

Mike Miller Trail Quest

Established: July 2021 by Sachiko Otsuki, Cheryl Horton, Ema Parker and Cait Goodwin. Illustrations by Ema Parker (newt) and Sachiko Otsuki

Box Monitor: Wilder Neighborhood

Explore Lincoln County's Mike Miller Park, which features a mature coastal Sitka spruce and western hemlock forest. As you walk among the large trees, listen for bird calls, watch small animals, and discover native plants and fungi. The well-maintained trail includes some hills, a few bridges, and several benches. A series of numbered posts along the trail and on your map are connected to an older interpretive trail guide; Some of the posts are referenced in this Quest, and others are not. The trailhead and map kiosk is located 0.2 miles east of Hwy 101 on SE 50th Street in South Beach, immediately south of Newport. Parking is available at the trailhead for vehicles, and there is a bike rack as well.

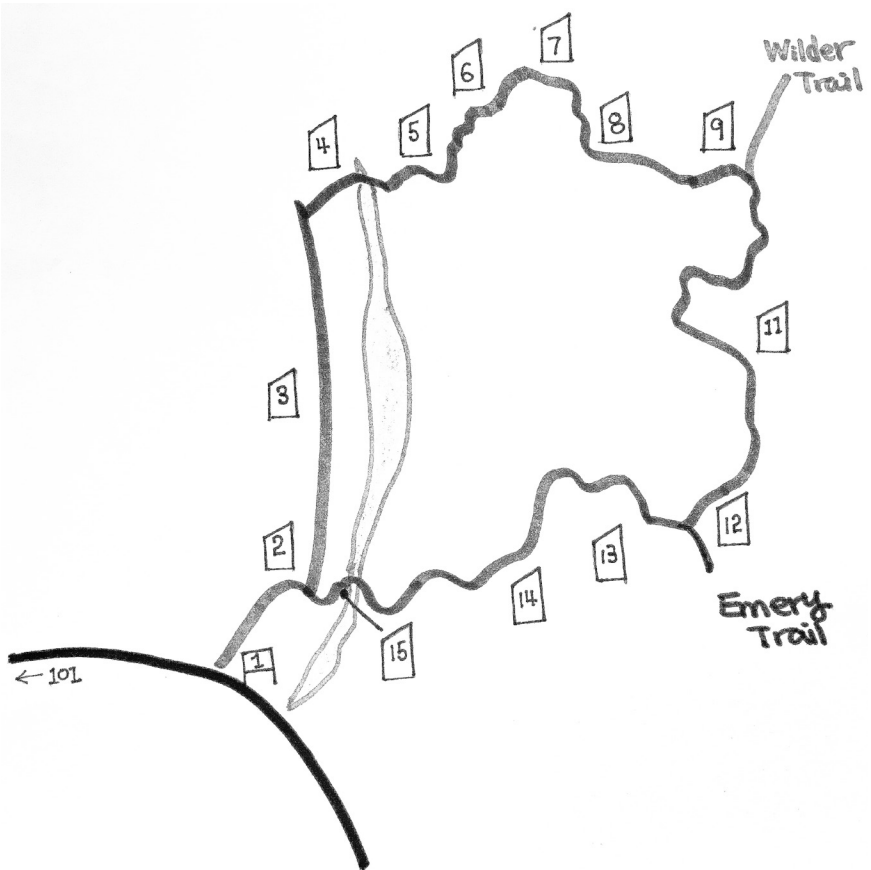
Take care as you walk. In some sections the trail is uneven, covered with exposed roots, or muddy, and the park is closed during storms and high winds. Please stay on the path, and do not pick flowers or berries. Dogs are permitted on the trail, but please bring a bag so you can pick up and pack out waste. This Quest will take approximately 1 hour to complete.

Let's begin!

Mike Miller was a judge and commissioner in Lincoln County. This park was dedicated to him when it opened in 1974. The trail was built by the Youth Conservation Corps in the 1970's and improved by the Angell Job Corps in the late 1980's.

Begin your Quest at the Mike Miller Park trailhead sign, and find your position on the map. This Quest will take you in a clockwise loop through an old growth forest, following the numbered points of interest.

Use this map to help you solve the Quest. Follow the directions and collect the letter clues to fill the numbered squares on the last page of this Quest. The message you complete will help you find the hidden Quest box.

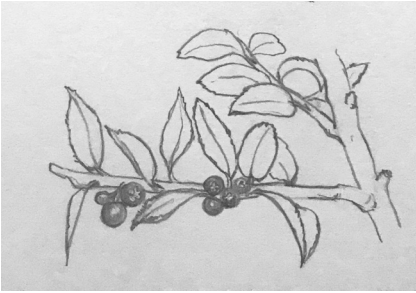


Quest Partners

Wilder Neighborhood • Lincoln County Parks

Notice the straight line on the trailhead map next to numbers 1, 2, and 3. What does that line indicate?

Just beyond the entrance sign, walk past the bike rack and start along the trail. In this section, see if you can identify the huckleberry bushes along the side of the trail.



Huckleberries

Huckleberries are shrubs that produce small berries in late summer. The berries are eaten by birds and mammals.

At the first junction, the trail splits. One trail is named after Will Emery, a developer who donated 5.8 acres of land adjacent to Mike Miller Park.

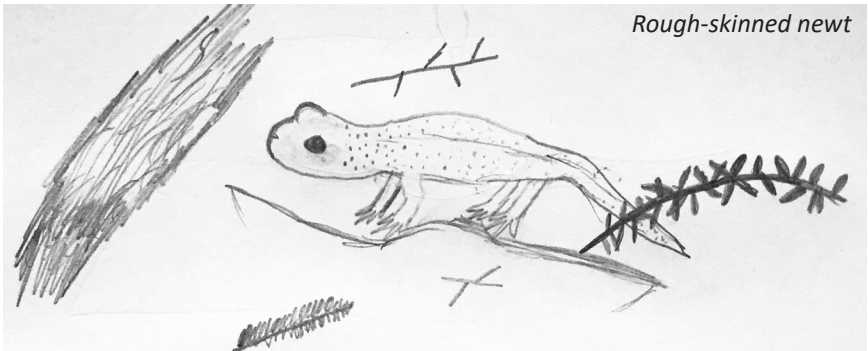
But for this Quest, go left to stay on the Mike Miller Trail, and stay left to remain on the straight path.

Stop when you find post #3 on your right. Why is the trail so straight in this section? This part of the path used to be part of a railroad bed. During World War I, a logging railroad carried spruce logs from Yachats to Yaquina Bay. The spruce logs were used for airplane construction.

Notice the rhododendrons that line both sides of the historic railroad bed. These plants bloom in May and show off bright pink flowers.

Before moving on, check the back of post #3 for a letter clue that has been left for you to find. Write the letter in square number one of your hidden message.

While on this Quest, keep an eye out for rough skinned newts that may be walking across the path. Be careful not to step on them!



Rough-skinned newt

Continue along the trail as it turns up and to the right. Watch your footing as you scramble over roots, and stop when you get to a bridge.

Check the map. Can you find where you are now?

At the end of the bridge, notice the large stump on which smaller plants are growing. When fallen or cut trees like this decay, they serve as nurse logs, providing nutrients and support for new seedlings.

What does this stump tell you about the history of the land? This forest has been logged in the past.

Continue on the trail, and look for nurse logs and interesting tree shapes as you go. Stop when you get to post #6.

Here at post #6, look around at the trees. Find a large Sitka spruce, and look up the trunk to see shelf



Nurse stump

mushrooms or “conks”, and ferns growing on it. Keep looking up. Do you see any branches or needles?

No, because this is a snag; a standing dead tree. Snags provide structure and important habitat for many animals including birds like woodpeckers.

Examine the spruce bark and find spruce cones on the ground. Spruce cones are soft and about the size of your thumb.

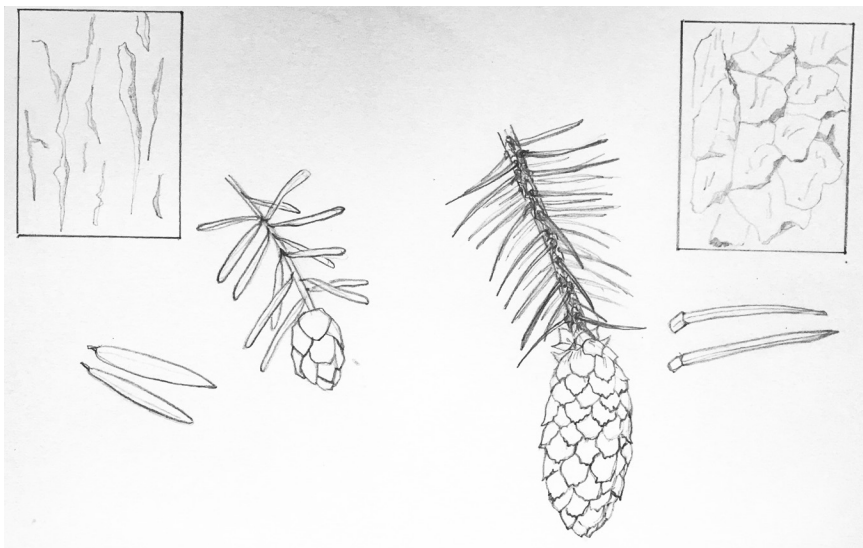
Do you also see smaller cones, about the size of an almond, on the ground? These small cones are from western hemlocks, the other common conifer in this forest.

Before moving on, check behind post #6 for the next letter clue. Write the letter in square number two of your hidden message.

Continue walking until you reach post #7 which stands in front of a downed tree or “tip up”. From this spot, you can see a large root wad. Notice how the root system spreads out instead of going straight down. What do you think caused this tree to fall? What kind of tree is this?

As you continue walking, you will pass a bench. After the bench, stop at post #8.

There are two trees behind post #8. Can you observe differences between these two trees? Look at the bark,



Cones, bark and needles of western hemlock (L) and Sitka spruce (R)

needles, and cones. What kind of trees are these?

Answer: The tree on the left is a Sitka spruce, and the tree on the right is a western hemlock.

Conks



Take a look behind you. You may see a snag with conks sticking out from the trunk, like shelves. These fungi hold moisture, and you may notice drops of water on their surfaces.

Check behind post #8 for the next clue. Write this letter in square number three of your hidden message.

As you are walking toward post #9, look up occasionally to observe the tree canopy. Can you see the sky? When the canopy opens up, a shrub called salal can be found growing on either side of the trail.

When you reach post #9, there will be two trail signs. The "Wilder Trail" leads to the Wilder neighborhood and the Oregon Coast Community College. We're not going that way.



Salal

To get the next clue, look at the other sign. Take the last letter from the second word of the name of the trail and write it in square number four of your hidden message. Then, continue following that trail.

Today we can still see signs of this area's logging history. Sometimes you can see cuts on a stump that were clearly made by an axe or saw. For example, shortly after passing a bench, look to your right to find a nurse stump with an obvious wedge-shaped cut near its base.

When you get to the bridge, stop and find your place on the map.

Close your eyes and listen. Do you hear water flowing? Can you hear the ocean or the highway? Do you hear birds?

Walk up the steps from the bridge and keep going until you get to post #11. Then continue on the trail and look for a long, horizontal log ahead, covered

in moss. You can get a good look at its tipped up root wad at its end on your right.

Pass another bench on your left, and then look on your right for a stump with a notch in its side. Can you find it? This may have been a springboard cut. A springboard was a plank that loggers could stand on while they cut the tree, and they made the notch to help insert the plank into the trunk (photo right).

Ahead on the trail, the canopy opens up again. When you get to post #12 and look up. This is a good place to look and listen for bald eagles that might be perched high in the trees or soaring overhead.

Check behind post #12 for the next clue. Write this letter in square number five of your hidden message.

At the next junction, have a seat on the bench and take a deep breath. What does the forest smell like here?

Before you move on, check behind post #13 for the next clue. Write this letter in square number six of your hidden message.

Walk down into the dark, until you cross another small metal bridge with no handrails. Is there water under this bridge today? If so, which direction is the water flowing? Where does the water go?

Stop at post #14 and notice a change in the forest ahead. How do these hemlock trees compare in size and shape to the trees in the forest you just passed through?

Check behind post #14 for the next clue. Write this letter in square number seven of your hidden message.

Follow the trail down, and duck under the tunnel formed by a fallen spruce. Feel the squishy wood as you pass underneath.

Cross a small bridge and then a bench, and then walk down the steps to a big bridge. When you get to the middle of the bridge, stop and turn around to look back at where you came from.

What kind of big tree stands on the north side of the bridge (on your left)? That's right, it's a Sitka spruce!

What kind of tree is on the south side of the bridge, leaning toward the platform? The answer will help you find your next clue. Take the last letter of



Springboard in use (Photo provided by the Lincoln County Historical Society)

the name of the tree on the right and put it in square number 8.

Before you leave the bridge, look down into the water. Are there any rough skinned newts swimming in the water today? In early spring, adult newts migrate here to mate and lay their eggs in the water, and some will stay for a while before returning to the forest.

Now you have all your letter clues! What does your hidden message say?

Continue forward on the trail and you will soon be connected back to the beginning of the loop. Look for the hidden box near where your secret message indicates.

Fill in the boxes with the answers to the clues to solve the Quest.

--	--	--	--

7 5 8 2

--	--	--	--

4 3 6 1

When you've found the Quest Box, sign your name and stamp the back of your book to mark your accomplishment. Don't forget to seal the box tightly and return it to its hiding place for the next person to find!

*If you enjoyed this Quest, check out *The Oregon Coast Quest Book 2023-24 Edition*, which contains maps and directions for this Quest and 29 other clue-directed hunts across seven counties. For more information and to find a bookseller, visit seagrant.oregonstate.edu/quests.*