



Beginning your journey at the Chehalem Ridge Nature Park trailhead you will pass old oaks, whose acorns feed people and wildlife alike, and come to a shrubby clearing with volcanoes to view. Continuing on to the high point of the park via the Mampal Trail, the screen of young Douglas fir trees falls away to reveal a panoramic view of the Tualatin Valley and Coast Range. On almost any but the rainiest day, the highest viewpoint in the park provides opportunities to see wildflowers, listen to birds or simply sit and appreciate the land still known as the Outside Place by the Atfalati people, also known as the Tualatin Kalapuya.

Chehalem Ridge itself was formed millions of years ago as extreme pressure from the colliding tectonic Pacific and North American plates on what is now the Pacific coastline pushed, buckled and tilted the basalt ridge. As you follow the Chehalem Ridge trail, you'll notice a more steeply sloping west side with shallower soils and more exposed rock, and a gentler east side with deeper soils formed from thousands of years of wind-deposited silt soil.

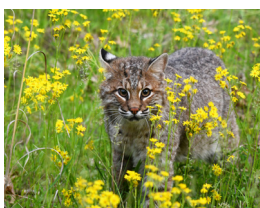
The Chehalem Ridge trail takes you to the Madrona Trail and some of the most diverse habitats in the park. Oregon white

oaks and Pacific madrone trees are common here, as are large patches of shrubby habitat that are magnet for dozens of bird species, as well as coyotes, black-tailed deer, alligator lizards and, uncommonly seen, bobcats.

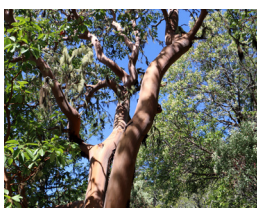
Most of the 1,250-acre Chehalem Ridge was a commercial tree farm until 2005. With voter-supported funding and encouragement, Metro acquired the land and began nudging it toward a more diverse forest to create room for other plants to thrive. Hikers, bikers and equestrians moving along the trails might notice stumps covered in fir cones collected by Douglas squirrels; piles of logs that shelter small animals and their food, insects and mushrooms; openings filled with shrubs and, in the spring, singing songbirds.

For thousands of years this place was periodically burned by Indigenous people to encourage the production of food and other supplies. The fires were halted when colonization of the valley occurred, and over time Douglas fir trees dominated the more open oak, madrone and fir forests. Metro will continue to thin, control invasive species and improve water protections to create a place that allows plants, animals and people to thrive.

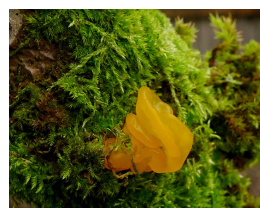
Be on the lookout!



bobcat



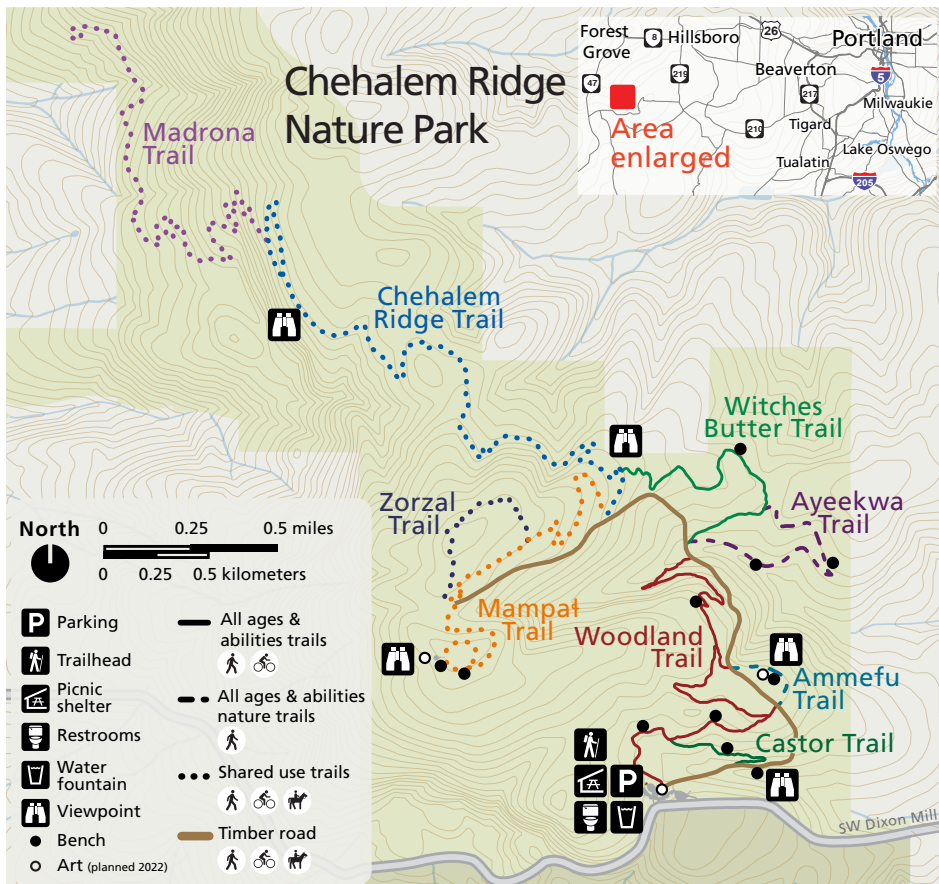
Pacific madrone



witch's butter



hermit thrush



Chehalem Ridge Nature Park

38263 SW Dixon Mill Road, Gaston

Getting there

From Forest Grove, head south on Highway 47. In Gaston, turn left onto SW Gaston Road. Turn left onto SW Hardebeck then right onto SW Dixon Mill Road. Stay on SW Dixon Mill Road for approximately 2.5 miles.

From Cornelius, travel south on South 10th Avenue, which becomes SW Golf Course Road. Continue south on SW Golf Course Road to a T-intersection on SW Tongue Lane. Turn right onto SW Tongue Lane, then left onto SW Iowa Hill Road. Turn right onto SW Dixon Mill Road.

From the east, take Highway 219 to SW Unger Road. Travel west on SW Unger Road until SW Dixon Mill Road. Turn left on SW Dixon Mill Road.

Amenities

Picnic tables, restrooms, parking, equestrian loading.

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.

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Season-by-season highlights

Spring: In springtime, the quiet of winter gives way to a symphony of bird sounds as neo-tropical migratory birds return to breed and raise young. Resident species are also active during this season. Listen for the distinctive drumming of the male ruffed grouse, whose rapid wing movement creates the sound.

Summer: Chehalem Ridge sits at the north end of the Willamette Valley and experiences drier conditions than the Coast range to the west and the Cascade Range to the east. Visitors might notice western red cedars that are declining or even dying due to the hotter, longer summers climate change is bringing to our region. Western red cedars are an important species for wildlife, watershed health and Indigenous cultural practices. Hopefully they will persist at Chehalem Ridge in the cooler, moist riparian areas.

Fall: As the days shorten and the weather turns cool, animals begin to prepare for the changing seasons. In early fall, listen for the soft sound of fir cones clipped by Douglas squirrels falling to the forest floor. There, the squirrels feast on seeds and carry the cones away to a midden or cache, storing protein-rich food for the coming winter.

Winter: Winter is the water season at Chehalem Ridge. In heavy winter rains, many small ephemeral streams collect rain and runoff and filter it as the water moves off the ridge and down to the Tualatin River. From the observation point at the highest part of the ridge, watch as the Wapato Lake basin in the Tualatin Valley fills up once again, repeating a pattern that has happened for thousands of years.