

Nearby Wildlife Viewing Sites

There is an abundance of wildlife viewing areas in Humboldt Bay. Some you may want to visit are described below.

1. Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. This 174-acre restoration project has a freshwater marsh with a myriad of birds along improved trails. Take Highway 101 north to Arcata exit, Highway 255 (Samoa Boulevard), and head west. Turn left at I Street and drive 1 mile to site.

2. Elk River Wildlife Area. Birding, picnicking, and bay views can be seen along the trail of this wildlife area in the city of Eureka. Take Highway 101 north to Eureka, turn left on Hilfiker Lane. Go west to the parking area.

3. Samoa Dunes Recreation Area. Enjoy bay and ocean front wildlife observation. Take Highway 101 to Eureka, turn left on Highway 255 toward Samoa. Turn left onto New Navy Base Road and drive 4 miles to the entrance.

4. Fields Landing Boat Ramp. See bay ducks and large flocks of Pacific black brant. Take Highway 101 north 5 miles to Fields Landing exit. Go .5 miles west.

5. Table Bluff County Park provides a splendid vista of Humboldt Bay. Follow Hookton Road west 5 miles to the park.

Getting to the Refuge

Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge is located on Humboldt Bay near the cities of Arcata and Eureka, in Humboldt County, California. Wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities are available in South Humboldt Bay portions of the refuge.

You can reach the refuge by taking Highway 101 to the Hookton Road exit.

To Hookton Slough trailhead: Drive 1.2 miles west on Hookton Road and follow the signs.

To refuge office and Salmon Creek unit:

Southbound on Highway 101. Turn right at the end of the offramp onto Eel River Drive. Turn left immediately onto Ranch Road and follow into the refuge.

Northbound on Highway 101. Take the overpass across the highway. Before you reach the end, turn right onto Ranch Road and follow into the refuge.

For more information, contact:

Refuge Manager
Humboldt Bay
National Wildlife Refuge
 1020 Ranch Road
 Loleta, California 95551
 (707) 733-5406

Illustrations by Larry Eifert

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages fish hatcheries and national wildlife refuges throughout the country for the continued conservation, protection, and enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources and their habitats.



U.S. Department of the Interior
 Fish and Wildlife Service

RF11590 September 1994

No person shall, on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, physical or mental restrictions, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination in any program or activity of the Department of the Interior.

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1994-589-053/00017

I 49.44/2:H 88/2 PAM FILE

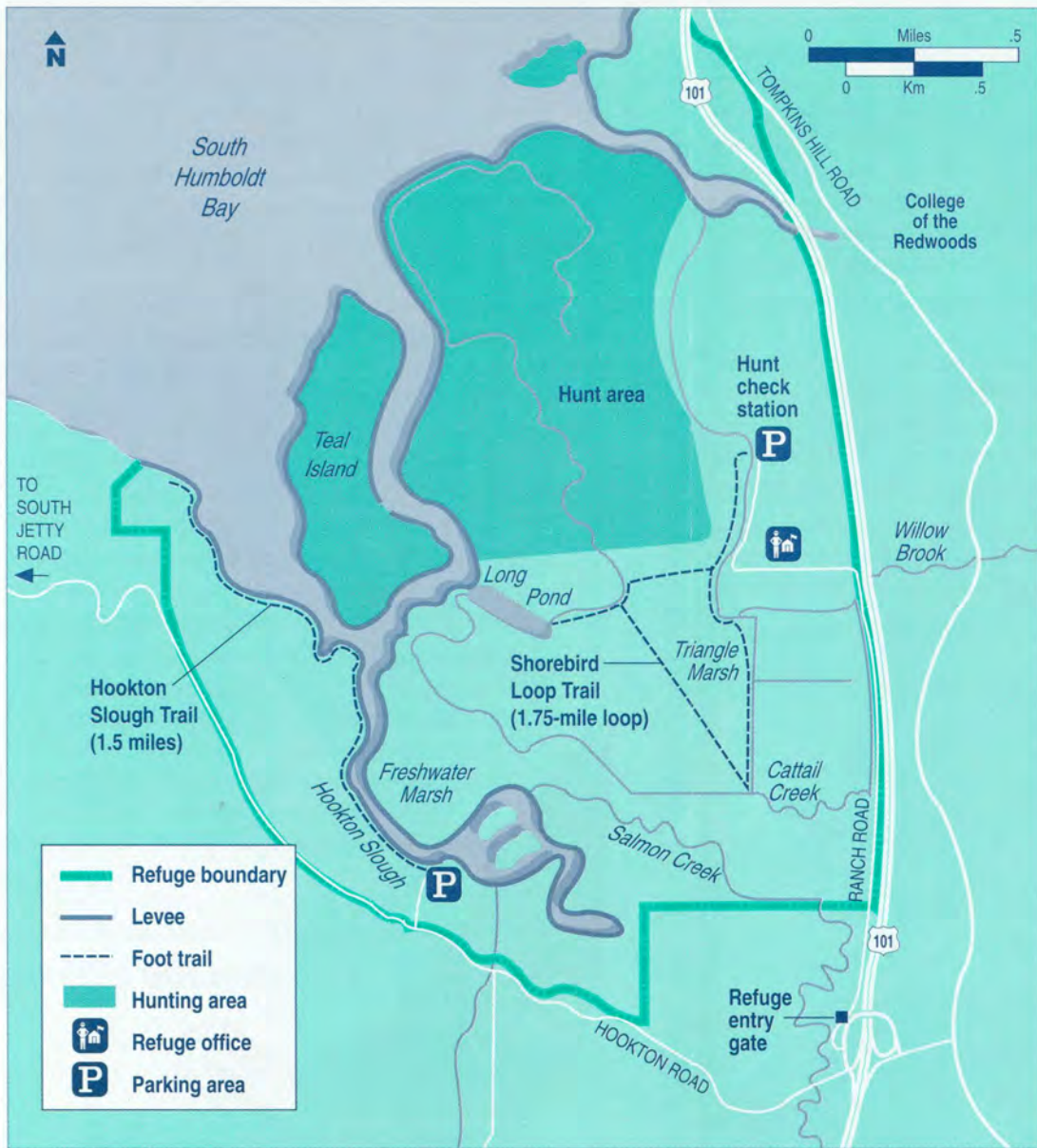
Humboldt Bay, National Wildlife Ref...



Humboldt Bay

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Restoring habitat for wildlife



Recreational activities

The refuge is open for day use only. Refuge office hours are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. For a safe and enjoyable visit, please observe the following rules, and remember public phones and drinking water are not available, so please plan accordingly.



Wildlife Observation.

Hookton Slough Trail, South Jetty Road, and Shorebird Loop Trail are good locations for observing wildlife.

Peak viewing season for most species of waterbirds and raptors is September through March. Black brant and migratory shorebird populations peak from mid-March to late April. Summer

visitors will see many gulls, terns, cormorants, and pelicans, as well as resident egrets and herons. Waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, and harbor seals are visible throughout the year.



Hiking. Two interpreted trails — Hookton Slough and Shorebird Loop — are open to visitors, both are subject to seasonal, temporary closure. During peak waterbird migration, special winter tours may be arranged to areas without developed trails. A minimum of 10 people is required; check at the refuge office for current information.

Hookton Slough Trail is open 7 days a week, sunrise to sunset. This year-round trail follows a tidal slough 1.5 miles out along the south edge of Humboldt Bay. The 3-mile distance (round trip) passes along grasslands, freshwater marsh, mudflats, and open water. Look for herons and egrets as well as shorebirds, waterfowl, and harbor seals.

Shorebird Loop Trail is open weekdays, October through May, during refuge office hours. This level, 1.75-mile trail begins at the parking area and passes near some of the refuge's best shorebird viewing areas. The trail affords a good overview of the diverse seasonal wetlands and an optional side trail takes you to the refuge's largest permanent freshwater pond. Interpretive panels along the way illustrate the wildlife resources and habitat management practices. Look for shorebirds, waterfowl, songbirds, tree frogs, and river otters.



Boating. Wildlife viewing from a boat can be excellent. However, canoers and users of

other small craft should be aware that tides, wind, and weather change rapidly on Humboldt Bay. There are public boat launches at Fields Landing, below Samoa Bridge in Eureka, at Arcata Marsh, and at the county boat ramp on Samoa Peninsula. Be sure to wear proper flotation devices and carry the required safety equipment!



Fishing. Humboldt Bay and tidal sloughs are open to fishing year round. Areas separated from the Bay by land, such as creeks and flooded areas behind levees, are closed to fishing. Hookton Slough Trail, from the parking lot west, is open to shore fishing; access to other areas is by boat. Fishing is governed by federal and state regulations.



Hunting. Waterfowl, snipe, and coot hunting are allowed on selected parts of the refuge during approved seasons. Check the refuge office for detailed hunting information. Hunting is governed by federal and state regulations.



Firearms. Firearms are prohibited on the refuge, except for shotguns in designated hunting areas during legal hunting seasons.



Pets. For the benefit of wildlife and other refuge users, pets are not allowed on the refuge. However, retrievers are encouraged for waterfowl hunting.



Littering. Please take your throw-aways with you when you leave the refuge.



Camping and Fires. Camping and fires are not allowed on the refuge. A list of local campgrounds is available at the refuge office.

Refuge Signs

Refuge regulations help protect visitors and resources. Please respect them.



Blue Goose. Marks the legal property boundary of the refuge. On Humboldt Bay NWR, entry past these signs is allowed into most, but not all, areas.



Area Closed. Certain areas of the refuge are closed to visitors for management purposes. Public entry beyond this sign is prohibited unless permission is granted by the refuge manager.



No Hunting Zone. Area closed to all hunting.



Public Hunting Area. Area open to hunting during waterfowl hunting season only.



Public Fishing Area. Designates fishing areas along the shore.



U.S. Fee Area. Area closed to all public entry unless a recreation fee is paid by the visitor. Applies to hunt area.

Pacific black brant are attracted to the refuge by the extensive eelgrass beds.



Diverse habitats attract many wildlife species

Humboldt Bay, one of the most important stopover points along the Pacific Flyway, is the winter home for thousands of migratory ducks, geese, swans, and shorebirds. More than 200 bird species, including 80 kinds of waterbirds and four endangered species, regularly feed, rest, or nest on the bay or in adjacent marshes and willow groves.

The bay, which ranges from .5 to 4 miles wide and 14 miles long, consists of two shallow tidal basins, North Bay and South Bay, connected by a relatively narrow channel.

Habitat diversity in and around Humboldt Bay is varied. You will find mudflats, eelgrass beds, diked seasonal wetlands, sand spits, uplands, salt marsh, brackish marsh, and fresh water marsh. The attraction of the Humboldt Bay ecosystem is the eelgrass found throughout the bay area. These eelgrass beds, along with extensive mudflats, provide habitat for large concentrations of waterbirds and important spawning, nursery, and feeding areas for fish and other marine life.

Why the refuge was established

In 1971, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, recognizing the importance of Humboldt Bay for migratory birds, purchased a few acres for a new refuge. Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established to preserve and restore precious bayshore wildlife habitat for the variety of migratory waterbirds, especially black brant, that depend upon Humboldt Bay in the fall, winter, and spring.

In 1988, a 1,081-acre parcel along Salmon Creek was

Humboldt Bay is teeming with wildlife. Here are some birds you might see as you walk around the refuge:



Barn owl
A medium-sized owl with dark eyes in a heart-shaped, white face. Active at dusk.



Western sandpiper
A tiny, grayish-brown shorebird with black legs and a short beak.



Northern Harrier
A raptor with a white rump patch. Males are gray, females and juveniles are brown. Usually flies low over the ground.

Green-winged teal

In the spring, male has cinnamon head with green patch around the eye. Females are mottled brown. Both have a green patch on wing.



Restore habitat diversity for waterbirds

When hiking Shorebird Loop Trail, you are walking through former ranchland now being restored to wetlands for wintering and migratory waterbirds and endangered species.

Cattle graze certain sections along the trails, providing an effective way to shorten the grass. When flooded, these grazed grasslands support aquatic insects and other invertebrates that are eaten by foraging waterbirds. Tall, ungrazed grass provides cover and nesting sites.

Maintain a tideland ecosystem

Hookton Slough is home to millions of tiny invertebrates. These microscopic animals support the fish and shorebirds that populate the slough. At high tide, the slough may be full of sanddabs, English sole, leopard shark, halibut, salmon, and steelhead. Young dungeness crabs abound, thriving on organic matter in the mud. Pelicans and cormorants dive into the water and harbor seals swim up the slough from the Bay, each in search of fish. At low tide, migratory shorebirds crowd the mudflats as they forage for clams, worms, and crabs.

Broaden understanding of the Bay's natural and sociological history

Humboldt Bay and its wetlands came into existence about 10,000 years ago with the end of the last ice age. Rising sea level flooded this coastal valley, creating an environment now enriched with a myriad of plant and animal species. Humans arrived several thousand years ago and established many villages along the shore and on the islands within the Bay. Remnants of this rich indigenous culture testify to the comfortable life the native Wiyot people enjoyed.

Humboldt Bay NWR is still in the acquisition and development stage. Though not yet ready for extensive public use, the refuge welcomes visitors interested in experiencing a wildlife refuge in the making.

Upon completion of public facilities, the refuge will provide year-round public use of many kinds. It will be an important resource for schools, photographers, artists, hikers, boaters,



Great blue heron
A large, blue-gray heron with white head and black stripe over eye.

8,935 acres within and around Humboldt Bay. Currently, the refuge includes 2,200 acres of seasonal wetlands, salt marshes, grasslands, open bay, and mudflats.

Achieving refuge goals

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, together with local community volunteers, is working to achieve the following six refuge management goals:

Preserve endangered and threatened species

Humboldt Bay NWR is restoring its wetlands to provide essential habitat for endangered species that occur on the refuge. Species in danger of extinction are the peregrine falcon, California brown pelican, Aleutian Canada goose, American bald eagle, western snowy plover, Menzies' wallflower, and beach layia.

Increase use of Humboldt Bay for Pacific black brant

Humboldt Bay is one of the most important areas in the U.S. for black brant. As many as 32,000 of the migratory geese occur on the Bay at any one time. Each year, refuge biologists monitor banded brant. These same brant have been observed in Alaska, Russia, Canada, and Mexico.

During the spring, prior to their return to Arctic nesting grounds, the Bay is a key staging area for black brant. It contains the largest beds of eelgrass south of Willapa Bay, Washington. These beds provide gourmet meals for the brant.

Enhance and restore natural creek channels

Salmon Creek is being rechanneled to a natural meander, and its edges are being restored with willows, alders, and a host of streamside plants. Juvenile salmon and steelhead are dependent upon healthy streamside vegetation. Trees provide food, shade, and protection for growing fish. In addition, as the new vegetation matures, the creek attracts amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

hunters, anglers, and other conservationists. And most importantly, good habitat management practices will produce improved habitats where wildlife — birds, mammals, fish, and plants — will flourish!



Intensive wildlife management of former ranchland is necessary to compensate for the reduction of historic areas of habitat.