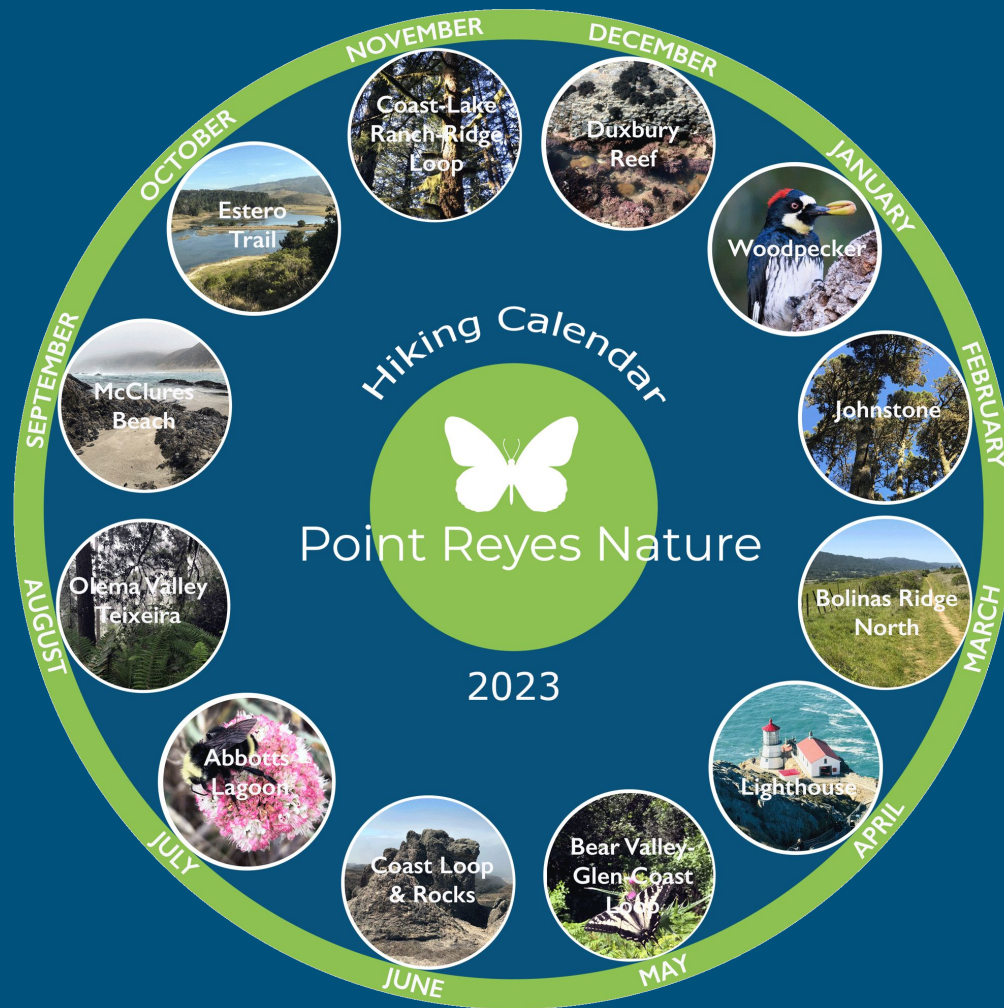




Point Reyes Nature

Hiking Calendar

2023



Check before you go

Events in this calendar are subject to change. Always confirm directly with the sponsoring organization.

Check the Point Reyes National Seashore website for [current conditions](#) including trail & road closures and hazardous conditions.

Download the maps used in this calendar from the Point Reyes National Seashore website: [North trails map](#) and [South trails map](#). Or, stop by the visitor center and pick up a free double-sided hiking map.





January

Woodpecker Trail

The Woodpecker Trail is one of several short self-guided nature trails near the Bear Valley Visitor Center. Look for mushrooms and other fungi treasures hidden in the forest – on logs, in the undergrowth, and even tiny ones sprouting from fir cones. Check out the [Fungus Fair](#) at the Visitor Center on Jan 28.

Avg temp: 45-59°F

Avg rain: 8 days, 5.2 inches

Daylight hours: 10

Full moon: Jan 6 at 6:08pm

PRNSA full moon walk CANCELED DUE TO WINTER STORM

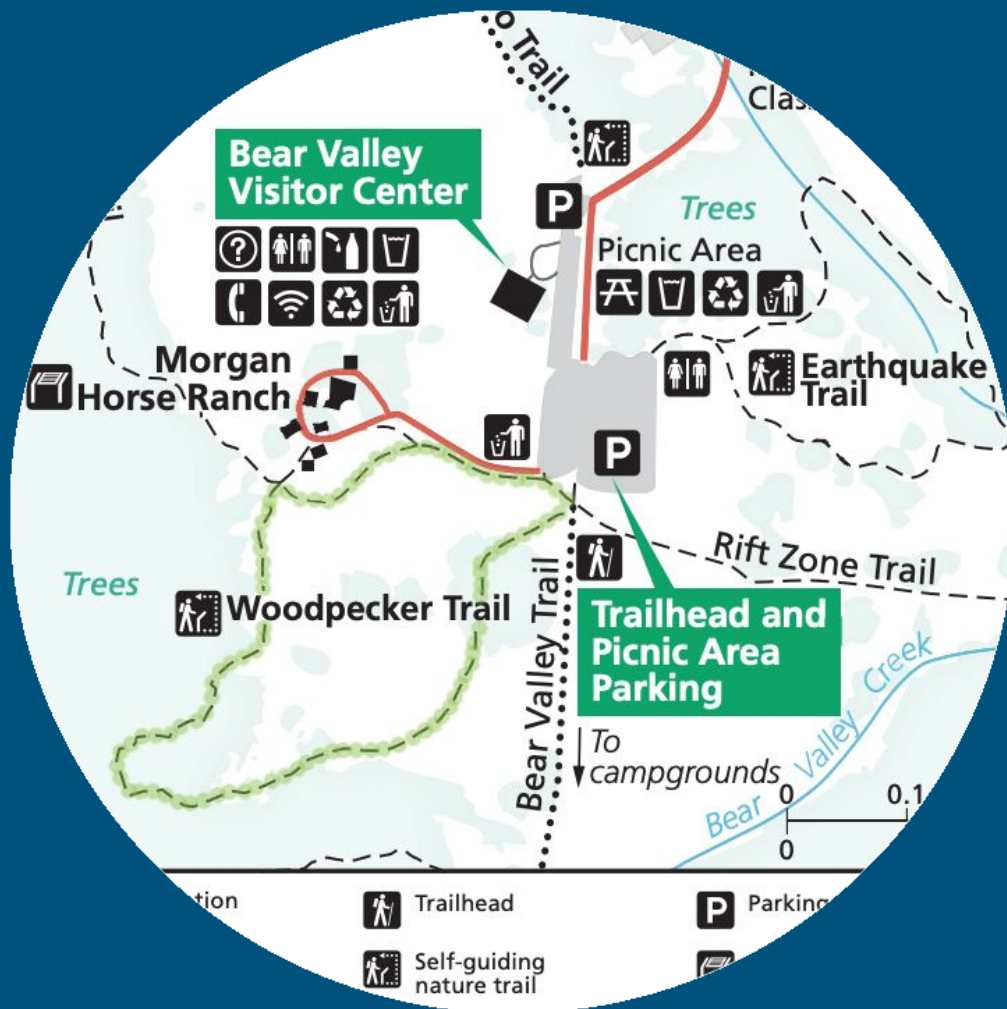
Hike: Woodpecker Trail (0.7 miles), loop

Mushrooms, forest, woodpeckers, short loop

Start at the Bear Valley Trailhead

The Woodpecker Trail is a short loop trail through lush mixed California live oak, California bay laurel, and Douglas fir forest. The beginning of the trail is an incline through a meadow. Along the way, you'll have panoramic views across Bear Valley. Just before you enter the forest is a meadow perfect for a picnic as well as a good spot to watch birds including Acorn Woodpeckers. This self-guided nature trail has numbered markers along the way. Stop at the Bear Valley Visitor Center for a guide or use your imagination and powers of observation to guess the intent of each marker. Visit the nearby [Morgan Horse Ranch](#) and [Earthquake Trail](#) to make a longer hike.

[Get details about this hike](#)



January highlights

Become a [Point Reyes National Seashore Association member](#) and join PRNSA on a monthly full moon hike.

Volunteer for a [Beach cleanup](#) for MLK Day of Service Jan 16

[Coho salmon](#) are spawning! Take an informative [creek walk tour](#) with local non-profit SPAWN.

Visit the Lighthouse or Chimney Rock to watch for [Pacific Gray Whale](#) southern migration (peaks in mid-January)

Visit [Drakes Beach](#) to see Northern Elephant Seals pupping and breeding. Volunteer docents are on hand to answer questions.

[Get trained](#) for the Bumble Bee Atlas Project.



Top & Bottom: mushrooms and douglas firs. Right: Trail sign with markers. Cover: [Lion's mane mushroom \(*Hericium erinaceus*\)](#) found on the Woodpecker Trail

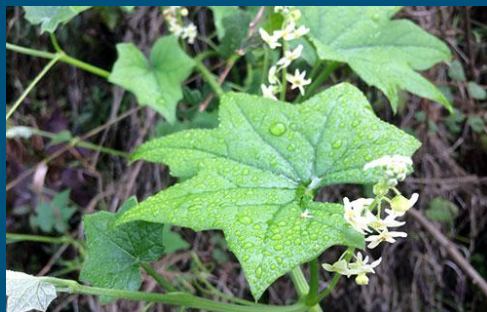
What's blooming in January?

Milkmaids (*Cardamine californica*) is one of the first wildflowers to bloom, with blossoms from January to May. (top left)

Manroot (*Marah fabacea* and *Marah oregana*) are starting to flower. Manroot vines cover the forest, climbing up trees and sprawling on the ground. Their bright green color adds vibrancy to the forest (bottom left)

Mushrooms and other fungi!

Bright red Scarlet Waxy Cap (*Hygrocybe coccinea*) and Scarlet Cup (*Sarcoscypha coccinea*) (top right) and ethereal White Coral Fungus (*Ramariopsis kunzei*) (bottom right)



Featured species: Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*)

Listen for large family groups chattering “waka waka” in forests with oaks. Around the Bear Valley Visitor Center is prime habitat. Learn more about [Acorn Woodpeckers](#) in [iNaturalist](#) and read about their complex social structure in [Bay Nature](#).



photo by [mayoung01](#), Bear Valley
Visitor Center area, Point Reyes

February

Johnstone Trail to Shell Beach

Venture out on a sunny day for a serene winter hike in the bishop pine forest of Tomales Bay State Park. Tiny Bonnet mushrooms sprout like clusters of pale umbrellas on the forest floor. Steelhead are spawning in nearby Marin County creeks.

Avg temp: 46-61°F
Rain: 7 days, 5.1 inches
Daylight hours: 11
Full moon: Feb 5 at 1:29pm
[PRNSA full moon walk](#): Feb 4



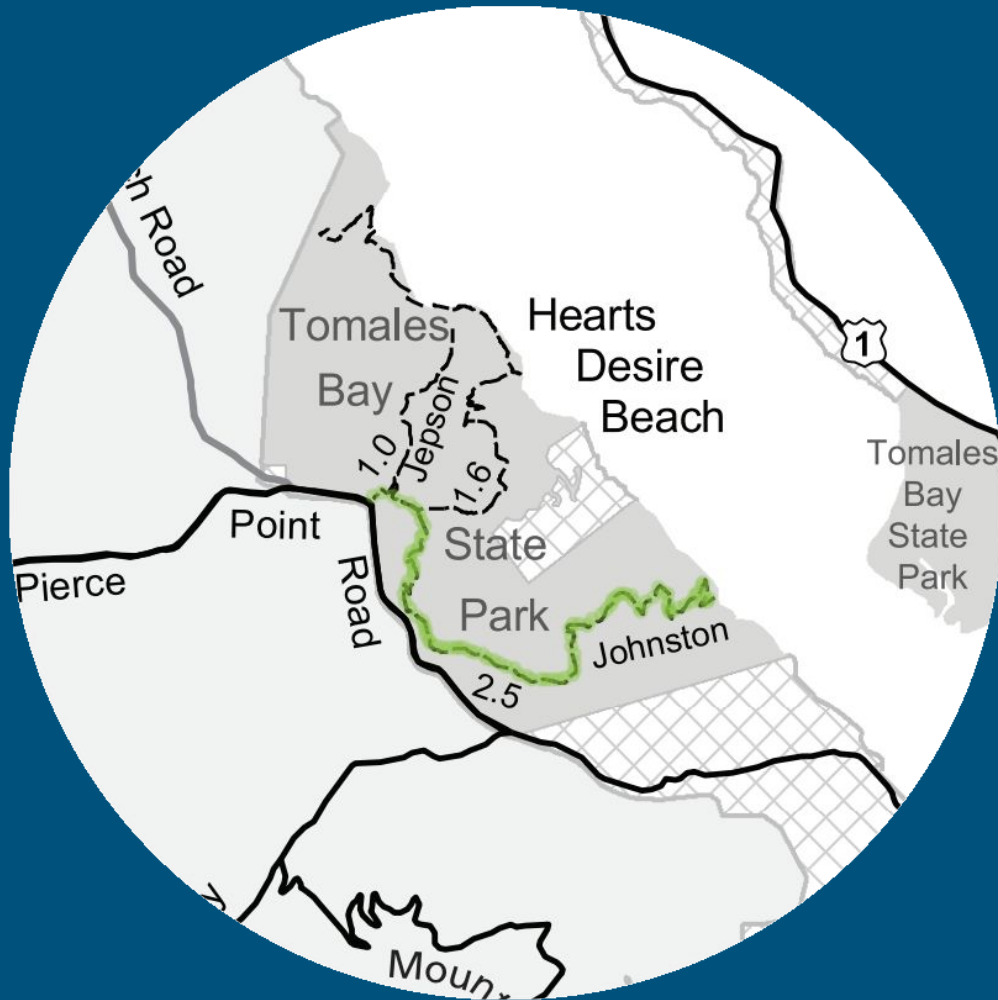
Hike: Johnstone to Shell Beach, 5.0 miles, out and back

Bishop pine forest, beach, Tomales Bay views

Park in the very small lot at the Jepson trailhead off Pierce Point Road.

1. (short cut) Walk down the paved road about 50 feet to the barely visible wooden stairs on the right. You are now on the Johnstone trail.
2. There are two forks in the trail. At the first fork, very close to the beginning of the trail, go right. Thanks to the Tuesday Irregulars hiking group, the trail now has markers!
3. At the second fork about a mile in, go left. (The trail to the right leads to the street, Via de la Vista, and neighborhood of Sea Haven.)
4. Stop for lunch at Shell Beach.
5. Return the same way you came.

[Get details about this hike](#)



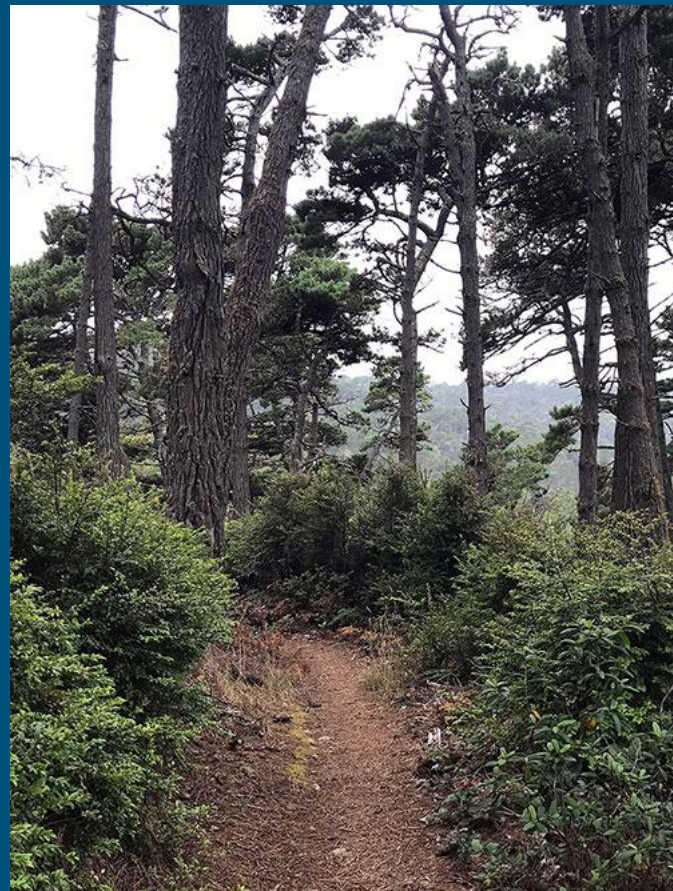
Fungi February

While you hike, scan tree trunks, stumps, and forest undergrowth for interesting fungi, lichens, and mosses. Collecting is not allowed in Tomales State Park. Instead, make observations on iNaturalist. For foraging, head to the Point Reyes National Seashore. Good options are the [Inverness Ridge Loop](#) or [Bear Valley Sky Loop](#) or [Five Brooks Loop](#).

Take a [Mushroom identification class](#) at the Point Reyes National Seashore Association Field Institute on February 12. Sign up early! This is a popular class.

Take a Field Institute class on the [Winter Birds of Tomales Bay](#) on Feb 10.

PRNSA member [full moon hike](#) (3rd anniversary!) is on Feb 4.



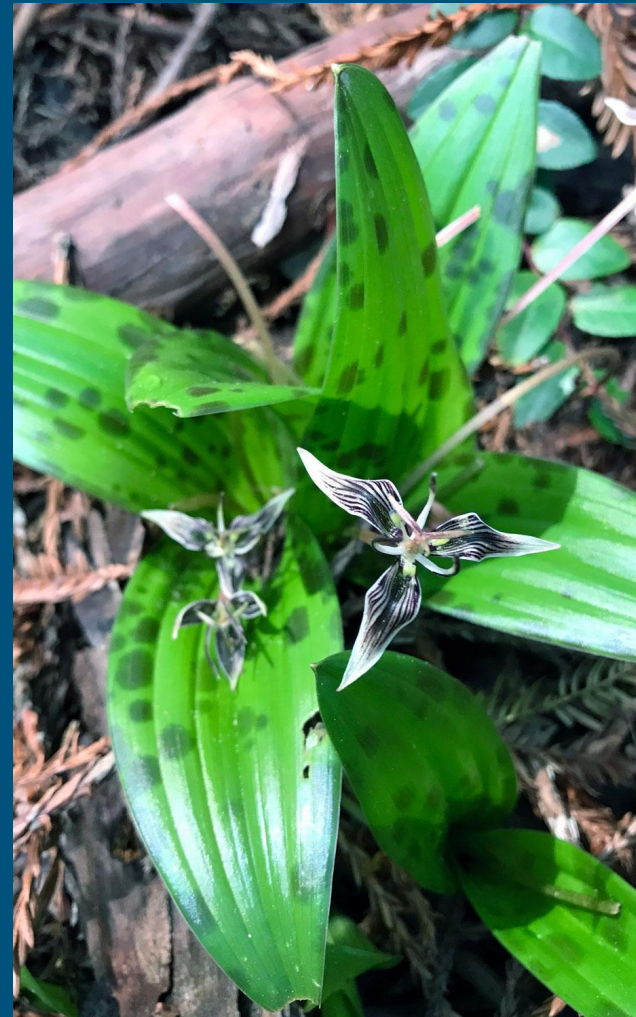
Top: Shell Beach. Bottom: Pixie Cup Lichens (Genus *Cladonia*) magnified. Right: Johnstone Trail. Cover: Bishop pines on Johnstone Trail.

What's blooming in February?

Mushrooms and other fungi

Red-flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) is prolific along forest trails (top left)

California Fetid Adderstongue (*Scoliopus bigelovii*) blooms in February and March along the Bolinas Ridge Trail. Read about my quest to discover how smelly is this lily? (right)





March

Bolinas Ridge North

In early spring, the rolling hills of Bolinas Ridge are green and the temperature is cool. The trail is mostly a gradual incline across pasture (with cows) to the top of Bolinas Ridge. It is fully exposed to the sun except for a few areas of dappled shade and the last 30 minutes of the hike through Douglas firs and redwoods as you approach the Randall Trail. Dogs are allowed on leash and bikes are allowed.

Avg temp: 46-64°F

Rain: 9 days, 4.3 inches

Daylight hours: 12

Full moon: Mar 7 at 7:40am

[PRNSA full moon walk](#): Mar 4

Pasture, expansive views of Tomales Bay and Inverness Ridge

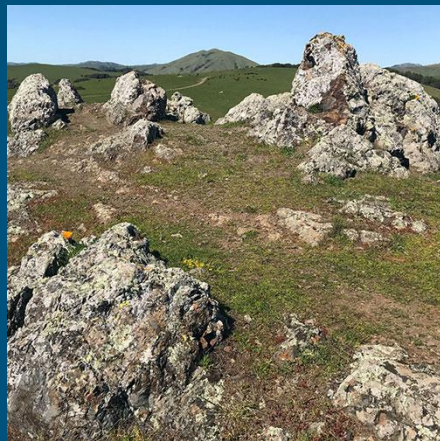
1. Hike about 35 minutes to the intersection with the Jewell Trail (1.4 miles). The trail veers to the right with a steep incline but levels out. Hike another 10 minutes and you'll curve left at a ranch fence with many old wooden posts that are a perfect sunning spot for lizards. I call it the lizard fence. You'll now be hiking south.
2. Hike about 2 hours to the intersection with the Shafter trail and within 15 minutes you'll see the landscape change with forest plants such as redwood violets and huckleberries. Watch for animal paths worn into the trail that cross from forest to field. Douglas firs are on both sides of the trail now.
3. Hiking another 10 minutes puts you in the redwoods and moss-covered trees. Hike about 15 minutes more to the intersection with the Randall trail (4.8 miles).
4. Turn around and hike back. It will be faster since it's mostly downhill. For a shorter hike, turn around at any point on the trail.

A detailed map of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The map shows various trails, including the Golden Gate Trail, Ridge Trail, and Shafter Trail. Key landmarks include the Bear Valley Visitor Center, Divide Meadow, Glen Camp, Firtop (1324ft), and Camp Taylor. The map also shows the boundaries of the National Recreation Area and the Samuel P. Taylor State Park. Distances are marked along the trails, and icons indicate facilities like restrooms and picnic areas.

Explore the forest for a beguiling lily

Once in the redwoods, search the sides of the Bolinas Ridge Trail for the green spotted lily, California Fetid Adderstongue (*Scoliopus bigelovii*). The fleshy leaves grow low to the ground and the small flowers are a high-contrast stripe. If your knees are willing, bend down to see if you can pick up the faintly “wet dog” smell that gives the lily its smelly common name.

Take an Animal Tracking & Awareness class at the [Point Reyes National Seashore Association Field Institute](#) on March 10.



Top: California Fetid Adderstongue lily. Bottom: Rocky outcroppings in the pasture. Right: Douglas fir shade a few areas of the trail near the top of the ridge. Cover: Bolinas Ridge Trail facing Tomales Bay.



April

Lighthouse, Sea Lion Overlook & Chimney Rock

Explore the east and west spurs of the Point Reyes headlands. Hike the best wildflower trail, Chimney Rock Trail. Climb stairs down to the lighthouse passing bright orange lichen and bushy clumps of sea fog lichen clinging to the rock walls. Watch for seals, and birds at the overlooks. Pacific Gray Whales are migrating north with their babies. Examine the jumble of rocks that form the Point Reyes Conglomerate, just outside the visitor center. You may spot the peregrine falcon seen often near the visitor center. Stop by the South Beach Overlook for an expansive view of the Point Reyes Great Beach reaching all the way to the north end of the peninsula at Tomales Point.

Avg temp: 47-66°F

Rain: 5 days, 2.1 inches

Daylight hours: 13

Full moon: Apr 6 at 12:35am

[PRNSA full moon walk](#): Apr 1

Hike: Lighthouse 0.8 miles, Chimney Rock 1.8 miles, out and back

Lighthouse, wildflowers, marine mammals, ocean views, birds

Start at the Chimney Rock trailhead

1. Hike the Chimney Rock trail to the end (0.9 miles). Sit on the bench and watch for whales. Enjoy wildflowers along the way.
2. (Optional) Walk 0.2 miles to the Elephant Seal Overlook

Drive to the Lighthouse parking area

1. Walk the 313 stairs to the Point Reyes Lighthouse and admire the bright orange lichen on the rocks. Visit the observation room to watch for whales.
2. Stop by the South Beach Overlook for an expansive view of the Point Reyes Great Beach all the way to the north end of the peninsula at Tomales Point.
3. Walk to Sea Lion Overlook on the opposite side of the road to spot elephant seals and other marine mammals and birds.

Get details about the [Chimney Rock Trail](#) or [Lighthouse](#)



Maps: [Chimney Rock & Elephant Seal Overlook](#) or [Lighthouse](#)

April Highlights

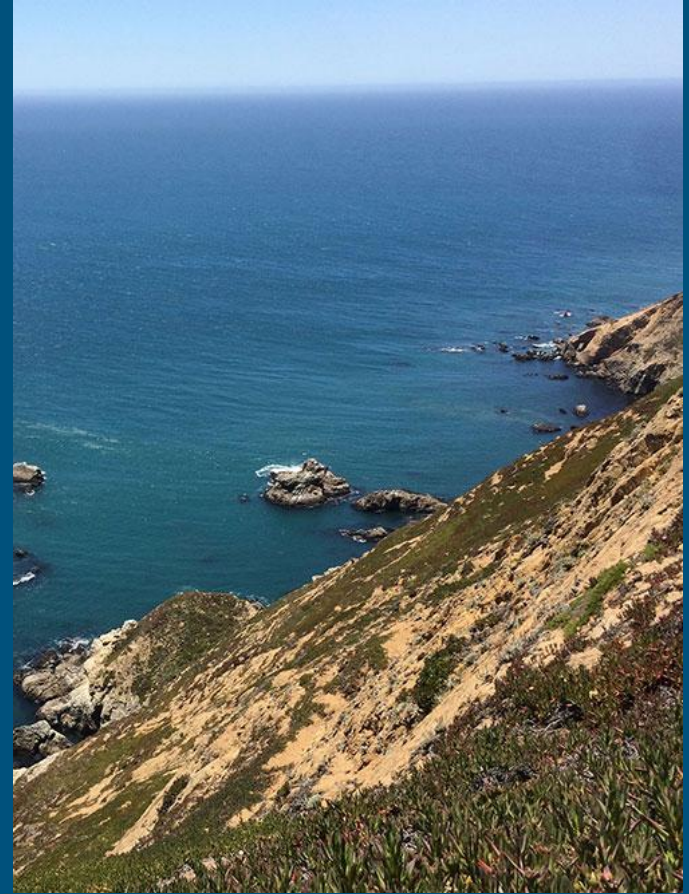
Don't miss the [Point Reyes Birding Festival](#) on April 21-23, the annual fundraiser for the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin.

Learn about the fascinating [Geology of the Point Reyes Headlands](#) at a PRNSA Field Institute class on April 21.

Take a Field Institute class on [Wildflowers and Elephant Seals of Chimney Rock](#) on April 23.

Learn about the [spring migration at Point Reyes](#) at a Field Institute class on April 28.

Pacific Gray whales are migrating north.



Top: Chimney Rock Trail. Bottom: Goldfields on Chimney Rock. Right: Sea Lion Overlook. Cover: Lighthouse.

A photograph of a forest path with a blue text overlay. The path is a narrow dirt trail winding through a lush green forest. Tall trees with dense foliage line the path, and sunlight filters through the leaves. A blue rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'May' and 'Bear Valley-Glen-Coast Loop'.

May

Bear Valley-Glen-Coast Loop

Spring wildflowers offer bright pops of color along the trails. Most of this loop is shaded in Douglas Fir forest except for some open stretches on the Coast Trail. Stop for lunch overlooking the ocean. Watch for Pacific Gray whales on their northern migration. Cows and calves are close to shore and easier to spot.

Avg temp: 49-69°F

Rain: 2 days, 0.8 inches

Daylight hours: 14

Full moon: May 5 at 1:34pm

[PRNSA full moon walk](#): May 6

Hike: Bear Valley, Glen, Coast Lollipop Loop, 9.8 miles

Douglas fir forest, ocean views, wild ginger & fringe cups

Trails: Bear Valley, Glen, Coast

Start at the Bear Valley trailhead

1. Hike or bike on the Bear Valley trail to the Glen Trail on the left. Lock your bike in the rack. No bikes beyond this point (3.1 miles)
2. Hike the Glen Trail to the Y intersection of the Glen Trail and Glen Camp Loop (0.6 miles). Go right, uphill on the Glen Trail to the Glen Spur North Trail (0.4 miles). Follow the spur trail through coastal scrub then forest to the Coast Trail (0.3 miles).
3. Turn right on the Coast Trail and hike to the Bear Valley Trail (1.4 miles). Enjoy beautiful ocean views.
4. Take Bear Valley back to the trailhead, an easy mostly-flat stroll (4.0 miles). The first mile is less traveled and peaceful. It begins with a bishop pine tunnel and goes through deep, shady forest with thick ferns on the left and a creek on the right.

[Get details about this hike](#)



Wildflowers, pollinators, and plovers

May is peak wildflower bloom in Point Reyes. Tall [Fringe Cups](#) (*Tellima grandiflora*) line the Bear Valley Trail. Peek under heart-shaped [Western Wild Ginger](#) (*Asarum caudatum*) leaves to find the long-tailed burgundy flower.

May 20 is Endangered Species Day. Watch for calls for volunteers for the [Snowy Plover docent program](#). (Update: Training is May 6 from 10-3 at the Red Barn in Bear Valley)

Join the [Bumblebee Atlas Project](#) for field events to learn to use an insect net, collect data, and identify bees.



Top: Fringe Cups. Bottom: Western Wild Ginger flower. Right: Swallowtail butterfly. Cover: Glen Trail forest

Featured species:

Snowy Plover

(*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*)

Western Snowy Plovers are small, sparrow-sized shorebirds. They are often confused with sanderlings who feed on the shoreline in groups. In contrast, plovers feed farther up on the beach stalking insects. Western Snowy plovers are a federally threatened species with an active recovery program in Point Reyes managed by wildlife biologist Matt Lau. The wire enclosure (shown at the right) keeps predators out but allows plovers through.

Read the Western Snowy Plover brochure with tips on what you can do to protect them. Watch the short documentary on the Western Snowy Plover.

Volunteer as a Snowy Plover Docent at Point Reyes from May to September. Learn what it's like in my news posts from prior seasons and Matt's updates from 2022.



photo by Matt Lau, NPS. Western Snowy Plover nesting at Abbotts Lagoon, May 2022.



June

Laguna-Coast Loop (featuring
hillside rocks)

Visit the alluring rocks between Coast Camp and the Woodward Valley Trail. You'll venture off-trail briefly to get to the rocks. This loop hike goes through coastal scrub with hazelnut, blackberry, an alder-filled marsh, and finally travels along the coast. On a wet or foggy day when the light is just right, marvel at the many spider webs revealed in blackberry vines. Watch for brush rabbits nibbling grass along the trail. Their network of small escape holes run throughout the brambles.

Avg temp: 52-75°F

Rain: 1 day, 0.4 inches

Daylight hours: 14.5

Full moon: Jun 3 at 11:42pm

[PRNSA full moon walk](#): Jun 3

Hike: Laguna-Coast Loop 4.6 miles + out and back to rocks ~0.8 miles

Coastal scrub, ocean views, brush rabbits, alluring rocks

Trails: Laguna, Fire Lane, Coast

Start at the Laguna Trailhead

1. Hike 0.8 miles to the Fire Lane Trail.
2. Continue on the Fire Lane 1.0 mile to Coast Trail.
3. Hike to Coast Camp and continue up the hill following the Coast Trail until you come to a barely-noticeable narrow dirt path on the left heading up the hill. Hike a few minutes to the rocks. Enjoy exploring.
4. Retrace your path back to the Coast Trail and continue along the ocean 2.8 miles back to the road. Walk 0.2 miles back to the Laguna Trailhead parking lot.

[Get details about the Laguna-Coast Loop](#)

Read about the [Coast Trail rocks](#)



June Highlights

National Trails Day is June 3.

[Western Snowy Plovers](#) are beginning their breeding season on Point Reyes ocean beaches. They make nests by sweeping out an indentation in the sand and adorning it with white pebbles. It's nearly impossible to spot the nests. Consider volunteering as a [snowy plover docent](#).

[Harbor seals](#) are at the end of their pupping. A great place to see them is on sandbars in Drakes Estero and Bolinas Lagoon.

Watch for calls for volunteers for the annual butterfly count in Point Reyes, usually held in June or July. Or download the [iNaturalist](#) app and take photos of butterflies on your own to contribute to citizen science.



*Top: View toward the ocean from the top of the Coast Trail rocks. Bottom: Twinberry Honeysuckle berries (*Lonicera involucrata*). Right: beginning of Laguna Trail. Cover: Coast Trail rocks on the hillside*



July

Abbotts Lagoon Cliff & Dunes

Bumble Bees! The cliff overlooking Abbotts Lagoon and the dunes are buzzing with bees in July and August. Bring a magnifier to see a rare spiny flower along the trail. If you are patient, you may spot a rare butterfly, the [Point Reyes Silverspot](#), feeding on nectar flowers.

Avg temp: 53-79°F

Rain: 0 days, 0.0 inches

Daylight hours: 14.5

Full moon: Jul 3 at 7:39am

[PRNSA full moon walk](#): Jul 1



Hike: Abbotts Lagoon Trail, 2.8 miles, out and back

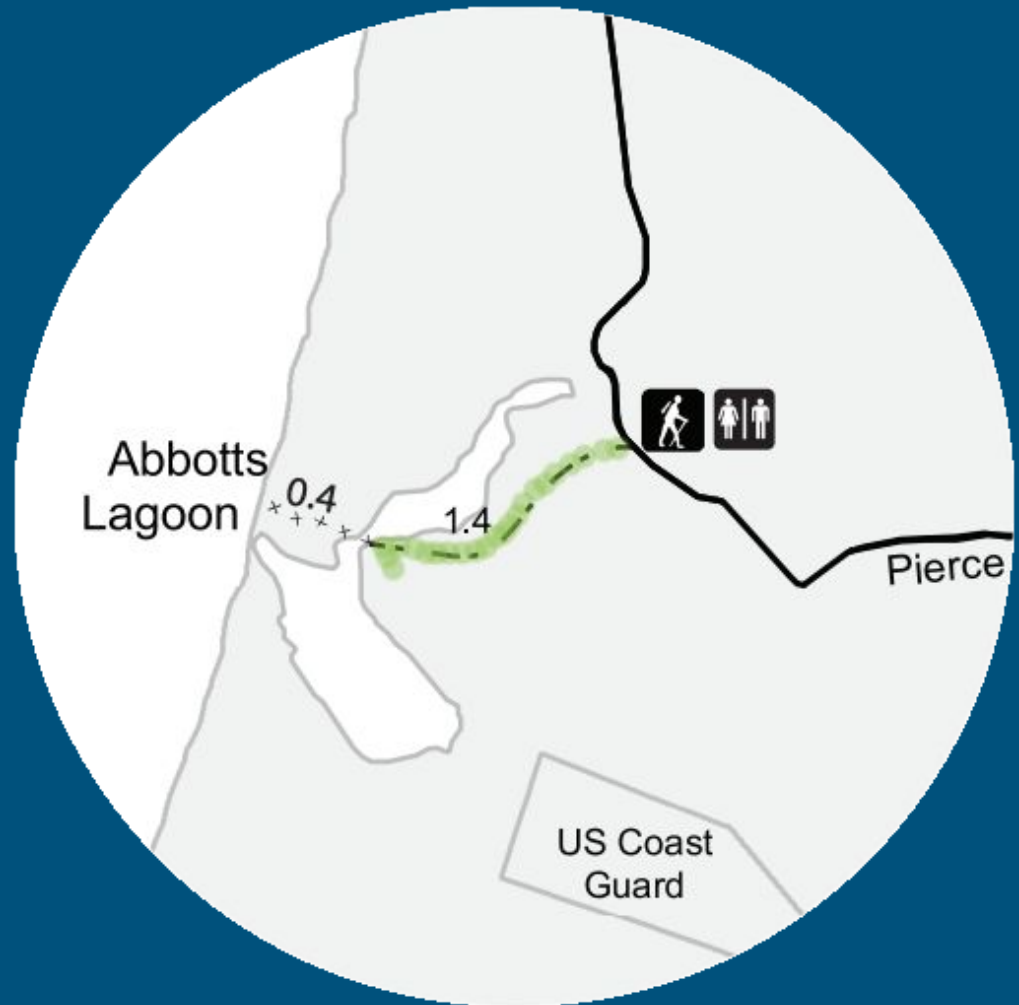
Coastal scrub, lagoon, beach, dunes, river otters

Start at the Abbotts Lagoon trailhead

Hike to the end of the trail at the bridge that connects the two lagoons. Look across the water to where the sand dunes meet the lagoon and search for river otters among the tall vegetation or swimming in the lagoon.

Just before the bridge, look for a small trail up the hillside. As you near the top of the trail, veer to the right to the hill overlooking the lagoon, dunes, and ocean. This is a perfect place for a picnic. Watch for bees on the round pink seaside buckwheat flowers and the golden gumplant flowers. Pay attention to avoid the poison oak. There are often small colorful garter snakes in this area.

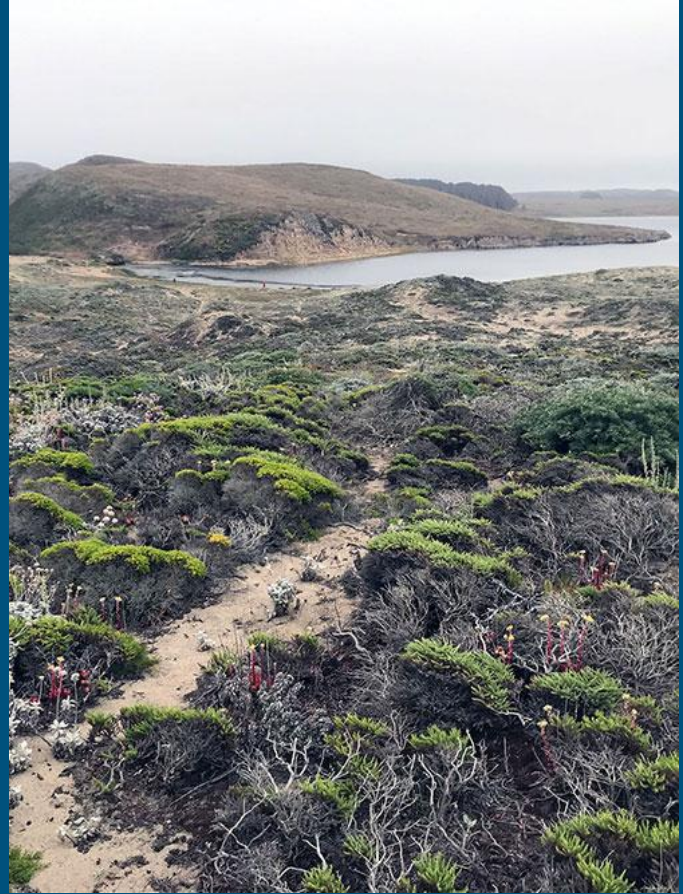
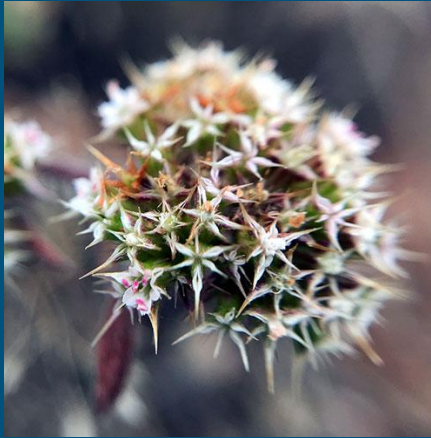
[Get details about this hike](#)



Learn about Bumble Bees in the summer

Read about [a rare flower, butterfly, and bees](#) at Abbotts Lagoon.

Volunteer with the [Bumble Bee Atlas Project](#). Even if you don't have time to participate, the [training videos](#) are a great resource to learn about bumble bees in California. The Bumble Bee Watch website has a section devoted to [identifying each Bumble Bee species](#) in California.



Top: bumble bee and long-horned bee on a gumplant flower. Bottom: Spineflower magnified. Right: View of cliff hillside from the dunes. Cover: bumble bee on seaside buckwheat at Abbotts Lagoon.



August

Olema Valley - Teixeira

Celebrate “Fogust”, the foggiest month of the year, in the mixed evergreen forest at the south end of the Point Reyes peninsula near Bolinas. Fog brings fir forests twice as much precipitation as other places in Point Reyes - up to 80 inches of rainfall a year! Breathe in the fresh bay scent as you hike the steep Teixeira Trail. See how many different types of ferns you notice. Read about [Point Reyes’ fir & mixed evergreen forests.](#)

Avg temp: 54-79°F

Rain: 0 days, 0.0 inches

Daylight hours: 13.5

Full moon: Aug 1 at 2:31pm & Aug 30 at 9:35pm

No full moon hike

Hike: Olema Valley-Teixeira, 4.9 miles, out and back

Fir/mixed evergreen forest, creek, marsh

Trails: Olema Valley, Teixeira

Start at the Olema Valley (South) Trailhead

Walk half a mile on the Olema Valley Trail to the Teixeira trail. Early on, you'll cross Pine Gulch Creek. There's no bridge so you'll have to cross on a fallen tree trunk or step across stones. On a typical morning, the Teixeira trail is a misty, dripping rainforest of bays and firs. It's magical. The trail is a steady ascent with switchbacks until the trail meets Pablo Point, then it's a more gradual or level climb to the end at the Ridge Trail. It's downhill on the return! Treat yourself to huckleberries and blackberries along the way.

For a shorter hike (3.4 miles), turn around at the intersection with Pablo Point Trail.

[Get details about this hike](#)



August Highlights

The Tule Elk breeding season is in full swing. Visit the [Tomales Point Trail](#) or [Estero Trail](#) to see and hear elk bugling and sparring.

August is the start of shorebird, waterfowl and bird migration. Snowy plovers are finishing their breeding season.

Save the date for PRNSA's annual fundraiser *Party on the Pacific Plate* on September 23rd (earlier than usual this year). Subscribe to the [PRNSA](#) newsletter to stay current on events.



Top: Western Sword Fern & lichen (Teixeira). Bottom: Pine Gulch Creek without a bridge on Olema Valley Trail near intersection with Teixeira. Right: Olema Valley Trail. Cover: Bay tree in the fog on Teixeira Trail.



September

McClures Beach

Take a walk back in time to some of the oldest exposed rocks in the Bay Area on dramatically beautiful McClures Beach. In a low tide, climb through a narrow passage between the rocks at the south end (to the left from the trail) to access a narrow beach covered in large rocks, mussels, seaweed and more incredible rocks. For safety, [check the tides](#) before you visit. If you have extra time, walk up the road to the nearby Tomales Point Trail to discover Tule Elk bugling and sparring during their seasonal rut.

Avg temp: 55-80°F

Rain: 0 days, 0.1 inches

Daylight hours: 12.5

Full moon: Sep 29 at :5:57am

[PRNSA full moon walk](#): Sep 30

Hike: McClures Beach, 0.8 miles, out and back

Beach, geology, whale watching, bird watching

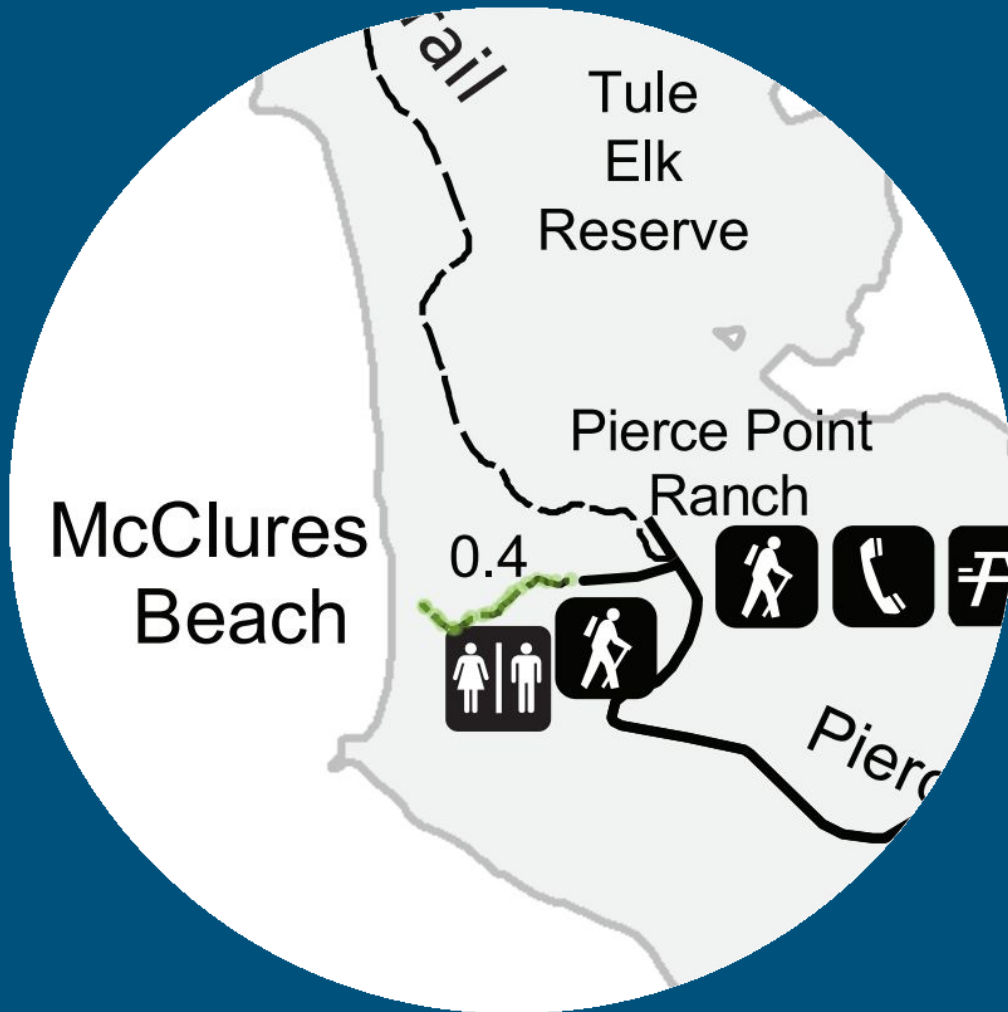
Start at the McClures Beach parking lot

It's a short hike starting on a sandy path – remains of ice age sand dunes. The path becomes decomposed granite and winds gradually down a wide ravine. Wildflowers dot the banks and a seasonal creek carries water to the beach. This is not a good beach for swimming. Instead, explore its beauty a safe distance from the shore.

For safety, [check the tides](#) before you visit. September has wide daily fluctuations from minus tides to six-foot high tides in Point Reyes. Only explore the south end rocks and beach at a low or outgoing tide.

Keep your eyes on the ocean at all times and stay back 90 feet when possible to avoid large, unpredictable waves.

[Get details about this hike](#)



Ancient rocks

McClures Beach is a geologic wonderland. Some of the most ancient rocks in the Bay Area are exposed here. Read about [McClures Beach Geology](#) (page 20) to learn how the rocks on the north and south ends of the beach are different. Local Bay Area geologist, Doris Sloan, discusses [what and where are the oldest rocks in the bay area](#), including Point Reyes (Bay Nature).

The shoreline is a gathering place for migratory shorebirds feeding on crabs and insects. Learn more about the birds of Point Reyes by taking a [Field Institute](#) birding class.

Join the [Coastal Cleanup day at Drakes Beach](#) on September 16.

Buy your tickets for PRNSA's annual fundraiser **Party on the Pacific Plate** on September 23rd.



Top: Sur Series metamorphic rock exposed on the beach, possibly as old as 1.7 billion years. Bottom: Seaside Daisy. Right: McClures Beach. Cover: McClures Beach.



October

Estero Trail & historic cemetery

Leopard sharks breed in the shallows of Drakes Estero in the fall. Watch for them from the bridge. Bring binoculars to spot migrating birds and shorebirds along the water's edge. Afterwards, drive to the historic Point Reyes Life-Saving Station cemetery on the hill. During the first few years of operation in the late 1800's, four surfmen died and were buried at the historic Claussen family cemetery on G Ranch, where they continue their watch over Point Reyes.

Avg temp: 53-75°F

Rain: 4 days, 1.9 inches

Daylight hours: 11.5

Full moon: Oct 28 at 4:24pm

[PRNSA full moon walk](#): Oct 28

Hike or bike: Estero Trail, ~3.4 miles, out and back

Estuary, pasture, fir forest, bat rays, leopard sharks

Start at the Estero Trailhead

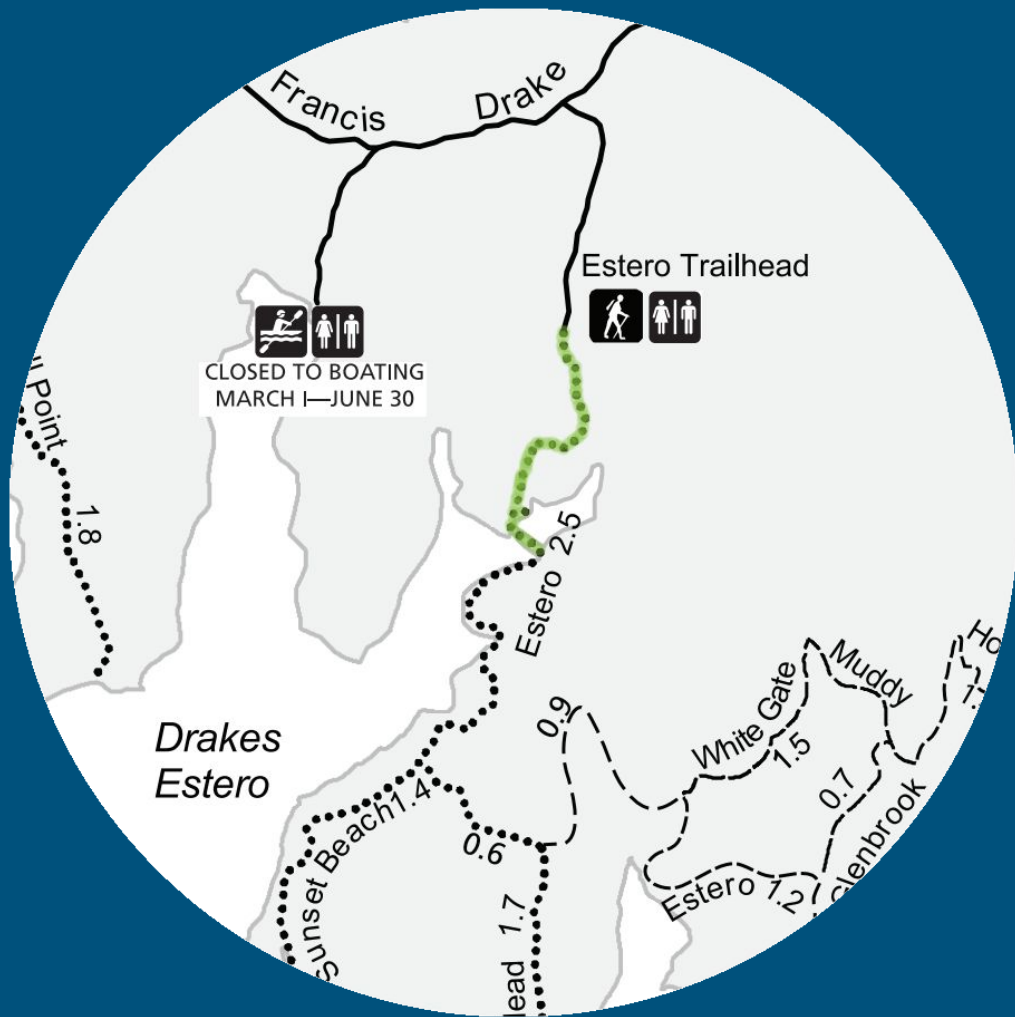
1. Follow the Estero Trail to the bridge (~1.7 miles).
2. Explore along the water's edge and watch for bat rays and leopard sharks from the bridge.
3. Return to the trailhead

Drive to the Point Reyes Life-Saving Station cemetery

4. Turn left on Sir Francis Drake as you exit
5. Drive 1.1 miles. Watch for the sign on the right.
6. Drive a short distance up the gravel road and park overlooking Sir Francis Drake in one of the few pull out spots.
7. Hike up the hill toward the Eucalyptus & Cypress grove. The cemetery is among the trees.

Read more about life in the [historic life-saving service in Point Reyes](#).

[Get details about this hike](#)



October Highlights

Fall on the Estero Trail is a great time to spot migrating birds feeding in Drakes Estero and resting in the fir forest bordering the Estero. Watch for leopard sharks and bat rays at the bridge.

At the Great Beach, Drakes Beach, and Chimney Rock, Northern Elephant Seal juveniles are hauling out of the ocean to rest and spar onshore. Consider volunteering as a [Winter Wildlife Docent in Point Reyes](#). Training starts in the fall.



*Top: Drakes Estero at low tide. Bottom: Grave marker. Right: Historic Life-Saving Station cemetery.
Cover: View back to Drakes Estero bridge crossing.*



November

Coast-Lake Ranch-Ridge Loop

Fall is a great time to hike the south end of the Inverness Ridge near Bolinas. The first rains bring a profusion of mushrooms to the forest and the yellow leaves of Bigleaf Maples (*Acer macrophyllum*) stand out from their evergreen fir and bay neighbors. This hike offers both cliffside ocean views and deep forest serenity.

Avg temp: 49-66°F

Rain: 6 days, 3.3 inches

Daylight hours: 10

Full moon: Nov 27 at 4:16am

[PRNSA full moon walk](#): Nov 25

Hike: Coast-Lake Ranch-Ridge Loop (10 miles)

Fir and mixed evergreen forest, ocean views, solitude

Trails: Coast, Lake Ranch, Ridge

Start at the Palomarin Trailhead

1. This is a lovely, mostly shaded 10-mile loop. Starting at the Palomarin Trailhead, hike 2.2 miles on the [Coast Trail](#) to the Lake Ranch Trail. The first segment of the loop follows the coast providing scenic cliffside views of the ocean before heading inland.
2. [Lake Ranch](#) ascends gradually for 3.0 miles to the Ridge Trail.
3. Turn right (south) on the [Ridge Trail](#) which parallels the Lake Ranch Trail closely in the beginning. While the Coast Trail is popular with hikers, Lake Ranch and Ridge offer solitude. Hike on the Ridge Trail for 2.5 miles to the intersection with the Teixeira and Pablo Point Trails. Continue on the Ridge Trail for another 2.3 miles to its end at the road.
4. Walk 0.6 miles on the gravel road back to the Palomarin Trailhead parking lot.



[Get details about this hike](#)

Birds are plentiful in the fall forest

The southward migration is going strong in the sky and in the water. Humpback Whales are beginning their ocean journey south, and birds are headed for warmer wintering grounds. Beaches and marshes host flocks of shorebirds and waterfowl.

While “test-driving” this hike on 11/11/22, I paused for 3 minutes at 11:00am near the pond on the Lake Ranch Trail and heard 9 birds: Pacific Wren, Stellar’s Jay, Varied Thrush, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Fox sparrow, Lincoln’s sparrow, Hairy Woodpecker, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and Spotted Towhee. A few minutes earlier, I also heard a Red-breasted Nuthatch and Song Sparrow. Download Cornell’s [Merlin app](#) for an easy way to identify the birds you hear and see.

Become a [Point Reyes National Seashore Association member](#) and join PRNSA on a monthly full moon hike on Nov 25.



Top: Brittlegill (*Russula*) mushroom (Ridge Trail). Bottom: Conical Brittlestem (*Parasola conopilea*) (Ridge). Right: Fir and maple forest (Ridge Trail). Cover: Moss-covered fir tree on Lake Ranch Trail.



December

Duxbury Reef at Agate Beach

At the southernmost end of the Point Reyes peninsula is Duxbury Reef, a large shale reef extending out from Duxbury Point at the south end of Agate Beach. Here, you will find exceptional tide pools to explore when the tide is low. You are guaranteed to find plenty of limpets, chitons, mussels, barnacles, snails, and anemone. You will need to venture farther on the reef to find the more elusive creatures that are only revealed in the lowest tides, the colorful nudibranchs, and if you are very lucky, octopus.

Avg temp: 45-59°F

Rain: 9 days, 5.0 inches

Daylight hours: 9.5

Full moon: Dec 26 at 7:33pm

No full moon hike

Duxbury Reef at Agate Beach

Beach, tide pools

Explore Duxbury Reef at Agate Beach (highlighted in green on the map).

The dominant color of the Duxbury tide pools is pink. The rocks are covered in pink Coralline Algae and Encrusting Coralline Algae. Duxbury tidal pool life has fantastic names like [Spotted Unicorn](#) (*Acanthinucella punctulate*), a sea snail that lives in the upper tidal zone and [Splendid Iridescent Algae](#) (*Mazzaella splendens*) which glimmers blue underwater in the sunlight.

Duxbury Reef is a Marine Protected Area (MPA) which means you cannot take anything from the beach (except trash, thank you!) and fishing is prohibited.

[Get details about this hike](#)

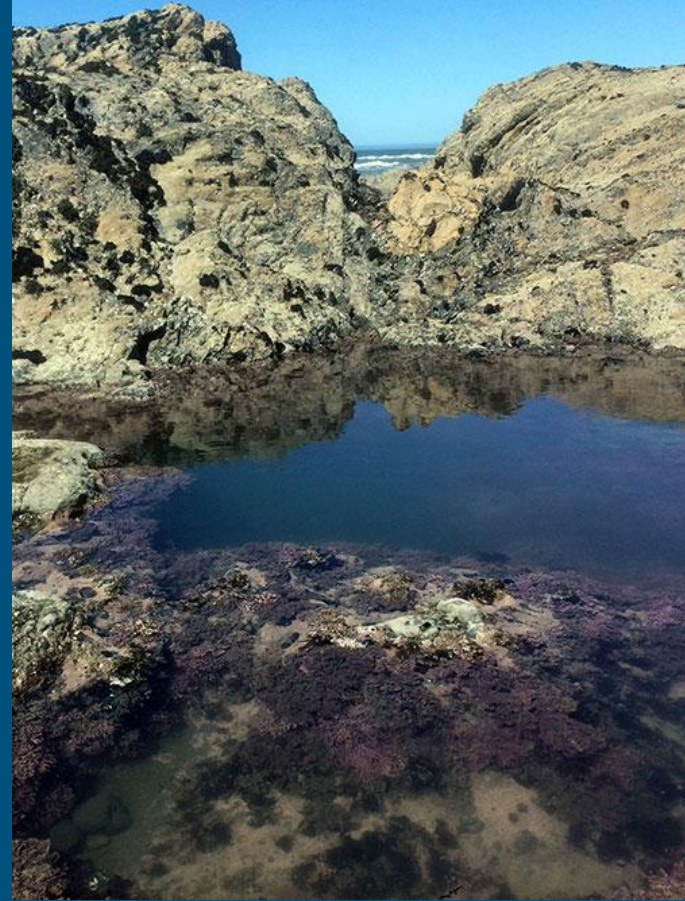


Will you spot a unicorn at Duxbury?

Most likely! Spend a few minutes with the Duxbury Docent volunteers to learn about the rocky intertidal ecology of Duxbury Reef. Several varieties of unicorn sea slug are found here – checkered, spotted, and angular.

Watch for Humpback and Pacific Gray whales on their southern migration.

Consider volunteering as a [Duxbury Docent](#) to educate the public about rocky intertidal ecology, Marine Protected Areas and stewardship practices while visiting the Duxbury Reef State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA).



Top: [Warty Shag-Rug Sea Slug](#) photo by [Lorri Gong](#). Bottom: Angular Unicorn (*Acanthinucella spirata*). Right and Cover: Duxbury Reef at Agate Beach.