

The Hansville Railroad

At Sign Post #4 you'll notice that you are on a broad straight trail stretching to the south with large trees on both sides. In the 1920's Puget Mill Company of Port Gamble logged this area. The company built an extensive network of narrow gauge train tracks throughout their properties on the Hansville Peninsula. The logging trains hauled the cut timber to Gamble Bay, where it was floated over to the mill. As you look off into the forest on both sides of the railroad grade, notice the stumps of large western red cedar trees. Look for notches in the sides of these stumps. Loggers put planks into these notches so that they could stand on them to use their huge two-handled saws to cut the tree off above the spreading base of the tree. Because of the action of the planks as the loggers sawed, the planks were called "springboards".



Photo: PEMCO Webster & Stevens Collection, MOHAI

The Forest

Walking along the railroad grade you may notice how dark it is. Look for vegetation on the ground. Now look for areas where there is undergrowth. Notice how many trees have fallen, allowing in sunlight. Several species of old trees that have not won the race for survival are dying and falling, naturally thinning the forest. Elderberry, thimbleberry, and several kinds of ferns have become established. Can you imagine how the forest will look twenty years from now? Evergreen trees will be taller and dominate the canopy while deciduous trees such as alder and big leaf maple will be gone, except in occasional forest openings. A groundcover of ferns, moss, and various shrubs, supplied with nutrients from the fallen trees and leaf litter, will grow abundantly in the understory, where sunlight penetrates to the forest floor. Seedling cedar, hemlock, and Douglas fir already can be seen sprouting from the tops of huge stumps and fallen trees along The Forest Loop Trail, Trail Posts #6, #7, and #9. The one plant that you see on top of nearly every old stump and downed log is red huckleberry.

Greenway Wildlife

The dark forest is an unlikely place to see the most common wildlife of this habitat. Although evidence of cougar has been found in The Forest, none have actually been seen. Deer and bear, which are fairly common, are more likely to be seen along the trail on the west side of Buck Lake and at Bear Meadow at the north end of the lake. The meadow and its edges provide substantial forage for deer, and bear feed upon the plentiful blackberries. Coyote and river otter have also been seen in the Greenway.

Buck Lake Area Exploration Guide



HANSVILLE GREENWAY

WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

A Wildlife Sanctuary
and
Nature Preserve

Prepared by the Hansville Greenway
Stewardship Committee

Kitsap County
Department of Parks and Recreation

Exploring the Hansville Greenway

Introduction

Welcome to the Buck Lake area of the Hansville Greenway. Approximately 3 miles of trails are available for your exploration. The information below suggests particular features to watch for as you stroll along the Greenway trails. We hope it will help make your visit pleasant and rewarding.

Otter Meadow

After entering the Greenway through Welcome Wood you emerge from the forest at Sign Post #1 into an open area south of Buck Lake. Turning left will bring you to Otter Meadow. This area was cleared in the 1960s and has been used as pasture. It now provides a diversity of habitat not found elsewhere in the Greenway. Deer forage along the edges, where they can quickly slip into the protection of the forest. Voles, shrews, and mice live and travel through runways under the meadow grass. River otter may be seen scurrying across the meadow as they travel from wetland to wetland. One of the enhancement projects undertaken by the Greenway Stewardship Committee, and sponsored by the Hansville Flotsam and Jetsam Garden Club, is the planting of native plants and trees along the southeast side of the meadow. Eventually these plants will screen the buildings now visible to the visitor.



Hawk's Ponds

As you follow the trail south from Sign Post #2 out of Otter Meadow you curve around to the right past the north end of Upper Hawk's Pond and into The Forest. Further along there will be better access to the pond, so stay on the trail here. In the forest you will pass low areas which are filled with water for several months each year. These are called vernal pools. These ponds are prime breeding and rearing areas for frogs and salamanders.

At Sign Post #4, in the woods, turn left to head south. At Sign Post #5 again turn left to reach the view platform on the west shore of Upper Hawk's Pond. Approach the shore of the pond slowly and quietly and you may be greeted with a rare close-up look at wood ducks, bald eagles, or river otters. Beavers apparently created this 17-acre pond some time after the area was logged. Note how stumps in the water have tops shaped by saws, not beaver. No fresh evidence of beaver has been seen at this pond for the last few years. Look for evidence here

and farther along the trail between Sign Posts #6 and #9 for clear indications that they haven't been gone long.

Turn off at Sign Post #10 to see Lower Hawk's Pond. This beaver pond is larger, with more recent beaver activity. Hawk's Hole Creek flows from this pond to Hood Canal at Shore Woods.

Buck Lake

Turning right at Sign Post #1 takes you to the south shore of Buck Lake. It is a natural 20 acre lake, 24 feet deep, which drains north to Admiralty Inlet. Dozens of bird species can be seen at the lake, including red-wing blackbirds, bald eagles, cormorants, diving ducks, ospreys, Canada geese, and mallards. The lake is stocked with rainbow trout and also contains bass. Buck Lake is believed to have been named for the deer that drink at its shore. The lake has always been a summer gathering place for Hansville and local communities. Several summer cabins used to be located at the north end. Early residents of the area reported occasionally seeing a strange phenomena where water would be forced up in a column from the surface of the lake. The column of water was reported to be as tall as the tallest trees and would cause a loud roaring sound. A viewing platform at the North end of the lake can be reached by following the trail west from Otter Meadow then north along the west side of the lake to Sign Post #8.