Humboldt Lagoons

State Park

Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at (707) 488-2169. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

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Humboldt Lagoons State Park
115336 Highway 101 North
Trinidad, CA 95570
(707) 488-2169

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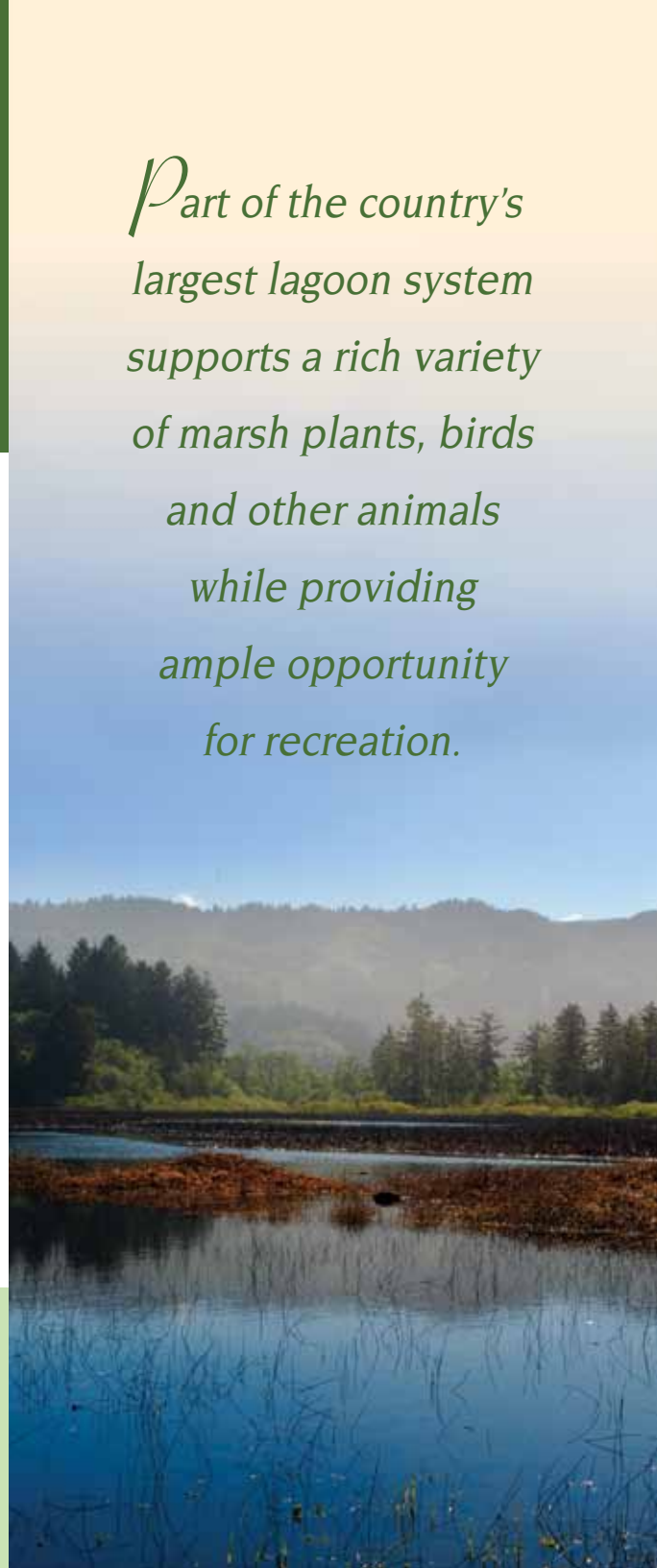
Part of the country's largest lagoon system supports a rich variety of marsh plants, birds and other animals while providing ample opportunity for recreation.



Visitors to Humboldt Lagoons State Park see part of the largest lagoon system in the United States. Lagoons are shallow, enclosed bodies of water along the coast—separated from the ocean by coastal strands or spits of land. Water flows in and out of the lagoons when it breaches (breaks through) these spits.

The park offers activities that include fishing, swimming, picnicking and kayaking. From the flat, uncrowded beach and wetland areas, watch whales and migratory birds make their way along the coast.

Summers are usually mild, with morning fog burning off by midday. Cool winters bring rain; weather changes frequently.

Stone Lagoon

PARK HISTORY

Native People

The Yurok have lived here for generations, inhabiting a coastal strip from Little River in today's Humboldt County to Del Norte County, and inland along the Klamath River. Though some villages were seasonal, others were permanent settlements where major ceremonies took place.

From several Yurok villages within what is now Humboldt Lagoons State Park, people fished for salmon, eel, trout and steelhead, as well as marine mammals and shellfish.

Canoes of hollowed-out redwood logs carried the Yurok between villages and food sources. A system of trails was also established to connect far-flung settlements across rugged terrain.

First European Contact

The Yurok people's first documented contact with non-Indians was in 1775, with the arrival of Spanish explorers at the nearby town of T'surai (near present-day Trinidad).

With the discovery of gold in 1850 along the Trinity River, the Yurok people's way of life nearly came to an end. Conflicts between the Yurok and many Euro-Americans forced the relocation of the Yurok to distant reservations. By the turn of the century, two-thirds of the population had been decimated, due to dietary changes and unfamiliar diseases. Today, the Yurok tribe has made a remarkable recovery. The most populous tribe in California with more than 5,500 members, the majority of Yurok live in Del Norte and Humboldt counties. The tribe has actively pursued cultural and language revitalization, viewing Humboldt Lagoons State Park as part of their heritage.

Roosevelt elk

NATURAL HISTORY

The Lagoons

Humboldt Lagoons State Park consists of four separate areas from south to north: Big Lagoon, Dry Lagoon, Stone Lagoon and Freshwater Lagoon.

Big Lagoon frequently breaches its sand spit each season after winter rains. Thousands of birds live or migrate through here, as does a federally endangered fish, the tidewater goby.

Dry Lagoon was once a fourth body of water. Farmers drained it, but attempts to grow crops here failed. Dry Lagoon's wetland now attracts scores of migrating birds.

Stone Lagoon breaches its 1.5-mile ocean barrier much less frequently than Big Lagoon; years may elapse between breaks. Six environmental campsites are available. Watch for river otters or Roosevelt elk that graze south of Stone Lagoon.

Freshwater Lagoon, co-managed with Redwood National Park, is a fully enclosed body of water. The lagoon is stocked with rainbow trout, which join bluegill, largemouth bass and catfish already in residence.

Plant Life

The coastal strand beaches within Humboldt Lagoons support a dynamic coastal dune mat vegetation community. The lagoon margins of Big and Stone lagoons consist of brackish marsh, while Dry Lagoon supports both freshwater and brackish marsh. Landlocked Freshwater Lagoon is bounded by a narrow band of freshwater marsh.

Native dune mats can be displaced by invasive exotic species such as jubata or pampas grass, iceplant and European beachgrass. State Parks has been restoring the dunes here for several years, resulting in a vibrant dune mat community. Prairie balds, small patches of herbaceous vegetation found across Hwy. 101 from the visitor center, are dominated by various grasses interspersed with Douglas iris, clumps of Pacific reed grass and bracken fern.

In the forest, coast redwood and salt-spray-tolerant Sitka spruce thrive near the ocean among Western hemlock and grand fir. Red alder grows in riparian areas among large stands of willows.

Wildlife

As part of the Pacific Flyway, Humboldt Lagoons hosts more than 200 bird species, including endangered bald eagles, peregrine falcons and threatened Western snowy plovers. Black bears, herds of Roosevelt elk and bobcats can be seen in the park. Watch for whales, dolphins and sea lions offshore.

Snowy plover

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Fishing—Freshwater Lagoon has rainbow and German brown trout, surf perch, catfish and largemouth bass. Use barbless hooks at Stone Lagoon and Big Lagoon for all species. Steelhead trout are catch-and-release only.

Kayaking—All three "wet" lagoons allow kayaking. Freshwater Lagoon has the most protection from strong north winds.

Camping—The first-come, first served campsites are usually open from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Stone Lagoon has a boat-in campground. Register at the self-pay station at Stone Lagoon Visitor Center.

To obtain the combination lock number for Dry Lagoon campsites, register at Patrick's Point State Park—(707) 677-3570.

Picnicking—Picnic areas are at the visitor center and at Dry Lagoon day-use area.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

There are no (wheelchair) accessible activities yet at this park, but accessibility is continually improving. For updates, visit **http://access.parks.ca.gov**.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Patrick's Point State Park
  4150 Patrick's Point Dr., Trinidad 95570
  (707) 677-3570
- Harry A. Merlo State Recreation Area
  32 miles north of Eureka on Hwy. 101
  (707) 677-3570
- Trinidad State Beach, 19 mi. north of Eureka on Hwy. 101, Trinidad 95570
  (707) 677-3570

Humboldt Lagoons
State Park

Legend

- Major Road
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Trail
- Intermittent Stream
- Boating
- Boat-In Environmental Campground
- Campground
- Environmental Campground
- Fishing
- Hand Boat Launch
- Locked Gate
- Marsh Area
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Restroom
- Windsurfing

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Map by Eureka Cartography, Berkeley, CA

PLEASE REMEMBER

- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed.
- Watch out for afternoon winds that may cause treacherous conditions, rogue waves and ocean-side rip currents.
- Check current tide tables to avoid becoming trapped by high tide.
- Anglers age 16 and older must carry a current California fishing license.
- For your safety and theirs, do not approach elk for any reason.
- Except for service animals, pets are not allowed in campsites, on trails or in dune areas, and they must not be left unattended.