Your dog should never be off-leash in natural areas because they are occupied year-round by a wide range of wild animals feeding, breeding, and raising young, including some animals whose very existence is threatened. While your pet’s activities may appear harmless and fun, wildlife and their habitat are significantly impacted in ways that you may not be able to see.

Even if your dog doesn’t chase wildlife, dogs that are off trails disturb wild animals enough to deplete their precious energy preserves, which can cause malnutrition or death. Birds that nest on or near the ground are particularly susceptible to harm by off-leash dogs. Nests on the ground or in low shrubs are very difficult to see and your off-leash dog can easily destroy or dislodge them without you ever even noticing. Fragile amphibians and reptiles rely on clean, quiet water bodies for feeding and reproduction. While your dog may have fun splashing in the water, this activity is detrimental to frogs and turtles. Also, remember that your dog is only one of thousands to recreate in Portland’s parks. While your pet may appear to have little impact on the landscape, the cumulative effect of all the dogs that visit the same area is very significant.

Keeping your dog on a leash in natural areas is not only a responsible decision that protects wildlife and our urban environment, it’s also the law. Portland City Code requires dogs to be leashed outside designated off-leash areas. Violators can be fined $150 per dog (Portland City Code 20.12.140).

Please respect all the animals, domestic and wild, that live in Portland. Natural areas may be home to the animals listed here and your cooperation is essential for their survival.

For more information: Environmental Services, 503-823-4000 or www.portlandonline.com/bes/wildlife

Parks Off-leash Areas
Unleashed dogs are never allowed in natural areas. However, Portland has areas in 31 parks where dogs and their owners can exercise and play off-leash. Some sites are fenced, others are unfenced with markers designating the boundaries. Off-leash hours are specific to each park.

Portland’s Sensitive Wildlife and Your Dog
Portland’s natural areas are wonderful places for you and your pet to exercise and enjoy some solitude in the city. However, these places are also very important for the survival of wildlife living in and passing through Portland.
Portland’s Wildlife and Your Dog

You can help protect Portland’s wild creatures by keeping your dog on a leash.

1. Western Painted Turtle: One of two native turtles designated as critically imperiled on Oregon’s Sensitive Species list. This turtle relies on adequate riparian areas for nesting and is very sensitive to disturbance.

2. North American Beaver: Live in and near streams and rivers. They are especially susceptible to disturbance and predation when raising young. The Audubon Society of Portland receives injured beavers that are attacked by dogs in local parks.

3. Yellow Warbler: Nests in shrubs. It’s one of Portland’s Special Status Species.

4. Red Legged Frog: This frog is federally designated as a Species of Concern. It is dependent on shallow, often ephemeral, ponds or wetlands and adequate riparian vegetation. Eggs in water are easily disturbed.

5. Northwestern Salamander: Found in wet habitats from the Pacific coast sea level to 5,700 feet including grasslands, woodlands, and forests. Eggs in water are easily disturbed.

6. Killdeer: Nests on the ground in gravelly clearings. They are well camouflaged and easily flushed from nests.

7. Black Tailed Deer: These deer thrive on the edge of forests, which has the underbrush and grasslands the deer prefer as food and that provides cover for safety. Deer use many of our local natural areas and often leave vulnerable fawns unattended while they graze.

8. Spotted Towhee: Nests on or near the ground in shrubby areas, are well camouflaged and easily disturbed.

9. American Kestrel: When hunting, this bird hovers then swoops to the ground to capture mice and insects. It’s one of Portland’s Special Status Species.