

PORTLAND LOOP



Portland's reputation as a "green" metropolitan area is confirmed by a remarkable array of birding sites, offering a chance to find nearly every species of bird that regularly occurs in the Willamette Valley. From the Willamette River confluence east to the Sandy River Delta, the mighty Columbia River and nearby lakes and wetlands offer you views of loons, grebes, geese and ducks, while open habitats can host kingbirds, shrikes, sparrows and longspurs depending on the season. As you turn south and west, forested remnants of extinct volcanoes rise above the heart of the city, providing sanctuary to migrant flycatchers, vireos, and warblers along with resident forest birds. Returning to the Willamette River at Oaks Bottom, you'll find more waterfowl and shorebirds during migration. West of the river on majestic heights overlooking the Willamette confluence where you started, you can even encounter Red Crossbill, Evening Grosbeak, and other denizens of the Oregon Coast Range.

Loop Sponsor: Port of Portland

P1. Smith-Bybee Lakes Wildlife Area

From Portland, take I-5 N to Exit 307, and follow signs for Marine Dr W. The park entrance is about 1.5 mi down on the L.

Access the wildlife area by the Interlakes Trail (paved). A portable toilet at the trailhead; a parking lot with restrooms is 0.25 mi from the entrance.

The path begins at the park entrance, and runs 0.5 mi through cottonwood forest and riparian brush to two observation blinds. In winter, along with sparrows including Lincoln's and White-throated Sparrows, expect to see many geese and ducks, notably Canvasback, Redhead, and Common Goldeneye, and hundreds of Great Egret that show up as water levels are lowered in fall. Migrant shorebirds use the area in summer and fall.

Spring and summer bring songbirds to the forest, including Red-eyed Vireo. Bald Eagle nest on site. On warm days, you may see Western Painted Turtles basking in the backwaters. Paddling is best in spring and early summer when the water level is still high enough for good access.



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P2. Vanport Wetlands

From Portland, take I-5 to Exit 306B for the Expo Center. Turn L at the bottom of the ramp, go under the freeway, and turn R on Expo Rd. From Vancouver or Hayden Island, take Exit 306 (Interstate Ave), stay in R lane and take another exit for Delta Park / Portland Meadows in 0.25 mi. At the bottom of the ramp, go straight 0.2 mi on Expo Rd and turn L on Broadacre. Small parking areas are on both sides of the road within 0.1 mi, just past the entrance to Portland International Raceway.

This mitigation project comprises about 60 ac of open wetland with hummocks that become islands as water levels drop during summer. The perimeter is fenced and the interior is off-limits, but viewing is possible from the N side of a large off-leash dog field. This is an

excellent site for waterfowl in winter, and southbound shorebirds in late summer, including Black-bellied Plover. Summering ducks include Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal. Many swallows forage over the water in season. Check the wooded edges for warblers, vireos, and tanagers. Yellow-headed Blackbird has nested here. Red-shouldered Hawk appears occasionally, while American Kestrel, Red-tail Hawk, Osprey, and Bald Eagle are expected. Another 0.5 mi NW on Broadacre is Force Lake, a good place to scope for migrant grebes, ducks, and shorebirds.



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P3. Marine Drive

Marine Dr can be reached from Exit 307 off I-5, or by taking the 122nd Ave or 223rd Ave exits N from I-84.

Marine Dr runs along the top of the dike that protects the Portland Airport area from floods. You'll find many places to scan the Columbia River for loons, grebes, and diving ducks, as well as Osprey and Bald Eagle. A paved multi-use path that runs alongside the road. Parking areas all along the way offer many viewing points, but one of the most popular birding destinations is Broughton Beach (3 mi E of I-5, just



Bewick's Wren
PHOTO BY:
STEPHANIE HAZEN

P5. Columbia River Slough

From NE 148th and NE Sandy Blvd go N to Airport Way. Turn R on Airport Way. Watch for green sign, turn R at sign and proceed to small parking lot.

The Columbia River Slough is a nearly 20-mi chain of narrow waterways and ponds that stretches almost continuously from Kelly Point (at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers) to Fairview Lake in Gresham. Restoration efforts by Metro and the City of Portland have restored this urbanized landscape so that it now supports river otters, painted turtles, dragonflies, and more than 170 species of birds. The best season for a paddle trip is late spring, when the woods are buzzing with life and water levels are still high. By mid-summer, water levels drop and aquatic vegetation can make paddling difficult. In addition to the central access point noted above, Metro provides many additional access points, including at Site P4. A canoe launch and trail at 166th and Airport Way, behind the Portland Water Bureau's pumping station, features a pond with waterfowl, and woodlands that host songbirds. If you're inclined and prepared for a longer trek, you can launch at Kelly Point park, at the far W end of Marine Dr (W of P1) from which you can paddle up the slough, or out into the Willamette River.



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P6. Sandy River Delta

From I-84 eastbound near Troutdale, to reach the west bank of delta take Exit 17, turn N at bottom of ramp onto Graham Rd and follow for 1 mi (road curves to W), then turn R on Sundial Rd and continue 0.5 mi. From there walk N along a gravel road to reach the Columbia River. To reach the east bank, take Exit 18 onto ramp that curves back toward W. At bottom of ramp turn N (R) to pass under freeway, and follow frontage road 0.2 mi E to gravel parking area on L, just before the frontage road turns into on-ramp for I-84 westbound. From here walk trails NE into grasslands or follow a causeway that leads N along the Sandy River.



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past Salty's Restaurant). Park in the large gravel lot on the S side of the road, cross, and take the path E. The 1.25 mi walk to the Sea Scout Base passes through a small but productive patch of short-grass habitat on sandy soil, which is a wintertime magnet for American Pipit, Horned Lark, Western Meadowlark, and rarely Snow Bunting or Lapland Longspur. The river here is also good for water birds: five species of grebes have been seen. Short-eared Owl is sometimes seen along the beach or hunting over the airport grounds in the winter. Be alert that traffic along Marine Dr is dangerous, as drivers go fast on the narrow road.



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P4. Whitaker Ponds Natural Area

From I-5, take Exit 306A (Columbia Blvd) and drive E for 3 mi to 47th Ave. Turn L and drive 0.25 mi to the entrance on the R, 7040 NE 47th Ave. If the gate is closed, use the small gravel pullout just before the bridge.

Whitaker Ponds Natural Area is an interesting site for children, with plenty of interpretive signage and educational activities. Two cottonwood and willow-edged ponds along the Columbia Slough host Hooded Merganser, Wood Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe. Belted Kingfisher, Red-tailed Hawk, and Great Blue Heron are commonly seen. Black-capped Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Western Wood-Pewee, and Bewick's Wren nest in the wooded areas. A canoe launch at the NW corner provides paddling access to Columbia Slough (Site P5), although boating is not allowed on Whitaker Ponds.



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The Sandy River Delta, particularly its E side, is a unique area of extensive open habitat near the mouth of the Columbia Gorge. As such, it draws birds that are otherwise hard to find in the northern Willamette Valley. In late spring thru summer look for nesting Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lazuli Bunting and Bullock's Oriole. Eastern Kingbirds reach the western limit of their documented breeding range on the E side of the delta. Many intermontane-region vagrants such as Sage Thrasher and Mountain Bluebird have been found. The delta also includes access to reclaimed wetlands which now host Sora and Virginia Rail, Cinnamon Teal, and Solitary Sandpiper (in migration). In winter, look for Northern Shrike and check sparrow flocks for rarities such as Harris's Sparrow. River views at the ends of the trails are good for loons, grebes, and diving ducks in winter. A unique elliptical bird blind designed by Maya Lin can be reached via a 1.2 mi trail from the parking area.



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P7. Salish Ponds Wetland Park

From I-84, take Exit 14. Drive 0.9 mi S on 207th Ave/Fairview Pkwy to Glisan St. Turn R, and then almost immediately turn R into the parking lot of the Lodges at Lake Salishan apartment complex. There is reserved parking for park visitors here.



Common Goldeneye



Chestnut-backed Chickadee

PHOTO BY: GLEN LINDEMAN

A wide gravel path takes you around two small lakes surrounded by willows and some cattails, with a second path continuing N through a grassy meadow and ash woods. The ponds host waterfowl year round; in spring warblers abound in the willows. The meadow hosts sparrows, and the woods are good for thrushes, wrens and vireos. Osprey often dive into the small ponds to take stocked trout. Restrooms are located across the lake from the parking area.



Sponsorship available

P8. Powell Butte Nature Park

From E Powell Blvd, between Portland and Gresham, turn S on 162nd Ave and drive 0.5 mi up the short, steep road to the gravel parking area.

A large system of trails covers this 600-ac volcanic butte, looping through scrub/savanna on the top, to

PHOTO BY: RIE LUFT



Common Loon

PHOTO BY: KEVIN SMITH

dark forested flanks that host species for the novice and advanced birder alike. Specialty birds include nesting Lazuli Bunting and Western Kingbird in summer, Short-eared Owl in winter, and a variety of raptors in all seasons. The summit, 350 ft above the surrounding city, can be reached via a 0.75 mi paved trail from the parking area.



Sponsorship available

P9. Mt. Tabor Park

From US Hwy 26 (Powell Blvd) 0.7 mi W of I-205, turn R on Hwy 213 (SE 82). Go N 0.5 mi, then L (W) on Division St for 1.1 mi. Turn R (N) on SE 60th Ave and go 0.6 mi. Turn R (E) and go 0.1 mi to park entrance gate. Continuing uphill 0.6 mi through a R bend and sharp L switchback, park at amphitheater and basketball courts or continue 0.2 mi farther to a smaller parking lot and gate. To reach the summit from here either walk up paved road or take steps that ascend to R about 50 yards beyond gate.

Mt. Tabor, another volcanic butte, is one of the best places in the Portland area to view large flocks of mixed warblers, vireos, and flycatchers during spring migration in late April and May. Breeding species include Band-tailed Pigeon, Hutton's Vireo, and Lesser Goldfinch can be found around patches of mixed forest. Common migrants include Rufous Hummingbird, Pacific-slope, Hammond's, and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Orange-crowned, Black-throated Gray, Nashville, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers, Cassin's Vireo, and Swainson's Thrush. Rare but annual migrants include Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit Warbler, and Chipping Sparrow. Winter residents include Townsend's Warbler, Varied and Hermit Thrushes, and Sooty Fox and Golden-crowned Sparrows. Park hours are 5 AM to midnight. The park is closed to motor vehicles on Wednesdays, and from 10 PM to 5 AM all other days.



Sponsor: Audubon Society of Portland and Friends of Mt. Tabor

P10. Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge

North entrance: From US Hwy 26 (Powell Blvd) at E end of Ross Island Bridge, exit onto Hwy 99E southbound. Go 1.2 mi S and exit onto SE Milwaukie Ave. At top of off-ramp, bear R. After 100 yds, turn into parking lot on R. A gravel trail on the S side of lot leads into the wildlife refuge.

South entrances: Alternative access points are at SE 7th Ave & SE Sellwood



Horned Grebe

PHOTO BY: KEVIN SMITH

Blvd (Sellwood Park) and at the N end of SE Oaks Park Way, from the E end of Sellwood Bridge (Tacoma St).

This 140-ac floodplain wetland is on the E bank of the Willamette River in the heart of Portland. Common residents include Red-breasted Sapsucker, Bewick's and Winter Wrens, Hutton's Vireo, and Western Scrub-Jay. In winter, watch for Varied and Hermit Thrushes, Sooty Fox and Golden-crowned Sparrows. Pacific-slope Flycatcher and Osprey nest on-site. The Refuge also hosts warbler and flycatcher flocks during migration. Fall migrants include Semipalmated Plover and American Pipit. Bald Eagle nests on islands nearby. Restrooms are available in Sellwood Park, a short walk from the parking lot at the southern entrance.



Sponsor: Audubon Society of Portland

P11. Pittock Mansion

The Pittock Mansion is located 2 mi W of downtown Portland. Traveling W on Burnside, 0.6 mi past the intersection with NW Macleay Blvd, turn R onto NW Barnes Rd. Go 0.1 mi, then turn R on NW Pittock Ave. After 0.2 mi turn R on NW Pittock Dr and go 0.3 mi to reach the mansion grounds. GPS 45° 31.443' N, 122° 45.678' W

The Pittock Mansion, a stately house built in 1912 with a commanding view of Portland, Cascade peaks, and the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers, was home to

Portland pioneers Henry and Georgiana Pittock. The 46-ac grounds in the hills of W Portland are part of the Portland park system, and have second-growth mixed forest as well as ornamental plantings. The grounds are open daily from 5 AM to 9 PM. In winter, watch for Varied Thrush, Red Crossbill, and Pine Siskin. In summer, Vaux's Swift can often be seen overhead. Red-breasted Sapsucker, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Black-headed Grosbeak nest in the area. Hutton's Vireo, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and Bushtit are resident. The site is also outstanding for migrant songbirds. On weekends the Mansion can be busy with visitors, so it's best to get there early. A fee is charged for admission to the mansion, but entrance to the park is free. The Audubon Sanctuary (Site C1, Columbia Loop) is within walking distance.



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Eastern Kingbird

PHOTO BY: KEVIN SMITH



Townsend's Warbler

PHOTO BY: STEVE DOWLAN