

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ELDORADO TRAVERSE

I greatly enjoyed the "Eldorado Traverse" article by Charles Bagley *et al* in the January issue. Bagley and company really captured the essence of the whole Eldorado region.

Having climbed Eldorado Peak in 1981, visited the Borealis Glacier in 1980 (via the brushy northeast ridge route), and stood at the shores of Moraine Lake in 1972 (which involved five full days of off-trail bushwacking in the wild and brushy West Fork Thunder Creek valley), I have a very special interest in the area.

For those who are similarly affected by Eldorado (Washington 18th highest "major" mountain), here is some interesting information:

1. Eldorado Peak is one of only two non-volcanic "major" mountains in the Lower 48 States which has a permanent snow summit.
2. As Bagley *et al* stated, Eldorado's snow summit is noticeably higher than its highest rock point (elevation 8868 feet, see *USGS Eldorado Peak*). The actual summit elevation of Eldorado Peak, even in a lean snow year, is at least 8880 feet. Because Eldorado was triangulated from the west, where the higher snow summit is not visible, the USGS erroneously calculated Eldorado's height.
3. Eldorado Peak's volume is 7.0 cubic miles. Therefore, Eldorado is 3 times larger than the Grand Teton, and 2.7, 16.6, and 121.4 times smaller than Mount Everest, Mount Rainier, and Kilimanjaro, respectively.
4. Eldorado Peak's rise-above-base (RAB) is 6795 feet. In comparison, many mountains have lesser RABs: Mount Daniel (5017 feet), Mount Stuart (5085 feet), Mount Elbert, Colorado (5333 feet), and Bonanza Peak (6281 feet).
Mountains with higher RABs include: Mount Olympus (6875 feet), Goode Mountain (7170 feet), the Matterhorn (9358 feet), Mount Everest (12,066 feet), Mount Rainier (12,740 feet) and Dhaulagiri (20,510 feet).
5. According to John Lixvar, a mountain researcher, the Eldorado network of peaks has the fourth largest amount of glacier area in

the state. Only the Mount Rainier, Mount Baker and Mount Olympus massifs have more extensive glacier systems.

6. According to the late Robert Hitchman, a place names specialist, Eldorado was named in 1890. My research indicates that Eldorado Peak was named by miners who apparently saw great promise, back then, in the prospects the dug on its flanks.

Since I have been studying Washington's highest mountains for fifteen years, and because I am currently working on a book about Washington's Fifty Highest Major Mountains, I feel impelled to correct some oversights made by Barclay Kruse (*December, page 24*) and Charles Bagley (*January, page 14*) in the past two issues of Signpost.

Kruse stated that the runners-up to Bonanza Peak (Washington's highest non-volcanic mountain) are Mount Stuart and Mount Shuksan. The correct answer is Mount Stuart and Mount Fernow.

Bagley *et al* state that Goode Mountain is the second highest non-volcanic peak in the state. Nope. The second highest non-volcanic peak in Washington, by anyone's list, is Mount Stuart. Goode is the fourth highest non-volcanic "major" mountain in Washington.

Maybe I can help eliminate some of the recurrent confusion as to what are the highest mountains in Washington. My mountain definition, which was presented at the Pacific Science Center in December and January, divides mountains into three main categories: (1) Major Mountains; (2) Submajor Mountains; and (3) Minor Mountains.

Major Mountains have the greatest prominence above "ridge level" (*ie*, 1000 feet or more), while Minor Mountains have the least prominence above "ridge level." A more detailed and complete account of my mountain definition will likely appear in a future issue of Signpost.

Given the information above, here is an abbreviated version of my list of Washington's Highest Major Mountains:

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| 1. Mount Rainier | 14410ft |
| 2. Mount Adams | 12276 |
| 3. Mount Baker | 10778 |
| 4. Glacier Peak | 10541 |

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| 5. Bonanza Peak | 9511 |
| 6. Mount Stuart | 9415 |
| 7. Mount Fernow | 9249 |
| 8. Goode Mountain | *9220 |
| 9. Mount Shuksan | 9127 |
| 10. Buckner Mountain | **9114 |

*Close estimate. No summit elevation is given for Goode Mountain on the *USGS Goode Mountain* quadrangle. Goode's height is somewhere between 9200 and 9240 feet.

**Fred Beckey's field estimate of the highest point on Buckner Mountain (the southwest summit).

Stephen Fry
Woodinville, Washington

UNDERSTANDS FRUSTRATION

I totally understand Mary Sutliff's frustration with the crowds in the Enchantments (January, page 24). But she should be glad she was at least able to visit the area. A week later, on September 24th, our climbing party of three floundered in three feet of new snow and, with no indication of improving weather, we aborted our vacation trip without even gaining Aasgard Pass.

Allan Sande
Seattle, Washington

MUST BE A SOLUTION

This is in response to Mary Sutliff's well-done article on the Enchantments (January, page 24). I recognize the problems that exist in such a place, and her partial solution of limiting the population sadly is needed. (Personally I've never experienced this overpopulation in three visits—June 1980, August 1984, and September 1984, the last two being times of fine weather.)

However, I must, after much thought, take exception with her advice to not visit these lakes more than once. At least two reasons come to mind:

1. While there are countless places of equal beauty, not any one place is the same as another. I would give equal beauty ratings to Spray Park, Boston Basin, the Enchantments, the Hoh River—but each place is vastly different, uniquely beautiful and special.