drank it, as one has a right to do in the wild lands. Gently snoring, the unknown camper slept on.

Resisting the temptation to leave him a minor mystery in the form of his trousers hanging from a tree branch, I started the outboard, cast off, and buzzed on back to Ross Lake Resort.

Horseback, though, is my favorite mode of travel in wild lands, and of many glorious rides I've had, I remember especially one we took in the southern part of the proposed park.

Thirteen miles northwest of the head of Lake Chelan, the Park Creek horse trail leaves the primitive Stehekin-to-no-place-in-particular motor road and corkscrews up to where the vault of the sky begins. The country through which it passes is a microcosm of this entire wonderland of mountains.

One horse wide and not yet overburdened with traffic, the trail begins in primeval forest. Crossing foaming streams, clinging to scree slopes fabricated by winter's great avalanches, it leads in ascending order to alpine meadows, living glaciers, and majestic peaks crowned with everlasting snow.

It tops out on Park Creek Pass, one of the few saddles over which anything but a mountain goat can cross the mountain barrier (map, page 651). Below the crest, in a heather-clad bowl beside a crystal stream, we pitched our tents and built our cooking fire.

While the steaks sizzled in the fry pan and night's first stars winked on in a purpling sky, we six weary humans stretched out in the heather—Ray Courtney; his wife Esther; their son Jimmy; Ann Davis, who with her husband David runs a resort hotel near Chelan; Jim Blair; and myself.

Camp robbers—gray jays—screamed in the stunted, storm-tortured trees that dwell at the very top of timberline. A water ouzel sang its evensong from a lichened boulder beside the stream. Marmots whistled as they scurried about the rocks.

Beyond the tumbling stream a bush moved —and became a bear combing a brushy slope for blueberries. Black-tailed deer drifted from lengthening shadows to greet our horses, loosed in the meadows.

Peril of Forest Fires Routs Campers

Ray revealed his feeling for this lofty, wild country as he watched the Park Creek Pass deer share the meadows with his horses.

"I won't bring hunters here," he said. "Those deer trust us. Maybe you'll see for yourself before the night's over."

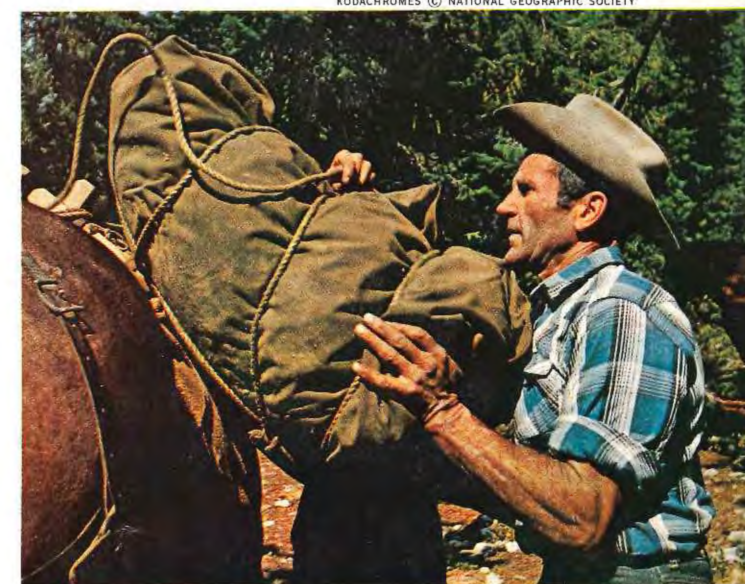
I did. Snug in a sleeping bag under a small tent, I was awakened about midnight by stampings and snufflings just outside.

"Fool horses," I said to myself. "They ought to be up on the grass." Thinking to drive them away, I beamed a flashlight at the sounds. Half a dozen deer, not horses, raised their heads and regarded me calmly, then went back to their feeding.

One frosty morning we awoke to find the

Summer, the glory season, carpets the heights with ankle-deep greenery and a wealth of wild flowers. Cloud-plumed Ruth Mountain rises above the timberline of Hannegan Pass, where a lone rider pauses to listen to the wind and to the music of birds winging in and out of the dark forest.

KODACHROMES © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



Master of the packing art, Ray Courtney loads a trail horse for the steep climb to Park Creek Pass. Expertly, he lashes one of two side packs onto a saddletree; a third will ride atop the others. As rugged as the country he roams, Mr. Courtney hewed massive logs for the home he built in the Stehekin Valley. A ski trooper in World War II, he hopes one day to lead cross-country ski trips for vacationists in the North Cascades.

KODACHROME BY BOB AND IRA SPRING © N.G.S.

Giving wide berth to a crevasse, roped climbers approach the summit of Mount Challenger. A major barrier to moist Pacific winds, the Cascades lift and cool ocean clouds and then wring them dry. As much as 50 feet of snow falls here in a year, creating avalanche hazards and making climbing as challenging as it is in the high Himalayas.

valley at our feet shrouded in pale-blue mist.

"That's smoke," said Ray. "There must be forest fires somewhere."

A helicopter flew over and dropped a note that confirmed the guess. Fires indeed raged in many parts of the Northwest, which was suffering from record drought. The authorities had closed every wilderness trail in the state as a precaution. We were asked to come out of the mountains.

There are strict conservationists who argue that fire is a natural part of the wilderness life cycle, that it is nature's way of clearing land to renew itself. But for man, whose life span is short, that is going too far. The benefits of renewal by fire do not become visible in a lifetime.

So we came out of the wild lands, and even though we had lost precious days in the outdoors, we were content to cooperate in a good cause. We were content, that is, until we saw the newspapers at Stehekin.

An editorial noted that the western slopes of the North Cascades, much of it logged years ago, would soon be reopened to logging. Kennecott, it continued, still considered working its Glacier Peak lands, and Seattle City Light was weighing plans for a dam on Thunder Creek that would inundate a mile-long stretch of prime wilderness.

The lost wilderness days suddenly appeared in a new light. Were they gone forever, not to be regained in the years ahead? Will there be a wilderness in the North Cascades tomorrow? I, for one, hope and pray there will be.

THE END