

Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Geocache

Locate each stage and answer the questions to open the cache.

Welcome to the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex. We hope you will enjoy this geocaching activity as you follow the clues and learn about the Refuge. This multi-cache covers 2 trails and about 5 miles. Be sure to dress appropriately (weather can change quickly) and bring water and snacks. Binoculars and field guides will add to your experience, but are not necessary for the solution to the cache. The Refuge is open every day from 8 am to 5 pm (closed on Federal holidays). This multi-cache quest can only be done during open hours so plan accordingly.

This is a special type of geocache since traditional geocaching is **PROHIBITED** on National Wildlife Refuges. Please remember that wildlife and wildlife habitat comes first on the Refuge so you must follow all rules and regulations. Nothing in this quest will disturb the land or habitat. We hope you will enjoy this adventure. Good luck!

Starting coordinate: **N40° 40.6299, W124°13.3259**

Hookton Slough

Stage 1. **N40° 40.6399, W124° 13.3100**

In the mid-1800s Hookton Landing was a bustling port that transported lumber, seafood, and other goods out of the area. Imagine yourself back in that time. To the east you can see a small town with a hotel, livery stable, and general store. To the west are ships sailing down the channel. There are no cars—people travel on foot or horseback. Close your eyes—can you hear the sounds from that far away time?

Find something with the letters DFSZ. Note the top 3 letters of this item.

Stage 2. **N 40° 40.6371, W124° 13.3357**

Humboldt Bay NWR was first established to protect migratory birds. The Refuge has also played a key role in preserving the once federally endangered Aleutian Cackling Goose. This goose looks similar to a Western Canada Goose, but is smaller with a high-pitched cackle instead of a honk. In the 1800s, after fur farmers brought foxes to the Aleutian Islands. The foxes wiped out the Aleutian Cackling Goose population and by the 1970's it had declined to only about 800 individuals. During their spring migration, the entire population spends nights at Castle Rock NWR, part of the Humboldt Bay NWR Complex located in Crescent City. Through successful recovery efforts there are now over 100,000 geese in the population and the species is no longer on the endangered species list.

What year was HBNWR established?

Stage 3. **N40°41.0614, W124° 13.4542**

Hookton Slough is a very special estuary habitat that is rich with wildlife. Incoming tides bring nutrients that support a variety of small creatures, which in turn are food for birds. Look for the shorebirds that feed in the mud here. Observe their beak lengths and shapes,

and their feeding techniques. These differences allow several species to feed on the mudflats without competing for the same food.

Use the nearby sign to find out how many birds stop in Humboldt Bay each winter.

Stage 4. N40° 41.4468, W124° 14.0198

Refuge lands are fragile and it is extremely important that you stay on the trail. At this point you can see across south Humboldt Bay. On a good day you may even see seals. Sit down and enjoy the view. Use your senses to try to identify the wildlife here today.

The end of the trail is marked by a gate that came from which state?

Shorebird Loop Trail

Stage 5. N40° 41.1146, W124° 12.5112

In the fall and winter, migratory birds stop to rest and refuel as they travel from their breeding grounds in the north to warmer climates in the south. In the summer, Barn Swallows nest in the rafters here. If you are quiet and sit for a while you may see some interesting wildlife.

With help from the sign, can you identify any of the birds present today? Alternatively, find the brass number.

Stage 6. N40° 41.1721, W124° 13.2257

Water is carefully managed on the Refuge. This structure is the Long Pond Floodgate, the main water control structure for this part of the Refuge. Water can come through the flapping gate in one direction but not the other. This tidegate keeps salt water out when the tide is high, then opens to allow fresh water to flow from Salmon Creek out to the bay. Before the area became a Refuge, water was drained off the land through ditches, culverts, and tidegates. These same control structures are now used to create seasonal wetland habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife.

Find the number 307x. Fill in the x.

Stage 7. N40° 41.1732, W124° 13.2474

In the late 1800s and early 1900s ranchers built dikes to “reclaim” the land for ranching. These attempts to “conquer nature” required constant maintenance and had major consequences to the land and ecosystem. Exposed to air, the highly organic peat soil decomposed rapidly, resulting in compaction and subsidence (lowered elevation). The dikes also impacted the salt-tolerant native plant and animal community that was adapted to tidal conditions. Many of the dikes on the Refuge have been breached to allow tidal influences back on the land.

Guess what this piece of equipment was used for. (Ask the visitor center staff for more information.)

Stage 8. *N40° 41.1280, W124° 13.3355*

Stamp your paper here.

Stage 9. *N40° 41.1039, W124° 13.1306*

Volunteers are vital to the Refuge's success. The Friends of Humboldt Bay NWR assists refuge staff in all functions, from leading walks to constructing benches like this one. They also help support the Refuge financially through fundraising, paid memberships, and grants. If you would like to join the Friends or share your knowledge and skills, please talk to staff at the Refuge office.

Who made this bench?

When was it built?

Stage 10. *N40° 41.1625, W124° 12.3810*

Who was this building named for and why?

Congratulations! Now that you have found and answered all the questions you can obtain the combination for the cache box. Use these clues:

- The first # of the combination is the third digit (tens' place) in #2.
- The second # of the combination is the final digit (right hand side) of the second part of the answer to #9.
- The third # of the combination will be given to you when you hand in your answers to all 10 stages at the Visitor Center.