

WEEKLY

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Staying Cool

Winter in the City of Subdued Excitement

Story and photo by John D'Onofrio · Wednesday, January 5, 2011



Well, here we are; deep in the sub-basement of another Northwest winter. Often estranged from the sun, we must be vigilant against losing our exceedingly cool Bellingham mojo. Thankfully, we have a plethora of options to keep the chi flowing and our limbs limber.

Take a hike to **Pine and Cedar Lakes**. Do it on a really cold day, as you'll have no worries about staying warm on this relentless ascent. Stop often along the way and let the silence envelope you. If it's cold enough, the lakes will be adorned with a chiaroscuro of ice. Spend some time and allow yourself to slow down. What's the hurry?

Capture a sunny day at **Clayton Beach**: a nice winter's day on this beguiling little beach is just what the doctor ordered for the winter blahs. Explore the sandstone bas relief at the water's edge and flop out beside the sparkling water. A great place to read a book or contemplate the (hopefully) setting sun.

Take a bike ride on **Galbraith Mountain**. The bike trails here are famous and with good reason. Views? Sure, but the appeal here is the bewildering trail system itself, a labyrinth of opportunities to get lost. And that's quite an attribute, if you think about it. Getting lost is one of life's undervalued pleasures, and the chance to do it so close to home is clearly precious. For a short and scenic jaunt, catch the Ridge Trail from the end of Birch Street and in an easy mile you'll be gazing at much of western Whatcom County and beyond. On a clear day, the Canadian peaks look close enough to touch.

Admire the falls at **Whatcom Falls Park**. One of the positive side effects of the copious rain at this time of year is the thunderous rush of the falls as Whatcom Creek flexes its muscles, invigorated by an onslaught of sky-water. In a cold snap, icicles add a Currier and Ives element to the tumultuous scene. And the moss-carpeted grottos downstream are striking, illuminating the shadows and offering solace for even the most world-weary souls.

Look around from the top of **Alger Knob**. The walk up is easy along a logging road and the view from the top extends to the snow-frosted Canadian mountains and our resident volcano, Koma Kulshan. A view like this would suggest the creation of a National Park in lots of places. Are we spoiled? Yep.

Harvest the sky at **Padilla Bay**. The trail that meanders along the water is out in the open in a big way. If you find yourself needing light, a walk here will do the trick. If the sun's out, you'll get to bask in the bonus light reflected off the water. And, of course, the birds are omnipresent. Listen to their tone poems as their songs blend harmoniously with the north wind.

Stroll the **Taylor Street Dock**. The Canadian peaks are picture-perfect and the view of Fairhaven embodies a tranquil New England sort of flavor. This is the quintessential Bellingham thing to do at the end of the day.