

POINT LOBOS

*Celebrating 75 Years
1933-2008*



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Point Lobos Association

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The mission of the Point Lobos Association is to support interpretive and educational programs that enhance the visitor's experience, and to assist California State Parks in preserving Point Lobos State Reserve.

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Message from the President

Judd Perry



The PLA Magazine goes out to you every quarter extolling the wonders of Point Lobos State Reserve and keeping you abreast of the many events that take place year-round. However, there is another story in the background that I do not believe has received enough attention. It's about each of you, our generous and dedicated members.

There are currently about 800 active PLA members, and that number has increased by almost 30% over the past two years. You come from every state in America. About one-third of you reside in Monterey County, and another third are from other counties in California. The final third come from beyond the borders of California, some from as far away as the United Kingdom.

To me, these numbers suggest something very significant—that the support for Point Lobos comes not only from those who live near-by and can enjoy it on a regular basis. Two-thirds of that support comes from people who are infrequent visitors, many of whom may have seen Point Lobos only once,

but who were so struck by its beauty and grandeur, and so appreciative of the educational and interpretive services of the Point Lobos Docent Group, that they feel it is worthy of their continuing financial support.

And that support is very important! Membership contributions make up approximately 25% of the PLA's annual gross income (ordinary income less cost of goods sold – 2007). These contributions come from both new memberships and the annual renewal of existing memberships. On behalf of the PLA Board of Directors and the more than 150 volunteers in the Docent Group, I want to thank each of you for the confidence you have shown by your support, and I encourage each of you, when your next renewal letter comes, to renew at the highest membership level your circumstances will allow. Without your generous continuing support, our ability to continue funding the important educational and interpretive work of the Docent Group, and the trails repair and maintenance work at the Reserve would

be significantly diminished.

One of the most terrific examples of your membership dollars at work was the recent celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the opening of Point Lobos State Reserve in 1933. For five weekends in May, the Point Lobos Docents and State Parks staff put on a spectacular array of special activities and events for visitors to the Reserve. I hope you were one of those who came to join the fun.

Finally, I want to invite you to our annual membership "Moonlight Walk" celebration on October 11, 2008 (see page 4 for more details). This is an annual favorite event for members only (yes, you can join or renew at the event), which will feature a light evening meal provided by the Association, enjoyed as the full "hunter's moon" rises over the Santa Lucia Mountains. I hope to see you there.

EVENTS



Members' Party and Walk by Moonlight: October 11, 2008

Join fellow members for a light buffet at the Bird Island picnic area. We'll be serving up G's homemade clam chowder, salad, french bread, cookies, and bottled water. You may BYOB. Afterwards walk in the light of a hunter's moon. The Reserve will close at 6 pm and re-open at 6:30 for this event. Members (and potential members) **MUST** make a **reservation** to attend by calling 831-625-1470. There will be no entrance fees for those who have RSVP'd to this special event.

Point Lobos moonlight courtesy Steve Ligas

(see his cover for the Fall '07 issue at www.PointLobos.org/Magazine.html)



Birdwatching and Poetry: October 19, 2008

The Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation, California State Parks, and Point Lobos Association will present "Play Birds in the Bright Wind," an afternoon of birdwatching and poetry on Sunday, October 19, from 3:00 - 6:30 pm at the Bird Island picnic area. The event begins with a poetry walk and scoping at Bird Island at 3:00 pm, followed by a picnic at 4:00 pm (please bring your own food and drink and/or something to share), and at 5:00 pm, a presentation by local poets of the poetry of Robinson Jeffers. The event is free and open to the public; however, an entrance fee of \$10 dollars (\$9 dollars for seniors) that will be charged at the Entrance Station to the park. This event is part of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) *The Big Read: the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, a pilot initiative in partnership with the Poetry Foundation to celebrate the nation's historic poetry sites. The NEA, with underwriting from the Poetry Foundation, will provide each attendee with a *Reader's Guide to the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. For more information on this and other Big Read events taking place in the fall of 2008, please contact Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts at 831-624-1180.

UNDER MY BRIM

Ranger Chuck Bancroft

During my frequent patrols through the Reserve I've noticed a tremendous influx of cars traveling way too fast. The posted speed limit at the entrance station is 15 MPH. I guess with so many exciting things awaiting our visitors along the shoreline and on the various trails, they forget where they are and what they're doing. Intent on reading the map or just wanting to get somewhere to begin their adventure, they miss the sign.

One of my favorite sayings is "If everyone read the rules, I would be out of work." Do people actually read the rules or are they just left on the center console or dashboard to be forgotten until they clean the car out after their trip? The rules also tell visitors to picnic only at the picnic tables. As I drive along the south shore I can't help but notice people sitting on the rocks with one to several gulls just sitting near by. We all know that gulls are very opportunistic waiting for a free lunch. I usually approach the people and let them know about the gulls standing nearby waiting for a morsel to be dropped or forgotten. I tell them their options and patiently wait (back at my truck) for the group to pack up and move to the appropriate picnic area. Now, back at the picnic area you still have to be careful because the gulls and crows will swoop down and steal your unattended lunch. The ground squirrels can be even more of

an annoyance because they will jump up in your lap to steal the food. And they can bite. So remember . . . protect your food



and don't feed the critters.

The Basin Complex Fire brought home a very real concern for fire safety, not just from lightening strikes, or illegal campfires in the backcountry, or illegal fireworks, but from forgotten fires on the beach next to the Reserve, or the careless smoker discarding a butt out the window or along the trail. I just can't imagine why someone would come to the Reserve and then walk the trail smoking! It's amazing how many cigarette butts we find along the road and on the trails. As a precaution and to comply with California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention protocols,

our resource team, the maintenance staff, has been busy in the Reserve cutting back the dense undergrowth around the

structures. Our talented Maintenance Worker 1, Greg Palermo, and his trusty tractor have cut down along the roadway the tall grasses and brush. This five-foot wide border will help with visibility while driving the curvy road as well as removing the dry fuel next to the roadside. Unfortunately, visitors have taken this to mean extra park-

ing along the roadside. Again, if people read the rules, they would see that we require people to park in designated areas: parking in lots only. The rules say if a lot is full go to the next one. And it says not to park parallel on the side of the road.

My thanks to the super park aides at the entrance station who are diligent in giving visitors the park brochure with the rules handout, asking them to read the rules, reminding people the speed limit is 15 MPH, and more.



Spring and summer have been overwhelming with the variety and numbers of birds in and around Point Lobos. I have observed sooty shearwaters by the thousands traveling along the coast, but unfortunately, too far out to get a good picture.

The Carmel River mouth at Carmel River State Beach was my sighting of too many pelicans. They use the brackish water of the lagoon for bathing and then resting on the sandy beach. Oftentimes they are diving for food in Carmel Bay. The Bird Islands at the south end of Point Lobos were formally one of the northern most breeding areas, but the use of pesticides like DDT progressing from agricultural fields up the food chain caused the pelican eggshells to be overly-thin and incapable of supporting the embryo to maturity. Thus the pelicans stopped nesting here and the Brandt's cormorant became the major nester on our Bird Islands. Great numbers of pelicans are still seen in this area and some in breeding plumage, but so far no reports of new breeding colonies in our area.

Elegant terns are seen here in July and August in huge

numbers. With the cold water upwelling from the Monterey submarine canyon bringing lots of nutrients, there has been an abundance of food for fish and other marine life. When the anchovies and sardines are running we see incredible numbers of terns as well as white and brown pelicans. Terns breeds on the Pacific coasts of the southern USA and Mexico and winters south to Peru, Ecuador, and Chile. This species breeds in very dense colonies on coasts and islands, and occasionally inland on suitable large fresh-water lakes close to the coast. It nests in a ground scrape and lays one to two eggs. Unlike some of the smaller white terns, it is not very aggressive toward potential predators, relying on the sheer density of the nests (often only 20-30 cm apart) and nesting close to other more aggressive species such as Heermann's gulls to avoid predation. This year I have seen incredibly large numbers at Carmel Point, Carmel River State Beach, and on the rocks and kelp beds off Sea Lion Point in the Reserve. As I watch the terns, for some reason they all take off and

make a loud "keerick" sound as they circle and eventually settle down. I called our local expert and docent emeritus, Brian Weed, to find out what was going on. Brian told me that sometimes an individual tern might feel threatened and goes into a panic which in turn (no pun intended) causes the other birds to also react. They take off in a furious movement called a "dread," eventually calming down and resuming their perching on the rocks or beach.

Of the current population of about 150,000 pairs, 90% nest on the island of Isla Rasa off Baja California, with smaller colonies as far north as California and as far south as Nayarit. After breeding, birds commonly disperse to central California to feed, and less commonly north as far as British Columbia and south as far as Guatemala. They are rarely found inland.

Venture up, with camera ready, to Elkhorn Slough and Moss Landing State Beach for incredible wildlife viewing. The mouth of the Carmel River is obviously one of my favorite places. And you just can't beat the adventures in my favorite place of all time, Point Lobos State Reserve.

GRAY WHALES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Alan Baldrige

There is a timeless nature in the migration of the gray whales along our coast. Its predictability and our anticipation of their arrival always brings a special pleasure.

At the same time, the realization that global warming and consequent climate shifts are occurring is causing cetacean biologists to look for evidence of change. Some of that evidence is starting to show and may point to the way ahead.

So what changes or events are already occurring?

Increased ocean temperatures have already

caused gray whales to abandon the southernmost Baja California calving lagoons at Magdalena Bay. Meanwhile, for several years surveys have shown that the numbers of calves born in and adjacent to the very popular San Ignacio Lagoon have been in decline.

In the far north, drastic temperature changes in the Chukchi

Sea, between Siberia and Alaska, have seen the virtual disappearance of populations of the gray's preferred prey, benthic amphipod species. The result has been an increase in weight loss in the population, and therefore a greater prevalence of the "skinny" whale syndrome.

At the same time, grays have been found year-round in unex-



pectedly large numbers in waters surrounding Kodiak Island in the Gulf of Alaska. Investigations show that they were feeding on unprecedented densities of cumaceans, a small crustacean and an atypical prey item.

In the winter of 2003–2004 grays were discovered feeding in the now ice-free waters of the Beaufort Sea off the north coast of Alaska in the Barrow region. These are extraordinary findings, which, it would appear, could only be a reflection of climate change and its impact on the food supply. Gray whales could be considered “sentinels” of climate change and of consequent ecosystem change.

The population estimate was 18,000 in 2005. The numbers for the most recent census (2007–08) have not yet been released. Gray whales were removed from the protection of the Endangered Species Act in 1994 although they are still covered by the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Censusing by National

Marine Fisheries Service biologists show further evidence of long-term change indicated by a one-week delay in the peak of the southward migration along the Big Sur coast between 1967 and 1999. It appears that this is happening as a response to the grays’ needs to spend more time and effort securing enough food to fuel their migration south to Baja California and the northward return.

If their preferred prey species of bottom-dwelling amphipods continues to decrease and is replaced by other more successful but less nourishing species, then the numbers of gray whales may be expected to decline.

Another wrinkle in the gray whale story is DNA evidence that points to much larger pre-whaling populations than have been assumed. Hence the present population is proportionately smaller than has been thought. Using this evidence, grays were previously approximately 3–5 times more numerous than

in today’s average census.

Gray whales have gone through many changes during their evolutionary history and have proved to be “survivors.” A major problem with much of climate change is that it is happening so fast that species do not have enough time to adapt as was possible previously over evolutionary time scales. We can but hope that the speed of these changes can be slowed before they become irreversible.

For further reading see:

Alter, S.E. et al. 2007. DNA evidence for historic population size and past ecosystem impacts of Gray whales. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 104:15162-15167.

Baldrige, A. and D. G. Gordon. 2006. *Gray Whales*. Monterey Bay Aquarium. 64p.

Moore, S.E. 2008. Marine mammals as ecosystem sentinels. *Journal of Mammalogy*. 89(3): 534-540.





A WONDERFUL BIRD

Pat Gadban

I had never see a flock of pelicans in flight until I happened upon Kip Evans' photo. Impressed by the beauty of this small flock and somehow taken aback by an image of a number of pelicans rather than just one, I began to read about the bird, in the process becoming fascinated with pelican imagery in western culture.

As it happens, both the actual shape and the behavior of pelicans have stimulated legions of writers and thinkers to make a multi-faceted symbol of the bird. Elegant in flight and when swooping toward the water for its prey, Zen-like in its solitary standing position, the pelican—with its large pouch-like beak and webbed feet—is often, quite contrarily, portrayed as a comic and voracious figure. Consider, for example, the carved pelican at the Monterey wharf: loyal

guardian of the pier or a waiting buffoon?

You may already be familiar with Dixon Lanier Merritt's tribute from which the title of this piece was taken.

A wonderful bird is the pelican
His bill can hold more than his belican.
He can take in his beak
Food enough for a week;
But I'm damned if I see how the helican.

The holding capacity of the pelican's beak is, indeed, larger than its stomach's capacity, and is of course extremely useful when returning with food for the young. The perspective of the pelican nurturing her young or, broadened, to see the pelican as a sacrificial nurturer, like Christ,

has been a recurrent theme in Christianity. According to *WINGED WONDERS: A Celebration of Birds in Human History*¹ the image might originally have derived from a vision of one type of pelican the bottom of whose pouch turns a shade of red during the nesting and feeding period. To the viewer, this could seem as if the bird were feeding her young with her own blood. Another chronicler of bird legends, Laura C. Martin, notes that, as early as 1120, “it was believed that the pelican would actually peck at her own breast to give her young her life-saving blood.”² The sentiment is clearly referenced in a line from *Love for Love*, written by William Congreve (1695):

What, wouldst thou have me turn pelican, and feed thee out of my own vitals?

The image has been powerful and pervasive as this nurturing feature has been interpreted in the broader sense of education and dedication. The College of Saint Elizabeth in Convent Station, New Jersey—which was founded by the Sisters of Charity who originally adopted the pelican as a Eucharistic symbol—features that aspect of the bird’s imagery with the inscription “Deus est caritas” on their college seal shown here.³ The pelican feeding its hatchlings also appears on the Louisiana state seal, and in 1966 the pelican was adopted as the state bird.⁴



The pelican can be found in the coats of arms of both Cambridge and Oxford universities in England as well; “Cambridge choosing the pelican in its piety and Oxford the solitary bird.”⁵ Princeton University in New Jersey was presented with a sundial bearing the Oxford coat of arms in 1907.⁶ This brings us to one of the earliest Christian references to the pelican:

I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. (Psalm 102:6)

The Bible uses the bird—along with owl who is often portrayed sitting alone on its night perch—to evoke solitude and a sense of despair or desolation. The use of this image is particularly interesting in that pelicans, in “real” life, are considered to be very “social and gregarious birds....[who] congregate in large flocks for much of the year.”⁷

Many of you may have already spotted pelicans at Point Lobos. Docent Stan Dryden tells us that “pelicans go south in the spring to nest, but do return in early summer and stay through the winter...They can be seen—flying or perched—along the whole south shore, from Bird Island to the Pinnacle, and occasionally along the northern shore as well.”

While it is possible, according to Dryden, that the pelican will return to this area someday to nest, most of us will not have had the opportunity to see new hatchlings locally, which is unfortunate



Seal courtesy College of Saint Elizabeth, New Jersey.

as they are truly amazing-looking hatchlings. Like many birds, the pelican is featherless when born. Though they quickly grow the downy fuzz we associate with other birds, the hatchlings do, indeed, look like tiny pterodactyls!⁸

Pelicans are altricial, that is, completely dependent on their parents at birth. Their average age at first flight is 75 days. They are considered to have few natural enemies, although people have proved to be a major threat, whether hunting the bird for its feathers, killing it because it was seen as a competitive threat to fishers, destroying its eggs through contamination by DDT and other pesticides, or destroying its habitat. But in 1970 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the bird as endangered. And in 1972 the Environmental Protection Agency banned the use of DDT. Since then the pelican has had much greater nesting success. "The population of the subspecies found in southern California...is estimated at more than 11,000 breeding pairs." (The largest population of brown pelicans, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is in Peru, which has an estimated 400,000!)⁹

John James Audubon, the painter and naturalist, described the pelican as "one of the most interesting of our American birds" ... and I certainly agree. I shall forever be charmed by the pelican. However, delighted though I have been to learn more about her real life, my favorite pelican image comes from Edward Lear's *The Pelican Chorus*.

King and Queen of the Pelicans we;
No other Birds so grand we see!
None but we have feet like fins!
With lovely leathery throats and chins!

Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!
We think no Birds so happy as we!
Plumpskin, Ploshkins, Pelican Jill!
We think so then, and we thought so still!

¹ Watkins, Peter and Jonathan Stockland, *WINGED WONDERS: A Celebration of Birds in Human History*. Blue Bridge - an imprint of United Tribes Media, Inc., New York, 2005, 2007. You can find a more in-depth history of pelican imagery in this small volume.

² Martin, Laura C., *THE FOLK-LORE OF BIRDS*. The Globe Pequot Press,, Connecticut, 1993, p. 134

³ College of Saint Elizabeth's Archives

⁴ LaCoast , *THE BROWN PELICAN'S RETURN TO COASTAL LOUISIANA - PART ONE: The Brown Pelican and Louisiana History* <http://www.lacoast.gov/articles/bps/1/index.htm>

⁵ Watkins and Stockland, p. 130

⁶ Martin, p. 131

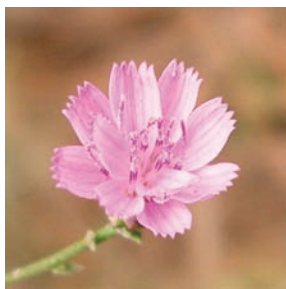
⁷ Brown pelican, (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) http://www.fws.gov/species/species_accounts/bio_plcn.html

⁸ For a view of pelican hatchlings, see <http://www.kidszoo.org/pdfs/BrUpBaby.pdf>

⁹ Brown pelican, (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) http://www.fws.gov/species/species_accounts/bio_plcn.html



Pelican flock courtesy Chuck Bancroft.



Quotes from the Docent Log

edited by Stan Dryden

May 9: Joy Osborne

Last week there were many cormorants at Bird Island. Today—where are they? There are several nests, but most of the birds are gone. But during the week the gulls have really determined where to nest.

In China Cove, some seals come onto the sand. A mom nurses her pup in an alcove near the water.

May 14: Milt Jines

The night heron nest (to the right of the popular Bird Island viewing area) now contains three chicks! Fuzzy and gray. I had my scope with me, much to the delight of numerous visitors. Many visitors, like me, wonder where the cormorants are.

May 21: Connie Dallmann

Only one pelican and a gull were seen on Bird Island today, but 30-40 Brandt's Cormorants were lined up on the near islands. Some are displaying and offering kelp for nests, but no nests were seen.

May 24: Jacolyn Harmer

A blustery gray day, but lots

of visitors. I wish my Mandarin were better, but luckily some of the many Chinese visitors spoke great English. Lots of northbound pelicans in squadron formation today. Took a scope out to Sea Lion Point, but it was too windy to see through it. On the way back I noticed the telltale dots on Headland Cove—four sea otters wrapped in the kelp. I was able to use the scope near the bench and saw a mom/pup pair. Thanks to a sharp-eyed visitor, spotted a female deer with two fawns.

June 1: Terry Tellep

Late afternoon trail watch along Cypress Grove

A doe sitting amongst luminous lavender sea daisies

The sighing of waves in the distance

Peace

June 10: Sally Smith

I was on duty at Whalers Cabin from 9-11 when a stocky, short man with salt-and-pepper hair and beard came in with a *beautiful* young woman. He was intensely interested in the "people" stories of Point Lobos, and we talked for

two hours! When a hiking group from San Mateo came into the cabin, the two fled.

When I got home I looked up movie directors on Google, because I thought from the tone of his questions that he might be one. He was—it was Francis Ford Coppola and his daughter.

June 15: Rosemary Foster

Took a perimeter plant walk today. Still lots of fairy lanterns and blue dicks on Coal Chute Point. Carmelo Meadow is so overgrown with non-native grasses that the native grasses are almost invisible.

North Shore Trail has more lizard tail than I've seen in 20 years. On the south shore the coastal bluff scrub was in gorgeous bloom. Far too many ice plants (*M. chrystalinum*)—we need to work on those. The oaks are stunning on the south plateau trail, and the honeysuckle is in full bloom. Big year for wild roses throughout the Reserve.

June 27: Joy Osborne

The Big Sur Basin fire is sending its smoke here, but it is not bad for us. However, everything is very dry, and all

are being very careful. (*Another docent, Catherine Dunn, reported that the smoke was very bad the following day, with her car covered with ash – Ed.*)

June 27: Catherine Dunn

On Ed Clifton's day-long geology walk, we were startled to see hundreds or thousands of jellies in the water in all coves along the South Shore Trail. Working hypotheses were exchanged, but the phenomenon remains an enigma.

June 29: Jean Grace

On trail watch, I was taking people to see the huge "Ed Clifton Stone," which had been deposited by huge waves. There was also huge excitement when people thought they were seeing California condors. When they found out they were "only" turkey vultures, they were still excited because there were at times 12 or 13 of them —hanging out, waiting, evidently, for something to die.

July 6: Norma Davis

Three young fire fighters from Oregon had a chance to do some Point Lobos sightseeing while waiting for their fire truck to arrive. They beat it here by being flown in.

July 8: Carol Bloner

Otter count today, and there were several strange happenings. Smoke from the Big Sur Basin fire was heading north and was quite prevalent. Nothing looked clear through binoculars and only somewhat clearer through the scope. Scores of pelicans in five or so different flocks were streaming



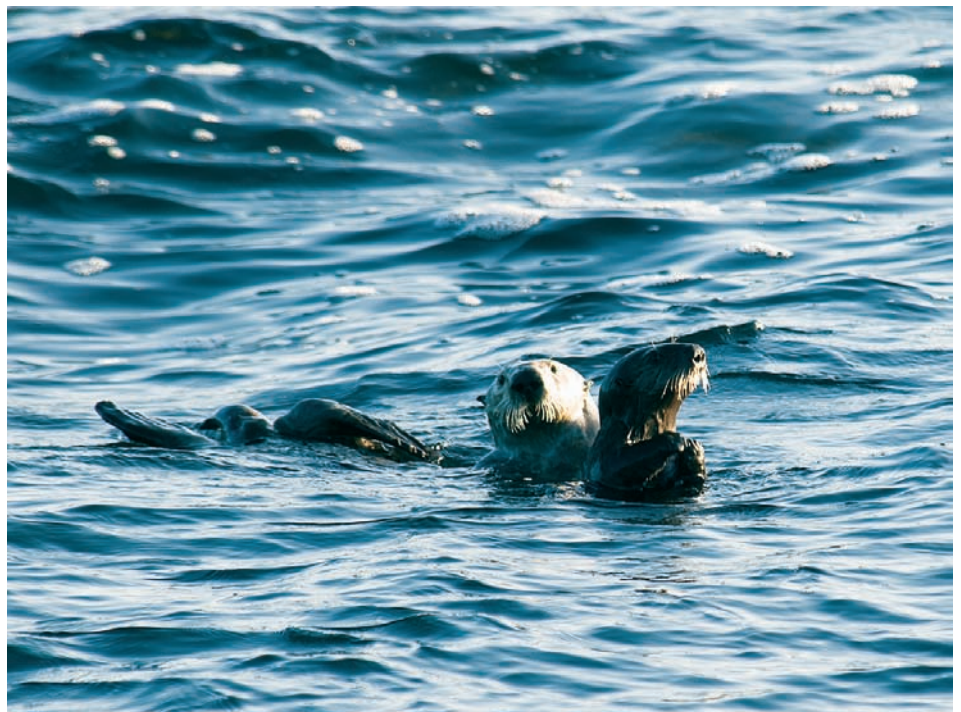
northward; not one bird of any ilk was heading south. Cormorants on Bird Island were walking/hopping from the flat, sparsely populated nesting area to the top of the rock. No one had a clue why; couldn't have been the smoky view.

Seaweed at the rocky edges of Sand Hill Cove gleamed vibrant copper. When the obscured sun shone on the fronds, the kelp was alive with copper sparks. There was so much kelp in the

coves and ocean that otters were hard to spot. Huge swells were an additional difficulty; these were winter, not summer, swells. Still, the group covering Headland Cove to Bird Island found 28 adults and 3 pups. Two of the pups were tiny. They stretched ferret-like thin as they crawled onto their moms. Lots of visitors (unlike July 4 weekend), and it was nice to be able to show them otters not otherwise visible without a scope.

July 8: Dione Dawson

The otter count for July was 32 adults and 4 pups, a typical number for this time of year. Good viewing was in Headland Cove and Sand Hill Cove with absolutely nothing seen on the north shore. An otter was hauled out on Bird Island, and despite a very heavy blanket of kelp in Whalers Cove we spotted three common murrelets swimming in the clearing further out. On the south side of the Pit cormorants were feeding their young in two



nests and huge blue heron chicks were grooming in two nests at the very top of the pines. The day had seemed strange from the beginning with very smoky skies due to all the nearby fires, which changed the look of everything, and even the water seemed murky. No wonder the otters chose not to appear!

This will be my last report on behalf of the faithful otter counters as I am retiring from heading up the group. They have provided the eyes to make these

counts possible and my contribution has been a long record and book-keeping lines for the last fifteen years. It's time for new blood to contribute and capable Lynne McCammon

will be assuming this post. I wish her the best and know she will enjoy the job as much as I did. Let's try to get more docents interested in this fun duty and give the present otter counters the cooperation they deserve.

July 12: Mary Beach

Two humpback whales have been frolicking off Sea Lion Point for an hour and a half—still blowing and showing some skin for many visitors. It is always exciting to create sign language for the overseas visitors, and watch their reactions when they see the blows and make the association with what

you are acting out. (*Mary sees more whales than anyone else, and one of the rangers calls her the "whale whisperer" – Ed.*)

July 15: Stan Dryden

An eventful public walk today. Few otters to be seen, but two humpback whales were breaching repeatedly off of South Point. And a first for me was having a visitor correctly name *Trentapohlia* (that orange deposit, an algae) without any



"I'll just take a nap and deal with it later. Maybe put it into recycling, like the irresponsible human who had it earlier should have done."
Photo and caption courtesy Ed Clifton.

help from me. Turns out he is the director of the Tel Aviv University botanical gardens, and was attending an international conference at Asilomar on lichenology. (That word is a first for me.) He said that he has seen *Trentapohlia* sp. in New Zealand and Italy, and Point Lobos was his third sighting.

July 23: Jacolyn Harmer

Hard to spot a native this morning, and I'm not talking about plants or birds. Several families from Israel, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and France—full migration season, it seems. Animals too—two

vultures over Sea Lion Point, one otter hard to spot in the kelp, and a tiny rodent thing scuttling across the parking lot.

July 26: Chris Stone

Information Station very busy today. Strangely, the most asked question was, "Where is the poison oak?" I had an entire group learning about it. Saw a great blue heron in Whalers Cove—it floated in the same place for 2 hours.

July 27: Carol Rychener

Could it be a toy?...hmm... something delicious to eat?

This sea otter spent more than an hour examining this plastic water bottle at the Bird Island trail head overlook. Ed Clifton took wonderful pictures and told me about the otter. Ed and my husband, Larry, met there to do some geological investigations of new rock exposures on Gibson Beach. My plan was to set up a scope somewhere, and Ed's observation helped determine where that would be. Visitors coming and going on the trail stopped to view this curious fellow. What an opportunity to share information about the sea otter, its role as a keystone species reflecting the health of the environment it occupies, and how human behaviors are intricately connected to its well being! Plastics, the scourge of the ocean and its inhabitants, should at least be recycled; better yet, they should be used only sparingly and disposed of thoughtfully. Serendipity demonstrated!



July 27: Wayne Cipperly

The regular invasive plant removal team of PLA board member Carl Voss, state resource employee Mary Paul, myself, along with much appreciated extra help from Point Lobos Magazine editor Dida Kutz continued with our invasive plant removal program on the 2nd Tuesday and 4th Sunday of every month, concentrating on the Granite Point and Moss Cove areas on Sundays. It was an overcast day, but perfect for spraying because of little or no wind today. We are very pleased with what we have accomplished so far, and it's very rewarding to come back to an area we worked the previous month and see the fruits of our labor. It's very labor intensive work, but one of the benefits is being

able to walk off the regular trails to do the spraying and see views of Point Lobos that most people don't get to see, and they are very spectacular to say the least! So, the next time you walk the Granite Point trail, please observe all the dead ice plant, poison hemlock, fennel, and wild mustard and see all the new open areas that our native plants will have to grow and thrive!

August 11: Glen Eubanks

Just as I turned out the lights prior to closing Whalers Cabin, I had a unique visitor. A bat started flying around the cabin. I hope he has a way out other than the front door, because I locked him in.

August 12: Lynne McCammon

The otter count this month was a mere 14 adults with no pups seen. The teams experienced a great deal of heavy kelp that hindered the ability to spot the otters. Never fear, it still was a nice day. One otter was seen with a red nose. Can a pup be in the future? One team observed pelicans hiding from the wind. Another team observed turkey vultures inhabiting the nests that the herons left behind. Finally a black-crowned night heron positioned itself in a cypress tree to watch over the egrets and harbor seals in Whalers Cove.

(After 15 years of coordinating and reporting the monthly otter count, Dione Dawson has graciously decided to let someone else have a turn. Lynne has agreed to take it on. Thank you, Dione, for a job lovingly done. – Ed.)

AFTERTHOUGHTS

In the Summer '08 issue of Point Lobos Magazine, the last line of Robert Weston's poem was inadvertently cut off. Here are the entire last two stanzas of *Surfing to Alaska*, a poem about tectonic plate activity:

Just because we cannot see it
Does not mean it is not happening.
It hasn't been here forever, you see:

Just 6,000 lifetimes.
And it won't be here forever, either.
Give it another 100 million years and we'll be passing by Alaska
On our long slow way to ourselves.

Also, Ann Muto was accidently credited with a flower photo on page 14 of the Summer '08 issue. Credit should have gone to Art Muto, her husband, whose harvest *Brodiaea* photo is shown here.



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