



*The Meadowbrook area circa 1950. Note that the Meadowbrook neighborhood (platted in 1923) has a number of houses, but Mount Si High School (funds allocated in 1952) and Snoqualmie Elementary are yet to be built. Can you find the Scout Island field, the Camas Meadow, the Three Forks of the river? The land may be still open, but is no longer prairie.*

## **Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association Winter 2026**

Happy New Year! It's a time of year for thinking about what's important, with renewed appreciation for those unique places that make this valley so special. What can you do, this year, to help care for and steward our shared public lands? What can you do to help Meadowbrook?

Winter at Meadowbrook is certainly a special time. Colder weather means leafless trees, with views you didn't know existed, and subtle colors resembling an Andrew Wyeth painting. Fewer visitors allow a more thoughtful personal experience, and more glimpses of wildlife. Marvel when the sky fills with 800 Cackling Geese, visiting from the Aleutians! Spot a tawny elk through the trees! Examine each patch of muddy trail to see who the creatures are who share this place!

Remember that Meadowbrook has been a sacred and important place for the Snoqualmie Tribe for thousands of years, and we now all share in its care. Pick up the piece of trash you see. Keep your distance from the wildlife who live here. Respect the gift that our public lands represent for us all.



## Winter Walking and Appreciating Mud!

Most people taking the time to walk at Meadowbrook appreciate the signs of wildlife that they see. Meadowbrook's wetlands and riparian forests allow us to see wildlife tracks most of the year—but in the winter, the additional mud enables us to see so much more. Take the time to look closely at each muddy patch, and each wildlife trail near the designated trail. And look near the trails. Even though blackberries are invasive, and dormant this time of year, they are ubiquitous, and often impinge on trails. Examine them for animal hairs. Who walked here?

Many valley residents have experience in identifying elk tracks. Look for a heart-shaped track, 4–5" long. If the mud is deep, the impressions of the dewclaws may be visible at the rear of the track.



*Elk tracks.*



*deer tracks*

Deer tracks are not as common on Meadowbrook—the plentiful elk browse the trees up higher than the deer can reach. Deer tracks typically are 2–3.5" long, slightly less heart shaped. The toes can splay apart further than an elk track. Their dewclaws may often show in deeper mud

On Meadowbrook, a small track that might be a deer is more likely an elk calf, since the elk have made the habitat less hospitable for deer.



In areas near stream channels, or off the sides of boardwalks, keep an eye out for raccoon tracks. These busy omnivores cover wide areas searching for food, often foraging nocturnally. Invertebrates such as insects, worms and crayfish make up about 40% of their diet, but they will also eat fruit, nuts, bird eggs and small vertebrates such as amphibians and fish. They are very dexterous with their forepaws, and use them for fishing and handling food.



*A raccoon's forepaw (left) and plantigrade hind paw (right).*



*A raccoon's forepaw can almost look like a baby's handprint, but note the imprints of the claws.*

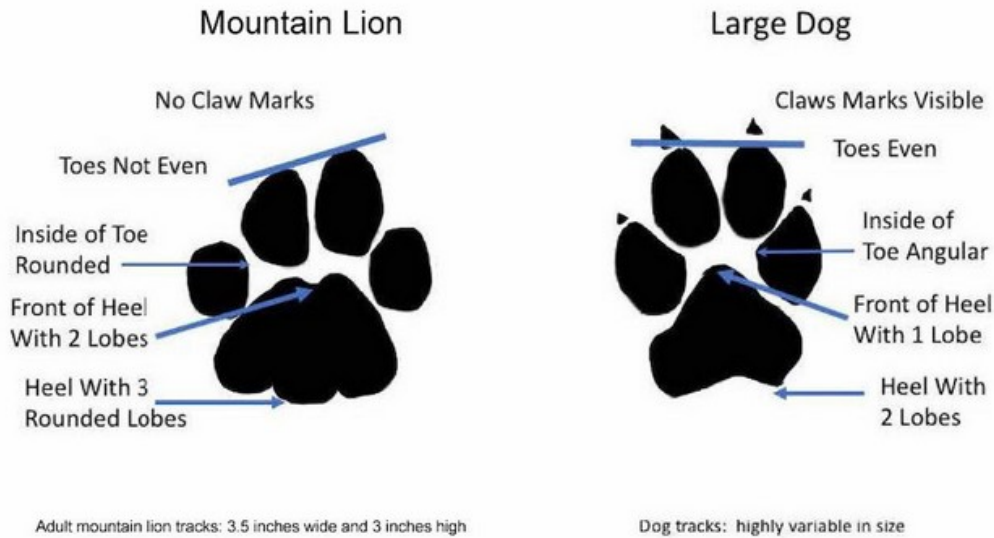
Less common on Meadowbrook are opossums. These mostly nocturnal animals are opportunistic omnivores, eating almost anything including carrion. Opossums are marsupials; their young are born after 12 or 13 days gestation, and must find their way to the mother's pouch, where they can nurse and develop further as they grow. When older, they can sometimes be seen riding on their mother's back, clinging to her fur. Opossums typically don't maintain their own burrows or nests, but will hide under logs, in other burrows, under buildings or dark places during the day, and forage for food at night. If threatened, they will "play possum", fainting or playing dead until a predator moves on.



*Opossum forepaws are slightly more spread out laterally than a raccoon's, but the hind paws are distinctive, with a large opposable thumb-like toe. The hind paw "thumb" has no claw. These front and hind tracks are almost superimposed, but note how easy it is to tell the right vs the left hind paws by the thumbs!*

Opossum tracks can be confused with raccoon tracks. Their forepaws also have 5 toes, but these are more laterally spread, making tracks like little sun rays. Their hind paws are distinctive, with a large medial opposable thumb-like toe. Unlike raccoons, opossums often drag their tails, and the trace of the tail may be seen with the tracks.

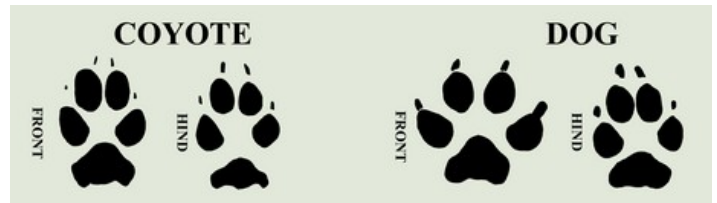
Because many people walk dogs on Meadowbrook, both dog and coyote tracks are common, and can be hard to distinguish. First, decide if the track is from the cat family—bobcat or cougar—or from a canine. Bobcats and cougars have both been seen on Meadowbrook, but very rarely, spending more time in the forested foothills. Because of their retractable claws, claws are rarely seen in feline tracks,,



so seeing claw marks can be a first clue. Next, look at the shape of the track. Cat family footprints are distinctly rounder, compared to the oval of a canine print, and have a relatively larger main pad print with smaller toe prints. Bobcat tracks are smaller versions of the cougar track.



*Coyote track (left) shows light narrow claw marks, with compact forward pointing toes, and 2nd and 5th toes pointing forward. Dog track (middle) shows longer, larger claw marks, rounder and more splayed print, with 2nd and 5th toes pointing out rather than forward. Track on right is a from a smaller dog.*



Coyote and dog tracks can be hard to distinguish between animals of similar size and build. Coyote tracks tend to be more compact, with lighter, narrower claw marks. Toes tend to point forward, and the main (metacarpal pad) can have a small caudal “wing”. Dog tracks have more breed variability, and tend to have a slightly rounder, splayed track. Toes 2 and 3 can point more laterally, and nail marks are more prominent. Forepaws in both leave a deeper track because of the animal’s weight distribution.

Coyotes often move in a straighter line than dogs, who may meander more and show a somewhat wandering path. Similarly, the “floor” of a coyote track may be angled or sloped to show more forward motion, where a dog track’s “floor” may be flat.

Black bears have been seen on Meadowbrook, but rarely, seeming to also spend more time in the forested foothills. (Please let us know if you see bear or cougar tracks on Meadowbrook!) Bear tracks are distinctive, showing 5 discrete large toe pads, typically with claw marks. Fore paws show a broad main metacarpal pad, while hind paws show a main pad plus a heel print, similar to a human foot track.





*Black bear tracks, with fore paw (above) and hind track (below). Notice the rounded arc of the toe prints and the placement of the short black bear claw marks (best seen on the hind print) close to the toes.*

Bear track size depends on the size of bear. Black bear tracks can be distinguished from grizzly bear tracks by the grizzly's long claws, close together toes, and toes in a more straight line. But remember, we don't have grizzly bears on Meadowbrook! If black bear tracks are seen, you are fortunate—it is a rare occurrence!



Other common tracks seen on Meadowbrook are small mammal tracks such as rats and moles, and more aquatic animals such as beavers. In winter the most commonly noticed bird tracks are from the many visiting Cackling Geese.

Take the time on your next Meadowbrook walk to examine each patch of mud you see! Winter can offer the best tracking opportunities. You may be surprised at the tracks you see, and will likely appreciate Meadowbrook and its wildlife (and mud) more than ever!



*Goose tracks showing their three prominent toes, with a suggestion of their webbed feet.*

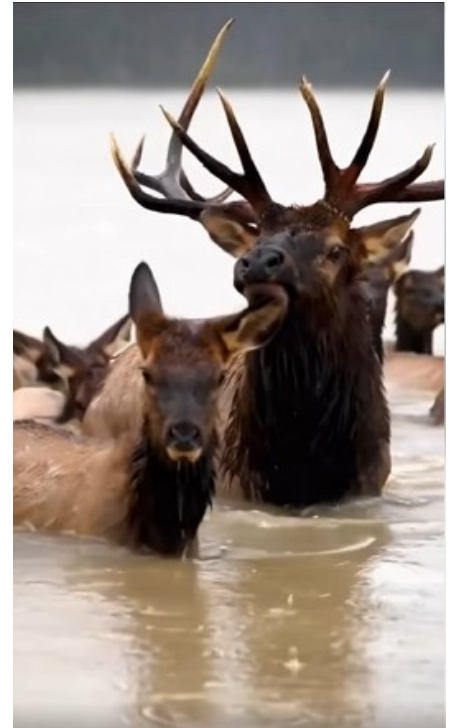
## What Happens to the Elk in a Flood?



*Elk making their way across a school athletic field; internet photo, date/location unknown..*



*The group of elk reaches higher ground; note the calves with the group. internet photo. Where was it taken, and when??*



*The bull elk keeps his band of cows and calves together. internet photo.*

Most valley residents had plenty to think about during the recent major flood events in December 2025. With homes, businesses and roads flooding, almost everyone was affected in some way by the week of unusually high water. Many parts of Meadowbrook flooded. Of the 450–500 elk who live in the upper valley, about 180 of them spend most of their time somewhere on Meadowbrook. What did they do?

Fortunately, elk are fairly good swimmers, and have experience in normal times crossing the three forks of the river. And fortunately, there are areas of Meadowbrook that don't flood at the recent high water levels: on the Central Meadow, near the Interpretive Center building, and on parts of the Dike Road field. Happily, according to wildlife biologist Harold Erland of the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management group, no dead elk were found or have been reported, following this December's floods. Large groups of elk were seen together resting quietly on the higher fields in the days after the flooding.



*A bull elk guides cows and calves across the mainstem Snoqualmie River near Reinig Road during the summer 2025. Norton photo*



## Opstad Elementary Students Visit Meadowbrook



*Susan Doyle leads a group in making plant rubbings for tree identification. P. McLaughlin photo*



*Three classes of Opstad Elementary second grade students arrive at Meadowbrook. P. McLaughlin photo*



*Terry Pottmeyer helps students recognize 4 important native trees. P. McLaughlin photo*



*Harold Erland discusses animals of Meadowbrook, and what can be learned studying skulls. P. McLaughlin photo*



*Mary Norton shows why cedar was such an important tree for Northwest residents. P. McLaughlin photo*

In October, Opstad Elementary's five classes of second grade students visited Meadowbrook over a two day period. Our second grade field trip is based on the Washington State's "Since Time Immemorial" curriculum, and we focus on the "Storytelling" module. First, students listened to part of the Snoqualmie Tribe's Story of Moon the Transformer, and how he came to earth at this very place, then traveled the world changing the plants and animals into the forms they are today. Following Greg Watson's telling of the story, students divided into groups to learn more about the plants and animals of Meadowbrook today. Included was a short hike to experience the open meadow and view the landmarks of the Moon the Transformer story: Mount Si, Rattlesnake Ridge and the Swing Rock, right where the story happened.

Snoqualmie Elementary second grade students have also visited Meadowbrook, and we hope additional valley elementary schools will visit in the coming year. In addition, a fourth grade field trip, also planned to augment the "Since Time Immemorial," curriculum is being developed. We plan to offer it for the first time this spring.

## Meadowbrook Organization: A Quick Look



Meadowbrook Farm was purchased into public ownership as open space by the cities of Snoqualmie and North Bend in a phased purchase ending in 1996. A variety of grant funding was used, including King County Conservation Futures, Open Space Bond funds, federal ISTEAF funds, Washington State Recreation Coalition funding, funding commitments from both cities, and a substantial donation in purchase price by the Snoqualmie Valley Land Company, to make the purchase possible.

Properties purchased as “Open Space” carry funding restrictions that limit the uses of Meadowbrook to uses such as habitat and passive recreation—walking on trails, birdwatching, picnics, etc.. Active recreation—sports fields, league sports, etc., are not allowed per the underlying funding sources..

Meadowbrook, part of the once vast upper valley open prairie, is also a very important cultural site for the Snoqualmie Tribe, with a history of Tribal use and maintenance dating back 13,000 years. Because of Meadowbrook’s importance to the Snoqualmie in both timeless story and the seasonal rounds of thousands of years of daily life, the Tribe today is very interested in Meadowbrook.

When the operating structure of Meadowbrook as public open space was reformed in 2023, the two cities formed a joint Governing Body overseeing all aspects of Meadowbrook, with Si View Parks taking over maintenance and operations, and the MFPA providing education and interpretation. Because of the importance of the site to the Tribe, the two cities and the Snoqualmie Tribe will begin discussions this March, about how the Tribe may take a larger role in decisions and stewardship of this special place.





## Winter Event Schedule at Meadowbrook

email [info@meadowbrookfarmpreserve.org](mailto:info@meadowbrookfarmpreserve.org) for more information

February 11: **Almost Ground-Hog's Day Hike:** 9 am, meet at Interpretive Center

Free. Celebrate Spring or 6 more weeks of winter with a walk on Meadowbrook. Peek quietly into hidden meadows to look for elk, enjoy the visiting migratory birds, and look for the earliest signs of new life at the prairie restoration sites. Dress for the weather and wind chill, with boots for wet areas. Heavy wind or rain will cancel.

March 7: **Hike to the Big Cedars:** 9 am. Meet at Interpretive Center.

Free. Walk through Meadowbrook's riparian woodlands to see old growth cedar trees over 500 years old. Learn about what an important tree cedar was for Northwest Tribes and early pioneers. Appreciate early native plants as we walk. Dress for the weather, with boots for wet areas. Children welcome; not suitable for strollers. Heavy wind or rain will cancel.

April 25: **Winter Bird Walk:** 9 am Meet at interpretive Center. Free. Join wildlife biologist and birder Harold Erland to see what birds are wintering at Meadowbrook this winter. Walk through forest edges and near wetlands to learn new birdsongs and perhaps see new birds. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather, with boots for wet areas. Remember the wind chill factor! Families welcome. Heavy rain or wind will cancel.

May 6: **Prairie Restoration Site Walking Tour** 5:30 pm, meet at SR 202 Elk-viewing pull out.

Free.

Join the Snoqualmie Tribe's Prairie restoration specialist Ryan Lewis to tour prairie restoration test plots on Meadowbrook, now in their second season. What is blooming now? What are the challenges for this project, and how do the Meadowbrook plots compare with those at Three Forks, now in their third year? Learn some interesting new native plants and find out more about this complex long term effort. Dress for the weather, with boots advised. Heavy rain or wind will cancel.

May 13: **Babies Love Meadowbrook!** 10 am, meet at Meadowbrook Interpretive Center. Free. Join others with babies and toddlers for a leisurely spring walk at Meadowbrook. Packs, strollers and/or walkers welcome. Route will vary depending on weather, desired terrain and interesting sites. Enjoy the open meadows and woodlands at a pace for exploration. Dress for the weather, including boots for puddles, and bring a snack.



## Grady Eide Eagle Scout Project



Grady Eide directs a Boy Scout crew at the SR 202 elk-viewing pullout between North Bend and Snoqualmie. The group is assembling new picnic tables for the pull-out area from pre-made kits Grady had built for each table. By the end of the day, three new sturdy tables, including an ADA-accessible table, were ready for public use! Thank you to Chinook Lumber in North Bend for support and advice for this project. Eide photo



Grady Eide's Eagle Scout project also included a work party to remove residual Scotch Broom from Meadowbrook. The Scotch Broom had been removed about 10 years previously, and some had regrown. The Scouts carefully contained and disposed of any seeds and blossoms to minimize further regrowth of the very invasive plant. Thank you, Grady and Scouts, for the new picnic tables, and difficult plant removal work! Eide photo



## Eagle Projects in Progress

Two additional Eagle Scout projects are in the planning stages at Meadowbrook. **Elijah McCarty** is working on development of a native plant identification area near the Meadowbrook Interpretive Center. Working with native plant mentor Susan Doyle, and in conjunction with the Snoqualmie Tribe, Elijah will both label existing native plants as well as add additional important flora. Plant labels will be keyed to Lushootseed and Latin names, plus ethnobotanical information about each plant and its uses.

**Camden Cooley** is working on creation of an orienteering course on Meadowbrook, with support of Meadowbrook board member and GIS professional Stacey Marion. While the sport of Orienteering can involve timed events and large groups of people, Meadowbrook's course will focus on building compass, map reading and observational skills for the individual users. People will navigate the course using maps and compass to find subtle markers on mostly existing structures.

Congratulations to these young people who have achieved the leadership and background skills needed to become Eagle Scouts. Thank you for contributing time and energy to create assets at Meadowbrook that the community will enjoy and provide a deeper appreciation of this special place.

## Burke Museum Exhibit on Coast Salish Weaving: See It!

Seattle's Burke Museum is currently offering a very interesting exhibit, **"Woven in Wool: Resilience in Coast Salish Weaving."** The exhibit brings together an unusual collection of historic and contemporary woven items from around the Salish Sea area--clothing, capes, hats, tumplines, robes, baskets—plus all the tools needed to create the items. The collection was facilitated by present-day tribal weavers cooperatives, featuring their work, plus family heirlooms passed down for generations.

The exhibit discusses fibers commonly used in weaving, including information about the now-extinct woolly dogs raised for their thick wool by many local tribes. The dogs were kept separate from other dogs to keep up the quality of their wool. Many of the oldest items on display are woven from mountain goat wool. Tools shown are also both historic and contemporary, even including a spindle weight from the Snoqualmie Tribe. The resurgence of weaving now highlights the effect colonization had on these crafts.

Anyone interested in weaving, baskets or Coast Salish handicrafts should take the opportunity to see this special exhibit. The collection of heirloom weavings together with modern textiles makes a singular display. The exhibit will be at the Burke until August 30, 2026.



*Skokomish basket on display at the Burke Museum, with a border of woolly dogs, and a diamond pattern representing the pens in the prized dogs were kept Norton photo*

## Prairie Loop Trail News

The landscape architecture firm of J.A.Brennan has been working on gathering the information needed for the design and permitting of Meadowbrook's gravel Prairie Loop trail. The project will connect the existing gravel trail that ends at the bridge into the Camas Meadow to Snoqualmie Middle School and to the paved trail at Snoqualmie's Centennial Fields Park, creating a 2.5 mile walking loop.

Because of Meadowbrook's relationship with Kimball Slough, wetlands and their buffers, the flood plain, and the Snoqualmie Tribe, eleven different permits are needed. The Army Core of Engineers oversees the federal permit needed because of the slough's connection to the river, and because of the Tribe's interest in Meadowbrook, a Section 106 consultation is needed. The expense of this consultation by the Core (cost unknown at present) is billed to the trail project.

The trail's design and permitting work is funded by a King County grant. Originally funds raised were intended to cover design and construction of the trail, but as costs of both design and construction increased, the grant scope was changed to a design/permitting grant. Additional money would be needed for the trail construction. Now, the addition of the Section 106 Consultation to the federal permit, with unknown costs, is a setback to the trail project.

Watch for more news about the long-planned Prairie Loop Trail project, as the Core of Engineers permit work continues. Much work and thought by many people has been invested in the trail project, and we hope to one day enjoy walking on it.



*Two generations of a family pause to watch elk along Meadowbrook's trail. Norton photo*



*Bush School students delineate the Prairie Loop trail from the Interpretive Center with bark, in 2008. Battey photo*



## Thank You, John House!

Best wishes, and a BIG “Thank you!” to John House, the Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association’s long-time treasurer. John and wife Nancy Walton-House are moving out of the valley, and John has resigned from the MFPA board.

For nearly forty years, John has been actively involved in Snoqualmie area community land use and civic affairs, while busy with a demanding human resources career. With interests in bird and wildlife watching, open space and a rural valley, work with Meadowbrook was a natural fit for John. We have appreciated his pragmatic financial advice and oversight, and even more, appreciated John’s ability to look at many sides of an issue and calmly work toward mutual solutions.



*John House's work has made possible land use decisions that will forever preserve parts of the Snoqualmie Valley.*

Best wishes to John and Nancy on their new adventures!

## Help with Meadowbrook Stewardship!

You can help with stewardship at Meadowbrook. Send a contribution to the 501(c)3 Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association at: PO Box 1462, Snoqualmie, WA 98065. Your gift is greatly appreciated.

## Meadowbrook Farm Preservation Association

**PO Box 1462, Snoqualmie, WA 98065** [www.meadowbrookfarmpreserve.org](http://www.meadowbrookfarmpreserve.org)

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Stacey Marion (North Bend Citizen)



Mountain Ash berries on Meadowbrook are a source of food for birds in winter. Battey photo