

Bearbones Mountain

Location & USGS Map

T23S.R2E.S25, 36, Bearbones Mountain

Difficulty

Easy to moderate
(short, but steep and not well-maintained)

Distance

2.0 miles round trip to summit,
plus ~.5 mile more for ridge

Elevation gain

900 feet (3950'–4910')

Bloom Period

late May to July, peak in June

Highlights

lots of rock habitat, unusual plants

Directions

Drive east on Hwy 58 for 2 miles past Oakridge. Turn right toward the Hills Creek Dam onto Kitson Springs Road. After .5 mile turn right onto Rd 21, "Diamond Drive". Follow Rd 21 for 16.3 miles. Turn right at Rd 2127. Cross a bridge and continue on Rd 2127 for 3.9 miles. The road soon turns to gravel. Stay right onto what is now Rd 5850. Continue for 3.5 miles to a hiker symbol sign on right. Park along left side of the road.

This little-known mountain in the southern part of Lane County is part of the Calapooya Mountains and has many plants more common to the south and east. Few people venture to this old lookout site and the trail is not regularly maintained. But for those who love rocky habitat, it is well worth the visit.

The trail begins in a stretch of open old growth woods with numerous wildflowers including a number of tiger lilies in July. A logged stretch with considerable bracken and thimbleberry follows and can get overgrown as the summer progresses. More statuesque old Douglas-firs cover most of the rest of the small mountain with a small amount of undergrowth, giving the place a park-like feel. At one of several switchbacks up the steep hillside, there is a rock outcrop area off to the side where you can see the first of the abundant Mahala mat, as well as a patch of Sierra cliffbrake, both quite rare in Lane County. The summit is open and rocky, with a 360° view of southeastern Lane County down to Douglas County including many of the high peaks. Many beautiful wildflowers clothe the rocks including cliff and hotrock penstemons, Cascade daisy, spotted saxifrage and cliff paintbrush, almost at the southern end of its range.

For an extra treat follow the trail back off the top, but just before you leave the open area, head downhill and turn hard to your left (southeast) into the woods. Head for the light off to the left and in 100' or so you will pop out onto a long, stepped ridge with even more rock-loving beauties including countless death camas, delphiniums, leafy fleabane and Olympic onions, 3 kinds of buckwheats, and masses of the darling little spring phacelia.



In addition to the old lookout site at the top of Bearbones, there is a long open ridge just off to the southeast. Both offer great views and a vast amount of rocky habitat and many flowers for such a short trail. Oregon sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) and several buckwheats (*Eriogonum* sp.) decorate the ridge in early July.



Mahala mat (*Ceanothus prostratus*) forms prostrate mats in dry, open areas, rooting at the nodes as it spreads. Its small evergreen leaves are reminiscent of holly, although there may be only a few teeth near the tip. The fragrant flowers vary from deep to pale lavender. Normally found farther to the south, it is abundant on Bearbones Mountain from late May into June.