



## General and Wildlife Viewing Information

# South Arm Marshes Wildlife Management Area

### Delta/Richmond

The South Arm Marshes Wildlife Management Area (SAMWMA), officially designated in 1991, is located in the South Arm of the Fraser River. It contains 886 hectares of islands, freshwater marsh, and interfacial marsh. Included in SAMWMA are Ladner Marsh, Ladner Lagoon, and Woodward, Barber, Duck, Kirkland, Rose, Gunn and Williamson Islands. Ladner Marsh is located in the Municipality of Delta, and the islands are in the Municipality of Richmond. SAMWMA is located directly east of Alaksen National Wildlife Area and the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

The Fraser River estuary is the single most important area of aquatic bird and raptor habitat in British Columbia. SAMWMA provides wintering, migration and breeding habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and many passerine species. In addition, the intertidal marshes provide critical rearing areas for juvenile salmon.

Historically, more than 70% of the natural habitat in the Fraser River estuary has been lost to dyking. The islands and marshes of SAMWMA contain an estimated 25% of the remaining Fraser River estuary marsh habitat. As these habitats continue to be lost to urban development, SAMWMA becomes increasingly more important as wildlife and fish habitat.

SAMWMA is identified and signed as a wildlife viewing site of **British Columbia Wildlife Watch**, the provincial wildlife viewing program.

### History

Before the completion of the George Massey Tunnel in 1959, access across the Fraser River between Richmond and Delta was by car ferry. The Richmond dock was located at Woodward's Landing, and the Delta dock was at the end of Ferry Road.

Remnant pilings at the west end of Duck Island mark the location of an old fish cannery. Many canneries were located in the Steveston area at the turn of the century.

The Woodward Training Wall was originally constructed between 1922 and 1928. A major extension was added in the mid 1930's, and significant repairs to the structure occurred in the late 1930's and early 1950's. The wall is just over 3.7 kilometres long. Its purpose is to stabilize the south bank of the Fraser River by preventing migration of the navigational channel.

The Ladner sewage treatment lagoon was operated until the early 1980's. Through cooperation of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Ministry of Environment, the lagoon dyke was breached in two locations to permit tidal water to flush the lagoon. This provided additional fish rearing habitat. A few nesting islands were also constructed in the lagoon to promote waterfowl use.

Using Pacific Coast Joint Venture and North American Waterfowl Management Plan funds, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Ministry have established a series of new channels in Ladner Marsh. These channels allow for greater tidal flushing of the wetlands, thereby increasing their habitat value to fish and wildlife.

The storm water treatment marsh was constructed in 1991 on a former dredge spoil site. The treatment marsh was established as part of an agreement between BC Environment and the developer to treat storm water generated from the new residential areas along the east side of Ferry Road.



Common Loon.

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### Wildlife Viewing Highlights

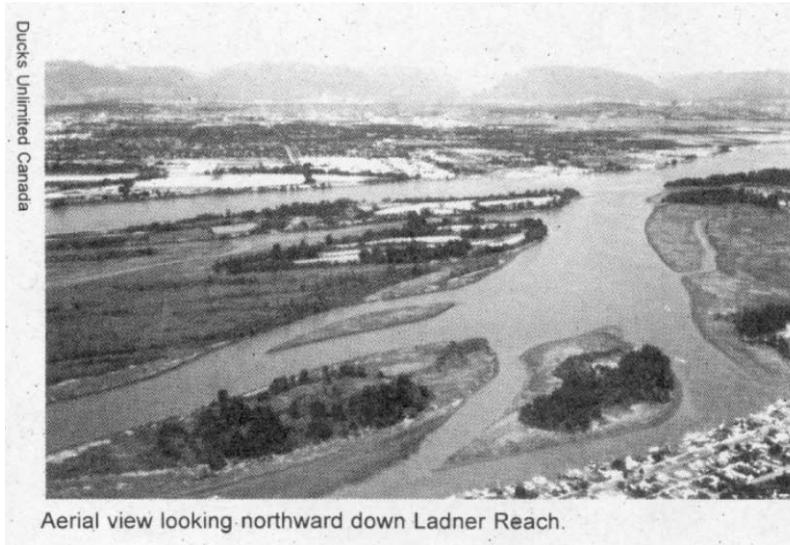
SAMWMA is an excellent area to observe a wide range of wildlife species throughout the year. The following are some of the viewing highlights:

**Loons and Grebes** - The waters of SAMWMA are frequented by many loon and grebe species, especially during spring and fall migrations. The most easily observed are the Common Loon, Red-throated Loon, Horned Grebe, Red-necked Grebe and Western Grebe.

**Great Blue Heron** - Herons are easily seen throughout the year.

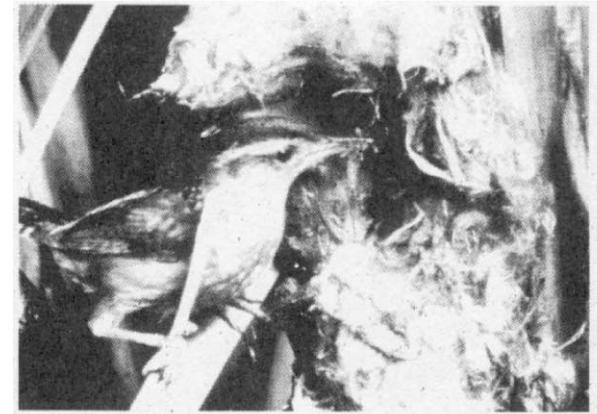
**Waterfowl** - While SAMWMA provides year-round habitat for many waterfowl species, the largest concentrations are observed during the spring and fall migrations. The most common species include Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal and American Wigeon. Snow Geese are present in large numbers on the west portion of the area in March and April.

**Bald Eagle** - The Ladner Harbour Park area and the north end of Ladner Marsh are excellent sites to view eagles. A number of Bald Eagles nest nearby in the Fraser River estuary.



Aerial view looking northward down Ladner Reach.

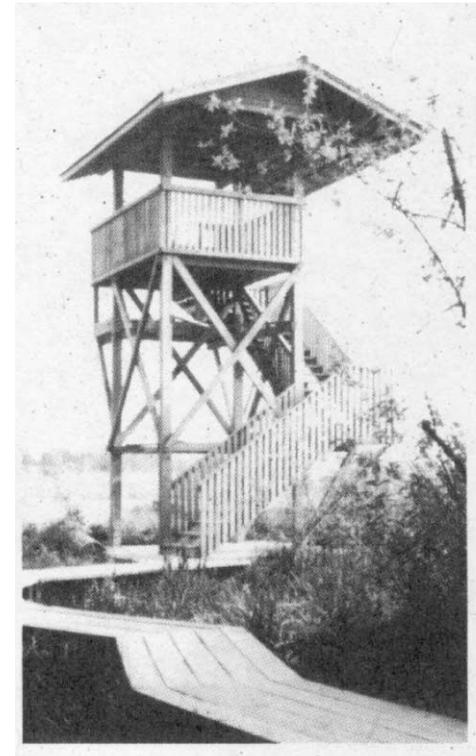
Ducks Unlimited Canada



Marsh Wren at its nest.

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Viewing tower at Ladner Marsh



BC Environment

**Hawks** - This area is used by many hawk species, including Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk.

**Falcons** - Peregrine Falcons are often seen hunting shorebirds and waterfowl.

**Shorebirds** - During low tides, the mud flats and marsh areas are frequented by shorebirds, especially during the migration periods.

**Songbirds** - Passerine species may be observed throughout the year. The greatest diversity of song-

birds occurs in late spring and through the summer. Easily observed are the Marsh Wren, Red-Winged Blackbird and Song Sparrow.

**Mammals** - The marshes of SAMWMA are home to both beaver and muskrat. Raccoons and mink may also be observed.

**Seals and Sea Lions** - The channels of the Fraser River are frequented by harbour seals throughout the year, and in the spring by California sea lions. These species are most visible during fish runs.



**British Columbia Wildlife Watch** is the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks' program designed to promote viewing opportunities within British Columbia. The protection of wildlife and their habitat, and a positive, safe experience for the viewer are the primary objectives of this program. Many local communities, other agencies and public conservation groups are involved. For more information on this or other wildlife viewing sites, contact the Regional BC Environment office in Surrey [(604) 582-5200 or 1-800-665-7027; #300-10334-152A Street, Surrey, B.C. V3R 7P8].

### Viewing Ethics for Conservation

Wildlife viewing demands courtesy and common sense. For the well being of the wildlife and habitats please follow these guidelines:

- Be Considerate of Wildlife** - Use binoculars to view wildlife from a distance rather than approaching them too closely.
- Be Considerate of Habitat** - Plants and the landscape are important parts of wildlife habitat. Please do not damage or remove them, and stay on designated trails or roads.
- Be Considerate of Other People** - Respect private property and the wildlife viewing activities of others.
- Control Pets** - Pets can harm wildlife and hinder viewing opportunities.
- Do Not Approach Young Wildlife** - Young wildlife are rarely 'abandoned' or lost. An adult is usually at a safe distance waiting for you to leave.

### Tips for Wildlife Viewers

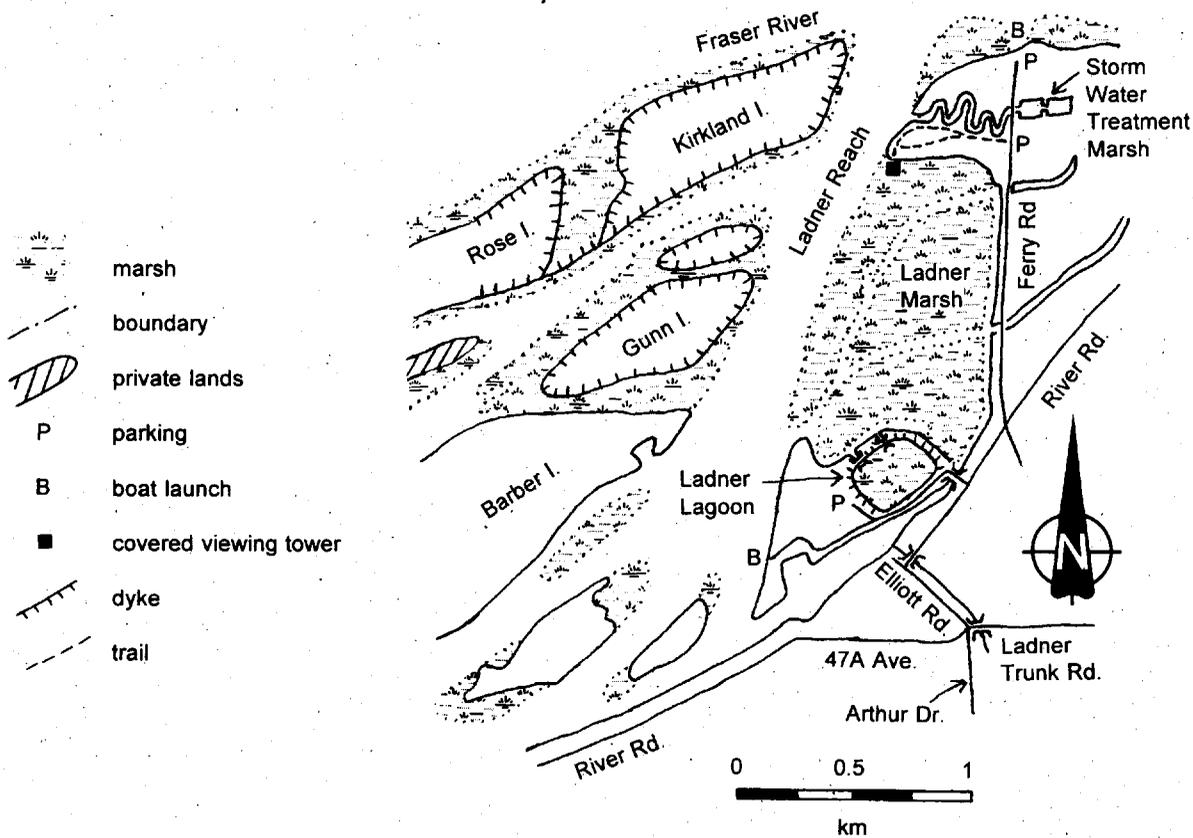
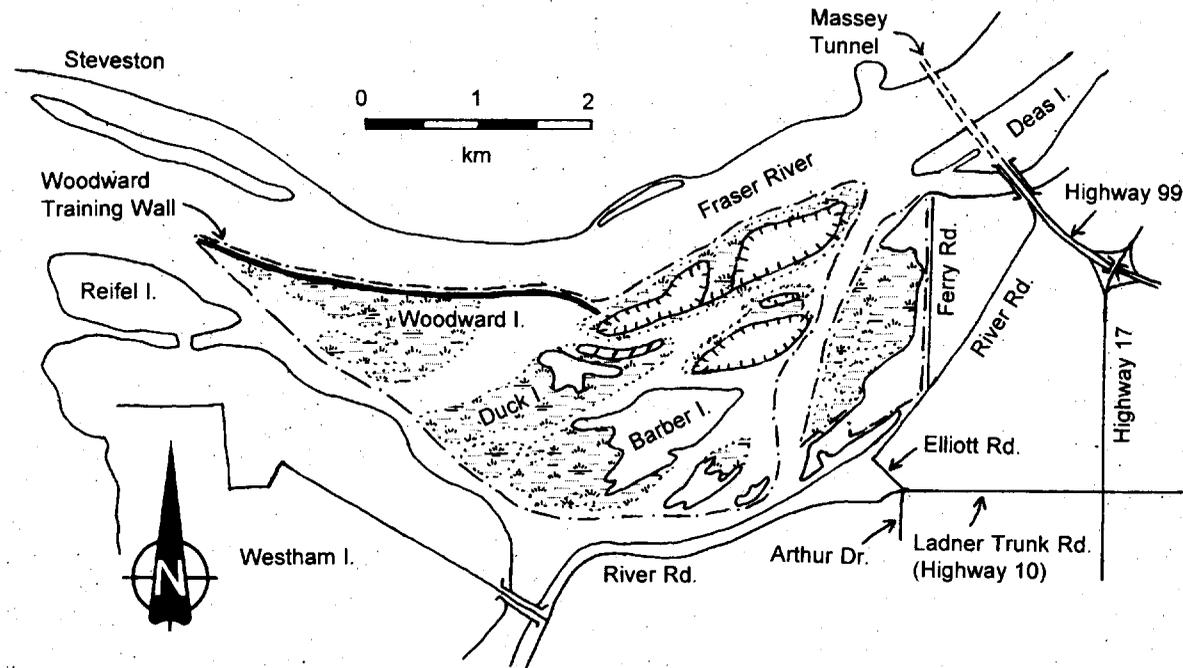
These tips will improve your chances of seeing wildlife in their natural habitats. Remember, wildlife are 'wild' and they may choose not to be seen.

**Choose the Right Season and Time of Day** - Many species are most active during the cooler morning and evening hours. A hot, dry, sunny, afternoon is usually not the best time to look for wildlife.

**Be Patient and Be Quiet** - Wildlife may be difficult to observe even though you have heard the species or detected their signs. If you remain still and quiet, wildlife will determine that you are no threat, and may become active and more visible.

**Use Binoculars or a Spotting Scope** - Visual aids can let you scan wide areas and will increase your chances to observe wildlife without disturbing them.

**Move Slowly and Reduce Visibility** - Wildlife will usually sense your presence long before you have sensed theirs. Most animals have a keen sense of hearing and smell, and most birds and large mammals have keen sight.



### Access and Facilities

To access this site while, southbound on Highway 99, take the River Road exit just south of the Massey Tunnel and continue to Ferry Road. Access while northbound on Highway 99 is via Highway 17 (turn south) and then west onto Ladner Trunk Road (Highway 10). Continue on Ladner Trunk Road to downtown Ladner and turn right onto Elliott Road, and finally right onto River Road. There is water access to SAMWMA from the Fraser River.

Ladner Marsh has a loop trail on the west side of Ferry Road along the banks of the storm water treatment marsh. The west end of the trail has a short boardwalk and covered viewing tower which provides excellent views of the surrounding area. Ladner Lagoon has a dyke top trail around the east and north perimeter which connects with Ladner Harbour Park on the west.

Kirkland and Rose Islands are managed for waterfowl by the Kirkland Island Waterfowl Society and are not open to the public. Frenchie Island is privately owned, and is not part of the management area. Do not leave valuables or personal items in your vehicle.

### Recreation

A number of recreational activities are permitted within SAMWMA, including walking, wildlife viewing, nature study, fishing, canoeing and boating. Waterfowl hunting is permitted within most of SAMWMA. Look for details posted on-site, or consult the provincial hunting and trapping regulations or the Fraser Valley Special Licence hunting regulations. Pets must be kept on a leash at all times.

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**Delta Naturalists' Society**  
(604)943-0273

The **Federation of British Columbia Naturalists Foundation** supports the goals, objectives and activities of **British Columbia Wildlife Watch**.

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