

Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Sonny Bono Salton Sea / Coachella Valley

Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge Complex
906 West Sinclair Rd
Calpatria, CA 92233
Telephone 706/348 5278

fws.gov/Sonny_Bono_Salton_Sea

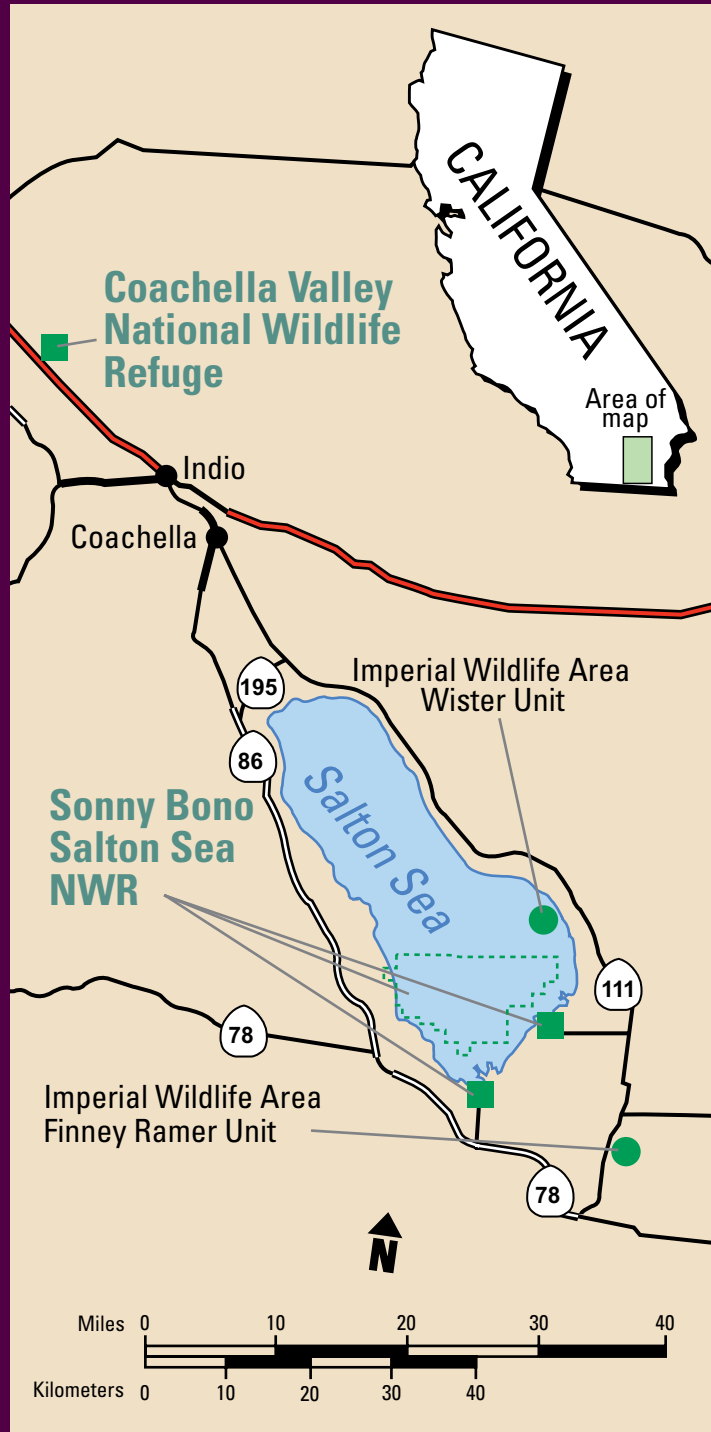
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information:
1 800/344 WILD

California Relay Service
Voice 1 800/735 2922
TTY 1 800/735 2929

Visitors with disabilities may be reasonably accommodated upon request, and/or receive an alternative format publication.

Area Map



May 2020

Cover: Burrowing owls. ©Jenny Ross

Named in honor of Congressman Sonny Bono for his inspired conservation efforts at the Salton Sea, Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge is located within California's Imperial Valley.

The refuge has documented more than 400 bird species along the southern shore of the Salton Sea and adjacent habitats.

As California's largest lake, the Salton Sea has established itself as crucial feeding grounds for birds as they migrate from the Arctic to as far as South America.



**Sonny Bono
Salton Sea
National Wildlife
Refuge**

Located within the Lower Colorado River Basin on the southern end of the Salton Sea, the refuge encompasses 37,900 acres of wetland, farmlands, desert scrub, shorelines, and open water habitat.

The refuge is designated as an Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy and a Regional Shorebird Reserve by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.



**Remnants of an
Ancient Lake
& A Changing
Landscape**

It's often said that the Salton Sea is a man-made accident. In reality it is the most recent form of ancient Lake Cahuilla, which has repeatedly been flooded by the Colorado River over the millennia. This regular flooding deposited fertile silt into the valley, turning the surrounding lands into an agricultural hotspot.

In the 1950s, the Salton Sea became a haven for tourism and fishing. Today, due to water conservation, less agricultural drain water is feeding into the sea, decreasing water levels and increasing water salinity. This increasing salinity is affecting species found at the Salton Sea, causing some wildlife like shorebirds to increase while others like pelicans and cormorants to forage elsewhere.

*Right: Snow geese. USFWS
Background: Shorebirds along the shore of
Salton Sea. USFWS*

Wildlife By the Seasons

Spring is when migrant birds fly home to their summer nesting sites. Colorful species such as verdin and Bullock's oriole can be seen perched in trees on the refuge.



Summer is nesting season! Quails, rails, and surprising nesters such as western gull-billed terns and black skimmers all raise their young here.



Fall is time to migrate back south. Migration starts as early as July and peaks in November. Rafts of northern shovelers and ruddy ducks are common sights in the area.



Winter is for fattening up. The area's mild winters mean more than 200 bird species call this refuge home. Some of the more boisterous species include sandhill cranes and snow geese.



Visitor Activities

Visitor Information Services

Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge has a volunteer-staffed visitor center that you can call or visit.

Designated Trails

The Rock Hill Trail takes visitors through all the different habitat types found at the refuge. Starting at the visitor center, it is a two-mile loop that ends at the top of one of the area's active volcanoes. The Hardenberger trail allows visitors to walk around the Reidmann Duck Ponds and access a photo blind. The .7-mile loop starts at the observation tower.



Wildlife Observation & Photography

Visitors are encouraged to use the observation towers and platforms, self-guided interpretive trails, and photo blind at the refuge headquarters and Unit 1 areas for wildlife observation and photography.

Hunting

Waterfowl hunting is permitted on the refuge from October to January in designated areas. These areas are managed by state and federal regulations. Refuge hunt maps are available at nearby state hunt stations.

Opposite page, top to bottom: verdin; Gambel quail; northern shovelers (©Jenny Ross); sandhill cranes. USFWS

Above: Snow geese. USFWS

Coachella Valley National Wildlife Refuge



Encompassing 3,709 acres of aeolian (wind transported) sand dunes, Coachella Valley National Wildlife Refuge is home to over a dozen endemic species. Some of the more well known species are the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and the Coachella Valley milkvetch. Coachella Valley NWR is part of the larger Thousand Palms Conservation Area that is managed within the guidelines of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Due to the sensitive nature of the dunes ecosystem and the status of the fringe-toed lizard and milkvetch, the refuge is maintained as a preserve and public visitation onto the refuge is prohibited.

If visitors wish to experience the Coachella Valley dune landscape, they can visit the Thousand Palms Oasis Preserve, managed by the Center for Natural Lands Management. While not a part of the refuge complex, the preserve provides similar habitats for visitor education and recreation.



Opposite page: Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (USFWS); scorpion under ultraviolet light (©Paisley Ramstead, UCR)

Background: Sand verbena blooming on dunes. USFWS

Regulations

Pets Pets must be on a leash at all times. Hunting dogs on public hunting areas must be under effective control.

Camping No camping is allowed on the refuge.

Signs & Fencing Marked locations around the refuge are closed to the general public to protect wildlife and endangered species. Please respect all signage.

Friends Group

Sea & Desert Interpretive Association A 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to promoting the Salton Sea through education and interpretation, based at the Salton Sea State Recreation Area.

For more information:

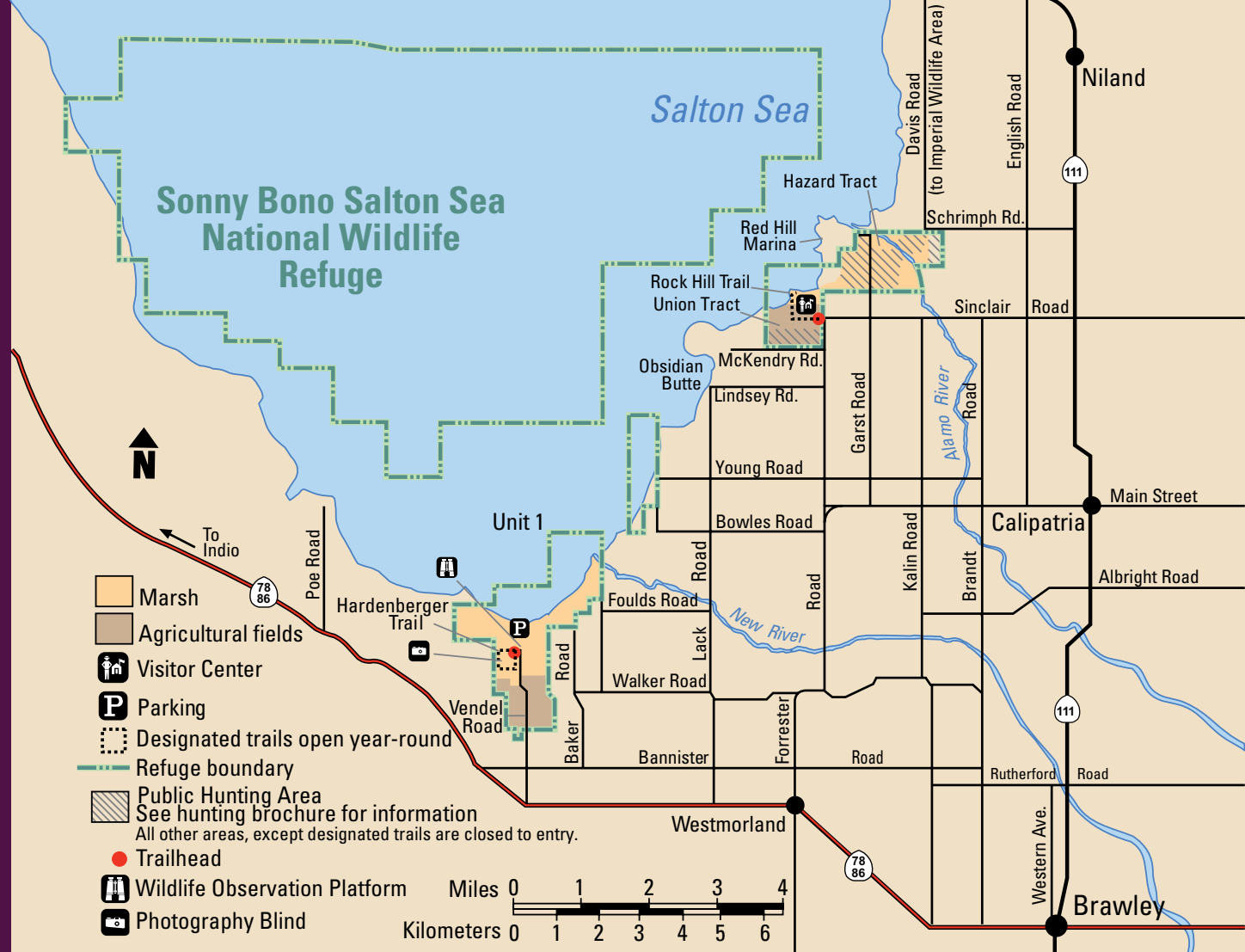
Refuge Manager Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge
906 W. Sinclair Rd
Calpatria, CA 92233
760/348 5278

Salton Sea State Recreation Area 100 State Park Rd
Mecca, CA 92254
760/393 3052

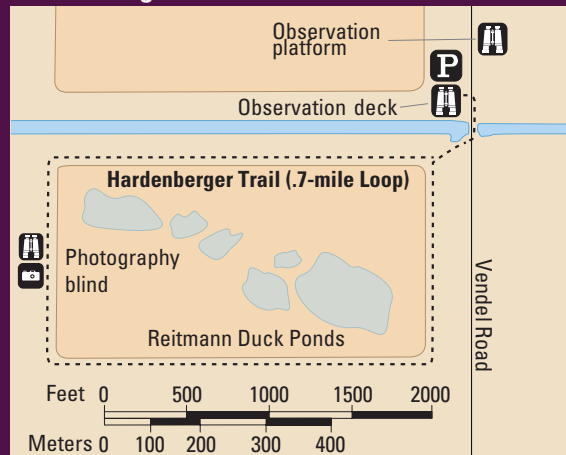
Thousand Palms Oasis Preserve 29200 Thousand Palms Canyon Rd
Thousand Palms, CA 92276
760/343 2733

California Department of Fish & Wildlife 8700 Davis Rd
Niland, CA 92276
760/359 0577

Yawning bobcat. USFWS



Hardenberger Trail



Rock Hill Trail

