

Visit Our Wildlife

in

Port Hardy

**including Port McNeill, Port-Alice,
Alert Bay, Telegraph Cove and
Sayward**

Northern Vancouver Island



The community of Port Hardy is on the eastern side of Vancouver Island, about 3 hours drive north from Campbell River. Throughout this portion of the island, freshwater rivers, marshes, forests, ocean beaches and estuaries are easily accessed by visitors. These habitats are the seasonal or year-round home of wildlife and fish populations.

In this brochure is information for 12 sites where you may visit our wildlife. These areas are recognized by British Columbia Wildlife Watch, the provincial wildlife viewing program, as sites offering good viewing and educational opportunities.

In addition to Port Hardy, the Northern Vancouver Island area includes the communities of Port McNeill, Port Alice, Sointula, Alert Bay, Woss, Telegraph Cove and Sayward. This area is reached by road from Campbell River or by ferry from Price Rupert.

Cape Scott Provincial Park

Located on the northern tip of Vancouver Island. The park has both human and natural history to experience. The best time to hear and see forest birds is from April to late September. The marine coastline, bays and lagoons offer excellent viewing. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - From Port Hardy follow-the signs towards Holberg. It is about 60 km from Port Hardy to the park boundary and a parking lot. Most of the road is gravel. Visitors must hike in. The shortest hike is the 2.5 km trail to San Josef Bay.

Viewing Highlights - In marine areas Black, Surf and White-winged Scoters are common. Trumpeter Swans often winter at San Josef Bay and Hansen Lagoon. Watch for Bald Eagles from April to September. Land mammals are elusive, but include deer, Cougar, Raccoon, River Otter and Black Bears.



Did you know?

After coho salmon spawn, their fertilized eggs remain in the gravel bottom until spring when the young emerge. Unlike chum salmon; these coho fry will remain for another 1 or 2 years in their home stream system before migrating to the sea. So, please, be careful in salmon streams throughout the year, not just when you see spawning adults.

Hardy Bay/Quatse River Estuary

The bay and estuary areas are visited by a wide range of wildlife. Bald Eagles and Great Blue Heron are common year round. Scan the mud flats during low tides for shore-birds. During fall and winter waterfowl are found. Cormorants and seabirds are also seen. During the fall, salmon travel through the bay and enter the Quatse River. This attracts many wildlife species who feed on the dead and dying fish carcasses. For more information contact the Environment and Lands regional office in Nanaimo [(250) 751-3100; 2080 Labieux Road, Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6J9].

Access - From Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19) take the access road to the BC Ferries terminal. Turn left onto a gravel road (Goodspeed Road) 1.2 km from the highway. Continue a short distance to the end of Hardy Bay. There are good viewing spots along Hardy Bay Road.

Viewing Highlights - Bald Eagles are a regular sight. During migration periods bird diversity can be wonderful. Early morning and tide changes offer some of the best viewing.

Quatse River Hatchery

The hatchery is open year round from 8 am to 4:30 pm daily. The best fish viewing occurs in October when salmon enter the river to spawn. There are also many troughs and tanks with young fish. For more information contact the Northern Vancouver Island-Salmonid Enhancement Society [(250) 949-9022; Box 1409, Port Hardy, B.C. V0N 2P0].

Access - From Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19) just south of Port Hardy take Coal Harbour Road. Watch for hatchery signs not far from the highway. Turn left onto Byne Road.

Viewing Highlights - The peak spawning period for pink is early to mid October. The peak period for coho salmon is mid to late October. Some spawners may be seen outside the peak periods.

Marble River Provincial Park

The Marble River empties from the north end of Alice Lake. A series of waterfalls begin on the downstream side of the bridge. Some of the best fish viewing occurs from the bridge where you can look down into the clear water. A trail from the Western Forest Products managed recreation area leads to Marble River Provincial Park. A fishway at Bear Falls provides good viewing of chinook. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - From Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19) take the road towards Port Alice, located about half way between Port Hardy and Port McNeill. The bridge is located about 14km from Highway 19. Ample parking near the bridge, including in the recreation site.

Viewing Highlights - Chinook and coho salmon migrating up the river from mid September through mid December. Look year round for American Dippers in, and around, the falls.

Marble River Hatchery

Established in 1981, the hatchery raises chinook and coho salmon and steelhead trout. From mid January to the end of July weekday hours are 8 am to 4:30 pm and 8 am to 2 pm on weekends. Other times call first. For more information contact Friends of the Marble River [(250) 956-3682; Box 594, Port McNeill, B.C. V0N 2R0].

Access - From Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19) take the road towards Port Alice, located about half way between Port Hardy and Port McNeill. The access road to the hatchery is located on the left 13.9 km from the highway. If you reach the bridge over the Marble River, you just missed the hatchery road.

Viewing Highlights - There is a new rearing channel for chinook and coho, and many troughs and tanks with young fish.

Port Alice Hatchery

This facility is located at the southern end of Neroutsos Inlet, near Colonial and Cayeagle Creek. There are no regular hatchery tours. There is a trail along Colonial Creek that leads to deep pools and the confluence of the two creeks. For more information contact the Port Alice Fish and Wildlife Association [Box 666, Port Alice, B.C. V0N 2N0].

Access - From Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19) take the road to Port Alice. This road is about half way between Port Hardy and Port McNeill. Travel through Port Alice and past the pulp mill. The hatchery is an 11 km, 15 minute, drive from Port Alice (or 6 km past the pulp mill). From the mill the road is gravel.

Viewing Highlights - Chum, coho and chinook salmon may be observed in Colonial Creek and Cayeagle Creek. Peak spawning occurs in October. Visitors to the area should take caution as bears are often sighted.



Did You Know?

An underwater microphone is installed at Robson Bight that is programmed to turn on when it "hears" killer whale calls. ORCA FM can be found at 88.5 on the FM dial in the Robson Bight area. This listening post is part of WhaleLink, a killer whale research project coordinated by the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre.

Broughton Strait

Broughton Strait is located between the western end of Malcolm Island and Telegraph Cove, and includes the waters offshore of Port McNeill, Sointula and Alert Bay. For more information contact the Port Hardy and District Chamber of Commerce [(250) 949-7622; P.O. Box 249, Port Hardy, B.C. V0N 2P0] or the Port McNeill and District Chamber of Commerce [(250) 956-3131; Box 129, Port McNeill, B.C. V0N 2R0].

Access - Portions of Broughton Strait are visible from Port McNeill, Sointula, Alert Bay and Telegraph Cove. The best way to observe wildlife is by boat. BC Ferries operates a ferry between Port McNeill, Sointula and Alert Bay. There are also many tour boat operators in these communities.

Viewing Highlights - This area is frequented by orcas and other marine mammals, including Pacific White-sided Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises, Dall's Porpoises and Harbour Seals: Best viewing occurs from July through mid October. Late summer and early fall is great for birds, including Marbled Murrelet, Pigeon Guillemot, Common Murre, Oldsquaw, grebes, cormorants, scoters, loons and gulls.

Gator Gardens

This unusual wetland area, located on Cormorant Island near Alert Bay, is fed by an underground spring. It was originally a water source for the Spenser and Huson fish saltery. A network of trails and boardwalks provides access through the area. For more information contact the Alert Bay Information Centre [(250) 974-5024; Bag Service 2800, Alert Bay, B.C. V0N 1A0].

Access - From Port McNeill take the 45 minute ferry ride. Depart the ferry and turn right. At the RCMP Station turn left, right at the credit union and then left onto Maple Road. At Cedar Street turn right. Continue to the Gator Gardens Campground, turn left and travel past the campground to the small picnic area on the right. The main trail is located at the back of the picnic area.

Viewing Highlights - Despite the locals name for this site, there are no "gators" to be found. Bald Eagles and Common Ravens are commonly observed, and many Violet-green Swallows nest in tree cavities. Dragonflies are everywhere in spring and summer. In the forests look for Downy Woodpecker, Varied Thrush and Song Sparrow. Also look for Belted Kingfisher.



Did you know?

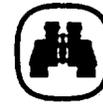
Salmon have a "slimy" coating when in salt water that prevents bacteria from growing on their scales. When salmon enter fresh water this coating disappears and bacteria thrive. This is why spawning salmon look "patchy".

Gwa'ni (Nimkish) Hatchery

The Gwa'ni (Nimkish) Hatchery is located just south of Port McNeill along the Nimkish River. Chinook, chum and coho salmon are raised at this large facility. For more information, contact Gwa'ni (Nimkish) Hatchery [(250) 956-4712; c/o P.O. Box 210, Alert Bay, B.C. V0N 1A0].

Access - From Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19) the access road into the hatchery is located 5.4 km south of the road into Port McNeill, just past the large green bridge over the Nimkish River, and 3.0-km north of the road into Telegraph Cove. Watch for the hatchery signs.

Viewing Highlights - Chum spawn near the hatchery from mid November to mid December. Chinook and coho pass by the hatchery site from October to December to spawn further up the Nimkish River. Thousands of fish fry are visible in the holding troughs and pens from October to July.



British Columbia Wildlife Watch is the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks' program designed to promote viewing opportunities within British Columbia. For more information on Vancouver Island contact the Environment and Lands regional office in Nanaimo [(250) 751-3100; 2080 Labieux Road, Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6J9]. Wildlife viewing information, including festivals and special events, is available at the British Columbia Wildlife Watch web site: www3.bc.sympatico.ca/driftwood/bcwwhome.htm.

For more information on the northern portion of Vancouver Island contact the Port Hardy and District Chamber of Commerce [(250) 949-7622; P.O. Box 249, Port Hardy, B.C. V0N 2P0; e-mail chamber@capescott.net] or the Port McNeill and District Chamber of Commerce [(250) 956-3131; Box 129, Port McNeill, B.C. V0N 2R0; e-mail pmccc@island.net].

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The **Habitat Conservation Trust Fund** is a financial sponsor of *British Columbia Wildlife Watch* activities. For more information on this fund write P.O.Box 9354 Stn. Prov. Govt., Victoria, B.C. V8V 9M1.

WBT Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia supports the goals, objectives and activities of *British Columbia Wildlife Watch*. For more information on WBT write #124-1489 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, BC V7T 1B8, phone/fax (604) 924-2581 or e-mail minerva@direct.ca.

Visit Our Wildlife

Wildlife Are Everywhere

While opportunities to observe or to learn about wildlife and fish populations are highlighted at 12 sites, remember, wildlife are everywhere. Visit these sites to develop your observation skills. Once you do, you will see, hear and find evidence of creatures everywhere you go.

When visiting these areas please remember that you are visiting wild creatures in their home. Leave their homes clean, and keep your pets under control on a leash at all times.

Some animals are only present for short periods of time, so it is best to plan your visit when they are at home.

Marine Environments

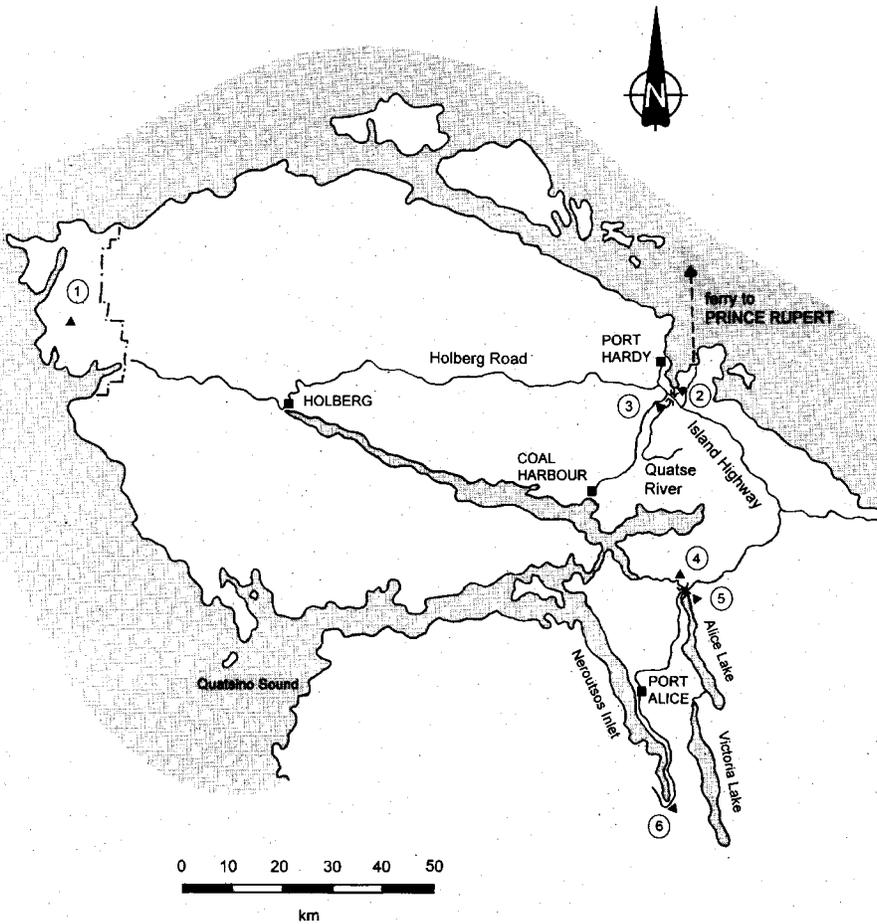
Salt water habitats provide excellent opportunities to view birds and marine mammals. Seals and diving waterbirds are commonly viewed from shore. Small rock islands and open water areas are also visited by sea lions and by bird species such as gulls, cormorants and murrelets. Whales, dolphins and porpoises are common in open water areas:

Telegraph Cove

This small resort community is located southeast of Port McNeill. You can participate in commercial whale watching adventures or launch your own boat, kayak or canoe. Telegraph Cove provides water access to the Johnstone Strait and Blackfish Sound areas. For more information contact the Port Hardy and District Chamber of Commerce [(250) 949-7622; P.O. Box 249, Port Hardy, B.C. V0N 2P0] or the Port McNeill and District Chamber of Commerce. [(250) 956-3131; Box 129, Port McNeill, B.C. V0N 2R0].

Access - From Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19) the access road into Telegraph Cove is located 7.0 km south of the road into Port McNeill. The road into Telegraph Cove is well marked, and is a combination of paved road and gravel logging road. It is 14.8 km from the highway into Telegraph Cove.

Viewing Highlights - From Telegraph Cove there are limited view lines into Johnstone Strait, but on some occasions you may see (from a distance with binoculars) orcas and other marine mammals, including orcas, Pacific White-sided Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises, Dall's Porpoises and Harbour Seals. The best orca viewing is from June through October.



Johnstone Strait

Johnstone Strait, including Blackfish Sound and the world famous Robson Bight (Micheal Bigg Ecological Reserve), is home to one of the best places to watch whales and other marine mammals. Boaters are not to enter the ecological reserve. Commercial tours are available from Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Alert Bay, Telegraph Cove, Kelsey Bay and Campbell River. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4800; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - The easiest boat access to these areas is from Port McNeill and Telegraph Cove. Please note that public access into the Robson Bight Ecological Reserve is prohibited.

Viewing Highlights - The best orca viewing is from June through October. Other marine mammals include Pacific White-sided Dolphins, Harbour Porpoises, Dall's Porpoises and Harbour Seals. The birdlife is diverse, including Bald Eagles and many seabird species.

Salmon River Estuary

The estuary area is located in the community of Sayward. For more information contact the Environment and Lands office in Nanaimo [(250) 751-3100; 2080 Labieux Road, Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6J9]

Access - From Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19) take the road into Sayward. At 9.5 km from the highway is a large welcome to Sayward sign on the left. Directly across from this sign on the right is access across an active logging road to the beginning of the trail into the estuary. It is a 10 minute walk out to the river.

Viewing Highlights - Trumpeter Swans are numerous in the late fall and winter months. Many waterfowl species may be seen. Bald Eagles, Belted Kingfisher and Great Blue Heron are seen year-round. Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk and other raptor species have been observed. Harbour Seals frequent the outer estuary and orcas are occasional spotted offshore.

