

## STATE FOSSIL: COLUMBIAN MAMMOTH

Following a four-year effort by students from Windsor Elementary School near Cheney to have this behemoth designated as our state fossil, the Legislature recognized in 1998 that the large, hairy prehistoric elephants of the extinct genus *Mammuthus* roamed the North American continent, including the Pacific Northwest, during the Pleistocene epoch (ice ages).

The first North American mammoths migrated across the Bering Strait from Asia down through Alaska about two million years ago. Nearly all mammoths died out about 10,000 years ago. From studies based on deposits of the Columbian mammoths *M. columbi* it is clear that grasses featured prominently in their diets. The maximum life expectancy of the mammoth would have been 60 to 65 years. The males grew to the size of modern adult elephants; females were about half that size. Several years ago, fossils of the Columbian mammoth were found on the Olympic Peninsula.



## STATE GEM: PETRIFIED WOOD

The geological history of our state has encompassed many great changes, one of them being the many lava flows from volcanic fissures. Centuries ago, the interior of Washington was swampy and mild with many trees such as cypress, oak, elm and ginkgo growing in wet areas. Layers of logs were preserved with each new lava flow, and as the layers grew deeper, many of the logs became waterlogged and lay protected in deep water. Over time, water continued to seep through the lava and permeate the wood with silica. Eventually, the wood fiber was completely replaced by silica thus petrifying many logs. The petrified wood is perfect in form and detail to the original wood. In 1975, petrified wood was adopted as the state gem. The best place to see petrified wood is the Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park in Vantage.



## STATE SEAL



In 1889, jeweler Charles Talcott designed our first state seal using an ink bottle, silver dollar and a postage stamp. Talcott's brother, L. Grant Talcott, lettered the words, "The Seal of the State of Washington, 1889," and another brother, G.N. Talcott, cut the printing die. More information can be found at the [Secretary of State](#) site on the State Seal.

## STATE SHIP: THE LADY WASHINGTON



Photo by Rick Horn

The legislature designated the *Lady Washington* as the official ship of the state of Washington in 2007.

The *Lady Washington* was built over a two-year period and launched on March 7, 1989. The ship was designed by the late Ray Wallace and built in Aberdeen by the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Authority. Master shipwrights from all over the Pacific Northwest constructed her near the confluence of the Wishkah and Chehalis rivers.

The *Lady Washington* is a reproduction sailing ship of the original *Washington/Lady Washington* that sailed from approximately 1750-1798. Her vessel type is a "brig," indicating the configuration of the sails. The *Lady Washington* is owned and operated by the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Authority, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Public Development Authority based in Aberdeen. The Secretary of State holds a mortgage on the vessel to secure the investment of the people of Washington.

## STATE SONG: "WASHINGTON, MY HOME"



The state song, "Washington, My Home," was written by Helen Davis, arranged by Stuart Churchill, and became the official state song in 1959. But, like the goldfinch, it had some stiff competition from another popular song.

Back in 1909, "Washington Beloved" was adopted, sort of, by the Legislature. Professor Edmond Meany, the historian, wrote the words and Reginald de Koven wrote the music. But this song was never formally introduced as a bill and so was not part of the state's code of law. When a state senator from South Bend introduced a bill in 1959 to make "Washington, My Home" our state song, it was approved unanimously. In April, 2002, the state song was performed at the state Capitol by the Tumwater Girls' Choir, under the direction of Jack Arend, choir director.

## STATE SPORT: PICKLEBALL

The legislature recognizes that the sport of pickleball was created in 1965 on Bainbridge Island by Joel McFee Pritchard, who went on to be elected lieutenant governor and member of Congress for Washington, along with two of his friends, Bill Bell and Barney McCallum. These men created the game at Pritchard's summer cabin after they "persuaded" their abnormally hyper children to go outside to play a few games of badminton, but there was no badminton equipment to be found. Instead, these fathers did some brainstorming and created a new game using ping-pong paddles, a net, and a neighbor's plastic wiffle ball. The rules that they created for the new game, which they named pickleball, are still used today by the USA Pickleball Association.



## STATE TARTAN

A tartan is a design for the weaving of cloth consisting of perpendicular bands of contrasting colors on a solid background. The Washington State tartan was designed by Vancouver, USA Country Dancers to commemorate the Washington State Centennial celebration. The background color green represents the rich forests of Washington, the "Evergreen State." The perpendicular bands of contrasting colors represent the following features: blue for the lakes, rivers and ocean; white for the snow-capped mountains; red for the apple and cherry crops; yellow for the wheat and grain crops; and black for the eruption of Mt. St. Helens. The bill, designating a state tartan, was signed into law in 1991. The Council of the Scottish Tartans Society also affixed its seal to the official Certificate of Accreditation in 1991.



## STATE WATERFALL: PALOUSE FALLS

The tourism industry is a vital part of the state's economy. Palouse Falls has visitors numbering averaging over eighty thousand to one hundred thousand per year. The falls drop one hundred ninety-eight feet identifying them as the last remaining year-round waterfalls left by the ice age floods.



Palouse Falls was named sixth on the top ten best United States waterfalls list, tenth on the list of the world's most amazing waterfalls, and the site of the world record breaking kayak drop. Palouse Falls surrounding area is the location for the oldest documented remains found in the western hemisphere; home of the Palouse Native American culture; birthplace of the Appaloosa horse; and documented in Lewis and Clark's journals. The Palouse Falls was designated as a state symbol in 2014.



# SYMBOLS of WASHINGTON STATE

## STATE FLOWER: COAST RHODODENDRON



In 1892, before they had the right to vote, Washington women selected the coast rhododendron as the state flower. They wanted an official flower to enter in a floral exhibit at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Six flowers were considered, but the final decision was narrowed to clover and the "rhodie," and voting booths were set up for ladies throughout the state. When the ballots were counted, the rhododendron had been chosen as the

Washington state flower. In 1959, the Legislature designated the native species *Rhododendron macrophyllum* as the official flower of the state of Washington.

## STATE FRUIT: APPLE

Washington is the nation's top apple-producing state, so it is appropriate that the apple was named a state symbol in 1989, the centennial year. A favorite fruit around the world, the apple comes in many different colors, sizes and varieties. From the beautiful blossoms of spring, to the heavily laden branches in autumn, the apple trees of eastern Washington represent one of the largest industries in the state. The Washington apple is certainly one of the most recognized symbols of the state worldwide.



## STATE GRASS: BLUEBUNCH WHEATGRASS



While many state symbols are readily identifiable with the western part of the state, bluebunch wheatgrass is a state symbol that is unique to eastern Washington. Bluebunch wheatgrass was a blessing to Washington's pioneer farmers and continues to play a major role in our agriculture industry today. It was adopted by the 1989 Legislature as the official state grass. Its botanical name is *Pseudoroegneria spicata*.

## STATE TREE: WESTERN HEMLOCK

In 1946, an Oregon newspaper teased Washington for not having a state tree. The Portland Oregonian picked out the western hemlock *Tsuga heterophylla* for us but Washington newspapers decided to choose their own and selected the popular western red cedar. State Representative George Adams of Mason County pleaded with the Legislature to adopt the western hemlock. The hemlock, he said, would become "the backbone of this state's forest industry." Adams' bill passed the Legislature and was signed into law in 1947.



## STATE VEGETABLE: WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION



In 2007, the Walla Walla sweet onion was designated as the official vegetable of the state of Washington.

The Walla Walla Sweet is from Walla Walla and indeed, this sweet onion is only grown properly in the Walla Walla Valley.

The Walla Walla Sweet finds its origins on the island of Corsica. Over a century ago, a retired French soldier named Peter Pieri found a sweet onion seed there and brought it to the Walla Walla Valley. The sweet onion had impressive winter hardiness well-suited for the climate of southeastern Washington. Soon Pieri and many Italian immigrants in the area began harvesting the seed. After several generations of

careful hand selection, the sweet onion developed greater sweetness, size, and shape. Today, there are approximately 40 growers producing Walla Walla Sweet onions on 1,200 acres of farmland in the Walla Walla Valley. Sweet onion season is mid-June through September and, since 1984, Walla Walla has celebrated the Sweet Onion Festival every July.

The measure was a class project for a seventh-grade honors social studies class at Eatonville Middle School. In prior years, the bill had also been a project of a Kirkland Junior high school.

## STATE AMPHIBIAN: PACIFIC CHORUS FROG

In 2007, the Pacific chorus frog, *Pseudacris regilla*, was designated as the official amphibian of the State of Washington.



Because Pacific chorus frogs live in every county in the state and on both sides of the Cascades, they are an excellent choice as an emblem for the whole state. The Pacific chorus frog is charming and makes beautiful sounds. Less than two inches long, they swell their throat sacs to three times the size of their heads to send their calls into the night. This amphibian is useful because it eats insects, including mosquitoes. It is recognizable by the black stripe through the eye to the shoulder, and can be brown, tan, grey or green. A native amphibian, it is preyed upon by bullfrogs, snakes, raccoons, shorebirds, hawks and ducks.

A third grade class at Boston Harbor Grade School in north Olympia, demonstrated excellent knowledge about the political process in making this proposal to the Legislature as the project involved science, research, art, and persuasive writing.

## STATE BIRD: WILLOW GOLDFINCH

The goldfinch is a delicate little bird with a yellow body and black wings, and although it eventually became the official state bird, many other birds were considered for the title. In 1928, legislators let school children select the state



Photo by Bruce Livingston

bird and the meadowlark won hands-down. It was a nice choice but seven other states already had chosen the same bird. Another vote was taken in 1931 by the Washington Federation of Women's Clubs. Many birds were nominated, but the goldfinch won handily over the tanager, song sparrow, junco and pileated woodpecker.

Now there were two state birds and the Legislature decided to leave the final choice to school children. In 1951, children voted for the goldfinch and the Legislature made it unanimous. The bird is now referred to as the American Goldfinch.

## STATE FISH: STEELHEAD TROUT



The steelhead trout is an anadromous fish, meaning it returns to fresh water rivers to spawn. The scales of the steelhead shine flecks of silver with a gray spotted back from head to tail and an intensely white belly; the two colors separated by a hint of opalescent pink. Steelhead trout is one of the most popular fish for recreational fishing, a major industry in Washington State. The steelhead trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*, was adopted by the Legislature as a state symbol in 1969.

## STATE INSECT: GREEN DARNER DRAGONFLY

In 1997, the common green darner dragonfly, *Anax junius Drury*, became Washington's official state insect after a group of students at Crestwood Elementary School in Kent brought the idea to the Legislature. Students from school districts statewide participated in the selection of the common green darner dragonfly. Also known as the "mosquito hawk," this insect can be found throughout Washington and is a beneficial contributor to the ecosystem because it consumes a large number of insect pests. It is easily recognizable by its bright green head and thorax, it has a 4- to 6-inch wingspan and can fly 25 to 35 mph. There are over 400 different species of dragonflies. Dragonflies existed prior to the dinosaur age and some had up to a 3-foot wing span. "Darners" is one family of dragonflies and the common green *Anax junius* was first sighted and recorded by Drury in 1773.



## STATE ENDEMIC MAMMAL: MARMOTA OLYMPUS

In 2009, the Olympic marmot, the only endemic mammal in Washington state, was designated as the state endemic mammal following a proposal from the 4th and 5th graders at Wedgwood School in Seattle. The Olympic Marmot inhabits the Olympic Peninsula in the western section of Washington. Olympic Marmots are highly social animals and may live in groups of over a dozen animals. Gregarious bonds are made between animals in a family. Olympic Marmots identify each other by touching noses and smelling cheeks. Olympic Marmots hibernate from September to May. During the morning and afternoon on summer days, they feed and spend their time sunbathing on rocks. In the evening, they return to their burrows. Olympic Marmots are relatively easy to see during the summer months along Hurricane Ridge in the Olympic National Park.



## STATE MARINE MAMMAL: ORCA

As a result of two years of research and persuasion by second graders from the Crescent Harbor Elementary School in Oak Harbor, the legislature designated the orca, *Orcinus orca*, as the official marine mammal of the state of Washington in 2005. Many people visit Washington state to watch orcas; the orca is a significant symbol for the Native American culture; there are pods of orcas that migrate annually through Puget Sound; and the orca is easily recognizable because of its distinct markings. The designation is intended to promote orca awareness and to encourage protection of the natural marine habitat.



## STATE OYSTER: OSTREA LURIDA

The *Ostrea lurida* is designated the official oyster of the state of Washington. This native oyster species plays an important role in the history and culture that surrounds shellfish in Washington state and along the west coast of the United States. Some of the common tribal and other names used for this species are Native, Western, and Olympia. The *Ostrea lurida* was designated as a state symbol in 2014.



## STATE DANCE: SQUARE DANCE



On April 17, 1979, the square dance became the official Washington state dance. When the pioneers came west, they brought with them a dance called the quadrille, which means square in French. The pioneers liked the simpler term and so the square dance was born. The dance is known for its series of figures and footwork. Dancers are directed by a caller. It is easy to learn, a good form of exercise, and fun.

## STATE FLAG

The state flag and the state seal are similar. Passed in 1923, Washington law describes the flag as having dark green bunting with a state seal in the center. In the late 1890s, a blue and gold military state flag with George Washington's profile on it flew over many cities and towns throughout the state. But, when it came to a final decision, the current flag was adopted by the Legislature. According to law, the flag of the United States and the flag of the state shall be prominently installed, displayed and maintained in schools, court rooms and state buildings. For further information about the state flag, check the [Secretary of State's](#) web site.



## STATE FOLK SONG: "ROLL ON, COLUMBIA, ROLL ON"



In the early 1940s, the federal Bonneville Power Administration produced a movie encouraging rural residents in the Pacific Northwest to electrify their homes and farms with the power being generated by the newly-built Bonneville and Grand Coulee Dams on the Columbia River. As part of the project, BPA hired folksinger Woody Guthrie at \$270 for 30 days to write songs for the movie. Guthrie wrote 26 songs, the most popular of which was "Roll On, Columbia, Roll On," an ode to the harnessing of Washington's mightiest river. It was approved as the official Washington state folk song by the Legislature in 1987.