

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge  
3888 State Route 101  
Ilwaco, Washington 98624-9707  
360/484 3482  
<http://www.fws.gov/willapa>

Washington Relay Service  
TTY 1 800/833 6388  
Voice 1 800/833 6384

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
<http://www.fws.gov>  
1 800/344 WILD



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This brochure is available in an  
alternative format upon request.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Willapa

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*



*Plants and animals from land, rivers, and ocean are all present at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge - and all are dependent on the delicate balance of the estuary.*

*In this coastal environment, the incoming tides combine life-giving nourishment of the ocean with the nutrient-laden fresh waters of rivers and streams to create one of the most productive environments on the Pacific Coast.*



## Preserving a Rich Natural Heritage

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge is located in Willapa Bay, one of the most pristine estuaries in the United States. Willapa Bay is the second largest estuary on the Pacific coast and includes over 260 square miles of water surface.



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The Refuge preserves a number of unique ecosystems including diverse salt marshes, muddy tideflats, rain-drenched old growth forests, and dynamic coastal dunes and beaches. Freshwater marshes and grasslands are found along the southern shore of the bay.

*Many different salmon species are found in the waters of Willapa Bay, including chum, chinook and coho.*



*The "Blue Goose" has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

Willapa NWR was established in 1937 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to protect migrating and wintering populations of brant, waterfowl, shorebirds, and other migratory birds and their habitats. The Refuge was established at a time when many estuaries were rapidly being destroyed from the effects of diking, draining, dredging, sedimentation, and pollution.

Visitors to Willapa NWR can enjoy viewing a wide variety of wildlife, from Roosevelt elk on Long Island, to tens of thousands of shorebirds crowding the beaches of Leadbetter Point.

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 550 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, a nationwide network of lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specifically for wildlife. The System is a living heritage, conserving wildlife and habitat for people today and for generations to come.



*Chum salmon*  
© Shari Erickson



Willapa NWR provides an excellent opportunity for people to experience wildlife in a dynamic natural setting.

The Refuge consists of approximately 16,000 acres and is divided into several management units: Leadbetter Point Unit at the northern tip of Long Beach Peninsula; Long Island in the southern part of the bay; and Porter's Point, Bear River, Teal Slough, Tarlatt, Lewis, and Riekkola Units at the south end of the bay.

## Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

- Refuge Headquarters
- Parking Area
- Restrooms
- Boat Launch
- Wildlife Viewing Area

- Refuge Boundary
- Proclamation Boundary  
*Hunting of migratory birds within the proclamation boundary is prohibited*
- Hiking Trail
- Hunting Area
- Archery Hunting Area
- Campground



## The Nature of Water

Willapa Bay has been shaped by many forces of nature including wind, glaciers, earthquakes, floods, and tsunamis. The Long Beach Peninsula is a natural barrier, protecting the bay and its wildlife from storm winds and waves.



*Dunlin and Sanderlings*

An average of 110 inches of precipitation falls each year in the area, swelling streams that carry nutrient-rich water and sediment into the bay. Chum, chinook, and coho salmon spawn in streams on the Refuge.

The bay's shallow water and mudflats support vast beds of eelgrass and shellfish. Eelgrass provides critical spawning habitat for fish and is the staple food of brant, a sea goose that migrates along the Pacific Coast between Alaskan nesting grounds and more southerly wintering grounds.

Throughout much of the bay, seemingly barren mudflats teem with worms, clams, and crustaceans hidden just beneath the surface. Low tide exposes these vast acres of mudflats creating prime foraging habitat for shorebirds.

*Freshwater streams and salt marshes make perfect habitat for great blue herons and river otters, where they feed on small fish, frogs and other small animals.*

*Great blue heron*  
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*Roosevelt elk graze in open fields year-round and use wooded areas for cover and shelter.*



During the peak spring migration, the number of shorebirds present at Willapa Bay exceeds 100,000, making it one of the most important sites for shorebirds on the west coast of North America! Isolated sandbars near the mouth of the bay provide pupping grounds for harbor seals and rest sites for migratory birds. Seabirds, such as sooty shearwaters and brown pelicans, stream into the mouth of the bay from the ocean during summer and fall to feast on abundant small fishes.



*River otters*  
illustration by Matt How

## Leadbetter Point

In 1788, explorer John Meares named this land of sand dunes, grasses, and small shrubs Low Point. In 1852, the name was changed to Leadbetter

Point in honor of Lt. Danville Leadbetter of the U.S. Coastal Survey.

Leadbetter Point constantly changes as dunes shift, become stabilized or erode away.

This is a world of sand covered with patches of dune grass, lupine, wild strawberry, sand verbena, sea rocket and beach pea. Potholes scoured by the wind between the dunes fill with winter rains and support stands of willow and freshwater marsh plants. The bay side of the point contains some of the most significant saltmarsh habitats remaining in the state of Washington.

Leadbetter Point provides food and cover for a diverse array of wildlife. Biologists have recorded over 100 species of birds on Leadbetter Point alone. Fall and spring migrations bring dizzying concentrations of sandpipers, sanderlings, plovers, dowitchers and other shorebirds to the Refuge shores and tideflats. Peak numbers of dunlin occur in the winter.

*Snowy plover*



© Peter LaTourrette

## Wildlife

Peregrine falcons and bald eagles are among the most common raptors occurring at Leadbetter Point, and dramatic bursts of bird flight can be seen when these predators pursue their prey. Occasionally a pure white snowy owl can be seen perched on a log during the winter.



*Snowy owl*

© Carol Ashley

The threatened western snowy plover reaches the northern limit of its breeding range in Washington. Leadbetter Point is the largest of only two remaining nesting areas in the state. These small cryptic shorebirds nest on the upper ocean beaches in small scrapes in the sand. Their well camouflaged eggs can be inadvertently stepped on by people or run over by vehicles. Incubating adults are easily frightened off the nests, allowing sand to cover the eggs or predators to destroy them. A portion of Leadbetter Point along the ocean beach side is closed to ALL public entry, including foot travel, generally from March through September to protect the nesting snowy plovers.

## Recreational Activities at Leadbetter Point



### Birdwatching

For optimal birdwatching opportunities, plan your visit during the fall (October) and spring (April) migration periods.

### Hiking

There are many miles of foot trails at Leadbetter Point, one on refuge lands and the others on the adjacent state park. These trails are flooded with deep water throughout the rainy season (October through May), so plan accordingly. During the summer, check with the Refuge office or look for posted signs that indicate the closed snowy plover nesting area.

### Hunting

The Leadbetter Point Unit is open for waterfowl hunting. Please check the state Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet for season dates and regulations.



© Gary Kramer

*Brown Pelicans can be seen all along the shore of Leadbetter Point during summer and fall. These large birds are characterized by their high dives in search for one of their favorite foods, anchovy.*

## Long Island

Long Island is unique in being the Pacific Coast's largest estuarine island. Long Island's 5,460 acres contain a rare 274-acre remnant of old growth lowland coastal forest known as the Cedar Grove. Some western red cedar trees in this grove have been growing for more than 900 years. The rain-drenched forests on Long Island grow rapidly and densely, with salal, huckleberry and salmonberry bushes carpeting the forest floor beneath tall western hemlock, Sitka spruce and western red cedar trees. Fallen trees, called nurse logs, provide shelter and a rich growing medium for young trees to grow. The damp, moss-laden forests, sand and mud beaches, tidal saltgrass marshes, and mudflats offer rich habitats for a wide variety of animal species.



© David Pitkin  
*Western red cedar*

### Wildlife

The forests of Long Island are home to mammals such as black bear, Roosevelt elk, black-tailed deer, beaver, and river otter. The mature forests provide special niches for numerous sensitive wildlife species. The largest trees provide wide sturdy limbs suitable for the platform nests

*Long Island*



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of marbled murrelets, a seabird that has lost much of its historical nesting habitat due to logging of old growth forests. Bald eagles and great blue herons also nest in large trees on the island.

Standing dead trees, or snags, contain nesting cavities for species such as pileated woodpeckers, flying squirrels, and spotted owls. Roosting



© Bill Leonard  
*Van Dyke's Salamander*

silver-haired bats and Pacific tree frogs find cover in the loose and creviced tree bark of old trees. Fallen trees provide habitat for the rare Van Dyke's and

Dunn's salamander. Willapa NWR has more amphibian diversity than any other wildlife refuge in the state of Washington.

The nutrient-rich marine environment surrounding Long Island supports oysters, clams, crabs, salmon, steelhead and numerous other marine organisms. There are vast beds of eelgrass on the west side of Long Island that provide important nursery grounds for young fish including Pacific herring, salmon, sea perch and sole. Brant also concentrate here in spring to forage on eelgrass in sheltered portions of the bay.

*Marbled Murrelet*  
© Gary Braasch





## Recreational Activities

Visitors can observe or photograph wildlife while canoeing, kayaking, or hiking. Long Island can only be accessed by boat. There is no potable water on the island so bring your own.

### Caution

Carry a tide table, since tidal fluctuations, currents, extensive mud flats and weather can make getting to and from the island difficult and occasionally dangerous.

Launch facilities are available at the Port of Peninsula in Nahcotta and on US Highway 101 at the Refuge headquarters.

To maintain the quiet, remote nature of the island, motor vehicles and power equipment, such as chain saws and generators, are prohibited on Long Island.



## Hiking

Day use on Long Island is encouraged to produce less impact on Refuge resources. Please stay on the trails. Hike along the beaches on the west side of Long Island or the roads to Baldwin Slough and Paradise Point. From the boat landing on the south end of the island, walk north along the main road for 2 1/2 miles to the Don Bonker Cedar Grove Trail, a 3/4 mile loop trail in the awe-inspiring, old growth Cedar Grove.

## Camping

There are five primitive campgrounds on Long Island with a total of 20 campsites. Camp only in designated campsites. Sites are available on a first-come-first-serve basis. Leaving items unattended to hold a campsite is prohibited. Camp "bear friendly" by hanging food and packing out your garbage. Adopt the "leave no trace" ethic and burn only downed wood in the existing fire pits.

## Clamming

Clams may be harvested from public tidelands located on the western side of Long Island. Check the state Sport Fishing pamphlet for regulations. Be mindful of boundaries as many privately owned tidelands surround Long Island and are closed to the public.

## Hunting

Archery hunting is allowed on Long Island for black bear, elk, deer and grouse. Consult the state Big Game Hunting pamphlet for season dates and regulations as well as the Refuge headquarters for registration information. No hunting firearms are allowed on the island.

## Riekkola, Porter's Point and Lewis

### Riekkola Unit

The grasslands established on diked tidelands at the south end of the bay provide shelter and feeding areas for migrating Canada geese, ducks and shorebirds.

Grazing cattle in the summer create fields of short grass in fall for cackling and Canada geese, including the rare Aleutian and Dusky subspecies. The grasslands and neighboring forested areas provide habitat for bear, elk, and bobcat.

### Hunting

Waterfowl hunters can hunt geese from assigned blinds for a small user fee during the goose season in late fall/early winter.

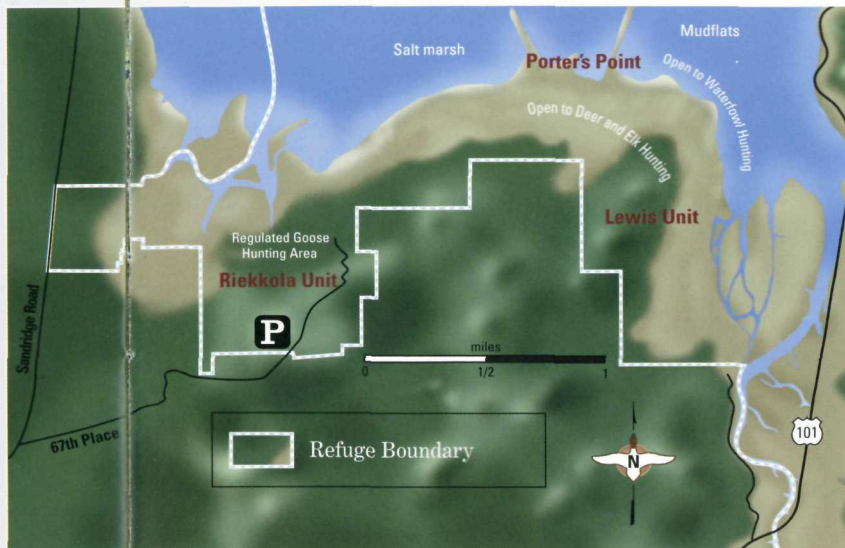
Check the state Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet for season dates and regulations and visit the refuge website for specific information

about the blind selection process and hunting days. One blind is available for disabled hunters.

### Porter's Point and Lewis Units

The Porter's Point and Lewis Units provide saltwater marsh habitat for a diverse assemblage of waterbirds, anadromous fish, and aquatic mammals. Shorebirds roost on islands within the unit and forage on invertebrates.

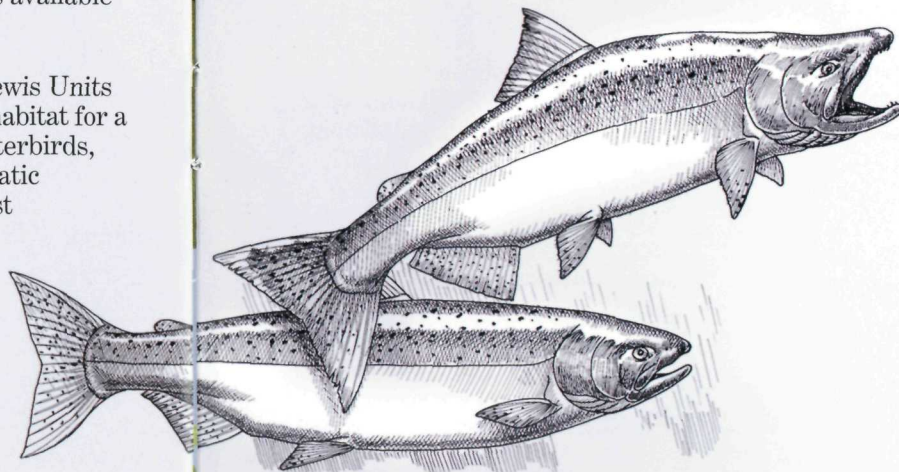
*Chinook salmon*  
Illustration: Gary Whitley



### Hunting

As a result of the Bear River Estuary Restoration, waterfowl, deer and elk\* hunting will be allowed in the Porter's Point and Lewis Units. Hunting maps are available at the Refuge headquarters and on the website. Season dates and regulations are listed in the state Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game and Big Game Seasons pamphlets.

\* Rimfire and centerfire rifles are prohibited.



## The History of Wildlife Habitats

The Chinook, Chehalis, and Kwalhioqua peoples lived and hunted the area in and around Willapa for at least 2000 years. Native wildlife and the diverse sea life, especially salmon, provided enough food for the people to support themselves throughout much of the year. They camped, fished, gathered clams and oysters, and hunted in the area, including Long Island. Today they use the island for spiritual and cultural events.



*Tools used by the Chinook people are from left to right: a bowl carved from rock; a weight used to hold down fish nets; and a maul, usually of harder rock, used like a hammer.*

## Clamming Industry

Diamond Point, located on the northern tip of Long Island, once harbored the small population of Diamond City, founded in 1867. Diamond City, originally called l'oneville, was named for the many discarded oyster shells which were thought to shimmer in the sun like diamonds.

Post card and logging company photo courtesy Pacific County Historical Society.



## Fishing

Wild salmon not only provided American Indians with a rich source of food but the salmon fishery once supported a short lived cannery during the 1880s on the southern tip of Long Island.

## Logging

Logging on Long Island began in the early 1900s by independent loggers who skidded logs down sloughs and into the bay; logs secured in "rafts" were floated to mills on the shores of Willapa Bay as well as milled on the island. A floating logging camp which housed thirteen workers was constructed and situated on the slough near the Sawlog Campground.

## A Wildlife Refuge

Lands within and surrounding Willapa Bay that once supported industries like grazing, logging and fishing have gradually been added to the Refuge. These lands now preserve a rich heritage of wildlife for environmental conservation and wildlife dependent recreation.

*The Pentilla Logging Company on Long Island*



## Information to Plan Your Visit



Here are a few tips to make watching wildlife enjoyable and rewarding.

To observe and photograph wildlife in their natural environments, move quietly and maintain distance between yourself and the animals. Although animals often disappear when you arrive, they may return shortly if you are quiet and remain still.



Binoculars and telephoto lenses will help you get a good look or photo.



Bring a field guidebook to help you identify various species and learn what habitats they prefer, when they are active, and what they eat.



Collecting and removing archeological or historic objects is prohibited, as well as removing any natural material such as plants, mushrooms, berries, and antler sheds.



Dogs are allowed in certain areas of the refuge. They must be kept on a leash, except for hunting dogs engaged in authorized hunting activities, and under the immediate control of a licensed hunter. Dogs are prohibited on Long Island and on beaches within the Leadbetter Point Unit.



ATVs, horses, and bicycles are not permitted on trails.

## Refuge Hours

The Refuge is open daily from dawn to dusk. The Refuge headquarters is open 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Wildlife are more active in morning and late afternoon.

## Hiking Opportunities

### *Art Trail*

The Art Trail is located at Refuge Headquarters. A curving ADA accessible boardwalk brings visitors up close to the tideland marsh and stream. Artwork located along the boardwalk tells the story of the stream and the many species who live there. An additional 2/3 mile loop hiking trail, the "Cutthroat Climb", leads hikers up the valley near the ridgeline and to the headwaters of the stream. Although fairly short, this upper trail can be a real workout! This trail is open dawn to dusk.

### *Teal Slough*

Located approximately 1.5 miles north of the Refuge Headquarters is a great place to take a short hike. Walk two tenths of a mile up the main logging road to the entrance of a spur road located on the north side of the main road to find a small remnant of old growth forest. This unit is open dawn to dusk, but please do not block the gate!

### *Leadbetter*

Several miles of hiking trails wind their way through the shore pine forests and beaches of the Leadbetter Unit, located at the northern tip of the Long Beach Peninsula.

## Other Nearby Recreational Opportunities

Cape Disappointment State Park, Leadbetter Point State Park, and Fort Columbia State Park in Washington, and Lewis and Clark National Historic Park in Oregon.

## Local Tourism Information

For information on local accommodations and campgrounds contact:

Long Beach Peninsula  
Visitors Bureau  
P.O. Box 562  
Long Beach, WA 98631  
(360) 642-2400 or  
(800) 451-2542  
[www.funbeach.com](http://www.funbeach.com)