

Resources and Contacts

Report illegal breaching:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife, (888) 334-2258 (CALTIP). If you don't get a response, contact the County Sheriff at (831) 471-1121.

Flooding and road closures:

County of Santa Cruz Public Works, (831) 477-3999. Visit the Public Works website for road closure information.

Corcoran Beach:

County of Santa Cruz Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services, (831) 454-7901.

www.scparks.com

The Friends of Corcoran Lagoon Beach:

<http://foclb.weebly.com/>

Brochure copies available at Live Oak Public Library, Environmental Health online or (831) 454-2022.

The 2005 Tidewater Goby Recovery Plan is online.

Brochure Production

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) funded brochure printing and distribution. Written and produced by Kristen Kittleson and Sierra Ryan, Environmental Health, County of Santa Cruz

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Photos: Kristen Kittleson



What is Corcoran Lagoon?

Corcoran Lagoon forms where the Rodeo Gulch watershed connects with the ocean. Located between Portola Drive and the ocean, the lagoon area provides a mix of shallow lagoon, emergent marsh, beach, and riparian habitats. East Cliff Drive crosses the lagoon near the beach.

The lagoon supports a population of endangered tidewater goby, a small fish that lives only in coastal California lagoon habitats. This brochure provides information about Corcoran Lagoon, tidewater goby, and wildlife habitats.

The Lagoon Past and Present

Ohlone people would have used the lagoon and adjacent uplands for fishing, hunting, and collecting. Corcoran Lagoon is named after one of the early ranchers and farmers, James Corcoran. Today, the lagoon is bordered by an urban neighborhood, including the Live Oak Library and KSCO radio station.

The County of Santa Cruz Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services manages the beach, a popular spot for walking and other beach activities. Please respect wildlife while visiting the lagoon and beach. Leashed dogs are currently allowed on the beach but should not harass or chase wildlife.



Lagoon Ecology

Lagoons are dynamic systems where freshwater streams and the ocean connect and mix. The lagoon can be open or closed to the ocean and have predominantly freshwater, saltwater or brackish (mixed) water. At Corcoran Beach, a sandbar separates the lagoon from the ocean during much of the year. In response to winter storms, the lagoon breaches (opens) and flows to the ocean. Waves and tides bring in salty water and marine nutrients both when the lagoon is open and when it's closed, by overtopping the sandbar.

Healthy lagoons create a productive environment for microscopic plants and animals, which provide abundant food resources for animals higher in the food chain such as shrimp, crabs, fish, and birds. Aquatic and marsh plants also provide food for many animals. In turn, top predators such as osprey and peregrine falcon feed on the abundant wildlife. Mammals such as raccoons and coyote also visit the lagoon.



Snowy Egret

Since 1984, 175 species of birds have been recorded in the Corcoran Lagoon area, reflecting lagoon, urban, beach, and marine habitats (eBird.org). Resident birds such as mallards, egrets, herons, and coots can be found at the lagoon year-round. Other birds, such as Caspian terns, visit during fall and spring migration. Friends of Corcoran Lagoon Beach works in cooperation with Parks to protect shorebird nesting habitat. Fish species collected in the lagoon include tidewater goby, three spine stickleback and mosquitofish.



Caspian Terns

during migration

Tidewater Goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*)

Corcoran Lagoon supports a population of tidewater goby, a small fish that lives only in California coastal lagoons. They live on the bottom of the lagoon and eat small animals such as shrimp and aquatic insects. Predators include egrets, herons, and mergansers.

Tidewater goby are unusual because females compete for access to the males, who construct burrows in the sandy bottom. After a female lays her eggs in the burrow, the male cares for them until hatching (9-11 days). Reproduction peaks in the summer and most goby live about 1 year.

Tidewater goby are protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and are a state species of special concern. Tidewater goby inhabit 14 locations in Santa Cruz County and Corcoran Lagoon has an abundant, stable population with limited threats or restoration needed.



Tidewater goby are about 2 inches long



Tidewater Goby

Don't breach the lagoon!

It is illegal to dig a trench through the sandbar and breach or drain the lagoon. Breaching the lagoon can harm tidewater goby through physical trauma and by stranding fish and burrows. Harming gobies is a violation of state laws and federal ESA. Please report breaching.

East Cliff Drive will flood sometimes when the lagoon is full. For your safety, respect Road Closed signs and drive around the lagoon on Portola Drive.



An illegal trench through the sandbar



Dead tidewater goby from a breach