

About the Northwest Rockhound Retreat

The Northwest Federation of Mineralogical Society rents the a facility to hold the Northwest Rockhound Retreat (NWRR). It is held every Labor Day Week (Monday thru Sunday) at OMSI's Hancock Field Station. The camp is owned and operated by the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) 9 months of the year for Outdoor School, Stargazers and Parents & kids Weekend. Camp Hancock is private land surrounded by John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. The National Monument is monitored and protected, no collecting or disturbing of the land is allowed. The address is 39472 Highway 218, Fossil, Oregon 97830.

The Camp was started in the 1950's with a few open-air structures. Berry Hall, where we eat all our meals was eventually enclosed, a kitchen area and women's bathroom and showers were added. The A-Frame sleeping buildings were added as time went on. These buildings sleep from 2 to eight individuals. A new unisex bathroom/shower facility was built in 2021 to replace the old men's bathroom and shower facility.

Each year the retreat is held, registration starts in March, the registration fee provides for food, lodging and instruction. The workshop fee is used to replace parts of the equipment such as grinding wheels, saw blades, sanding belts and other expendable items. The instructors create kits for the various classes ranging from \$20 to \$40 depending on the materials required. Students usually complete 1 to 3 kits during the week.

In 2024 we are adding a new class, Chainmaille. The class was previously offered in the evenings as an option; however, increased demand has allowed us to offer this during the day. In the class students can make earrings, bracelets and necklaces. Learn how to make a chain or weave using jump rings and construct patterns for different appearances or make a pattern with embroidery floss (Kumihimo). Bring your own materials if you have them or purchase a kit from the instructor. Instructor will have chainmail ear ring or bracelet kits available to purchase. Kits for Kumihimo (flat braid or round) will also be available for purchase. Different levels of chain mail will be available.

Our Lapidary class is extremely popular. Here you learn to make cabochons from slabs of rock by sawing, grinding, sanding and polishing. These cabs can be made into necklaces, bracelets or earrings in the Silver Working, Metal Working and Wire Wrapping classes. NWRR also offers classes in Soft Stone Carving, Doublets and Triplets, Intarsia and Wire Wrapping/Weaving.

The Silver Working class is also very popular. Here students create jewelry using silver. They learn to saw, bend, and solder silver sheets to make pendants, earrings or bracelets with inset stones.

In Metal Working you work with soft metals using a variety of tools, or enameling to make jewelry.

The Intarsia class used various colored rocks that are cut, sanded then glued together to form a picture.

In the Soft Stone Carving class, you work with hand tools and handheld grinders to create a picture or statue in stone.

The Wire Wrapping/Weaving class teaches how to work with wire to create a bezel around a small stone to create pendants, earrings or bracelets.

We also teach a class in Doublets and Triplets where you sandwich a stone between layers of Quartz and a backing material. We have slices of Opal and other material available in the kits to work with.

We also offer evening programs with a rock-related swap meet, stump the experts with rock related questions, auction of items made in camp, collected and donated items and show and tell of the things the students have made during the week of camp.