

News Release

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This Summer Tour a Historic Lighthouse of the National Wildlife Refuge System *Three Open to the Public in the Pacific Region*

Travelers the world over love America's lighthouses, reminders of the country's seafaring past. Today, the lights that once kept sailors off rocks and shoals have a second mission: providing safe harbor for nesting seabirds and a broad variety of other wildlife. The Pacific region has three historical lighthouses open to the public, Kilauea Point in Hawaii; Cape Meares Lighthouse on the Oregon Coast and the Dungeness Light Station near Sequim, Washington.

Management of many of these magnificent lighthouses was transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service when the U.S. Coast Guard transferred several lighthouses and the surrounding land to the National Wildlife Refuge System. As word spreads about these historic and environmental treasures, their popularity continues to rise. Here are some favorite lighthouse sites in the Pacific region, rich in both history and wildlife, that you may wish to visit.

Hawai'i - The Kilauea Point Lighthouse, built in 1913 as a navigational aid for commercial shipping between Hawai'i and the Orient, stands as a monument to Hawai'i's colorful past. For 62 years, it guided ships and boats safely along Kauai's rugged north shore with its signature double-flash. In 1927, the lighthouse played a key role in the first trans-Pacific flight from the West Coast to Honolulu by reorienting lost pilots. In 1976, the Coast Guard deactivated the lighthouse and replaced it with an automatic beacon.

This summer, a substantial lighthouse renovation project will begin with a goal of bringing the structure back to its former glory in time for its 100th anniversary. Although visitors will not be able to go inside the structure, they are welcome to see the progress being made. At times during the renovation project, the refuge may be closed to protect public safety; visitors are encouraged to call the refuge first at 808-828-1413 to check its current status.

Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge's dramatic backdrop of steep cliffs plunging to the ocean is one of the best places in the Hawaiian Islands to view wildlife. The refuge is home to the largest populations of nesting seabirds in Hawai'i. Visitors also have a chance to view spinner dolphins, native Hawaiian coastal plants, and Hawai'i's state bird - the nēnē or endangered Hawaiian goose. A \$5 entry fee is charged.

Oregon - Visitors to the **Cape Meares Lighthouse** on the Oregon coast needn't choose between history and wildlife; they can easily admire both. Commissioned in 1890 and located on state park lands surrounded by the Cape Meares National Wildlife Refuge, this lighthouse offers spring and summer visitors a chance to see nesting peregrine falcons and common murrelets on coastal rocks and headlands. In winter you may be lucky enough to see sightings of gray whales, scoters, western grebes and common loons.

The only viewpoint in the country where three National Wildlife Refuges can be seen at once, this panoramic view from the Cape Meares State Scenic Viewpoint and Refuge Overlook, visitors can look over the cliff top on a clear day and view Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge to the south and Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge to the north.

Elsewhere on the refuge, huge Sitka spruce and western hemlock, some of them hundreds of years old and more than 200 feet tall, provide habitat for a federally threatened bird species, the marbled murrelets, as well as nesting bald eagles. The popular Oregon Coast Trail runs through the center of the refuge.

The refuge hiking trail and the State Scenic Viewpoint are open year-round from sunrise to sunset. The viewpoint has two accessible viewing decks overlooking the nesting falcons and Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge. For more information, visit <http://www.fws.gov/oregoncoast/capemeares/> or call 541-867-4550.

Washington - The new **Dungeness Light Station** near Sequim, Washington, is really not that new. Lit in 1857, it was one of the first lighthouses established on the Pacific Coast. Today, it can be accessed through the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge, a gem of a wildlife sanctuary situated on a quiet bay and tidal flats formed by the world's longest natural sand spit. Here, wildlife find shelter from the ocean wind and pounding surf.

The light was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. The lighthouse is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard and tours are available daily from volunteer keepers from the New Dungeness Light Station Association.

Public access to the refuge is by foot. An easy 3/8-mile trail takes visitors through the forest from the refuge parking lot to an overlook on the bluff above the spit. From there, the trail drops down steeply for a half mile and continues 4.5 miles (one way!) along the beach to the light station.

Refuge waters are open to boating (no-wake zone) from May 15 to September 30 up to the 100-yard buffer. Boats may land only at the designated landing site near the lighthouse; reservations are required. The entrance fee is \$3 per family daily; the fee is waived for those with a federal Duck Stamp or annual pass. Pets are prohibited. Camping is available near the refuge in the adjacent Dungeness Recreation Area. For more information, visit <http://www.fws.gov/washingtonmaritime/dungeness/> or call 360-457-8451. Or visit <http://www.newdungenesslighthouse.com/refuge.html>.

For a map of all National Wildlife Refuges and a detailed description of what each has to offer, visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>.

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