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NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

The Learning Center is located in the heart of the North Cascades ecosystem, which includes one national park, two national recreation areas, three national forests, nine wilderness areas and the Loomis State Forest in Washington, as well as seven provincial parks, one protected area and one recreation area in British Columbia. This region is the largest contiguous body of protected lands along the 4,000-mile U.S.-Canada border.

In the heart of these wildlands lies North Cascades National Park—a **684,000-acre classroom**. With **93 percent** of its area designated as **wilderness**, the national park is known for its steep mountains, ever-flowing streams and tremendous biological diversity. East and west of the Cascade Crest, several major watersheds flow from the North Cascades, including the Skagit River, the largest basin draining into Puget Sound. With more than **300 glaciers** and countless snowfields, the park is one of the most rugged and heavily glaciated areas in the United States outside of Alaska.

Plant life in North Cascades National Park is extremely varied, reflecting differences in rock and soil types, exposure, slope, elevation and rainfall. Eight distinctive life zones support more than **1,627 vascular plant species**. Estimates of nonvascular plants and fungi could be more than double the total number of plant species. Researchers have also identified **75 mammal species** in 20 families, 21 species of reptiles and amphibians in at least four orders, approximately **200 species of birds** in 38 families, more than 500 types of land insects, approximately **250 aquatic invertebrate species** and **28 species of fish**. The Skagit River harbors eight species of anadromous fish, including five species of native salmon, comprising more than one third of the salmonid population entering Puget Sound.

Today, these wildlands are formally managed as the North Cascades National Park Service Complex, which includes the national park and the Ross Lake and Lake Chelan National Recreation areas. In addition to waterborne journeys, visitors can enjoy several car-accessible campgrounds, as well as 386 miles of maintained trails and more than 200 designated backcountry campsites.

IN THE HEART OF IT ALL SITS THE NORTH CASCADES ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER.



NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE IS A PROUD PARTNER IN EDUCATION WITH
NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK.