

Let's Learn

Wildlife of the Los Angeles Harbor Area



Los Angeles Harbor is located on the western portion of San Pedro Bay. The Port of Long Beach (Long Beach Harbor) is located on the eastern part of the bay.

San Pedro Bay is very rich in wildlife, including fish, birds, and plant life. It supports many ecosystems where different types of life depend on others (and even on the death and decay of other types of life) to thrive).

The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach comparison more than 7,000 acres of land (2,380 ha) and another 7,000 acres of water area.

The ports handle more than 170 million metric tons of cargo per year. More than 4,000 vessels call at the two ports each year. All of the industrial activity connected with the two harbors can be very much of a strain for the wildlife that live here.

To help protect the wildlife, the ports have undertaken studies to find ways to improve the habitats, and these facts are from those studies.

Fish

Northern Anchovy (*Engraulis mordax*) (87% of all fish in the area waters)

Topsmelt (*Atherinops affinis*) (7% of all fish in the area waters)

California Grunion (*Leuresthes tenuis*) (2% of all fish in the area waters)

Pacific Sardine (*Sardinops sagax*) (2% of all fish in the area waters)

Jack Mackerel (*Trachurus symmetricus*) (2% of all fish in the area waters)

Juvenile Pacific Barracuda (*Genyonemus lineatus*) (<2% of all fish in the area waters)

And many other fish live along the bottom of the harbor: White Croaker, Queenfish, Shiner Surfperch, White Surfperch, Specklefin Midshipman, California Tonguefish, Yellowchin Sculpin, Bay Goby, California Halibut, Pacific Sanddab, Barred Sand Bass, Speckled Sanddab, California Lizardfish, and at least 48 other species.

The mud and sand bottom (sediment) of the harbors also have much sea life. Echinoderms 2%; Mollusks 19%; Crustaceans 30% Polychaete Worms 48%. These include a non-native clam (*Theora lubrica*), a small crab, two species of small shrimp-like crustaceans known as leptostracans and amphipods, and six species of polychaetes (a type of marine worm).

Life Forms on the Rocks

The rocky shoreline and the rocks placed for the breakwater provide locations for all kinds of life. And because the tide changes throughout the day, different types of life thrive in different parts at different times. Barnacles are very prevalent, along with limpets and clams in the high intertidal zone. The lower intertidal zone supports various types of star fish, as does the subtidal zone, where you will also find marine snails and sea squirts.

Kelp Beds

Many of these types of fish and other sea life also thrive in the kelp (seaweed) beds. There are beds around the outside of the harbors and kelp has been planted within the harbors to provide habitat.

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More on the other side



Birds

The most common birds in the harbors are seagulls and waterfowl (cormorants and grebes), followed by foraging birds (mainly pelicans and terns). The California least tern is an endangered species that has been protected in the harbor with its own habitat at Pier 400, which serves APL and Maersk lines.

Sea Lions and Seals

The ports are also home to an abundant number of California sea lions as well as a lesser number of harbor seals. Visit the Marine Mammal Care Center at Ft. MacArthur, 3601 S. Gaffey Street and you will find out more about these animals there.

Non-native Species

Since ships come into the harbors from all over the world, they can bring non-native sea life with them. And while these can sometimes cause many problems in other areas, they have worked themselves into the ecology of the area here. These include the yellowfin goby fish and some types of clams and crustaceans.

Some Questions About Wildlife of the Los Angeles Harbor Area and Terms Used

- What is a Mollusk?
- What is a Crustacean?
- What is a Barnacle?
- What are some differences between Sea Lions and Seals?
- What is an ecosystem?

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479 W. 6th Street, Suite 101, San Pedro, CA 90731
310-729-9828 www.SanPedroTourist.net

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