

# Explore the Winter Shore!

DCR State Parks Coastal District

## TRIP-TIP SELF-GUIDED ADVENTURE

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### Welcome

Explore nature and history on the shore this winter! This self-guided “Trip-Tip” features three DCR parks that are located along a scenic ocean drive: **Halibut Point State Park, Revere Beach Reservation, and Belle Isle Marsh Reservation**. Many birds find their winter homes along our shores, and some are unique to this special environment. Hone your skills of observation as you discover how birds live and feed in harsh New England winter.

Visit all three parks in one day or anytime this winter. The adventure is of your own making. Reasonable accommodations are available upon request. All ages are welcome.

Children must be accompanied by adults. If you have any questions feel free to reach out to staff at the parks using the contact information provided.



### Share Your Adventure!

Share your Trip-Tip adventure with others through word of mouth, or on social media using the hashtags **#massdcr** and **#dcrtip**.

### Things To Know, Before You Go

Something about safety and necessary rules or regs to mention. Particular information for winter recreation? Staying warm outdoors and know when to call it quits? Remember, at all DCR parks and watersheds:

- Binoculars or a spotting scope are very useful for bird viewing, especially from a distance.
- Field guides or smart device. Download **eBird** or **Merlin** apps
- Carry-in, carry-out all of your belongings, including trash.
- Stay on designated trails.
- All pets on 10-foot maximum leash, attended to at all times. Clean-up after your pet and dispose of waste off-site.
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and wear blaze orange when appropriate.
- Wear sturdy, warm footwear/boots/Yaktrax, clothing layers, and wear sunscreen on your face for protection from the very windy coastal edge. Consider wind-proof outer wear for windy exposures.

# Halibut Point State Park

Gott Avenue and Granite Street (Rt. 127), Rockport, MA 01966

**Phone:** 978-546-3239

**Website:** <https://www.mass.gov/locations/halibut-point-state-park>

**Hours of Operation:** 8:00 a.m. until sunset

**Parking Fees:** FREE in winter

**Restrooms:** available in parking lot

Halibut Point is located at the northern tip of Rockport. This park tells the story of the quarrying industry and has some of the best views over rocky New England shore in the state.

## Adventure 1: Rocky Shore Seabirds

Halibut Point State Park has one entrance, a short, leisurely walk through tree-lined areas with sounds, habits, and flights of birds. You may see or hear **American robins, White-breasted nuthatches, Black-capped chickadees, and Tree swallows.** Follow the signs “to Ocean Overlook” to view **wintering birds and ducks** at the seashore that escape freezing ponds up north.

You’ll enjoy **Harlequin ducks, Eider Ducks and Loons** frolicking among the winter birds at the rocky shoreline’s edge. Bring binoculars, if you have them, and see

**Northern gannets** diving for food offshore! While some of these seabirds are here year round, quite a few species come here for the winter. Watch them dive down into the water for long periods of time. *What might they be after?* Imagine having to dive into cold water for your food, rather than visiting the supermarket. Observe the locations of the different species. *Where are they? Close to shore? Out in the water? Flying, or swimming?* Each species feeds in a specific area depending on what they eat.

Feel the strong northern winter wind on your face. *How do these ducks survive in such cold water?* Smell the fresh ocean air. Even without binoculars, you can see all the way to Maine on a clear day. Look for the Isles of Shoals off the coast of Portsmouth, NH. This portion of your adventure can be done in around one hour.

## Bird Sketching Activity

Sketch and describe one or more of the birds that you see, then identify the bird(s). Binoculars and a spotting scope are best for discovering details. However, gulls can be viewed using only your eyes. You may identify the bird(s) either in the field or when you get home using a field guide or internet resources. We encourage you to include yourself, your family and friends in the drawing.

## Next Stop on your Birding Adventure

Now you’re off to Revere Beach, the nation’s first public beach where bathers used to rent swimming costumes in the mid-1800s! There are a few routes you can take to Revere, but here is interesting suggestion:



**Suggested driving route to Revere Beach:** Take Rt. 127 to the Beverly/Salem Bridge to Nahant Beach, then Rt. 1A to Revere Beach. Enjoy this scenic New England coastal drive through the small towns on the North Shore. You'll be glad you did!

Possible Ideas to **Explore at Revere Beach and Belle Isle**

- Look for birds and sketch them. Birds you may encounter include ducks & other water-birds, gulls and raptors. We recommend bringing a spotting scope and binoculars to view the birds.
- Photo-shoot at Revere Beach of notable architectural structures, or a beachcomber scavenger hunt for shells and other interesting objects. Remember no collecting, take only photos.
- View the habitats of Belle Isle Marsh Reservation from the tower and two boardwalks as you search for natural and past cultural features.

## Revere Beach Reservation

Headquarters located at One Eliot Circle Revere, MA 02151

Phone: (781) 781-656-1485

Website: <https://www.mass.gov/locations/revere-beach-reservation>

Winter Hours: Sunrise to sunset

Winter Parking Fees: No parking fee along Revere Beach Boulevard, at Carey Circle and at Eliot Circle. Weekday parking restrictions in place: No more than 4 hr. parking that begins 10:00 a.m.

Restrooms: Subject to staffing. Weekdays 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Amenities: Several restaurants and fast food establishments that serve a diversity of cuisines are located along Revere Beach Boulevard.

Three miles of beautiful sandy beach forming a crescent shape with historic buildings and structures await your visit. Beachcombing and Bird watching are popular activities here. Interesting buildings & structures grace the shoreline. Most of the buildings and structures listed here were built in the late 1800's before being restored in the late 1900's. These features include:

- *The brick State police barracks; formerly the Metropolitan Police Station with a weathervane taken from the original bathhouse.*
- *A replica of a clock that bathers in the past used to ensure that their rented bathing suits were returned on time.*
- *The circular Reinstein bandstand across from Shirley Avenue topped by a fancy copper lyre indicative of its musical purpose.*
- *Boston Light--a lighthouse best viewed with a spotting scope was built in 1783 after the British destroyed the original structure at the end of the American Revolution.*



Stephen Gore (nantaskart at Flickr.com)

## Adventure 2: Beach Seabirds

The best places to stop and look for birds at Revere Beach include:

- Carey Circle at Northernmost end of beach
- The Pink Condos about midway on the beach
- Eliot Circle at the Southernmost end of the Beach

Watch ducks and loons as they dive beneath the surface of the ocean that remains ice free in winter, to capture their food. Ducks are busy feeding on clams, mussels, worms, and crabs; loons are feeding on fish and crabs. Most of these birds have come to the coast from inland U.S. and Canada where they raised families on lakes and ponds now frozen over. In the water you are likely to see **American Black Duck, Black Scoter, Brant, Bufflehead, Canada Goose, Common Eider, Common Golden-eye, Surf Scoter, White-winged scoter, and Common Loon.**

The gulls on the beach are either resting or feeding on surf clams that have washed up during storms. Search up and down the beach and in the water for: **Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Great Black Backed Gull and Sanderling.** After a storm that has washed large numbers of clams on the beach, you may even see an immature **Iceland Gull** and **Glaucous Gull** feeding as you search for them across from the Pink Condos and south along the beach.

If the gulls are disturbed by people, dogs or other gulls, the birds will escape to the water on out-stretched flapping wings where they then sit and wait until it is safe to return to shore. Gulls are sea-birds after all. Where did all the broken shells of clams, mussels and moon snails come from that you see on the sidewalks of Revere Beach Boulevard? Look closely as you may catch a view of a clever gull in the act of flying with a shell in its mouth that it drops to the ground to break the shell open. The gull then wastes no time gobbling up a tasty morsel of meat that has been exposed from inside the broken shell.

As you watch birds on the water look for them splashing about, passing feathers through their beaks and scratching. These are all preening behaviors meant to keep the feathers clean, waterproof and otherwise in tip top shape for flying and providing insulation from the cold.

Search the air for **Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Red-tailed hawk** that occasionally make their appearance. Search the rocks on the jetty at Eliot Circle for **Purple Sandpiper.**

### Beachcomber Scavenger Hunt

Stop and take a round trip walk along the beach enjoying the sights, sounds and smells of the ocean as your search for 6 items from the list below.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rounded rock     | <input type="checkbox"/> Periwinkle shell |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surf Clam shell  | <input type="checkbox"/> A seaweed        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Razor Clam Shell | <input type="checkbox"/> Eelgrass         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mussel Shell     | <input type="checkbox"/> A feather        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slipper shell    |   |

# Belle Isle Marsh Reservation

Bennington Street, East Boston

**Phone:** (508) 749-5360, (781) 656-1485

**Website:** <https://www.mass.gov/locations/belle-isle-marsh-reservation>

**Winter Hours:** Sunrise to sunset

**Winter Parking Fees:** No parking fee and daytime restrictions.

**Restrooms:** No Public Restrooms.

This land that is now this DCR Massachusetts State park was visited by the Massachusetts Colonial Militia as they marched to fight the British in the battle of Chelsea Creek during the American Revolutionary war. Search for the concrete blocks that once supported the screen for a drive in movie theatre in more recent history. Today the park is a birding hotspot along the Atlantic migratory flyway with a total bird count of about 257 species. As you travel through the park on short trails and boardwalks that are universally accessible, enjoy the views of salt marsh, meadow, tall reed-grass marsh and woodland at ground level or climb the tower!

## Adventure 3: Marsh Birds

Winter is the best time to bird at the park and look for birds flying, swimming in the water, or perched on the ground or in a tree. Here's where your binoculars and spotting scope come in very handy.

In the Saltmarsh viewed from the **Reinstein Boardwalk** search the water and grass for **American Black duck, Brant and Great blue heron**. Search the water for **Bufflehead**. Search the entire park for **Northern Harrier, Cooper's hawk, Red-tailed hawk** and even the occasional **Snowy Owl** and songbirds that include **Downy woodpecker, Northern Flicker, White-throated sparrow, Song sparrow, Red-white-winged blackbird, Northern cardinal**.

The winter raptors at Belle Isle Marsh arrived in the fall or early winter in search of small mammals that are now more plentiful and easier to catch than is the case for more northerly portions of their range.



*Salt Marsh from the Reinstein Boardwalk*

## Scavenger Hunt

Explore the Reservation and enjoy the sights and sounds as your search for 6 items from the list below. Create a photo that includes you, your family and friends. Please share your photos and stories on social media using the hashtags **#massdcr** and **#dcrtriptip**

- Salt Marsh viewed from the Reinstein Boardwalk
- Reed Grass Marsh
- Meadow
- The foot-bridge
- A concrete block that once supported the screen for a drive in movie theatre.
- A small pond
- The Tower and the park viewed from the tower

**Thank you for joining us for this Shore Exploration Trip-Tip!** Hopefully you have become more familiar with our Massachusetts winged residents! Remember that most of these birds have traveled hundreds of miles to spend time here on our beautiful shore; here they can rest and feed until spring when they return to their breeding grounds. Please respect the wildlife and view from a distance.

During your next Trip-Tip, perhaps you'll visit a park that you didn't know about before. Maybe you'll meet a new bird or try a new outdoor activity. We hope that you will be invigorated to take even more Trip-Tip outdoor adventures all year long!

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The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) oversees over 450,000 acres of state parks, forests, beaches, bike trails, parkways, watershed lands, and dams across the Commonwealth. DCR's mission is to: *Protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.* For more information visit: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/department-of-conservation-recreation>.

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