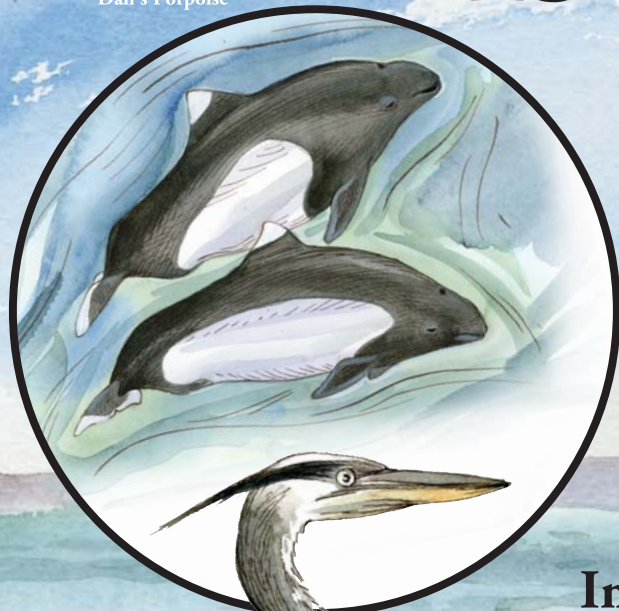


Is Useless Bay Really Useless?

Dall's Porpoise



What You Can See – and Can't See

You are looking at Useless Bay – so named because it was too shallow for the tall ships of the 1800s. This bay may have disappointed early explorers but it is paradise for marine life. The mixing of fresh and saltwater in front of this beach creates a dynamic environment for salmon. They find food and shelter in the nearshore eelgrass beds, preying on finger-size forage fish. These small fish provide a rich banquet, too, for eagles, herons and other birds that nest in the bluffs and trees of our shoreline. Shore-dwelling river otters find abundant fish and crab. Dall's porpoises visit often. Ghost shrimp burrow in the sandy sea floor. Gray whales scoop them up by the mouthful, sifting out the sand.

Bald Eagle



In the Distance...

Look about four miles to the northwest for the glacially carved, white cliffs of Double Bluff. Erosion from those bluffs and others like them supplies sand to our shorelines, supporting many types of marine life. In the distance, across Admiralty Inlet, you may glimpse Point No Point Lighthouse and the 6,000 - 8,000 foot peaks of the Olympic Mountains.

Cutthroat Trout



Great Blue Heron



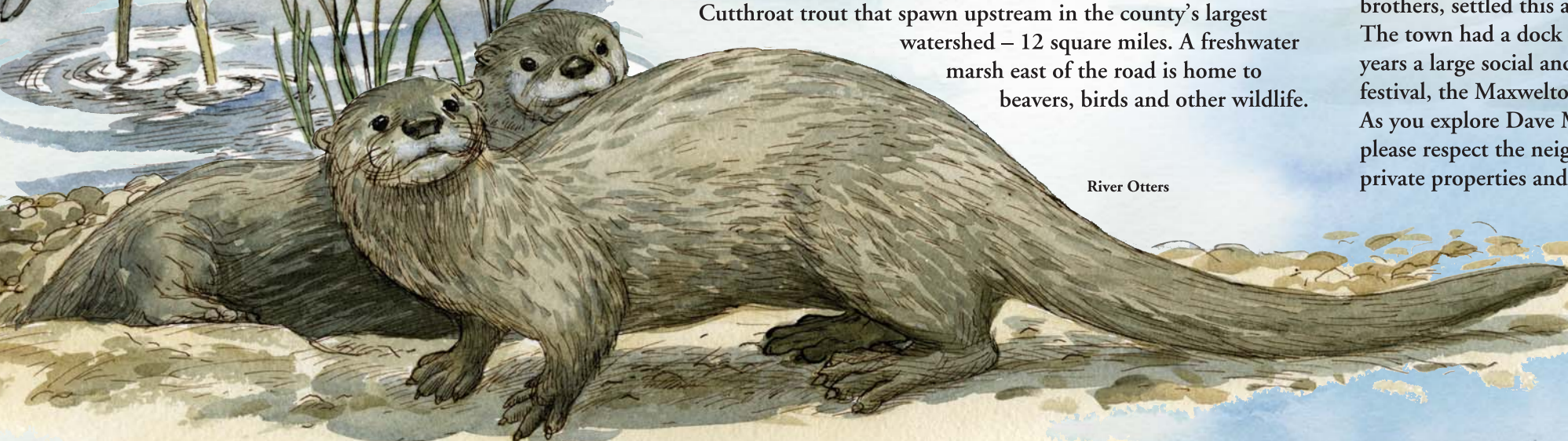
Today's Marsh – Remnant of a Larger Estuary

Nearly a century ago the large saltwater Maxwellton estuary was mostly filled and drained for farming. European Americans arrived in the 1870s and transformed the native hunter-gatherer economy to logging and farming. Thanks to the creek and surrounding forests, Maxwellton Valley remains a wildlife corridor for deer, coyotes, raccoons, owls and hawks.

Where Fresh and Saltwater Mix

You could easily overlook the outlet where Maxwellton Creek meets the saltwater about half-a-mile north of here, through a tide gate and culvert under the road. That culvert is the lifeline for Coho salmon and Cutthroat trout that spawn upstream in the county's largest watershed – 12 square miles. A freshwater marsh east of the road is home to beavers, birds and other wildlife.

River Otters



Maxwelton's Rich Cultural History

Scottish immigrants, the Mackie brothers, settled this area in 1905. The town had a dock and for a few years a large social and cultural festival, the Maxwellton Chautauqua. As you explore Dave Mackie Park, please respect the neighboring private properties and beaches.



This signage by Island County Marine Resources Committee was funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration, CZM 310 Grant G0600066. Co-sponsors: Maxwellton Community Club, with funding from community purchase of 4th of July parade buttons, and Port of South Whidbey.

Signage Text: Dan Pedersen. Design and Illustration: Kris Wiltse, www.kriswiltse.com