

Quests Help Kids of All Ages Discover Nature

The Humboldt Bay Natural Wildlife Refuge (HBNWR), just south of Eureka, is one of the North Coast's special places where land, sea, and sky seem to converge. One could spend hours walking the refuge's meandering trails while not fully realizing the story unfolding around them. A guided tour of the trails enriches the experience for visitors, both young and old, by telling the story of the dynamic coastal ecosystem, encouraging all to take a closer look.

But throw a treasure hunt into the mix as well? Now, *that* is a recipe sure to please the entire family... even those members reluctant to put down the video game controller.

Quests are place-based "treasure" hunts, written in rhyme, which can be undertaken by children and/or adults working together. They use a combination of movement and teaching clues to guide participants to the hidden "treasure box". A peek inside reveals a stamp unique and relevant to the quest, a sign-in book for recording visitors' experiences, and other activities and games to use at the site. Questing is a way for communities to celebrate their rich natural and cultural history, stories and special places.

An excerpt from the Quest "A Place In Between":

*Stay on the road past post seven you go
To a line of trees; white spotted bark they will show.
These trees are called alders with water near their feet,
A perching place for birds looking for a quick bite to eat.
If you look close, tiny cones you may see,
With their broad green leaves pine trees they'll never be!
Wind from the ocean trims their branches neat,
But on their sheltered side flowing lichens find a seat.
Look for dead branches where birds like to be.
When they look across this landscape what do you think they see?*

A popular approach to educational family fun on the East Coast, the idea of Questing is a relatively new addition to the environmental educator's toolkit in the West. The North Coast's bank of Quests is building quickly. "Communities Under the Canopy" is a recently completely Quest at the Arcata Community Forest that explores plant life in a second growth redwood forest. Additional Quests are in varying stages of development at Patrick's Point State

Park's Sumeg Village, the town of Falk at the BLM's Headwaters Forest Reserve, the city of Blue Lake, the Arcata Community Recycling Center, Humboldt State University's Natural History Museum, and the Jacoby Creek Land Trust's Kokte Ranch in Bayside.

HBNWR's Quest is called "A Place In Between", owing to the refuge's location between upland and bay, its role as a migratory stepping stone on the flyway and its cultural history between wild and developed. The Quest meanders along the 1.7 mile Shorebird Loop Trail past otter slides, bat boxes, "Jupiter's Bucket", Teal Island, cattail marsh, tree frogs perched on alder leaves, and other delights.

Peak wildlife viewing at the refuge is November through March. Visitors can expect to spend one to one and a half hours completing the Quest. The path is level and is wheelchair and stroller accessible. Upon arrival at the Salmon Creek Unit headquarters, stop into the Visitor center to pick up your Quest map and clues. The first clue guides you right out the door.

Hours: 8am-5pm, 7 days/week

Directions: Take Exit 696 off Highway 101. If *northbound* turn left and go west over the overpass and take the first right, then follow the entrance road north and west 1.3 miles to the Visitor Center. If *southbound* turn right and then immediately left onto the entrance road and proceed 1.3 miles north and west to the Visitor Center.

Amenities: Visitor Center, picnic area, restrooms

Questions: Call 733-5406 or visit www.fws.gov/humboldtby



Humboldt NWRC Visitor Center

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