



CALIFORNIA WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

Designing for Sustainable Wildlife Viewing



May 10, 2013
Trails & Greenways Conference



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Mission

California Watchable Wildlife celebrates the state's wildlife and diverse habitats by acknowledging and elevating the value of wildlife viewing to benefit individuals, families, communities, and industries while fostering awareness and support for wildlife and habitats.





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What is a Watchable Wildlife Viewing Site?

- A unique or exceptional wildlife viewing experience
- Cultural and natural history attributes
- Exceptional ecological value, unique habitat
- Access and facilities: Parking, Interpretation, Trails, Boardwalks, Viewing Platforms, etc.
- Community Support and Involvement





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California Viewing Site Criteria

Background

What makes this site a unique, premier wildlife viewing experience?
Does this site incorporate other cultural and natural history amenities into the overall visitor experience?

The Habitat

Short description of the habitat
Why is this site of exceptional ecological value?



The Experience

What do you want to make sure a visitor experiences when they visit the area?

Wildlife and Where to Find It

Trails, Boardwalks, Driving Loops,
Viewing Platforms, etc.





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California Viewing Site Criteria

Viewing Tips

Best Season to View, Other Considerations

Site Notes

Interpretation, Scheduled Events

Travel Information

Hours of Operation, Roads, Parking, Directions; Nearby sites (with links to Watchable Wildlife sites); Link to local Visitors Bureau or Chamber of Commerce

Contact Information

Address, Phone, Website and Email

Searchable Species List

Facilities





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Viewing Site Ratings

Premium – the most significant sites, worth visiting if you have limited time. Premium sites have high wildlife values year-round, staff on site, interpretive programs and/or displays, and well-developed facilities.

Regional – worth visiting if you are already in the area. They may be located farther from populated areas or with more limited wildlife species.

Seasonal – these sites have high wildlife values only during certain seasons, though they may have recreational value year-round.



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Designing the Viewing Experience

Goals

- Protect the resource
- Create a “wow” experience
- Clearly identify the viewing destination
- Teach people how to view responsibly
- Leave them wanting more



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Protect the resource





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Protect the resource





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Protect the resource

WARNING
Federal law prohibits harassment of seals



**Protect Your Dog and
Hawaiian Monk Seals**

**Please keep your pet at
least 50 yards from the
seals**

Canine distemper and other diseases can
spread between dogs and seals



To report harassment of Monk Seals, contact
1-800-853-1964 and





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Protect the resource

HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL (*Īlio holo i kauaaua*)

Hawai'i's Watchable Wildlife

Hawaiian monk seals have the distinction of being the only marine mammal that resides entirely within US territorial waters as well as being one of the most endangered marine mammals in the world. Most of the 1,200 remaining monk seals live in the isolated Northwestern Hawaiian Islands hundreds of miles to the west of here. Most seals spend their entire lives near the island of their birth, hunting for fish, octopus, eels, crustaceans, and other bottom dwelling prey and basking along the warm shorelines.

Fewer than 100 seals have been sighted on the main Hawaiian Islands, but their numbers here appear to be growing. However, the total population across their entire range is in decline. Threats in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands include a lack of food, entanglement in marine debris, and shark attacks. Seals do not appear to lack food in the main Hawaiian Islands, yet face additional threats including human disturbance, interaction with fishing gear (including shore casting and lay gill nets), and a greater risk of contracting diseases from other mammals.



Monk seal pups are born in April, usually in the spring and summer months. The mother nurses with the pup for about 8 to 10 weeks, nursing mothers fast during this period and lose about one third of their total weight while the pup grows from 25 pounds to almost 200 pounds.



The monk seal's common name comes from the thick fold of skin around the neck that resembles the collar or hood of a monk's robe and because the seal looks a solitary like other seal species that live in colonies. Its Hawaiian name – *Īlio holo i kauaaua* – translates to “dog that runs in rough water.”

Sponsors



Hawai'i Wildlife Authority



The Wildlife Society
Hawaii Chapter



NOAA Fisheries – Pacific
Islands Regional Office
Hawai'i Wildlife Fund



Decreased fishing nets and other human debris threaten monk seals and all other forms of sea life.

Viewing Tips for You; Protection for Them

Finding Monk Seals

- There are a few locations where monk seals are occasionally seen and this is one of them.
- Look along gentle sloping beaches and rocky shorelines where the seals haul out and sleep. From a distance they can look like a rounded rock or log.
- Use binoculars to carefully scan the coastline to find these elusive animals.

Watching Monk Seals

- Monk seals are protected by law. Do not disturb, feed, pursue, encourage, or otherwise approach seals.
- View from a distance and remain out of sight if possible. Stay at least 150 feet away from the seal, farther if it is a mother and her pup. A good way to judge this distance is to hold your thumb out at arms length and position the view of the monk seal between the tip and first knuckle of your thumb. If the seal appears outside of this range you are too close.
- If the seal appears alarmed or interested in your presence, you are too close – back away.
- Seals are wild and may bite if disturbed.
- Keep dogs on a leash and well away from any seal to avoid aggressive encounters and disease transmission between species.
- To report monk seals in trouble, call (808) 256-9840. To report monk seal sightings, call (808) 220-7802 (O'ahu).

Produced by the Hawai'i Watchable Wildlife
Project - www.HawaiiWildlife.org
Nature Tourism Planning
The Artistry of Design





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Create a “wow” experience





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Clearly identify the viewing destination





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WELCOME TO THE MARE ISLAND SAN PABLO BAY TRAIL

Step back in time 500 years, 100 years, 10 years...

- when the tides and wind sculpted the vast salt marshes of the San Pablo Bay and the water's edge was thick with feeding shorebirds;
- when Mare Island Naval Shipyard built hundreds of ships and expanded the island from eight hundred to over 5,000 acres;
- when the shipyard closed and Mare Island's legacy of natural and cultural resources was passed on to other stewards.

The western shoreline of Mare Island has not been accessible to the public for more than 150 years. The wild side of Mare Island offers scenic vistas and solitude not found in more developed parts of the Bay Area. Wildlife abounds here, making this one of the best wildlife-viewing destinations in the North Bay. Enjoy your visit and please stay on the trail to ensure that the wild qualities of this area are protected for the next 500 years.



Planning Your Hike

Trail length and condition. The 2 1/2-mile trail (4 1/2 miles roundtrip) is level and surfaced to support wheelchair and stroller use. Two scenic overlooks provide benches and interpretive exhibits about the bay's natural and cultural history. There are no restrooms, drinking water or trash cans along the trail.

Weather on the bay. Cold winds blow in from the bay on most days. Spring and fall usually provide the calmest and warmest days. Winter rain storms often blow in from the Pacific Ocean, but the clearest days of the year occur between storms. In summer, overcast skies generally clear by midday as winds sweep away the clouds.

What to wear. Dress in layers with an outer windproof shell. A wide-brimmed hat with a neck strap will protect you from sun and rain.

What to bring. Carry drinking water, a bird field guide, binoculars, sunscreen and gloves.

What to look for. Birds of prey, brush rabbits, black-tailed jackrabbits, and coyotes can be seen year-round. If five types of shorebirds, water-fowl and songbirds also can be seen year-round, but most arrive in the fall and stay for several months. Winter is by far the best season for wildlife viewing on San Pablo Bay. In the summer, focus your attention on the historic buildings, Carnegie Steel Bridges and shipping traffic to the east. Every season offers a new experience. Come back again to see a different side of Mare Island.

Rules for your safety and for the protection of the wetlands

Walking path only. Please secure your bike, skateboard, inoped, motor cycle, scooter or skates at the trailhead.

No pets. Wildlife and pets, even leashed pets, don't mix.

Carry out your trash. Litter and unclean food attracts rats and other animals that also prey on the island's endangered species.

Stay on the trail. Cross-country travel is prohibited in this area to protect endangered wildlife and sensitive habitats, and to protect you from the potential for encountering ammunition that is a legacy of the military history on the island.

Do NOT pick up any items. Although the area has been carefully searched for live ammunition that may have been deposited in the dredge ponds decades ago, don't risk a potentially dangerous encounter by picking up or disturbing any items you don't bring with you. If you see something near the trail that looks like old ammunition, mark the location so others can find it and call 911.

Stay out of the grass and brush to avoid ticks. Spring and summer are the worst seasons for ticks, but the area's mild climate makes ticks a problem throughout the year.

Trail Sponsors: A cooperative project of Weston Solutions, Inc.; the City of Vallejo; the California State Lands Commission; and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Trail design and exhibits by Nature Trusts Planning (www.naturetrusts.org)
 Bob Gorman—trail design and text writer
 Nancy Riggs—illustrations and text writer
 Jim Cooper—trail design
 Rick Kuchel—illustrations



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Teach people how to view responsibly

GREEN SEA TURTLES (*Honu*)

Hawai'i's Watchable Wildlife

Five of the world's seven species of sea turtles reside in Hawaiian waters, but only one—the Hawaiian green sea turtle (*honu*)—is a common sight throughout the Hawaiian Islands. The green sea turtle feeds on seaweed (*limu*), which grows along shallow rocky ledges close to shore. It is not unusual to encounter many turtles sharing the best feeding areas.

Every species of sea turtle found in US territorial waters has been designated as threatened or endangered and is protected under the Endangered Species Act. The threatened Hawaiian green sea turtle is better off than most other green sea turtle populations because it nests on uninhabited islands away from land-based predators and egg collectors. However, accidental drownings in fishing nets and floating debris have taken their toll, and a virus that causes tumors has spread throughout the population.



The *honu* is the only Hawaiian sea turtle that comes to shore during the nest-laying season to bask in the sun. On land, the sea turtles are often making them vulnerable to harassment by people or attack by dogs.



Most *honu* return to French Frigate Shoals in the remote Hawaiian Islands to lay about 800 eggs in the redwood to bowl and by their eggs.



Sponsors
NOAA Fisheries—Pacific
Islands Regional Office
HAWAII
Hawaii Tourism Authority



U.S. Fish &
Wildlife Service

Viewing Tips for You; Protection for Them

Finding Sea Turtles

- From shore, watch the nearshore waters for turtles surfacing to breathe.
- Look along shallow, rocky shorelines where the turtles feed on seaweed (*limu*).
- When snorkeling, watch for the turtles resting or feeding on the bottom.

Watching Sea Turtles

- View from a distance. Give them the space and freedom they require.
- Let sleeping turtles lie.
- Please do not try to touch, ride, sit on, feed, or chase a sea turtle. This is harmful to the turtle and may result in a citation for you.
- Report sea turtles in trouble: (808) 983-5730.



Early Hawaiians carved turtle images on the lava, buried the turtles for food and carved fish hooks, ornaments, and other items from the shell. The *honu* continues to be an important symbol or family god for many Hawaiians.

Produced by the Hawai'i Watchable Wildlife
Project: www.HawaiiWildlife.org
Native Visitor Planning
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Environmental Education Programs

- Engage the public
- Provide guided experiences
- Supplement classroom learning with hands-on field studies
- Provide training for teachers, who incorporate learning objectives through field trips
- Presented by Rangers, non-profit organizations and “Friends” groups
- Create advocates



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Environmental Education Programs

Discover the Flyway, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area

- K-12 Outdoor science education, based on California science and social studies curriculum standards
- Activities are hands-on, interactive, and inquiry based
- Students participate in learning stations about wetlands plants, birds, soils, animals and Native American life
- Partnership between Yolo Basin Foundation and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Since 1997, over 45,000 students in the Sacramento region have experienced a *Discover the Flyway* field trip





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Environmental Education Programs

Taylor Creek Visitor Center, South Lake Tahoe

- Ranger-led programs daily from Memorial Day through October
- Rainbow Trail & Stream Profile Chamber
- Junior Ranger program
- Wildlife at Night and Creek Exploration
- Keynote Speaker Series at Lake of the Sky Amphitheater on Friday evenings in July & August explore nature, natural history, and history





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California grey **whales spyhopping and breaching** as they migrate along the coastline.



Hundreds of **red-backed king salmon returning** from the ocean to inland rivers.

Haunting **cries of sandhill cranes** at dusk echoing above suburban homes.



Tule elk grazing quietly in the misty fog.

Two thousand **snow geese whitening the sky** as they lift off from a Central Valley wildlife area.



These and many viewing opportunities await you as **you heighten your senses** to wildlife watching in California.

Calendar of Events

Jan 16 - 19

[Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival](#)

Jan 17

[2nd Annual Winter Bird Festival](#)

Jan 22 - 25

[Snow Goose Festival](#)



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Partners

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Department of Transportation
California State Parks
National Park Service
Nature Conservancy of California
US Army Corps of Engineers
US Bureau of Land Management
US Bureau of Reclamation
US Fish and Wildlife Service
USDA Forest Service



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