

North Cascades Institute Scores Success

By Saul Weisberg

The North Cascades Institute, an independent non-profit field school, held its first summer field season in 1986. The Institute offers in-depth educational programs about the natural and human history of the North Cascades ecosystem in cooperation with North Cascades NP and the U.S. Forest Service. Twenty courses, ranging from field seminars (for which academic credit was available in 1986 through Western Washington University), photography and art workshops, family nature programs, and discovery dayhikes, provided a chance for more than 250 persons to discover the wild beauty of the North Cascades.

North Cascades Institute was born in January 1986 with the support of North Cascades National Park Service Complex (NOCA). Classes, which ranged in length from one to four days, began on the Memorial Day weekend and ran through the end of September. Among the classes offered were nature photography, mountain wildflowers, geology of the North Cascades and Mount Baker, alpine ecology, birds, butterflies, mushrooms, people of the mountain world, watercolor painting, and pen and ink illustration. Instructors for the classes were all recognized authorities in their fields, in many cases *the* authority on their subject in the Pacific Northwest.

The Institute was created and the first programs designed by, Saul Weisberg (M.S. Biology) and Tom Fleischner (M.S. Biology), seasonal backcountry rangers, and Margie Lundquist (MFA. Art Education), secretary to NOCA Superintendent John Reynolds.

Plans now are underway for an expanded program for the 1987 academic season, including a six-week academic program studying the Skagit River watershed (cosponsored with Huxley College of Environmental Studies). The Institute also will sponsor a three-day symposium on wilderness management in the Pacific Northwest in the winter of 1987. Future plans include an expanded series of year-round field seminars and workshops, as well as research into North Cascades prehistory.

The goals of North Cascades Institute are to 1) promote an awareness of the unique nature of the North Cascades ecosystem, 2) increase public understanding and appreciation of natural processes in the region, 3) enhance public understanding of how human activities affect this ecosystem, and 4) promote an appreciation of the value of wild lands, both for human use and enjoyment, and for their own sake.

The Institute programs encourage participants to examine their roles in natural systems, and become more responsible members of the natural community. The programs also spotlight the historical and cultural legacy of the North Cascades.

Requests for information may be sent to: North Cascades Institute, North Cascades National Park Service Complex, 2105 Highway 20, Sedro Woolley, WA 98284.

Weisberg is Program Director for the North Cascades Institute.