

# NATURAL POINTS OF INTEREST

## *Huntington Blueway Trail*



### **Lloyd Point**

Lloyd Point is the most northwest point of Lloyd Neck. It is part of a designated significant coastal fish and wildlife habitat area, and is an important breeding ground for many bird species. The region offers access to the bay, salt marshes, tidal flats, and coastal wetland ecosystems.



### **Fly Island Marsh**

Fly Island Marsh is part of Caumsett State Park, that contains tidal creeks and tributaries that drain into Oyster Bay. The area provides habitat for important species like osprey and dwarf glasswort, a salt-tolerant flowering plant.



### **Morris Rock**

Morris Rock is a sandbar that is 2.8 miles from Lloyd Harbor and is a popular fishing spot.



### **Caumsett State Park Preserve**

The Caumsett State Park is over 1,500 acres making it the largest park in the Town of Huntington. The park has a diverse set of coastal habitats, with beaches, marshes, and flats, which also make it an important bird area for many local and migratory species. The park has a 3 mile paved loop with additional networks, including fitness stations and hiking, horse, and biking trails.



### **Cold Spring Harbor State Park**

Cold Spring Harbor State Park is 40 acres of coastal forest that support migrations of songbirds, owls, and hawks. The park contains several trails, including the northern trailhead of the Greenbelt trail.



### **Mill Cove Waterfowl Sanctuary**

The Mill Cove Waterfowl Sanctuary is a 0.28 square mile refuge that is part of the National Wildlife Refuge and Wildlife Management Areas. The sanctuary became a national refuge in 1972 and is now maintained by the nonprofit organization, Van Wyck-Lefferts Tide Mill Sanctuary Inc. The pond is an important area for snowy egrets, great blue herons, and other bird species.



### **Coindre Hall**

Coindre Hall Park is a 33 acre park overlooking Huntington Harbor. The Coindre Hall property has grassy hills and wetlands. There is a 1.1 mile unpaved trail where you can experience many bird species and other marine species along the shoreline.



### **Shellfish FLUPSYs**

Gold Star Battalion Beach is a location for the Town of Huntington's Shellfish Restoration Program. These FLUPSYs, or FLoating UPweller SYstems, are operated by Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program. These aquaculture systems allow natural water flow and nutrients into and out of the unit while shellfish develop. Eastern Oyster and Hard Clam are grown here and planted in local bays and harbors to revitalize natural populations. Eastern oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water per day

making them an important species that can actually clean our waters. Ribbed Mussels are another species that can filter up to 40 gallons per day and aquaculture methods are being studied to also restore these populations.



### **Salt Marsh**

Marsh plants such as Smooth Cordgrass and Glasswort, are highly salt tolerant, making them common along shorelines and in saltmarshes. Marsh plants have a highly interconnected root system and hollow stems, which help them survive. They are important along coastlines since they help slow erosion and buffer waves and storm action. Cordgrass also provides habitat and serves as a nursery area for many marine animals. Ribbed Mussels and Eastern Oysters can provide necessary structure for salt marsh plants to thrive.



### **Target Rock National Wildlife Refuge**

The Target Rock National Wildlife Refuge is an 80 acre area of land that was donated to the US Department of Interior in 1967 and it is now managed by the Long Island National Wildlife Refuge complex. The land is part of the Harbor Hill Moraine, as evidenced by its rocky beach, and it is a common area for harbor seals to haul out and for plovers, least tern, and common tern to forage and care for their young. There is a trail through the preserve with a beach, observation deck, restrooms, and wildlife blind.



### **Sarah H. Ruppert Water Bird Park Preserve**

This area is important to breeding shorebirds that nest on the beach, most of which are either state or federally threatened or endangered. Research shows that during breeding season, all of these ground-nesting shorebird species are negatively impacted by nearby recreational activities, including powerboating, walking, kayak landing, and dog walking. The preserve is closed to the public from early April until all shorebirds are done breeding, usually in early to mid-August.



### **Eatons Neck Point**

Eatons Neck Point is well known for 3 buoys outlining a popular fishing spot for striped bass, bluefish, porgies, sea bass, and blackfish.



### **Phragmites Park**

Phragmites Park is also known as Twin Ponds North and is made up of deposited dredge spoil from dredging efforts in Northport Harbor in the 1960s. There are sandy pathways through the park for about 0.6 miles.



### **Bird Island**

Bird Island was created from dredge spoil deposits and the site eventually became home to a number of birds including great blue herons and other wading birds, shorebirds, and ospreys.



### **Horseshoe Crab Spawning Area**

Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program monitors Horseshoe Crab populations in several locations across Long Island. CCE scientists and volunteers work together to monitor crabs to better understand their abundance in the area and their distribution across the region. Horseshoe Crabs are found on Long Island's beaches during new and full moon events from May to July. Horseshoe Crabs are often referred to as "living fossils" since they have been on Earth and unchanged for nearly 450 million years. Horseshoe Crabs are not actually true crabs and are more closely related to spiders and ticks than other crab species. They are harmless animals and are found crawling around the ocean floor eating debris and small benthic animals. Their long pointed tails are meant to assist them in turning over when flipped by a wave, and were used by Native Americans as fishing spears. Horseshoe Crabs are harvested by fishermen to use as bait in the eel and conch fisheries. Their unique sensory systems are studied and have led to advancements in neurobiology, while their blood, which is blue, is used to detect bacterial contamination in the medical fields. Their eggs are an important food source for numerous animals, including migratory shorebirds that rely on this food to have enough energy for their flight back to the Arctic each year.



### **Stormwater Outfall Pipe**

Stormwater runoff can have impacts on the health of the surrounding waterways. Runoff carries pathogens that close our bathing beaches and shellfish beds as well as excess nutrients that make it unhealthy for local marine species to live here. Remember, only rain down the storm drain!



### **Jerome A. Ambro Memorial Wetland**

Jerome A. Ambro Memorial Wetland is a 400 acre tidal marsh that is part of the Crab Meadow Watershed. This salt marsh provides habitat for finfish, shellfish, and crustaceans. The region is an important bird area, which herons, egrets, gulls, plovers, sandpipers, and northern harrier utilize throughout the year. The unique set of tidal channels serve as a nursery areas to many species.



### **Winkle Point**

Winkle Point is a private beach that was named for the large amount of periwinkle snails that could be found there.



### **The Sand Hole/Clam Digger's Cove**

Boaters call this area Clam Digger's Cove, while locals refer to it as the Sand Hole. This area is a sand pit that is about 15 feet deep and has 2 sand bars with a skinny channel leading into the pit. The outer sand bar makes it difficult for boaters to pass through during low tide and can result in strandings.



### **Osprey**

To quote local naturalist John Turner from his published nature guide 'Exploring the Other Island'; "If Long Islanders were asked to choose a bird that symbolizes the essence of the island, the osprey would be the probable winner. After all, the osprey frequents the very areas-the bays, harbors, and ocean coastline-that make the Island such a special place to live." Ospreys are large birds of prey, with the larger females reaching two feet in length. Male and female Ospreys look similar, with dark brown feathers on top of their body, white feathers underneath, and a characteristic white head with dark brown stripes on either side. Known as fish hawks, Osprey are pescatarian and their diet consists solely of fish. Long Island is home to one of two breeding populations of Osprey in NYS, and nests can be found on the top of tall trees or poles along coastlines. Ospreys have bounced back from their endangered status after the NYS and federal bans of the pesticide DDT in the early 1970s. DDT thinned the egg shells of ospreys and other raptors, making them fragile and likely to prematurely break.



### **Diamondback Terrapin**

Diamondback Terrapins are brown or green in color and are named for the diamond shapes on their backs or carapace. The scutes on their backs are as unique as fingerprints and can indicate the age of the turtle by counting the growth rings. These turtles have distinct black markings that resemble a mustache just above their mouth. Diamondback Terrapins eat small invertebrates in tidal regions where they spend most of the year. During the winter months, this species hibernates in river banks or at the bottom of creeks. On Long Island, they are most common in salt marshes and coastal habitats. While on the water keep an eye out for their small heads that may peak up every once and a while.



### **Great Blue Heron**

Great Blue Herons are the largest of the Island's wading birds that are grayish blue in color and have long brown or green legs, with s-shaped necks. During mating seasons, they develop plumes on their head, neck, and backs, but lose these after mating season and gain back brighter yellow beaks. Juveniles can be distinguished by looking for black crowns and no ornate plumes. These birds live on Long Island throughout the year, but are most commonly seen in the summer months.



### **Great Egret**

The Great Egret is the second largest wading bird on Long Island. Great Egrets have large wingspans and are white in color, with black legs, and a yellow bill. Great Egrets can be found in marshes or near shorelines or riverbanks hunting for bait fish. They nest on Long Island high in the trees or thickets from May until June. They are most commonly seen from April to November along coastlines where they feed on any small creatures, including fish, snakes, marine invertebrates, and small mammals. Nearly wiped out in the United States in the late 1800s, when its plumes were sought for use in fashion, the Great Egret made a comeback when early conservationists put a stop to the slaughter and protected its colonies; as a result, this bird became the symbol of the National Audubon Society.



### **Blue Crab**

Blue Crabs are invertebrates and are named for their blue colored claws. Female crabs can be differentiated from males, by looking for the purple coloring at the tips of their claws or for a more broad apron on the underside of their body. Blue Crabs are strong swimmers and can grow to 8 inches across their carapace. They are predators in the coastal and estuarine areas, eating shellfish, fish, plants, and even smaller crabs. Their predatory role makes them important contributors to the ecosystem, making fishing regulations important to ensure there are enough to carry out their role in the environment.



### **Snowy Egret**

Snowy Egrets are medium sized herons that are white in color with black legs, yellow feet, and a black bill. Novice birders can remember their distinctive trait, their yellow feet, as they are reminiscent of snow boots. They breed from April to July, nesting in dunes and scrub forests. Snowy Egrets are most commonly found on Long Island from March until November. The coastal regions of Long Island are important for these birds, which can often be found there stirring up sediment with their feet to flush out prey.



### **Piping Plover**

Piping Plovers are small shorebirds that camouflage well with the shoreline due to their pale coloring. They have orange legs and beaks with a black tip at the end. Their name comes from their small whistle like sounds. Long Island is an important breeding ground for this species, that nest along marine coastlines. Piping Plovers lay eggs along shorelines during May and June. Their first clutch is about 4 eggs, and if they are unsuccessful in their first attempt, they nest again with fewer eggs. It is important to minimize disturbance of piping plovers during their breeding season to ensure larger clutches of eggs to maintain populations.



### **Double-Crested Cormorant**

The Double-Crested Cormorant are the most common and widespread cormorant species in North America. They are medium to large sized seabirds that have mostly black bodies, with several bright patches, like the yellow-orange patch on their throat, a blue gullet, and green eyes. Their name comes from the white tufts of feathers that develop on males' heads, called nuptial crests, that are used for mating. They prefer rocky marine coastlines where they can dive up to 100 feet to eat benthic fish and shellfish. Cormorants can hold their breath up to 15 minutes each dive. They can commonly be viewed perched on offshore rocks with their wings outstretched to dry as their feathers can become waterlogged.



### **Common Loon**

The Common Loon is a migratory bird that breeds in the Arctic and overwinter on Long Island. They can be seen in this area from October through May. Common Loons have unique calls that can be heard from a long distance away. They differ from most bird species because they have solid bones, rather than hollow ones. This allows them to dive deep in the water, sometimes to 250 feet, to hunt for food. Their more solid structure makes it more difficult to begin flying, which is why loons require hundreds of feet of runway in the water in order to takeoff.





### **Menhaden**

Atlantic Menhaden are also referred to as bunker. They are schooling fish that are silver in color, with a black spot located behind their gills, and can reach up to 15 inches in length. Menhaden are filter feeders, with gill rakers that help them to filter small plants and animals out of the water to eat. Menhaden are an oily fish and a major source of omega-3 fatty acids, making them a common source for fish oil supplements. They are also common prey of larger predatory fish, bald eagles, osprey, and marine mammals.



### **American Oystercatcher**

American Oystercatchers live along the coast in saltmarshes and beaches, where their diet consists of aquatic invertebrates. They are one of the only birds that are able to open large shellfish besides gulls that drop these prey to crack open shells. These are large, stocky shorebirds that can be identified by their long, red, stout bills and large heads. American Oystercatchers are migratory birds that breed on Long Island beaches and can be found along the coast of the eastern United States, Mexico, and southern South America. These birds can live over 20 years.



### **Least Tern**

Least Terns are a relatively small tern that has a bright yellow bill. It has a forked tail, black cap, white forehead, and black line that runs across the eye. They can be found on Long Island during their breeding season, after which they migrate back to the Caribbean and northern South America. They live along the coast and other waterways, like the Mississippi River, where they dive for fish. These small birds also dive-bomb humans or other animals that approach their nest, giving them the name "little strikers".



### **Sanderling**

Sanderlings are medium-sized "peep" sandpipers recognizable by their pale nonbreeding plumage, black legs and bill, and obsessive wave-chasing habits. These extreme long-distance migrants breed only on High Arctic tundra, and can be found year-round, but are present in larger numbers in the winter and early spring. They can be seen along the water's edge along the outer beach.



### **Bald Eagle**

Bald Eagles have been known to nest near Centerport Mill Pond. They can be seen soaring over Centerport Harbor and the entire Complex. Bald Eagles have wingspans up to 8 feet across, and they can live well over 25 years in the wild. These birds are predators, although they often steal other raptors' food, like smaller eagles or ospreys, rather than hunt for their own. Adult Bald Eagles have a distinct white head and tail, with a brown body, and yellow talons and beak. They prefer to live in coastal habitats, where their main food source, fish, are widely available. Bald Eagles have been making a comeback in recent years after the ban of the pesticide, DDT, in the 1970s that threatened many raptor species.



### **Red Fox**

Red Fox range from orange to cherry red in color, with black markings on their ears and legs. They grow to about 8-15 pounds, have relatively short limbs, and tails that are longer than half their body length. Red Foxes are the most widely distributed carnivore across the globe, and are common on Long Island throughout the year. They are most commonly found in forests, fields, and coastal environments. Red Fox are nocturnal animals, but are sometimes seen during the day. Red Foxes are excellent runners, jumpers, and swimmers, making them suitable for these coastal regions.



### **Harbor Seal**

Harbor Seals are the most common seal species that migrate to Long Island from the Arctic. They are found in Long Island's waters mainly during the winter months, from December to April. Harbor Seals can be differentiated from other seal species by their puppy dog faces and their speckled fur that ranges from tan to silver to grey-blue. Harbor Seals can be seen hauled out on beaches during sunny days. They can also be spotted in the water, just offshore, hunting for food, or bottling, where they are vertically positioned with their head above the water, so they can breathe while they take a quick nap.



### **Smooth Cordgrass**

Smooth cordgrass grows to 2 or 7 feet tall, depending on the type. The cordgrass is highly salt tolerant, making it common along shorelines and in saltmarshes. Smooth cordgrass has a highly interconnected root system and hollow stems, which help it survive. They are important along coastlines since they help slow erosion and buffer waves and storm action. Cordgrass also provides habitat and serves as a nursery area for many marine animals.



### **Black Skimmer**

A long-winged bird with stark black-and-white plumage, the Black Skimmer has a unique grace as it forages in flight. Skimmers feed by opening the bill and dropping the long, narrow lower mandible into the water, skimming along until they feel a fish. Then they relax the neck, quickly closing their jaws and whipping the fish out of the water. The Black Skimmer is active throughout the day. However, since they feed by touch, they are largely crepuscular (active in the dawn and dusk) and even nocturnal. These birds, as well as the piping plover and tern species, face a number of threats including habitat loss, destroyed nests by roaming dogs and by vehicles that are allowed to drive on beaches. When foraging, skimmers often pay little attention to people, sometimes flying within a few feet of bathers and boats. Listen for their unique call as they pass by that is similar to a yapping bark.



### **Black-Crowned Night Heron**

Black-crowned Night-Herons are stocky birds compared to many of their long-limbed heron relatives. True to their name, these birds do most of their feeding at night and spend much of the day hunched among leaves and branches at the water's edge. In the light of day adults are striking in gray-and-black plumage and long white head plumes. They live in fresh, salt, and brackish wetlands and are the most widespread heron in the world. Evening and dusk are good times to look for these rather stout, short-necked herons flying out to foraging grounds. Listen for their loud "quowk" as they pass overhead.



### **Yellow-Crowned Night Heron**

The Yellow-crowned Night Heron's smooth purple-gray colors, sharp black-and-white face, and long yellow plumes lend it a touch of elegance. These birds are often active at night, so keep an eye out at dusk and dawn for night-herons commuting from roosts to foraging areas. Their diet leans heavily on crabs and crayfish, which they catch with a lunge and shake apart, or swallow whole. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons are especially common in coastal areas, but you can also find them in open habitats such as wet lawns and golf courses. Look for them roosting in trees or foraging on the ground, often along tidal creeks, where they stand still or walk slowly with a hunched-over posture.



### **Belted Kingfisher**

The Belted Kingfisher's large head and hefty bill give it a distinctive profile as it patrols its territory, using the open space above the water as a flyway. It feeds almost entirely on aquatic prey, diving to catch fish and crayfish with its heavy, straight bill. These ragged-crested birds are a powdery blue-gray; males have one blue band across the white breast, while females have a blue and a chestnut band. Belted Kingfishers are common along streams and shorelines across North America. You'll probably hear a loud, rattling call before you see the kingfisher. They also perch on riverside branches and telephone wires.



### **Barn Swallow**

Glistening cobalt blue above and tawny below, Barn Swallows dart gracefully over fields, barnyards, and open water in search of flying insect prey. Look for the long, deeply forked tail that streams out behind this agile flyer and sets it apart from all other North American swallows. Barn Swallows often cruise low, flying just a few inches above the ground or water. True to their name, they build their cup-shaped mud nests almost exclusively on human-made structures including moored boats and docks.



### **Prickly Pear Cactus**

The Prickly Pear Cactus can be found in vegetated habitat near beaches on Long Island. This native wildflower is the only species of cactus in our area as well as the eastern United States. In the summer months, they produce a large yellow flower. The pads of this cactus are covered in one-inch long spines that grow in groups of three. Bristles on these pads can be irritating if brushed. They produce an inch-long oval-shaped fruit that can be reddish in color.



### **Dwarf Glasswort**

Dwarf glasswort is a salt tolerant succulent that is found in coastal regions, like salt marshes, beaches, intertidal regions, and in the ocean. Dwarf glasswort grows annually and reaches about 1 foot tall. The plants flower from August to September, and their oily seeds ripen from September to October. This species is becoming rare or endangered in many areas but some regions, like Fly Island Marsh, are noted habitat areas for this species.