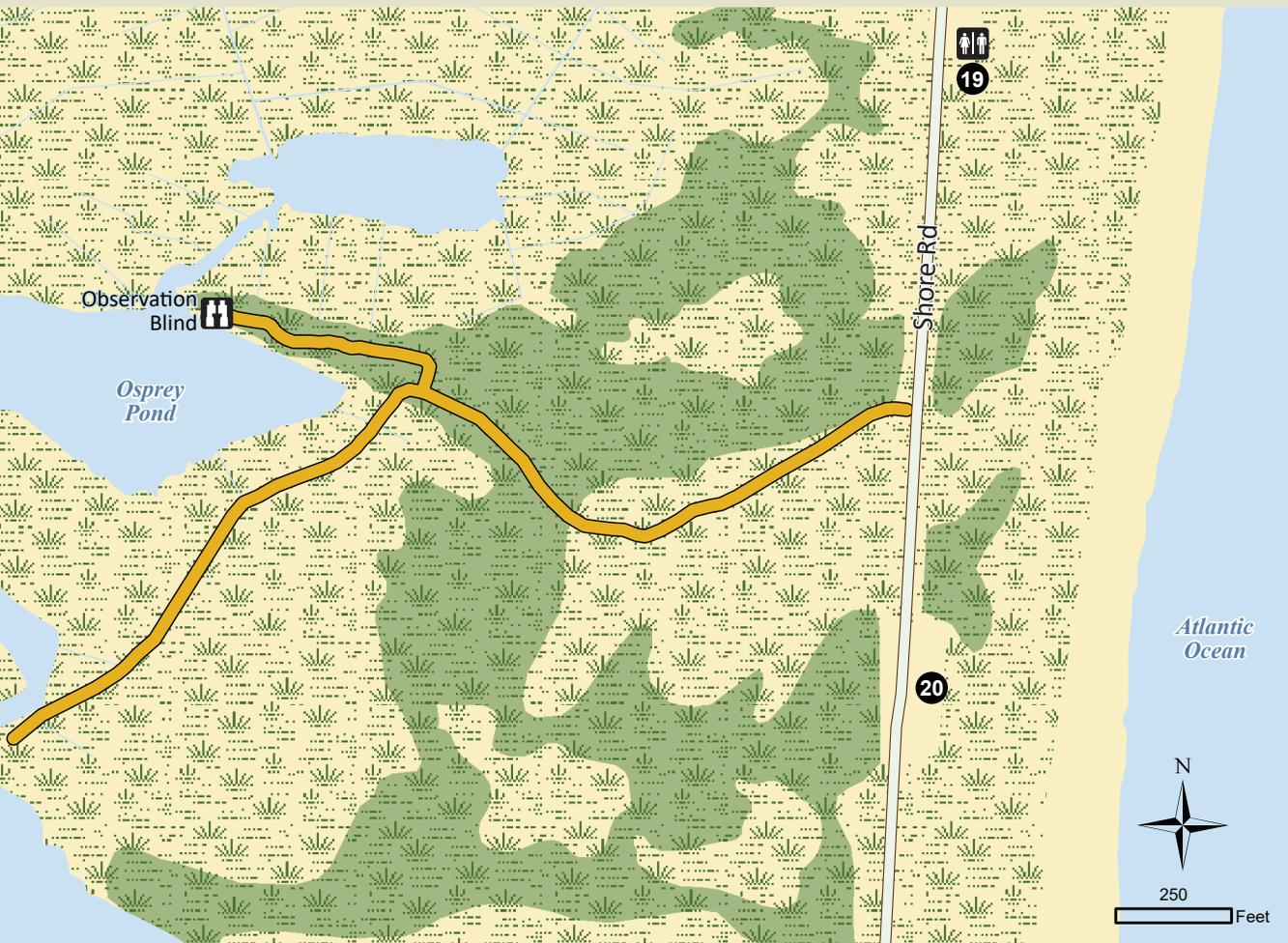


Welcome to Island Beach State Park (IBSP) and the Spizzle Creek Trail. This self-guided trail is 0.8 miles long and should take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete the roundtrip walk. It is wide, flat and sandy. It can be muddy at times, but offers an easy hike.

Spizzle Creek Trail travels through a few of the park's unique barrier island ecosystems. Near the end, the trail forks with the right side ending at a bird blind and left side at the bay. As you walk, keep an eye out for some of the common plants and animals included in this brochure and on exhibits along the trail. As always, please respect the wildlife and keep a safe distance.



Maritime Forest

Forests that grow close to oceans and are affected by coastal conditions are known as maritime forests. IBSP preserves one of New Jersey's most significant maritime forests. As you leave the paved roadway and head west along the path, you are surrounded by a maritime forest.

Before coastal areas became popular places to visit, maritime forests covered much of the shore region. As more visitors came, large areas of the forest were developed with cottages, homes and grand hotels. Today, only small areas of these once-thriving forests remain. They are one of New Jersey's rarest plant communities, are essential for storm protection, and provide critical habitat to many different species. This quarter-mile section of trail travels through healthy maritime forest that extends to the bay.

Some of the common plant species include:

- American holly*
- Beach heather*
- Beach plum* (*below*)
- Bayberry
- Redcedar*
- Red maple*
- Prickly pear cactus*

**Highlighted on interpretive signs along the trail*

Beach plum (*Prunus maritima*)



View of the salt marsh and a snowy egret

Salt Marshes

Once you have reached the kiosk and picnic table, you are nearing the bay and salt marsh. Salt marshes are one of the most productive habitats in the world and play an important role in the growth and survival of many of New Jersey's native species. Salt marshes provide food and shelter for a variety of fish, crab and bird species. Salt marshes also help surrounding areas by slowing waves which minimizes erosion, provides flood protection and filters pollutants. These delicate areas also offer endless recreation opportunities.

From the kiosk, turn left and continue along the trail. On your left will be narrow channels of water and land, and on the right is open saltmarsh next to the bay.

Some of the common species that inhabit the salt marsh and surrounding waters include:

- Phragmites
- Saltmarsh cordgrass
- Salt hay
- Spikegrass
- Fiddler crab
- Atlantic silversides
- Striped bass
- Blue claw crab
- Diamond back terrapin
- Quahog clams

**Highlighted on interpretive signs along the trail*

SPIZZLE CREEK TRAIL

SPIZZLE CREEK TRAIL



While you walk along the trail, be sure to read the informative wayside exhibits.

Bird migration

IBSP is one of the best birding locations in New Jersey. It is located along the Atlantic flyway, one of four major bird migration routes in the United States. In spring and fall, IBSP becomes a hot spot for migrating landbirds, raptors and shorebirds. The barrier beach is an important fall migration route for several species of raptors, including ospreys, northern harriers, sharp-shinned hawks, American kestrels, merlins and peregrine falcons.

Osprey nests are found all throughout the salt marsh.



Shorebirds arrive in May and again in August and on many days, hundreds of black-bellied plovers, willets, least sandpipers, semipalmated sandpipers, dunlin, ruddy turnstones, sanderlings and short-billed dowitchers can be found feeding in the mudflats.

Thousands of loons, northern gannets, cormorants, scoters and long-tailed ducks migrate past IBSP in the fall and many stay for the winter. Turning right at the kiosk leads to a bird blind with open views of Barnegat Bay. Inside the blind you will find a simple yet comfortable spot for bird-watching. Interpretive exhibits provide short descriptions of some of the most common species with links to audio recordings of their calls.

Barnegat Bay

From the kiosk, either trail brings you to the edge of Barnegat Bay, a shallow body of water protected from the Atlantic Ocean by the barrier islands of Island Beach and Long Beach Island. It is more than 40 miles long and fed by saltwater from the Atlantic, and freshwater from many rivers and creeks. The bay supports many of the habitats seen along the trail, including salt marshes, maritime forests, tidal flats, barrier islands and eelgrass beds.

Eelgrass is a common vegetation in the bay and provides food and habitat for many species of wildlife. Noteworthy species are clams and osprey. Clams play an important role in improving water quality by filtering pollutants in the bay. Another important species is the osprey, whose population fell in the 1970s due to the impact of the chemical DDT. After years of protection, there are now almost 500 nesting pairs in New Jersey and nearly 40 pairs in Sedge Islands Marine Conservation Zone.

Marine Conservation Zone

At the Southern end of Island Beach, stretching from parking lot A13 to the inlet, you will find NJ's first and only Marine Conservation Zone. The Sedge Islands Marine Conservation Zone (SIMCZ) is a protected area containing 1,900 acres of maritime forests, tidal marshes, creeks, ponds and open water, and is one of NJ's most productive wildlife habitats. The purpose of the SIMCZ is to protect ecologically sensitive resources and provide a unique recreation and learning environment. There are four water trails that visitors can use to explore the SIMCZ by canoe and kayak. Guided trips are offered by IBSP's interpretive staff. No commercial activity or personal watercrafts (e.g. jet ski/WaveRunner) are permitted.

Please stay on the trail, take only pictures, be aware of changing trail conditions and report any trail issues to the park.



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Department of
Environmental Protection
State Park Service



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