

■ Outdoor recreation

Silver Scene

Silver Falls State Park offers 25 miles of scenic hiking trails and multiple picturesque waterfalls

BY ASHLEY GRIFFIN
OUTDOOR RECREATION REPORTER

In a forested landscape filled with mossy trees and cascading waterfalls, it's easy to imagine you're in a scene from "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy instead of in a state park near Salem.

Silver Falls State Park accomplishes this feat in a temperate rain forest with 25 miles of trails, multiple waterfalls and an abundance of Douglas fir, western hemlock and sword fern. Frequent rabbit, bird, deer and beaver sightings add to the illusion that hikers are in a fantastical world where nature reigns supreme.

"Students love the waterfalls, and day trips are easier for most busy schedules," said Suzanne Hanlon, the Outdoor Program's assistant coordinator. "This is a great trip rain or shine. If it rains there is more water in the falls and the hike is still fun; if it's sunny, that's nice too."

Numerous trails are suitable for walkers, runners and horseback riders. The 80-acre park also boasts four miles of paved bicycle paths that run around its ridge and 14 miles of horse trails.

The seven-mile Trail of Ten Falls is arguably the park's biggest draw. Also called the Canyon Trail, this packed dirt path delves deep into the forest, meanders past 10 waterfalls in the Silver Creek Canyon and then joins the Canyon Rim Trail to complete the loop.



JAKE GARTLAND | COURTESY

Silver Falls State Park near Salem offers 25 miles of trails for hiking or biking that take visitors by several waterfalls such as this one. In addition to the hiking and biking trails, the picturesque park offers 14 miles of horseback riding trails.

"I've only hiked the waterfall loop," Hanlon said. "It's so fun, so fulfilling. And the lure of the next waterfall really makes the miles fly."

The trail can require up to three hours to complete when considering appropriate amounts of time for nature appreciation. There are ample locations to stop for a picnic, soak in some sun or take some stunning pictures in front of the falls.

For hikers wanting to experience nature with a bit more brevity, shorter hikes are available. Hikers with multiple vehicles can also opt to leave a second car in the North Falls parking lot and drive the last two miles of the long hike.

"You can hike a variety of distances to suit your mood or ability level," Hanlon said. "Hike one, two or three miles and see a couple waterfalls,

hike five miles and see nine falls or hike the entire seven-mile loop to see all 10 falls."

The falls, as indicated by the park's name, are the real spectacle of the park. They range in height from South Falls' 177-foot plunge to the shorter but still spectacular

PARK, page 10a

■ Duck football

Ngata, defensive line impress in Oregon's spring practices

BY JON ROETMAN
SENIOR SPORTS REPORTER

Defense continues to be Oregon's strong point as the Ducks enter their third week of spring football practice.

Head coach Mike Bellotti has been quick to sing the praises of his first unit lately, including its performance during Saturday's scrimmage at Autzen Stadium. The offense, still learning a new system, was held to eight first downs in 75 plays and didn't score until late into the 1-hour-and-15-minute workout.

"I thought the defense outplayed, out-hit and out-hustled the offense today," Bellotti said Saturday. "It had nothing to do with scheme, it was just attitude and desire."

"I was very, very impressed with the first-team defense."

A solid chunk of Oregon's success can be attributed to its defensive line and its anchor — junior defensive tackle Haloti Ngata. The former five-star recruit from Utah's Highland High School has been wreaking havoc in the offensive backfield, blowing up plays before they ever get started. Listed at 6-foot-5 and 338 pounds, Ngata's nearly impossible to block one-on-one, and his presence on the field immediately upgrades a defense.

"Haloti is a great football player," Bellotti said. "He makes everybody around him better, because he attracts a lot of attention."

Ngata is the exception on a defensive line built with lighter, quicker athletes. Lining up next to the massive Salt Lake City native in the middle of Oregon's front four has been Matt Toeaina. After starting the spring at defensive end, Toeaina was moved to tackle to better utilize his talents. Listed at 6-foot-3 and 279 pounds, the junior will surely benefit from the double teams attracted by Ngata.

While Toeaina said he is equally capable of playing both positions, he said it's been an interesting transition back to the inside.

"It's different from being on the end," Toeaina said. "You're more free on the outside. When you're on the inside there's so much more going on, and you have to get back into the rhythm of having contact every single play."

On the outside, junior Victor Filipe — a former high school teammate of Ngata — has been impressive and has appeared to have earned a starting spot at defensive end. At 6-foot-2, 275 pounds, Filipe is a high-energy player who will provide a solid pass rush.

"I'm very pleased with Victor Filipe," Bellotti said. "He's made plays, he's played with high intensity and a high motor. He's got to eliminate mistakes, but he's playing fast, and I'm excited about his athleticism."

Senior Devan Long, who has missed the majority of spring drills with a hamstring injury, will be the other end. The 266-pound pass-rushing threat enters his third season as a starter and has solidified himself as one of the best in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Senior Darius Sanders has done an adequate job filling in during Long's absence.

Two young players that have shown promise but need to improve on their technique are sophomore defensive tackle David Faateete and redshirt freshman defensive end Devlin Bayne.

While the D line has certainly been impressive, its leader said there is still more work to be done.

"I think we need to make a lot of improvements in certain areas," Ngata said. "The D linemen need to work a lot on pass rush lanes and being stronger as a whole."

jonroetman@dailyemerald.com



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Senior defensive end Devan Long is a key element to Oregon's defensive line but has missed the majority of spring practices with a hamstring injury.