

PCEI and The Nature Conservancy Team Up

By Tracy Brown

The Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute (PCEI) has contracted with The Nature Conservancy <www.nature.org> to take the lead role in the management of the *Rose Creek Preserve*, north of Albion, Washington. The Preserve is one of the best examples of the black hawthorn-cow parsnip-quaking aspen community type remaining on the Palouse.

The relationship between the hawthorn and aspen is particularly complex. As the aspen grows, it shades out the hawthorn, which dies back to rootstocks, only to re-emerge when the short-lived aspen falls victim to heart rot. Following a dormant period, the aspen sprouts again and the cycle repeats. The Preserve is home to more than 250 species of vascular plants.

A perennial stream that flows into the South Fork Palouse River, Rose Creek bisects the Preserve. In winter, long-eared owls roost in the dense hawthorn thickets as red-tailed hawks hunt the adjoining hills. The preserve provides food, habitat, and refuge over 100 species of birds and many mammals ranging in size from shrews and voles to porcupine, coyote and white-tailed deer.

PCEI's role as stewards of the Preserve involves weed control, on-going restoration of the native aspen forest (monitoring and tree caging), and trail maintenance. Many community groups and individuals involve students in research and restoration work at the Preserve.

The Preserve is open year round. Access is limited to a small trail that winds through the riparian and uplands areas. Please stay on the marked trail and tread lightly. Financial and volunteer participation by the local community is necessary to successfully steward this community resource. PCEI is working with The Nature Conservancy and local organizations to expand the benefits of the Preserve to adjacent properties. To contribute to the Rose Creek Preserve Fund please contact Tracy at 208-888-1444. For directions and more information, visit <www.pcei.org/rosecreek/index.htm>.