A Rare View
The Bureau of Land Management’s Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area offers a rare, close-up look into seabird breeding colonies. These colonies are typically remotely located and inaccessible to the public. The seabirds breeding at Yaquina Head, however, are close enough to observe in detail with a pair of binoculars and are a real viewing treat to all bird enthusiasts.

What to See
There are five seabird species and one shorebird species that breed on the coastal rocks, cliffs and headlands at Yaquina Head. Brandt’s and Pelagic Cormorants nest on the rock tops and cliff faces respectively. Pigeon Guillemots can be seen on the water and on cliff ledges outside of their nest cavities, Western Gulls stake out shallow ledges and Black Oystercatchers can be seen perusing the intertidal for a tasty morsel. On the nearshore sea stacks Common Murres cover almost every inch of exposed flat rock. Standing on the observation deck visitors can see at least 50,000 Common Murres packed tightly together on Colony Rock alone. In mid- to late May visitors also have the rare opportunity to see the courtship displays of Brandt’s Cormorants, conducted on the headland a mere stone’s throw away.

Action Throughout the Summer
While the breeding seabirds certainly steal the show there are other sights to see at Yaquina Head. Grey Whales often pass just off the outer rocks and Harbor Seals can be seen sunning themselves and resting with their pups nearby. Flocks of California Brown Pelicans pass overhead throughout the summer, traveling from their breeding grounds in California and Mexico to their summering areas on the Oregon and Washington coast. Bald Eagles also frequent the area and often put on stunning displays of disturbance when they dive into the Common Murre colony in search of a weak or slow moving bird. From Fall to Spring Harlequin Ducks, Surfbirds and Black Turnstones can be seen resting and foraging in the intertidal zone.

Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge
The coastal rocks at Yaquina Head are part of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. These areas are managed as sanctuaries for seabirds and harbor seals that use these habitats to rest and reproduce and are closed to public access at all times.
Where to Find the Birds of Yaquina Head

Legend

- Lighthouse
- Seabirds
- Shorebirds
- Bald Eagles
- Harbor Seals
- Marine Garden

Common Murres

Brandt’s Cormorants
Pelagic Cormorants
Western Gulls

Bald Eagle Roost

Pigeon Guillemots
Pelagic Cormorants

Black Oystercatcher

Rocky Intertidal

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Photo by Dave Pitkin

Photo by Ram Papish

Photo by Gerrit Vyn