

DISCOVERY PARK NEWS

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SEATTLE PARKS
AND RECREATION

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Great blue herons nesting in tall trees in Kiwanis Ravine, above the Lake Washington Ship Canal (Photo ©Marilyn Sandall).

Kiwanis Ravine Great Blue Herons Return

By Pam Cahn, Heron Monitor

During the minus tides of spring and summer, dozens of great blue herons feed along the shorelines of Magnolia and nest in tall trees along Kiwanis Ravine, which lies above the Lake Washington Ship Canal between the Ballard Locks and **Discovery Park**. The heron colony has nested there for decades, and recently it has been growing, from 37 nests in 2000 to around 80 nests in 2009.

Colony size is dynamic, however, influenced by nesting habitat, food resources, predators, and human disturbance. Several earlier generations of herons were able to raise their young without the threat of bald eagles, who are themselves rebounding from

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Great Blue Herons

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the adverse effects of DDT and who increasingly predate on heron eggs and nestlings. Herons in some other Puget Sound–area colonies are coexisting with eagles, though not always peacefully. The local Heron Habitat Helpers group is using two cameras mounted at nest height within Kiwanis Ravine to observe how this colony adapts.

Hérons return to Kiwanis Ravine in February and March, displaying ritual courtship behaviors, choosing mates, remodeling old nests or building new ones, and eventually laying three to five eggs. The herons typically incubate eggs for a month (in April) and feed young in the nest for two months. Adult herons take turns incubating the eggs, and both parents feed the young in the nest.

Click here to see the heron nests up close through the [Kiwanis Ravine heroncams](#), installed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. To learn more about the herons or help with habitat restoration, see the [Heron Habitat Helpers'](#) Web site.

Volunteer Opportunities: Trail Maintenance

By Becca Fong, ELC Grounds Supervisor

The trails system is the main way the public experiences the varied terrain, ecosystems, wildlife, and historic elements of **Discovery Park**. The system has several components: The Loop Trail is the primary arterial, but secondary trails such as the South Bluff Trail and the interpretive Wolf Tree Nature Trail provide access to



Jogging the Loop Trail.

scenery and educational experiences. Other primitive or social trails, often created to provide access to remote locations by park users and not part of the maintained trail system, can cause negative impact by creating erosion and access for illicit activity, and by damaging plant and wildlife habitat.

With such an extensive network of trails, keeping them in good condition is a huge task, and one that in recent years has become more difficult due to limited financial resources, increasing park usage, and a short repair season. The park's grounds and maintenance crew must prioritize maintenance and care of the trails, taking into account level of use, accessibility for maintenance activities, and the scope of maintenance and repairs required. The crew is committed to using the most efficient, durable, and sustainable methods, which means waiting until the dry season to make trail repairs and making them with minimum impact to the area surrounding the trail bed.

Currently the aging trails system needs some major repairs and lots of regular maintenance. The park's grounds crew is working to maintain access to the remote, wild, and tranquil places in **Discovery Park** for present and future users, but additional volunteer help is always needed. **To get involved, call 386-4295.**

Spring Events at Discovery Park

The Environmental Learning Programs spring brochure lists programs at all Seattle Environmental Learning Centers. Pick up one up at any ELC, or view it online at www.seattle.gov/parks. (To see **Discovery Park** programs, click on Environmental Learning, then **Discovery Park**.) To register for programs online, click on the SPARC icon ([SPARC: Seattle Parks and Recreation Connection](#)) on the parks link above. Please note that unless otherwise specified, children must be accompanied by an adult.

Bird-Watching Programs

Bird Tours – Ages 8 and Older

Join experienced leaders and explore for migrants and year-round residents within **Discovery Park's** many habitats. Please dress for the weather and bring binoculars if you have them. All tours are held 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Free.

April 10 Course Code 53024

April 24 Course Code 53026

May 22 Course Code 53027

Birding Basics – Ages 6 and Older

Explore several **Discovery Park** habitats, looking at birds and learning how to spot them. Learn how to use basic bird-watching tools such as binoculars, field guides, and spotting scopes. Beginning birders and families are welcome and encouraged along with more experienced birders who want to develop their birding skills. Please dress for the weather and bring binoculars if you have them. Also, please be prepared to walk at least a mile and a half. Use Course Code 53028 to register on SPARC. \$8 per adult. \$6 per child.



Saturday, April 10 2 p.m.–4 p.m.

International Migratory Bird Day Bird Tours – Ages 8 and Older

Celebrate the return of our feathered friends. Each spring swallows, tanagers, warblers, and many other species make an arduous return flight to the Pacific Northwest. Many of these spectacular birds consider **Discovery Park** their summer home. Join an experienced birder on this search for migrants. Free.

Saturday, May 8 Course Code 53030 7 a.m.–9 a.m.

Saturday, May 8 Course Code 53031 8 a.m.–10 a.m.

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Spring Events at Discovery Park

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International Migratory Bird Day Family Bird Tour – Ages 6 and Older

Celebrate the return of the migratory birds! Explore several habitats in **Discovery Park** looking at birds and learning how to spot them. Use Course Code 53033 to register on SPARC. Free.

Saturday, May 8 2 p.m.–4 p.m.

Birding by Ear – Migrants – Ages 8 and Older

The neotropical migrants have returned to **Discovery Park** full of song. Eavesdrop on these warblers, tanagers, and flycatchers and learn to identify migrant birds by listening to their songs, calls, and flight notes. Birding by Ear Basics class is recommended prior to taking this advanced program. Use Course Code 53029 to register on SPARC. \$8 per person.

Saturday, May 15 7 a.m.–11 a.m.

Urban Nest Tour –Ages 8 and Older

Explore several neighborhoods of Seattle that are nesting places for fascinating birds like peregrine falcons, purple martins, and bald eagles. This van-based tour includes stops at several places with short hikes to viewing areas, a bakery/hot drink stop along the way, and a stop to eat your brown bag lunch. Rain gear, layers of warm clothes and binoculars are suggested. Families and beginning birders are encouraged. Meet at the Environmental Learning Center in **Discovery Park**. Use Course Code 53034 to register on SPARC. \$15 per person.

Saturday, May 22 7:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Swallows of Discovery Park- Ages 8 and Older

Learn about these birds and their “fast food” habits. What kind of food are they eating? How does this affect humans? How can you identify the different types of swallows and where will you usually find them? Please bring binoculars and be prepared to walk. Use Course Code 53093 to register on SPARC. Free.

Saturday, May 22 2 p.m.–4 p.m.

Tide Programs

Family Low Tide Beach Walks- Ages 3 and Older

Explore the intertidal world of sea stars, moon snails, and sea anemones on sandy South Beach with a **Discovery Park** naturalist. Perfect for families with small children. Free.

Saturday, April 17 Course Code 53565 12 p.m.–2 p.m.

Sunday, May 2 Course Code 53085 12:30 p.m.–2:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 15 Course Code 53086 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 26 Course Code 53087 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

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Spring Events at Discovery Park

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Exploring the Beach at Low Tide – Ages 6 and Older

Enjoy some of the best low tides of the season! Learn how different plants and animals survive low tides and search for moon snails, crabs, sea anemones, and more! Due to the long walk and rocky beach, this program is best suited to ages 6 and up. Please dress for the weather and be sure to wear shoes that can get wet. Free.

Saturday, May 15 Course Code 53080

11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Saturday, June 12 Course Code 53081

10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Sunday, June 13 Course Code 53082 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Saturday, June 26 Course Code 53083 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.



Discover treasures from the sea on low-tide walks.

Nature at Night

Full Moon Trek – Ages 8 and Older

In honor of Save the Frogs Day, we'll walk to some ponds after dark to look for evidence of local amphibians. What will we find in the light of the moon? Explore the evening with a naturalist and see what is hiding beneath the water's surface. Please come prepared with warm clothes and a flashlight. Use Course Code 53090 to register on SPARC. \$5 per person.

Friday, April 30 8 p.m.–10 p.m.

Native Plant Programs



A wild rose blooms in Discovery Park.

Native Plant Walk – Ages 8 and Older

Discover some of the local plants that make our habitats healthy. Learn ways to identify these plants and even explore some of their uses by both animals and humans. Use Course Code 53088 to register on SPARC. Free.

Saturday, April 17 2 p.m.–4 p.m.

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Spring Events at Discovery Park

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Spring Wildflower Walk – Ages 8 and Older

Enjoy the beauty and wonder of spring in the northwest forest. Join a naturalist for an in depth look at the colors and variety of spring wildflowers in **Discovery Park**. Use Course Code 53092 to register on SPARC. Free.

Saturday, May 8 2 p.m.–4 p.m.

For Wee Ones and Their Adult Friends or Parents

Tot Treks – Ages 2-3

Adults--share nature with your children! A local park where the grass and ferns grow is a special place for you and a child to explore. Look beneath the tall, old trees to discover life in the park and make new friends. \$7 for each child/adult and \$3.50 for each additional person. All tot treks take place 10:30 a.m.–11:45 a.m.

Ponds and Polliwogs

Tidepool Travels

Wed, April 14 Course Code 53036 Wed, April 28 Course Code 53038

Sat, April 24 Course Code 53037 Sat, June 12 Course Code 53044

Friends with Wings

Beach ABCs

Wed, May 5 Course Code 53039 Sat, May 15 Course Code 53040

Sun, June 6 Course Code 53043 Wed, May 26 Course Code 53042

For 50 Years and Older

Sensational Spring Forest Walk

Explore the forests of **Discovery Park** with a nature guide. Search for signs of spring; listen for singing warblers; experience the different textures of the forest. Use Course Code 53882 to register on SPARC. \$3 per person

Thursday, April 15 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Wildflower Walk

Walk the Wolf Tree Nature Trail and learn some of the common native plants of the Pacific Northwest. This walk includes three sets of stairs with no railings. Use Course Code 53904 to register on SPARC. \$3 per person

Thursday, May 20 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Archaeology of West Point

Join a Burke Museum archaeologist on a 4,000 year old journey. View replicas of some of the artifacts found during the archaeological excavation that took place at **Discovery Park** in the 1990s. Use Course Code 53880 to register on SPARC. \$3 per person

Thursday, June 17 10 a.m. –12 p.m.

Staff Profile: Sheila Brown

Sheila Brown, public education programs supervisor for Seattle Parks and Recreation, supervises the staff and manages customer service at the **Discovery Park** Visitors Center and also manages and coordinates public programs at all three of Seattle's Environmental Learning Centers, which also include Camp Long in West Seattle and Carkeek Park in Broadview. These programs include family events, nature programs, wildlife lectures, and more. Brown, who started this job in January 2010, transferred from Camp Long

Environmental Learning Center, where she began her career in 2004. She came to Seattle Parks and Recreation from EarthCorps in Seattle.

What is your background in environmental education?

I have been involved in outdoor and environmental education most of my life. I have a bachelor's degree in ecology from the University



Parks education programs supervisor Sheila Brown with Seattle City Councilman Richard Conlin.

of California, San Diego, with minors in teaching and chemistry; and I completed masters course work in environmental science, participating in research studies involving water toxicology and stormwater biofiltration systems at Western Washington University. But mainly I taught or ran programs for youth and young adults with regard to the environment and the outdoors. I've directed residential education and recreation camps, taught science at the elementary and middle school level, taught water-quality laboratory, and coordinated restoration education with EarthCorps. I have a strong background in multi-cultural and cross-cultural education and speak Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

What brought you to Seattle?

I did my undergraduate work in the northwest and worked at camps during the summer. After college, I decided to settle down here.

What are the strongest assets you bring to Discovery Park?

I have lots of experience in running environmental programs and managing facilities. I am a quick learner, organized, and good at networking.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Serving my staff and my community to the best of my ability.

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Staff Profile: Sheila Brown

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What is your most memorable experience in a Seattle park?

Walking along our shorelines.

What is your most memorable outdoor experience?

Backpacking as a teen in the Yosemite National Park.

What do you hope to accomplish in your position at Discovery Park?

My hope is that I can empower the community and our partners in supporting environmental programming at our parks.

What do you like to do outside of work?

Listen to acoustic music, play with my dog, and go out to eat.

What is your favorite place in Discovery Park?

Any place in the park that has a view of the Puget Sound, especially when the Olympic Mountains are out.

Discovery Park Discoveries

Good News: Sparrows in South Meadow

A sure sign of spring: Savannah sparrows returned to Discovery Park on Saturday, March 27. Males are setting up territories in thick clumps of grass on the slope above the parade grounds in the Historic District, the small meadow in front of the chapel, and other grassy areas. Females will build and occupy nests soon.

Nature Kids Preschool Recruits

The Nature Kids Preschool at Discovery Park has openings for its 2010–2011 school year. A child’s typical day at Nature Kids would include reading, crafts, music, exploring, walks, nature studies, snacks, and more with two teachers on site. For more information, contact Natalie Fuller or Erika Peterson, 206–386–4273, or e-mail natalie.fuller@seattle.gov.



Nature Day Camp Summer 2010

Some Nature Kids examine a specimen.

Discovery Park’s Summer Nature Day Camp offers age-appropriate curriculum at three age levels with themes about plants, animals, and the environment. Space is available in “Nature Play” for 4–6 year olds, “Nature Adventure” for 6–8 year olds, and “Tween Nature Trek” for 9–12 year olds. For more information and a description of the different camps, please check out [SPARC](#), go to the [Discovery Park Web site](#), or e-mail the director, natalie.fuller@seattle.gov.

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Discovery Park Discoveries

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Online Survey for Sewer Overflow Plan

The public has until April 16 to fill out an online survey on three alternatives for **Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) control in the Magnolia basin**. Public input will be used to inform the county's decision on a proposal to forward for environmental review. This spring, the project team will refine and review the alternatives using a range of factors, including design/engineering, community input, environmental concerns, land use/permitting, operations and maintenance, and cost. All community input, including feedback in these areas, is welcome. To fill out the survey, go to www.kingcounty.gov/CSOBeachProjects and select feedback form in the header.

To learn more, visit the CSO Program Web page (www.kingcounty.gov/environment/wastewater/CSO.aspx), the CSO Beach Projects Web page (www.kingcounty.gov/CSOBeachProjects) or call or e-mail Monica Van der Vieren, 206-263-7301 or monica.vandervieren@kingcounty.gov.

Natural History Notes: The Urban Oasis

By Penny Rose

Discovery Park Naturalist

Now that spring has arrived, **Discovery Park's** role as an urban sanctuary comes into full focus. Its beaches and forests greet and protect a variety of species that could not survive in an asphalt hardscape.

Visitors to the park's beaches on a clear, cool spring day are greeted by the gentle murmurings of a hundred-plus Brant geese. These small, elegant birds with black heads and a white neck ring are distinctly white underneath the tail, distinguishing them from their more common cousin, Canada geese. The Brant's primary food source is eelgrass, a plant that grows in the shallow saltwater of the park's North and South Beach tidelands. The Brant's spring migration from Mexico depends upon **Discovery Park's** eelgrass beds to provide fuel for the adults' arduous journey back to the high Arctic of Alaska and Canada. A plant with very specific habitat requirements, eelgrass is available at limited sites on the West Coast, making the Brant vulnerable to environmental pressures at any of these locations.

The pressures of an urban setting include a disregard for laws restricting dogs from beach areas. As stewards of **Discovery Park**, visitors can help ensure that Brant are safe during this vulnerable time by keeping their leashed dogs on the trails above the beach. Enjoying the spectacle and magic of migration from a distance assures that many generations of Brant will continue to find a safe haven within the confines of the city.

A springtime hike along the forested **Discovery Park** loop trail is filled with color and sound. Salmonberry and red-flowering currants are in full bloom, welcoming returning rufous hummingbirds back from their winter hiatus in Central America

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Natural History Notes

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and Mexico with nectar-laden blossoms. Many rufous hummingbirds and their close relative the Anna's hummingbirds create a tiny sculptured nest of lichen and moss spun together with spider web, attached firmly to a low branch of a shrub or thick evergreen.

Nearby, secreted under the protecting fronds of the sword fern, is the small cup nest of song sparrows. Song sparrows join several **Discovery Park** bird species able to successfully raise their young in nests placed on or near the ground. Spotted towhees, dark-eyed juncos and orange-crowned warblers lay their delicate eggs in nests hidden in the cover provided by thick shrubs such as osoberry, mahonia, and wild rose. All of these bird species rely on the rich, healthy habitats in **Discovery Park's** forests, shielded from urban threats such as lawn mowers and outside cats.



Anna's hummingbirds in their nest.

Park habitat stewards who worked so diligently to remove invasive species and plant a thick cover of natives during the fall can relax in the knowledge that their work is done for the season. Spring is the time to reap the rewards of that hard labor. It is the time to enjoy the sweet music of an urban sanctuary filled with birds, the time to feast the eyes on the diverse palette that a forest of native herbs and shrubs offers. Slow down, listen, and watch springtime unfold.

Ask Discovery Park

This new section of *Discovery Park News* will be devoted specifically to you, our readers. If you have any questions about the park, here is the chance to ask. Send questions to anne.bentley@seattle.gov, and Anne will direct selected questions to the appropriate staff person or park volunteer for the answer. Please include your name, phone number and the neighborhood where you live.

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