

Outdoor Activity – Check out Scatter Creek!

The Olympian/Chester Allen

Prime nature views within Scatter Creek Wildlife Area

- **Where:** South of Littlerock, near the intersection of Case Road and 180th Street
- **To do:** Scatter Creek is 1,200 acres of prairie and oak woodlands, with access to Scatter Creek. Much of Western Washington's prairie and oak lands have vanished, but Scatter Creek still is open grassland dotted with oak stands. Scatter Creek's wildlife gets very active this time of year — especially during warm days. From now through early summer is the time to visit Scatter Creek, and see the area come alive with singing, nesting and flying birds. Right now, bluebirds are checking out the nesting boxes scattered around the wildlife area, red-winged blackbirds are near the creek and red-tailed hawks are lurking in search of prey. It's fun to visit Scatter Creek every week or so, as a huge variety of birds that love open prairie, oak woodlands and wetlands are headed for Scatter Creek to nest. Scatter Creek is one of South Sound's best birding spots, but it might be the best place to find a garter snake enjoying a sunny afternoon.

Spring, which is just around the corner, attracts wildflower-lovers and bird watchers to Scatter Creek. Camas and other wildflowers will bloom at Scatter Creek in a few weeks. From April 1 to July 31, Scatter Creek will close to horseback riding to protect ground-nesting birds, butterflies and rare plants. Dogs also must be on leashes during this time, and visitors must stay on the Inner Loop Trail. Visitors during this time see great wildflower displays and a lot of nesting and mating birds.

- **Wildlife:** Most hunting — except for pheasant hunting — is not allowed at Scatter Creek. It's possible to see blacktail deer, beaver, otter, muskrat, fox, deer, bobcat, rabbit, coyote and other wildlife at Scatter Creek. Birdwatchers see herons, ducks, red-tailed hawks, kingfishers, killdeer, meadowlarks and other birds in season.
- **Directions:** From Olympia, take Interstate 5 south to the Littlerock/Maytown exit. Take Maytown Road to Case Road. Turn left on Case Road. Turn right at 180th Street and follow the street to a gravel road. The parking area for the main Scatter Creek entrance is on the right. Another access point is on Case Road, 0.80 miles north of 180th Street.
- **Rules:** No plant or insect collecting without a special permit. No camping or bicycles allowed. No rifle or pistol shooting allowed. All dogs must be on a leash from April 1 to July 31. Fishing season opens June 1 and closes Oct. 31. Visitors must display a state Department of Fish and Wildlife Vehicle Use Permit if they park at the area. The permits come with fishing or hunting licenses or cost \$10 if purchased without a license. For a list of permit sellers, go to wdfw.wa.gov.
- **Equipment:** Hiking shoes, cameras, binoculars, spotting scopes, water bottles, food, sunscreen, sunglasses and rain gear come in handy.

- **Look for:** Remnant Mima Mounds in parts of the area. Mima Mounds are the mounds that dot prairie lands in some parts of Western Washington. Scientists believe the mounds were the work of pocket gopher colonies, the remains of glaciers or both.
- **Bathrooms:** There are toilets at the 180th Street parking area and the parking area 0.80 miles north on Case Road.
- **More information:** Call 253-589-7235 or go to wdfw.wa.gov.



This garter snake was out basking in the warm sun. It's common to see garter snakes at Scatter Creek from early spring — or even late winter — through fall. Warm days bring out a lot of garter snakes. Walk softly, and you'll see them everywhere. Mature garter snakes eat small fish, insects, rodents and young birds — which is probably why these snakes are so plentiful at Scatter Creek. (Chester Allen/The Olympian)
