

Groundhog Mountain

Location & USGS Map

T23S.R4E.S9,16,21; Groundhog Mountain

Difficulty and Elevation

Easy, roadside stops (no trail), ~5000–6000'

Bloom period

late June to late August

Highlights

numerous meadows, rare plants, butterflies

Directions

Drive 2 miles east of Oakridge on Hwy. 58 and turn right onto Kitson Springs County Road. After .5 mile turn right onto Rd. 21. Head south on 21 around Hills Creek Reservoir. 1.5 miles past the bridge, turn left onto 2120, Buck Creek Rd. After about 6.6 miles stay straight (left) at intersection (the right leads to Moon Point). Road is now 2309. At the next intersection with Rd. 440, 1.4 miles farther, also stay left. Continue for another 1.9 miles and you'll see Rd. 451 to the left that leads to Waterdog Lake .3 mile below and Little Groundhog Mtn (the giant meadow seen from the road). Stay on 2309 for another .4 mile and go left at the intersection (still 2309, the right leads to the Warner Lookout and Moon Point). Continue down the hill for .6 mile from the intersection and you'll see Rd. 452 heading uphill to the left (this seldom-used road may have many fallen rocks). Farther up Rd. 452 (1.7 miles from the intersection) the abandoned Rd. 454 is on the right. In another .6 mile two very small lakes lie just off to the right. Back to the intersection of 2309, return south .7 mile and veer left up Rd. 437 for .6 mile until it hits Rd. 2120. Turn right, go .2 mile and turn left onto deadend Rd. 462 to get to another wetland with small pond. To return the way you came, head back to 2309 and go left.



The floriferous rocky areas along Rd. 452 along the east side of Groundhog Mountain are like a magnet to many species of butterflies. Butterflies are especially fond of the purple coyote mint (*Monardella odoratissima*), but are also attracted to the buckwheats, Oregon sunshine and many composites found here.



Soon after the snow melts in June, vast spreads of tall mountain shooting star (*Dodcatheon jeffreyi*) put on a fabulous show in the many wet meadows in the area.

Few areas in the Western Cascades provide such beautiful wildflower displays and so many interesting plants that are as easy to access as they are in the area near Groundhog Mountain. This is the perfect place for those unable to walk long distances or who just want to spend a relaxing day enjoying wildflowers or butterflies. If you only have time for one stop, park at the intersection of Roads 452 and 2309. The wet ditches here are home to the rare yellow willowherb as well as heart-leaf miner's lettuce and three species of bog orchids. The drier banks along 2309 are covered with columbines, light blue California jacob's ladder and many shrubs including wax currant and mountain ashes. The large wetland by the road is filled with shooting stars and tall bluebells early in the season. Great rock and meadow habitat can be found along Rd. 452, especially between .9 and 1.2 miles, and wet seeps of sundews and grass-of Parnassus are worth walking down old Rd. 454 to see. The two lakes farther up the road dry up fairly quickly. Many tiny toads live here and a number of High Cascade plants such as pink mountain-heather and Sitka clubmoss can be seen. Pretty Waterdog Lake is another worthwhile stop. Hooded ladies-tresses bloom here in August. Leathery grape ferns are a little farther up the road. Wormwood and skyrockets grow at Little Groundhog Mountain. While there are a number of wetlands in the area (be sure to bring a map!), one of the better ones is at the end of Rd. 462. Round-leaved sundew grows here in abundance along with alpine laurel and the unusual rangers buttons.