

# Field guide

MOUNT TALBERT NATURE PARK



Story by Dan Daly. Photography by Fred Joe

This beautiful forested oasis nestled between bustling Interstate 205 and Happy Valley rises 750 feet in elevation. Mount Talbert is a volcanic butte shaped for nearly 3 million years by fountains of lava, floods, fires and people. A mosaic of habitats and more than 4 miles of trails offer a year-round getaway for those looking to experience nature as it changes throughout the seasons.

Visitors that enter from the Mather Road Trailhead will be treated to a picnic shelter, restrooms and a short, wheelchair-accessible loop that circles through a prairie. For thousands of years the Willamette Valley was covered with prairies that were maintained by fires set by Indigenous communities, and that later settlers have since turned into farmland or developments.

Climb the butte's southern slope through patches of Oregon white oak woodlands and savannas. Oaks grow slowly and are easily overtopped and shaded out by faster-growing trees. Less than 5 percent of historic oak woodlands remain in the Willamette Valley, and the surviving fragments need active management. At Mount Talbert, Metro strategically removes competing trees when necessary and controls invasive species that threaten native wildflowers and other plants.

Round the west side of the butte on the Park Loop Trail to find deep red soils that hint at a once-active cinder cone volcano,



## Mount Talbert Nature Park

10945 SE MATHER ROAD, CLACKAMAS

**DRIVING**  
From I-205, take exit 14 for Sunnybrook Road and head east briefly. Take a right immediately onto Southeast 97th Avenue, which curves onto Southeast Mather Road. The main park entrance is on the left. TriMet buses 155 and 156 also run near different entrances to Mount Talbert.

**KNOW WHEN YOU GO**  
Open sunrise to sunset. No bikes or pets, please. The North Clackamas Parks & Recreation District provides day-to-day management.

**AMENITIES**  
Bathrooms, picnic areas and shelters, boat launch, camping (tent, pull-through, ADA accessible), playgrounds, pedestrian/equestrian and bike trails, nature programs, summer campfire shows.

[oregonmetro.gov/mounttalbert](http://oregonmetro.gov/mounttalbert)

**In the neighborhood** For another dose of nature, enjoy a hike in the nearby Three Creeks Natural Area. Or take the whole family for a splash at the North Clackamas Aquatic Park. Looking for a spot of shopping? Hit up Clackamas Town Center, just across I-205. The area also offers plenty of restaurants, a theater and more.

spewing and frothing iron-rich lava into the air. Watch for a large grove of cascara trees with shredded bark at the base that give testimony to a large blacktailed deer buck, marking his territory with vigor.

Entering the park from the Sunnyside Road trailhead will take visitors through a series of meadows and across Mount Scott Creek, a small salmon-bearing stream.

### Be on the lookout!



### Season-by-season highlights

**WINTER:** Bare trees make geologic features easier to see. Ice Age floods about 20,000 years ago likely caused the major landslide features on the Park Loop Trail. As you climb, notice rounded river cobbles in the trail that reveal the mystery of an active river system that somehow buried the volcano nearly to its summit.

**SPRING:** Wildflowers ranging from white fawn lily to common camas adorn the wet meadows and mixed woodlands in spring. Because Mount Talbert is an island of natural habitat in a sea of development, it is an ideal spot for migrating neotropical songbirds to rest, feed and nest. Warblers, vireos, orioles and tanagers can be seen.

**SUMMER:** Mount Scott Creek, accessed from the Sunnyside Road trailhead, is a lesser-known spot to take the kids for a splash in the creek. Native shrubs such as salal, serviceberry and red huckleberry offer sweet edible fruits for wildlife.

**FALL:** Fall rains bring a lovely assortment of mushrooms that rise from the duff beneath Douglas firs and Oregon white oaks. Move slowly, step quietly and watch carefully for an elusive native squirrel. Western gray squirrels are larger than the squirrels commonly seen in the city, and they sport pure white bellies and massive fluffy tails.