

# Nipomo Dunes



FREDERICA GEORGIA

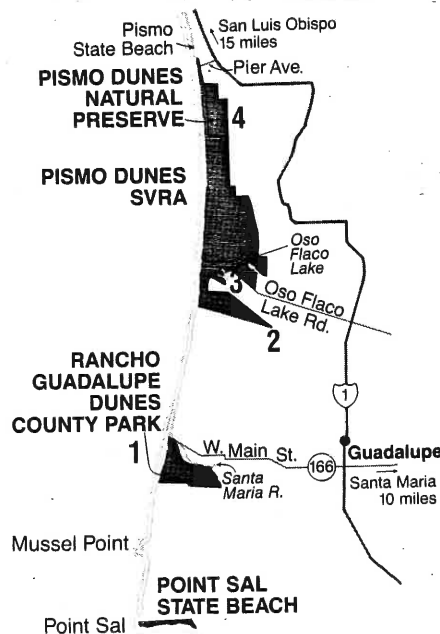
*Early-morning kayakers slip soundlessly across Oso Flaco Lake (3 on map below), searching for some of the marshland's 200-plus bird species. On the horizon, surrounding dunes retain the natural vegetation that keeps them stable*

A place where hills move and where rare birds lay their eggs in nests of sand, the Nipomo Dunes complex is one of the largest relatively untouched dune masses in California. Stretching 18 miles between Pismo State Beach and Point Sal, the area constitutes about 20,000 acres.

Decades ago, Ansel Adams and Edward Weston made haunting photographs of the starkly shadowed land; today, conservationists are attempting to preserve it. This summer, The Nature Conservancy acquired a 567-acre parcel, adding it to the 26-acre Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park. Other groups are looking to future purchases.

With both crowds and afternoon winds diminishing in September, you can explore the park and other public lands in relative solitude or cross privately owned acreage on scheduled hikes.

Four spots we suggest here will give you an overview. To stay the night, you can camp at Pismo State Beach (\$5 to \$16; 800/446-7275), or stay in moderately priced motels in nearby cities such as Pismo Beach or San Luis Obispo.



*From Point Sal north to Pismo Beach, area west of U.S. 1 is called Nipomo Dunes. Among its diverse habitats, we've marked four to visit*

## Efforts at preservation

Various state, county, and private entities own the dunes; less than 4,000 acres allow public access, with 1,800 of them reserved for off-road-vehicle recreation.

With the San Luis Obispo Harbor Commission proposing a new harbor for the area and off-road-vehicle driver organizations pushing to extend their territory, one local group—People for a Nipomo Dunes National Seashore (PNDNS)—feels it's time to really press for a broader conservation effort. As its name indicates, PNDNS wants the U.S. Congress to declare the dunes a national seashore.

Another possibility for preservation has also arisen: the dunes will benefit if a parks and wildlife state bond initiative is placed on the June 1988 ballot and passes; in this initiative, \$14 million is earmarked for purchasing land from private owners in the Nipomo Dunes area.