

Neary Lagoon Self-Guided Tour

- Neary Lagoon Rules and Guidelines
 - No feeding or petting the animals.
 - Please remain on the path.
 - Leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but pictures.

1. Pollinator Garden

Beginning at the Bay St and California St entrance, walk to the pollinator garden just past the tennis courts.

What is a “pollinator”?

A pollinator is any animal that helps spread a plant’s pollen from plant to plant, enabling the plants to grow fruits and seeds. Examples include: bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and even bats!

Walk through the garden looking for pollinators.

Select one plant and count how many bees you can see land on its flowers in 2 minutes. Did all the bees look the same? What do they all have in common? Did they have any differences?

Continue down the sidewalk. As you reach the split in the path, **turn left** to walk towards the floating walkway. We will be walking through 3 different habitats in our walk: a freshwater marsh, a riparian woodland, and an open meadow. Our walk will take us in a full loop back to this spot.

2. Floating Walkway

Follow the path onto the floating walkway.

Look around for a bird.

You may have to look closely, while some might be right in front of you! Small birds might be hiding in the willow tree branches or deep in the tule, the tall reed-like plant growing from the water. Some birds might even be swimming underwater!

Select one bird that you can see easily.

What is it doing? What makes you think that is what the bird is doing? Can you be specific? If it is eating, what do you think it might be eating? If it is singing or calling, can you see who is listening?

Look around for a different bird and compare.

Do you think that this bird is a different species than the one you just saw? What makes you think that? Think of two examples of how the birds are different. This could be something you can see that is part of the bird's body or something that it is doing. How is that bird different from the one you were just looking at?

Some birds, like mallards, are the same species but the male and female look different from each other. The male is usually more brightly colored. The male's bright coloration is how he attracts the female and the female's more drab coloration helps her camouflage or blend in.

3. **Observation Dock**

As you continue along the path you will see an observation dock (a dead end) on your left, where you can go to look for more birds. Ducks like to hang out there too, so make sure you give them their space! Did you see any different kinds of birds from the end of the dock?

Try doing a silent walk for one minute (or more!).

Turn around and **continue along the main path**. Walk slowly and listen to nature. When you see something don't shout out, just watch and listen.

4. **Riparian Woodland**

Continue walking across the marsh. After a few minutes of walking the path will enter the riparian woodland habitat.

What does "riparian" mean?

Riparian habitats contain plants that like to grow near creeks, rivers, ponds, and lakes. You can tell where this change happens on the trail when you feel that the path doesn't wobble on the water underneath you anymore. What are some of the differences you notice around you as you enter this new habitat?

5. **Meadow**

As you continue along the path the riparian woodlands opens up into a grassy meadow habitat. **Turn right where the trail splits**. This will lead you through a meadow with mostly invasive plants.

What is an "invasive species"?

An invasive species is any sort of living creature that has been introduced into a new environment and is competing with the native species for resources. Most of these plants growing here are not native to California and they are taking over this meadow. Despite

that, they provide food and shelter for lots of animals, including insects, birds, and mammals. Look and listen closely as you walk along for these creatures in the tall grasses and flowers.

6. **Living in a tree**

When you reach the amphitheater area, **turn right** to continue along the path.

Look up in the trees. Do you see any nests in the trees above you? Some of them might have been made by birds, but there is another kind of animal that lives in the trees and lives in a nest as well. This one is covered in fur and gives birth to live babies that it feeds milk, which means that this animal is a mammal. Do you have a guess? The large, messy nests of sticks and leaves were made by Gray Squirrels!

7. **Hiding Herons**

Continue down the path until you reach a spot with some large rocks and a fence.

Look past the fence, and look carefully. This is a good place to spot the 3 foot tall Great Blue Herons and smaller Black Crowned Night Herons. They like to hunt for fish in the shallow water. This is also a place that Mallards and American Coots like to gather.

8. **The Bridge**

Walk down the path until you reach the bridge.

Stop and look on both sides of the bridge. Mallards might be hiding at the water's edge under the tule or they might be a Black Phoebe sitting on one of the branches looking for tasty bugs to eat. Small songbirds like sparrows can be found flitting through the bushes and Anna's Hummingbirds land in the treetops and call out with their buzzy, whistling song.

9. Follow the trail as it turns **to the right**. Continue down this path, looking for Red-Winged Blackbirds perched in the tule or in the trees above you. Mallards, Wood Ducks, American Coots, and Pied-Billed Grebes live in the waterways next to this path. This way will lead you back to where we began. **Turn left** and head back up to return to the Bay and California St. entrance.

What was something that you observed today that you think might be different the next time you visit Neary Lagoon?

How do you think Neary Lagoon and the plants and animals that live here are affected as the seasons change?