A photograph of a dirt trail winding through a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. The trail is reddish-brown and leads into the distance. The trees are tall and thin, with green foliage. The ground is covered with green undergrowth and fallen leaves.

Idler's Rest Nature Preserve Trail Guide

**Palouse Land Trust
palouselandtrust.org
(208) 596-4496
PO Box 8506
Moscow, ID 83843**



Welcome to Idler's Rest! Please look for the numbered marker posts and use this guide as you explore the preserve to learn more about the history, special features, and flora and fauna that call Idler's Rest home.



Idler's Rest Nature Preserve

Know before you go

- ♦ **Idler's Rest is open year-round, from dawn until dusk**
- ♦ **Leashed pets are welcome in all areas of the preserve**
- ♦ **Please, no fires or BBQs**
- ♦ **No mountain bikes or motorized vehicles allowed on the trails**
- ♦ **No hunting, shooting, or paintball on preserve property**
- ♦ **Please be considerate of native wildlife and plants and stay on marked trails only**
- ♦ **No camping or overnight parking**
- ♦ **Pick up after your pet and yourself**
- ♦ **Please respect preserve boundaries and neighboring landowners**

Questions, concerns, or maintenance issues?
Give us a call at the Palouse Land Trust offices at
208-596-4496

1. Formation of the Preserve



Early visitors enjoying a picnic among the trees. **BELOW:** the Berrigan cabin and supporters touring the newly formed preserve.

Idler's Rest appears on maps as far back as the early 1900's, and has been a site of social and recreational gatherings for decades. The space has been homesteaded, logged, mined for gold, and played host to music festivals and gatherings of all kinds.

Worried about the possibility of development, the community and the Nature Conservancy came together to help purchase the property and turned it into a public nature preserve in 1968.

Seeking a locally-based owner, in 2004 the Nature Conservancy turned the preserve over to the Palouse Land Trust, and we have been managing and maintaining the preserve ever since.



2. Trailhead and Trail System

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Boy Scout troops, youth and church groups, and community volunteers, Idler's Rest has a rich and low-impact trail system with over 5 miles of looping walking and hiking paths. You are now entering the woodland side of the preserve. Be sure to explore the meadow side, across the road.



The preserve is made of two parts: the meadow and orchard side, to the north of the Idler's Rest Road—

—and the wooded, cedar grove side located on the south side of Idler's Rest Road.



The preserve is open to visitors from dawn to dusk, all year round. Trails are minimally groomed to offer a natural woodland experience. We hope you enjoy exploring!

3. Cedar Grove

The cedar grove is by far the most popular site at Idler's Rest. The grove is populated primarily by Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), one of the most common trees in the Northwestern United States. Native Americans used cedar bark to make rope and weave baskets, and cedar wood is one of the most important woods in the fencing and shingle industries.



Breathe deeply. The rich cedar smell is actually the reason behind its scientific name, *Thuja plicata*. It comes from the Greek and Latin words meaning 'sweet smelling wood with plated leaves.'

Even better than the sweet smell, during the heat of the summer, the grove remains at least 10-15 degrees cooler than the surrounding area! This has made the grove a favorite summer destination for picnics, hikes, and relaxation for over 100 years.

4. Community Spirit

Whether in the form of a Land Trust-organized work day, or as part of a meaningful service project, all of the bridges, fences, railings, and other amenities you see at Idler's Rest have been constructed and maintained thanks to community volunteers.



The boardwalk you are standing on was built as part of a Bat mitzvah celebration in 2014.

Are you interested in helping with improvements, trail and habitat maintenance, or simply getting more involved with Idler's Rest and the Palouse Land Trust? Learn about volunteer opportunities on our website and Facebook pages, and contact us for more information about how you can become an Idler's Rest Steward today.

Volunteers move logs to line the trails at a 2016 community work party event



5. Plant Communities: Douglas fir and ninebark

Idler's Rest is home to four distinct plant and tree communities. As you move from the low-lying cedar grove to the hillside section of trails, notice the changing vegetation. Here, the low-lying cedar habitat gives way to a drier, more open Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and ninebark (*Physocarpus* sp.) community.

Douglas fir wood is prized in construction and provides important habitat in the forest. Dense thickets of ninebark commonly grow beneath. These hardy shrubs are vibrant green in spring and summer and turn a deep auburn in the fall.



6. Great Horned Owl Habitat

Be sure to scan the branches above you carefully for the resident Great Horned Owls. These large, common birds of prey are skilled nighttime hunters with exceptional hearing and eyesight. Preferring to snack on rodents, small birds, and other small mammals, these birds also eat snakes, frogs and sometimes even insects.



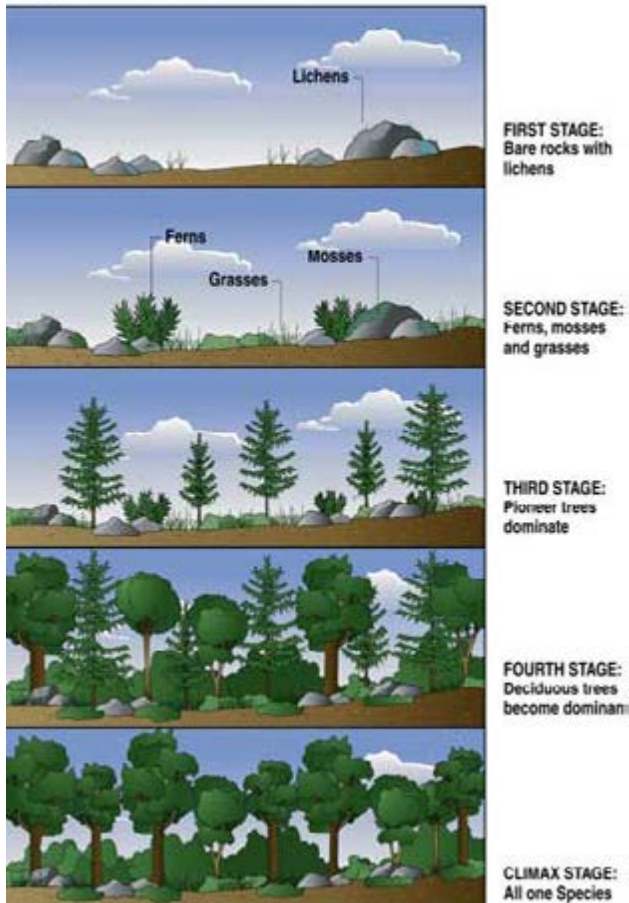
Listening for the tell-tale hoot, hoo-hoo, hoo, hoo is another great way to identify this sometimes elusive bird.

Also be on the lookout for tell-tale owl pellets in the underbrush along the trails. Owls eat their prey whole, then regurgitate undigestable pieces (hair, bone, teeth) in compact bundles.

7. Lifecycle of the Forest

Observe the changing trees and structure of the forest as you explore the preserve. Do you think the forest has always looked this way? Has it always been made up of the same trees? What will it look like in the future?

Stages in Forest Succession



8. Plant Communities: Snowberry and Rose

Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos albus*), and the baldhip rose (*Rosa gymnocarpa*) form an important plant community, commonly found under Douglas fir trees.

The fruit produced by both shrubs is an important winter food staple for quail, forest grouse, pheasants and other birds, although snowberries are poisonous to humans.



Snowberries are very tolerant; living in sun, shade, drought, heat, and cold.

The baldhip rose is the smallest and most delicate of the wild rose family, with vibrant red hips.



9. Ferns of the Forest

Thriving in the shady, moist conditions found in this area of the preserve, the Sword Fern (*Polystichum munitum*) is an evergreen fern found in conifer forests from Alaska to the southern tip of California. These ferns have historically been used by Native Americans for bedding, to line berry baskets, and some tribes ate the rhizomes in the early spring.



In addition to spreading through rhizomes, this fern also reproduces via spores found on the underside of the fronds (look for the little brown bumps).

The Sword Fern prefers year-round moisture, but once established, the deep and fibrous roots make it quite drought resistant, especially when shaded. Where else in Idler's Rest can you find this fern?

10. A Hike Through History

The trails at Idler's Rest and those that criss-cross Moscow Mountain are hardly new additions to the landscape. Prospectors and early settlers have been walking these trails since the early 1800's.

At that point in time, the trail system here was known as the "Rag Road." Strips of cloth from young ladies' petticoats marked the paths through the forest to mines and camps higher up on the slopes of the mountain.

Other signs of early travel include "marker trees." These are trees that have been purposely bent or otherwise distorted to mark the trail. Do you think any of the bent trees along the trail might be old trail markers?



Above: 1800's petticoat garment. Thankfully, ladies' hiking attire has improved greatly over the last century.

II. Game Trails

Throughout Idler's Rest, you will see many game trails bisecting the property. Some game trails have been used and maintained by generations of large game, small mammals, predators, and other local fauna.

Animals create these trails as a matter of daily routine, as the quickest route to the best feeding or hunting grounds, and for safe passage, particularly when with young. Can you find signs of the animals that frequent this trail?



Bears, deer, moose, turkeys, and coyotes, to name a few, have been spotted at Idler's Rest.

Interested in seeing other preserve residents? Check out the Idler's Rest Facebook page for more game cam shots



12. Root Rot: the Bad & the Good

There are several dead and broken trees in this area of Idler's Rest. The culprit is a root fungus that is particularly fond of Douglas fir trees. Unfortunately, once established in the soil, the mycelia of this fungus will be present permanently, which is why you may notice that no seedlings are emerging beneath the dying specimens.

Signs of decay and rot can be seen on the bark and exterior of some trees



The news is not all bad, however. The dead trees provide critical resources for other forest inhabitants. Woodpeckers and other insect-eating birds rely on these snags for food, many animals find shelter beneath fallen limbs and bats and nesting birds enjoy the comfort of hollowed out trunks. Smaller shrubs, forbs, and flowers now flourish thanks to the open canopy. Mushrooms and other fungi break down the wood and recycle its nutrients to support the health of the entire ecosystem.

13. Recyclers of the Forest

Even in the absence of large-scale disturbances, wood and forest matter is constantly being broken down. When a plant or animal dies, decomposers and scavengers go to work to recycle the nutrients of the forest ecosystem. Mushrooms, shelf fungus, earthworms, ants and other insects, and soil bacteria all work to break down and recycle forest nutrients.



What do you think the forest would look like without these natural recyclers? What would the soil be like?



14. Camp Kenjockety



Camp Kenjockety attendees, June 25, 1967.

Named for the Indian word meaning “a spiritual place on the edge of the wood far from the multitude,” Camp Kenjockety was a very special day camp for girls held near this site throughout the 1960's.

The camp was hosted by Mrs. Berrigan, one of the original homesteaders of the site. Daily activities included arts and crafts projects, cooking lunch over a campfire, and learning a multitude of outdoor skills.

The close of each day brought the girls together around the fire circle, named the Council Circle, where they would sing in celebration under the canopy of the cedars.

15. Idler's Rest Creek



Beginning on the slopes of Moscow Mountain, Idler's Rest Creek flows year-round through the bottom of the cedar grove.

The stream is home to many water insects, amphibians, reptiles, and provides a fresh water source for mammals and birds. Children and adults alike flock to it's gentle, soothing sounds and rippling waters.

The stream once provided a fresh water source for early homesteaders and the area around the creek higher up on the mountain was prospected for gold in the early 1900's.

16. A Scouting Tradition



Above: Troop 343 and Troop 344, 3/18/1967.

Since the formation of Idler's Rest, Boy Scout Troops have been instrumental in maintaining and improving the trails and habitat at the preserve. The cedar grove was host to many overnight jamborees, service projects and gatherings.

Today, the tradition continues. Eagle Scouts have built stairways, bridges, repaired damaged benches, and helped improve the marker stakes for this guide; Cub Scouts have built and mounted birdhouses to improve nesting habitat; and Scouts of all ages visit Idler's Rest to learn about nature and environmental stewardship.

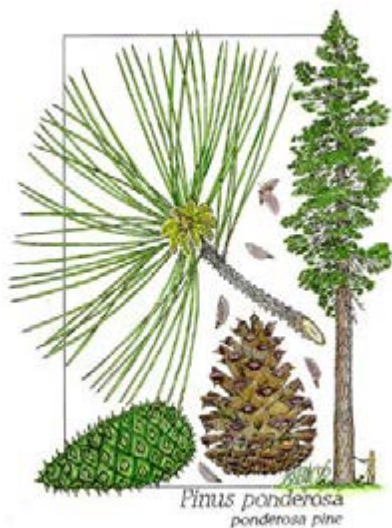
Below: Eagle Scouts Nathaniel Fallen and Garrett Cox completing service projects, summer 2016.



17. Plant Communities: Ponderosa Pine

Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) is one of the most abundant tree species in North America. Also called the yellow pine, blackjack pine, or bull pine, this evergreen can grow over 230' tall and 40" wide!

Ponderosas can be identified by their unique "jigsaw piece" flaky bark and long, slender, and bright-green needles. These tall, sturdy trees were prized by Native Americans for canoe making, and as a food source (both the soft inner bark and the seeds found within the pine cones are highly nutritious and tasty).



Ponderosa pines are forest powerhouses, providing wildlife and bird habitat, a vital wild food source, and erosion control. It is also a highly prized timber source, is fire resistant when established, and makes a great windbreak!

18. Historic Orchard



Left: Tart apples, growing in the summer sun.



Right: Small and yellow when ripe, these tiny plums are a delicious fall hiking treat.

This portion of Idler's Rest is dotted with the remnants of an old fruit orchard. Early settlers of the area planted a variety of trees across the hillside, with apples, pie cherries, and plums still remaining.

In the early fall, when the fruit is ripe, don't be surprised to see a deer sampling the low-hanging apples, or perhaps even a bear up in the cherry and plum trees. Fruit is an essential part of the diets of many preserve residents - but they won't mind if you grab an apple or two on your next hike.

19. Feathered Residents

You've undoubtedly heard many of our feathered residents while exploring. The preserve is home to a wide variety of birds, from the tiniest wren to large birds of prey.

The shrubby underbrush here is ideal habitat for small birds, like the nuthatch, wren, sparrow, chickadee, finch, robin, and migrating seasonal visitors. In early 2017, Moscow Cub Scout troop 323 built and mounted 22 beautiful birdhouses to help improve nesting habitat for these little birds.



During late winter, you might spy a visiting waxwing feasting on berries. Photo by Don & Melinda Crawford.

The preserve is also home to larger birds, including owls, crows, hawks, Steller's blue jays, downy woodpeckers, northern flickers, quail, doves and even wild turkeys. Staff, board, and volunteers work throughout the year to ensure that bird and wildlife habitat is healthy and vibrant for all residents and visitors alike.

20. Kiosk and Trail Log

Thank you so much for visiting Idler's Rest Nature Preserve! We hope you enjoyed your hike and we invite you to sign our trail log at the main kiosk.

If you're curious to learn even more about the history of Idler's Rest, please visit our website at www.palouselandtrust.org for historical photos, documents, and much more.

We hope to see you on the trails again soon!



A new sign goes up at the Idler's Rest Nature Preserve. Dr. James Fazio, preserve manager and UI associate professor and chairman of Wildland Recreation management, and Dawn Chapman watch forest resources graduate student Ron Mastrogiosippa nail cedar shakes on the sign's roof. The sign presents a map of the 33-acre preserve located six miles from Moscow.

This lovely kiosk was built in 1977, and was originally located along a little-used portion of the trail. Thanks to amazing volunteers from the WSU-CCE, the kiosk was relocated to the parking lot in early 2016.

Who We Are

Palouse Land Trust was established as a nonprofit conservation organization in 1995. We work with landowners to with landowners and communities to conserve the lands we love, now and forever, and to enrich connections to the natural world.

Contact Us

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