

Cougar Bay Preserve Fact Sheet

John Pointer Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary Trail

Hike Details

- [Map to parking](#) - Enter from Hwy 95 at the big Cougar Bay Preserve sign
- [Link to trail on All Trails](#) - 2.7 mile loop (moderate), 383 ft of elevation change
- Takes about 1hr and 10 mins to complete
- Public trails are connected by a small portion of trails on private land – so please stay on the designated trails
- There are no restrooms
- Open sunrise to sunset, all year round
- Trail condition – narrow, uneven and rocky at points, dirt trail (can get very muddy), hiking poles are recommended for people who like to use them going up and down hills
- Dogs are allowed
- No fees for parking or access

Native land acknowledgment – if you are comfortable and would like to. “We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the Schitsu’umsh (Coeur d’Alene), Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla and Ktunaxa ʔamakʔis People.”

Suggested Hike Route

- After parking your car, cross the bridge and go past the gate on the left toward the Idaho birding trail sign
- Start with general Cougar Bay Preserve talking points and then the John Pointer Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary Trail talking points then the general Idaho talking points (remember you do not have to cover everything; this is just a suggestion for flow)
- About ½ mile into the trail, there is an “option” to go to the right up a hill or left down a flat path – please go left down the path. The right is very steep and will not be comfortable for most of our attendees (this is also likely a social trail that is causing erosion)
- As you continue along the trail you will come to another fork in the road marked by a stump – go left where the arrow way finding sign points you
- At the top of the hill, you will see views of the bay – then go right (there is some kind of abandoned tractor on the left)
- About 1 mile in when you reach the top of the 2nd bigger hill (and then start to make your way down) there is a good gathering spot on the left with views of the lake. This would be a good time to talk about Carder Farm and the Chocolate Bear conservation property (under other INLC talking points)

- the trail continues to the right toward the gate (there is an arrow way finding sign here as well)
- The next fork in the trail is when you have the option of going to a viewpoint. To see the viewpoint go to the left (I think it is worth it). There is a nice deck and bench seating at the top. This is the highest point of the hike. It is a bit of elevation change, so just ask the group if they are up for it. Once at the top you turn around and go back to the fork in the road.
- If the group decides not to go to the viewpoint, go to the right at the fork
- At this point you can start talking about the JP Johnson conservation property (particularly when you get up a little higher and can see across 95)
- At the next fork go RIGHT (I accidentally went left, and it is not safe for these hikes – the All-Trails map marks it correctly but I forgot to check)
- When you get to the bottom you will once again see the stump fork in the road. Go left to come back the way you came. Here you can talk about the Heine conservation property
- When you get to the “Community of Osprey” interpretive sign you can either go straight to the parking lot or go to the left for a slightly more challenging route with more distance and elevation gain (ask the group – I saw a lot of mushrooms going this way)
- If you chose to go left, you will eventually make your way to the other gate from where you started

General Cougar Bay Preserve talking points

- Since 1997, INLC has helped protect just over 8,085 acres in Idaho through conservation easements (4,986.17) and partner projects (3,099.05)
 - One of those favorite places is here in Cougar Bay.
- Cougar Bay is the last undeveloped shallow bay at Lake Coeur d’Alene’s northern end.
- This rich wetland habitat provides an abundance of wildlife watching opportunities. Bordered by towering conifer forests and lush meadows, Cougar Bay attracts migrating and nesting waterfowl, numerous shore birds, songbirds, moose, beaver, otter and deer. 34 rare animal species are known to utilize the site, including 27 species of birds
- Realizing Cougar Bay was a threatened and irreplaceable natural resource, many local people worked hard to preserve it from development and other disruptive intrusions.
 - [More on the history of Cougar Bay by Wes Hanson](#)
- INLC has directly protected six places around here that cover 435 acres. In addition, INLC has helped landowners, and our conservation partners protect special parcels of land, including the Cougar Bay Nature Preserve.
 - What was our role in the Cougar Bay Nature Preserve? (see John Pointer Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary)

John Pointer Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary Trail

- Once upon a time—John Pointner owned most of Cougar Bay. John was colorful and stubborn. He wanted to see his land preserved forever for wildlife but just couldn't come to terms with any of the entities that courted him.
- One of John's advocates enlisted the Inland Northwest Land Conservancy to try to break the logjam.
- The Conservancy listened to what John needed. He wanted the land to be protected forever, and he didn't trust *anyone* who merely promised they'd take care of the land like he had.
 - He didn't trust universities to make good on funding promises, and not to have trustees have a change of heart someday and sell the land.
 - He needed money, because he was old and ailing and worried about being a burden to his children.
- The Conservancy proposed a way that Pointner could sell his property for what Pointner considered a fair price, a major sticking point in previous negotiations.
- Senior Conservationist, Chris DeForest (have participants raise their hand if they had met/know Chris) suggested a deal where John could get \$5,000 a month for the rest of his life and, upon Pointner's death, the remaining debt would be forgiven.
- And that's what happened. As a result of listening to the landowner and offering sage advice, INLC helped John Pointner fulfill his desire to preserve his property for the over 150 species of wildlife that inhabit his beloved Cougar Bay.
- Thanks to John Pointner's generosity and his desire to see his land preserved for wildlife, and Chris and the Conservancy's endeavors the Bureau of Land Management and Kootenai County acquired the last large private holding on Cougar Bay at a bargain price.

General North Idaho talking points

- All conservation work we have done in North Idaho has been with willing private landowners. One tool we use to conserve land is conservation easements (another tool is partner projects where we act as bridge owners of land before passing it on to those who will handle long term management).
- Can ask if anyone is familiar with the concept of Conservation Easements
- Conservation easements are a permanent legal protection for land.
 - Through a conservation easement, a landowner deeds away certain rights in the land, for a land trust to hold forever. These rights typically include the right to subdivide, develop, mine, and log without safeguards.
 - The private landowner keeps ownership of the land and traditional uses. The landowner can pass the land on or sell it, but it comes with the conservation easement and land trust, like Inland Northwest Land Conservancy, to safeguard it **forever**.

- The conservation easement clearly spells out what rights stay with the land, and what rights are tied up forever in order to protect the land.
- The Conservancy Stewardship team monitors the easements at least once a year to make sure landowners are following what's outlined in their conservation easements
- That means, no matter who owns the land, it will be protected forever!

Other INLC Talking Points

- Once you have discussed the history of Cougar Bay and the preserve and concepts on conservation easements and how they are used to protect land in ID (mentioned above), you can mention any of these specific examples
- At the northeast corner of the trail, when you are near the lake, you can talk about the 158 acre Carder Farm conservation property about a mile right across the bay.
 - Through this perpetual conservation easement, this land is preserved and is currently owned by family members. This land will be preserved as open space today and long after the Carder family no longer owns it.
 - Wes has spurred numerous other families to protect their land (see Chocolate Bear CE below) following visits to his property and discussions on the benefits of conservation easements
 - [Conservancy article on the Carder farm](#) (I recommend reading this if you want to mention it on your hike!)
 - Gertie noted 125 different bird species that either reside on the property or use it as a migratory stopping point
 - Adjacent to Carder Farm property is the 23-acre Chocolate Bear conservation property
 - Named from the road that runs through the property (Chocolate Bear Rd.) and the many brown bears that roam the property
 - The Johnsons heard about INLC (known as Inland Northwest Land Trust back then) from Wes Hanson (see Carder farm above) who had sent a letter to nearby landowners after he and his late wife Gertie had protected their land with a conservation easement. Hanson encouraged his neighbors, including the Johnsons, to consider protecting their own land.
 - When Gary and Tina Johnson were on their way to sign the conservation easement, they saw a baby brown bear just off the road that leads to their home – they took it as a good sign
 - The property is on Blackwell Hill near Coeur d'Alene and could have been subdivided into 10 lots like much of the surrounding land
 - Instead, the easement will help maintain the rural character of Blackwell Hill by preserving the scenic view
 - It will also conserve forest habitat for wildlife

- It lies on top of a ridge and provides scenic views for Coeur d'Alene, Post Falls, and Rathdrum Prairie and serves as an important part of the Lake Coeur d'Alene watershed
 - Easement was signed in 2007 and is now on the third landowner (but the same land trust (INLC) protecting it)
- In the last .8 miles (no matter which direction you start on the loop – around 1.9 miles into the hike) you can talk about the JP Johnson Conservation Property. This 80 acre property is right on the other side of Hwy 95 from the preserve's parking lot.
 - J.P Johnson, a Swedish immigrant, had borrowed \$10 from ten of his friends to purchase the 160-acre homestead for \$100
 - They converted the land to a dairy farm called the Green Meadow Dairy, which was later renamed Meadow View Dairy, and raised their 6 kids back in the 1890s
 - Their son Clarence and his wife Alta took over the dairy in 1931 and expanded its size.
 - The dairy provided milk to Coeur d'Alene households until the 1940s and later sold milk directly to the Van Kleeck creamery until 1960.
 - This conservation easement was donated to the Conservancy by two of J.P. and Sallye's grandchildren, the late Graydon and Maurice Johnson, and great grandson Brett Gilbert, to ensure that 80 acres of the original homestead would be forever preserved as scenic forest, meadow, and wetland.
 - The barn on the property is painted bright blue and yellow for the colors of the Swedish flag
 - The increase in surrounding development pressure pushed the family to consider how they could keep this from happening to their home. Their good friend Gertrude Carder Hanson urged the Johnsons to consider protecting the homestead with a conservation easement.
 - Wildlife abounds in the wetlands and lower meadow.
 - There have been swan, ducks, muskrats, deer, pheasants, coyotes, and rabbits as well as signs of bear.
 - Maurice even came face to face with a bobcat under the bull barn!
 - Once there was a herd of 30 elk in the meadow
 - for the past ten or so years, moose and their calves have watered and grazed in the lowest part of the homestead.
 - It is part of the beautiful sweep of farms, forests, and wetlands that make up Cougar Bay and cougar gulch
 - Is the land still owned by the family but is no longer operated as a farm. Today with the help of the Bureau of Land Management and Ducks Unlimited (and permission through the easement held by INLC) they are taking part in wetland restoration

- At the end of the hike - The Heine conservation property is just less than a mile NW of the JP Johnson property. This 119 acres northwest of Cougar Bay is part of the panoramic mountain area above the bay. The parcel is less than 1.5 miles from the Preserve parking lot across from Hwy 95.
 - Established in 2011, the easement preserves the panoramic mountain view above Cougar Bay
 - On the ground, wildlife such as black bear, elk, badgers, and porcupine reside on the property throughout the year. In the air, birds such as Pileated woodpecker, Junco, quail, Northern Flicker, and Swainson's Thrush are commonly seen.
 - This land also hosted a small dairy farm in the past
 - It was the 5th conservation easement signed in the Cougar Bay area

Sources/Additional Resources

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

[Visit North Idaho](#)

[Cougar Bay page on our website](#)



