

Wilderness women



Patrick Hagerty/Journal

Real estate consultant Faith Roland, of Bellevue, casts a fly on the Snoqualmie River. Roland also teaches other women how to fly-fish.

Bellevue-based group makes sure the outdoors isn't guys-only

By Carole Beers
Journal Reporter

Increasing numbers of women are discovering the thrill of wading into a rushing trout stream, rod held expectantly in hand.

They are tramping through the woods learning to navigate the wilderness with little more than a compass and a map, or they are hearing the satisfying crack of a rifle as they bring down a deer for the first time.

For women aspiring to an out-

door life, a Bellevue-based group called Washington Outdoor Women is ready to lead the way.

Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation, WOW is offering one of its most popular workshops Sept. 15-17 in North Bend.

The deadline to register is Thursday.

Featuring 18 classes including hunting, fishing, archery and preparing wild foods, the program takes place at Camp Waskowitz, a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp four

miles east of North Bend.

Partial scholarships to the \$215 session are offered courtesy of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

All kinds of people attend WOW workshops, said Ronni McGlenn, who co-founded WOW in 1998. Workshop participants include students, single moms and women in transition who want to do something they've never done.

"We think girls should get an

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Outdoors: Group hopes to teach women self-reliance in the wild

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introduction to self-reliance and outdoor skills," McGlenn said. "Then they can pass it on to their children. Women are the nurturers and the teachers."

Each participant picks three classes from the lineup, as well as attending a cougar/bear awareness and safety seminar the final day.

"The weekend workshops are very popular with girls and women of almost every age," McGlenn said. "Past workshops have had 100 to 30 students, and used teachers from our volunteer base of 100 volunteers, only two of whom are men."

She said women pick up skills faster when they're alongside other women, thanks to a sense of camaraderie and a less-intimidating atmosphere for questions.

"We are very hands-on, with small classes," McGlenn said. "We're not doing lectures. People learn by doing, and women are excellent learners. They don't come with extra baggage, and are just a joy to teach."

Women often want to learn the basics first, such as taking care of themselves, then go in for canoeing, hunting or fly-fishing, McGlenn said.

But some, like WOW fly-fishing instructor Faith Roland, came into the program already familiar with the outdoors because her father had taken her and her siblings camping and fishing.



Washington Outdoor Women

Participants hone their archery skills in a past weekend workshop offered by the Washington Outdoor Women, a Bellevue-based group focused on introducing women to outdoor adventures.



Patrick Hagerty/Journal

Faith Roland's personalized license plate has a not-so-subtle message.

At 22, the Bellevue woman learned fly-fishing from a friend, and now, at 46, indulges her interest as often as possible. Her job as a real estate consultant for public projects enables her to pursue her interest on a

wider scale, due to the traveling it requires. One day she might be in Alaska, and another, back in the Northwest. She's caught cutthroat trout on the Stillaguamish, sailfish off Guatemala and yellowfin tuna in Florida.

However, all the basic skills are the same; only the bait, gear and clothing are different sizes and weights.

It's the kind of thing she teaches women in her WOW fly-fishing classes, so they can enjoy any kind of fishing, wherever they go for vacation or work.

What drives her desire to pass on her love of fishing?

"I have a fast-paced, business-type job," Roland said. "But when I'm out fly-fishing, it gives me a sense of balance and well being. I enjoy the physicality and rhythm of fly-fishing. It's fun to do and to watch."

WOW workshops are non-competitive and focus on building skills.

"It's all about understanding the equipment, and about getting out there and having the confidence to learn something new," Roland said.

WASHINGTON OUTDOOR WOMEN

■ **What:** A women's outdoor education program of the Washington Wildlife Federation, affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation.

■ **Where:** North Bend's Camp Waskowitz

■ **When:** Weekend workshops Sept. 15-17, and other times throughout the year

■ **Who:** Designed for women 18 years and older; taught by instructors skilled in outdoor living, hunting and fishing

■ **Why:** To give women self-reliance and outdoor skills in a

low-stress, all-female setting

■ **How:** Classes offered several weekends a year at North Bend's Camp Waskowitz (shooting classes in March at Renton Fish & Game Club). Subjects include archery, orienteering, backyard wildlife habitat, fishing, hunting and preparing wild foods.

■ **Cost:** \$215 (includes room and board). Partial scholarships available.

■ **Contact:** P.O. Box 1656, Bellevue, WA 98009-1656; 425-455-1986; www.washingtonoutdoorwomen.org



Patrick Hagerty/Journal

Faith Roland's 'Wheatley' fly box sits on the Snoqualmie River in Fall City. Roland likes to indulge her favorite sport wherever she is, all around the country and beyond.