

TOFINO MUDFLATS

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

The Tofino Mudflats Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was established in 1997 to conserve critical wildlife habitat in Clayoquot Sound.

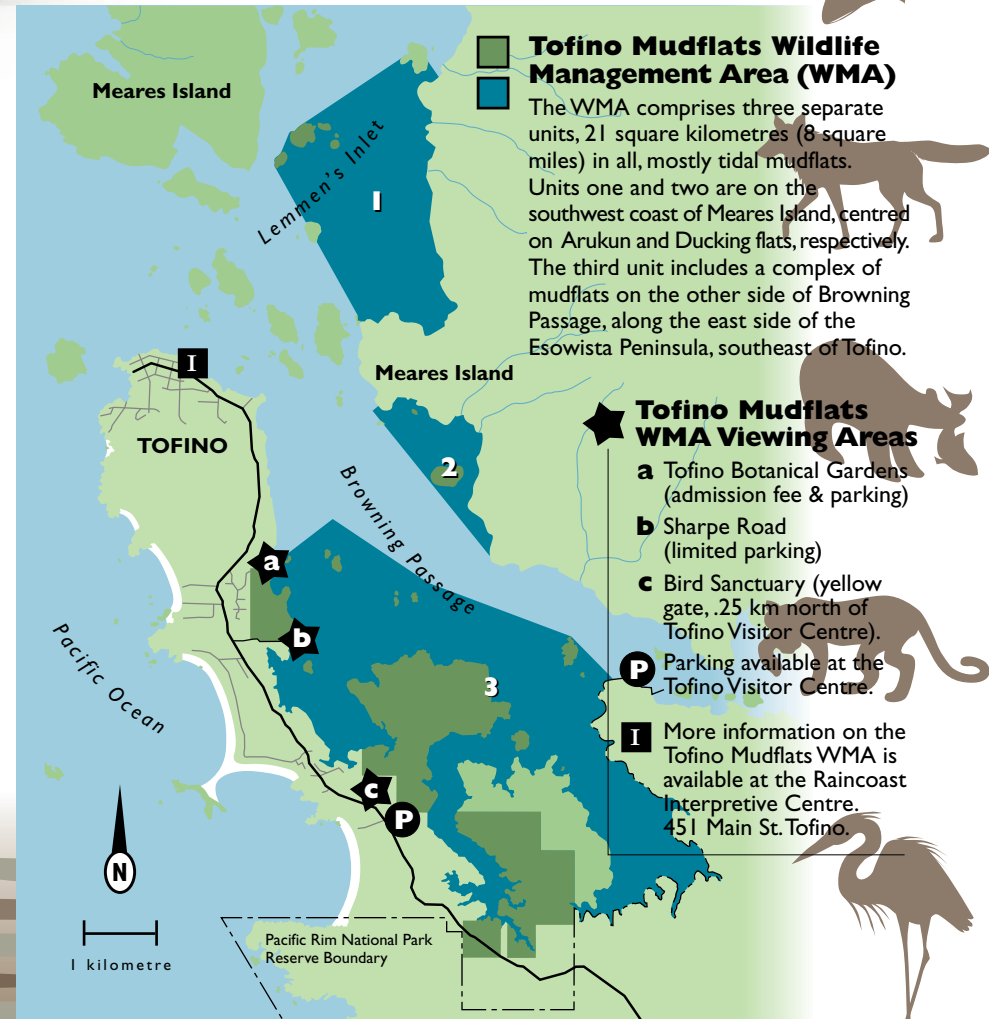
Migrating shorebirds are not alone. Many plant and animal species require the mudflats at some point in their life cycle. More sheltered than most intertidal environments and richer in nutrients, the mudflats and eelgrass beds abound with small fish and invertebrates: ghost shrimp, clams and crabs. It's a fascinating place to explore, full of bizarre life forms hidden beneath rocks and burrowing in the mud. Wintering waterfowl flock to the shallow sheltered waterways in stormy weather. Marine mammals including gray whales and killer whales pass through deeper channels. Wolves, black bears, cougars and other land mammals forage through forest and shoreline environments.

People are also part of the Tofino Mudflats WMA and have been for a long time, evidenced by numerous archaeological sites: shell middens, fish traps and canoe skids.

From kayaking and bird watching to the harvesting of clams and Dungeness crab, the Tofino Mudflats provide for a range of recreational and commercial activities. These must be carefully conducted so they don't run contrary to the basic goal of protecting habitat for wildlife.

The Tofino Mudflats WMA covers a range of different environments: tidal channels, mudflats, eelgrass meadows, rock/gravel beaches, marshes and streams with their associated riparian habitat, and a wide variety of forest ecosystems.

Together, these mudflats comprise one of the ten most critical wetland areas for migratory birds on Canada's West Coast and have been designated an "Important Bird Area" of Canada. As a protected area, the WMA is an integral part of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.



It's no picnic being a shorebird!

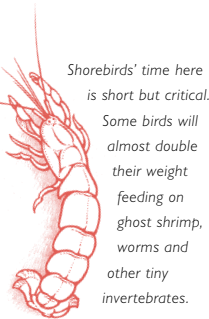


For one thing, there's an awful lot of travel involved.

Tiny western sandpipers, common on the beaches and mudflats of Clayoquot Sound in early May, have often flown all the way from Ecuador or Peru. Sanderlings and semi-palmated plovers may have spent our winter months as far as Tierra del Fuego. Other species range even further. All are headed for a brief, frantic breeding season in the high Arctic.

And decent accommodation is hard to come by.

Every seasoned traveller knows the value of eating well and getting a good night's rest. Western sandpipers and many other species that migrate along the Pacific Coast of North America depend on a series of large estuaries, from San Francisco Bay, California to Kachemak Bay, Alaska. Unfortunately, such estuaries along the Pacific Coast are few and far between. Many are under fierce development pressure. With the loss of estuarine habitat elsewhere, migrating shorebirds are increasingly dependent on the Tofino Mudflats for food and shelter.



Shorebirds' time here is short but critical. Some birds will almost double their weight feeding on ghost shrimp, worms and other tiny invertebrates.



THE TOFINO MUDFLATS NEED YOUR HELP!



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Don't disturb wildlife

Shorebirds and other animals suffer from repeated disturbance. Give feeding or resting animals an especially wide berth. Control your pets (or, better still, leave them at home).

Secure your garbage

Contain garbage and compost in wildlife-proof containers. Feeding wild animals interferes with their natural diet and behaviour. Animals searching for handouts may become aggressive or dependent.

Spare the habitat!

Property owners can help by minimizing disruption of the shoreline. Set buildings back, maintain a screen of native vegetation, minimize exterior lighting, install adequate storm water drainage, and maintain natural substrates along the foreshore.

Don't pollute!

Pesticides, fertilizers, waste oil, and detergents contaminate ground and surface water. In a whole ocean of water, small amounts may seem trivial but they accumulate and become toxic in bottom-feeders, like clams and ghost shrimp. Some fertilizers cause algal blooms that rob the water of oxygen and kill local marine life.

Get involved! They're your mudflats, too!

The Tofino Mudflats Wildlife Management Area is administered by the British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, with assistance from a local Advisory Committee of interested individuals and organizations. There are lots of stewardship opportunities.

Please join us, we'd love to hear from you.

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CLAYOQUOT™
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Funding for printing provided by the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust.



RAINCOAST
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The original brochure was funded by the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund.

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More than just mud!

CONSERVING CRITICAL
WILDLIFE HABITAT IN
CLAYOQUOT SOUND

Photographs by: Top cover: ©John Forde, bottom cover: ©Adrian Dorst, inside ©Barb Beasley, illustrations and map by: Marion Syme.

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