

31 important ecological areas off the Oregon coast

Tillamook Head to Cape Falcon

1. TILLAMOOK HEAD Rocky headland, invertebrates, fish, seabirds, marine mammals
2. CAPE FALCON Seabirds, seals and sea lions, sandy seafloor habitat with sea whips

Cape Meares to Cape Kiwanda

3. CAPE MEARES Rocky headland, seabirds, diverse invertebrates
4. THREE ARCH ROCKS Oregon's largest tufted puffin colony and major common murre colony, Steller sea lion pupping site, rocky reefs, invertebrates
5. CAPE LOOKOUT Kelp forest, seabirds, marine mammals, larval retention area
6. CAPE KIWANDA Intertidal invertebrates, seabirds, rocky reef

Cascade Head to Seal Rock

7. CASCADE HEAD Large, diverse seabird colonies, marine mammal haulouts
8. NELSCOTT AND SILETZ REEFS Extensive deep and shallow rocky reefs, fish, invertebrates
9. BOILER BAY AND BOILER RIDGE REEF Large rocky reef, harbor seal pupping area, fish, invertebrates
10. CAPE FOULWEATHER TO OTTER ROCK Largest kelp forest north of Cape Arago, rocky reefs, seabird colonies, marine mammals
11. YAQUINA HEAD Important seabird nesting area
12. SEAL ROCK Complex rocky reef, marine mammals, fish, invertebrates

Cape Perpetua to Heceta Head

13. CAPE PERPETUA Rocky headland with diverse intertidal communities, offshore rocky reef complex with high fish diversity
14. HECETA HEAD Seabird colonies, marine mammals

Siltcoos to Tenmile Creek

15. SILTCOOS & TAHKENITCH Coastal coho salmon, gray whales, seabird feeding area, snowy plover critical habitat
16. THE UMPQUA TO TEN MILE CREEK Similar features to Siltcoos and Tahkenitch

Cape Arago to Coquille Reef

17. CAPE ARAGO Extensive kelp forests, subtidal rocky reefs, fish, invertebrates, major sea lion and seal colonies/ resting area at Shell Island, including Oregon's only breeding colony of northern elephant seals, rare sea otter sightings
18. SEVEN DEVILS/FIVE MILE POINT Rocky intertidal, deep rocky reef
19. COQUILLE REEF Rocky reef, fish, invertebrates, marine mammals, major seabird colonies at Coquille Point

Cape Blanco and the Orford Reef Complex

20. BLACKLOCK POINT Kelp, marine mammals, rocky reef, seabirds
21. BLANCO REEF Seals and sea lions use offshore islands, seabirds, rocky reef, kelp forest
22. ORFORD REEF Major seabird colonies, Steller sea lion breeding area, extensive rocky reef habitat, kelp forests
23. REDFISH ROCKS Large nearshore rocky reef, kelp forest, seabird colonies
24. HUMBURG MOUNTAIN Productive intertidal habitat, fish, invertebrates, kelp forests, marine mammals
25. SISTER'S ROCKS Seabird colonies, harbor seal haulout, kelp, intertidal invertebrates

Rogue Reef to Cape Sebastian

26. ROGUE REEF Large reef habitat, Steller sea lion critical habitat, fish, invertebrates, large common murre seabird colony
27. CAPE SEBASTIAN Storm petrels, tufted puffins and other seabirds, kelp, rocky intertidal

Crook Point to Harris Beach

28. CROOK POINT AND MACK REEF Important seabird area, kelp forest, rocky reef, fish, invertebrates
29. WHALEHEAD Auklets, puffins, storm petrels and other seabirds, marine mammals, kelp, rocky reef
30. CAPE FERRELO Seabird colonies, marine mammals, kelp forest, invertebrates
31. GOAT ISLAND Eleven species of nesting seabirds, harbor seals, kelp forest

The Pacific Ocean off Oregon

is one of the richest temperate marine ecosystems in the world. Along Oregon's 360 mile stretch of coastline are 22 major estuaries, long sandy beaches, rocky headlands, more than 1,400 rocky outcrops and islands, and a phenomenal diversity of life.

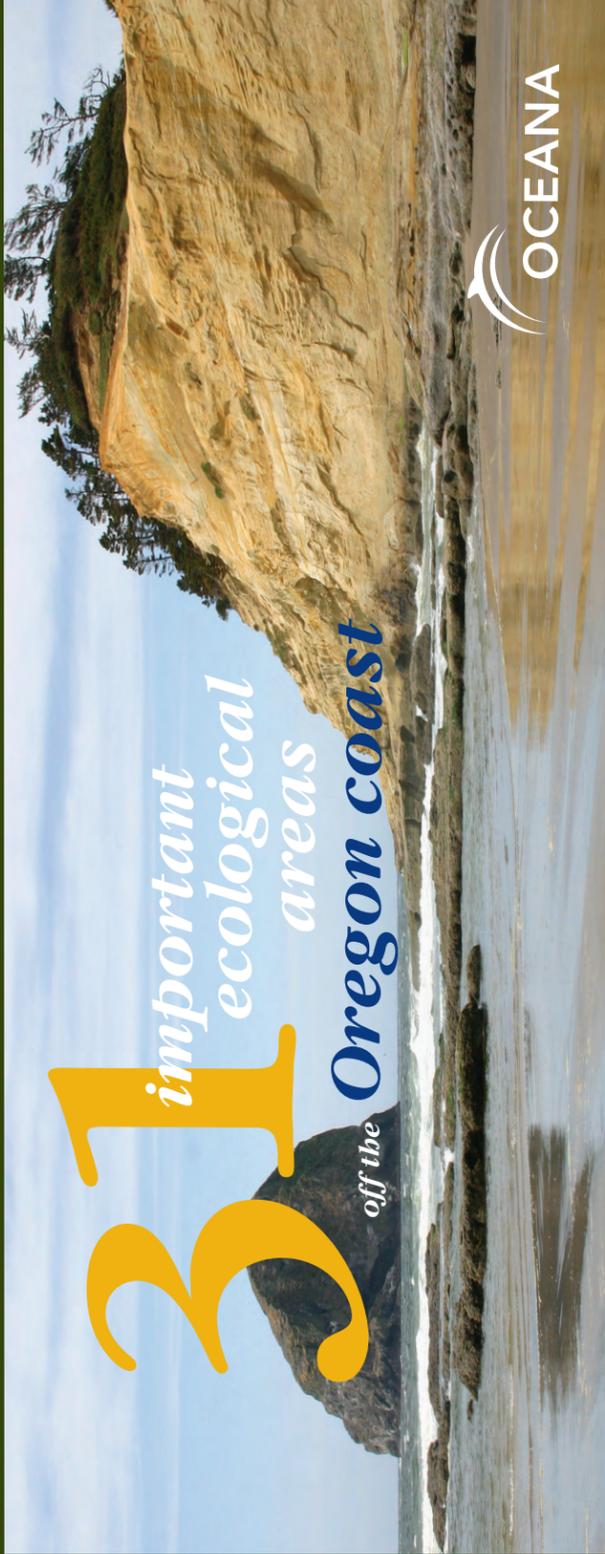
Oregon's waters are a critical stop on the migratory route of more than 20,000 gray whales traveling between the Arctic and Baja California. Roughly 200 gray whales stay to feed off Oregon during the summer. Thirteen species of seabirds, making up over a million birds in total, nest and breed on the coastal rocks and cliffs. Below the surface are hundreds of species of fish such as salmon, rockfishes, and smelts, and invertebrates such as anemones, crabs and sea stars, that make the rocky reefs, kelp forests and deep ocean waters their home.

Oregon's coastal and ocean ecosystems face a range of pressures including climate change, habitat destruction, over-exploitation, invasive species and pollution. Now Oregon is working to establish a system of protected areas, including marine reserves, for the special habitats and marine life that make up our ocean ecosystem. As part of this process, Oceana scientists evaluated fish, seabird and marine mammal habitats to identify 31 Important Ecological Areas.



Pacific Ocean

- Legend**
- Important Ecological Areas
 - City
 - State Park



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Ecological Features

of the Oregon Coast

Rocky Reefs

Both deep and shallow rocky reefs like the Siletz, Perpetua and Rogue reefs are known for their abundant and diverse biological communities. These reefs have physical features like boulders, crevices, and high and low relief bedrock that create unique habitat types for many different species. Rockfishes, wolf eels, giant octopus, lingcod, abalone, urchins, sharks and marine mammals are just some of the many species found on Oregon's rocky reefs.

Sand and Mud Habitats

Between the rocky reefs and headlands, sand and mud seafloor habitats are the dominant seafloor type. While these areas are less sensitive to disturbance, they are important habitats for flatfish, burrowing invertebrates, sea urchins, sea pens, shrimp, Dungeness crabs, and important forage fish such as sand lance.

Seabird Colonies

Thirteen species of breeding seabirds use Oregon's offshore rocks and protected headlands to nest. It is estimated that there are over a million seabirds total, more than Washington and California combined. Some of Oregon's important seabird areas include Three Arch Rocks, Blanco Reef, Orford Reef, Mack Reef, Goat Island, Cascade Head and Yaquina Head.

Kelp Forests

Oregon's kelp forests make up a rare and biologically rich habitat. Rockfishes, lingcod, seals and seabirds all use kelp forests like those at Cape Foulweather, Cape Argo and along the southern coast as an essential habitat for shelter and feeding. Oregon's canopy forming kelp forests are predominantly bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkenana*) which grows over rocky seafloors at depths between 5 and 25 meters.

Marine Mammals

At least 29 different species of marine mammals are found in Oregon's coastal waters, including many types of whales, dolphins and porpoises. Gray whales frequent the Oregon coast during annual migrations between the Arctic and Baja California. California sea lions, Pacific harbor seals and threatened Steller sea lions use Oregon's rocky islands and protected shores for breeding, feeding and/or resting. Northern elephant seals use Shell Island at Cape Argo as a resting and pupping site.

Estuaries

Oregon's 22 major estuaries and 17 minor estuaries and coastal marshes - from the Columbia River to the Winchuck River estuary - play an important ecological role, providing fish and wildlife species with migration routes and habitat for reproduction, rearing, resting, and foraging.

Rocky Shores

The rocky shores along Oregon's coastline support abundant and diverse marine life. Biological communities associated with rocky intertidal habitats include seabirds, marine mammals, fish, invertebrates, algae and marine plants.

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Haystack Rock off Cape Kiwanda, Ben Nieves



Black rockfish seeking refuge

Tufted puffins, USFWS

♻️ Printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink.



Three Arch Rocks, USFWS



Sun star & hooded sea star



Northern elephant seal, USFWS



Black rockfish in kelp forest