

FAQ's

- Is the Salton Sea polluted?

The Salton Sea is slowly accumulating excessive nutrients that are stressing the aquatic life in it. It is safe to recreate in the Salton Sea.

- Why is the Salton Sea so salty?

Salt naturally exist in the Colorado River which is the source of water that maintains the Salton Sea. About 6 feet of water evaporates from the Salton Sea each year leaving behind all the salts.

- Which types of fish live in the sea?

Tilapia and the endangered Desert Pupfish can tolerate water with high salinity levels.

- Is fishing permitted?

Boat fishing only is permitted on Refuge areas. On other areas, bank fishing may be permitted as well.

- What causes fish die-offs?

Decomposition of algae blooms deplete oxygen causing fish to die in those areas.

Also, a nutrient rich layer in the Salton Sea is saturated with hydrogen sulfide and ammonia. These compounds come from decomposition of living organisms in the Salton Sea. These parts of the Salton Sea are oxygen deplete as well and when fish come into contact with these areas, they die from lack of oxygen.

- Why are factories located near the Refuge?

The facilities are actually geothermal power plants which create renewable energy by harvesting steam from deep in the earth's crust. The Steam spins turbines, creating electricity.

- Where can I see birds at the Salton Sea?

The Refuge has two areas the public can visit in order to see birds. Unit 1 at the southern tip of the Salton Sea located on Vendel Road is a good place to see Snow and Ross Geese, and Sandhill cranes in winter. Many other waterfowl and shorebirds can be seen as well.

At the Refuge's Visitor Center area, visitors can hike Rock Hill Trail and see birds along a mesquite tree row, the shore of the Salton Sea, a freshwater pond and in winter, a farmed agricultural field.

Numerous other points outside of the Refuge are great areas to see birds. To see a summary of these locations, visit www.southwestbirders.com.

- What can I do at the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge?

Birding is the most popular activity at the Refuge but other activities are available as well. The Refuge has a photo blind for taking pictures, 2 wheelchair accessible observation decks for wildlife observation, 2 hiking trails, waterfowl hunting (in season), and a staffed office available to answer any questions.

- How long do the dirt roads take to dry after it rains?

About 3 days.