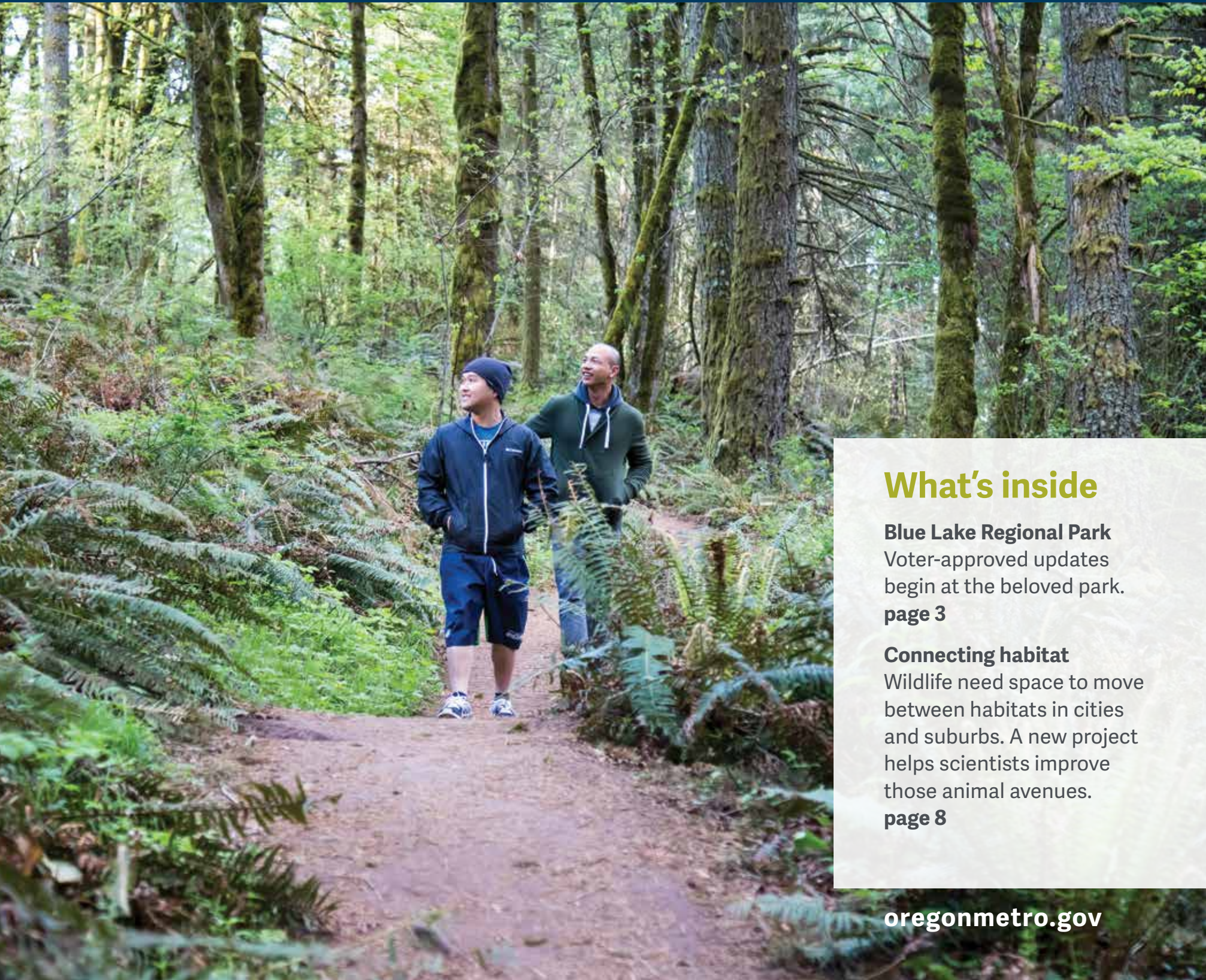




“Trees grow very slowly. And they'll keep growing slowly larger.”



What’s inside

Blue Lake Regional Park
Voter-approved updates begin at the beloved park.
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Connecting habitat
Wildlife need space to move between habitats in cities and suburbs. A new project helps scientists improve those animal avenues.
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If you picnic at Blue Lake or take your kids to the Oregon Zoo, enjoy symphonies at the Schnitz or auto shows at the convention center, put out your trash or drive your car – we’ve already crossed paths.

So, hello. We’re Metro – nice to meet you.

In a metropolitan area as big as Portland, we can do a lot of things better together. Join us to help the region prepare for a happy, healthy future.

Metro Council President

Lynn Peterson

Metro Councilors

- Shirley Craddick, District 1
- Christine Lewis, District 2
- Gerritt Rosenthal, District 3
- Juan Carlos González, District 4
- Mary Nolan, District 5
- Bob Stacey, District 6

Auditor

Brian Evans



If you have a disability and need accommodations, call 503-220-2781, or call Metro’s TDD line at 503-797-1804. If you require a sign language interpreter, call at least 48 hours in advance. Activities marked with this symbol are wheelchair accessible:



Bus and MAX information

503-238-RIDE (7433) or trimet.org

Stay in touch with news, stories and things to do.

- oregonmetro.gov/parksandnaturenews
- facebook.com/oregonmetro
- twitter.com/oregonmetro
- instagram.com/oregonmetro

Pets policy

To protect plants, wildlife and people, Metro does not allow pets at most regional parks and natural areas. Pets can damage sensitive habitat and threaten wildlife the region has worked to protect. In natural areas where pets are not allowed, people see more wildlife and get closer to it. Seeing-eye dogs or other service animals are allowed. Please bring cleanup materials.



Share your nature and win!



Winner: Chris Elkinton

The lake at Reed College is a wonderful place to watch birds. I got lucky on this particular morning when I spotted this male hooded merganser. It was a joy to lie still, flat on the ground, watching this magnificent bird swim and dive.



Finalist: Rajiv Mongia

This picture was taken through my house window at sunset during the wildfires last fall. This was just before the haze set in and made me feel like we were living in the clouds of Jupiter.



Finalist: Adam Thorn Smith

The sunrise on the Clackamas River, upriver from High Rocks Park, blessed by electrifying neon pink clouds and an unexpected surprise – a ghost boat beached by higher flows in the night.

Submit your photo

Win an annual parking pass, a full-day picnic shelter reservation at Graham Oaks or Scouters Mountain nature parks, a tennis court session, or a round of golf for four people including cart at Glendoveer Golf and Tennis Center.

To enter, submit a photo taken at a park or natural area in greater Portland – your friends and family, a view of wildlife or a sunset, for example. Include a 50-word description of your experience. Where were you? What were you doing? What captured your attention?

The winner will appear in this space. By submitting a photo, you consent to Metro’s future use and publication of your photo. Send your photo and description by August 15 to: ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov

Like what you see?

Sign up for the print edition of the quarterly magazine, change your address or save paper by switching to a digital subscription. Email ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov or call 503-797-1545.

On the cover: Oliver Lim and Danny Phanphackdy hike at Scouters Mountain Nature Park in Happy Valley. Photo by Cristle Jose.

25 years of restoration at Newell Creek Canyon

Story by Kelsey Wallace



If a rare, undeveloped natural area exists in the middle of a city, it should be left alone, right? Can't nature take care of itself? Well, not exactly. While it may seem like the best way to preserve or restore nature close to home is to leave it completely undisturbed, it takes years of planning and hard work to protect fragile ecosystems that exist close to human development.

“If we left this site alone it would quickly be covered with ivy, clematis, holly and laurel,” said Brian Vaughn, a natural resource scientist at Metro, referring to the weeds he sees most frequently at Newell Creek Canyon.

Along with Chehalem Ridge, Newell Creek will become a nature park later this year. It took decades to get it ready.

To restore and maintain a healthy environment in the canyon, Vaughn and his colleagues have spent thousands of hours since Metro purchased the site in 1995, removing weeds and human debris.

In their place, they’ve planted 20,550 native shrubs and trees, like tall Oregon grape, oceanspray, Pacific ninebark, red osier dogwood, Oregon white oak and Douglas fir.

Newell Creek Canyon is a wild place smack dab in the middle of Oregon City, within walking distance of a Fred Meyer and an Abby’s Pizza. It’s accessible by bike, bus and car, which makes it an ideal place for people to experience nature right in their neighborhood. It will open as a nature park later this year, but it’s taken a long time to turn it into a space where that’s possible.

In 1995, Newell Creek neighbors, determined to prevent development that could damage the canyon’s fragile ecosystem, helped campaign for Metro's bond measure to protect nature across greater Portland. The bond measure passed, and Metro swiftly began buying land along the creek.

Jonathan Soll, Metro's science team manager, says, “At the core of why voters passed and renewed the levy is our ability to take places that are in OK or poor condition and turn them towards a good condition, and keep them heading that way.”

“One of the most exciting parts of Newell Creek are the streams that cascade into the canyon,” Vaughn says. “It’s a nature wonderland.”



From top: The slopes of Newell Creek Canyon are dotted with springs. The springs' cool water flow into Newell and Abernethy creeks and make ideal spawning grounds for native fish, including the Pacific lamprey.

Bubbling springs and seeps surround the canyon, providing cold enough, clean enough water for coho salmon, cutthroat trout, steelhead and Pacific lamprey to spawn. It's a delicate habitat, and maintaining water quality and preventing erosion to improve it is a priority at the site. To see this restoration work in action this summer, neighbors can look straight up.

To improve life for the fish in both Newell and nearby Abernethy creeks, helicopters will fly more than 160 large logs into the canyon and place them over one another in the water to create log jams. This airborne approach is part of a stream restoration effort led by the Greater Oregon City Watershed Council, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Metro. The log jams create the pools and gravel areas salmon, trout and lamprey use for spawning and rearing young.

Crews are hard at work completing the bridges and trails that will take visitors through the future park. In addition to the chance to see the park’s water habitats up close, amenities will include off-road cycling trails and a large day-use area with parking for buses. And though construction work will end when the park opens in the fall, the restoration work will continue.

Brian Vaughn has been waiting over a decade for the park to open, and he’s prepared to wait longer to see some of the fruits of his labor.

“Trees grow very slowly,” he laughs. “And they’ll keep growing slowly larger.”



Blue Lake improvements

Story by Kelsey Wallace

Crews have begun a series of infrastructure updates at Blue Lake Regional Park that will improve health, safety and accessibility for years to come at the beloved destination.

The initial work is for a new water line planned for installation later this year. The park has been on well water since it first opened in 1925, and connecting to a municipal water supply will help meet the growing need for water and boost fire safety.

Other improvements will help revitalize Blue Lake’s aging infrastructure, most of which has not been updated for decades. The fishing pier has been closed for safety in recent months due to structural issues and is slated for removal later this year.

The maintenance building at Blue Lake, which serves as the home base for most of Metro’s park maintenance operations, will be replaced.

The aging office building and the Lake House, which is structurally unsound and lacks utilities, will also be removed. These improvements are possible thanks to the voter-approved 2019 parks and nature bond measure and will help keep the park safe while planning is underway for additional improvements.

“We’ve heard from voters that taking care of infrastructure, safety and accessibility improvements in Metro parks is a high priority,” said Olena Turula, a senior regional planner for Metro. “At Blue Lake, we’re starting with updating utilities and removing unsafe structures, since that’s an urgent need right now.”

Blue Lake is still open to the public, and fishing is permitted from the lake shoreline. Visitors can also enjoy a picnic under the trees or play disc golf on Blue Lake’s gold-level, 18-hole course.

Later this year, Metro staff will begin community engagement to identify priorities for future amenities and improvements at the park. People who use the park, especially those from historically marginalized communities, will have the chance to shape the future of visitor experiences at Blue Lake.

“Blue Lake Regional Park needs more work,” Turula said. “And we know voters are eager for us to get started.”



Get involved

CLASSES AND EVENTS

Have a big or a little nature adventure

During the COVID pandemic, Metro’s community education and stewardship team is finding new ways to help visitors learn and love Metro's parks.

Before you head out for a day in nature, check out what programs are happening at Metro’s parks.

oregonmetro.gov/natureeducation

Park educator program

Those who wander may not be lost. Join us in our parks and find wandering park educators who can answer your questions about the park, trail, plants, wildlife and more. Look for the people wearing blue and gray Metro shirts and hats in the parks walking on trails.

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Blue Lake Regional Park: July 2, 16 and 30; August 3, 13, 17 and 27. \$5/car, \$7/bus

Oxbow Regional Park: July 9 and 23; August 6 and 20. \$5/car, \$7/bus

Scouters Mountain Nature Park: July 8 and 22; August 5 and 19

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area: July 15 and 29; August 10, 12, 24 and 26.



Self-led activities

Connect with nature your way with our self-led activities! From scavenger hunts to wellness practices, each easy-to-follow activity offers unique outdoor experiences for all. We have material available for download or print along with short videos on our web page. Some printed materials are available by request or at a park kiosk. Enjoy these activities anywhere!

oregonmetro.gov/natureeducation

Plan your own class

Create your own outdoor program with the community education and stewardship team! Learn about plants, discover the animals of a wetland, help restore a forest: there are many options for individuals or groups.

Community education program

Our team supports the vision of a community organization or group to co-create a program, whether it’s a single event or a recurring program. For example, we’ve organized wetland tours, plant walks at Oxbow Park, water ecology events, youth leadership series and many, many school field trips.

Stewardship program

The stewardship program provides individuals and groups opportunities to create and nurture reciprocal relationships with the land through activities like tree planting, amphibian talks and walks and garden work parties.

Both programs prioritize groups that serve communities of color.

Contact the team
503-220-2782
natureeducation@oregonmetro.gov



Free Parking Days

Get out and explore nature!

Enjoy free parking at Oxbow and Blue Lake regional parks, Broughton Beach, Chinook Landing Marine Park and M. James Gleason Memorial Boat Ramp on July 15; Aug. 19; Sept. 16; Oct. 21; Nov. 11, 18 and 26; and Dec. 16.

Parking at all other Metro parks and boat ramps is free year-round.

COVID protocols

All programs listed here will take place outdoors and be physically distanced. Face masks are required for all participants 5 years or older.

Registration, accessibility information

Unless otherwise noted, register and pay at oregonmetro.gov/calendar

Registration and payment are required at least 24 hours in advance for all classes. Classes with low enrollment may be canceled. For more information or to request interpretation, sign language interpreters and other modifications, call the community education and stewardship team, 503-220-2782.

SAT. JULY 10

Swimming upstream: Black and Brown stories of perseverance

From Flint to Standing Rock, from the Salmon Wars to lynching; throughout history water has systematically been weaponized against communities of color. Join us at Oxbow Regional Park for stories of Black and Brown resistance, resilience and struggle for equitable access to water. We will delve into the depths of Black, Indigenous and other communities of color’s cultural histories, perseverance in the face of colonialism and varied uses of water. This event will be held outdoors as a walking tour and discussion.

Oxbow Regional Park
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
\$6/person, \$11/family; \$5/car, \$7/bus. 12 and older.
Registration required. Difficulty: easy.

THUR. AUGUST 19

Twilight Thursday

As the sun begins its descent in the sky, many animals go out to forage for one last meal. At the same time, nocturnal animals awaken and move across the landscape. Join us at Smith and Bybee Wetlands on a hike to explore the magical space between day and night.

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
\$6/person, \$11/family. All ages.
Registration required. Difficulty: easy.

SAT. SEPTEMBER 25

Eena (Beaver) Festival

The Eena (Beaver) Festival is an Indigenous-led festival that hopes to raise awareness about non-human-led restoration, share education about traditional ecological knowledge and create a safe, welcoming means to increase access to nature for Black, Indigenous and other people of color. Activities will include storytelling, wood carving demonstrations, a talk on traditional ecological knowledge, traditional salmon bake, kids’ crafts table and video showing the influence of beaver in Fanno Creek with an illustrated map to the site where you can view the beaver lodge.

Multnomah Arts Center
7688 SW Capitol Highway, Portland
Noon to 3 p.m.
Free. All ages.
No registration required. Difficulty: easy.



Field guide

MASON HILL PARK

Story by Renea Perry

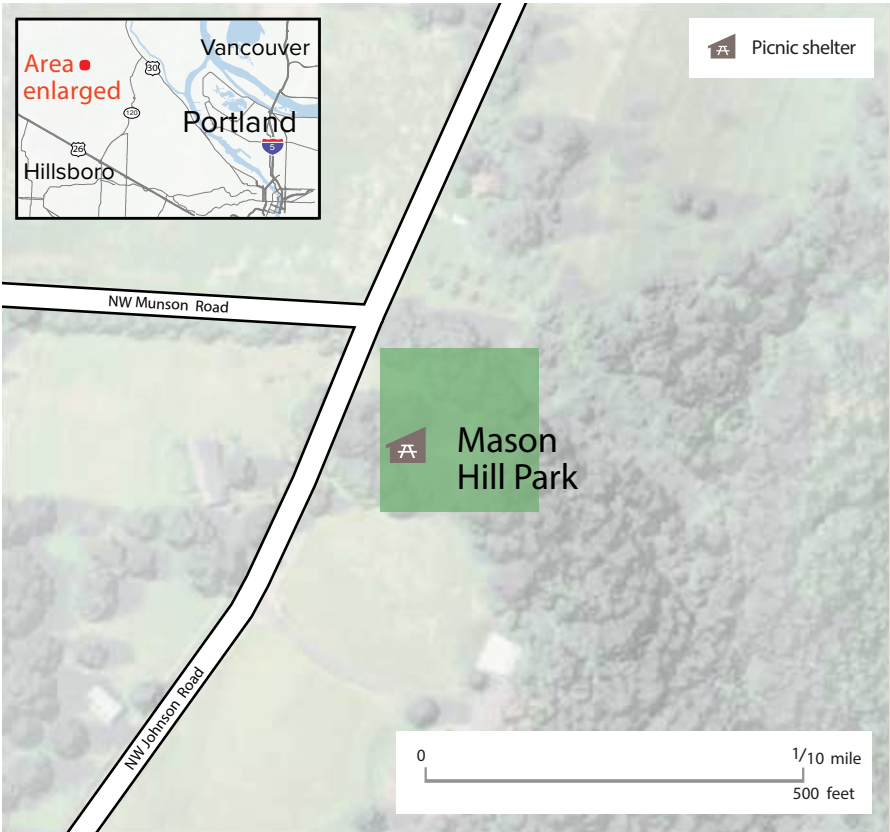
Located in the North Tualatin Mountains, Mason Hill Park rests on the original homelands of the local Indigenous tribes and bands, whose families and communities continue traditional healing practices to care for ancestral lands, foods and medicines for present and future generations.

Nestled among a forest of cedars and Douglas fir trees, a scattering of maple trees creates shade and sun-dappled light for gatherings in the spring and summer, and a retreat for quiet repose any time of the year. A covered picnic area provides shelter from the rain or summer heat, as well as bench seating for group story sharing. Painters love this gem of a park for the changing light and the natural wildlife that claim their home here – such as robins, red-tailed hawks, black-tailed deer and coyotes.

Located off of Northwest Johnson Road, the park is a respite for long-distance cyclists and those taking scenic drives through the North Tualatin Mountains and the surrounding settled farmlands.

The shelter at Mason Hill

The picnic shelter at Mason Hill was a one-room schoolhouse built by colonizers for their children after the forced removal of the Tualatin people in the 1850s. A bell remains from the original structure, which stood on the site from 1891 to 1944.



Mason Hill Park

ADDRESS
16498 NW Johnson Rd., Portland

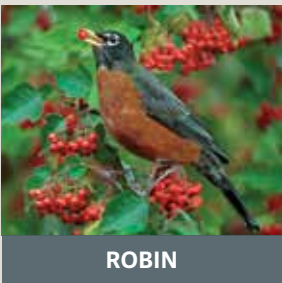
GETTING THERE
From Portland, head west on U.S. 26. Take exit 61B and head north on Northwest Helvetia Road. Shortly after the road curves left, take a right on Northwest Logie Trail, which naturally becomes Northwest Johnson Road. Mason Hill Park will be on the right at the intersection with Northwest Munson Road. If you come by car, be prepared to park in a narrow roadside spot.

KNOW WHEN YOU GO
Open sunrise to sunset.
No pets, please.

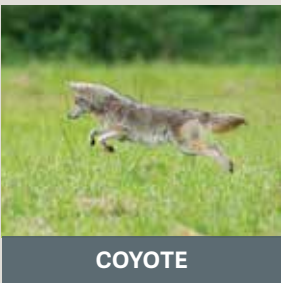
AMENITIES
Picnic shelter.

oregonmetro.gov/masonhill

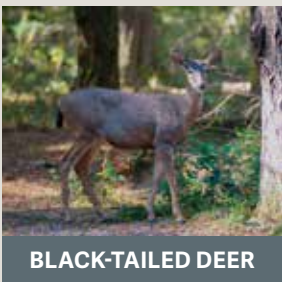
For more details about all 19 Metro destinations, visit oregonmetro.gov/parks



ROBIN



COYOTE



BLACK-TAILED DEER



RED-TAILED HAWK

Be on the lookout!

Though the park is just one acre in size, many animals call Mason Hill home. Listen and look for black-tailed deer leaping through the trees, coyotes calling to one another across the meadow, red-tailed hawks soaring through the air and robins singing in the trees. The grassy hills also attract pollinators like hummingbirds and mason bees.

Drive and bike around Mason Hill

Traveling along the Valley Scenic Tour Route takes visitors near the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, through the Forest Grove wine region and by old colonial churches and farm houses.

The Tualatin Valley Scenic Bikeway captures some of the best scenic views of the northern part of the Willamette Valley. The trail starts in Hillsboro at Rood Bridge Park and heads west to Forest Grove. Cyclists can find their way onto the iconic Banks-Vernonia State Trail, a 21-mile paved trail that travels through L.L. Stub Stewart State Park, and over to Mason Hill Park for a ride through the hillsides.

Bring a lunch or stop at one of the u-pick farms during the summer for berries or other fresh fruits and vegetables. Or stop by one of the vineyards with breathtaking views of the valley below.

Learn more about these tours at traveloregon.com and tualatinvalley.org

Restoration at Baker Creek

Story by Cory Eldridge
Photograph by Clean Water Services

Just a couple miles west of Sherwood, Baker Creek winds from south to north for four miles through ravines topped with farms, ranches, homes and forests. Its waters eventually flow into the Tualatin River. Metro manages four natural areas along the creek that add up to more than 300 acres.

When you first looked at this photo of Baker Creek, you probably thought something like, “Wow, that’s really pretty.” Maybe you spotted a tree species or two you recognize; possibly, you imagined the animals that live there. Maybe you spied the pond and looked for a beaver dam. If you looked at it long enough, you probably started getting a feeling that there was so much more you weren’t seeing. There are mysteries in the photo.

Some people can see into many of those mysteries (usually they find even more there).

It takes years, but if you've studied something deeply you're able to look at it with almost superhero vision. You see details most people overlook, make connections unknown to others, you even know the structures hidden behind the surface that make the whole thing work. It works for a mechanic looking at a car, a musician hearing a song, a gamer playing a game. It happens when Andrea Berkley, one of Metro natural resource scientists, looks at a forest.

Andrea experiences the photo those ways, too. In her role overseeing restoration at Baker Creek with partners from Clean Water Services, she also sees where invasive plants are crowding out native species. She sees how the forest is reforming after being logged. She sees strengths in the habitat and what might help make those even stronger.

Let’s take a look at what Andrea sees after she says, “Wow, that’s really pretty.”

Forest health

Hillsides along Baker Creek have been logged in the past, and now support a young forest with a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees that are 20 to 40 years old. The plant communities are recovering from this past disturbance slowly but surely, with a lovely forest-floor wildflower display in the spring. Some areas are overcrowded with trees, especially Douglas fir and bigleaf maple, which grow in quickly after timber harvests. Many of these trees won’t survive the dense conditions, and slower-growing species won’t ever get a chance. Metro will thin these stands, letting more species grow into larger, healthier trees.

Bigleaf maples

There are many bigleaf maples along Baker Creek that were cut down, but survived, when Douglas fir were harvested decades ago. Those maples sent out lots of new shoots, which now have formed trees with multiple, large trunks coming out of one root mass. These root sprouts now spell doom for these trees – as these trunks get larger and heavier, these maples will break open like a blooming onion at Outback Steakhouse. To preserve these trees, we will thin the trees, leaving the healthiest trunks behind to grow into robust, large maple trees.

Beaver-built wetlands

Throughout Baker Creek you’ll stumble upon beaver dams, old and new. Older dams have trees and shrubs growing on them; newer dams have freshly harvested sticks and mud. Beaver dams provide tremendous environmental benefits by creating wetlands, often called “biological super systems” because of the rich biodiversity contained within them. These wetlands boost fish and wildlife numbers, but they also buffer the watershed from the effects of drought by saturating the soil and recharging groundwater aquifers. And by slowing down the water coming down a creek, they reduce the rate of soil erosion which keeps the water cleaner.



Nature knows no borders

The yellow plants are Scotch broom, a prolific invasive bush that you've probably seen on the side of highways. These plants are growing on a property next to the natural area. Unfortunately, weeds don't care about property lines. The best thing we can do to keep the Scotch broom out is look for it periodically and remove it and ensure diverse groups of native plants thrive so there's no room for invasive weeds.

Reed canarygrass

Reed canarygrass is one of the most successful invasive aquatic plants in the Pacific Northwest. It spreads by seeds and rhizomes, creeping underground stems that produce plants far from the parent. This grass starts its growing season before many native plants, which means it crowds them out before they even start growing. These dense stands have little wildlife or insect habitat value and disrupt food chains in wetlands and along streams. Clean Water Services treats the canarygrass, then quickly plants at least 3,000 native sedges, rushes, grasses, shrubs and trees per acre. These plants will eventually outcompete the weedy grass.

Stream channel shape

Baker Creek and other streams like it have undergone many changes as people have worked the landscape. Tree removal, introduction of invasive species and development along the creek corridor all cause rainfall to move down the creek faster. All this fast water erodes the soil along the edges and the bottom of the stream, making the water murky, and gradually changing the stream from a winding shape to a straighter channel that rarely spreads to the floodplain. The floodplain area is rich habitat where all sorts of creatures and plants live, including juvenile salmon looking for tasty bugs to eat to fatten up during floods. Along Baker Creek channel straightening and erosion have been slowed by the nighttime work of beavers.

Fish passage

The Tualatin River and the streams that feed into it support many native fish species, including winter steelhead, coho salmon and cutthroat trout. Although Baker Creek does support many native fish species, searches for salmon up to Mountain Creek Road have come up empty. Metro and Clean Water Services are working together to find and modify or remove barriers like culverts or small dams that block salmon migrating up and downstream. In 2022 Metro and Clean Water Services will remove a small dam in one of the natural areas along Baker Creek. Small dams can create high water temperatures and lower dissolved oxygen levels, both being bad news for animals living in the stream.



Wildlife corridors

To hear the poet Robert Frost tell it, when two roads diverge in a wood they create a life-changing opportunity. While this may be true for humans, for the plants and animals in the wood those roads can be deadly.

Story by Kelsey Wallace

Roads, bridges and trails help people get where we want to go, but for many species of wildlife they do just the opposite. Even something as seemingly minor as a fence can disrupt a fragile wildlife corridor, a small nature highway that allows animals like birds, deer and insects to move from one piece of habitat to another. This movement is critical to many species’ survival, especially in the face of climate change.

These wildlife corridors are at the heart of a years-long effort led by Lori Hennings, a natural resource scientist at Metro and cofounder of the Regional Habitat Connectivity Work Group with Ted Labbe of the Urban Greenspaces Institute. Comprised of more than 45 partner organizations, the group is focused on mapping habitat connectivity in the greater Portland area to preserve the connections that still exist, and create new ones whenever possible.

“Without connectivity, our wildlife species aren’t going to be able to adapt to climate change,” Hennings says. “We’re going to lose species over time.”

Animals and plants need ample food, water and habitat to survive, but they also need a diverse enough gene pool to reproduce. When a natural area is surrounded by roads, fences and people, the plants and animals that live there become stranded, with no way to get in or out. Eventually, many of those species will die out, especially if temperatures rise and they aren’t able to move to new habitat.

As Hennings explains it, sometimes a barrier can be as simple as a gap in vegetation or a recreational trail. When a barrier is present, none of the habitat on the other side of that barrier is available to the species that need it. Habitat becomes fragmented, then isolated over time. Studies show that isolated habitat

patches lose wildlife species, and without connectivity there is no way for them to repopulate.

With careful planning though, small corridors of natural areas between larger habitats can be left undisturbed, or developed areas can be restored to create corridors. These connections greatly improve outcomes for plants and wildlife. In other words, connected habitats are greater than the sum of their parts.

That’s why Hennings and her colleagues in the work group have developed a series of user-friendly models to help developers, planners and other land-use decision makers learn how to preserve wildlife corridors and maintain the habitat connections that still exist. The models help identify the region’s remaining habitat and connecting corridors, and they’re designed to be specific enough to identify conditions at a small, site-level scale.

The project has taken years, first spent developing methods to study habitat connectivity, then using computer mapping to identify and map potential wildlife corridors in the greater Portland area. After the computer modeling phase, researchers venture out to verify the corridors found on the maps. There could be new homes and roads built, for instance, or an insurmountable barrier that certain wildlife species simply cannot cross.

The connectivity models use what are called surrogate species to identify wildlife corridors in a given area. These species represent three different types of habitat: forested, wetlands and oak woodland. By using information about how the surrogate species move within and between these habitats, the models can predict how similar species would fare in similar types of habitat.



For instance, the alligator lizard represents other small animals that like to take cover under the thickets and downed logs found in oak woodlands. And the Douglas squirrel, which moves by jumping from branch to branch, represents animals that need forested areas where trees grow close together.

“Let’s say you have a thrush that has specific habitat needs, and you identify two habitats for the bird,” says Hennings. “You can use the models to see where opportunities exist to improve connections.”

To see this concept in action, look no further than the large patches of upland forest from Gresham to Happy Valley known as the East Buttes. Metro and the City of Gresham own a significant collection of properties in the area, which spans two counties and bridges the Johnson Creek and Clackamas River watersheds. When making decisions about where to purchase land or restore habitat, the potential for habitat connectivity is a top priority.

“Wildlife and plants have to have a way to move around neighborhoods,” says natural resource scientist Kate Holleran, who oversees Metro’s work in the East Buttes. “If we want our common wildlife to stay common, and we want to keep those species here, they have to have a way to move.”

The East Buttes area is mostly conifer hardwood forest, growing up around a series of extinct cinder cones in the Boring Lava Field. Applying the habitat connectivity models, then, it’s a forested area with four surrogate species: rubber boa, Swainson’s thrush, Douglas squirrel and North American beaver.

Take the mighty beaver. North American beavers thrive in streamside habitats found in the East Buttes, but they’re shy animals who are often hit by cars in developed areas. Thanks to information from the models and fieldwork done by researcher Amanda Temple, Holleran knows roads are a major barrier to connecting beaver habitat.

Something as simple as widening a culvert to allow beavers to pass under a road, instead of over it where they might be killed by a car, can improve the lives of generations of affable, tree-chomping rodents to come.

Keeping these habitats connected is a daunting task, especially with a changing climate and a growing human population in the area. But Holleran is optimistic, and says wildlife corridors are coming up more and more in the conversations she’s having with partner organizations in the East Buttes.

“We’re keenly aware of the desire to protect some functional connectivity,” she says, “and we have the potential to do it.”

Later this year, the models from the Regional Connectivity Habitat Work Group will be available to the public. Anyone who’s interested can access interactive maps, or download data to show where the wildlife corridors are in a specific area. Hennings hopes the models will be used in planning everything from bridges to bus routes. Even in heavily developed areas, small changes can be made to increase connections, like removing barbed wire from a fence or leaving a row of trees intact to preserve the canopy.

“Narrow is better than nothing,” she says. And every bit of connectivity helps.



Clockwise from opposite page: A Columbian black-tailed deer. Trees felled by beaver, a Douglass squirrel and an alligator lizard. The map shows habitat quality and barriers for areas around the East Buttes in Gresham. The darker the box, the better the habitat. Yellow lines are barriers that are easier to pass, orange are more difficult and red the hardest.

You can help improve wildlife habitat connectivity in your own neighborhood or backyard:

- Plant native plants, and keep them healthy. “Native bugs like native plants and native birds like native bugs,” says Lori Hennings. She recommends ocean spray as one of many insect-friendly native shrubs to plant at home.
- Prevent bird strikes. Window decals or external screens can help birds avoid collisions with windows, which can be deadly.
- Be mindful of your pets. Cats and dogs can make wildlife nervous and close off habitat connections. Consider keeping your cats inside – our furry feline friends can have a bigger impact on local wildlife than wild predators do.
- Reduce chemicals. This is especially helpful for pollinators like bees and butterflies, who are very sensitive to pesticides.

You don't float. Life jackets do.

Wearing a life jacket is the best thing you can do to stay safe in water. The jacket has to fit to do its job. Here's how to find the right jacket for the right fit.

1 Size

Life jackets are made for people of different sizes and weights. Check the label for the jacket's weight range and chest size.



2 The kids

Life jackets for children include a leg strap. Life jackets for infants also have a collar.



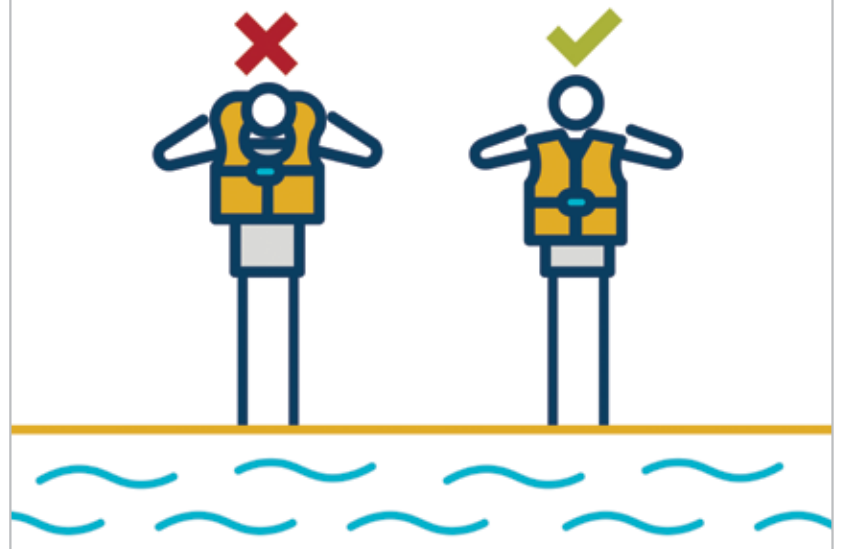
3 Zip, click, pull

Make sure all zippers and clips are fastened. Pull straps tight.



4 Shoulder test

Pull the jacket up at your shoulders. If it slides up to your ears, it's too big. If it stays tight, you are ready for the water!



Questions?

Contact Metro staff at 503-797-1545.

For updates on Metro parks visit oregonmetro.gov/parks



Metro starts pilot program to collect Styrofoam for recycling

Metro, in partnership with Agilyx, will collect Styrofoam and other expanded polystyrene foam products at the Metro South transfer station

Story by Arashi Young

Foam coolers, some coffee cups and meat packing trays – items that are often used once and then thrown away – will find a new life through a pilot program at the Metro South transfer station.

Metro, in partnership with the recycling company Agilyx, will now collect expanded polystyrene foam, also known as Styrofoam, products at the facility in Oregon City. Instead of going into the landfill, these items will be recycled into new products.

Agilyx is an advanced recycling company that specializes in converting plastics. Before this pilot program, their facility in Tigard was one of the few places in greater Portland that could reuse polystyrene waste.

“This partnership with Agilyx is an opportunity to be more sustainable and to increase the number of products we can recycle,” said Penny Erickson, superintendent at Metro South.

Expanded polystyrene foam is often used in packaging materials, providing the form-fitted buffer for electronics, appliances and furniture. It can also be found in food service items like foam take-out containers and egg cartons.

Erickson said having this option is even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused a large shift in spending habits.

“During this COVID-19 pandemic, there are so many people ordering food to go or getting essential needs delivered which increases the amount of Styrofoam in peoples’ homes,” Erickson said. “This pilot program gives people a way to recycle these products and get more out of our extracted resources.”

This partnership with Agilyx is an opportunity to be more sustainable and to increase the number of products we can recycle.

Want to know if foam in your home is made of polystyrene? Look for the number six resin code.

At Metro South, the foam will be collected by Metro employees. Agilyx will condense the foam and then ship it to their Tigard location. There, the polystyrene will be chemically broken down into its base molecule – a styrene monomer.

The value of this kind of chemical recycling is that the polystyrene foam doesn’t lose integrity as it is recycled. A Styrofoam cooler that goes through this process can be reformed into the same quality foam cooler.

Matt Durbin, vice president for operations at Agilyx, said there is no limit to the times this foam cooler could be recycled into a new polystyrene product.

“The recycled styrene monomer that we produce is used directly by other manufactures to make new products,” Durbin said.

Using recycled polystyrene is more environmentally friendly too. According to a press release from Agilyx, products created with recycled Styrofoam have up to a 70% lower carbon footprint than products made from virgin plastics.

The pilot program supports Metro’s efforts to lessen the negative health and environmental impacts from products that people use every day.

For Durbin, the partnership with Metro would expand the ability for Agilyx to collect and recycle Styrofoam.

“We’ve been trying to work with the local municipalities to do take-back programs,” Durbin said. “This is an awesome way to start that partnership with Metro to take something that would normally just go into the trash.”

Prep your load

When bringing your Styrofoam and expanded polystyrene foam to Metro South, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- There is a \$10 flat fee for each load of Styrofoam
- Keep the foam separated from the rest of your load
- Keep it clean; rinse off any food residue
- Bring it to the receiving areas of Metro South, if you are unsure where to go, ask the spotter for assistance.

If you are unsure if your foam is made of polystyrene, bring it anyway and Metro will dispose of it.

THANK YOU essential workers for keeping garbage and recycling moving in greater Portland.

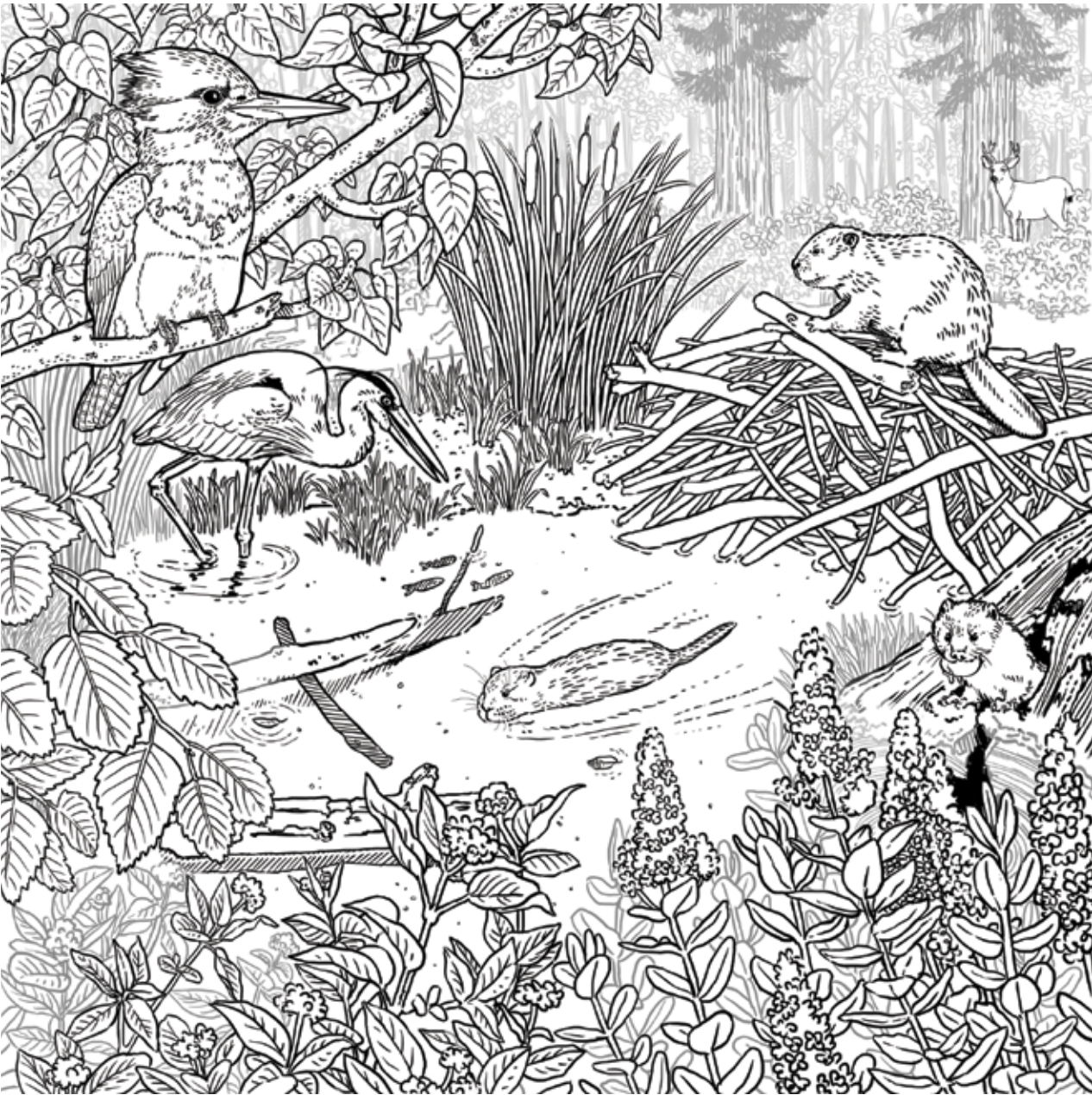


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Color and discover!



Drawing by Zoe Keller

Summer on Baker Creek

The pools behind beaver dams are an ecological wonderland on par with coral reefs. The ponds provide still water that insects, amphibians and fish thrive in. Young salmon often fatten up in beaver pools, eating insects and hiding from their predators among the twigs of the dam.

And there are a lot of predators to hide from! Herons in the shallows, kingfishers overhead, mink and otters in the water.

Baker Creek is far from most neighborhoods, but beaver dams show up along any creek in greater Portland, even in the middle of cities.

Share your coloring creation with Metro! Snap a picture and tag [@OregonMetro](#) on Instagram or Facebook.

