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## Important Bird Areas

# Sachuest Point & 3rd Beach

[Rhode Island](#)

Located in the Town of Middletown, Newport County, Rhode Island, this IBA lies on the southeast corner of Aquidneck Island. The Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge lies at the heart of this IBA. The IBA lies approximately 23 miles southeast of Providence and 5 miles east of Newport. It is bordered by the Sakonnet River to the north and east, the Atlantic Ocean to the south; and Sachuest Bay to the west. The IBA includes approximately 2.51 km of shoreline length consisting of coastal beach bisected by rocky headland. A majority of the site is owned by the USDOJ and managed by the USFWS as a National Wildlife Refuge. The proportion of the land developed in residential, commercial, and industrial land use within a 100 meter radius around Sachuest Point is estimated to be less than 6%. Land adjacent to the IBA consists of reservoirs, farmland, and the Norman Bird Sanctuary.

{link:For IBA map, click  
here. | [http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/maps/RI/RI3471m\\_Sachuest.pdf](http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/maps/RI/RI3471m_Sachuest.pdf)}

## Ornithological Summary

Home to over 200 species of birds, this IBA is a significant wintering site for sea ducks and other marine waterbirds such as grebes, loons, cormorants, alcids, and gulls. Large concentrations of bay ducks occur in cove. Sea ducks congregate off of Sachuest Point and in later winter, thousands of Common Eiders stage in this area prior to migration to northern breeding grounds.

The area contains a large winter population of Harlequin Ducks, estimated to be the largest population for Rhode Island, and comprising between 11-23% of the southern New England wintering population (McKinney et al. 2007).

Management of refuge lands includes the control of invasive plant species. Through these control efforts, coastal grasslands are currently being restored providing important wintering habitat for Short-eared Owls, Northern Harrier, Horned Lark, and other grassland species. A restored salt marsh on-site has become recolonized by Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

The first piping plover nest on Aquidneck Island since the 1950s was found on the refuge in 2002.

<http://www.fws.gov/Northeast/facts/sachuest06.pdf>

The IBA is also an important migratory stopover for a variety of birds. Migrants passerines include Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, and various warblers, thrushes, and vireos. Migrant Tree Swallows often number in the thousands. Migrant raptors include Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, Merlin, Broad-winged Hawk, Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. The IBA shoreline is also an important place for migrating and wintering shorebirds, including Sanderlings, Purple Sandpipers, Dunlin, and Semipalmated Plovers.

Abundant wintering songbirds include Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-throated Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos.

## Conservation Issues

Use of the refuge by joggers, although technically not allowed, occurs frequently.

Dog owners that allow their dogs to roam the refuge off-leash can impact bird species of conservation concern.

Refuge personnel currently manage the site to control invasive plant species including Asiatic Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*). Various treatments and treatment combinations have been used including mowing, herbicide application, and fire.

## Ownership

The majority of the Site is owned by the USDOJ USFWS and managed as part of the National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Rhode Island. Additional lands within the boundary of the IBA are owned by the Town of Middletown, The Norman Bird Sanctuary/Aquidneck Island Land Trust, and the Newport Water Department.

## Habitat

A large portion of the site is composed of coastal shrubland some of which has been restored to coastal grassland via brush hogging and herbicide application. The refuge also provides coastal beach, salt marsh, rocky intertidal zones, and coastal dune habitat.

Approximately 18 acres of salt marsh were created in recent years via the remediation of a former landfill, bringing the total number of acres in salt marsh to almost 40 acres.

Beach areas transition from sand to interspersed sand and boulder, to rocky intertidal zone and rocky cliff headlands.

A portion of the IBA is developed for the Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge which includes a visitor center and parking facilities.

## Land Use

A majority of the site is managed as a National Wildlife Refuge. Wildlife conservation is the primary land use of this site. Marine waters adjacent to the IBA are designated as essential fish habitat for all life stages of the following Federally managed fish species: Atlantic Cod, Atlantic Herring, Ocean Pout, Red Hake, Silver Hake, Windowpane, and Winter Flounder. These waters are renowned for excellent surf fishing opportunities, and the refuge manages a nighttime fishing permit system.

Adjacent to the northwest of the IBA are a Town of Middletown campground, the Norman Bird Sanctuary, Gardiner Pond (A water supply reservoir for the City of Newport), and Second and Third Beaches, owned and maintained by the Town of Middletown as public swimming beaches.

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## Birds in This Area



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