Conserving Coastal Habitats

Humboldt Bay encompasses a variety of wildlife habitats where visitors can experience the pounding surf on ocean beaches, colorful wildflowers of the foredunes and dune ridges, windward dune slopes turning aquatic life, herring-shaped beach pine forests, and the subtle beauty of the salt marshes.

The Humboldt Bay ecosystem is home to a variety of coastal habitats:

- **Beaches**
- **Dunes**
- **Wetlands**

Protecting Endangered Species

The Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge is home to several federally listed endangered species and more than 170 other species that have been identified as threatened or endangered. The refuge provides critical habitat for many of these species, including the western snowy plover and the California spotted owl. The refuge also protects the rare Humboldt bay dogwhelk, a small marine snail that lives in the intertidal zone.

Coastal Habitats

The Humboldt Bay area encompasses a variety of wildlife habitats, from sandy beaches to offshore islands. Visitors can experience the pounding surf on ocean beaches, colorful wildflowers of the foredunes and dune ridges, and the subtle beauty of the salt marshes.

- **Beaches**
- **Dunes**
- **Wetlands**

Natural History

**Dune Formation**

The sand carried by ocean tides accumulates over time and is carried inland by longshore currents. There, it forms sand ridges called dunes. The wind then moves the sand, creating the dune landscape. The wind also helps to spread seeds from plants, such as sand verbena and beach rose, which grow in the dunes. The dunes are home to a variety of plant and animal species, including the snowy plover, a small shorebird that nests in the dunes.

**Dune Habitats**

The dunes support a variety of plant and animal species, including the snow-crested juniper, a rare plant found only in the dunes. The dunes also provide habitat for the California scrub jay, a small songbird that nests in the dunes. The dunes are also home to a variety of insects and spiders, including the sugar plum colored skipper butterfly and the marbled spiny flower mantis.

**Wetland Habitats**

The wetlands provide habitat for a variety of plant and animal species, including the American beaver, a large rodent that builds dams in the streams. The wetlands also provide habitat for the western pond turtle, a small turtle that spends much of its time in the wetlands. The wetlands are also home to a variety of birds, including the yellow-crowned night heron, a large bird that nests in the wetlands.

**Marine Protectors Area**

The marine protected areas provide habitat for a variety of marine life, including the giant sea anemone, a large sea creature that lives in the intertidal zone. The marine protected areas also provide habitat for the white sea lion, a small sea lion that lives in the intertidal zone.