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Story by Dan Daly

The waters of Killin Wetlands stretch – calm and serene – to mirror the open sky, and they mix with islands of sedges and willows that hum with life. Diversity thrives at the edges, and this 590-acre natural area offers a special experience where rolling hills, an ancient swamp and the work of North America’s premier rodent come together as one.

Once part of a patchwork of peat soil wetlands that covered more than 10,000 acres in the Willamette Valley, Killin Wetlands may be one of the last wetland habitats of its kind. Thanks to the work of generations of beavers, slow-moving water allowed dead plants to sink to the bottom and build a rich peat soil that supports an abundance of plant and animal life.

One hundred and twenty five years of draining the swamp for cattle ranching exposed the fragile peat soils to air, oxidizing them and causing them to collapse. Today Killin Wetlands resembles a lakebed that is now many feet lower than it was a century ago. Wetlands specialists expect the lost peat soils to slowly rebuild over the next century.

Cedar Canyon Creek slopes in from the north, providing water to the wetland and a habitat connection to the rolling hills of the Coast Range.

Home to a barn owl, the dairy barn features a beautiful piece of artwork by the Westside Quilters Guild called “Doves in the Window,” making it part of the Quilt Barn Trail of Oregon’s Washington County.

Killin Wetlands Nature Park



Killin Wetlands Nature Park

46280 NW CEDAR CANYON ROAD, BANKS

DRIVING
From Portland, head west on U.S. 26, then take the exit for Highway 6 toward Tillamook. Stay on Highway 6 for 3 miles after Banks. You will see a big wetland area on your right.

Turn right onto Northwest Cedar Canyon Road. Stay on Cedar Canyon Road as it curves right at the intersection. After about 1 ½ miles, turn right at the big, old barn on your right.

KNOW WHEN YOU GO
After construction finishes, the park will be open sunrise to sunset. No pets, please.

AMENITIES
Parking, restroom, trails, picnic tables.

In the neighborhood For a dose of that cozy, small-town feeling, stop by the community of Banks just before you reach the wetland. Check out the Trailhead Café for a stick-to-your-ribs breakfast, sandwiches, strong coffee and espresso. The Hop Cycle Brewing Company has a great selection of fresh-brewed beers to lighten your load after a walk in the wetlands.

This site is recognized by the Audubon Society of Portland as an Important Bird Area and is a featured stop on the Willamette Valley Birding Trail. Birders flock to Killin Wetlands to see and hear three birds that are hard to find: the Virginia rail, sora and American bittern.

Killin Wetlands is a year-round destination for visitors of all ages that invokes a sense of

curiosity and exploration of a rare ecosystem in the Willamette Valley. Improvements provide a safer, more intimate experience, and visitors no longer need to park on the side of the road. Trails, parking, restrooms and picnic tables will help visitors enjoy this site to the fullest.

oregonmetro.gov/killin

Season-by-season highlights

SUMMER: Killin Wetlands is an open site, so be prepared for sun. Dusk is a great time to catch a glimpse of beavers or river otters. Pink blooms on Douglas spirea shrubs decorate the wetland, and baby birds test their wings. Watch for American kestrels hovering above the fields, keen on catching a vole or mouse.

FALL: Roosevelt elk wind down Cedar Canyon, leaving tracks and scat as evidence of their nighttime wanderings. The rains return to refresh the wetland, and pintail ducks by the thousands stop for rest and food on their long trip south.

WINTER: Ducks, geese, hawks and eagles return from the north to settle in for winter. Watch for a sudden flush of ducks taking to the sky – a sure sign that a hunting bald eagle is near. Hooded merganser, great egret, northern harrier and merlin can all be seen here. Killin Wetlands hosts a dense population of northwestern salamanders that lay their eggs in the winter water.

SPRING: The wetland comes to life. Geyer willow, Oregon ash and black cottonwoods burst forth with new leaves, and the migratory songbirds soon follow. Listen for the bubbly chatter of the marsh wren, and the “fitz bew” song of the willow flycatcher.

Be on the lookout!



HOODED MERGANSER



WESTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL



AMERICAN BITTERN



DOUGLAS SPIREA