

D. L. Anderson

P h o t o g r a p h y

Tom McCall Nature Preserve

In stark contrast to the lush trails of the western side of the Columbia River Gorge, the east end is a dry land of scrub oak, sagebrush, grasslands and basalt plateaus. The nature preserve land is owned by the Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit organization that purchases sensitive lands and sets them aside for restoration and preservation.

Directions

From Portland drive 68 miles east on I-84 to exit 69 (Mosier). Follow the Columbia River Scenic Highway east $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the Rowena Crest Viewpoint. From The Dalles travel west on I-84 to exit 76 (Rowena) and follow the Columbia River Scenic Highway 5 miles to the Rowena Crest Viewpoint.

The Trail

Named after former Governor Tom McCall who is probably most remembered for encouraging people to visit Oregon but not stay, however, Governor McCall's accomplishments also include cleaning up the Willamette River, introducing the bottle bill, and protecting Oregon's beaches from private development.

The wildflower season begins in early March and continues through July. Prairie stars, shooting stars, and balsamroot thrive. In addition, Thompson's lupine, Columbia parsley, Thompson's waterleaf, and Hood River milk vetch are unique to the gorge.

The Plateau trail is the best place on the reserve to observe wildflowers and it begins just across the scenic highway from the viewpoint entrance. A little more than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile after you cross the fence stile at the trailhead, you come to the first of two small cattail lined ponds. Here a short loop circles the pond. Look and listen for the red-winged black birds and pacific chorus frogs.

Another $\frac{1}{4}$ mile brings you to the second, and smaller, pond and a short trail spur that leads to a viewpoint. The trail ends at a viewpoint that looks down the Columbia and the basalt cliffs of the Washington shore. An early morning or late afternoon hike may offer a glimpse of a mule deer or coyote that also frequent the area.

The trail to Tom McCall Point begins at the east side of the Rowena Point parking loop and immediately begins to climb along the basalt rim. A little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile the trail follows an old road to the left for several yards before turning uphill once again. Another $\frac{1}{4}$ mile along the exposed rim brings you to a false junction, stay right and follow the steep switchbacks under the power lines. From here it's another mile of steep switchbacks to reach the top.

Photographing the Natural Pacific Northwest

26400 NW St. Helens Road • Scappoose • Oregon 97056
Phone: (503) 543 7294 • Web: www.dlap photography.com

D. L. Anderson

P h o t o g r a p h y

Grand sweeping views of the gorge are offered along the rim while Indian paintbrush and lupine populate the grasses along the trail. A grass meadow greets you at the top as do views of Mt. Hood, Mt. Adams, and the eastern end of the Columbia River Gorge.

As little as 10,000 years ago the Missoula floods scoured this landscape, initially submerging it under as much as 200 feet of iceberg and gravel filled water. As the flood waters began to recede immense gravel bars began to form. One of these can be seen on the Washington side of the Columbia just above the town of Lyle.

Photographing the Natural Pacific Northwest

26400 NW St. Helens Road • Scappoose • Oregon 97056
Phone: (503) 543 7294 • Web: www.dlap photography.com