

1 – Birds Connect Seattle Headquarters

Before heading out on your walk, take time to explore our educational and conservation exhibits. Staff are happy to share our collection of more than 600 taxidermied bird specimens. Admire the mural by artist Tori Shao, which depicts local birds and habitats, and browse our retail space for gifts. Every purchase supports our nonprofit programs.

When you're ready to begin the walk, exit the building, turn left, and head southwest on Olive Street toward 6th Avenue. Continue along 6th Avenue for three blocks, then cross at Union Street and head up into Union Square.

2 – Union Square

Before continuing along 6th Avenue, detour into Union Square for a more scenic route through the plaza. Climb the stairs beside the fountain, designed to resemble a cascading stream, and watch for birds bathing in the flowing water. Scan the skies for soaring Bald Eagles or Red-tailed Hawks—and keep an eye out for Peregrine Falcons, too. At least two breeding pairs nest on nearby buildings.

At the top of the fountain, look back over the lower courtyard toward the brick building across the street. Can you spot the large eagles built into the upper corners? Follow the inclined ramp and stairs and find a landscaped garden on your left. Look for Song Sparrows and Anna's Hummingbirds.

3 – Park Place Building

Cross University Street, then step up and turn left into the Park Place Building colonnade, which leads into Freeway Park. The building underwent a sustainability-focused renovation in 2012 and now features a green roof with honeybee hives and a rainwater catchment system.

As you exit the colonnade, notice the massive concrete structures on your right, forming the foundation of Freeway Park and its engineered soil beds.

4 – Seneca Plaza

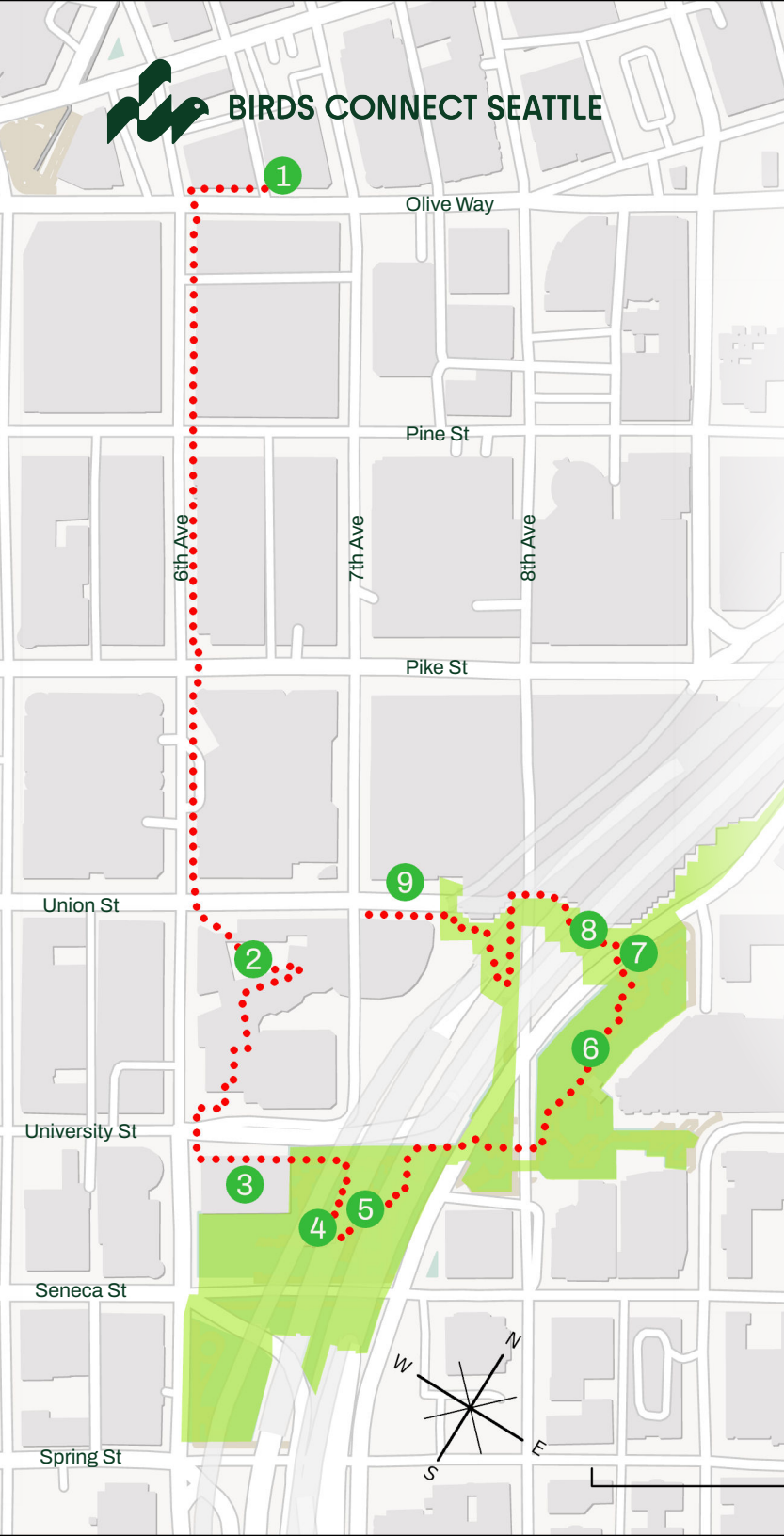
Climb the stairs into Freeway Park. To your right is Seneca Plaza, the park's central space with mature broadleaf trees and flowering shrubs. Pause here and listen for birds in the canopy: Black-capped Chickadees, Bushtits, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and American Robins are common. Townsend's Warblers may be seen in winter, while Yellow Warblers, Wilson's Warblers, and Western Tanagers occasionally appear in spring.

5 – Canyon Fountain

Freeway Park is known for its Brutalist architecture, a minimalist style that emphasizes raw building material. One of the park's iconic Brutalist features is Canyon Fountain, a waterfall cascading down rectangular concrete forms that evoke both the freeway below and Pacific Northwest landscapes. Follow the path that cuts down and through the fountain like a canyon. Here you are walking directly above Interstate 5.



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6 – Upper Lawns

Emergence from the Concrete Canyon and follow the path beneath 8th Avenue into the Upper Lawns, a green space that invites you to sit and linger. American Robins, Song Sparrows, House Finches, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Anna's Hummingbirds are all commonly seen here. Wander through the lawns and discover another Brutalist water feature.

7 – Seattle George Monument

From the Upper Lawns, find the path that will take you toward the Convention Center. On your way, look for an art installation on your right. Built in 1989 by Buster Simpson, this kinetic sculpture features twenty-four static profiles of Chief Seattle and a sharpened template of George Washington that acts as a weather vane. Simpson intended ivy to grow up through the trellis at the base and over the head structure formed by the Chief Seattle plates. Over time, the George Washington weather vane would trim the growth into a 360-degree bust of George Washington, at which point Chief Seattle would become just a memory—commentary on ongoing settler colonialism and native erasure.

As of May 2026, no vines or vegetation were growing on the sculpture.

8 – Native Basalt Rockery

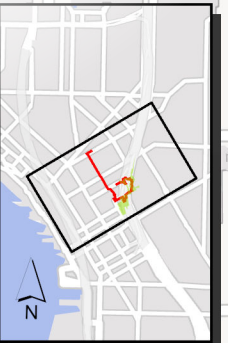
Head left from the Seattle George Monument into James R. and Mary Lou Ellis Plaza. Find the native basalt rockery. This natural formation is called columnar basalt, which forms distinctive hexagonal columns as lava cools under the right conditions. Columnar basalt can be found around volcanoes like Mt. Rainier and across Eastern Washington, especially the Columbia Plateau which was formed by millions of years of lava flows.

These formations inspired the blocky, textured design of Freeway Park. The Convention Center in front of you also draws from this aesthetic, echoing and reinterpreting the architectural language of the park.

9 – Eagles Auditorium

From the basalt rockery, keep left to hook around onto the corridor adjacent to 8th Avenue. Look for stairs on your right and descend to Union Street.

Your walk concludes across from the historic Eagles Auditorium Building. Take a moment to admire its terra-cotta façade and eagle sculptures. The building played an important role in Seattle's cultural history: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke here in 1961 during his only visit to Seattle. Later, it became a major rock venue during the psychedelic era: The Grateful Dead performed here eight times.



See Along the Way

Decorative eagles visible from Union Square



Canyon Fountain



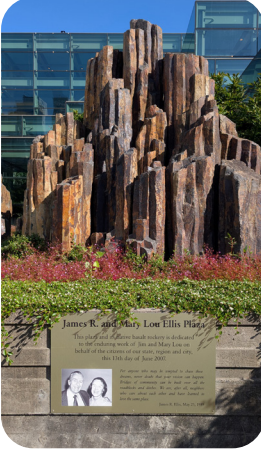
Freeway Park Upper Lawns



Seattle George Monument



Native Basalt Rockery



Common Birds of Freeway Park

These are ten of the most common year-round bird species found in Freeway Park. See how many you can spot while you explore the park.

American Crow



European Starling



American Robin



Glaucous-winged Gull



Black-capped Chickadee



House Finch



Bushtit



Rock Dove



Dark-eyed Junco



Song Sparrow



About Freeway Park

Freeway Park is a designated Seattle Landmark and listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. It earned these distinctions as the world's first freeway-lid park. Built atop Interstate 5, the park reconnects Downtown Seattle with First Hill.

Freeway Park was once the largest Downtown park. Today, it still supports the highest tree canopy cover in the city's urban core, remarkable considering that most of its trees grow in engineered soil beds.

The high tree canopy attracts wildlife. More than 70 bird species have been reported here, including common urban species and a surprising number of raptors and migratory warblers.

Accessibility & Safety

Distance, condition, and elevation: This walk covers approximately one mile on paved sidewalks and trails. Elevation gain is modest, with a gradual uphill climb along 6th Ave and several staircases within the park, totaling 110 feet of elevation gain.

ADA Accessible: No. The route includes stairs with no ramp or elevator option.

Safety Considerations: Freeway Park's unique design includes narrow paths, limited sight lines, and occasional dead-ends. While the park is open from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily, we recommend visiting during daylight hours and exploring the park in groups of two or more.



BIRDS CONNECT SEATTLE

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FREEWAY PARK

Self-Guided Nature Walk



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