

# Outdoors

## HIDDEN TRAIL FEATURES BEAUTIFUL OLD-GROWTH



The Mike Miller Trail travels through old-growth forest near South Beach State Park outside Newport. PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

**Zach Urness**  
Salem Statesman Journal  
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In the Oregon Coast town of Newport, dramatic scenery grabs you from every direction.

From lighthouses to beaches, a historic bridge to the Oregon Coast Aquarium, it's full of obvious charms.

But hidden away in a nondescript part of town, away from the typical tourist hubs, sits a small park worth a visit.

It's called Mike Miller Educational Park. And while it doesn't seem like much, the 40-acre park features one of the most interesting hiking trails on the Central Coast.

The hike is 1.2 miles total — with possibilities for a longer outing. It has some steep sections that will challenge younger kids, but in general it's a great open-to-everyone hiking experience.

We visited the trail earlier this month during a trip to South Beach State Park, a classic place to play in the sand. After getting our fill of beach and sun, we decided to enjoy a forested option, and headed across Highway 101 to the Mike

Miller Trailhead.

The park opened in 1974 and is named for a judge and commissioner who fought for the site's purchase. In 2012, a donation added 6 acres and the new "Emery Trail" to the system of pathways, which allows the possibility of a longer trek.

It's easy to see why people are passionate about protecting this area.

The trail features an utterly unique combination of sand dunes, marshland and old-growth forest you only find intact in a few places on the coast. There's also an array of plants, animals and mushrooms you'll have the chance to come across.

The hike begins amid high rhododendron bushes and max-myrtle, creating a green tunnel in the forest. Keep left at the loop, and you'll follow the grade of an old railroad used during the first World War to carry logs used in early aircraft, according to the brochure you can pick up at the trailhead.

The trail is marked with numbers that correspond to interesting tidbits in the brochure.

Next, the trail crosses the first of



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three elegant footbridges and enters a dense old-growth forest of sitka spruce, Douglas-fir and western hemlock. The trees are enormous, and grow at odd angles, including one that grows sideways before bending upward, like the world's largest letter "L."

There are numerous fun places to explore with kids in this deep, shaded,

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### Mike Miller Trail

**In a nutshell:** Kid-friendly hike near South Beach State Park in Newport.

**Distance:** 1.2-mile loop, with options for a longer trip

**Climb:** 200 to 300 feet

**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate. There are some steep, muddy and uneven sections of trail.

**Best trip:** Add it onto a trip to Newport, Yaquina Head Lighthouse or South Beach State Park

**Directions:** From Newport, drive south on Highway 101, crossing the Yaquina Bay Bridge and heading another two miles. Turn left on S.E. 50th Street, following signs for Mike Miller Educational Trail. After a quarter mile, you'll see the trailhead on your left. Park in a pullout on the side of the road.

(If you reach South Beach State Park on Highway 101, you've gone just a bit too far).

**Coordinates:** 44.60180, -124.05204

## Fish and Wildlife stocks big brood trout in big ponds

**Fishing**  
Henry Miller  
Guest columnist



Brood trout are being loaded into a hatchery truck for delivery to Junction City Pond. The big ones are rolling again. HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

holding ponds that ran up to 15-plus pounds, some as much as 20 pounds, that were turned out in previous years.

"We used to do 4-year-olds, too," Hansen said about the Moby trout, adding that their productivity drops off significantly after year three.

Frequent readers of this column probably have the same opinion about retired outdoor writers.

As a personal aside, Hansen has one of the best all-time job descriptions that I've ever heard.

As the scheduler of hatchery deliveries, he is known as the department's "liberation coordinator."

"I know where every fish is going," he said jokingly. "At least on the west side," of the Cascade Range.

Vive truite libre!  
Sigh, another digression.

In addition to the bruisers planted this week, all three Willamette Valley ponds are scheduled to be stocked with "keeper-plus" size rainbows early next week during the run-up to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Junction City will get 1,000 fish, Waverly, 700, and Timber Linn Lake, 500.

Closer to home, Walter Wirth Lake in Cascade Gateway Park in Salem is set to get 1,300 keeper-plus trout early the week of Nov. 25.

Unfortunately, there weren't enough ripe spawners at Roaring River this week, Hansen said.

And fish spawned on Tuesdays have to be held for a week before being released, usually on the following Mondays.

Which means that the annual tradition of releasing "brooders" during Thanksgiving week won't happen this year.

But there will be many more runs of

bonus babies in the offing.

Roaring River has fired-up its record-ed Broodstock Hotline, which is updated on delivery days. For your speed dial, that number is (503) 394-3155, then press "2."

### Mushrooms

Concerned about a low turnout at a new venue, Kay and I dropped by to fluff up the attendance and rub elbows with the members of the Willamette Valley Mushroom Society at the group's fourth annual Mushroom Show.

It was an afternoon event on Nov. 17 at Painters Hall at the Sustainable Living Center in Salem.

After holding the event at the Salem Public Library the previous three years, a record 620-plus turned out for the free collection of displays, seminars, guided exhibit walk-and-talks and mushroom taste-testing.

People circling looking for parking spots should have been our first clue.

If you didn't get to the show, but would like to know more about the Salem-area group of wild-fungal enthusiasts, the society website is <https://www.wvmssalem.org/>

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