

PASSPORT



*Marine Protected Areas
of California's Central Coast*

I ♥ MPAs!

Most Californians have visited state parks, but did you know there are state parks underwater too? Ocean lovers created these Marine Protected Areas or “MPAs” in order to protect the animals living in the ocean from fishing and other threats to their safety.

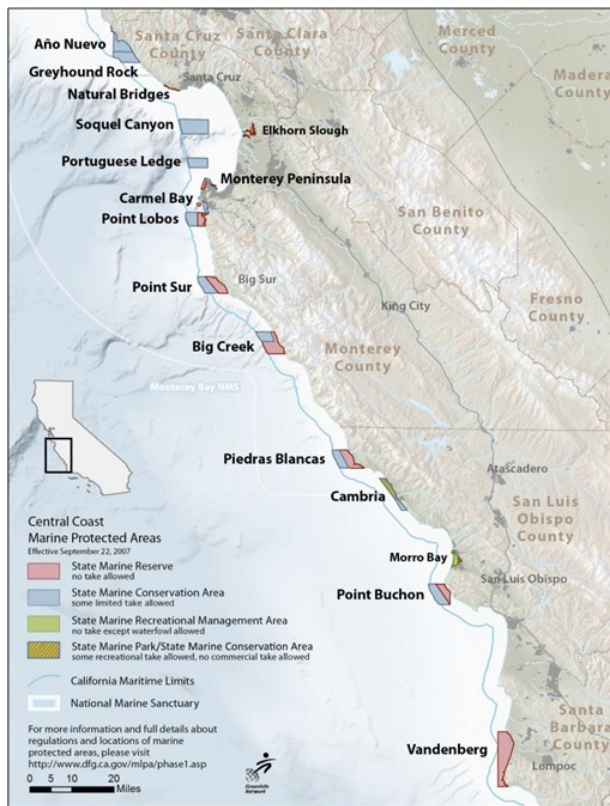
When marine animals are protected from harm, they tend to get healthier, grow bigger, get stronger, and produce more offspring.

Along the Central Coast of California, there are 29 MPAs divided into four classifications: State Marine Reserve (SMR), State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA), State Marine Park (SMP) and State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA). All are welcome to visit the MPAs, but certain rules must be followed in order to protect marine life. For instance, fishing is not allowed at the SMRs. A detailed list of regulations for each MPA can be found at californiampas.org.

To get you better acquainted with the MPAs, your friends at Save Our Shores created this MPA Passport, which is filled with history, fun facts, and many ways that you can enjoy the coastline.

At each MPA you visit in our region, make sure to take photos or write down your experience and then share it with Save Our Shores! See page 19 for details. Participants will be highlighted on the Save Our Shores website and in its newsletter!

The Central Coast MPAs



Año Nuevo SMCA

Año Nuevo is home to more than 300 species of invertebrates, plus numerous fish, seabirds, and marine mammals. Giant kelp creates underwater forests for crabs, a variety of fishes, and abalone. White sharks, whales and dolphins are common visitors. Many resident and migratory birds feast among the tide pools and beaches. Brown pelicans and other diving birds feed on schools of bait fishes.



Fun Facts

- Scientists found the fossilized remains of a 15-million-year-old baleen whale here.
- The Quiroste, an Ohlone Indian Tribe, called Año Nuevo home thousands of years ago and remnants of their society are still found here.
- In 1872 a steam fog whistle was installed at Año Nuevo Island to warn sailors of the shores. A light station keeper ran the whistle by burning coal to produce the steam needed to make the sound. More than 100,000 pounds of coal were needed every year to run the whistle.
- Año Nuevo has one of the largest mainland-breeding colonies of Northern Elephant Seals in the world. Guided walks are required to visit during the Elephant Seal breeding season (mid-December to mid-March).

Natural Bridges SMR



Natural Bridges is known for its beautiful bridge-like rock formations, biologically rich tide pools and sandy beaches. It's a great place to view birds, migrating whales, seals, and otters. Low tides reveal sea stars, crabs, sea anemones, and more. Make sure to check the tide charts before visiting! Natural Bridges is also home to the only State Monarch Preserve in California and provides a temporary home to more than 100,000 Monarch butterflies each winter.

Activity

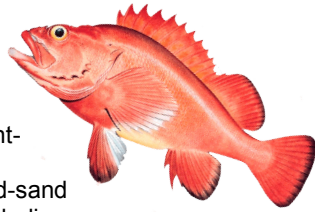
Draw a sea creature that you saw during a recent trip to Natural Bridges in the space below.

Soquel Canyon SCMA and Portuguese Ledge SCMA

Soquel Canyon consists of submarine canyon, deepwater rock and cold water corals. It funnels cold, nutrient-rich waters into the Monterey Bay.

The canyon walls and mud-and-sand floor offer ideal habitat for rockfishes including depleted species. Soquel Canyon contains communities of fragile deepwater corals and sponges. It is an important seabird forage grounds and whale feeding area.

The Portuguese Ledge SCMA protects important refuge habitat for several overfished deepwater rockfish species and is expected to contribute to the recovery of these species.

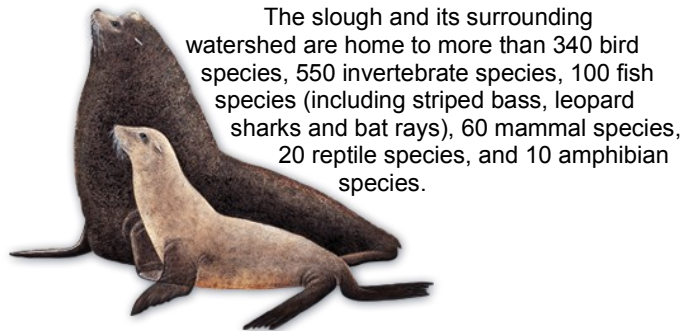


Activity

Draw an underwater canyon below.

Elkhorn Slough SMCA

Elkhorn Slough is one of California's largest estuaries—a partially enclosed body of water along the coast where freshwater from rivers and streams mixes with salt water from the ocean. It's also one of the largest salt marshes in the state.



The slough and its surrounding watershed are home to more than 340 bird species, 550 invertebrate species, 100 fish species (including striped bass, leopard sharks and bat rays), 60 mammal species, 20 reptile species, and 10 amphibian species.

It's a vital habitat for several threatened or endangered species, including southern sea otters, western pond turtles, Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders, and the California red-legged frogs.

Marine mammals such as sea otters, sea lions and harbor seals eat and rest along the banks.

Visitors can enjoy kayaking, boating, birding, and photography.

Monterey Peninsula MPAs

The Monterey Peninsula MPAs—Edward F. Ricketts SMCA, Lovers Point-Julia Platt SMR, Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA and Asilomar SMR—help protect some of the Central Coast's most used and accessible nearshore areas, while maintaining traditional recreational access and open fishing grounds offshore.

The Monterey Peninsula includes many tide pools filled with marine life, sandy beaches used by harbor seals, and kelp beds that provide shelter for sea otters. This series of small MPAs provides many research opportunities for scientific and educational institutions.

Activity

Name each of the marine creatures pictured below.



Point Lobos MPAs

The geologically unique Point Lobos MPAs—Point Lobos SMCA and SMR, Carmel Pinnacles SMR, and Carmel Bay SMCA—contain a rich biodiversity of rare plant communities, and flora and fauna on shore and in the water. Point Lobos was the first marine reserve established in the U.S. in 1960.

At Point Lobos, a kelp forest provides protective habitat for many animals, including endangered sea otters. More than 300 species of birds can be found here. Otters, whales, sea lions, harbor seals and dolphins can frequently be seen.

Visitors can hike, photograph, kayak, SCUBA dive, and snorkel here.



Fun Facts

- At least 47 movies have been filmed at Point Lobos.
- In the 1800s, a large whaling community in Point Lobos hunted gray whales for their blubber, which was boiled down and used for lamp fuel. The whaling station museum at Point Lobos State Reserve is the only on-site whaling museum on the west coast.

Point Sur SMR and Point Sur SMCA



Point Sur is home to a wide diversity of fish, seabird and invertebrate species. Point Sur itself contributes to the unique oceanographic conditions at this site where gyres carry water and larvae both north and south. The large kelp bed here provides a shelter and nursery habitat to rockfish and other species. Offshore, the head of the Sur submarine canyon acts as a fish highway, linking the protected shallows to offshore features nourished by upwelling.

Fun Facts

- The Point Sur Lighthouse sits atop a volcanic rock and has remained in operation for more than 120 years. It is one of two complete light stations remaining in the U.S.
- Point Sur is home to peregrine falcons, the fastest animal on earth. Peregrine falcons can dive in the sky at more than 200 mph, three times faster than a cheetah can run!

Big Creek SMR and Big Sur SMCA

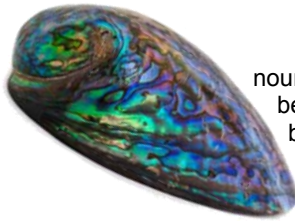
The Big Sur coast is known for its natural beauty. Offshore, the geography under water is equally dramatic, with unique narrow and steep finger canyons, which provide habitat to a variety of deepwater rockfishes such as cabezon and bocaccio.



This is an important forage area for southern sea otters and also provides habitat for a variety of fish species. Seabirds benefit from Big Creek SMR and SMCA, feeding on abundant fishes and resting in the safety of rock sand beaches.



Piedras Blancas, Cambria and White Rock MPAs



Within these MPAs, ocean currents nourish and replenish kelp forests, isolated beaches offer safety for elephant seals to breed and give birth, and many delicate intertidal creatures thrive in thousands of tide pools along the rocky coast.

This stretch of coast includes Hearst castle and supports a high diversity of birds and marine mammals, including California sea lions, elephant seals, harbor seals, northern fur seals, and sea otters.

These MPAs protect a rich nearshore including tide pools, two species of kelp, and both sandy and cobble beaches. Offshore, a high relief deepwater rocky structure attracts large forage fish populations and provides shelter for rockfish. Historically, this area was one of the most productive abalone beds in California.

Visitors can enjoy kayaking, boating, surfing, photography, SCUBA diving, and snorkeling.

Activity

Describe your favorite ocean activity and why you enjoy it below.

Morro Bay

Morro Bay is one of the largest and most important wetland systems on the Central Coast, sustaining diverse habitats that support more than two-dozen endangered species.

The bay serves as an important resting and foraging ground for migratory birds using the Pacific Flyway. Large and diverse invertebrate populations inhabit the mudflats; fish use the bay as a nursery ground and dense meadows of eelgrass support a highly productive environment.

Marine mammals such as sea otters, sea lions and harbor seals eat and rest along the banks.

Visitors can enjoy bird watching, and sea kayaking.

Activity

Name the bird, pictured on the right, which calls Morro Bay home.



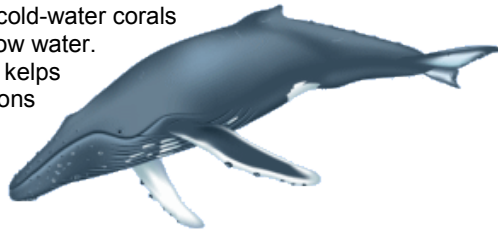
Point Buchon SMR and Point Buchon SMCA

Point Buchon has many caves, offshore rocky pinnacles and underwater reefs that provide habitat for a high diversity of marine life.

The reefs are home to more than 700 species of invertebrates, as well as 120 fish species, marine plants, seabirds, and marine mammals.

It is known for cold-water corals found in unusually shallow water.

Sensitive intertidal palm kelps shelter plentiful populations of fish, algae and invertebrates.



Secluded sandy beaches and offshore reefs provide safety for harbor seals and southern sea otters. From the Point Buchon headland, whale watchers may see gray whales migrating along the coast, or even a breaching humpback.

The Chumash, a Native American tribe that harvested the abundant marine resources along this coastline, considers Point Buchon a spiritual area.

Activity

What do humpback whales eat? _____

Vandenberg SMR

The Vandenberg area contains reef and sandy habitat as well as rocky cliffs that provide nesting habitat for guillemots, cormorants, and oystercatchers as well as hundreds of endangered brown pelicans and other seabirds.

Forage studies in the area have documented a wide range of fish and invertebrate species as well as the interactions between these prey species and seabirds and marine mammals using this area.



Fun Fact: After fishing, cormorants go ashore, and are frequently seen holding their wings out in the sun, just like the photo above.

Activity

If you were a bird, what would you look like? Draw a picture below, and write where you would choose to fly.

Fun with MPAs

Draw a line connecting each animal or insect to the MPA where it can be found:

Point Sur

Point Lobos

Vandenberg

Año Nuevo

Natural Bridges

Point Buchon



Have you visited an MPA? Write the name of the MPA, the date you visited, and have a parent sign the space provided. Then follow the instructions on page 19 to get credit!

MPA _____ DATE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

Fun with MPAs

Activity

Determine if the following statements are "True" or "False."

1. Point Buchon is considered a spiritual area by The Chumash.
2. The fastest animal on earth lives at Natural Bridges.
3. Less than 100 pounds of coal were needed every year to run the steam fog whistle at Año Nuevo.
4. Fishing is not allowed at Point Sur SMR.
5. Elkhorn Slough is one of the smallest salt marshes in California.
6. At least 47 movies have been filmed at Point Lobos.



Answers: 1. True, 2. True, 3. False, 4. False, 5. True, 6. True.

NOTES

Share Your Experience!

Once you've visited one of the Central Coast marine protected areas, tell your friends at Save Our Shores about it in one of the following ways:



1. Email a photo taken at an MPA to media@saveourshores.org, or post it to the Save Our Shores Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram page, using #SaveOurShores.
2. Write about your experience and email it to media@saveourshores.org.
3. Complete an activity in the MPA Passport, take a photo of the page, and either email it to media@saveourshores.org or post it to one of our social media pages listed above.



Then what?

Save Our Shores will post your photos and stories on its website and share them with the community in its newsletter!



Save Our Shores

Awareness
Advocacy
Action