

Birding Sebasco

Sebasco Harbor Resort is located near several of Maine's very best birding locations. Some are highlighted on the *Maine Birding Trail*. Some are still relatively secret. Grab binoculars and let's go.

Start with a quiet walk on the grounds of the resort. In the early months of summer, the birds will be the noisiest thing heard before breakfast. House Finches and American Goldfinches are immediately obvious around the Village Green. Song Sparrows and Chipping Sparrows are also abundant. It probably won't take long to notice Yellow Warblers and Baltimore Orioles working the trees around the center of the resort. Look for Barn and Tree Swallows hawking insects over the pond. Mallards and Canada Geese are normally present in the pond and may be joined by migrating waterfowl later in summer. Ospreys and Great Blue Herons are regular visitors to the pond and Killdeer are seldom far from it.

Beyond the Gazebo, a path leads across the causeway to Pine Grove, a picnic area located in a deep patch of woods favored by Ovenbirds and Least Flycatchers. Catbirds and Common Yellowthroats can be found in the shrubs along the way. At the Pilot House Restaurant, check the harbor for Common Loons and

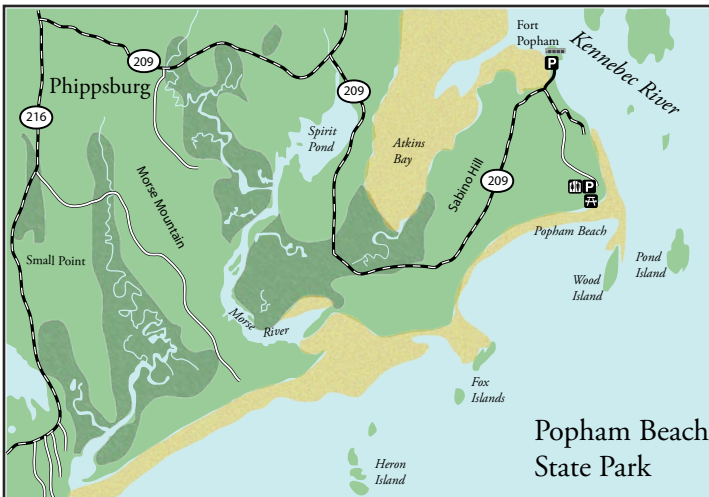
Eiders. Then continue past the Lighthouse underneath the mature conifer thickets where Eastern Wood Peewees and Golden-crowned Kinglets are residents. If you continue to Round Cove, a glance at high tide might reveal gulls and more waterfowl in the cove.

Low tide may turn up shorebirds and a few errant golf balls from Sebasco's famous 2nd Hole. Along the golf paths, expect to hear Red-eyed Vireos and Black-throated Green Warblers. Be watchful for Common Ravens among the crows. In the woods across the main road, Hermit Thrushes are part of the morning chorus and can be heard at a distance. Yellow-rumped Warblers and Cedar Waxwings are routine in any day of birding around Sebasco. Other possible warblers include Black-and-White, Nashville, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Blackburnian, and American Redstart.

Popham Beach State Park is exceptional year round. It is best birded at low tide. (Reid State Park across the river is best at high tide.)

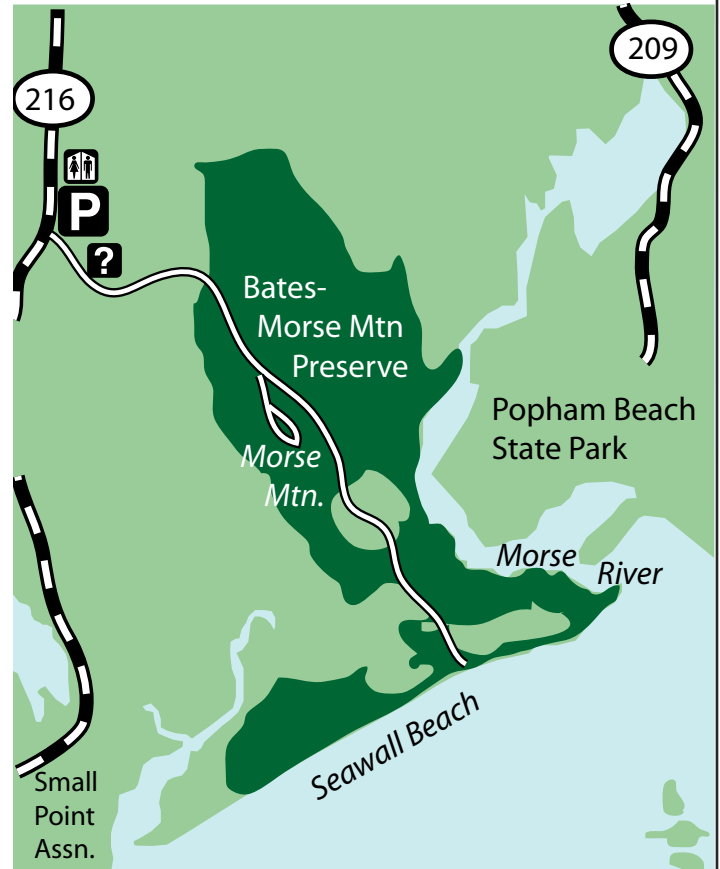
At low tide, it is possible to walk across the exposed sand bar to Wood Island. From this vantage, it is easier to scan the deep waters for diving ducks. This may be the best spot in Maine to see Red-throated Loons in the off-season and a few can linger into summer. Expect Common Loons, Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Eiders, Double-crested Cormorants, and Black Guillemots. Be aware that the incoming tide swallows the sand bar quickly.



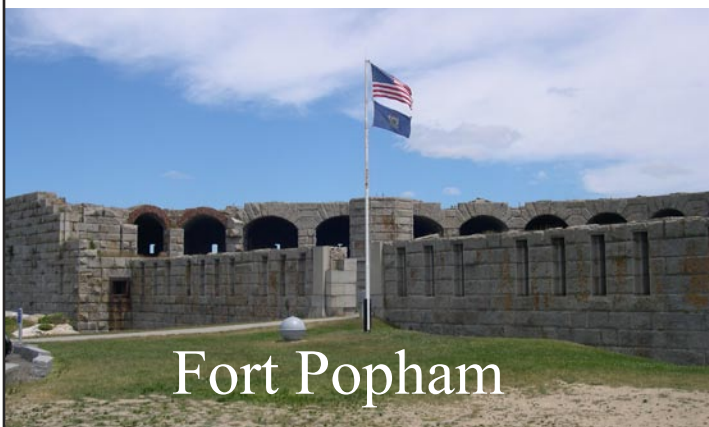


Inattentive birders risk a cold, wet return. Low tide exposes a vast amount of sand. In migration from August through October, sandpipers and plovers take advantage of the opportunity to feed. Piping Plovers may nest on the beach, though they usually breed in a conservation area separated from the park by the Morse River inlet. Least Terns nest near Piping Plovers and their smaller size helps to distinguish them from the Common, Arctic, and Roseate Terns that feed in these waters. The most productive beach area is at the tidal flats of the Morse River inlet, so if the plovers and terns are not on the main beach, they may be spied across the inlet on Seawall Beach. The salt marsh behind the beach and along Route 209 is habitat for Great Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets. American Bitterns, Green Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and Great Egrets also turn up regularly. Pine Warblers breed among the pitch pines, while Yellow Warblers and Common Yellowthroats are often seen in the open shrubbery. Song and Swamp Sparrows are common. Both Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows are possible. In migration, a variety of hawks pass the beach. Before leaving the area, continue on Route 209 to the end. Fort Popham is a well-preserved fortress that has guarded the strategically critical entrance to

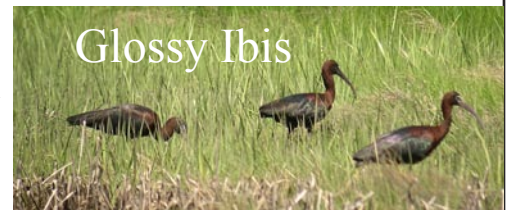
the Kennebec River since the U.S. Civil War. It provides another sheltered spot to scan for waterfowl, and it produces terns more often than the beach area does. *Directions: From Bath, proceed south on Route 209 toward Phippsburg. At 11 miles, turn left and continue following Route 209 to the park entrance, or continue straight to reach Fort Popham.*



Bates-Morse Mountain Conservation Area offers nearly 600 acres of superb birding. A paved access road serves as a self-guiding nature trail, with maps and brochures at the gate. The trail starts on Route 216 and winds through several different habitats, beginning with a mature oak/fir forest that is home to many Black-throated Green and Blackburnian Warblers. Yellow-rumped Warblers, Brown Creepers, and Golden-crowned Kinglets are also plentiful. Early in the walk, a portion of the Sprague River salt marsh intrudes into the forest. This should be checked carefully for wading birds such as Glossy Ibis and Snowy Egrets early in summer, as well as shorebirds later in the season. Both Nelson's



Fort Popham



Seawall Beach



and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows are possible. Upon re-entering the woods, the path leads gently uphill where there is a side trail to the summit of Morse Mountain. Although it is only 180 feet above sea level, it offers impressive views and an opportunity for hawk-watching in September. Pitch pines take over the forest from the summit to the beach, and the thinner canopy improves the chances of spying American Redstarts. Seawall Beach extends over a mile from the Small Point Association property on the west to the Morse River on the east. Popham Beach State Park lies beyond the river. At low tide, the expanse of sand on both beaches is enormous. Piping Plovers and Least Terns nest above the high tide line in some years. Be sure to watch your step and stay clear of all fencing. From August through September, other shorebirds may forage on the beach, particularly Sanderlings. (Due to the bird activity, dogs are not allowed on the beach in any season!) Throughout summer, Common Terns are often seen from the beach and large numbers concentrate around the offshore islands.

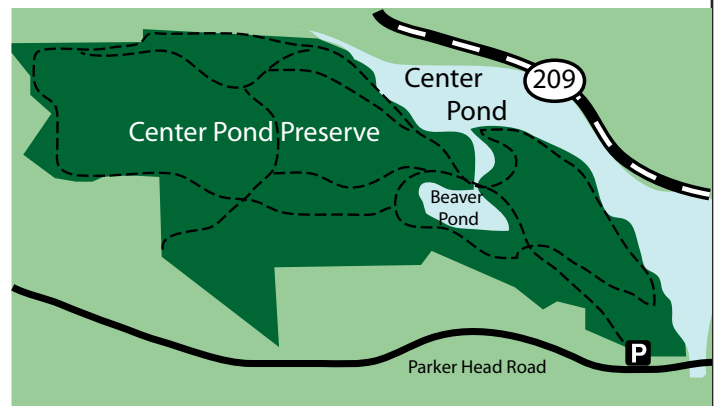
Directions: From Sebaso Harbor Resort, turn right onto Route 209 and continue straight for 1.5 miles. Route 209 will turn left toward Popham Beach. Instead, continue straight ahead on Route 216 and look for Morse Mountain Road on the left. Caution, the entrance is not easily seen from the road.



Sprague Pond

Sprague Pond Preserve is a 114 acre property of the Phippsburg Land Trust. The trail passes a beaver pond near the trailhead, crosses a planked boardwalk by the dam, extends less than half a mile through hardwood forest, and then skirts the length of a larger pond just beyond. The wetland of the first pond is rich in Common Yellowthroats and Yellow Warblers. Swamp and Song Sparrows are numerous. Both Alder and Willow Flycatchers may be present and can only be separated in the field by voice. From the first pond, the trail ascends through hardwoods that contain Ovenbirds and Hermit Thrushes, plus Black-throated Green, Black-and-White, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Sprague Pond is a cold, spring-fed pond stocked with trout, which draws a good number of Great Blue Herons and Ospreys. The trail hugs the pond on the west side but does not loop, necessitating a return by the same path.

Directions: The trail begins at the small parking lot on the west side of Route 209, 1.9 miles south of the Phippsburg Town Hall.



Center Pond Preserve is another Phippsburg Land Trust Property protecting 253 acres of very mature forest. Pine, Yellow-rumped, and Black-throated Green Warblers are most prevalent in the canopy, but Blackburnian Warblers, Red-eyed Vireos, Eastern Wood Pewees, and Scarlet Tanagers also sing from the treetops. Closer to earth, Brown Creepers, Ovenbirds, and Hermit Thrushes are easier to see, and a Tufted Titmouse is almost inevitable. Broad-winged Hawks nest on this tract and are heard often. There is a sizeable beaver pond in the middle of the preserve that should always be checked for waterfowl. The Drummond Loop that circumnavigates this pond is relatively short and easy to walk. A longer perimeter trail that follows the shoreline of Center Pond makes this

preserve particularly good for hiking. This trail may be buggy through June. There are no facilities.

Directions: From Route 209 turn onto Parker Head Road. From Route 1 in Bath, it is 6.8 miles; from Sebasco, it is just 0.9 miles north of Town Hall. The parking lot and trailhead is a half mile ahead on the right.



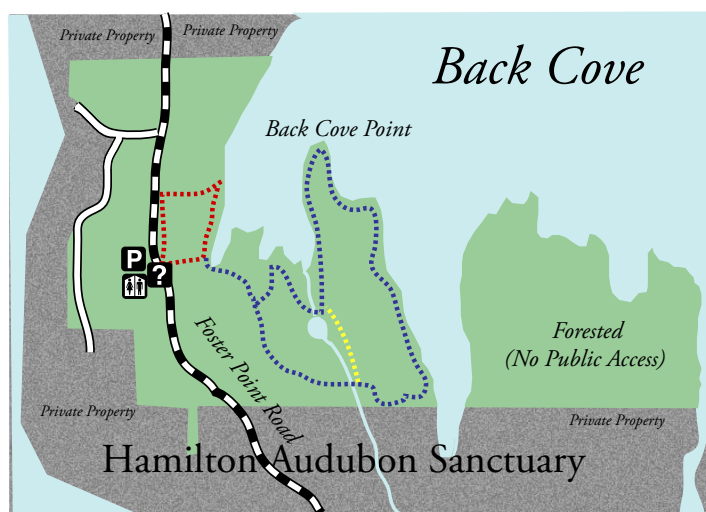
The Basin represents 1,910 acres of prime land given to The Nature Conservancy by an anonymous donor in 2006. It is one of the most generous gifts ever received by TNC. The preserve protects four miles of shoreline in an area particularly important to migrating and wintering waterfowl. The unbroken forest supports large populations of songbirds, particularly Hermit Thrushes, Veeries, Ovenbirds, and Black-throated Green Warblers. There are good numbers of Black-and-White and Yellow-rumped Warblers in the deep woods, while Chestnut-sided and Yellow Warblers abound in the secondary growth near the basin itself. Ospreys and Bald Eagles are also common around the basin. There are several snowmobile trails through the woods, but the fledgling preserve currently lacks foot trails. Fortunately, traffic is light and the preserve can be birded from the road. Much of the birding is concentrated around the basin itself where Tufted Titmouse regularly adds to the din.

Directions: While on Route 209 passing Center Pond, look for Basin Road opposite the pond's midpoint. Basin Road turns to dirt after 0.4 miles and continues completely through the preserve. One spur brushes the basin. Exit the preserve on the far side near the Sebasco Nazarene Church, and turn left to return to Sebasco Harbor Resort.

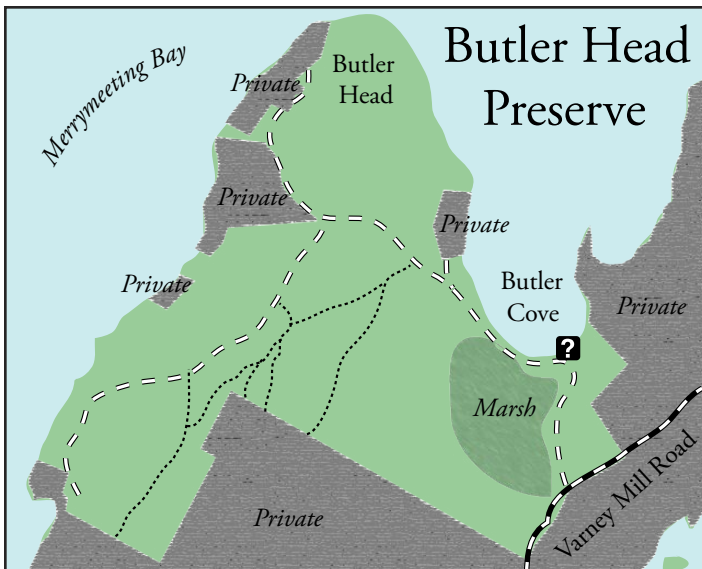
Hamilton Audubon Sanctuary has expanded recently. More than a mile of trails wind through open meadows and mixed woodland, following a peninsula

in the New Meadows River. Spurs to a freshwater marsh provide vistas of Back Cove, and Wood Ducks are sometimes found in this former ice pond. Broad-winged Hawks and Pileated Woodpeckers move in and out of the forested areas. Bobolinks gurgle from the high grass of the meadows. Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, and Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, Nashville, Black-throated Green and Wilson's Warblers have been found here. Great-crested Flycatchers are noisy when present. The cove can be good for Common Eiders with young in early summer and Snowy Egrets in late summer. At low tide, check mud flats for shorebirds.

Directions: Take the New Meadows exit off of Route 1, left onto New Meadows Road, which turns into Foster Point Road after the stop sign. The sanctuary is four miles from Route 1, three miles from the beginning of Foster Point Road.



Butler Head Preserve extends into Merymeeting Bay at an ideal place to scan for waterfowl. As winter changes to spring, Common Goldeneyes and Common Mergansers are often joined by Ring-necked Ducks. The diverse habitat features taller stands of white pine, red maple, beech, red oak, two species of aspen, and four species of birch. Black cherry, balsam fir, white oak, and witch hazel are characteristic of the emerging understory. Marsh, field, and shore land make up the remainder of the property. Wild rice proliferates on the southern edge of the preserve and in Butler Cove, which attracts waterfowl. Rare divers have included Canvasbacks and Redheads. The preserve gets its share of Common Yellowthroats, and Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, Black-and-White, and Black-throated Green Warblers. Song, Swamp, and

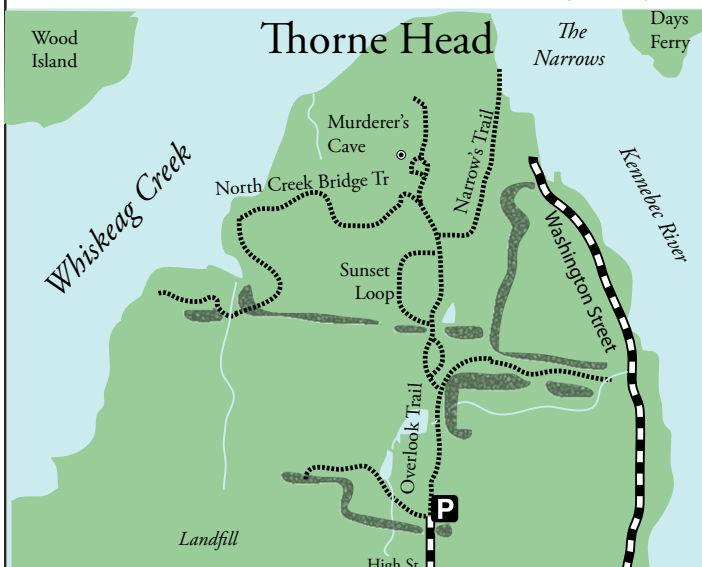


Butler Head Preserve

White-throated Sparrows are often encountered. Sandpipers have included Semipalmated, Least, Spotted, Pectoral, and Solitary, as well as Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs.

Directions: From High Street in Bath, proceed west on Whiskeag Road 1.1 miles. Turn right onto North Bath Road and go 1.5 miles. Turn right onto Varney Mill Road. Look for the second left in 0.6 miles and take this road to the preserve.

Thorne Head Preserve is protected by the Lower Kennebec River Land Trust. Tall pines that grew here in the colonial era were felled to become masts in the King's navy. After extensive logging, the area became pasture land. Stone walls still meander through the woods. Today, forest regeneration has produced a variety of habitats. Mixed woods consist mostly of white pine, hemlock, and oak, interspersed by vernal pools and freshwater marshes. The preserve is particularly rich in warblers and vireos. Blackburnian, Pine, and

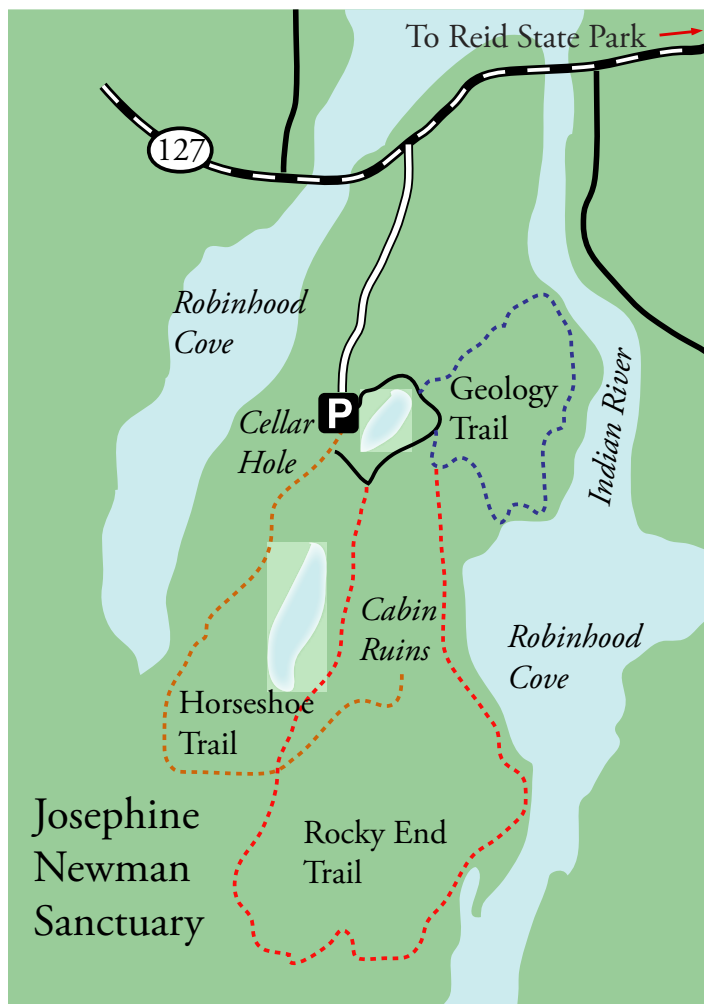


Thorne Head

Black-throated Green Warblers are most commonly encountered. Barred Owls haunt the deeper woods and Bald Eagles patrol the river's edge.

Directions: From Route 1 in downtown Bath, follow High Street north 2.1 miles straight ahead to the end.

Josephine Newman Sanctuary is under the stewardship of Maine Audubon. It is sandwiched between two branches of Robinhood Cove on mature forested upland. There are three blazed trails that total 2.5 miles of hiking. The shortest is a blue blazed, self-guided, geology trail. Though only 0.6 miles, the terrain is steep



Josephine Newman Sanctuary

and varied. This trail traverses mostly mature pines and hemlocks, and is home to Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Hermit Thrushes, and common woodpeckers. Pine and Blackburnian Warblers are easily seen. The Rocky End Trail is blazed in red and branches off the Geology Trail near the cattail marsh. This trail is 1.25 miles and ascends through deciduous forest to the highest point on the preserve. Warblers include Black-throated Green, Northern

Parula, Black-and-White, and Ovenbird, as well as Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireo. The orange-blazed Horseshoe Trail is 0.75 miles and represents the easiest hike. Please stay on trails.

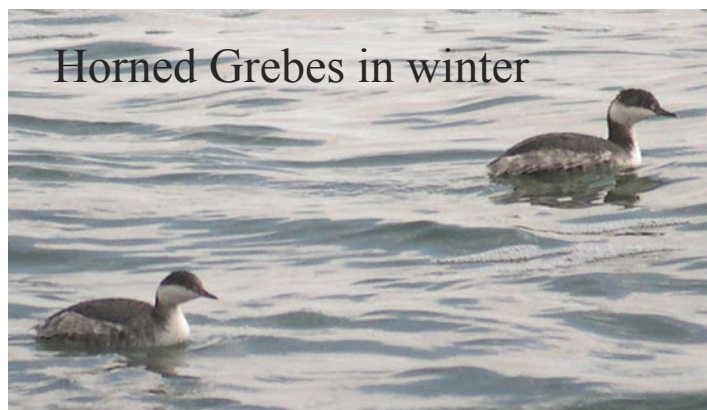
Directions: From the junction of U.S. Route 1 and Route 127 in Woolwich, just east of the Woolwich-Bath bridge, head south on 127 for 9.1 miles to Georgetown. Turn right at the sanctuary sign and follow the entrance road to the parking area.



Reid State Park, like Popham Beach State Park to the southwest, is popular in summer. Unlike Popham, high tide is preferred. The water levels are deep close to shore, bringing diving ducks closer to the beach for easy viewing. It's an ideal spot for grebes in the winter. Large rafts of Red-necked Grebes often float together, while more solitary Horned Grebes are scattered abundantly throughout the ocean. Long-tailed Ducks also draw close to shore. Rafts of Common Eiders sometimes include a King Eider. Of the scoters, Surf Scoters are the most common, but Black and White-winged may also be present. Red-breasted Mergansers and Black Guillemots are always findable. This is the last major sand beach along the Atlantic coast south of Canada and it is the northernmost of the protected breeding areas for endangered Piping Plovers and Least Terns in summer.

A typical outing begins with a quick peek into the tidal lagoon where the entry bridge crosses into the parking lot. It is attractive to a variety of dabbling ducks in migration and American Black Ducks at any time of year. Smaller diving ducks, such as Buffleheads and Red-breasted Mergansers, take advantage of the opportunity to feed in quieter waters. Next, an ascent of Griffith Head is mandatory. The entire expanse of Mile Beach and ocean is visible from here. Stroll the beach at least as far as Todd's Point on the opposite end. Half Mile Beach and the mouth of Little River lie beyond. There is a picnic area atop Todd's Point and the road that serves it is squeezed tightly between the tidal lagoon and wetlands. This access road is frequently used to make a loop out of the beach trip, returning to the entrance gate through an area that is rich in songbirds. Horned Larks, Snow Buntings and the occasional Lapland Longspur are possible from late September through March around the dunes and beach edges. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows nest in small numbers in the salt marsh fed by the Little River. Look carefully for dabbling ducks in the river on the far side of the service road. Canada Geese are usually present. Where the service road passes through woods, as it does just after the entrance gate and before Todd's Point, the habitat is mixed conifer. Golden-crowned Kinglets are always present. Ruby-crowned Kinglets are likely in summer. Brown Creepers are likely in any season and crossbills are possible in heavy pinecone years.

Directions: From Woolwich (on the east side of the Kennebec River from Bath) take Route 127 south through Arrowsic and Georgetown 10.7 miles to the right turn toward the park. Follow to the gate.



Horned Grebes in winter