

# Hiking By the Book

## Completely revising Washington's classic hiking guide series

BY ANDREW ENGELSON

When you're a hiking guidebook author, you really rack up the trail miles.

Take Craig Romano. He's had the task (or honor, depending on your perspective) of hiking some 850 miles of trails in the Olympic Mountains.

Alan Bauer hasn't kept a tally of his total miles on trail researching guidebooks, but says, "I wrote off about 9,700 miles of driving on my taxes this year."

Craig Romano, Alan Bauer and Dan Nelson have been spending a lot of time on trail these days. And for good reason. They've been chosen for the rather daunting task of completely revising The Mountaineers Books' flagship guide book line: Ira Spring and Harvey Manning's groundbreaking 100 Hikes series. The three authors have some big (or at the very least, well-traveled) hiking boots to fill. The series, which began in the 1960s, quickly became a hot item and set the standard for hiking guides.

I recently spoke with Dan, Craig, and Alan—plus Helen Cherullo and Hally Swift of the Mountaineers Books about the revision of this classic series.

"To have two guidebook authors [Ira and Harvey] working in collaboration for over four decades," says Cherullo, "there's just nothing that comes close to that." Harvey passed away in 2006 and Ira died in 2003. In the past several years, their publisher has been working on following up the two authors' work—honoring the tradition behind the series, but also injecting new vision

into the new versions.

Dan Nelson, who once edited this magazine worked closely with Ira at WTA, mentoring under the determined activist and hiker. Ira's commitment and passion for trails was an essential part of the books. "It really was designed so that future generations could be enriched by these places," said Nelson. That mission continues.

"There's a sense of wilderness ethic and stewardship we want to carry forward," said Craig Romano, author of *Day Hiking: Olympic Peninsula*. "It's not just about recreation."

This stewardship mission is integral to all the new books in the series. The first three, available now, are: *Day Hiking: Olympic Peninsula*, *Day Hiking: South Cascades*, and *Day Hiking: Snoqualmie Region*. Mount Rainier and the North Cascades are still in the works.

Introductions to each of the books profile the threats and accomplishments groups have made at protecting and maintaining the state's trails. Each guide also highlights a handful of hikes that are either "endangered" or have been "saved" by volunteer efforts.

In addition, the authors and the Mountaineers Books have generously agreed to donate one percent of sales of the books to Washington Trails Association to help defend and maintain trails. "We really wanted to make people think about the infrastructure of trails," said Romano. "By donating one percent, we're encouraging people to give. To really make people think about funding."

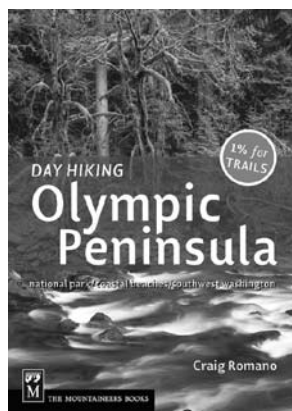
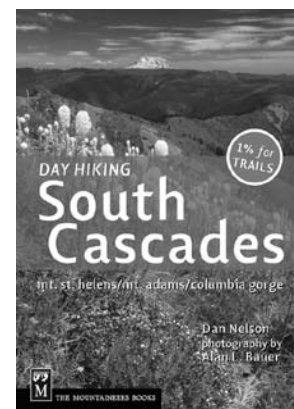
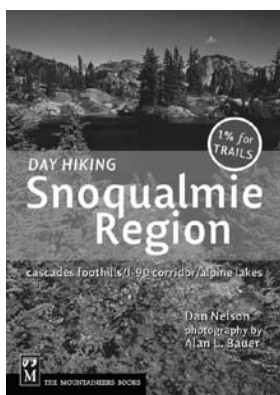
Though the series has a long history, the authors and publisher haven't shied away from changes to the established format. "We did some focus groups on what people were looking for in hiking books," says Hally Swift of The Mountaineers Books.

Gone is the arbitrary limit of 100 hikes: the guides now contain up to 125 trails. Despite the increase, the books are actually smaller and slimmer. "A lot of people actually do carry them in the field," said Swift, so the Mountaineers designed them to be more pack-friendly.

GPS waypoints for trailheads also make their debut. Also new are route profiles, clearer maps with topographic details, and repeated driving instructions. (No longer will you be frustrated to find "refer to hike 25" when you're trying to figure out which Forest Service road to take to an elusive trailhead!)

The regional break-down of the guides was also shifted to better match driving corridors. All the hikes in the I-90 corridor are now covered in *Day Hikes: Snoqualmie Region*. The South Cascades now has its own book by Alan Bauer. "As much as I respect the earlier guides, I thought they gave short shrift to the South Cascades," says Bauer, pointing out that the region was paired with the Olympics in the former books.

The biggest change to the series, however, is the emphasis on day hiking. All of the revised guides will focus on day hikes. Further down the road, a comprehensive overnight backpacking



At-a-glance trail data

2 OLYMPIC PENINSULA EAST

**39 Staircase Rapids-Four Stream**

RATING/DIFFICULTY	ROUNDTRIP	ELEV GAIN/HIGH POINT	SEASON
**/1	4.0 miles	150 feet/ 950 feet	year round

Elevation profiles indicate difficulty level

Map: Green Trails, Mount Steel, WA-No 167; Custom Correct, Mount Skokomish-Lake Cushman; **Managing Agency:** Olympic National Park; **Contact:** Olympic National Park Wilderness Information Center (360) 565-3100; **Notes:** Dogs prohibited, National Park entry fee. Staircase access road is closed in winter; park at picnic area and hike one mile up road or hike Shady Lane Trail (trailhead at Copper Creek) one mile to access trail; **GPS Coordinates:** N 47 30.946 W 123 19.798

Trail highlights & amenities

Stand in awe watching the swift-moving waters of the North Fork Skokomish River barrel and thunder over a series of cascades. A great hike anytime of year, Staircase Rapids is especially impressive during the spring runoff. Hikers of all ages will be delighted on this easy and captivating hike.

**Getting There**  
From Shelton, travel north on US 101 for 15 miles to Hoodport. Turn left (west) onto SR 119 and proceed for 9.3 miles to a T-intersection with FR 24. Make a sharp left continuing on SR 119 until it ends in 1.7 miles. Now proceed on a good gravel road. In 3.7 miles come to a junction, turn right continuing one mile to the Staircase Ranger Station. Trailhead parking access is across from the campground located on your right. Water and privies available.

Driving directions right up front

Photos show you what to expect

This trail is a accomplishable challenge for children.

**On the Trail**  
The trek to Staircase Rapids is a heck of a lot easier today than it was in 1890 when Lieutenant Joseph O'Neil accompanied by a group of scientists led an Army expedition here. The O'Neil Party was intent on traversing the Olympic Peninsula. Lacking the wonderful trails that now grace the region, O'Neil and company cut a mule trail up the North Fork of the Skokomish to help transport supplies to base camps along the way. Among the many findings that O'Neil's party would report was a realization that this wild area deserved to be protected. In his trip report, O'Neil wrote that the Olympic interior would serve admirably as a national park. Nice forward thinking Lieutenant O'Neil; I salute you.  
From the main parking area, cross the North Fork Skokomish on a solid bridge to begin this hike which follows part of the original O'Neil

Easy-to-follow maps

STAIRCASE RAPIDS-FOUR STREAM 3

Accurate, lively descriptions provide area and natural history information that make the hikes more fun

Mule Trail. Immediately pass a side trail leading left to the small hydro plant that powers the ranger station. About 5 minutes beyond pass another side trail. This path leads to what was once an incredibly large cedar. Today it leads to an incredibly large windfall. The old cedar yielded to a winter storm in the late 1990's.  
A few more minutes of gentle hiking delivers you to the river bank. Now marching up the valley, a series of roaring rapids and frothing falls await you. Follow the thundering river from one mesmerizing spot to another. In .8 mile is a junction. The trail right leads to a bridge that has been out now for a decade. If the Park Service ever gets the funding to replace it, it will once again provide a nice loop option. Meanwhile, ask Congress how they find billions of dollars for wars but not a few thousand for trails.  
Continue your hike up the river valley on the much quieter and less-used Four Stream Trail. Soon come to Beaver Flats, a nice spot to soak

Interior pages from Day Hike: Olympics by Craig Romano.

guide is in the works, but for now the series will limit itself to hikes under 12 miles, with the majority in the 7 to 10 mile range. “We’ve seen a trend in book sales that shows a strong interest in day hiking,” said Swift.

During two summers researching those hikes, Romano made many discoveries. That’s part of the fun of making a guidebook in which every single trail is “tested” in the field. While looking for one hike, Romano stumbled on the Copper Creek Trail, and now it’s part of the 125. Alan Bauer had to pare a list of 340 trails in the the South Cascades to a more digestible 125.

“At first, I knew so little about the South Cascades,” said Bauer, “but I found so many special areas—places with volcanic history, unique places like Potato Hill [a volcanic cinder cone] near Mount Adams. This book was one of the most fun projects I’ve ever worked on.”

Hiking a hundred or more trails in just two hiking seasons wasn’t all fun. Often, Romano would have to schedule hiking trips to coincide with other work commitments, even finishing some hikes in the dark by headlamp.

Still, all of the in-field reporting should pay off. “I look at it as if you’re hiring us to do this work for you,” said Romano. “We have to build that trust.”

It’s that sense of guided, fact-checked information that The Mountaineers Books believes gives the guidebooks a leg up over hiking information scattered across the Internet.

“If you’re looking online,” says Nelson, “you have to work to find all that information. It’s a huge thing to hold it in your hand and have it all right there.” Bauer agrees: “You might find three sources of comprehensive information online, including something from the Forest Service, and all three could be

completely wrong.”

Helen Cherullo is confident hikers are looking for carefully edited, filtered and researched trail information. “And if you have the book in your car, she adds, “you can change your mind a lot easier.”

Deciding whether to include a trail or exclude it is always a delicate balancing act. After the Middle Fork Cascade River Trail was hit by fire, Romano considered eliminating it from his upcoming guide to the North Cascades. But he left it in, figuring it was important for hikers to see the effects of fire on the landscape, and watch its eventual recovery.

And it’s important not to give everything away, Dan Nelson insists. “These books are only a starting point,” he says. “I’m not going to tell people what’s behind every tree. We’ll tease them with a little text, a few maps”

“It’s up to you to find your own wonders,” says Nelson. ♦