

Oak Knoll Restoration

at Hendricks Park



This 1908 photograph shows an old oak which still survives on the southwest ridge of Hendricks Park. *Photo courtesy of Lane County Historical Museum*

History

Oak woodland and savanna covered much of the southern Willamette Valley for thousands of years prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans in the 19th century. Today, oak habitat is among the most threatened habitat types in North America. Once estimated to have covered over 400,000 acres in the Willamette Valley alone, it has since been reduced to less than seven percent of its historic range. In the Willamette Valley, much of the oak habitat was replaced by expanding agriculture and urban development. Some small pockets of historic oak habitat did survive on steeper terrain on public and private land in Hendricks Park, Skinner Butte, Gillespie Butte,

Mount Pisgah, and several locations along the Ridgeline Park system.

When the 78 acres of Hendricks Park were acquired in 1906 it was a mosaic of prairie, oak savanna, and oak woodland with a small presence of Douglas fir. Over the last 100 years the park has become a predominately Douglas fir forest but there is a remnant oak knoll that has survived and represents a valuable example of a threatened ecosystem.

Significance

Oak habitat forms a crucial part of the ecosystem in the Willamette Valley. Researchers discovered that approximately 200 species of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, including several rare species, use oak forest habitat. In addition, these ecosystems connect us to the cultural history of the landscape, improve the livability of our community, and provide some ecological balance to our

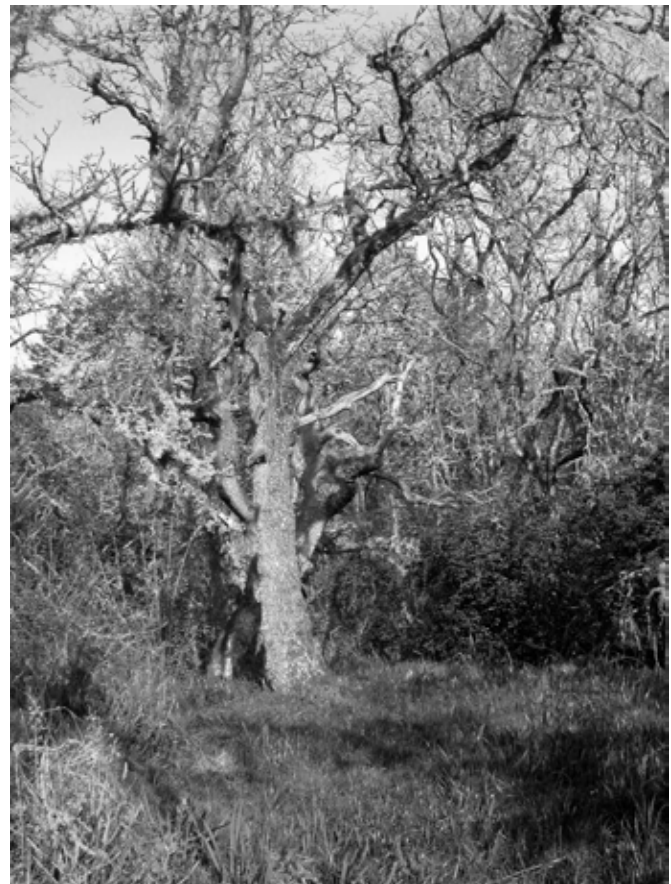


area. Given the important role that oak habitat plays in our local ecosystem and the fact that the viability of this habitat type is threatened, the City of Eugene, The Friends of Hendricks Park, local non-profit restoration organizations, and private citizens are working toward its restoration.

Restoration & Future

The remaining oak knoll in Hendricks Park was considered so valuable that its protection and restoration was specifically identified as an objective in the Hendricks Park Forest Management Plan — a plan that was developed in 2000 with the help of citizens, park staff, and natural resource experts. Over time, the oak knoll at Hendricks Park has become greatly compromised by invasive species such as ivy, blackberry, and vinca which are dominating the understory and destroying the diverse native vegetation that supports local species. Douglas fir trees have also encroached on the oaks, blocking out their sun.

The restoration process will include removing understory invasives, cultivating and planting native vegetation, and some thinning of the Oregon white oak to improve the survivability of individual trees. A limited number of Douglas fir trees (less than 25 trees total) will be utilized to create snags to provide critical nesting habitat or felled and removed from the project area. The oak knoll at Hendricks Park will serve as a living museum, giving visitors of all ages the chance to experience the beauty of an oak forest right in their backyard.

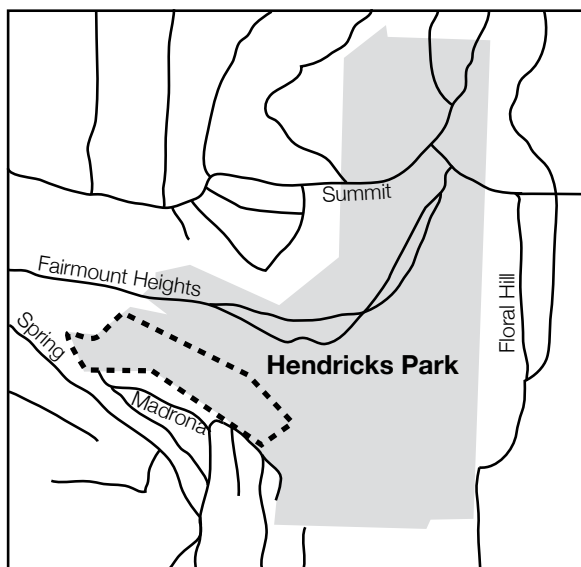


This restoration project is a partnership between the City of Eugene and The Friends of Hendricks Park.

For more information contact:

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