

= Forest Park ( Portland , Oregon ) =

Forest Park is a public municipal park in the Tualatin Mountains west of downtown Portland , Oregon , United States . Stretching for more than 8 miles ( 13 km ) on hillsides overlooking the Willamette River , it is one of the country 's largest urban forest reserves . The park , a major component of a regional system of parks and trails , covers more than 5 000 acres ( 2 064 ha ) of mostly second growth forest with a few patches of old growth . About 70 miles ( 110 km ) of recreational trails , including the Wildwood Trail segment of the city 's 40 Mile Loop system , crisscross the park .

As early as the 1860s , civic leaders sought to create a natural preserve in the woods near Portland . Their efforts led to the creation of a municipal park commission that in 1903 hired the Olmsted Brothers landscape architectural firm to develop a plan for Portland 's parks . Acquiring land through donations , transfers from Multnomah County , and delinquent tax foreclosures , the city eventually acted on a proposal by the City Club of Portland and combined parcels totaling about 4 000 acres ( 1 600 ha ) to create the reserve . Formally dedicated in 1948 , it ranks 19th in size among parks within U.S. cities , according to The Trust for Public Land .

More than 112 bird species and 62 mammal species frequent the park and its wide variety of trees and shade loving plants . About 40 inches ( 1 000 mm ) of rain falls on the forest each year . Many small tributaries of the Willamette River flow northeast through the woods to pipes or culverts under U.S. Route 30 at the edge of the park . One of them , Balch Creek , has a resident trout population , and another , Miller Creek , supports sea run species , including salmon .

Threats to the park include overuse , urban traffic , encroaching development , invasive flora , and lack of maintenance money . Occasional serious crimes and more frequent minor crimes occur in the park .

= = Geology and geography = =

Solidified lava from Grande Ronde members of the Columbia River Basalt Group underlie Forest Park . About 16 million years ago during the Middle Miocene , the Columbia River ran through a lowland south of its modern channel . Eruptions from linear vents in eastern Oregon and Washington flowed down this channel through what later became the Willamette Valley . These flows , some of which reached the Pacific Ocean , recurred at intervals between 16 5 and 15 6 million years ago and covered almost 60 000 square miles ( 160 000 km<sup>2</sup> ) . About eight separate Grande Ronde Basalt flows have been mapped in the Tualatin Mountains ( West Hills ) , where they underlie the steepest slopes of Forest Park and form the columned rocks visible along Balch Creek Canyon and Northwest Cornell Road . The West Hills were later covered by wind deposited silts that become unstable when saturated with water . Stream bank instability and siltation are common , and landslides deter urban development at higher elevations .

Roughly 8 miles ( 13 km ) long , the park is less than 1 mile ( 1 6 km ) wide near downtown Portland and about 2 miles ( 3 2 km ) wide at its northwestern end . It extends along the West Hills from West Burnside Street near downtown Portland to where the Willamette River divides to flow around Sauvie Island . Covering most of the east face of the ridge above the Willamette River , it is bounded by West Burnside Street on the south , Northwest Skyline Boulevard on the west , Northwest Newberry Road on the north , and Northwest St. Helens Road ( U.S. Route 30 ) on the east . Elevations above sea level vary from 50 feet ( 15 m ) near U.S. Route 30 at the base of the ridge to about 1 100 feet ( 340 m ) near the crest of the ridge along Northwest Skyline Boulevard .

In 2008 Forest Park ranked 19th in size among the largest city parks in the United States , according to The Trust for Public Land . The trust 's list included state parks , national parks , county parks , regional parks , and national wildlife refuges , as well as municipally owned parks located within cities . Chugach State Park in Anchorage , Alaska , was in first place with 490 125 acres ( 1 983 km<sup>2</sup> ) .

Portland author Marcy Houle says that the park " captures the essence of what is natural and wild

and beautiful about the Northwest ... From this forest sanctuary , panoramic views of the city of Portland , the Willamette and Columbia rivers , and five major peaks of the Cascade Range ... can be seen through the tall fir trees . From its inception ... , Forest Park has been a refuge for both people and wildlife , and an integral part of the environment of Portland . "

= = History = =

Before settlers arrived , the land that became known as Forest Park was covered by a Douglas fir forest . By 1851 , its acreage had been divided into donation land claims filed by settlers with plans to clear the forest and build upon the property . After logging , the steep slopes and unstable silt loosened by heavy rains caused landslides that defeated construction plans , and claims were defaulted or donated to the city .

Civic leaders beginning with the Reverend Thomas Lamb Eliot , a minister who moved to Portland in 1867 , sought to create a natural preserve in the woods that eventually became Forest Park . By 1899 , Eliot 's efforts led to the formation of the Municipal Park Commission of Portland , which in 1903 hired the highly regarded landscape architecture firm , the Olmsted Brothers of Brookline , Massachusetts , to study the city 's park system and recommend a plan . John Charles Olmsted , the stepson of Frederick Law Olmsted , spent May 1903 in Portland . The Olmsted Report , received in December , emphasized creation of a system of parks and linking parkways that would take advantage of natural scenery . It proposed a formal square for Union Station , squares along the downtown waterfront , and parks in places later known as Forest Park , Sellwood Park , Mount Tabor Park , Rocky Butte , and Ross Island , as well as Terwilliger Parkway , the 40 Mile Loop , and other connecting parkways . Proposed parks for Swan Island , in the Willamette River , and other places in Portland did not develop . Others like Forest Park came into being only many years later .

The city acquired land for Forest Park bit by bit over several decades . In 1897 , Donald Macleay , a Portland merchant and real estate developer , deeded a 108 acre ( 44 ha ) tract of land along Balch Creek to the city to provide an outdoor space for patients from nearby hospitals . In the 1890s , Frederick Van Voorhies Holman , a Portland lawyer and a president of the Oregon Historical Society , proposed a gift of 52 acres ( 21 ha ) of nearby land that was added to the city 's holdings in 1939 when his siblings , George F. and Mary Holman , completed the donation . Clark and Wilson Timber Company donated 17 acres ( 6 .9 ha ) in 1927 to create a Western Oregon timber park near Northwest Germantown Road . Nine years later , the estate of Aaron Meier , one of the founders of the Meier & Frank chain of department stores , donated land for Linnton Park near Portland 's Linnton neighborhood along Highway 30 . These smaller parks became part of the larger park when it was finally created . Some of them , such as Macleay Park , are still referred to by their original names even though they are part of Forest Park .

Other parcels were acquired through government action . In 1928 , the City Council 's Delinquent Tax Committee transferred land to the Parks Bureau for a wildflower garden along Balch Creek . Multnomah County in that year gave the bureau perpetual use of about 145 acres ( 59 ha ) of land north of Washington Park . Encouraged by the City Club of Portland , which conducted a park feasibility study in 1945 , civic leaders supported the Forest Park project . In 1948 , Multnomah County transferred to the city another 2 ,000 acres ( 810 ha ) acquired through delinquent tax foreclosures . On September 23 , 1948 , the city formally dedicated 4 ,200 acres ( 17 km<sup>2</sup> ) of land as Forest Park , which as of 2009 covered more than 5 ,100 acres ( 21 km<sup>2</sup> ) . It is one of the largest urban forest reserves in the U.S , though its exact ranking has been questioned . The city 's Parks and Recreation Department claims it is the " largest forested natural area within city limits in the United States " . However , an article in the Portland Tribune said Forest Park ranked no higher than third among U.S. urban forests in 2006 .

In 1991 , Metro , the regional governmental agency for the Oregon portion of the Portland metropolitan area , began budgeting for what became its Natural Areas Program aimed at protecting these areas in Multnomah , Washington , and Clackamas counties . By 1995 , the program had targeted 320 acres ( 130 ha ) next to or within Forest Park for acquisition . A 2006 bond measure allowed for the purchase of more land to expand the park , to protect its creeks ' headwaters and

those of nearby streams in Washington County , and to link Forest Park to other public lands to the northwest .

= = Recreational network = =

Forest Park is a major component of a regional network of parks , trails , and natural areas managed by Metro . At the southeastern end of the park , Wildwood Trail , the centerpiece of the Forest Park trail system , passes through Macleay Park . This part of the larger park , which includes the Forest Park field headquarters , is heavily used by pedestrians entering Balch Creek Canyon from nearby city streets . Further southeast , Wildwood Trail , while still in Forest Park , passes Pittock Mansion and its panoramic views of Portland and five volcanic peaks : Mounts Rainier , Adams , St. Helens , Hood , and Jefferson . Shortly thereafter , the trail connects to adjoining Washington Park and attractions such as the Oregon Zoo . From this point and from more remote Forest Park trailheads near the St. Johns Bridge , other components of the 40 Mile Loop system of trails encircle the city . They follow the Willamette and Columbia rivers , the Columbia Slough and the Springwater Corridor along Johnson Creek and extend to the eastern suburbs of Fairview , Gresham and Boring . This trail network links more than 30 separate parks that offer diverse recreational opportunities , such as horse @-@ back riding , in @-@ line skating , canoeing , and viewing of wetland wildlife , in addition to hiking and biking . It connects to other trail systems such as Discovery Trail in Clark County , Washington , and the Terwilliger Trail running through Tryon Creek State Natural Area to Lake Oswego .

As of 2015 , this network of parks and trails is still expanding . Metro , the regional government , plans to link the 40 Mile Loop to trails along the Willamette River to Wilsonville , south of Lake Oswego . The regional government has also proposed connecting Wildwood Trail to the partly completed Westside Trail running north ? south through Washington County to the Tualatin River . Another planned trail would extend the Springwater Corridor along a proposed Cazadero Trail to Barton on the Clackamas River . Longer @-@ term goals include trail links to the Sandy River Gorge Trail east of Gresham and the Pacific Crest Trail , which runs from Mexico to Canada and follows the Cascade Range through Oregon .

= = = Wildwood Trail = = =

More than 70 miles ( 110 km ) of trails and firelanes cut through the park . The longest trail in the park is the Wildwood Trail , of which about 27 miles ( 43 km ) is in Forest Park and about 3 miles ( 4 @.@ 8 km ) in Washington Park . It is also the longest section of the 40 Mile Loop , a trail network of roughly 150 miles ( 240 km ) reaching many parts of the Portland metropolitan area . The trail runs southeast to northwest from trail marker 0 in Washington Park to Northwest Newberry Road , just beyond trail marker 30 on the ridge above the southeastern end of Sauvie Island . The straight @-@ line distance from beginning to end is about 9 miles ( 14 km ) , but because the trail includes many switchbacks and hairpin turns , it is 30 @.@ 2 miles ( 48 @.@ 6 km ) long .

Wildwood Trail begins in Washington Park near the Oregon Zoo , a light rail stop , the Oregon Vietnam Veterans Memorial , the World Forestry Center and the Hoyt Arboretum . Blue diamonds placed about 6 feet ( 1 @.@ 8 m ) above the ground appear on trees along the trail every 0 @.@ 25 miles ( 0 @.@ 40 km ) . The diamonds and the mileage markers above them are visible to hikers traveling in either direction on the path . In its first 5 miles ( 8 @.@ 0 km ) , the trail passes near the Portland Japanese Garden , Pittock Mansion , the Audubon Society of Portland wildlife sanctuary , and the Stone House in Balch Creek Canyon . From this point west , Wildwood Trail runs through forest generally uninterrupted by buildings but crisscrossed by shorter trails , small streams , roads , and firelanes .

= = = Other paths , streets , easements = = =

Many shorter Forest Park trails , roads , and firelanes intersect the Wildwood Trail . Most of the

trails are open only to hikers and runners , but several roads and firelanes are open to bicycles or horses or both . Leif Erickson Drive , a road closed to motorized traffic , runs at lower elevation than and roughly parallel to the Wildwood Trail for about 11 miles ( 18 km ) from the end of Northwest Thurman Street to Northwest Germantown Road . Originally called Hillside Drive , it was renamed in 1933 at the request of the Sons of Norway , a fraternal organization . Easements for an oil line , a gas line , and electric transmission lines for the Bonneville Power Administration ( BPA ) cross the park . Paved roads surround the park , which is crossed or entered by other roads including Northwest Pittcock Drive , Northwest Cornell Road , Northwest 53rd Drive , Northwest Saltzman Road , Northwest Springville Road , Northwest Germantown Road , Northwest Newton Road , and BPA Road .

#### = = Vegetation = =

Forest Park lies in the Coast Range ecoregion designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ( EPA ) . In its natural state , the forest consists mainly of three tree species , Douglas @-@ fir , western hemlock , and western red cedar , and smaller numbers of grand fir , black cottonwood , red alder , bigleaf maple , madrone , and western yew . Much of the forest that existed here before 1850 was gone by 1940 . The stage of re @-@ growth in the forest depends on when it was last logged or burned .

In the mid @-@ 1990s , about one percent of the total vegetation in the park consisted of grasses , bracken , thistle , and fireweed in sections of the forest cleared two to five years earlier . Another two percent had reached the shrub stage , between three and thirty years old , with small trees dominated by such plants as thimbleberry , salmonberry , and blackberry . Forest areas 10 to 30 years old that contained tall alder and maple trees and smaller conifers accounted for about 20 percent of the park .

Larger areas were occupied by forests in which conifers had grown taller than the alders and maples . About 50 percent of Forest Park consists of these areas , which are between 30 and 80 years old and in which Douglas @-@ firs have begun to dominate . Another 25 percent of the park contains forests dominated by middle @-@ aged conifers , 80 to 250 years old . In these areas , red alders , which live for about 100 years , have begun to die , and the Douglas @-@ firs , which can live for 750 years , attain heights up to about 240 feet ( 73 m ) . Under the big trees are shade @-@ tolerant trees such as western red cedar , western hemlock , and grand fir and smaller plants such as Oregon @-@ grape , vine maple , and salal .

The last forest stage , old growth , is reached after 250 years and includes many snags , downed and dead trees , and fallen logs . Timber @-@ cutting and fires reduced old growth in Forest Park to " almost nothing " by 1940 , and most of the forest has not yet attained this stage . Patches exist near Macleay Park and further west near Germantown Road and Newton Road . The largest tree in Forest Park is a Douglas @-@ fir near the Stone House , the remains of a former public restroom near Balch Creek . It is 242 feet ( 74 m ) high , and the trunk is 18 @-@ 6 feet ( 5 @-@ 7 m ) in circumference .

Among the prominent wildflowers are Hooker 's fairy bells , vanilla leaf , evergreen violet , and trillium . Invasive species include English ivy , European holly , clematis , morning glory , and Himalayan blackberry . Citizen groups such as the No Ivy League. and The Forest Park Conservancy engage in projects to remove ivy , maintain trails , and plant native species .

#### = = Wildlife = =

Wildlife in Forest Park is strongly affected by contiguous tracts of nearby habitat that make the park accessible to birds and animals from the Tualatin River valley , the Oregon Coast Range , the Willamette River , Sauvie Island , the Columbia River , and the Vancouver , Washington , lowlands . Sixty @-@ two mammal species , including the northern flying squirrel , black @-@ tailed deer , creeping vole , bobcat , coyote , Mazama pocket gopher , little brown bat , Roosevelt elk , and Pacific jumping mouse frequent Forest Park . Blue grouse , great horned owl , hairy woodpecker ,

Bewick 's wren , orange @-@ crowned warbler , osprey , northern pygmy @-@ owl , and hermit thrush are among the more than 112 species of birds that have been observed in the park . In Balch Creek Canyon adjacent to Forest Park , the Audubon Society of Portland maintains a wildlife sanctuary with more than 4 miles ( 6 @.@ 4 km ) of trails , a wildlife care center , and avian exhibits . Amphibian species frequenting the Audubon Society pond include rough @-@ skinned newts , Pacific tree frogs , and salamanders .

Pressure from habitat loss , pollution , hunting , and urban development has reduced or eliminated the presence of wolves , bears , and wild cats and has led to increased numbers of weasels , raccoons , and other small predators . Invasive plant species such as English ivy have made the habitat simpler and less supportive of native insects and the salamanders and other amphibians that feed on them . Roads in the area severely hamper the movement of large animals . Multnomah County has designated Northwest Cornell Road and Northwest Germantown Road as " rural collector " streets , carrying traffic of less than 3 @.@ 000 vehicles per day but more than streets designated as " local roads " . Dogs allowed to run ( illegally ) off @-@ leash in the park pose threats to birds , fish , and other wildlife .

= = Creeks = =

About 40 inches ( 1 @.@ 000 mm ) of rain falls on Forest Park each year . Many small creeks , only a few of which are named , flow northeast through the park from the ridge at the top of the West Hills to the base of the hills near U.S. Route 30 . The five named streams from east to west are Balch Creek , Rocking Chair Creek , Saltzman Creek , Doane Creek , and Miller Creek . Rocking Chair Creek is a tributary of Saltzman Creek . After leaving the park , the streams pass through culverts and other conduits before reaching the Willamette River . These conduits block fish migration to and from the Willamette River except on Miller Creek , where the conduits are short and have been modified to assist the fish .

Near the east end of the park , the free @-@ flowing reaches of Balch Creek support a population of resident cutthroat trout . Near the west end , furthest from the city center , Miller Creek retains much of its historic nature and supports a greater diversity of aquatic organisms than other Forest Park streams . Biological field surveys of Miller Creek in 1990 noted sea @-@ run cutthroat trout , coho salmon , and short @-@ head cottid , as well as abundant macroinvertebrate species including stoneflies , mayflies , caddisflies , water striders , and crayfish .

= = Crime and other trouble = =

Multiple crimes have occurred in Forest Park , including two murders . In 2001 , a man who preyed on heroin addicts and prostitutes pleaded guilty to the 1999 murder of three women whose bodies were found in Forest Park near Northwest Saltzman Road , though forensic analysis showed the murders took place elsewhere and the bodies were brought to Forest Park . In 2003 , jurors convicted another man of the 1996 murder of his ex @-@ girlfriend on a Forest Park trail . Less serious crimes have included assault ( rarely ) , car break @-@ ins and petty theft ( frequently at trail heads ) , rare arsons , rare indecent exposure , and marijuana cultivation . Multnomah County Sheriff 's deputies in 2007 seized 114 mature marijuana plants found growing in the park on a hillside near Portland 's Linnton neighborhood . Deputies had seized another small grow operation in the park in 2005 . More common has been illegal camping by homeless transients and others . An illegal bicycling trail , about 1 mile ( 1 @.@ 6 km ) long , was discovered in a remote part of the park in February 2010 . In 2014 , hikers found a booby trap meant to fire a shotgun shell across a path leading to the park . Portland police removed the device .

In 2004 , authorities found a 53 @-@ year @-@ old man and his 12 @-@ year @-@ old daughter living in the park in a tarp @-@ covered structure stocked with encyclopedias for homeschooling . They told police they had been living in the park for four years . My Abandonment , a novel by Peter Rock , tells a story built around the incident .

In 1951 , a drought @-@ related blaze started by a campfire burned 1 @.@ 600 acres ( 650 ha )

near the western end of the park . In 2005 , a reporter for The Oregonian newspaper interviewed biologists , conservationists , Parks and Recreation officials , and others about the health of Forest Park and its future prospects . Collectively they identified threats to the park : urban development that restricts the movement of wild animals and birds ; overuse ; invasive plants ; loose dogs ; fire risk ; increasing rates of tree death ; lack of rule enforcement , and lack of money . In 2010 , the city hired a full @-@ time ranger assigned to Forest Park .