

Salmon Watch[®]

EAGLE CREEK GORGE – Upper & Lower

Located in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

Allow approximately 45 minutes driving time from downtown Portland.

DIRECTIONS:

From Portland: Take I-84 eastbound to exit #41. The exit is just past the Bonneville Dam exit and just after a tunnel; you'll see the sign "Fish Hatchery/Eagle Creek Recreation Area". From Hood River: Take I-84 westbound, take the Bonneville Dam exit #40 and "backtrack" on I-84 to exit #41.

UPPER SITE: If your trip is scheduled to use the upper site, it is at the end of the road, by the intake dam and Eagle Creek Trailhead #440. The bus can drop off students and then park at the large parking area by the hatchery.

LOWER SITE: If your trip is scheduled to use the lower site, it is at the small pullout parking/picnic area across from the suspension bridge. The bus can park at the large parking area by the hatchery and the students can walk down to the pullout parking/picnic area.

NOTE #1: To return west to Portland, you must first go east on I-84 and "backtrack" from exit #44, Cascade Locks.

NOTE #2: The Forest Service has introduced a parking fee program for trailheads. NW Forest Passes (either an annual or daily pass \$5) are required for all car parking. BUSES DO NOT NEED A PASS. Please mention this to your volunteers if they plan to drive themselves. We will provide passes for volunteers in the equipment kit, please be sure they are all returned to the kit.

NOTE #3: There are restrooms at this location, close to both the upper & lower sites. The Forest Service shuts the main restrooms down in late October/early November for the winter, but portable restrooms will be available at the trailhead.

BACKGROUND: The Oregon side of the Gorge presents the highest concentration of high waterfalls in North America, 77 falls within 420 square miles, and the Eagle Creek Trail allows spectacular access to at least 11 of the natural treasures. Eagle Creek flows 15 miles north from the slopes of Mt. Hood. It is not accessible by road except at the mouth and at the extreme headwaters.

The Cascade Fish Hatchery is a coho salmon hatchery operated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Although it is located along Eagle Creek, the fish raised at the hatchery are shipped to other areas in Oregon, including the hatchery at Bonneville Dam. We ask if you decide to visit a hatchery that you address the difference between hatchery and wild fish with your students. A hatchery activity is available in the Salmon Watch curriculum to assist you in planning.

SALMON VIEWING: This is a great site for salmon viewing. The fish you will see spawning in the creek are chinook and coho, and will be a mix of both wild and hatchery fish. There is great salmon viewing all along the road from the hatchery to the trailhead at the end of the road.

MACROINVERTEBRATES:

This is an excellent site for macroinvertebrate sampling. The best place to set up this station is above the hatchery's fenced-in water intake facility located at the trailhead. The fish are unable to swim above the small dam there, so you will be well away from both redds and spawning salmon.

WATER QUALITY:

Again, the best place to set up this station is above the water intake facility, which will assure that you are away from the fish.

NATURE HIKE/RIPARIAN STUDY:

The Eagle Creek trail is one of the most popular trails in Oregon. Spectacular scenery and an old growth forest ecosystem will give you much to see along the trail or in the picnic area. There are petrified stumps located along the trail which students can observe, as well as good views of riparian areas and forest plants.

ITEMS OF INTEREST:

METLAKO FALLS: If you have the time, the 150-ft. Metlako Falls is 1.5 miles up the Eagle Creek Trail. It was named for an Indian Goddess of the Salmon. On parts of this trail there are sheer cliffs with no guardrails, so this hike may not be suitable for young students.

ICE STORM: In December 1996 an ice storm in the area caused damage to both the recreation area and the hatchery. Eagle Creek was filled with debris and ice, and the hiking bridge across the creek to the interpretive trail was heavily damaged. At the hatchery, the adult holding pond was filled with ice and 700,000 fingerling coho were killed.

BONNEVILLE SLIDE: The area across the Columbia River is the site of the Bonneville Slide, which scientists believe occurred 250-400 years ago. A series of landslides originating from Table Mountain temporarily blocked the Columbia River with a 200-ft. high dam comprised of debris, causing the river channel to move one mile to the south and creating the four lakes located just west of Stevenson. The slide is also believed to be the source of the Native American legend of the Bridge of the Gods.

FISH LADDER: The Bonneville Dam fish ladder fish-viewing center will give students a different perspective on the life of a salmon. The Bonneville fish hatchery raises both chinook and coho salmon. Students can also view rainbow trout and white sturgeon in the hatchery's display ponds.

CONTACTS:

Columbia Gorge Ranger District, USFS 503-695-2276
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Cascade Hatchery 541-374-8381
www.dfw.state.or.us/ODFWhtml/FishProp/ice/ice.html

REFERENCES:

Oregon Field Guide Episode #1105 "Bridge of the Gods", Oregon Field Guide website:
www.obp.org/ofg/1105/bridge/

Hill, R. "A new look at an old landslide", The Oregonian, Sept. 29, 1999, p. B9.

MEDICAL FACILITIES IN THE AREA:

Hood River Memorial Hospital 811 13th Street, Hood River OR 541-3863911