

Newell Creek Canyon

Self guided tour



Canyon insights

Vegetation

Within the canyon, you can find forested areas with dense Douglas fir, big leaf maple, and groves of western red cedar. The understory is typical of these forest types – the herbaceous layer is dominated by sword fern and inundated areas host skunk cabbage with clusters of stinging nettles.

Geology

Two key geologic formations make up Newell Creek Canyon – the Boring basalts of the upper terrace, and the cemented sands and gravels that form the architecture of the canyon. The Boring basalts are characterized by reddish-colored soils with large, embedded boulders. The clusters of boulders in the upper watershed have been removed from this red soil matrix.

Soil

Most of the Newell Creek watershed has residual soils, formed by gradual weathering of the Boring lavas. In parts of the canyon, this soil is mixed with external sources, including deposits from the Missoula Floods dating back 14,000 years. Thus, the red-colored soil at the top of the canyon gives way to tan-colored, silty clays, which developed directly on the Sandy River and Troutdale formations.

Water

A total of six sub-basins or small watersheds feed cool groundwater to Newell Creek throughout the year.

Be on the lookout!

Woodpeckers

Red-breasted sapsucker: Look for them among the red alder trees where they drill sap wells and make their nest holes. Listen for the irregular drumming sound of their drilling and their nasal, squealing call.

Downy woodpecker: Spot this acrobatic forager in flight by looking for a small black and white bird with a bright red patch on the back of its head and an undulated flight pattern.

Amphibians

Pacific chorus frog: Listen for their iconic drawn out kreek-eeek sound or seek out their bright green bodies with a contrasting dark stripe over their eyes.

Rough-skinned newt: This granularly textured critter moves slowly on land. Look for their dark brown backs and flashes of their bright orange underbelly as they rest near the water's edge.

Red-legged frog: Get flashes of this olive and elusive black-spotted frog around moist sedge along the shaded pond or hidden in trailside forest debris.

Insects

Woolly bear: In its larval stage the Isabella tiger moth crawls along the understory floor, seeking refuge in like-colored decomposing vegetation. Look for this inching fuzzy caterpillar and its red and black banded body crossing the trail floor before they retreat to a deep slumber over winter.

Mammals

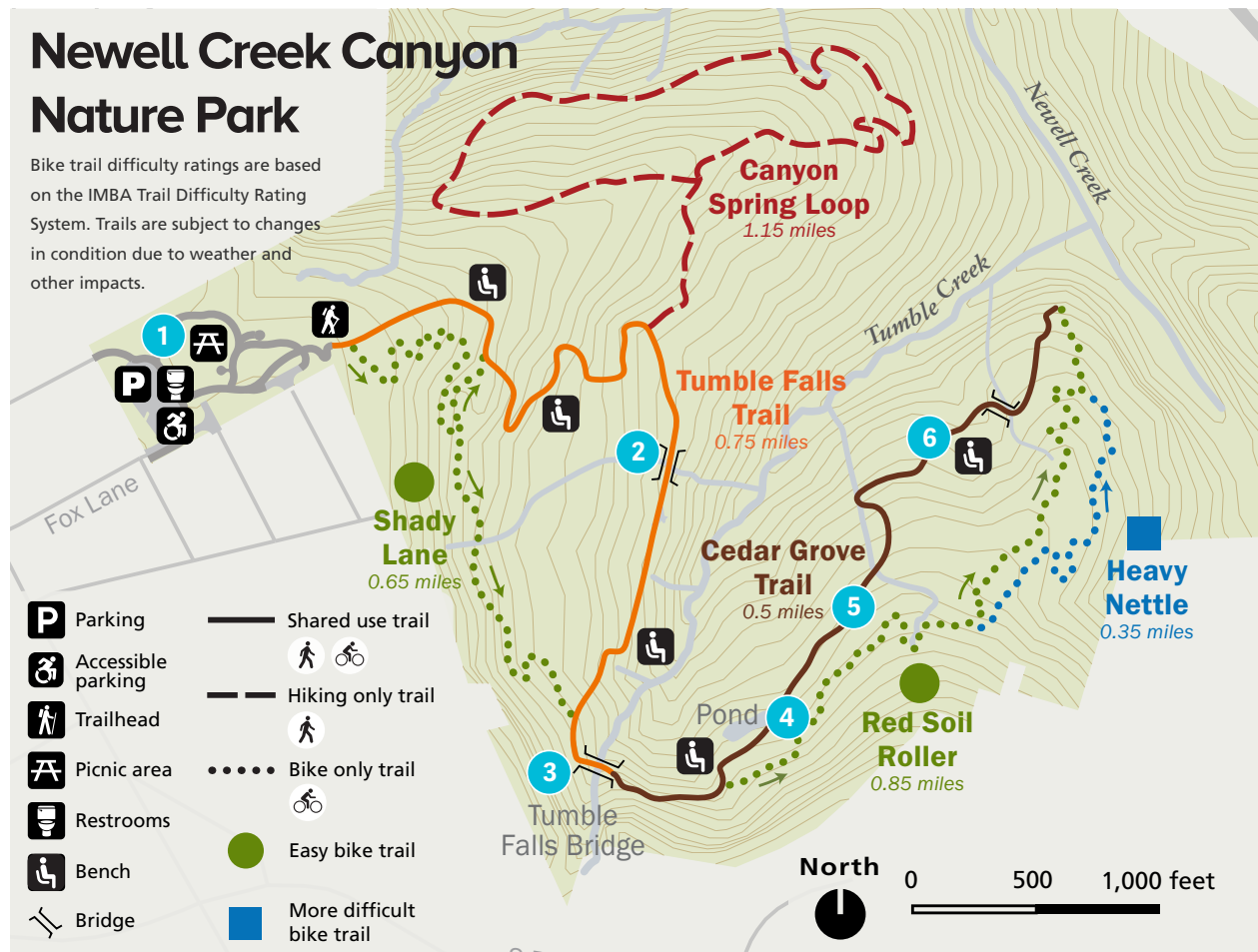
White-tailed deer: Signs of this animal are abundant on the ground. Spot their distinguishable hooved two toe track along the trail edge, usually between 2 to 4 inches. Look for them grazing on sword ferns and maple in the clearings.

Elk: Look for their light beige rump patch and body that contrasts their typically dark brown legs and neck. They are usually hidden in deep woods among Douglas fir.

Be safe

Please follow current public health and safety guidance during your visit.

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This is a zoomed in map of Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park. Visit oregonmetro.gov/newellcreek for a full map.

Wildlife viewing tips

Get grounded: Take a moment to slow your heart rate and your movements to optimize the sense of safety that animals have around you.

Keep your distance: Most animals sense us long before we are aware of their presence. They observe us, and depending on how far away we are and how we act, they decide whether or not to stay. Stay at a far distance so that you can view longer.

Use your senses: Close your eyes to sense more movement cues and direct your listening attention in a single direction when you are still.

Be mindful: If an animal approaches you or you catch them by surprise on the trail, avoid touching or feeding them to avoid disrupting their natural nourishment and behavior patterns.

- 1 A paved path provides access from the parking lot into a meadow of big leaf maple. Walk around the sedge meadow looking for grazing deer.
- 2 Past the trailhead, follow the Tumble Falls Trail to access the first of three wooden bridges in the canyon. From the bridge perspective, look at towering maples for signs of chipmunks and red-breasted sapsuckers among other woodpeckers.
- 3 Pause at the Pony Bridge to take in the sights and sounds of Tumble Falls as this clear water cascades down the canyon walls, eventually feeding into Tumble Creek.
- 4 Walk around the sag pond and look onto the water bank for the small, reflective eyes of resting amphibians. On a good day, you can spot the protected red-legged frog or the Pacific chorus frog.
- 5 Just past the Cedar Grove Trail, walk under a canopy of mature red cedars. Look up and around, and listen for bird calls. You might even spot a barred owl.
- 6 This bench lookout sits near the end of the Cedar Grove walking trail. Take a moment to appreciate the dense mixed forest view and the restoration work that nurtured this site back toward health.