During the ice ages, from 2 million to 15,000 years ago, glaciers over one mile thick repeatedly covered this area. As warming temperatures melted the ice, hundreds of feet of clay, sand, pebbles and giant boulders carried by the moving ice accumulated here. Constant pummelling by the waves of the Strait of Georgia have sculpted this land into the forested bluff and cobble beach we enjoy today.

In 1841, the surveying crews of the US Exploring Expedition charted this area. The prominent point just west of the park was named for Daniel Whitehorn, a gunner on the expedition.

In spite of the heavy industrial footprint nearby, the area has retained a remarkable sense of open space. In 2000 over 3,000 acres of state-owned tidelands and seabed were protected for herring spawning beds and other marine resources. In 2007 the Whatcom Land Trust acquired this 54-acre property for transfer to Whatcom County Parks & Recreation with funding from the conservation futures fund.

The park trail leads through a maturing forest of western hemlock, Sitka spruce, western redcedar and bigleaf maple, broken by wetland areas created by the dense glacial clay “hardpan” which prevents rainwater from percolating away from the surface. Boardwalks constructed on the trail are designed to protect these areas, and allow easy passage all year long.

Three keystone species define the marine life of this area. Pacific herring once spawned in prolific numbers along this coastline, but declines beginning in the 1970’s have diminished this important forage fish resource. Though the reason for the decline is not well understood, the impacts to salmon and orca whales are real.

Visiting Point Whitehorn

- Park open all year, sunrise to sunset
- No alcohol
- No camping or fires
- Pack it in, pack it out
- No pets
- No bicycles
- Avoid seals and other animals on the beach
- State license required for shellfishing
- Fill in holes to protect spawning habitat
- Report problems to park staff or call 360-733-2900
Exploring Point Whitehorn Marine Reserve

Find the trail on the south side of the parking area. Follow the accessible trail for 3/4 mile through lush forest to four blufftop viewpoints of the Strait of Georgia and islands. A final 0.1 mile descends steeply to the beach. Public tidelands extend to the east. Tidelands west of the park are private.

Getting to Point Whitehorn Marine Reserve

Take I-5 Exit 266 and drive west on Grandview Road 8.5 miles. Follow the road as it curves left and becomes Koehn Rd. Continue 0.5 mile to parking on left.