

Scouter Achieves 100 Milestone

Klahaya District Scouter, David Read, has been a conservationist for many years. Not only is he a Hornaday Award recipient, but has also been the conservation program advisor for many Scouts who have received the Hornaday Award, including the council's first ever Hornaday Silver Medalist. His interest in conservation started as a youth Scout growing up in Montana. As a Scout, he earned 12 of the conservation related merit badges on the Hornaday list and was the conservation director at Scout Camp. Many years later while working with Scouts on their conservation projects and write-ups, he continued to do conservation work with many groups outside of Scouting.

After working in 8 different counties over a period of 10½ years, he's reached the milestone of having worked on 100 different sites in the Puget Sound region. His early work was mostly salmon habitat restoration and tree planting in Snohomish County, in which he was also a volunteer event leader for the County for a short time. Then, the County began to have difficulty finding enough manpower and funding to keep up their current schedule of conservation events. When they stopped having events, it forced Mr. Read to start looking in other places for conservation work.

The decline in Snohomish County projects actually led to discovering much more outside of the County. He started doing internet searches for conservation groups and projects across the Puget Sound. This is what started the 'grand tour' of different locations, and as they say, the rest is history.

Where was your first conservation site and when was it?

It was tree planting with members of Troop 53 along a section of the Sister of Friar Creek near Monroe that runs through a piece of private property on October 20th, 2007, which was only 19 days after my second son was born. I probably needed some quiet time. ha ha

Where was your 100th site?

It was at O. O. Denny Park in Kirkland, which I thought was ironic that my 100th location was in a park named O.O.

Have you ever worked in one location more than once? If not, why not?

Yes, but only 5 times; a few locations early on and a couple of Eagle Scout projects that required more than one day of work. Except for helping with continued Eagle Scout and Hornaday projects, I don't work on the same site more than once. By doing this, I've discovered so many places and types of conservation work that I would have never found otherwise. When I go to a new place that I really like or has something unique, I take my family there to show them.

How do you pick which event to go to work on each week?

I used to research 10 or more different conservation groups' events schedules, but many of the groups I used to work with have disbanded, like People for Puget Sound, or only coordinate a couple of events per year. Lately, I've been using only two lists; Earthcorps and Seattle Parks and Recreation. Between these two lists, I can usually find 1-3 event locations that I haven't been to yet every Saturday morning.

What's the farthest you've gone in each major direction?

North: Maritime Heritage Park Fish Hatchery in Bellingham

South: Mt. Rainier National Park

West: Cayou Lagoon on Orcas Island

East: Amabalis Mtn. near Snoqualmie Pass

Even though I like to travel some lengths to get to new places, I have to consider, "at what point does the gas mileage and pollution out way the benefits of the conservation work?"

Do you have a favorite site?

I don't have a favorite site, but I've worked in some very unique locations.

1. Golden Gardens Park near Ballard, which is the only time I've seen wild turtles in a park.
2. Licton Springs in North Seattle, which has an actual natural spring coming out of the ground that flows into the nearby creek.
3. Fort Casey on Whidbey Island, building a historical trail during a Scouting event.

What's your favorite and least favorite type of conservation work?

I don't know if I have a favorite type of work. Depends on how I feel that day. I usually show up and say "ok, what are we working on today?" However, I do like tree banding (also called life rings), which is saw cutting a section out of climbing ivy to keep them from climbing to the top of the tree and causing the wind to blow them over. Some ivy grows up to 6" in diameter.

My least favorite site was Volunteer Park in Seattle. It's a very pristine, well-kept park that needs no large-scale planting or invasive species removal. I spent an hour trimming new growth stems off rose bushes. Too slow and tedious for my taste. I would rather run headfirst into a large wall of Himalayan blackberries with my hand cutters and a shovel.

What was the most difficult site?

Cedar River tree planting in below-freezing weather. All the staged trees had frozen solid in their pots, so we had to get large buckets of water from the river, travelling up and down a steep bank, to soak the tree pots. Then, we beat the pots on the side of a large tree until the trees came out of their pots, so we could plant them. They looked like treecicles when they came out. The roots were frozen blocks of ice.

What's the most unusual location you have worked?

I would have to say Mt. Rainier National Park. Working in a national park is quite different than my usual locations. The amount of tracking was eye opening. A national park has such strict guidelines and government regulations that we had to count and record the number, kind and location of every single plant installed and removed from the park. We even had to count how many weeds we pulled out.

What's a type of conservation work that you haven't done yet, but would like to?

There's two things. One is gluing "No Dumping" signage plates on street drainage openings at sidewalk curbs. This helps to remind people that everything dumped down a street drain usually drains directly in Lake Washington, Lake Union or Puget Sound, which is currently so polluted that it's not recommended to eat more than one fish per month taken out of the Sound.

The other is fish throwing. When salmon lay their eggs and die, they pile up in creeks and rivers, which impedes other Salmon trying to spawn. Workers put on hip waders and walk out into the water, scoop up the fish and throw them onto the shore to clear them out; very stinky messy job.

Where would you like to go that you haven't been yet?

I would like to get my enhanced WA State driver's license, so I can do some events in British Columbia. I also have a long list of locations throughout the Puget Sound that I'm working on.

What's something you learned from your conservation work?

I once went to a presentation on the toxicity of Puget Sound. I was amazed and horrified at how bad the water quality is in the Sound. In relation to the Sound, I didn't previously know that the Duwamish River is an EPA Superfund Site because it's one of the most polluted rivers in the nation. There are also videos on-line of the effects that copper brake pads dust has on wild salmon when rain washes everything off the roads and freeways into the drains.

Any other interesting project work?

It's not your usual conservation work, but I worked on a forest fire crew when I was in the U.S. Army that worked in the black (already burned areas) doing mop up work. We used Blackhawk helicopters to fly to the top of mountains and back near Bend, Oregon in 1989. To get a better idea, I recommend the movie *Only the Brave*.

Do you always go alone?

No, I've taken my two boys, now 10 and 12, with me on many events. They have done planting, mulching and blackberries/ivy removal. I've also coordinated a few Scouting units to attend events, and just last weekend I was working with a group of Cub Scouts from the Chief Seattle Council.

How is it working with your sons?

I love spending time with the boys in the outdoors. They learn a lot working on different sites, which sometimes relates to their homework.

One Saturday morning Aaron asks me “Where are we going today?” I said, “It’s a secret park.” “Come on Dad, what’s the name of the park?” I replied again, “It’s a secret park.” After a couple more tries, Aaron gave up asking. When we pulled up to the location, I pointed at the sign and noted his surprise. For there’s a park on Mercer Island named Secret Park.

In closing, congrats to Mr. Read and the environment, in which we wish him the best as he continues to work on his next 100 sites.

If you’re interested in working on the Hornaday Award or setting up a unit project, you can contact Mr. Read at readdm52@gmail.com or 360.320.9991.