



## Unalaska: An Uncommon Place

In the heart of the Aleutian Islands, discover the natural beauty, rich history and lively seaport that make up Unalaska and the Port of Dutch Harbor.

For 9,000 years or more, the islands have been home to Alaska Native people calling themselves the Unangan. Early Russian explorers, who gave them the name Aleuts, were harbingers of a more complex modern era centered on the Bering Sea's natural resources and strategic location between continents. The Russian fur trade, the Russian Orthodox Church and action in the North Pacific during World War II all left their mark on the region. Today, this busy Pacific Rim seaport remains a center of global importance for commercial fishing and scientific research.

Opportunities to see wildlife abound. Birds from all over the world, bountiful fish and marine mammals and several interesting land animals inhabit these lands and waters.



For information on tours and lodging, consult the Unalaska, Port of Dutch Harbor Convention and Visitors Bureau. Visit [www.unalaska.info](http://www.unalaska.info) or call (877)581-2612. While visiting Unalaska, stop by the visitor center at 5 Broadway Street.



## Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail

From the shorebirds of Cordova to the brown bears of Kodiak Island, from the caribou of Cold Bay to the whales of Unalaska, the South Coastal segment of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail highlights dozens of wildlife viewing sites in and around the communities of Cordova, Valdez, Whittier, Kodiak, Sand Point, Chignik, Cold Bay, False Pass and Unalaska. Pick up community brochures along the coastal trail and check for Alaska's South Coastal Wildlife Viewing Guide in stores and online.



**For more information on wildlife viewing across Alaska, visit [www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov](http://www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov).**



### Photos

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# UNALASKA PORT OF DUTCH HARBOR

# Wildlife Viewing Guide



[www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov](http://www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov)

## Alaska Department of Fish and Game

### Watch Our Wildlife

## Wildlife Viewing Tips



**Keep a Low Profile.** Enjoy watching animals' natural behaviors but try not to attract their attention with sounds. If your presence is causing an animal to stop feeding or act restless, give it more space. Be especially respectful of nesting and denning areas, rookeries and calving grounds, and critical feeding areas. Also, avoid causing whales to change their behavior; approach no closer than 100 yards.



**Time it Right.** Dawn and dusk are when many wildlife species are most active. Midday warmth energizes dragonflies and butterflies and creates thermals for eagles and hawks. Low tides expose tidepools and a wealth of food for birds and mammals.



**Look for Clues.** Tracks, droppings, trails and twigs tell stories of wildlife - what they are eating, where they live and when they passed through. Noticing and reading these clues adds richness to wildlife viewing. Tracking books and workshops will help you learn.



**Help Keep Wildlife Wild.** Never feed wild animals. This is teaching them to associate people with food, which can lead to trouble (and it's illegal). Human food can also make animals sick.



**Be Considerate of Others.** People use and enjoy Alaska's wildlife in a variety of ways. Respect private property and give hunters, anglers and others plenty of space.



Sea otters eat, sleep, mate and give birth in water.



## Wildlife Viewing Fun Facts

**Winter Birding:** The weather may be challenging but winter birding is terrific thanks to the region's ice-free bays, which attract tremendous numbers of waterfowl and sea ducks, including long-tailed and harlequin ducks and huge flocks of scoters. The Emperor goose (at right), whose entire world population winters in the Aleutians, and the Steller's eider are easily seen and photographed from the roadways. On a winter walk around town, you may see a peregrine falcon chasing snow buntings or a rock ptarmigan seeking relief from the deep snows at higher elevations.



**Aleutian Mammals, Land and Marine:** Scientists believe only three land mammals (besides humans) are native to the region: a collared lemming, a root vole and the red fox (native only in the eastern Aleutians). Red and Arctic foxes that were introduced throughout the Aleutians



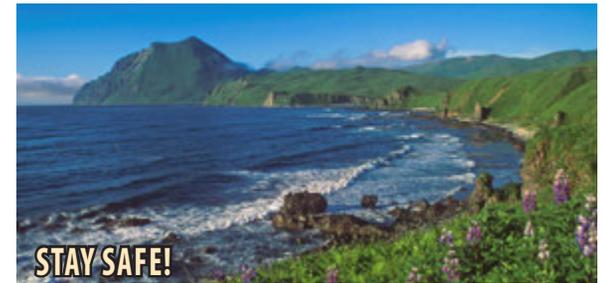
for their fur have decimated seabird populations over the years. Likewise, introduction of ground squirrel, Norway rat and livestock like the gelded wild horses at Summer Bay has also been detrimental to area lands and native species. Marine mammals, on the other hand, are diverse and abundant. Cold, nutrient-rich currents that flow between the Bering Sea and North Pacific feed an explosion of life and productivity. At least 26 marine mammal species and more than 450 fish species, as well as ancient deep-sea corals, are found in Aleutian waters.

## Land and Water Safety Tips

**Weather** Unalaska Island offers many hiking opportunities—and no bears!—but hikers can run into trouble without proper preparation. It's a common misconception that one can't get lost in open treeless tundra, however, at 500 feet in elevation a summer fog can move in quickly and blanket the landscape. The fog can hide challenging terrain like cliffs and steep river canyons and it's easy to become chilled in wet, inclement weather. It's safest to hike along the coast or follow well marked trails and roads. Summer temperatures average 43°F to 53°F, annual precipitation averages 58 inches and winds are ever present.

**Permits** Many lands you'll cross are privately-owned by Ounalashka Corp. **Please stop by their offices at 400 Salmon Way to obtain a general access permit.**

**Tides** Whether hiking or boating in coastal areas, stay aware of the changing tides. Free tide books are available at the boat harbor and many local businesses.



### STAY SAFE!

**The mountains, trails, islands and waterways of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail are wild lands. To be safe, take a guided tour or a companion, let someone know your plans and carry spare clothes, a first aid kit and a means of communication for emergencies. You may leave a hiking plan with the Unalaska Public Safety office (907-581-1233) or a float plan with the Ports and Harbors office (907-581-1254) but please be sure to let them know when you've returned safely!**

# Wildlife Viewing Sites



Atop **Mt. Ballyhoo** **1** overlooking the Port of Dutch Harbor, subalpine vegetation is slowly reclaiming the remnants of World War II-era Fort Schwatka. Amid the ruins of concrete bunkers and gun-mounts, wind-tossed purple lupine, blue bells and tall grasses harbor gray-crowned rosy finches, snow buntings and Lapland longspurs. The views from on top are spectacular on a clear day. Beyond the entry into Unalaska Bay, one looks far out into the Bering Sea where humpback whales and ships may be seen on the horizon. Looking west beyond Broad Bay and Makushin Valley are the glacial slopes and steaming fumarole of Makushin Volcano. You can access the top of Mt. Ballyhoo (elev. 1,634 ft) two ways. A hiking trail juts off to the right along a dirt road just past the airport. Further north off Ballyhoo Road, is Ulakta Drive: a steep, winding gravel road. Watch your footing at the top, the cliffs edges are loose and eroding, and be careful around abandoned buildings, which are full of nails and hidden holes. This former army outpost is a National Historic Area and jointly managed by the National Park Service and Ounalashka Corporation.

Ballyhoo Road continues past ferry and shipping docks and a marine salvage yard to end at the **Dutch Harbor Spit** **2** where part of the commercial fishing fleet ties up. An old road bed beyond a gate continues as a pleasant walking trail to the end of the spit, providing access to excellent birding and beachcombing. This is a prime winter location for Steller's eiders and emperor geese and a good place to see resident rock sandpipers, sea lions and rafts of sea otters.

An easier climb than Mt. Ballyhoo and also dotted with WWII relics, **Bunker Hill** **3** (elev. 421 ft) is located on the South America-shaped land mass at the southern end of Amaknak Island. Park along Airport Beach Road and hike the coastal gravel road at the base of the hill to look for seabirds like cormorants, marbled murrelets, pigeon guillemots and oystercatchers. You may see red foxes, harbor seals and harbor porpoises too. The trail to the top begins near the Carl E. Moses boat harbor and winds up the back side of the hill. Watch out for bald eagles nesting on the hillside. They can be territorial and have been known to dive at passers-by. From the trail, look over to the mouth of Captains Bay where humpback whales often gather to feed on rich concentrations of tiny crustaceans and small schooling fish.

Tucked behind the hotel and city museum is a small bay that's a hot spot for birders and jumping with salmon. Sit awhile on the banks of **Margaret Bay** **4** and scan for fresh and salt water ducks including Steller's eiders, buffleheads, goldeneyes, green-winged teal, and long-tailed and harlequin ducks. It's also an excellent spot to look for tufted ducks (an Asian species) among the flocks of scaup.

Small stands of Sitka spruce scattered around the community of Unalaska provide shelter for local passerines and are a magnet for any casual and accidental migrants or strays from mainland Alaska or Asia. The scrubby trees were transplanted to these treeless islands from other parts of Alaska by Russian fur traders—and later by U.S. soldiers. The spruce grove at **Strawberry Hill** **5** behind East Point is well worth a look.

**Summer Bay Road** **6** is a gorgeous, approximately 7-mile drive along the coastline north of Unalaska past Summer Bay and Humpy Cove and ending at Morris Cove. These three bays team with pink salmon in August. Beachcombers turn up colorful bits of beach glass and agates while tide pools may yield a trove of sea stars, urchins and anemones. Pull off the



Tundra plants and wildflowers at sunset

road and scan the kelp beds for sea otters munching on sea urchins and harbor seals perched on rocks. Birdlife includes bald eagles, black oystercatchers, rock sandpipers, and any of three species of cormorant, including the red-faced cormorant seen only in Alaska and NE Asia. Look for common redpolls, savannah sparrows and American pipits in the uplands. Summer Bay Road also connects with Overland Drive, which is described under #9.

Charter a boat trip or paddle a kayak up **Captains Bay**, **7** one of the area's few protected bays. Exploring by water allows you to avoid the busy industrial area and traffic along Captains Bay Road and be able to view wildlife at the head of the bay without crossing private lands there. Humpback whales and harbor seals may be seen in the bay. Look for rock and least sandpipers and semi-palmated plovers along the shore and bank swallows skimming the waters.

A map of area hiking trails is available from Ounalashka Corporation although many featured routes are unmarked and unmaintained. Well-established trails that are easy to find include Ugadaga Bay Trail, Agamgik Trail and Peace of Mind Trail. **Pyramid Trail** **8** begins about a mile down Captains Bay Road and follows a nearly 3-mile circuit around Pyramid Peak. You will cross rolling uplands that are breeding grounds for such birds as Lapland longspur, rock ptarmigan and rock and least sandpipers. Sit awhile in the tundra and marvel at the profusion of wildflowers, mosses, berries and grasses around you. Salmonberries are abundant through August and ripe blueberries into October. You may opt to climb Pyramid Peak or drop down into Unalaska Valley.

From town, consider a hike or rent or borrow a bike or car to explore beautiful **Unalaska Valley** **9** at the head of Unalaska Lake. Hike old road beds through berry patches and upland vegetation. If you are driving, you may continue up the valley along Overland Drive. The road climbs steep

switchbacks before it levels out along a scenic drive that passes several trailheads then drops down into Summer Bay. Look carefully for the tiny Kamchatka rhododendron or the delicate lady's slipper. You may see sandpipers or the Aleutian song sparrow perched on a Putchky flower. Overland Drive is closed in winter.

Join the many local residents who enjoy a stroll around old **Unalaska**. **10** Look for salmon spawning, ducks dabbling and diving, and people fishing along the creek. Follow the beach road back through town and check for bald eagles perched on the Russian Orthodox crosses of the Cathedral of the Holy Ascension. A hike out Bayview Avenue towards the landfill is sure to yield shorebird and marine life sightings.

Explore areas of spectacular beauty and abundant wildlife on a marine tour of **Unalaska Bay**. **11** Delicate waterfalls cascade from emerald green cliffs that are home to tens of thousands of nesting seabirds like puffins, kittiwakes, cormorants, murres, guillemots, auklets and murrelets. Humpback whales feed in Unalaska Bay in July and August before migrating to calving grounds in Hawaii. Steller sea lions and sea otters are common. Drift past moist, mossy sea caves, picnic on a beach or circumnavigate Hog Island to look for nesting gulls and kelp patches that draw porpoises, whales and otters. If your tour takes you outside Unalaska Bay, it may be long and rough—and even weathered out certain times of year—but the rewards are great. A trip to Chelan Banks or the Baby Islands may yield Laysan, black-footed and short-tailed albatrosses, the coveted whiskered auklet, or clouds of shearwaters, petrels, fulmars, and gulls in a spectacular feeding frenzy. Humpback, orca and minke whales, as well as Pacific white-sided dolphins, ply the waters while sea lions haul out on rock beaches.

If timing and weather are right, consider an air-taxi flight to the village of **Akutana** **12** and ride the twice-monthly ferry back to Unalaska. Look for whales, sea lion haulouts and clouds of seabirds feeding along the way. Your flight may take you directly over the Baby Islands.



A harbor seal resting on the beach

1. Mt. Ballyhoo		2 hrs.*
2. Dutch Harbor Spit		1 hr.
3. Bunker Hill		1 hr.
4. Margaret Bay		½ hr.
5. Strawberry Hill		½ hr.
6. Summer Bay Road		1 hr - ½ day
7. Captains Bay		½ day
8. Pyramid Trail		½ day
9. Unalaska Valley		1½ hrs.
10. Unalaska		1 hr.
11. Unalaska Bay		½ day
12. Akutan		1 day +

Scenic Vistas Hiking Trails Camping

\*Estimated times include travel between airport and site plus visit. Check with Ounalashka Corp. at 400 Salmon Way or the visitor center for detailed information on trails.

