

Wonderful Wildlife

The Tri-Cities of Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland, a desert shrub-steppe environment in southeastern Washington State, is located on the Pacific Fly-way at the confluence of the Snake, Columbia, and Yakima Rivers—making it one of the best birding spots in the Northwest. We are home to the McNary National Wildlife Refuge, Saddle Mountain Wildlife Refuge, Juniper Dunes National Forest, Wallula Delta, Tapteal Greenway, Chamna Natural Preserve, Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, and The Hanford Reach National Monument. (With the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge nearby.)

HANFORD REACH NATIONAL MONUMENT

The last free flowing stretch of the Columbia River—The Hanford Reach traces a path between shifting sand dunes and towering cliffs.

Designated by President Clinton as a National Monument in June 2000, The Hanford Reach is the only free flowing, non tidal stretch of the Columbia River remaining in the United States. Just north of Richland, a 51-mile stretch of unbridled river flows through a spectacular landscape of white bluffs, dunes and desert plateaus. Along with the river, rare birds and animals find refuge in this protected tract of wilderness. View American white pelicans, osprey, bald eagles, black-crowned night herons, great egrets, cormorants, Caspian terns, blue heron, prairie falcons, red-tailed hawks, elk, mule deer, coyote, river otter and many other spectacular animals which inhabit this natural sanctuary. A large elk herd hides in the canyons, and incredibly, porcupines are a common sight. Rare plants defy the drought, wind and heat. Beautiful spring wildflower displays delight the visitors who venture into the field. *Approximately 238 species of birds have been documented on or near the Monument, 36 of which are common and 40 are accidental visitors.* The Monument provides habitat for year-round residents, migratory species that breed on the site, winter residents, and migrants that are passing through to or from breeding grounds.

Consequence of World War II

As the rest of the Columbia River and eastern Washington's arid shrub steppe ecosystem gave way to development, The Reach and surrounding land survived as an unexpected benefit of security requirements of World War II's Manhattan Project. In fact, The Hanford Reach shelters the largest remaining tract of sagebrush grassland in the country. In 1967, the then US Atomic Energy Commission set aside 120 square miles of relatively pristine shrub-steppe on the Hanford Site to preserve portions of the sage covered grassland that once covered the American West. Now

known as the Fitzner/Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) Reserve, this portion hosts a staggering diversity of plant life which changes with the elevation. Including, bitterbrush, rabbitbrush, hopsage, Sandberg's bluegrass, dropseed, squirrel-tail grass, bluebunch wheatgrass, rosy balsamroot, and a variety of flowering forbs.

The Hanford Reach National Monument encompasses the river, shoreline, Hanford Dunes, and ALE Reserve; and is a truly unique asset. The Monument is a biological treasure, encompassing important riparian, aquatic, and upland shrub-steppe habitats that are rare or in decline in other areas. Indeed, it is an archaeologically diverse landscape encompassing an array of scientific and historic objects, including irreplaceable natural and historic legacies arising from the Manhattan Project.

View The Reach via a commercial tour, since it is in a federally protected area where vehicle access is limited.

Columbia River Journeys

(509) 734-9941/(888) 486-9119.
www.columbiariverjourneys.com.

Columbia Kayak Adventures

(509) 947-5901.
www.columbiakayakadventures.com.

MCNARY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Located in the lower Columbia Basin of eastern Washington, adjacent to the confluence of the Columbia and Snake Rivers near Pasco, Washington, the Refuge is an important resting and feeding area for migratory waterfowl in the Pacific Fly-way. A variety of refuge habitats also provide important migration and nesting habitat for a rich diversity of other migratory birds. The most favorable viewing opportunities for waterfowl occur between October and December. Freeze-up of impoundments in late December and January diverts many waterfowl to the open water of the Columbia and Snake rivers. Nesting activity commences from March through as late as July.

The McNary National Wildlife Refuge provides an excellent chance to view many species of animal, songbird, waterfowl, and migratory birds including tundra swans, snow geese, green-winged teals, Northern shovellers, canvasbacks, redheads, ring-necked ducks, and lesser scaup. The Refuge encompasses over 15,000 acres of backwater sloughs, seasonal wetlands, shrub-steppe uplands, irrigated farmlands, river islands, delta mudflats, and riparian areas. The Refuge also includes riverine wetlands and shoreline bays that serve as an important nursery for developing fall chinook salmon. *More than 212 species of bird are regularly sighted at the Refuge*, including several endangered species (Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle).

The McNary National Wildlife Center is staffed by knowledgeable Audubon and Ornithological Society representatives that offer education and interpretive assistance regarding native flora and fauna. Walk the wetlands nature trail and view the habitat used by many species of waterfowl, upland birds, and animals. The Center offers workshops and group sessions including The Nature Safari—a two-hour nature walk that includes hands-on learning stations. The Center also offers life-like mounts of 70 birds and animals, and a chance to handle real feathers, bones, and pelts.

Tribal Homeland

Working with the Wanapum People, the McNary National Wildlife Refuge recently installed a traditional Tule Mat Lodge as a station for study of culture, history, and meditation. For photos and info: <http://nwr.mcnary.wa.us/tulelodgerises.html>.

JUNIPER DUNES WILDERNESS AREA

The United States Congress designated the Juniper Dunes National Forest as a Wilderness Area in 1984 and it now encompasses a total of 7,140 acres.

The Juniper Dunes Wilderness preserves the northernmost growth of western juniper, some of which have been around for 150 years, along with windswept sand dunes measuring 130 feet in height and 1,000 feet in width. Other than junipers, no trees grow in significant numbers here, but many bushes and flowers bloom wondrously come spring, although the mountains that separate western and eastern Washington generally wring the moisture from the air. The landscape here takes quite a battering, in fact, with strong southwest winds to build the dunes, seven to eight inches of precipitation to moisten them, a foot or so of snow that drifts down in winter, and summer temperatures that occasionally rise above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Elevations range from 750 feet to 1,130 feet above sea level.

Plenty of animals thrive at the Juniper Dunes Wilderness Area despite the extremes: mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, badgers, skunks, weasels, porcupines, pocket gophers, kangaroo rats, several species of mice, hawks, owls, ravens, quail, partridge, pheasants, doves, numerous songbirds, and rattlesnakes.

The most popular access road to Juniper Dunes is from Peterson Road, which leads to the recreation area just off the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway. The access road is maintained by the Federal Bureau of Land Management, and posted no trespassing and directional signage help guide visitors to the Recreational Area.

BATEMAN ISLAND

Located on the Columbia River between the cities of Richland and Kennewick, this remarkable island is classified as an Urban Watchable Wildlife Area. Department of Transportation signs use binocular icons to identify the area. The island is accessible via a small land-bridge and hard-packed, single-track trails make it easy to hike or mountain bike the entire island. Bring your binoculars and discover this riverbank habitat that is home to many species of birds, and riparian wildlife. This island also marks the furthest point upriver on the Columbia ever explored by the Lewis & Clark Expedition, and was an important tribal gathering and fishing location for the Chemnapum people.

TAPTEAL GREENWAY/CHAMNA NATURAL PRESERVE

A 30-mile corridor along the Yakima River where trails, interpretive kiosks, signage, and trail maps define a natural space with a wealth of recreational, historical, and natural attractions for adventures, day-hikers, and birding enthusiasts.

AUDUBON NATURE TRAIL

Located along the Columbia River in Columbia Park, this trail provides an easy, paved loop for the birding enthusiast. Raised viewing platforms, and interpretive signage help visitors discover a wide variety of migrating waterfowl and nesting birds which inhabit the Columbia Basin. The trail also includes a nature pond for insect and fish identification.

SACAGAWEA HERITAGE TRAIL

One of the easiest ways to explore the outdoors is along the 23-miles of contiguous river front paths known as the Sacagawea Heritage Trail. This trail is perfect for walking or biking along the Columbia River. Weaving between the three cities, the trail offers a view of nature's scenic beauty from an easily accessible, paved trail system.

BADGER MOUNTAIN CENTENNIAL PRESERVE

A group of Tri-Cities residents came together to preserve the local ridges as open space. They believed something must be done before the ridgeline's beauty was permanently marred by irreversible development. When they learned that 574 acres was for sale on the crest and slopes of Badger Mountain, the *Friends of Badger Mountain* acquired this land to be held as open space. The Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve is open to the public for muscle-powered use only (hikers, mountain bikers, horse riders); no motorized vehicles are allowed. Parking areas and new trails have been established for hiking and restrooms are located at Westcliffe Park in Richland.

Badger Mountain is one of a series of northwest-southeast elongated ridges along the Rattlesnake Mountain-Wallula Gap trend. It will probably come as little surprise that lava flows of the Columbia River basalt make up Badger Mountain. The ages of the lavas exposed there span from 14.5 million years and to 8.5 million years before the present. The 12 million year old Pomona lava flow makes up the peak of the ridge. For those who like to hike Badger Mountain, don't just stop and smell the wildflowers, look at the rocks along the way; there's a lot of beauty there as well.

GUIDES / OUTFITTERS

Going Fishing Guide Service

Fishing local Columbia Basin waters for salmon, trout, steelhead, and sturgeon. USCGWA licensed guides. Fish one to four people. www.catchmorefish.com.

Big River Guide Service

Quality guide fishing trips on the Columbia River, Hanford Reach, Snake River, Hells Canyon, and other popular Northwest rivers for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, and shad. All fishing gear and bait provided. Fishing from a comfortable 25-foot Alumaweld. www.bigriverguideservice.net.

Columbia River Journeys

Jet boat tours of the Hanford Reach National Monument. View American White pelican, deer, and coyotes—in the unspoiled natural sanctuary of The Reach. Group discounts, other tours available. www.columbiariverjourneys.com.

Columbia Kayak Adventures

Enjoy desert beauty on half or full-day sea kayak tours through the Hanford Reach, Yakima River Delta, and other Inland waterways. Custom tours, beginning and advanced instruction. www.columbiakayakadventures.com.

Beamers Hells Canyon Tours

Approximately two-and-a-half hours from Pasco, this guide celebrates 25 years of professionally guided jetboat tours of Hells Canyon on the Snake River. All captains and boats fully licensed by U.S. Coast Guard. www.hellscanyontours.com.