

"The lagoon is one of Marin County's most significant natural resources. The lagoon tidelands are publicly-owned. ... Along with Drake's Estero and Tomales Bay, Bolinas Lagoon provides an important coastal environment for fish, birds and mammals that is unparalleled along the northern California coast between San Francisco and Humboldt Bays. Open water, mudflat and marsh provide productive and diverse habitats for marine fishes, waterbirds, and marine mammals. Bolinas Lagoon is part of a much larger protected natural habitat complex that is part of or adjoins the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GNMS, Pt. Reyes National Seashore, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Central California Coast Biosphere Preserve, Mt. Tamalpais State Park, and the Audubon Canyon Ranch Bird Sanctuary."

Bolinas Lagoon. Located in California, less than 20 kilometers up the coast from San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, Bolinas Lagoon is a tidal embayment of open water, mudflat, and marsh which provides productive and diverse habitats for marine fishes, waterbirds, and marine mammals, and it is also part of a much larger protected natural habitat complex in the region. The site is located on the Pacific Flyway, which makes the Lagoon an ideal staging ground and stopover site for migratory birds, and the temperate climate provides wintering habitat for a wide array of ducks, geese, and shorebirds. The area supports a number of recreational uses, including the use of manually-powered watercraft.

Bolinas Lagoon Open Space Preserve

Marin County Open Space District

Bolinas Lagoon is one of Marin County's most significant natural resources. Its 1,100 acres, known as the Bolinas Lagoon Open Space Preserve and managed by the Marin County Open Space District, was designated a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention in 1998. Along with Drake's Estero and Tomales Bay, Bolinas Lagoon provides an important coastal environment for fish, birds and mammals that is unparalleled along the northern California coast between San Francisco and Humboldt Bays.

Bolinas Lagoon's 1,100 acres was designated a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention in 1998. This tidal estuary lies on the San Andreas Fault, 15 miles northwest of San Francisco (Figure 1). The channels, mudflats, marsh and riparian areas provide rich habitat for a myriad of shorebirds and waterfowl, fish and invertebrates, and special status plants and animals. Located on the Pacific Flyway, Bolinas Lagoon is an important wintering area for many thousands of bird species. The lagoon also plays an important role for resident breeding colonies of herons and egrets. The protected sand bars and islands provide pupping grounds and year-round haul-out sites for harbor seals. Subtidal areas and extensive mudflats support diverse populations of invertebrates and provide nursery and feeding habitat for resident and migratory fish. Steelhead and coho salmon move through the lagoon to access streams in the 16.7 square mile watershed. The lagoon is an important part of a network of northern California estuaries, some of which are relatively pristine and others that are being restored. Together these estuaries provide a wetland complex of exceedingly rich ecological value.

Why We Should Preserve Bolinas Lagoon

On September 1, 1998, Bolinas Lagoon was designated "A Wetland of International Significance" by the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat. The Convention was established in 1971 at a meeting in Ramsar, Iran, and is informally known as the Ramsar Convention. Bolinas Lagoon was the 17th such site in the United States to be so named, the third in the Western States, and the **first** on the Pacific Flyway. The designation carries with it the responsibility to maintain the site as a viable habitat for migratory waterfowl.

The importance of Bolinas Lagoon was emphasized by the California State Assembly in a [resolution](#) adopted on April 24, 1997.

In the Preliminary Analysis for their Bolinas Lagoon Study (1997) the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers said:

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Bolinas Lagoon is also a Marin County Nature Preserve. Audubon Canyon Ranch and Point Reyes Bird Observatory make their headquarters adjacent to the Lagoon. The latter two organizations are an educational facility for school children and nesting location for herons and egrets, and an international avian research organization, respectively. The lagoon's ecological values result from its function as a breeding ground for shellfish, finfish, bottom fish, and marine organisms; as a pupping ground for harbor seals; as a nesting area for herons, egrets and other wading birds; as a stopover for thousands of migratory birds on the Pacific Flyway; as a year-round habitat for numerous endangered species; and, as a recreational resource for millions of our citizens.

The Bolinas Lagoon Management Plan prepared by Marin County (1996) lists **3 species of amphibians, 23 of birds and 3 of mammals that frequent Bolinas Lagoon and are identified as "rare, threatened or endangered."** Some 245 species of birds have been identified at the Lagoon and its surrounding watershed. In addition, the open water and marsh areas provide productive and diverse habitat for marine fishes and mammals. Bolinas Lagoon occupies some 1,200 acres; the surrounding watershed, 17 square miles.