



wildlife

of the North Coast

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The north Oregon and southwest Washington coasts are full of critters who share the singular terrain and distinct Northwest beauty residents here revel in. Whether in the winter, spring, fall or summer, these animals are part of our coastal communities fabric and are a constant cause for conversation. We hope you learn something new about these creatures who call our coast home. 🌊



1. Columbian Back-tailed Deer

Odocoileus hemionus columbianus

Columbian black-tailed deer can be found year round throughout Clatsop County. They can be spotted in your own backyard, crossing the street or prancing deep in the brush of our thick forests. They are most active at dusk and dawn.

2. Elk

Cervus elaphus

Elk can be found all over the North Coast and deep into the Clatsop State Forest. They frequent Fort Stevens State Park in the grassy areas near the batteries. Herds of up to 200 elk can be easily found at the Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area off of Nehalem Highway. They're in the area year-round but the best time to see them is between November and April.

3. California Sea Lion

Zalophus californianus

These large, brown beasts frequent the Astoria Riverwalk and the East Mooring Basin, harassing fishermen, and also enjoy hanging out in rocky outcrops along the coast. Buoy Beer features a glass floor to view sea lions resting on the boards above the river and beneath the restaurant. With a recent spike in population, they're not hard to find. You'll probably be able to hear them before you see them, as they're some of the most vocal of marine mammals.

4. Humpback Whale

Megaptera novaeangliae

These massive and elusive creatures spend most of their time out in the Pacific Ocean, but will sometimes take a detour and swim up the Columbia River to feed on salmon and other aquatic species native to the river. Head out to Dismal Nitch, Cape Disappointment State Park or the Hammond Marina to try your luck at spotting them as they travel in and out of the river, or head to the beach for the opportunity to watch them swim up or down the coast during migration. The humpbacks pass through the region July through September as they travel south to warmer waters in Mexico and Hawaii to breed and pass back through in March through May as they travel to cooler waters up north near Alaska to feed.

5. Great Blue Heron

Ardea herodias

This 4-foot tall bird with a 6-foot wingspan are common around the North Coast. They feed on fish and other marine life, so they prefer to hang out in marine environments. Spot them at the beach, along the river or in any spacious wet-land. With their long legs and blue plumage, they aren't hard to spot.

6. Western Gull

Larus occidentalis

You don't have to look far to find one of these coastal staples. There's probably one flying above you right now. These gulls usually nest along rocky cliffs and survive off of small fish and bug life, however, they often find homes in cities and scavenge garbage to survive.

7. Song Sparrow

Melospiza melodia

Listen closely for these sparrows' short, chirping songs on any nature walk in the area. While these birds can thrive in most habitats, they're often found flitting through the brush, tweeting their short little songs.