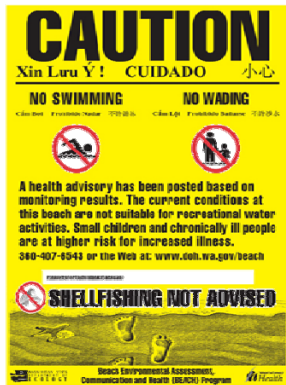


Is the Water in Wildcat Cove Safe for Swimming?

Not yet. Water quality results show high levels of bacteria in both the saltwater and nearby freshwater drainages. The freshwater drainages contain high levels of bacteria from raccoon latrines and discharge down to the beach in Wildcat Cove. The Whatcom County Health Department issued a swimming advisory to inform the public not to swim in Wildcat Cove. It may be safe for swimming in the future, but we need to work together to help control the raccoon population.

With the support of Surfrider volunteers, water is tested weekly in Wildcat Cove at Larrabee State Park from Memorial Day to Labor Day. You may have seen the signs near Wildcat Cove. This is what they say:



CAUTION

Bacteria levels do not meet EPA recommendations. Children, elderly, and those in ill health are advised not to swim.

References

1. Audubon Society of Portland brochure: *Living with Urban Wildlife*
http://audubonportland.org/images/wcc_images/living%20with%20raccoons.pdf
2. Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife webpage: *Living With Wildlife*
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/raccoons.html>

Larrabee State Park Bacteria Clean Up Project

The Larrabee State Park Bacteria Clean Up Project is a collaborative effort between the following organizations:



NORTHWEST STRAITS
marine conservation initiative



PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND HEALTHIER WHATCOM COUNTY

Washington BEACH Program
Surf the Web Before You Surf the Beach!
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/beach

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming

To report a spill in Washington State:
1-800-258-5990 or 1-800-OILS-911

Questions? Comments?
Contact the BEACH Program
Phone: (360) 407-6543

Secure your food!



Drawing by Laurel Baldwin

Help keep
wildlife wild
and
protect
water quality

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If you need this document in an alternate format, call 360-407-6764.

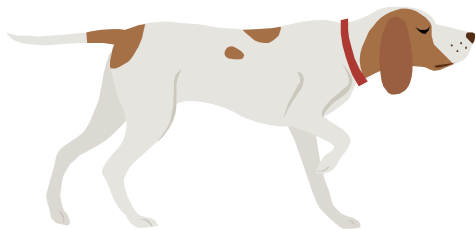
How Do Raccoons Cause Water Quality Problems at Larrabee State Park?

Raccoons use wet areas in the forest as bathrooms. These raccoon bathrooms, or *latrines*, concentrate bacteria from raccoon feces. Monitoring data collected in 2011 and 2012 show high levels of bacteria discharges from these wetlands and onto the beach at Wildcat Cove. Exposure to these bacteria can make people sick.

Why are Raccoons a Problem?

Yes, they may look cute, but...

- Raccoons love pet food. Do not leave pet food outdoors.
- Raccoons are very territorial and may fight with your pets. Keep your pets on a leash.
- Raccoons are wild animals. They can carry disease and parasites. Keep your food away from raccoons, and do not feed them. They can become territorial with humans as well.
- Raccoon feces can pollute the water with bacteria.



Why Are There So Many Raccoons at Larrabee State Park?

The answer is simple: food!

Raccoons have become overpopulated at Larrabee State Park because people feed them or leave food out for raccoons to steal.

What Can I Do To Help?



If you care about raccoons, please stop feeding them.

- Keep your food secure in a cooler or stored in your car.
- Throw trash in a garbage receptacle, and be sure the top is secure.
- Always pick up after your pet, and throw the feces in the trash.
- Do not leave pet food outdoors.

The best solution is to leave the raccoons alone and remove the attractant: food.

What Can I Do If I Live Near the Park?

- Do not feed raccoons.
- Secure your garbage in a receptacle with a tight-fitting lid.
- Eliminate any unnatural food sources.
- Look for potential den locations on your property. Seal these locations by closing off all but one entrance or exit. Wait until all raccoons have left the den, then seal the final entrance.

What Is State Parks Doing About the Problem?

To ensure safety from raccoons, park staff provide waste management throughout the park and have installed weighted arms on top of garbage cans to prevent wildlife from entering.



Park staff also evaluated raccoon population control methods and found:

- Raccoon repellants are unsafe for other wildlife and pets in the park.
- Relocation, hunting, and trapping are ineffective control measures.
- Relocated raccoons are quickly replaced by other raccoons.