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Article

The interpretive nature signs and arborglyphs of Cooper Mountain Nature Park

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Abstract

Nestled in the Pacific Northwest of the United States on the southern edge of Beaverton, Oregon, is a 232.55-acre park called Cooper Mountain Nature Park. Because the park is a popular destination among many locals and out of state visitors, it is worth examining what the park's interpretive nature signs may collectively communicate to help make the park's diverse ecology intelligible to the public. Aside from intelligibility, however, it is necessary to unearth the park's narratives that shape our relationship to nature. The interpretive nature signs at the park suggest the importance to acknowledge the uniqueness of the park's ecology, amplify our senses, and finally adopt an active role in restoring and protecting the environment. Despite the beneficial discourse of the interpretive nature signs, however, tree glyphs (also known as arborglyphs, dendroglyphs, and tree graffiti) inscribed upon numerous Pacific madrone trees (*Arbutus menziesii*) exemplify ambivalent discourse.

Keywords: Pacific Northwest; park signs; narrative; arborglyphs; ambivalent discourse

1. Introduction

Nestled in the Pacific Northwest of the United States on the southern edge of Beaverton, Oregon, is a 232.55-acre park called Cooper Mountain Nature Park (Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District [THPRD], 2026a). Overlooking the Tualatin River valley and the Chehalem Mountains, which is the highest mountain range in the Willamette Valley, the park overlays an "800-foot" basalt mount (Anderson, 2009, para. 2). The cracked basalt has formed a patchwork of landscapes including prairie grasslands, fir and conifer forests, and oak woodlands. Weaving through these distinct landscapes of "wet and dry", sun and

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shade, are approximately three and a half miles of five to eight feet wide, packed natural surface and crushed gravel trails forming three loops including one lollypop loop named Larkspur Loop (Explore a Unique Landscape). Sometimes the trails are covered in litterfall, including scattered Western redcedar, Ponderosa pine, and Douglas fir needles that soften the crunch of gravel underfoot. With minimally steep elevation changes resulting in a gain of 429 feet, only the Little Prairie Loop allows wheelchair accessibility (AllTrails, 2026; Access Recreation, 2025, para. 4). Memorial benches dot the trails approximately every quarter-to-half mile providing rest stops for families, hikers, and joggers.

In addition to the memorial benches, numerous small informational signs and notices are scattered among the trail edges; however, very few large interpretive nature signs exist — some have disappeared and many are nearing illegibility. In one area overlooking a section of prairie grasslands, for instance, only a foundational post remains where an interpretive nature sign one stood. Still, where another sign once stood near a small quarry pond, only the remnant of its flat cement base remains.

Based upon examining over 1,574 online Google reviews and photographs of the park from park visitors, it appears at least five different large interpretive nature signs have vanished from the park. According to one of the park's local rangers Kyle Spinks, two agencies — the Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District (THPRD), which manages the park, and Metro, a regional government agency that manages natural areas — have removed the interpretive nature signs because the signs were worn out (K. Spinks, personal communication, January 2, 2026). In the Google reviewer's cache of online photographs of the park, where different reviewers have serendipitously photographed the same views and interpretive nature signs over the years, for instance, the sign "Connecting Natural Areas" had disintegrated in just a span of two years leaving only remnants of illegible text suggesting the fragments of ancient archeological text. THPRD and Metro intend to replace two interpretive nature signs; however, as smaller signs of the park age, they will simply remove and not replace them (K. Spinks, personal communication, January 2, 2026).

Because the park is a popular destination among many locals and out of state visitors, it is worth examining what the remaining and online photographed interpretive nature and smaller signs may collectively communicate to help make the park's diverse ecology intelligible to the public. Aside from intelligibility, however, it is necessary to unearth the park's narratives that "shape people's lives and shape the society we live in" (Stibbe, 2021, p. 5). Given that Americans are increasingly spending less time in nature, and "54% of Americans have a literacy [rate] below a 6th grade level", the park's commonplace signs carry significant narrative weight for an ever-narrowing audience (Nature of Americans, n.d.; National Literacy Institute, 2024, para. 1).

Although not a definitive and exhaustive statement, the interpretive nature and numerous, smaller notice signs at Cooper Mountain Nature Park suggest the importance to acknowledge the uniqueness of the park's ecology, amplify our senses, and finally adopt an active role in restoring and protecting the environment. Despite the beneficial discourse of the interpretive nature signs and smaller notices, however, tree glyphs (also known as

arborglyphs, dendroglyphs, and tree graffiti) inscribed upon numerous Pacific madrone trees (*Arbutus menziesii*) exemplify ambivalent discourse.

1.1. Cooper Mountain Nature Park photographs

Explaining far better than my text alone could, Appendix C includes my field photographs of Cooper Mountain Nature Park. The photographs span two seasons — from early summer and early winter during foggy dawn and misty dusk. During the spring and early summer, the park is awash in colorful wildflowers; however, most of the photographs in this text are subtle, visually quiet, and imperfect, inviting readers to develop their affective capacity to find beauty in the sparse and misty gray.

2. Distinct geology and habitats with rare and endangered biota

The interpretive nature signs point to how the geology, habitats, and biota of Cooper Mountain Nature Park are diverse, unique, and rare. The volcanic geology of the area, for example, has produced a "diverse and rare habitat" in which "thick and thin soils atop cracked basalt form patchwork patterns" of "wet and dry" habitats of oak woodlands, fir forests, and prairie grasslands (Explore a Unique Landscape).

2.1. White oak woodlands and endangered Western gray squirrels

In general, white oak habitats are among the "most endangered ecological communities in the Pacific Northwest" because developers have extracted oak timber to construct "houses and barns" (Metro, n.d.-a; Anderson, 2009, para. 9). Nonetheless, the park is home to "rare" copses of native Oregon white oaks (*Quercus garryana*) surrounded by prairie grassland and scattered moss-covered basalt boulders and cobbles (Why No Dogs). Blanketed in fluffy, light gray-green usnea lichen, the furry oaks appear almost blurry during winter evenings. Only their delicate, phalange-like tips seem to maintain sharp silhouettes. Often during early winter months, robins congregate and sing in the white oaks, while year-round, chickadees and white-breasted nuthatches bounce among the branches foraging for food.

Many of the park's white oaks have large, smooth-like, round growths called oak galls on their upper and even lower, tiny branches extending just a foot away from the ground. After oak gall wasps lay their eggs on twigs or even leaves, white oaks grow harmless galls that protect and feed the wasp larvae (Discover Oak Woodlands). The oak galls can appear differently depending on season and circumstances of weather — sometimes they might appear as large burnt baked potatoes or even small, speckled, and burnt-orange gumballs.

Alongside oak gall wasps, the white oaks "are home to a multitude of plants, reptiles, birds, and mammals" including "rare and endangered" Western gray squirrels who rely on the oaks for acorns, their main source of food (Discover Oak Woodlands; Explore a

Unique Landscape; Western Gray Squirrel). The Western gray squirrels build both their daytime resting platforms and round nests in the conifer forest areas of the park, which at points, appear starkly adjacent to the white oaks and prairie grasslands (Explore a Unique Landscape; Western Gray Squirrel). Often too rare and quick for me to photograph, their white bellies and light gray fur appear as ghostly blurs in my photographs.

2.2. Conifer forest

Adding to the unique patchwork of habitats, the park's coniferous forest areas consist mainly of Douglas firs (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) draped in velvety moss (*Dendroalsia abietinum*) with an understory of fragrant Western redcedars, and short to medium height, writhing and reaching Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) reminiscent of Lorenzo Bernini's statue *Apollo and Daphne*. In one of the forested groves, the stump of an original old growth Douglas fir remains. In the winter, the shadowy, cool and damp forest floor is covered in fir needles, dried bracken ferns, emerald-green sword ferns, budding Oregon grape, snowberries, and various species of mosses, lichens, lungwort, and mushrooms. A small brook with a miniature cascade runs through one section of conifer forest.

Both near the brook and beyond among the cedars and firs, I have heard frog song consisting of various vocalizations. On the south of the Cooper Mountain loop prior to entering a section of conifer forest, and a small quarry pond is home to the "rare and endangered" species of both northern red-legged frogs and visiting Western bluebirds (Look for Larders in the Landscape; Explore a Unique Landscape). Northern red-legged frogs venture "far from the ponds and backwaters they breed in"; however, the frogs I have heard singing in the park are likely male Pacific chorus frogs who are excellent at playing hide and seek (Mathews, 2021, p. 450).

2.3. Prairie grasslands and endangered wildflowers

Extending to the edge of a forested area is one of the park's "rare" native prairie grasslands, which, in addition to the white oak woodlands, are "the most endangered ecological communities" in the Pacific northwest (Why No Dogs; Metro, n.d.-a, para. 4). Only "one percent of native prairies remain" in Oregon, so it is remarkable that a surveyor mapped park's little prairie in 1852 (Fire Renews the Prairie; Prairie Past and Present). Due to "thin soil", the prairie grassland has largely remained undisturbed for "hundreds" of years before 1852 (Prairie Past and Present). Indigenous peoples have sustained the Willamette Valley's prairies with controlled burns that have "encouraged open grasslands and a rich variety" of native plants (Fire Renews the Prairie).

One sign mentions how "in early spring", the sunny prairie is "full of rare wildflowers" with some species exclusively found in the region (Prairie Past and Present). Perhaps because they have found protection in the largely undisturbed prairie, the park's prairie grasslands are home to maybe "the largest remaining population of the state-endangered

larkspur" — locally called pale larkspur or white rock larkspur (*Delfinium leucophaeum*) — that grow to a height of one foot (Anderson, 2009, para. 7; THPRD, n.d.-b). Newswriter Eric Apalategui (2009) reports that in June 2009, "tens of thousands" of endangered larkspur bloomed in the park's prairie grassland and woodland oak habitats (para. 24). In addition to the larkspur, Apalategui asserts "delicate western columbine, elegant meadow checkermallow" bloomed. From 1993 until 2023, Nelson's checker-mallow was on the Endangered Species List; however, alongside the larkspur, this wildflower found protection in the undisturbed prairies of the park (Terry, 2023). Although I have missed spring blossoms, which include beauties such as giant fawn lilies, Pacific hound's tongue, Henderson's shooting star, elegant mariposa lily, chocolate lily, and others, when I visited the park in early summer, the large sunny prairie grassland twinkled from the wings of numerous butterflies and bees (THPRD, n.d.-b).

3. Engage and amplify the senses

Public art, several signs, animal tracks embedded in the sidewalk, and memorial benches collectively help visitors enhance their senses to deepen their understanding of and engagement with the park. THPRD commissioned interactive art installations for their "Nature Revealed: Discovering Nature through Art" series from various artists including Portland, Oregon, multi-media artist Christine Bourdette. THPRD maintains the series "introduces visitors to the ongoing changes taking places in nature every day" (THPRD, 2026b). Bourdette's art generally examines "enduring impermanence" in addition to "sporadic shifting of terrain and cumulative upheavals" — "metaphors for this uncertain era we inhabit", so her art is conceptually apt for the "Nature Revealed" series (Bourdette, 2019).

Because the art series focuses on observing ongoing change, and its title mentions "reveal[ing]" and "discover[ing]" nature, the art installations seem to initially enhance one's senses, which then prepares the conditions for visitors to witness such possibilities. The park, for instance, is site to a metal sculpture titled "Nest" that Bourdette created in 2009, in addition to three large listening trumpets, made of "rusted mild" and "stainless steel" (Bourdette, 2025). Next to "Nest", a sign tells visitors to "watch for stick nests in evergreen tree branches that look like this sculpture" (Western Gray Squirrel). The abstract and simplified form of the sculpture helps visitors adjust their eyes to new ways of seeing when they scan the tree tops for Western gray squirrel nests. Visitors acquire a gratifying new affective capacity rather than simply engage in the potential habit of overlooking carefully woven dreys as simply unremarkable clumps of autumn leaves and twigs.

Next to one of the listening trumpets that amplify birdsong overlooking prairie grasslands, a park sign asks visitors to "listen carefully" to five different "bird voices" (Bird Voices). The listening trumpet and detailed sign help visitors become more attuned to bird vocalizations to differentiate among songs, and alarm, territorial defense, and contact calls. A bird's alarm call can also help visitors "discover other animals hidden" nearby (Bird

Voices). Despite the symbol of an ear next to the word "listen" inscribed at the ear tip, however, visitors have interacted with the trumpet not as an opportunity to listen to the other, but as an opportunity to blow loudly into a listening trumpet. During one visit, for instance, the noise emitted from an intense blow of a listening trumpet disrupted the quietude of the prairie grassland far into the white oak woodlands.

Aside from the art installations, the park also has inconspicuous animal tracks embedded in the sidewalk that surrounds the park's nature house, demonstration garden, parking lot, bioswale, and playground that is at the head of park's trailhead. Although I was electrified to find what I initially thought were a set of authentic deer tracks, local park ranger Kyle Spinks explained it was instead a builder who imprinted tracks in addition to "[black] bear, [brush] rabbit, coyote, raccoon, heron, and squirrel" when the parking lot was under construction (K. Spinks, personal communication, January 2, 2026). The sidewalk tracks invite visitors to develop skills of identifying tracks of some of the regional animals who rely on the park as a wildlife corridor, or even as a year-round home (Connecting Natural Areas).

After learning that the site is a wildlife corridor, and how to identify a few animal tracks, I also became attuned to reading subtle signs of the presence of animals simply by lingering. Just recently, for example, after spotting a deer print on the edge of a trail, I traced the print to flattened grass, which led to an inconspicuous muddy trail where deer cross frequently. Moreover, I spotted thigh-high shredded tree bark that appeared to my untrained eye to be from claws; however, they were from antler rubs. Park ranger Kyle Spinks explained that "every winter, the blacktail deer bucks move through the area as the mating season approaches. Their antlers grow a fine coat of hair and they will scrape off the hair on the stems of woody shrubs and small trees" (K. Spinks, personal communication, January 2, 2026). Aside from animal tracks, even trail scat would direct my eyes to flattened grass where coyotes have vanished into the landscape. Even light, depending on the time of day, reveals where birds have excavated wood to build homes in tall snags.

4. Pauses, memory, and metamorphosis

Finally, the memorial benches prompt visitors to take pause — for some, the pauses might serve as reprieve from jogging steep hills, and for others, the pauses might be purposeless — an occasion to simply listen to the quietude of the wind and scratchy calls of hummingbirds, feel the pinpricks of rain and burn of sun, smell the scent of summertime, or even wonder if one's increasingly itchy leg is the result of having unmindfully brushed against the site's "abundant" poison oak (Poison Oak). Behind one's seated back, all the memorial benches have commemorative plaques with short dedications for people who have passed on. One bench plaque commemorates two friends who visited the park for twenty years — during this time, they "raised families", and even survived cancer. Still, another bench plaque reads, "in every walk with nature one receives far more than one

seeks" — a fitting literal and metaphorical statement for the park.

The varied lifespans marked on the memorials prompt consideration of how the park likewise has its own timescales of deep memories, and continual change. A tiny, easy-to-overlook sign tucked away in a sliver of conifer forest, for example, points to a large Douglas fir stump, which "is a remnant of the original old growth conifer forest that once covered much of Cooper Mountain. Douglas firs can reach an age of eight hundred years, and Western Redcedar a thousand" (Old Growth Forest). Diagonally across the easy-to-overlook sign, a young guardian Western Redcedar seems to keep a watchful eye on the remnant stump to remind visitors not to revise or erase our devastating ecological histories, but to embrace the duty to care and preserve what is left — after all, when considering just the park's prairie grasslands alone, "just 1 percent of Oregon native prairies remains" (Anderson, 2009, para. 11). Indigenous peoples used controlled burns to maintain the prairie grasslands; however, these burns stopped in the early 1800s. Eventually, Scotch broom "choked" the park's prairie grasslands and fields were "littered by illegal dumping"; furthermore, the site "had been partially clear-cut and was overrun with [other] invasive plants" (Apalategui, 2009, paras. 3, 9). Nonetheless, the prairie grasslands that a surveyor mapped in 1852, is locally protected, albeit now living under the threat of climate change.

The dynamic changes of every level of the park are not easy to overlook. In just a span of two early winter days, for instance, I had spotted an abandoned bald-faced hornet's nest hanging from a white oak; however, when I visited the park the next day, the hornet's nest had vanished. Upon walking past nearly sixty feet away from the tree, however, I found torn pieces from presumably the same nest scattered on the edge of the trail. The next week, when I visited the park, the same scenario repeated itself — I had joyfully found yet another nest; however, the next day, I was dismayed to see that it too had disappeared.

In both instances, gentle overnight winds could not have knocked the nests down, let alone shred them to pieces because the nest pieces I found were too heavy. Perhaps animals could have torn down the nests in search of wasp larvae; however, it seems unlikely animals would have carried large pieces of the nest nearly sixty feet away from the trees. Moreover, park officials did not remove the abandoned nests because they posed no threat to visitors. Spinks explained that "unless the nest is within about ten feet of a trail and the flight path is across a trail, we just leave them alone" (K. Spinks, personal communication, January 7, 2026). Spinks continued, the hornets "tend to be quite aggressive, especially as the summer wears on, so we are more likely to remove nests later in the year" (K. Spinks, personal communication, January 7, 2026). Perhaps a spritely wind was the culprit, because as Spinks explained, nests "fall apart quite quickly after [they go] dormant at the end" of autumn; nonetheless, the mystery will remain long after the nests disintegrate (K. Spinks, personal communication, January 7, 2026).

The park's signs, and even Metro website descriptions have their own longevity and dynamics. Although Metro and THPRD have removed worn signs with some nearing illegibility, not all is lost. At the time of writing this text, THPRD Nature & Trails Supervisor Greg Creager explained that Metro and THPRD will update and replace the

signs perhaps in next few months (G. Creager, personal communication, January 8, 2026). In terms of Metro's website discussing the park's trails, a page explains, "the descriptions provided here are based on June 14, 2025. Other routes may offer very different experiences. Rain, wind, heat, cold, plants, animals and people can change a trail surface quickly" (Metro, n.d.-b, para. 2). The trails metamorphose so quickly that Metro has to qualify its descriptions based on a specific date.

Collectively, the public art, signs, animal tracks, and memorial benches help visitors hone their senses to deepen their understanding of the shape-shifting, ephemeral beauty of the park. In his text *Vita Contemplativa*, philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2024) maintains:

> the word *schonen*, to spare or preserve, is derived from "beautiful" [*schön*]. Sparing and preserving is directed at the beautiful. The earth is beautiful. It presents us with the imperative to spare and preserve it, to return it to its dignity. (p. 40)

The signs of Cooper Mountain Nature Park demonstrate such an imperative to preserve and protect the earth.

5. Deontological ethics: A duty to protect nature

Collectively, numerous interpretive nature signs and smaller signs scattered in the park inform visitors about how to protect the park while also illustrating the local community's commitment to ecological restoration and protection. Next to the park's playground, for instance, is a demonstration garden whose signs inform visitors about how they may protect forests and streams from the inadvertent harms of home gardening ranging from planting native versus invasive plants such as English ivy, using "compost and mulch to build soil", to avoiding the use of "harmful garden chemicals" (Discover Natural Gardening; Garden with Care at the Edge of the Wild).

After leaving the playground and entering the park, a large sign reads, "Nature Area. Protected by voters." Over eleven smaller notice signs explain how visitors can protect the park by leaving pet dogs at home, not entering particular areas during certain times of the year, staying on the gravel trails, not disturbing soil or vegetation, and cleaning their shoes at a boot scraper station (Why No Dogs; Notice: Photo Loops; Protected Natural Area; Please Do Not Go Off Trails; Cooper Mountain Park). Although the signs might seem draconian, several of the signs explain the rationales behind their directives. One sign, for example, explains that visitors must stay on the trail because:

> many sensitive plants and wildlife species call this area home, and venturing off the trails — even for a quick photo — can scare them or cause permanent damage to their habitats. In places where leaving trails is not permitted, people see more wildlife and plants, and ecosystems are better able to thrive. (Please Do Not Go Off Trails)

The signs also collectively tell the story of a local community who has voted to protect the park (Why No Dogs; Nature Area). With voter-approved funds, the park opened in 2009 after volunteers "participated in nearly every aspect of Cooper Mountain's transformation, removing invasive species, restoring the native grasses and wildflowers, planting more than 110,000 trees and shrubs" (Metro, 2009, p. 19). Dave Green, a local volunteer who lived near the park since 1990, helped restore the "partially clear-cut" and overgrown site (Apalategui, 2009, para. 9). Green said that years ago, he did not consider the overgrown property remarkable; however, as he learned about the unique biota of the park from Metro scientists such as Curt Zonick, he realized, "there is something unique about this place that I never saw before" (Apalategui, 2009, para. 10). Aside from the extensive volunteer work, Metro and local fire departments also implemented controlled burns at the park to revive the prairie grasslands. Some trees remarkably still have traces of charring from the controlled burn on their bark.

6. Tree language: Ogham and arborglyphs

In addition to the signs, the park seems blanketed with letters, or the symbolic world — from tree alphabets to arborglyphs. During winter months, for instance, it is easy to see among the reaching white oak silhouettes, the crisscross of branches that mimic runes and various alphabets such as Ogham. Popularly known as "the tree alphabet", because a few letters come from tree terms, Ogham is the earliest form of Irish writing. Linguist Conor Quinn explains it is an "ancestor to the better-known Old Irish", which is "the ancestor of all three contemporary Gaelic languages (Irish, Manx, and Scottish Gaelic)" (McEwan, 2017, para. 2). Like the growth of trees above ground, Ogham is "written and read vertically from the bottom to top" and its twenty letters are called *feda*, which means trees (McEwan, 2017, para. 6). It is worth quoting Quinn at length about Ogham's tree etymology:

> (the word *fid*, plural *feda* is actually a direct cousin to English "wood", and Cornish *gwedh*, Breton *gwez* "trees"), and a number of the letter-names seem unambiguously to come from tree-terms, e.g. *beithe* "birch", *fern* "alder", *sail* "willow", *dair* "oak" … but then more than half do not. (McEwan, 2017, para. 15)

Even though Ogham is popularly called tree language, Ogham letter names have "numerous other categories (like saints, dogs, arts, and cows)" so reducing Ogham to tree language is a misnomer (McEwan, 2027, para. 15).

Aside from Ogham letters suspended overhead from the oak trees at the park, visitors can also discover occasional arborgraphs and arborglyphs (also known as tree glyphs, dendroglyphs, and tree graffiti) inscribed upon the tender bark of Pacific madrone that gracefully overhang the trails throughout the park. Arborglyphs are not regionally exclusive to the park — they are also found in Fremont National Forest located in southern Oregon and even beyond in the mountains of the Great Basin. During the mid-1800s, many of the

men who carved the trees in the Great Basin were sheepherders of Irish and mainly Basque descent (Worrell, 2009, p. 40). As they moved throughout the mountains, they carved their stories on trees — particularly Aspens whose white bark scars black when marred. Some trees have become "calendar trees" that mark sheepherders returning to the same spots "year after year to record their visits" (Harrison, 2025, para. 18). Among the arborglyph themes that Basque researcher J. Mallea-Olaetxe (2001) has catalogued is the "strange combination of painful cries from loneliness and humor" (p. 48). Loneliness is a fitting theme especially when considering the work of transhumance or even historical neglect. Because historians have either "ignored" or "deprived" the Basque "of their identity", trees have become "a vast and secret living-forest museum" preserving the history of Basque sheepherders (Mallea-Olaetxe, 2001, pp. 50, 45). Under threat of fire and climate change, however, aspens do not live forever. Nevada native, Jean Earl began recording arborglyphs in the 1970s when she went on camping trips. In 2021, Earl said that approximately "80% of the trees she recorded had since died" (Harrison, 2025, para. 21). Despite this loss as of 2024, volunteers and scholars have documented over 25,000 arborglyphs with just as many left (Bieter et al., 2024).

Although they do not carry the historical resonance of the Basque arborglyphs, the arborglyphs of Cooper Mountain Park perhaps tell a narrative of their time. The young Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) at the park are small to medium-sized trees that have smooth, cool, chartreuse to caramel-colored young bark, with older, pealing, burnt-sienna colored bark. Approximately fifteen trees, with two trees being the most heavily marked, have various carvings from park visitors. Many scratches could be animal marks; nonetheless, the carvings are largely human-made from the early 2000s. After cataloguing the carvings, they fall into the following categories: arbitrary marks, dates, symbols, initials, a single letter, first names, first names with surnames, and finally two separate initials separated with hearts or the addition sign.

Cooper Mountain Nature Park seems like the Forest of Arden from William Shakespeare's (2026/1599) comedy *As You Like It*, where countless Orlandos have carved their love for countless Rosalinds. Although Orlando claims to "hang" what the court jester Touchstone calls the "very false gallop of verses" on trees, Orlando also wants to carve the forest trees with Rosalind's praises (Shakespeare, 2026/1599, 3.2.1122, 3.2.1224). Orlando declares:

> O Rosalind! these trees shall be my books,
> And in their barks my thoughts I'll character,
> That every eye which in this forest looks
> Shall see thy virtue witness'd everywhere.
> Run, run, Orlando; carve on every tree
> The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she. (Shakespeare, 2026/1599, 3.2.1126–1130)

He eventually carved the trees because Rosalind says that a man has carved her name in bark (Shakespeare, 2026/1599, 3.2.1444–1450).

The park's arborglyphs, however, tell more than a story of love carvings, they suggest the cultural need to go out and touch the grass. To adult Americans who increasingly spend their free time indoors, Henry David Thoreau's (2012/1862) statement may read as an anomaly: "I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least — and it is commonly more than that — sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements" (p. 559). In light of such, when visitors do experience the park, does carving express the need to leave the infosphere? Doubtless, the park's arborglyphs represent inadvertent, literal examples of damaging discourse. After injury to their bark, for instance, Pacific madrone trees are susceptible to trunk canker diseases (Bennett & Shaw, 2008, p. 2). Whereas writing is often curative for trauma survivors, arborglyphs do the opposite and preserve the scars of trauma onto living trees.

Although the carvings exemplify damaging discourse, they ironically also function like the memorial benches, wherein they simultaneously signal a resistance to loss. After conducting a study of popular culture in English, Selin Kesebir and Pelin Kesebir (2017) conclude that references to nature have declined "in the collective imagination and cultural conversation" since the 1950s (p. 266).

Given that the language of nature is disappearing, this symbolic loss is chipping away at our positive relationship to nature. Kesebir and Kesebir (2017) explain, for example, the "loss of physical contact with nature, combined with a parallel loss of symbolic contact through cultural products, may set in motion a negative feedback loop, resulting in diminishing levels of interest in and appreciation for nature" (p. 267). What if the arborglyphs serve as a record to mark one's resistance to an ever-disappearing natural world in English culture? I would like to think visitors are in some sense joining the local community's imperative to protect the park and memorializing their love for nature. Nonetheless, if we put down our carving knives, we can understand that "after a whole day in the woods, we are already immortal" (Muir, 2017/1875).

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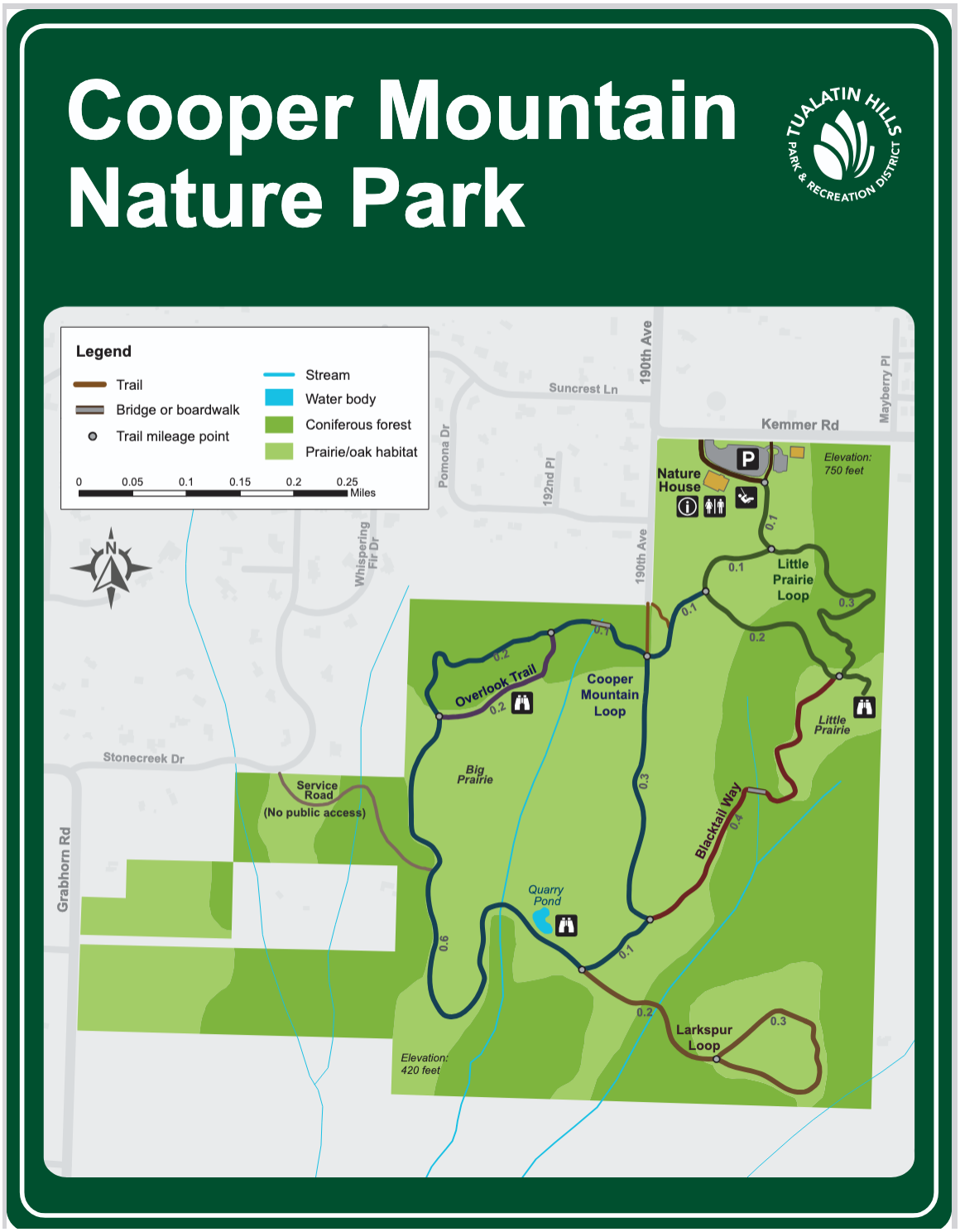
Appendix A: Cooper Mountain Nature Park Map



Note: Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District (THPRD). (n.d.-a). *Cooper mountain nature park map*. THPRD.org. https://www.thprd.org/pdfs2/maps/coopermountain2022.pdf

Appendix B: List of Interpretive Nature Signs & Smaller Signs

Interpretive Nature Signs

The asterisk (*) indicates signs located exclusively (as of the time of this writing) in the cache of photographs from Google reviews of Cooper Mountain Nature Park.

- Discover Natural Gardening
- Garden With Care at the Edge of the Wild
- Bird Voices
- Discover Oak Woodlands
- Western Gray Squirrel
- Explore a Unique Landscape
- Connecting Natural Areas*
- Look For Larders in the Landscape*
- Fire Renews the Prairie*
- Prairie Past and Present*
- Restoring the Habitats of Native Species*

Smaller Signs and Notices

- Stowaway Seeds
- Why No Dogs?
- Nature Area
- Notice (photo loops)
- Notice (under habitat restoration)
- Notice (being restored to improve wildlife habitat)
- Protected Natural Area
- Old Growth Forest
- Poison Oak
- Please Do Not Go Off Trails
- Cooper Mountain Nature Park

Appendix C: Photographs of Cooper Mountain Nature Park

Figure 1. Overlooking the Chehalem mountain range with a view of Mount Jefferson, a stratovolcano

Figure 2. Autum's leaves clinging to a lichen covered white oak branch

Figure 3. A white oak tree in the large prairie grassland during a foggy morning

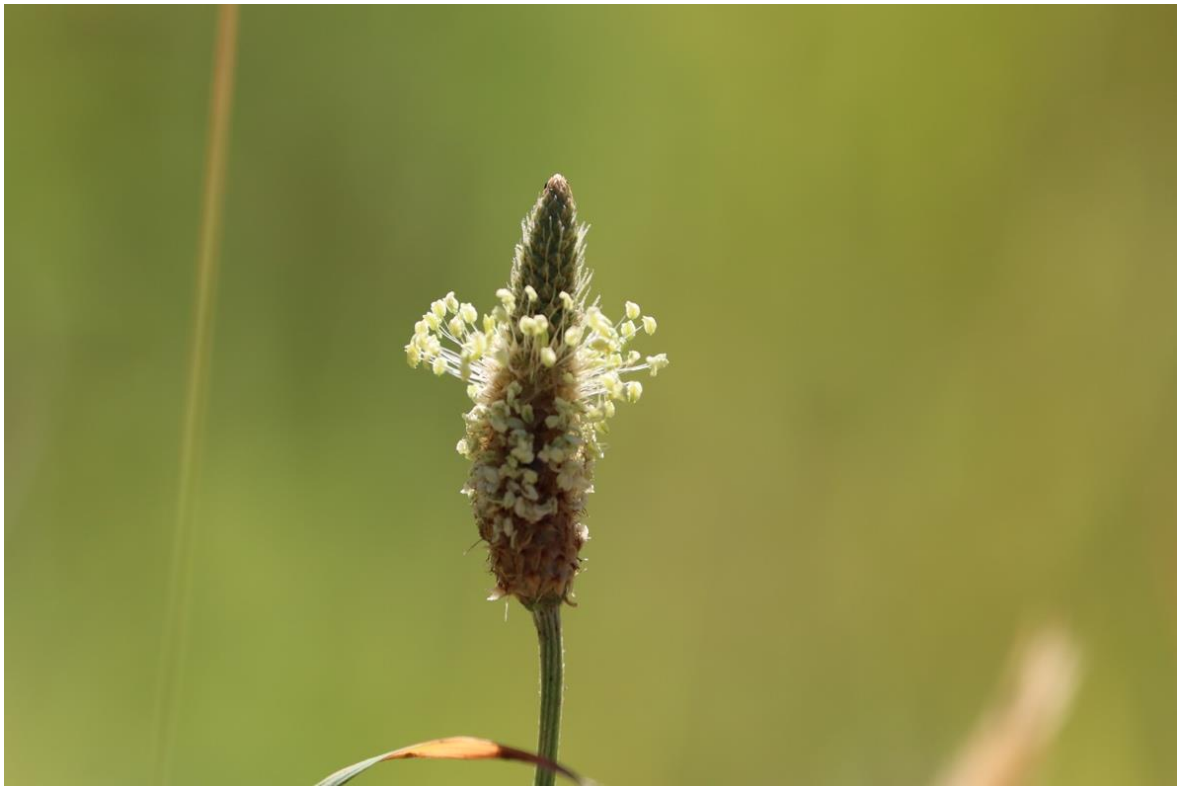


Figure 4. A blooming wildflower in the prairie during early summer

Figure 5. In early summer, the prairie is awash with blue centaurs (*Centaurea cyanus*)

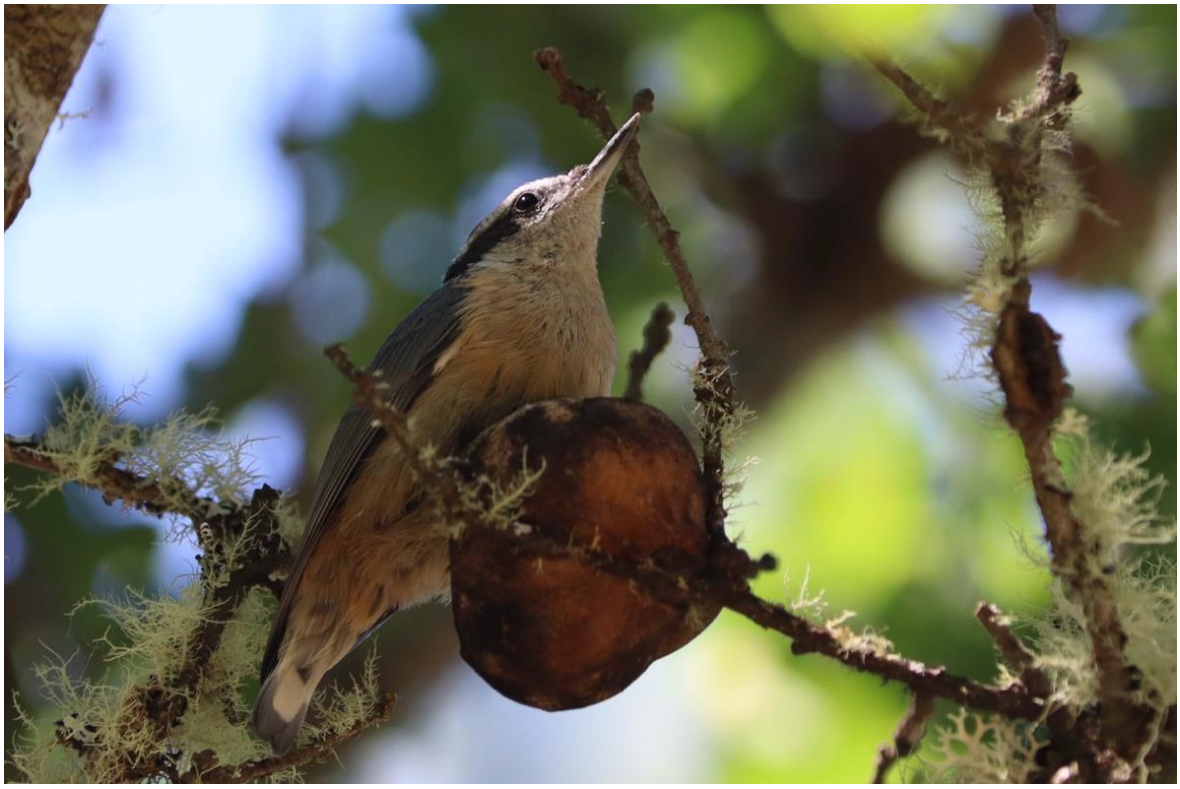


Figure 6. A red-breasted nuthatch sitting atop an oak gall

Figure 7. A moss and lichen covered boulder in the prairie grasslands

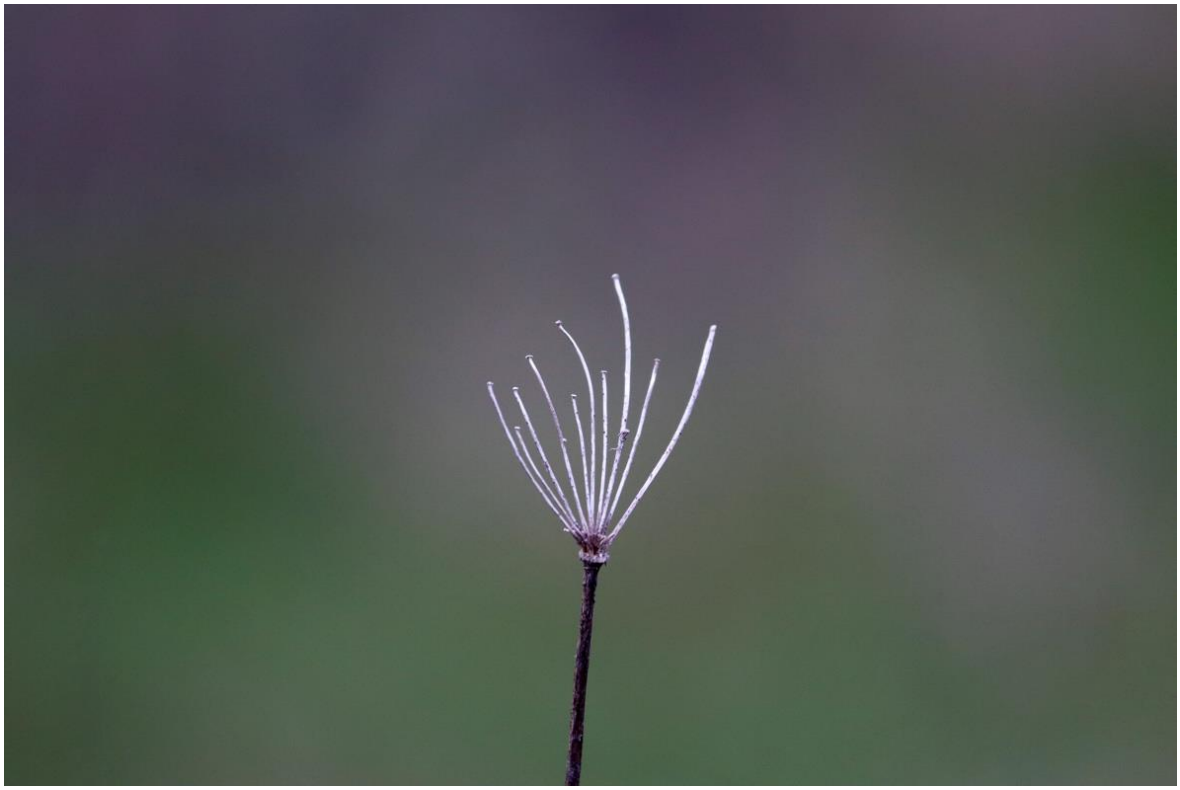


Figure 8. A wave goodbye to the wildflowers of spring

Figure 9. The watchful eye of a Western cedar near a remnant old-growth forest fir stump

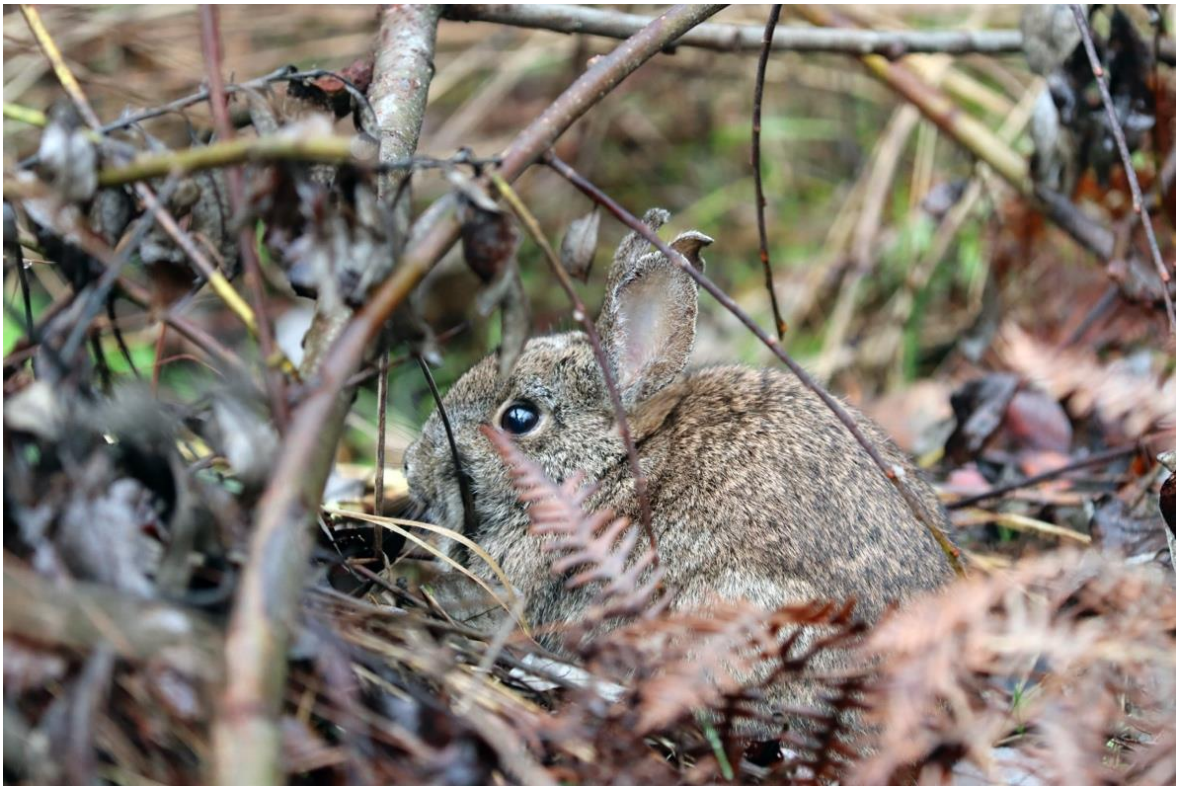


Figure 10. Brush rabbit nestled peacefully among dry ferns and grass near warren

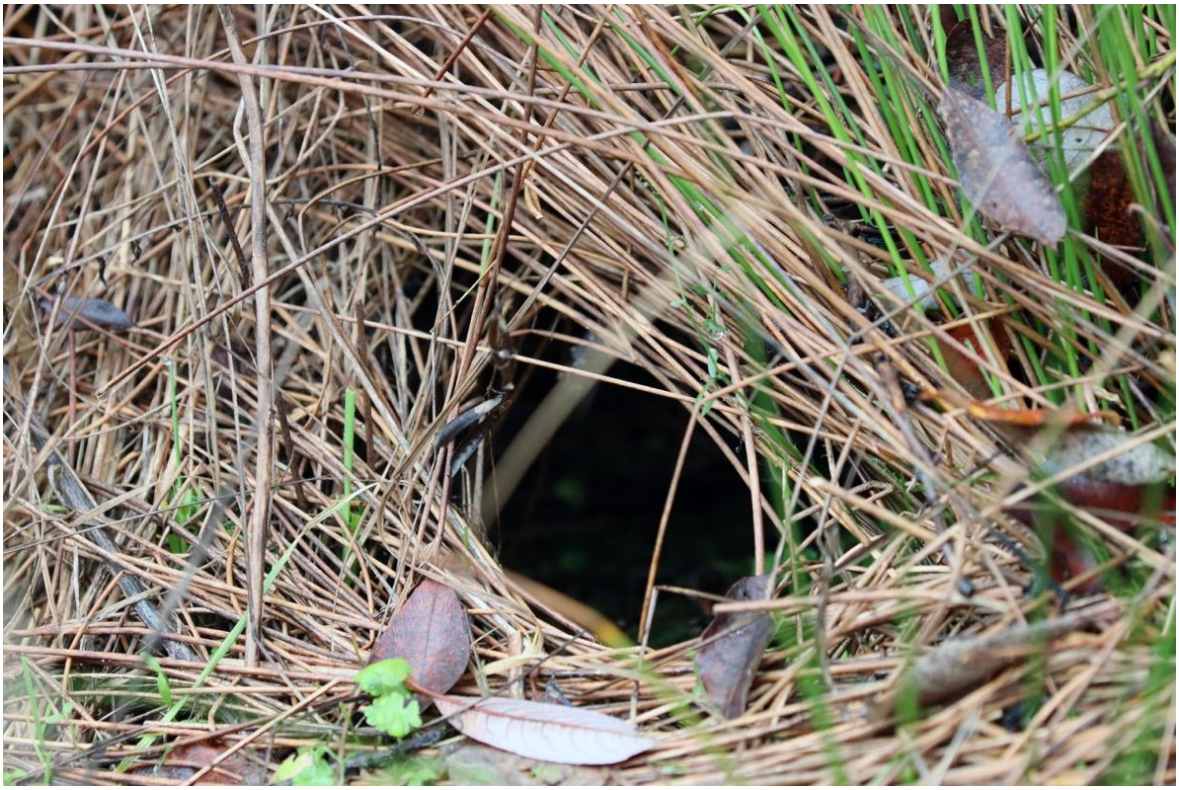


Figure 11. The aforementioned brush rabbit's warren

Figure 12. A black-tailed deer listening in the thicket of white-oaks, wary of loud sounds

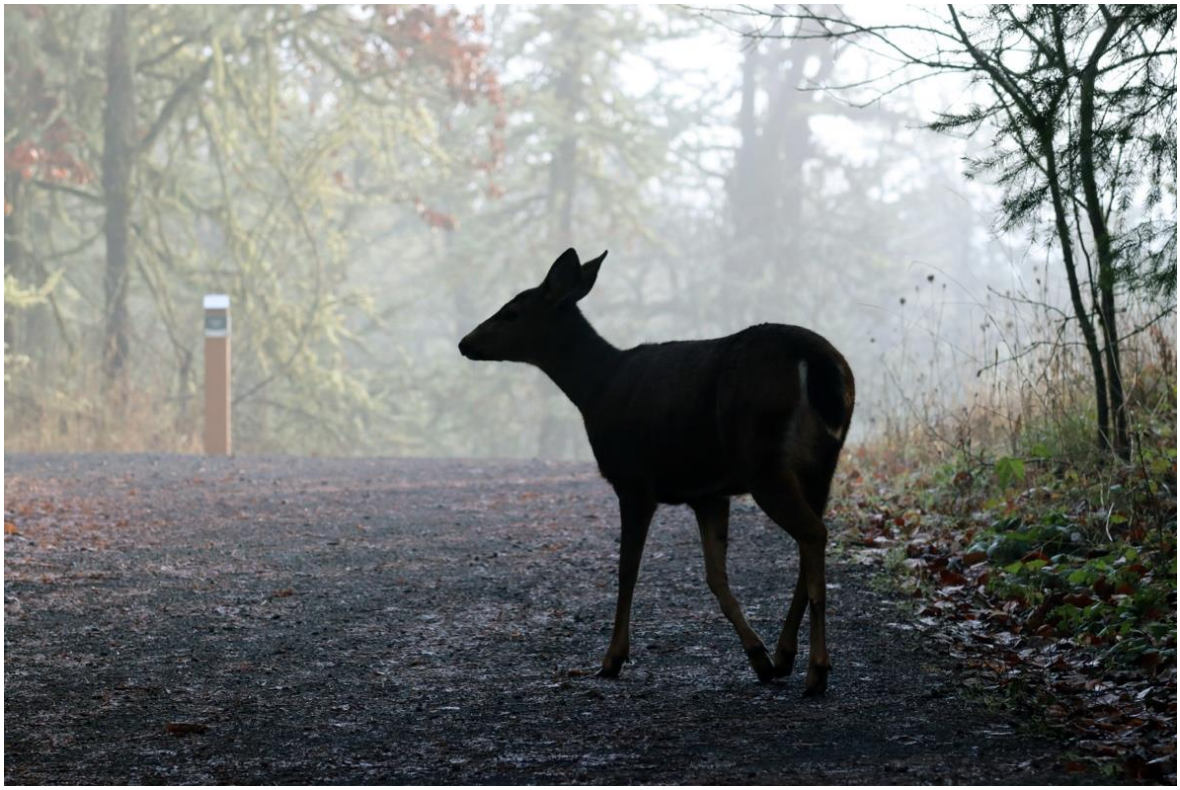


Figure 13. An enchanting, foggy intersection where a calm black-tailed deer pauses