

Penobscot Bay

From here, the Penobscot River opens up into Penobscot Bay. At over 45 miles wide and 37 miles long, Penobscot Bay is one of the largest embayments on the East Coast.

Penobscot Bay is relatively shallow, and as a result is filled with hundreds of islands, rocks, and ledges. These features, plus thousands of acres of mudflats, salt marshes, eelgrass meadows, protected coves, and tidal rivers provide a rich feeding ground and nursery for many kinds of fish and shellfish.

Clams, mussels, scallops, shrimp, crabs, cod, flounder, haddock, and mackerel are all found in the bay. This is also one of the most productive lobster habitats in all of Maine.

The bay's rich food web is fueled by the mix of freshwater from the river and ocean water that flows into the bay from the Gulf of Maine. This mixing of salt water and freshwater makes Penobscot Bay an estuary. The tides can be felt as far north as Bangor, and salt water reaches beyond Bucksport. Many ocean fish pass through the estuary on their way to freshwater spawning grounds in the river's tributaries.



These fish provide food for some of the 200+ species of birds that inhabit the Penobscot Bay region. Eagles, cormorants, osprey, and herons are commonly seen fishing from islands and shores. Black ducks, harlequin ducks, eiders, goldeneyes, scaups, mergansers, buffleheads, seagulls, sandpipers, and many other birds visit the bay, and the outer islands host colonies of puffins and razorbills.

Harbor seals are common in Penobscot Bay and, during the winter, you might also spot a gray seal, porpoise, or a harp seal wandering south from the Arctic.

Through stewardship and sustainable use, this diversity of life and the bay's varied landscape is supported by people who are working to protect the resources of Penobscot Bay for future generations. ■



Osprey



Goldeneye



Great Egret



Puffins

These interpretive displays are the product of a partnership that includes the Maine Department of Transportation, Maine Department of Conservation, Maine Sea Grant College Program at the University of Maine, and the Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Environmental and Watershed Research.



Photos—Osprey: Willie Linn, Shutterstock; Goldeneye: Tim Zurowaki, Shutterstock; Great Egret: Jose Gil, Shutterstock; Puffins: Noah Strycker, Shutterstock. Lobster courtesy Maine Lobster Promotion Council. Map: S. Nelson, George J. Mitchell Center. Design by K. Tenga-Gonzalez and text by C. Schmitt, Maine Sea Grant.