

Cuthbert Holmes & Tillicum Parks

Pileated Woodpecker



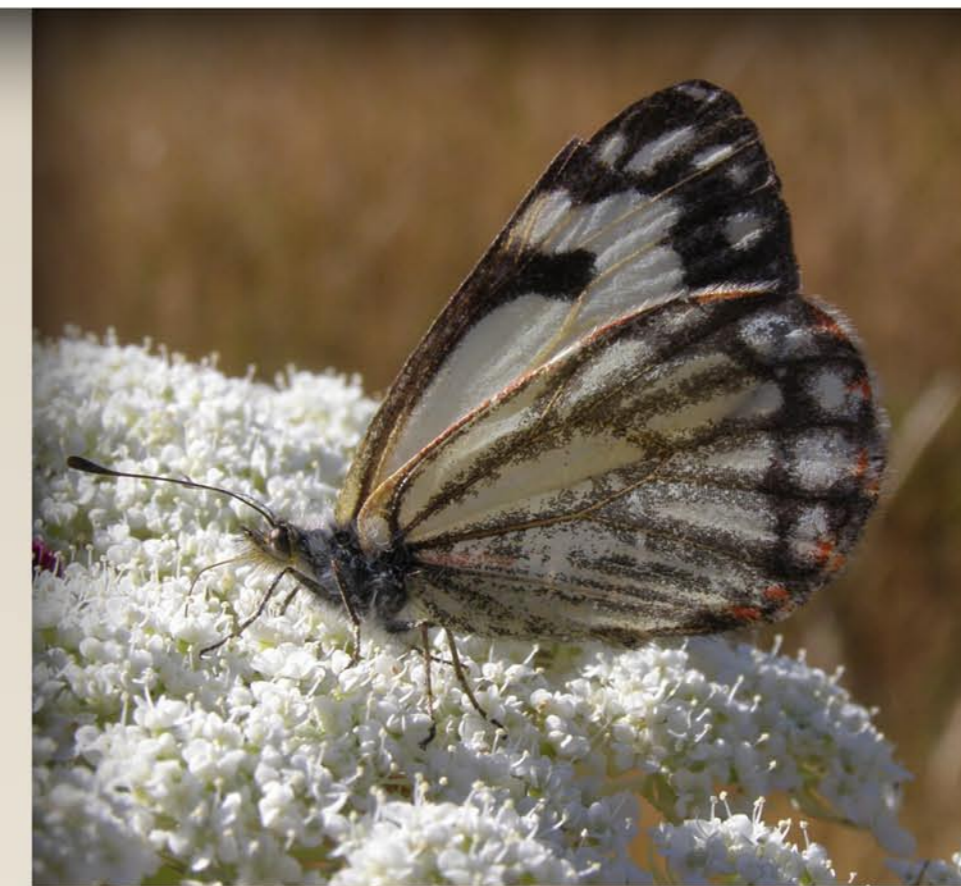
Fawn Lily



Welcome!

Cuthbert Holmes and Tillicum Parks are a natural oasis in the city. Enjoy this taste of wilderness, its rich bird life, and the Colquitz River with its rare urban run of wild Coho Salmon.

Pine White Butterfly



Mushrooms



Barred Owl

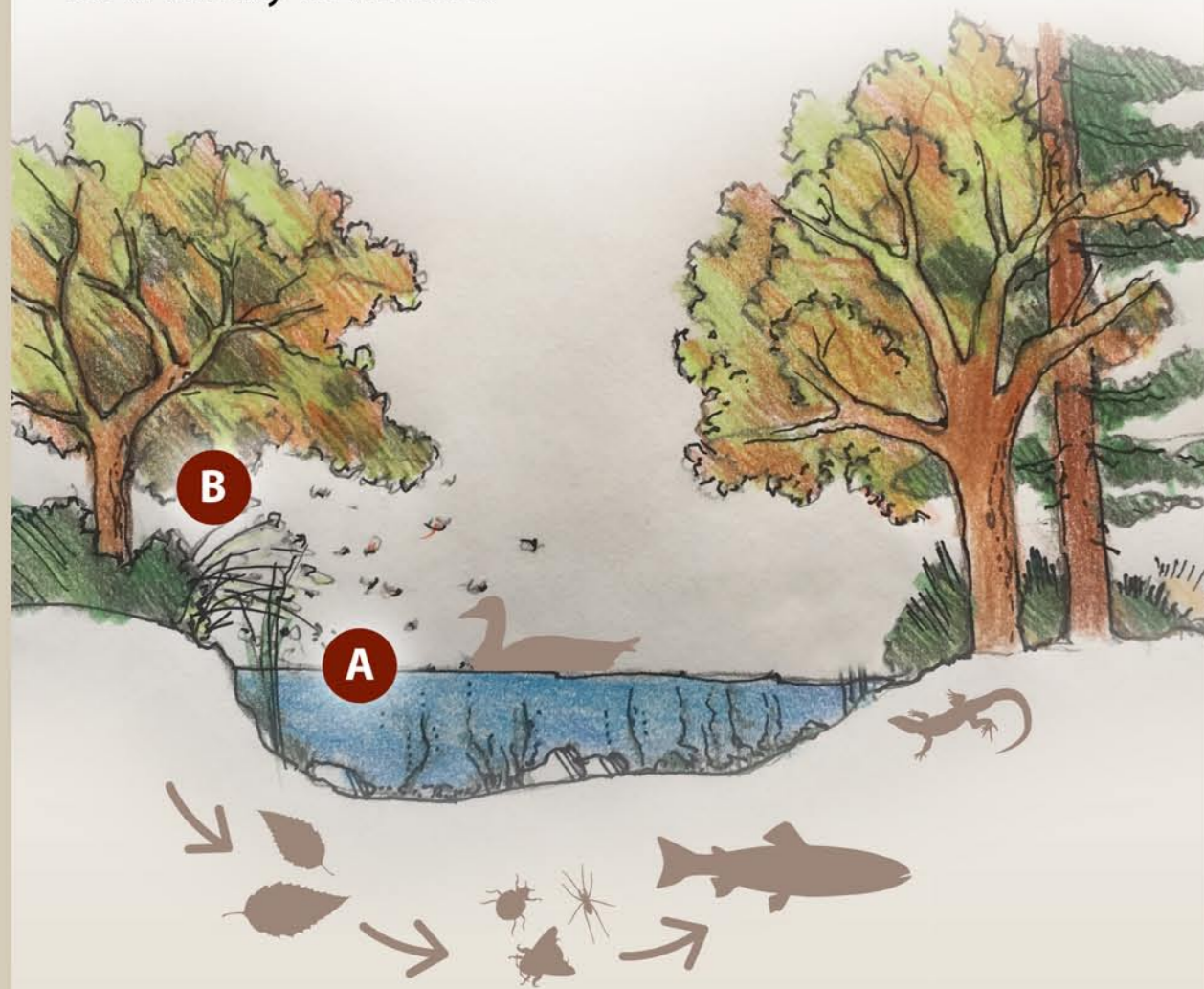


All photos by Angela Wyatt except as noted

The River

The Colquitz River is fed by Swan, Blenkinsop, O'Donnel, and Viaduct creeks, and Elk, Beaver, and Blenkinsop lakes. It ultimately flows into Portage Inlet – part of the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary. The Colquitz River is connected to the ocean via Portage Inlet and the Gorge Waterway, and the water in its estuary fluctuates with the tide.

The Colquitz River is a sensitive habitat (home) for a variety of wildlife:



A River Bed
The river channel, mudflats, and aquatic vegetation provides spawning and rearing grounds for young fish, and many invertebrates including mollusks. It also provides a variety of foods for waterfowl, and biofilm, which grows on the mudflats. Biofilm is an important food source for shore birds.

B Riparian Area
The vegetation along the river banks (riparian area) provides critical shade and cooling for the water, and stabilizes the soil. It is home to insects, nesting water birds, muskrats, mink, otters, raccoons, and others.

Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary



Did you know that the Colquitz River estuary has been part of the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary since Oct. 27, 1923? This sanctuary includes all tidal waters of Portage Inlet, the Gorge Waterway, Victoria Harbour and beyond to Cadboro Bay.

The sanctuary was established under the federal Migratory Bird Convention Act (1917), in light of dwindling bird numbers due to hunting – once popular in Portage Inlet. Low bird numbers are still a concern today.

This historic bird sanctuary features many wintering birds and other wildlife which are unusual in a city, like Coho Salmon, Pacific Herring, Olympia Oyster, Pacific Harbour Seal and Northern River Otter. The Colquitz River features the best estuary in this sanctuary.



Wildlife

The Colquitz River is home to a rare urban run of wild Coho Salmon, and sea-run Cutthroat Trout, Sculpins, Sunfish, and Stickleback. Visit the fish fence at the west edge of the Tillicum Mall parking lot in the fall to see our wild salmon returning to spawn.



Some of the parks' mammals are associated with the river, including mink, beavers and otters. Other mammals, including Black-tailed Deer, Red Squirrel, Wandering Shrew, Black Rat and the Deer Mouse, may be found throughout the parks. Watch for visiting otters and seals during the spawning season.

With its river, Douglas firs and other large trees, these parks are home to over 120 species of birds. If you are lucky you may see Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Belted Kingfisher, Cooper's Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Pacific Wren, Pileated Woodpecker, Anna's Hummingbird, Spotted Towhee and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. This is a remarkably wild oasis in the city.

You are also likely see Pacific Great Blue Herons. In 2007 these birds returned to the park after a 13 year absence, to establish the Island's largest breeding colony. The colony disappeared in 2010, but these beautiful birds continue to forage in the Colquitz River, and may establish a colony here again.



Help Protect the Creatures that Live In Cuthbert Holmes and Tillicum Parks

- ✓ **Stay On Trails**
Natural areas are affected by people and dogs leaving the trail. This off-trail travel can disrupt wildlife, damage vegetation and compact soil. Compacted soil and open ground give invasive plants a chance to get established; these plants provide less valuable habitat than the native plants they displace.
- ✓ **Keep Out Of the River**
Dogs (and people) in the river disturb birds and fish, especially during spring nesting and fall spawning season. The river's shallow water makes it extra hard for wildlife to escape danger and find refuge year-round.

Respect and protect the creatures that live here – please use only designated trails and keep dogs out of vegetation and out of the river.