



Directions

SE 19th Avenue & SE Sparrow Street, Milwaukie

Access

Elk Rock Island is connected to the mainland by a 40-million-year-old land bridge. The island is accessible at low water at the Spring Park trailhead on SE 19th Avenue and Sparrow Street. Follow the hiking



Hiking trail on Elk Rock Island.

trails that wind around the bay and through the island. Enjoy the natural habitat while remaining on the designated paths to avoid the poison oak.

History

In the 1860s, the island became part of the original donation land claim of Milwaukie pioneer Lot Whitcomb. Several owners followed including the Rock Island Club, which operated a dance hall on the island. Scottish grain exporter and Portland businessman Peter Kerr (1862-1957) acquired the property in 1910.

Peter Kerr gave the island to the City of Portland in 1940 with the requirement that it be preserved in its natural state. As Kerr put it, “Preserve it as a pretty place for all to enjoy.” On October 29, 1954, the Kerr formally dedicated Peter Kerr Park with a bronze plaque.

Geology

The geology of Elk Rock Island is unique in the Portland area and offers a significant opportunity for interpretation and education. It is particularly interesting to geologists because the basalt is well exposed.

The island represents part of an ancient volcano that erupted about 40 million years ago. The lava flows formed the predominant bedrock called Waverly Heights Basalt. Large and jagged, the basalt may be the oldest exposed rock in the Portland area. It substantially predates the more common Columbia River Basalts which formed 10 to 25 million years ago.



Driftwood on basalt shoreline



Pond surrounded by lush vegetation.

Habitat

Seven habitat communities have been identified on the Island:

- Willamette River Floodplain
- Emergent Wetland
- Mesic Upland Forest
- Riparian Forest
- Cliff Face
- Xeric Upland Forest
- Willamette Valley Grassland

Each of these communities provide food, cover, roosting, wintering and summer breeding habitat for numerous species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

“The respect we show our natural areas will be returned to us now and in the future.... It’s in our hands.”

Brochure funded by the City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services and Portland Parks & Recreation in cooperation with the Friends of Elk Rock Island and the Island Station Neighborhood in the City of Milwaukie.