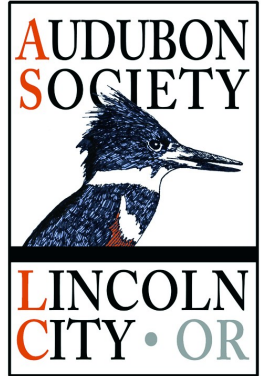


5 Reasons to Protect Oregon's Rocky Habitat



Conserving iconic coastal areas will boost local economies and support wildlife

The Oregon coast is one of the state's most valuable natural resources. It draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who explore tide pools, fish, surf, paint, take photos, walk on the beach, fly a kite, or take in a sunset. The majestic cliffs and offshore rocks provide habitat for more than 1 million seabirds. Submerged reefs and kelp forests produce food and refuge for a wide variety of fish and other marine wildlife. This environment is a spectacular living laboratory for students and scientists.

Rocky shores make up 41 percent of Oregon's 362-mile coastline. However, only a fraction is protected by the state. Oregon has an opportunity to expand protections of rocky habitat during the update of its Rocky Shores Management Strategy. Here are five reasons the state should conserve these important places:

1. Provide economic and scientific benefits

Oregon's nearshore and intertidal rocky areas account for millions of visits to the state's coast each year, bringing revenue to coastal communities. A tide pool rich with bright green anemones or orange sea stars can be a person's first exposure to marine life. And scientists conduct research in rocky shore areas—work that often leads to deeper understanding of our ocean ecosystems.



2. Safeguard ecosystem services

Nearshore rocky reefs deliver important ecosystem services, such as providing the habitat necessary for bull kelp to flourish. Kelp beds slow water currents, smooth waves, and help reduce coastal erosion. These underwater forests can also mitigate the impacts of ocean acidification by reducing the amount of carbon in nearshore waters—which in turn benefits shellfish.



3. Preserve biodiversity

Rocky shores provide habitat for a host of marine species, including sea stars, anemones, and the opalescent nudibranch—just a few of the 116 species of invertebrates, 71 species of algae, and three species of sea grass found in Oregon’s intertidal zone. Rockfish, greenlings, and surf-perch often move into these areas during high tide to feed and take refuge from predators. This diversity creates complex food webs that support the broader marine ecosystem.



4. Protect habitat

Oregon is home to half the seabird habitat on the U.S. West Coast. The state’s rocky cliffs and offshore islands provide nesting sites for common murre and other seabirds, and numerous bird species forage for invertebrates and small fish in rocky intertidal areas.



5. Plan for change

As climate change alters the ocean, it is increasingly important to monitor and protect nearshore rocky habitats so they can continue to provide ecological, economic, and social benefits for future generations.



The Audubon Society of Lincoln City is working with local communities and other stakeholders in Oregon to safeguard natural resources and access to these special places. Join us in supporting the Ocean Policy Advisory Council’s efforts to conserve our rocky shores.

Audubon Society of Lincoln City Oregon

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