

PENINSULA WILDLIFE

THE DISCOVERY COAST HAS ABUNDANT VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES



hen it comes to watching wildlife, the Discovery Coast is the place to be, with more bald eagles than anywhere south of Alaska, and more pelagic and coastal seabirds than anywhere else on the West Coast.

Seals and otters, huge herds of deer and elk, migrating and resident songbirds and waterfowl all can be observed in numbers that will amaze the whole family. It's time to discover just where these beauties can be seen!

EAGLES, HAWKS AND FALCONS: Peregrine falcons are frequently observed swooping down from tree top perches as they intercept prey in Leadbetter Point State Park. Bald eagles and other birds of prey are often spotted anywhere in the vicinity of Willapa Bay and the Columbia River. They are particularly obvious along U.S. Highway 101 between the Astoria Bridge and Ilwaco.

HERONS: Living here on the Discovery Coast we are fortunate indeed to have a very large and healthy population of great blue herons. They are quite common around the margins of Willapa Bay.

PELICANS: Pelicans, cormorants, Caspian terns, kingfishers and other bird species all gather in great numbers along the Columbia River estuary east of Ilwaco, through Chinook and on past the Dismal Nitch unit of Lewis and Clark National Park.

SWANS: Trumpeter and tundra swans can often be observed in Peninsula lakes, especially Black Lake near Ilwaco and Brisco Lake north of Long Beach.

ELK: For something a bit larger, how about some elk watching? A short drive out to the Bear River area at the south end of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge situated on the east side of the bay is a good place to start.

Elk also can often be spotted near the Naselle River.

BLACK-TAILED DEER: Deer are almost too common to notice on the Peninsula and the mainland, chomping rosebushes wherever they go.

GEESE AND DUCKS: Waterfowl in a myriad of colors can also be seen near the refuge headquarters. Casual sightings of dozens of species of ducks are quite common. Wood ducks are a particular favorite among area residents, many of whom build nesting boxes for them.

RIVER OTTERS: If it's something altogether different you're looking for, how about putting the binocs to some river otters? They can often be seen swimming and frolicking in the canals and lakes in the center of the community of Surfside just west of Oysterville, or even in Black Lake or small creeks around Ilwaco.

Left: Great blue herons are picturesque residents of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge in south Pacific County. — MADELINE KALBACH PHOTO