

ALSEA FALLS LOOP



The broad shoulders of Marys Peak, the highest point in the Oregon Coast range, form the backdrop for this loop, which takes you from the floodplains of the Marys and Willamette Rivers in Corvallis, south through the valley's largest wildlife refuge where enormous flocks of waterfowl gather in winter. From there you'll climb west into the Coast Range, to look for nesting American Dipper at a scenic waterfall near the headwaters of the Alsea River. After visiting two parks along the Alsea River's route to the Pacific Ocean, you can study the unique flora and fauna of the "sky island" atop Marys Peak. Returning to Corvallis through Philomath, take time to see an innovative site where extensive native wetlands are being restored to compensate for the impacts of development.

Loop sponsorship available

A1. Marys River Natural Area

From Hwy 99W, travel 0.8 mi W on US Hwy 20/Hwy 34. At the light, turn L on Brooklane Dr. Turn L at 1.0 mi onto a gravel lane and turn into small gravel parking area where the boardwalk begins.

This city-owned park is managed for native prairie and riparian habitats along the Marys River. An ADA-accessible 0.35 mi boardwalk with interpretive panels affords views of wet prairie and seasonal floodplain, even in winter when water levels are up. Nesting species include Song, Savannah and White-crowned Sparrows, American Goldfinch, Lazuli Bunting, Common Yellowthroat, Western Bluebird, American Kestrel,

and Red-tailed Hawk. In winter, watch for White-tailed Kite and Northern Harrier. Parking is limited and may be closed by winter flooding.



Sponsor: Audubon Society of Corvallis



Spotted Owl

PHOTO BY: MOLLY MONROE



Hermit Warbler

PHOTO BY:
STEVE DOWLAN

A2. Willamette Park

From downtown Corvallis, head S on Hwy 99W over Marys River Bridge and turn L (E) on Crystal Lake Dr. Follow Crystal Lake 0.5 mi, then turn L on Fischer Ln to reach boat ramp at the N end of park. Or, take Hwy 99W 1 mi farther S, turn L on Goodnight Ave, and travel 0.6 mi to reach S end of park. **Transit:** CTS Bus 6 stops at Goodnight and Greenmore Pl; from there walk E 0.25 mi on Goodnight to S end of park.

Willamette Park is Corvallis' main spring migration hotspot. A 0.75 mi gravel trail winds through the riparian forest with beach access to the Willamette River along the way. Another trail passes through the sports fields and through a restored riparian area recently planted with trees. Both trails continue south along the river. Willamette Park is a good site to listen for Western Screech-Owl, and to watch warbler and vireo flocks in spring migration. Black Phoebe has nested here in recent years. An active heronry is visible across the river from the S end of park.



Sponsor: Audubon Society of Corvallis

A3. Tyee Winery

From Corvallis, go S on Hwy 99W for 7 mi. At the Greenberry Store and grange hall, turn R on Greenberry Rd and go 2.3 mi to the Tyee Wine Cellars entrance on R.

This Century Farm has protected more than half of its 460 ac in the Wetland Reserve Program. A 1.5 mi trail

leads through vineyard, grass fields, hazelnut orchards, native prairie, oak woodland, marsh, and riparian forest, with views of an active beaver pond. Watch for Acorn Woodpecker, Western Bluebird and White-breasted Nuthatch in legacy oaks near the parking area, Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, American Wigeon, and Cinnamon Teal in the marshes, and Cooper's Hawks hunting in the orchards. Look for camas blooming in the wet prairie in spring, and monarch butterflies using milkweed in summer. The trail is open during tasting room hours, which vary by season; be sure to ask for a trail handout that describes the natural and cultural history of the area.



Sponsor: Tyee Winery

A4. William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge – Finley Rd Access

From Corvallis go S on Hwy 99W for 9 mi (2 mi past Greenberry Store) and turn R on Finley Refuge Rd (gravel). Go W 1.3 mi and turn S to enter refuge at the north prairie overlook (GPS 44° 25.445' N, 123° 18.292' W). This road continues SW for 3.5 mi across refuge to Bellfountain Rd. Woodpecker Loop and other trailheads are near W end of road. See Site A5 for additional access to S part of refuge.

This 5,000-ac refuge was established as a sanctuary for wintering Dusky Canada Goose. Over 230 bird species have been recorded on the refuge's varied habitats, which include expansive wetlands, oak savanna, grasslands, upland and riparian forest.

Boardwalks, trails, and observation blinds provide excellent viewing opportunities. The north prairie overlook provides views across a large part of the 400 ac of native wet prairie; look for White-tailed Kite, Short-eared Owl, Northern Harrier, Western Kingbird, Northern Shrike, Western Meadowlark, and Lincoln's, Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows. Farther SW look for Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, and Cinnamon Teal in ponds, and White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Lazuli Bunting and Acorn Woodpecker in the oaks, with an occasional Lewis's Woodpecker. Brushy areas host wintering Varied Thrush and Golden-crowned Sparrow, nesting Swainson's Thrush and Yellow-breasted Chat, and resident Wren-tit. Mammals include Roosevelt elk, river otter, bobcat, and Western gray squirrel. Historic home and farm structures dot the landscape, making a visit to the refuge a complete country experience. From Nov–Mar most wetland trails are closed to protect wintering waterfowl. Birders must stay in cars along roads, but a boardwalk along Muddy Creek ending at a viewing blind overlooking Cabell Marsh allows for winter wetland viewing. Upland trails are open year-round. The refuge is open from sunrise to sunset. Entrance is free. Handicapped accessible restroom facilities are provided at the refuge office.



Sponsor: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Willamette Valley Refuge Complex



White-tailed Kite

A5. William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge – Bruce Rd Access

From intersection of Finley Refuge Rd with Hwy 99W (9 mi S of Corvallis), continue 2.6 mi S and turn R on Bruce Rd at a modern country store, and go W 0.5 mi to gravel parking area for boardwalk trail to viewing blind on McFadden Marsh.

Migratory waterfowl are abundant throughout the refuge, but McFadden's Marsh often holds the largest winter flocks of Northern Pintail, Tundra Swan, and Cackling and Canada Goose, which roost and forage by the thousands. Goose flocks can include Greater White-fronted, Snow, Ross's, and Emperor Goose, or Brant, as rarities. Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon are often around these flocks; also watch for Golden Eagle (occasional), Red-shouldered Hawk, and Barred Owl. In spring look and



Sooty Grouse

PHOTO BY: JOHN MATTHEWS

PHOTO BY: BILL PROEBSTING

listen for American Bittern and Common Yellowthroat. Farther W on Bruce Rd, a wide gravel trail gives seasonal access to the interior of the refuge including Pigeon Butte and Cabell Marsh (closed Nov–Mar), and a hiking trail through riparian habitat leads to Cheadle Marsh. Scan grazed grass fields for American Pipit, Streaked Horned Lark, and Lapland Longspur (rare). In spring, scan the small mitigation wetland W of Cheadle Marsh for Wilson's Phalarope and Yellow-headed Blackbird, along with more common wetland birds. Rough-legged Hawk is regularly seen here in winter.



Sponsor: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Willamette Valley Refuge Complex

A6. Alsea Falls

From Corvallis, take Hwy 99 S for 15 mi. Turn R (W) on County Rd #45120 and drive 5 mi to Alpine Junction. Continue along South Fork Alsea Access Rd (Back Country Byway) 9 mi to Alsea Falls Campground.

The Alsea Falls Campground is representative of Coast Range forest ecology, with old growth Douglas-fir and also unusual plants such as fairyslipper, fawn lily and trillium. Several trails leave from both sides of the South Fork Alsea River. This site is very reliable for American Dipper, which nest near the waterfalls. Also watch and listen for Winter Wren and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Use caution when hopping rocks below the falls and be aware that cougars or black bears could be encountered. The park gate and restrooms are locked from mid-Dec to mid-May. Occasional road closures may occur in winter due to snow and slides.



Sponsorship available

A7. Salmonberry County Park

From the town of Alsea on Hwy 34, travel W for 7 mi to Salmonberry Rd. Salmonberry Park is 0.5 mi down Salmonberry Rd on the L.

Nestled along the Alsea River, this secluded park features a nature trail, boat ramp, picnic area, and restroom



PHOTO BY: STEVE DOWLAN

Northern Pygmy Owl

open year-round. From May 15–Oct 15, it also features a hosted campground with 20 campsites, clean restrooms and coin-operated showers. No reservations are accepted. On the river, watch for Hooded and Common Mergansers, Wood Duck, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, White-tailed Kite, Belted Kingfisher, Varied Thrush, and Yellow, Wilson's, and MacGillivray's Warblers. Chinook salmon migration begins after first rains in September. Also look for beaver and river otter along the river. To canoe the Alsea River, put in at Campbell Park, 2 mi E of Salmonberry Park, and paddle W downstream to Salmonberry Park. Some portage may be required in summer months; be sure to wear life preservers and avoid tree snags in river.



Sponsorship available

A8. Clemens County Park

Located 21 mi SW of Corvallis on Hwy 34. From Corvallis head W 6 mi on US Hwy 20/Hwy 34, just past Philomath. Turn L onto Hwy 34 and head W for 14.2 mi. Turn left onto Seeley Creek Rd. Parking is just past the bridge over the North Fork Alsea River.

The North Fork Trail, which leaves from the parking lot, is a 0.25 mi self-guided interpretive trail that describes the unique ecology of the Coast Range temperate rainforest. Watch for Hooded and Common Mergansers, Wood Duck, Belted Kingfisher, Winter

Wren, and MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers. American Dipper shows up in fall. Trillium are in full bloom in March and April. Chinook salmon migration begins after the first rains in September; also watch for beaver and river otter. This is a very popular steelhead fishing spot during the winter run.



Sponsorship available

A9. Mary's Peak Recreation Area

From Philomath, head W on Main Street (US Hwy 20). At the edge of town, turn L on Hwy 34. Go 8.8 mi and turn R on Mary's Peak Rd. Proceed 9 mi to the main Observation Point parking area. There are several nice hikes on trails, as well as a 0.5 mi gravel road to the summit from the parking area. Mary's Peak Rd is closed at MP 5.5 from Dec 1–March 31, and often longer until the snow is cleared.

At 4,097 ft, this mountain – known as Chintimini to native people of the region – is the highest point in the Coast Range. The summit offers panoramic views of the Willamette Valley, Coast Range, the Cascades, and even the Pacific Ocean. It draws alpine species not found elsewhere in the Willamette Valley, including wintering flocks of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (arriving in Nov), migrant American Pipit and Horned Lark, and occasional Snow Bunting. Mature stands of noble fir and extensive grassy meadows are unique for the central Coast Range. Species that are typical of open forests on the east slope of the Oregon Cascades, such as Clark's Nutcracker and Mountain Chickadee, are found occasionally as vagrants, and some such as Townsend's Solitaire may nest. Resident birds more typical of the Pacific Northwest forests include Mountain Quail, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Gray Jay, and Red Crossbill. In breeding

season these are joined by Hammond's Flycatcher and Hermit Warbler. This is one of Oregon's best sites for Sooty Grouse. "Hooting" season begins in mid- to late-March, peaks in April, and continues into June. Early summer may yield sightings of hens with chicks as they feed along roads. A NW Forest Pass is required for access.



Sponsor: Wild Birds Unlimited of Corvallis

A10. Evergreen Mitigation Bank

From Hwy 34 in downtown Philomath go S on 13th St 0.4 mi. Turn L (E) on Chapel Dr and go 1.6 mi to T intersection with Bellfountain Rd. Turn R on Bellfountain and go S 1.8 mi. After Evergreen Creek crossing, park and view wetlands from one of the three turnouts on W side of road.

This private wetland restoration is set up to compensate for development projects that impacted wetlands elsewhere in the valley. As the native wet-prairie and wetland plantings mature, it has become home to nesting Wilson's Phalarope and several Streaked Horned Lark pairs. Migrant shorebirds use the wetlands in spring, and various songbirds can be heard singing in the restored Oregon ash woods along the creek bottom. The Mitigation Bank is closed to private entry except for annual tours that are offered through local birding lists. However, birders are welcome to view the wetlands from any of the three pullouts. As prairie grasses grow tall in late spring, you may want to bring a stepladder or stand in the back of a vehicle to get a better view over the wetland.



Sponsor: Oregon Wetlands LLC

Varied Thrush
PHOTO BY:
STEVE DOWLAN

