

A Guide to a Unique Tidal Marsh Ecosystem

Island Beach State Park • Ocean County, New Jersey

What is a Tidal Marsh?

A tidal marsh is one of the most productive areas in the world. One acre of tidal marsh can produce twice the amount of nutrients as our most productive farmland. Two daily tidal cycles circulate plant and animal nutrients, forming a thick rich mud called detritus. This begins an intricate food web that is an important part of our coastal ecology and our quality of life. The richness of the tidal marsh provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. The tidal marsh is essential to all, from single-celled organisms to predators, such as the osprey and peregrine falcon.

Osprey and Peregrine Falcon

The Sedge Islands Marine Conservation Zone has roughly 30 osprey nesting platforms and a peregrine falcon hacking tower. Ospreys and peregrine falcons return to this area every year to use these structures for nesting and rearing sites. In New Jersey, the breeding population of osprey is currently listed as threatened, while the breeding population of the peregrine falcon is endangered. Conservation of habitats is one of the major actions essential to the survival of these species. To limit nesting disturbance, do not approach osprey or peregrine falcon nesting platforms.



Photo: John Lowrie



Photo: John Lowrie

Sedge Island Wildlife Management Area
and Island Beach State Park

WATER TRAILS of the SEEDGE ISLANDS MARINE CONSERVATION ZONE



INTERPRETIVE TRAIL GUIDE

NOT PERMITTED

ATVs, alcoholic beverages, swimming, smoking and vaping* are NOT permitted in the Marine Conservation Zone.



*Smoking and vaping permitted only inside your personal vehicle.



Keep It Clean and Green

Bring a bag or two to carry your trash out with you or to the dumpsters provided in parking lots of swimming areas 1 & 2. Don't forget to recycle!

**EMERGENCY: 1-877-WARN-DEP
(1-877-927-6337) or 911**

With thanks to "Save Barnegat Bay" for information and assistance.



ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK
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State of New Jersey
Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Parks and Forestry
State Park Service



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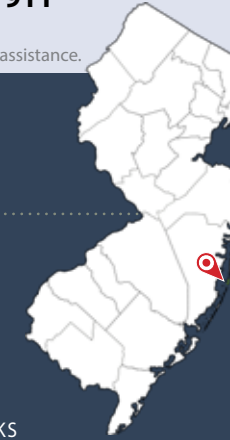


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Sedge Islands Marine Conservation Zone

The 1,900 acre Sedge Islands Marine Conservation Zone (SIMCZ) is located at the southern end of Island Beach State Park. Floating buoys and signs along the boundary notify visitors that they are entering the SIMCZ. This is one of New Jersey's most productive wildlife habitats because it contains a combination of maritime forest, thicket and an extensive tidal marsh. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection manages the area to protect it while making it accessible to visitors for a variety of recreational uses.

Water Trail Descriptions

The best way to explore the Sedge Islands Marine Conservation Zone (SIMCZ) water trails is in a kayak. **Waverunners and other personal watercraft are not permitted in the SIMCZ.** The first three trails start from the winter anchorage launch site at parking area 21 (A21). You can drop off your boat at the A21 launch site but you must park your car in the A21 parking lot. The Buster Islands Trail starts at the less heavily used parking area 15 (A15) launch site. A bayside parking lot allows paddlers to leave cars very close to this launch site.

Be aware that wind, tide and current cause frequent changes in navigability. Strong wind can make paddling difficult in open areas. At low tide it may be necessary to carry boats across sandbars. Tidal currents are often strong in narrow channels. Avoid Oyster Creek Channel and Barnegat Inlet due to heavy boat traffic and fast current. For your comfort you should carry water, sunscreen and insect repellent. For your safety you should carry a whistle, a compass and a cell phone. Always wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device. GPS points assist with navigation.

● Buster Islands Trail (2-3 hours; 3 miles)

This trail is on open water most of the way. Head south from the A15 launch site along the shore for nearly a mile passing to the east side of Inner Buster Island. Turn west and head across the open water into the narrow channel south of Sedge Island. (Note: Landing on Sedge Island is prohibited. The Center is open only to pre-registered groups.) Pass outside the poles marking the shellfish research area on the west side of the island before continuing around the island and back toward Big Buster Island as you return to the launch site.

◆ Spizzle Creek Bird Blind Trail (1-2 hours; 1.5 miles)

This trail is good for less experienced kayakers. It is short and close to land at all times. Follow the shoreline north turning into Osprey Pond. After you pass in front of the bird blind you will enter a protected area with ponds, natural channels and mosquito ditches, all of which have a very muddy bottom. This is a dead end, so once you have explored this area you must return by the same route.

GPS Points:

1. East entrance to Horsefoot Slough: N 39°47' 08.5", W 74°06' 27.1"
2. Horsefoot Slough Beach: N 39°47' 05.8", W 74°07' 00.3"
3. Entrance to Marsh Elder Thoroughfare: N 39°47' 10.7", W 74°06' 52.1"
4. North entrance to Snake Ditch: N 39°47' 02.9", W 74°06' 06.5"
5. South entrance to Sea Dog Island: N 39°46' 37.8", W 74°06' 09.7"

■ Marsh Elder Trail (2-3 hours; 2.5 miles)

Head west from the A21 launch site crossing open water toward the east entrance to Horsefoot Slough (GPS Point 1). At low tide a large sand bar may make it necessary to carry boats to reach deeper water. Follow the Horsefoot Slough west to a small beach (GPS Point 2) just before the Oyster Creek Channel. This is one of the few sand beaches in the SIMCZ. Head northeast across the slough into the south entrance to the Marsh Elder Thoroughfare (GPS Point 3). Follow the eastern shoreline of Main Island until you get to open water. Head east to return to the launch site.

▲ Little Bay Trail (2-3 hours; 3 miles)

This can be a challenging trail due to swift tidal currents in deep, winding channels, but this trail gives you great views of Barnegat Lighthouse. Head south from the A21 launch site keeping to the east of a large sand bar at the north entrance to the Snake Ditch (GPS Point 4). Continue south through Little Bay to the dike. Do not venture into Barnegat Inlet as strong current and boat traffic can be dangerous. Return to Little Bay and turn left to enter the south entrance to the Sea Dog Island Thoroughfare (GPS Point 5). Paddle to a small beach at the western entrance of the Horsefoot Slough (GPS Point 2). Turn right following the Horsefoot Slough to the open water at the eastern entrance (GPS Point 1). At low tide it may be necessary to carry boats across the sandbars in several areas.



SEDGE ISLANDS MARINE CONSERVATION ZONE

Sedge Island Wildlife Management Area and Island Beach State Park

MARINE CONSERVATION ZONE

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Birding
- ✓ Boating
- ✓ Recreational clamming
- ✓ Recreational crabbing
- ✓ Fishing*
- ✓ Hunting**
- ✓ Kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding

PROHIBITED

- ✗ Use of wave runners or personal water crafts
- ✗ Violating NO WAKE areas
- ✗ Approaching osprey or peregrine falcon nesting platforms
- ✗ Entering designated bird nesting areas
- ✗ Alcohol, swimming, smoking or vaping

* New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife regulations apply
+ Except on mainland



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- Beach or Sand Dune
- Sand Bar
- Developed Area
- Water
- Wetland
- Island Beach SP Boundary
- Sedge Island WMA Boundary
- Sedge Islands Marine Conservation Zone

- #### Water Trails
- Buster Islands Trail (3 mi)
 - Spizle Creek Bird Blind Trail (1.5 mi)
 - Marsh Elder Trail (2.5 mi)
 - Little Bay Trail (3 mi)

- #### Land Trails
- Cranberry Trail (0.1 mi)
 - Johnny Allen's Cove Trail (0.4 mi)
 - Spizle Creek Trail (0.8 mi)
 - Ocean View Trail (7.6 mi)
 - Trail to Beach

- Fishing
- GPS Points
- Interpretive Center
- Kayaking
- Lighthouse
- Parking Area
- Parking Lot
- Restrooms
- Wildlife Viewing