

EAST PORTLAND PARKS COALITION MEETING  
5/5/2022

This meeting was called to discuss the topic of Backyard Habitat Certification. Before the main speaker, Micah Meskel, began we had announcements for upcoming summer programs from the PP&R staff.

Alicia Hammock, PP&R Free Lunch + Play Supervisor, gave the first group of announcements. The website for the Gateway Discovery Park has been updated and the Free Lunch + Play schedule is up. Also, Stephanie Madrid announced events happening at Gateway Discovery Park this summer. That schedule was also being completed by Alicia on the PP&R website.

Jarrell Hosley then made announcements for the Summer Free For All events schedule. The first East Portland Arts Festival is to take place on July 9-10 in Ventura Park. Arts and kids' activities are to take place in the afternoon from 2-4, and the headliners are to come on from 6-8 pm. On Saturday, a live band with a Japanese calligrapher and a Tongan dance group are to perform. Sunday headliner is TBA. After the East Portland Arts Festival is done, then the other SFFA events will occur on Thursdays-Saturdays until September 3. These events will include concerts, movies, and comedy acts. The schedule is to be finalized soon with flyers coming out in June.

Jeremiah Sazdanoff then made announcements for Free Lunch + Play. The program will be run from 23 park sites including Ventura Park and Lincoln Park from 11-3. The mobile program will serve additional sites, including some apartment complexes. The programs will run June 21 – August 19 for some sites and June 27 to August 26 for others. There will be community engagement, arts, and other traveling programs in the play part of the program. Volunteers are needed for this program. They are also hiring 17 and up for both part- and full-time jobs.

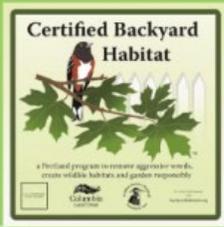
After these announcements were completed, Micah Meskel, Activist Program Manager for Portland Audubon's Conservation Program, talked to the group about the Audubon Backyard Certification Program and other related programs.

Meskel first talked about the Greening Wilkes Project, as this is happening in East Portland and leads into the main topic of backyard habitats. Four organizations -- Portland Audubon Society, Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Friends of Trees, and Verde -- are involved in habitat restoration of the old farm in Wilkes neighborhood which is the intended site of a twenty-acre nature park called Wilkes Headwaters. It is also the site of a spring which produces the only natural stream emptying into the Columbia Slough. This association of restoration specialists had recently done work in the park and conducted a tour of the project on Earth Day weekend 2022.

In addition to the Wilkes Headwaters project, the backyard certification program is working with 15 adjacent landowners to expand the natural habitat into their properties. This combination of residential and public habitats is expected to greatly increase the effectiveness of the restoration.

The Backyard Habitat Certification is a program which includes habitat, street tree planting, rain garden and native plant installations in multifamily and single-family residences. Six thousand people are participating in the Portland metropolitan area. The Portland Audubon Society wants the program to be accessible to all, so size of the project does not matter.

## How the program works



1. Sign-up (small, 1 time cost)
2. Initial site visit with Habitat Technician (1 hour)
3. Resource Packet, with resources & coupons
4. In progress sign
5. Customized site report
6. Follow up support



When ready.....

1. Certification visit with a volunteer
2. Certification sign, recognition and "benefits"
3. Upgrades (whenever) and renewals (3+ years)

To get started on the program, the applicant signs up and pays a small, one-time fee. He or she then gets a one-hour visit with a Habitat Technician who discusses the project and gives them a resource packet with resource lists and coupons and an in-progress sign. They get a customized site report and follow-up support for their project. When ready, their successful project is certified by a volunteer, and the owner is given a sign, recognition and other benefits. The installation is recertified every 3 years and upgrades are encouraged as well.

## The 5 elements of the program



1. Remove  
Noxious Plants



2. Plant Locally  
Native Plants



3. Reduce Pesticide  
Use



4. Support  
Wildlife



5. Manage Stormwater  
on site

The program has 5 goals which apply to each project, which in turn create a better habitat: removal of noxious weeds, planting local native plants, reduction of pesticide and herbicide use, support of wildlife,

and management of stormwater onsite. Their overall plan is to build habitat connectivity throughout the urban landscape. A couple of details Meskel mentioned are the preservation of dead tree snags and support for the mason bee, Oregon's native pollinator. For more information and to get started, contact the Portland Audubon Society [Backyard Habitat Certification Program - Portland Audubon \(audubonportland.org\)](https://audubonportland.org).

Meskel also mentioned two other Audubon programs which complement the habitat restoration. Their Lights Out program is aimed at reducing the amount of light broadcast out and up from property. Light is disruptive to wildlife and particularly disruptive to migrating birds. They also recommend the use of window decals to prevent bird deaths.

Another program mentioned was naturescaping classes. These are free from the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District. Here's the link to the program: [Naturescaping | EMSWCD](#) Portland Bureau of Environmental Services also has a rain gardens program.

In the Q & A period, Carol asked Meskel to discuss the implications of large amounts of multifamily housing being built in East Portland that is contributing to habitat destruction. Meskel said that, despite recommendations for preservation submitted to the City of Portland by organizations such as his, the city went with a tree code that calls for mitigation measures such as the planting of new trees rather than preservation.

Another participant was concerned because Friends of Trees, who for years had been working with volunteers to provide street trees in the city, was not having their partnership with the city renewed. The Portland BES will be attempting to fill the shoes of this very successful program.

Carol S. Hasenberg