

what is a water loop?

Water loops are recreational waterways on a lake, river, or ocean between specific locations, containing access points and day-use and/or camping sites for the boating public. Water loops emphasize low-impact use and promote stewardship of the resources, while providing healthy outdoor activity.

Lake County Water Loop maps can be found online at www.lakecounty.com or at Lake County Visitor Centers.



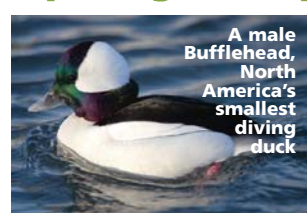
don't move a mussel!

Help protect Lake County's beautiful lakes and creeks by preventing the spread of harmful plants, animals, and other organisms, such as Quagga and Zebra mussels. These aquatic nuisance species can hitch a ride on boats, trailers, clothing, gear, etc., and then spread to other bodies of water. If conditions are right, these invasive species can severely impact the aquatic ecosystem. Each time you leave any water body, be sure to thoroughly clean, drain, and dry all items that come in contact with water.

boat inspections

To protect local water bodies from invasive species, the County of Lake requires that certain types of vessels be inspected prior to launching in Lake County waters. While kayaks and canoes currently are exempt, information about the inspection program is available through the Lake County Mussel Hotline: (707) 263-2556 or www.co.lake.ca.us/mussels

reporting water pollution



A male Bufflehead, North America's smallest diving duck

If you see anything suspected to be pollution or disturbance of the waterways, report it immediately by contacting the Lake County Sheriff's Department at (707) 263-2690.

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This is one in a series of Lake County Water Trails Brochures, published as a cooperative effort of the County of Lake and the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program.

Photographs courtesy of Lyle Madeson, Redbud Audubon Society, Laura Lamar

4/10



Great Blue Heron

leave no trace

- Plan ahead and prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Respect wildlife—observe from a distance.
- Avoid disturbing wildlife especially during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young.
- Leave what you find. Examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts. Leave rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Respect the privacy of landowners.
- Always ask permission before entering private land; unless otherwise posted, assume it is private property.
- Don't litter.
- Remember sound carries across water more clearly than on land; avoid loud noises or boisterous behavior.

is mercury a problem?

Mercury occurs naturally in the entire Coast Range of California. Since the mid-1800s, mercury was mined extensively and continued to be mined through World War II. Mercury can be found in lake sediments from soil erosion and run-off.

The waters of Clear Lake have low levels of mercury and are within the standard for safe drinking water; many county residents obtain their water supply from treated lake water. It also is perfectly safe to swim in Clear Lake, which provides a wide array of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

The presence of high levels of mercury in some fish is a problem in many lakes throughout California. The California Department of Health Services issued an advisory limiting the amount of fish consumed, particularly by children and women of child-bearing age. More information is available at: <http://oehha.ca.gov/fish.html>

watch for these other species:



Great Egret

Green Heron

Coots

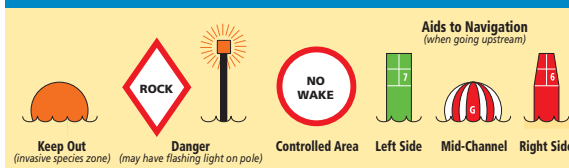
paddling safety

All canoes, kayaks, and inflatable rafts must carry a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (life jacket) for each person on board. Before setting out, boaters should become knowledgeable about local conditions such as currents, rapids, flow levels, weather, and hazards.

- Test new or unfamiliar equipment before use.
- Leave word with a responsible person concerning your destination and when you will return.
- Always make sure your craft is in good repair.
- Securely fasten all gear within the craft or in waterproof containers that will float high and be easily retrievable.
- Learn how to swim; learn first-aid techniques and CPR.
- Paddlers are harder to see from other vessels. Keep paddling groups together. Avoid long lines.
- Watch for and avoid hazards such as fallen trees, brush, fences, bridge abutments, or old pilings.
- Do not boat under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Additional recommended equipment: protective foot gear, extra paddle, anchoring device, bailing device/sponge, boating maps, flashlight, compass, first-aid kit, boat-repair materials, hat, sunglasses, whistle, sunscreen, waterproof storage bags, emergency light, water, GPS unit, cell phone, knife, and a 50- to 100-foot throw rope.

regulatory or advisory markers



cold water dangers

Capsizing or falling overboard into cold water can cause immediate health problems, ranging from disorientation and hyperventilation to heart attack. Cold water quickly numbs hands and feet and saps overall strength. To increase your chance of survival in cold water:

- Always wear a personal flotation device (life jacket).
- Get out of the water as fast as you can since you get colder faster in water than air.
- Dress properly.

in case of emergency, call 911

info & resources

Lake County Water Resources: (707) 263-2341
Lake County Parks & Recreation: (707) 262-1618
Lake County Sheriff (non-emergency): (707) 263-2690
www.lakecounty.com; www.konoctitrails.com;
<http://watershed.co.lake.ca.us/>

Clear Lake Water Loop 1

konocti
regional
trails

Rattlesnake Island



4 miles round trip | About 2–3 hours
Experience Level: Intermediate thru Advanced
Launch Area: Clearlake Oaks Boat Launch
Island Drive off E. Highway 20, Clearlake Oaks, CA



- Views of Mount Konocti
- Migratory waterfowl route
- Wetlands, tule reeds
- Historic cultural resources
- Rich wildlife viewing
- Islands and canals
- Picnic spots

Lake County Visitor Information Center

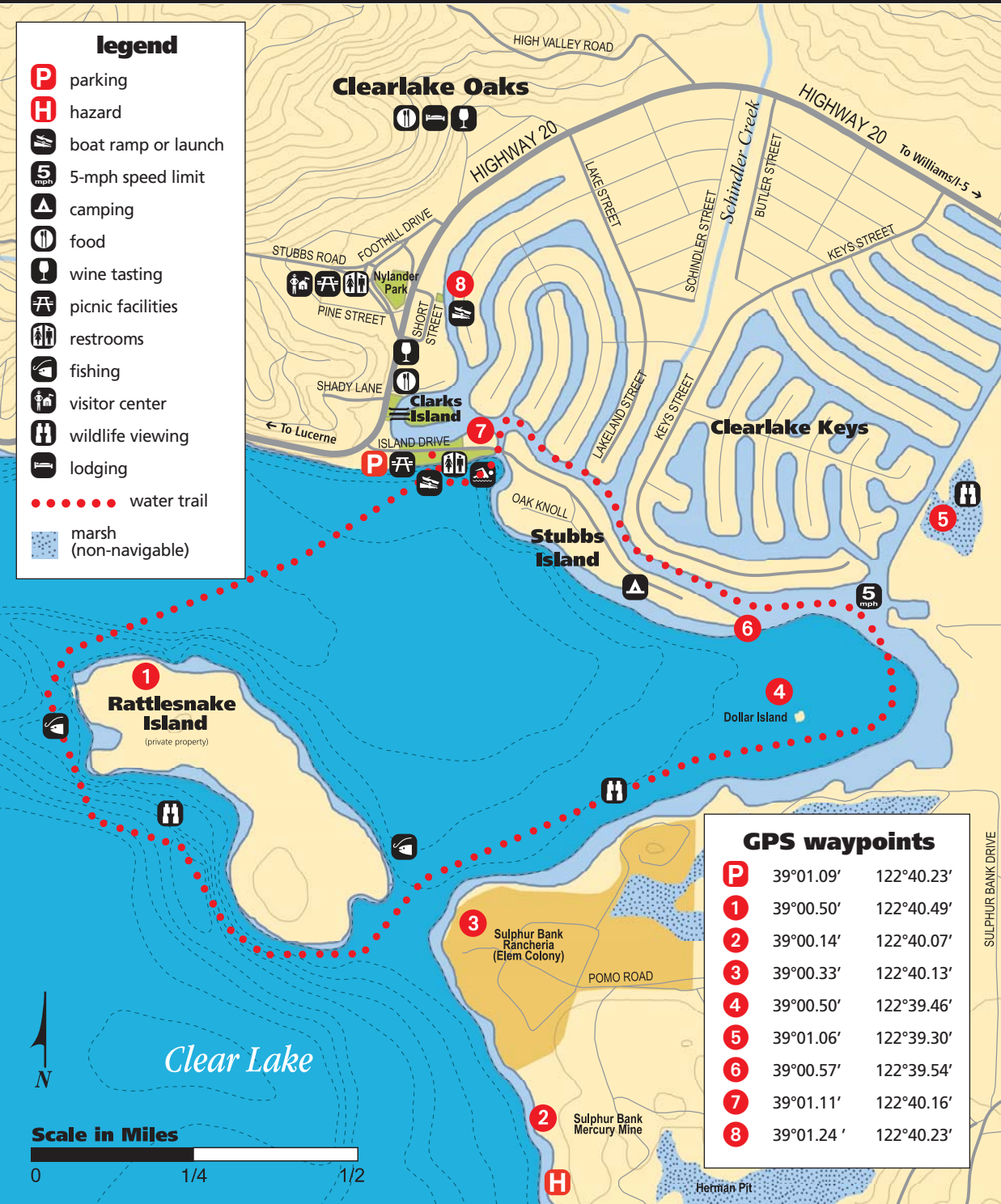
6110 East Highway 20, Lucerne, CA 95458

(707) 274-5652 | (800) 525-3743 | (800) LAKESIDE

www.lakecounty.com | info@lakecounty.com



Clear Lake Water Loop 1: Rattlesnake Island

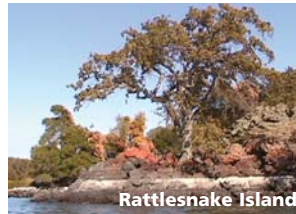


trail description

For the naturalist and those who want to savor breathtaking beauty, this is a beautiful loop around Rattlesnake Island, past the historic Sulphur Bank Mercury Mine and wetlands, and back through the canals of "The Keys" in Clearlake Oaks. On calm days, this is an easy paddle for all experience levels. On windy days, however, it is for experienced paddlers willing to battle heavy winds and large waves. In the summer, mornings are best since the midday sun can become intense and strong winds typically pick up in the afternoon.



trail route



As you begin your paddle out toward Rattlesnake Island (1), Mount Konocti dominates the background—a dormant volcano that sits at an elevation of 4,300 feet. Geologists estimate its first eruption approximately 600,000 years ago and evidence suggests the most recent volcanic activity took place within the last few thousand years.

Archaeological evidence suggests Native American activity on Rattlesnake Island dating back 8,000 years. While privately owned, this island's significance as the ancient burial ground and village site of the Elem Pomo, prompted a recent nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Descendants of the early inhabitants live 500 feet east by Sulphur Bank.

For birdwatchers, the winter months beginning in mid-December through March, can be an unforgettable paddling experience. Migratory groups of cormorants, grebes, gulls, coots, buffleheads, egrets, herons, and ducks are just a few of the waterfowl seen dotting the water, at times numbering in the tens of thousands. And it's not unusual for lucky paddlers to see a ribbon display of several hundred American White Pelicans slowly soaring overhead. But the summer still holds many resident waterfowl, including osprey (pictured, cover)—typically perched on bare tree trunks. Families of otter and the occasional mink often play along the shoreline, as do the island's resident goats and peacocks.



Rattlesnake Island is considered by many to be one of the best fishing locations on Clear Lake, which is noted for largemouth bass and catfish. Most days, fishing boats dot the perimeter from sunrise to sunset.

Circling around the island's eastern end, the historic Sulphur Bank Mercury Mine (2) comes into view. Activity dates back to the California gold rush days in the mid 1800s, when mercury was essential in the process of extracting gold from ore. Chinese laborers removed the ore from deep mine shafts, which changed to open-pit mining during the 1920s.

Over the decades, geothermal inflows and rainwater filled the pit, becoming highly acidic and leaching dissolved mercury back into the lake. Bacteria present in the sediment converts this to methyl mercury, which is easily absorbed by wildlife and fish. The Sulphur Bank Mercury Mine became an EPA Superfund Site in 1990. While few remnants of the mine or equipment remain, the location is a California historic landmark, although currently is fenced off to the public.

Heading back around the wetlands just north of the Elem Indian Colony (3), watch the shoreline. Osprey—and the occasional eagle—can be seen perched for prey in tall, bleached-out trees. Paddle past secluded Dollar Island (4) and catch your breath by perching on one of the small rocky crags while you enjoy the view, but beware of poison oak. At this point, you can choose to head back toward the boat launch, but avid birdwatchers may opt to paddle into the Keys to loop



into a small tule marsh (5). In the morning, calling birds—such as blackbirds, coots, and herons—overpower the sounds of motorists along nearby Highway 20.

Head back toward the boat ramp by entering the main Key near the campground at the southern tip of Stubbs Island (6). Keep heading to the left through the Keys and just before Clarks Island (7), a weeping willow hides the Island Drive bridge—you can choose to paddle under this to return to the boat ramp, or take a picnic break on Clarks Island, which is a County-owned park. Best done in the winter, spring, or early summer; naturally occurring algae and aquatic weeds can hinder your paddling efforts during late summer and fall. On windy days, the Keys can be a nice, easy jaunt through the canals, or a great choice if you've finished with Rattlesnake Island but aren't yet ready to stop. Great for waterfowl birdwatching, particularly in the winter.

Alternate launch point: This loop also may be accessed from the Short Street boat launch (8), located off Highway 20 across from Nylander Park. After launching, head toward the lake through the Keys under the Island Drive bridge, which opens to the lake and the Clearlake Oaks boat ramp.