

Smith and Bybee Wetlands

FIELD GUIDE

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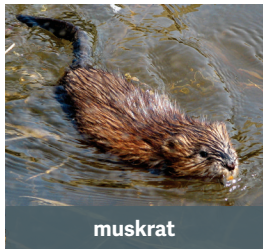
Smith and Bybee Wetlands is a big surprise to many first-time visitors. Passing warehouses and railroad tracks in North Portland, you don't expect to find two seasonal lakes bursting with trees, plants and animals. But this 2,000-acre natural area provides some of greater Portland's best wildlife viewing.

Your first big choice: whether to explore by foot or boat. The Interlakes Trail passes along huge cottonwoods, alders, willows and grasslands, to several spots with great views of the natural area's two namesake lakes. This mixture of habitats provides homes for many kinds of wildlife, especially birds.

From mid-April through late June, see the lakes up-close by paddling a kayak or canoe. Start from the boat launch on Smith Lake. Paddling west through the channel that leads to Bybee Lake gives you a front-row view of many mammals. In late summer and fall, watch for hearty leaves of wapato on the mudflats. Wapato is an important first food to indigenous people.

You'll find something exciting no matter when you visit. Discover basking turtles in the spring, creepy-crawly insects in the summer, migrating birds in the fall and soaring raptors in the winter. You can nearly always spot muskrats, beavers, black-tailed deer, raccoons, cottontail rabbits, river otters, minks, long-tailed weasels or coyotes.

Be on the lookout!





Season-by-season highlights

Winter: From the Interlakes Trail, you can look right through the trees and see the lakes – an opportunity to spot mammals and big, perched birds. This is the best time to see bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and other raptors. By February, male Pacific chorus frogs call for mates in big gatherings at the edge of the water. If snow sticks, you might be lucky enough to see rabbit, deer or coyote tracks.

Spring: Explore by kayak or canoe for an up-close look at lush scenery and abundant wildlife. Many migrating birds pass through, and 35 species of songbirds nest here. Watch for western painted turtles basking in the sun on floating logs. Smith and Bybee has one of the biggest populations in Oregon. For reliable views, visit “Turtle Turnout,” a wooden railing overlooking the slough on the right side of the Interlakes Trail. Look for Pacific chorus frog tadpoles in the

water, and garter snakes sunbathing on logs or along the trail.

SUMMER: July and August are quiet as birds eat, hide, molt and grow to survive the coming seasons. Mammals cruise around near sunset looking for food, but they’re the hardest animals to spot; they can sense people, especially if we’re talking! One group of animals that’s pretty obvious: insects and spiders. Spider webs laced with cottonwood seeds nearly cover the trees, creating a “haunted forest.”

FALL: Migrating birds leave with their young, while thousands of ducks that nested in the Arctic arrive for the winter and feast on water plants loaded with seeds. Shorebirds, like killdeer and sandpipers, fill up on food while they head south. Look for black and orange caterpillars called “wooly bears,” which drop to the ground and dig a place to hibernate until spring.

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area

5300 N. Marine Drive
Portland, OR 97217

Getting there

Take Interstate 5 north to exit 307, Delta Park/Marine Drive. Head west 2.2 miles on North Marine Drive and look for Smith and Bybee on your left. Or take TriMet bus line 11 to the 5300 block of North Marine Drive, which stops at the park entrance.

Know when you go

Smith and Bybee is open sunrise to sunset. No bikes or dogs, please.

Amenities

A picnic shelter, bathrooms, bike rack, seasonal drinking fountain and site map can all be found in the parking area. The Interlakes Trail is paved, flat and wheelchair-accessible.

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