

POINT LOBOS

*Celebrating 75 Years
1933-2008*



Raptors of Point Lobos (see page 5):

Top: American kestrel, golden eagle, red-tailed hawk

Middle: Cooper's hawk, peregrine falcon, red-shouldered hawk

Bottom: white-tailed kite, turkey vulture

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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



As I write this column, we are mid-way through our 75th Anniversary celebration of the 1933 opening of Point Lobos State Reserve. What a success this event has been so far. I sincerely hope that you were able to come out on one or more of our five May weekends to enjoy the festivities and to marvel at the grandeur that is Point Lobos at this time of year. The 75th Anniversary Committee and the docent group have risen to new heights in both the planning and execution of this celebration. Visitors to the Reserve have been unanimous in their appreciation for the great service the docent group provides to the Reserve. I want to express my personal pride and appreciation to the docents, and to the people at State Parks, for a job extremely well done.

Beginning June 1, 2008 there will be some changes to the membership fee schedule. Since the existing fee schedule was established, the docent group has expanded significantly and the needs of the Reserve have increased. With membership fees accounting for almost 20

percent of the Association's annual revenue, you play a major role in our ability to continue a vibrant and expanding docent program, to provide free educational and interpretive materials to Reserve visitors, and to continue our assistance to State Parks in the maintenance and renovation of the Reserve.

The **new membership fee schedule** will be:

Student/Senior	\$25
Harbor Seal	\$40
Sea Otter	\$75
California Sea Lion	\$150
Gray Whale	\$500
Life Member	\$1000

The "Student/Senior" category has replaced the previous "Individual" membership. It



provides a good entry level category for younger members and also allows members on limited fixed incomes to continue their valuable support. The "Harbor Seal" category has replaced the

previous "Family" membership, since in reality all category levels are "family" memberships. The Gray Whale membership is a new member category.

We greatly appreciate the strong support you, our members, have given us in the past and we hope the work of the Association and the Docent Group continues to earn that support.

Finally, I want to give you early notice of our annual membership celebration – the 2008 Moonlight Walk. Please mark your calendar for Saturday, October 11, 2008. This will be a great opportunity to meet other members over a light evening meal provided by the Association and to watch the full moon rise over the Santa Lucia Mountains and cast its light onto Point Lobos. Those of you who have attended previous Moonlight Walk events know what a marvelous sight that is. There will be more details in the next issue of POINT LOBOS magazine.



SURFING to Alaska

Granite Point, Point Lobos Reserve

Robert Weston

Socrates. Heracleitus is supposed to say that all things are in motion and nothing at rest; he compares them to the stream of a river, and says that you cannot go into the same water twice.

--Plato, *Cratylus*

We need this stuff to be solid, don't we?
No shifting about beneath the feet, please!

But it only takes a tremor or two
To realize that all is not as it seems:
No *terra firma* here.

Earth slipping a few inches along Loma Prieta,
And down come freeways and highways
Rolling like sheets of tin.
Unimaginable force!

Unimaginable too the time line here.
1,143,000¹ human lifetimes ago
The stuff I'm standing on was boiling
Seven miles under the eggshell crust of the earth,
Hot enough to be hell, and laced with liquid crystal.

Chilling out, it floated east with the Pacific Plate
Until it met up somewhere south of the border
With a tougher bit of eggshell called continental North
America.

We're not talking bumper cars here:
More like the immovable meeting the unstoppable,
A grinding push so powerful that rocks shatter like a
windshield
Meeting a hardball, and the slow dive of the Pacific Plate
Raises mountains like a root buckles asphalt.

786,000² lifetimes ago,
Deep water spewed down a crevice in this granodiorite,
Dumping pebbles, sand, and mud.
We're talking deep here, half a mile or more.
Creatures burrowed in this sediment,
Leaving tracks and traces in the sand and mud,
Until it all got squeezed so tight we call it stone.

And now, a mere 286,000³ lifetimes back, the whole darn
thing

1	80,010,000 years
2	55,020,000 years
3	20,020,000 years

Shifts and starts moving north. And up she rises,
Like a slow breaching whale,
Buoyed by the fire down below,
Bringing the Carmelo and Salinian layer cake into the
light.
It only took 280,000⁴ of those lifetimes to get here, lurching
A few inches a year along the San Andreas Fault.

Of course, water has had its way,
Pounding and surging, eating away the softer stuff,
Splitting faults and fissures,
Leaving the underlying granite sculpted like chaos,
Glittering with crystals and veined with cracks
Filled with feldspar and quartz,
Layered with sand, mud, and stones tumbled down river-
beds,
Embedded in the first cement.
In the end, water always has its way.

The sea is calm today.
No slow Pacific swell heaves
Into the rocky coast
Where upraised rocks lie rusting
In the air. Otters dive
And float, warming their hands against the sun,
And variegated seals
Perch awkwardly on rocks,
Taking a breather from the cold foraging.

Why can't I feel some action here?

Slow moving, grinding, invisible to a human eye,
This coast is leaving town again.

Like old Heracleitus said, everything is moving—
Earth, air, and water—powered by fire.

And, within me too, things are shifting,
Perpetual momentum,
Though hardly visible to a human eye.

Just because we cannot see it
Does not mean it is not happening.
It hasn't been here forever, you see:
Just 6,000⁵ lifetimes.
And it won't be here forever, either.
Give it another 100 million years and we'll be passing by
Alaska

4	19,600,000 years
5	420,000 years

UNDER MY BRIM: RAPTORS

Ranger Chuck Bancroft

(see cover for photos)

I've been at the Reserve for 27 years, four months, and a bunch of days, and I must say this has been one of the best spring seasons I've ever experienced. Trusty camera in hand, I've watched the meadows on the north end of the Reserve as well as Big Mound Meadow on the south shore. I've patrolled and visited the Carmel River Lagoon and Wetlands Natural Preserve, and even drove out Carmel Valley Road to find the elusive eagles that haven't been that elusive at all.

I recently bought *Raptors of California* by Hans Peeters and Pam Peeters, a great book that tells us the term *hawk* is actually an imprecise term that has been used instead of or interchangeably with *raptor* or *bird of prey* for centuries.

The Peeters' say that most of California's day-active raptors are called "true hawks," with the eagles being the largest group. They go on to say that falcons and vultures are in a separate family. All of these birds feed chiefly on meat and have a hooked beak, and strong claws for seizing and holding onto their prey. And when watching them soar, or hang in the air, or sitting in a tree watching carefully everything that moves with those great eyes, they are truly magnificent.

Here's a rundown on some of the birds I've been watching (smallest to the largest):

The American kestrel is often seen hovering over Big Mound Meadow, or the meadows on the north end of the Reserve toward Monastery Beach and up

the road at the Carmel River restoration area (a part of Carmel River Lagoon and Wetlands Natural Preserve). They feed on small mammals and insects.

The white-tailed kite works Big Mound Meadow, the meadows around the Hudson House all the way to Monastery Beach, and over the grasslands at the restoration area. Kites can just hang in the air with their wings rapidly moving, eyes watching for a rodent, and then plummeting to the ground to catch their prey.

The open areas around the Reserve and the field at the restoration area have been superb hunting areas for the Cooper's hawk. This medium sized accipiter can be found sitting on a tall bare tree and even shorter bushes. They are so agile they can pursue their prey through the trees and shrubs where their larger cousins just can't maneuver.

The red-shouldered hawk can work the meadows as well as trees and shrubs. From their perches, they hunt primarily mammals, amphibians, and some reptiles. I always see them sitting on the power lines at Highway 1 and Rio Road. They fly over the entrance to Point Lobos all the time to a nesting site just across the street.

The red-tailed hawk is magnificent as it sits on the updraft over Sea Lion Point or soars over the meadows on the north end of the Reserve. I've seen several pairs working the restoration area just north of us. I've been fortunate to capture several really good images while in flight, their beautiful reddish brown tail easy to see and so remarkable when backlit.

Finally this year, I was able to get images of the peregrine falcon as it sat in a snag behind China Cove. This sleek and powerful falcon has long been considered the epitome of speed and power. I was on patrol one day at the beach and watched as the peregrine went into its dive and took a band-tailed pigeon right out of the air. It proceeded to sit on the tall granite outcropping plucking feathers left and right before devouring the prey. And wouldn't you know it . . . I didn't have my camera. The gulls, cormorants, pigeons, and others really need to be wary with two pair of peregrines in the Reserve. One pair is around the Bird Islands and the other pair is working between Big Dome and Pinnacle Point.

And just a few weeks ago I drove out Carmel Valley road where I've been told that on many occasions a pair of eagles work the pastures for ground squirrels between 12:30 pm and 2 pm everyday. And there I was driving by when I saw one of the eagles on the ground feeding on a tasty ground squirrel. What a treat! For me and the eagle! Now all I need is an image of the bald eagle.

Our old friend the turkey vulture has been very evident this spring due to harbor seal pupping season. Some pups and mothers die each year from various causes. But the vulture with its great sense of smell soon spirals down to help remove the sad creatures from the beach. Recycling is very important and the vultures certainly do their share.

observations

Sparky Starkweather, State Park Squirrel

No one said squirrels never make mistakes. I received a wonderful note card from Sonia Cook of Pacific Grove, CA



yellow-bellied slider courtesy Chuck Bancroft

informing me I had misidentified the turtle in the winter issue of this magazine as a western pond turtle when in fact it was a yellow-bellied slider native to southeastern Virginia to northern Florida. Sonia was in fact the person who reported the wanderings of the turtle during those horrendous storms during the first week in January this year. Probably a household pet that somehow got out and was carried down to the beach by the rapidly running river.



Thank you Sonia for keeping us on track. I really should have done my homework.

Recently we received two wonderful emails from Robin Truran of Worcestershire, England in early April. Mr. Truran said, "While on vacation in California last week (from the UK) I was lucky enough to see and photograph two long-tailed



the most beautiful places on the coast, with such an abundance of wildlife."

Thank you Mr. and Mrs. Truran for your wonderful images and sincere joy in visiting our little spot on the coast.

Mr. Truran's images were taken on the Sand Hill Trail where it meets the South Shore Trail on the south side of Sea Lion Point.

weasels. We visited Point Lobos on three occasions. We had visited before three years ago, and it was top of the list for this trip--my wife and I just love the place. . . We would be really pleased if you would use my pictures. I have been on holiday on two occasions to California, and visited Point Lobos at least two or three times per trip. It is one of

From Wikipedia: The **Long-tailed Weasel** (*Mustela frenata*) is the most widely distributed mustelid in the New World. Its range extends from southern Canada through most of the United States to Mexico, Central America and the northern parts of South America. It is generally found in open or semi-open habitats near water.

*western pond turtle courtesy Wikipedia
long-tailed weasels courtesy Robin Truran*

A Breeding Season

Marlene Testaguzza



Each spring/summer season, something wondrous happens on the Bird Islands at Point Lobos State Reserve. Hundreds of birds prepare their nests, lay eggs, and raise their young. As part of my new volunteer training requirements in 2007 I chose to observe the most easily seen birds. This is what I saw.

Even though the western gull and the black-crowned night herons prey upon the chicks of other species, they and the Brandt's cormorant are nesting neighbors on the islet. There seem to be boundaries, however. Cormorants nest on the top of the islet, gulls nest around the periphery, and the herons nest on the steep rocky side. The Brandt's cormorants, sporting their breeding bright blue throat patches, build appropriately spaced saucer-like nests in scrapes. Their nests are made out of seaweed and other marine vegetation. Females lay three or four pale blue eggs that both parents incubate for up

to 40-50 days. Chicks hatch at different times during the incubation period, so the hatchlings are different sizes. There is much flying back and forth between nest and ocean as the parents forage for food and bring vegeta-

tion to the nest.

As the days pass, the nests become crowded. I notice groups of unrelated chicks gather outside the nests, seemingly guarded by an adult. They are forming creches, a protective strategy. (I've seen penguin chicks in Antarctica do this, too.)

Between 35 days and ten weeks, the chicks begin to flex their wings, and then try the air. Finally, they glide down to the sea. They learn to search for fish by diving down to the sea



This Brandt's cormorant chick is stretching her young wings and proudly displaying her elegantly webbed foot.

floor. Pelagic cormorants, in contrast, search among the rocks.

Double-crested cormorants, who visit the area, pursue shoals of fish in the open water. Different species. different niches. Hopefully, there is enough for all.

On the side of the islet facing Pelican Point, a few black-crowned night herons nest. Not considered seabirds, as gulls and cormorants are, these wading birds commonly nest near freshwater streams, marches, lakes, and even grasslands. But here at Point Lobos, they nest on outcroppings directly above the sea. The mating pairs of herons, sporting beautiful breeding plumes on their heads, greet each other at the nest by touching bills. Sometimes one, probably the male, brings a twig and gives it to the female, and she arranges it in the nest. She lays three pale blue-green eggs that hatch in 24-26 days.

As their name suggests, they normally forage for food from dusk to dawn. During the nesting season, however, they hunt during the day for fish, other aquatic animals, insects, and even small mammals. It has been reported that these birds bait fish. That is, they place insects or flowers, etc., on the surface of the water to attract fish, then stand and wait to catch them.

As the chicks grow, they look nothing like their parents except for yellow feet and red eyes. They won't have all their adult plumage for two years. They are tenacious, clinging to the vegetation, which in turn clings to the rocky side of the

islet. And they are rambunctious, sometimes chasing their parents until they fly away! These birds may live more than 20 years.

Several western gulls' nests built of the scant vegetation on the rocky ground are tended by their parents. They contain three eggs each. At the one nest I focus on, two hatch after 25-35 days of incubation. They are not helpless. Born with open eyes, a downy coat, and capable of walking soon after hatching, they are almost immediately exploring. (Ed. note: these are known as precocial birds.)

Their parents' constant attention is impressive. When the chicks move to a shady shelter

nearby on sliding soil that is slanted toward the ocean, the anxious parents try to coax the chicks up toward safer ground. Do the chicks listen? Most of the time, no. After 35 days to ten



A black-crowned heron brings a twig to his mate. Photo by M. Testaguzza

weeks, the two chicks can fly up a little off the ground, then down again. One seems to lead--the other watching, and then following. Then one day, I arrive at my view-

ing spot, and they are gone.

It is known that gull parents may continue to feed their chicks after they have fledged. A couple of weeks later in the

season, when I am walking along the Carmel River State Beach, I notice two young gulls floating on the calm bay. Nearby, perched on a rock, is an adult gull. When the young ones fly away, the adult joins them. I can't help but wonder, could it be them?

I'm told 2007 was a "normal" breeding season. But now it is 2008, and quite a different story. It is early May and on the islet there are no Brandt's cormorants beginning to nest, and only a few gulls nests and black-crowned night herons. And the large island, Bird Island, looks bare. Will it be a late year? Has there been a reduction in population? Could food problems, pollution, oil spill fallout, disease, or relocation be affecting the breeding season? We'll just have to wait and see.

Deep Diving



Deep diving (>130 ft.) in the underwater canyon of Point Lobos State Marine Reserve requires special training and equipment. As well as the gas mixture he breathes during his dive, the diver here carries a "deco" bottle containing an enriched oxygen mixture for use during his decompression stop. Surrounded by a school of blue rockfish, he surveys a rocky outcropping covered with strawberry anemones and California hydrocoral. See the Winter '07 issue of Point Lobos magazine (available online) for more about the expanded Point Lobos State Marine Protected Areas. Photo courtesy Phil Sammet

A FOSSIL SUBMARINE CANYON

Ed Clifton

Imagine life on the floor of a submarine canyon, a quarter-mile beneath the surface of the sea. A quiet place most of the time – lightless, bestirred occasionally by a gentle flow of water through the canyon. It is home to a host of animals living on or within the sand and mud of the canyon floor. Yet at great intervals, this serenity is destroyed. Violent avalanches of sand and mud pour down from the canyon's upper reaches, uprooting and smothering the fauna with layers of sand inches to feet thick. And these are the smaller events! The larger of these avalanches impel jostling masses of gravel several feet thick along the canyon floor, scouring it away in their passage. More catastrophic yet are giant submarine landslides, plowing like giant bulldozers through the canyon before coming to rest.

No human has ever seen such phenomena, yet their existence is documented in the Carmelo Formation, the sedimentary rock exposed along the South Shore and the north-eastern part of the Reserve. Geologists from all parts of the world visit Point Lobos to examine this extraordinary

example of a fossil submarine canyon. Although the ages indicated by the few fossils found in the Carmelo Forma-

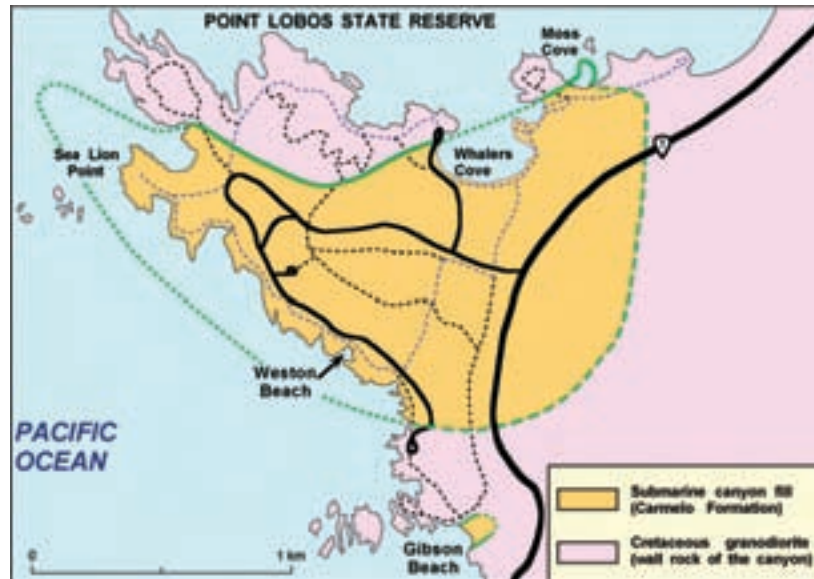


Figure 1. Distribution of the ancient submarine canyon fill at Point Lobos. (The green line signifies the boundary of the submarine canyon.)

tion are imprecise, paleontologists agree that 50-60 million years ago, the sand, mud, and gravel that eventually formed this rock accumulated in water depths of 600 and 1500 feet.

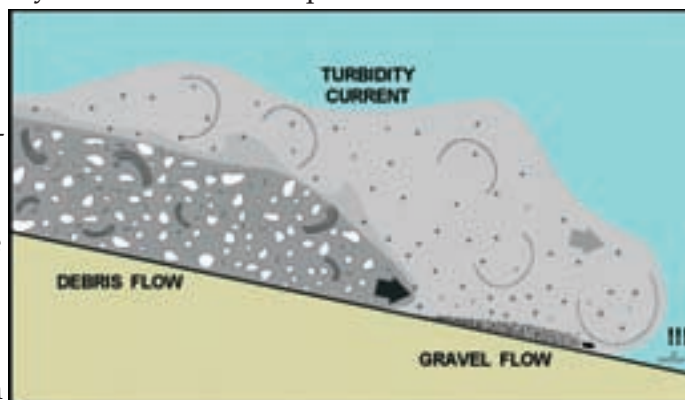


Figure 2. Different processes carry sand and gravel into the deep sea: avalanching mixtures of sand, mud, and water (turbidity currents), submarine landslides (debris flows), and gravel flows driven by turbidity currents. Fanciful submarine indicates possible sizes of these flows.

How can we reconstruct this ancient world? It far predates the existence of our species, and submarine canyons remain

today mysterious, inaccessible places about which little is known. Features of the rock at Point Lobos provide the clues.

As submarine avalanches of sand and mud (turbidity currents)

lose their energy, the coarsest sand rains to the sea floor, followed by successively smaller particles. The result is a "graded bed" in which the size of the sand decreases from bottom to top. Graded sand beds, inches to feet thick, abound in the Carmelo Formation.

Where turbidity currents drive a jostling mass of gravel at its base, the pebbles in the gravel sort themselves upward from fine to coarse, as one might expect in a shaken sack of popcorn. Upward coarsening is a common motif of the conglomerate (cemented gravel) beds at Point Lobos.

Undersea landslides produce chaotic masses of sand, mud, and gravel that can be

many feet thick. The larger ones plow into previously deposited sand and mud and push it ahead of them before coming to rest. Examples occur in the rock on the landward side of The Slot and on Sea Lion Point.

The rocks exposed on Weston Beach accumulated during a time of relative quiet in the ancient canyon. Sand layers here are thin, and mud is a common constituent. Gravel is almost nonexistent in the younger, upper part of these rocks. Ripples, like those on a modern sandy seabed, cross the upper surfaces of some sandstone beds here. The rocks bear an astonishing array of traces left by animals that lived on or beneath the ancient seafloor. Many are dwelling burrows, tubes in the sand or mud that became filled with more sand. Others resulted from animals feeding beneath the sea floor.

Elsewhere, as along the South Shore and at Sea Lion Point, conglomerate evinces periods of violence, when giant turbidity currents and submarine landslides dominated the canyon. Nearly all evidence of life in the canyon during these times has vanished owing to the erosive force of these powerful processes. The triggers for these convulsive episodes remain unknown – giant earthquakes, mega-tsunamis, or just a pronounced fall in sea level remain possibilities.

The Carmelo Formation provides an amazing natural laboratory. Although its rocks accumulated tens of millions of years ago, it can teach us much about our modern world.



Figure 3. Layers of sandstone at Weston Beach. Each one is coarse at the bottom and fine at the top, the product of a sandy avalanche (turbidity current).



Figure 4. Layers of sandstone and conglomerate at Sea Lion Point. Pebbles in the conglomerate layers are progressively larger toward the top, indicating that they were colliding within the ancient gravel as it moved across the sea floor (a similar distribution of sizes as that in a shaken sack of popcorn).



Figure 5. Ripple marks (green arrow) on a sand bed surface at Weston Beach. The rock also displays the passage marks (yellow arrow) of an animal that lived with in the sand. Forces within the earth rotated these layers to a nearly vertical position.



Figure 6. Top of a sandstone bed at Weston Beach that has been scrambled by animals that lived within the sand about 55 million years ago. Tube just below pen is a burrow that may have housed a shrimp-like animal.



Seen Through My Lens

David Hibbard

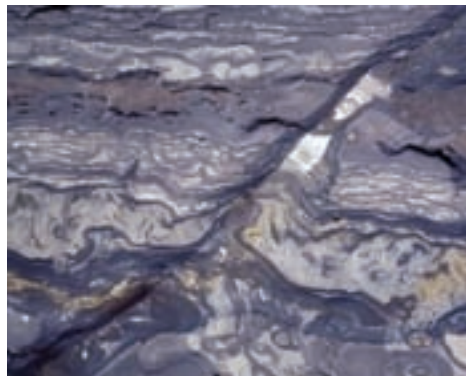
I have been taking photographs at Point Lobos ever since my first visit at age seven (I used a Brownie camera then). Over the years, I have been privileged to witness some extraordinary moments at Point Lobos when light and subject have come together in exactly the right way. Here are several of the most recent.

Great Cypress Tree, Pinnacle Cove. I had photographed this tree before, but never as successfully. On this occasion, I used a short telephoto zoom lens to pare away everything that wasn't essential to the composition. While I love the colors and textural contrasts of this spot, in my previous shots of the tree I had included too much of its surroundings. In photography, as in life, less is often more.

Patterned Rock, Weston Beach. Timing made all the difference with this image. When I spotted the rock with its little pool of water, the morning fog had

nearly burned off. The scene alternately darkened and brightened as the shifting edge of the fog bank played peek-a-boo with the emerging sun.

In the shadowed moments, the rock patterns seemed flat and dull. In full sun, the rock and water surfaces reflected



too much glare. Yet there were also transitions when the wet rocks sparkled and a lovely, silvery sheen spread across the pool of water.

So I waited for such a moment. It lasted less time than it will take me to write this sentence.

Winter Surf, South Shore. On this day, some of the swells that rolled in were so enormous they completely engulfed the large rocks offshore from Bird Island. Before I took my first shot, I observed the rhythm of the waves and studied how they broke for at least fifteen minutes. Of course, it was impossible to time the breaking of the waves exactly. Of the many shots I took that morning, this one was by far the best.

Tips

Overcast light is often rewarding at Point Lobos. If the sun had been out when I took the picture of the cypress tree, the contrast of the scene would have been too harsh. I love working with the softer light of an overcast day: shadows are open and luminous, and colors reveal themselves.

Weston Beach is at its best when the tide is out. There are good low tide days throughout the year—I look for a tide of +1.5 feet or less that occurs between 10 a.m. and sunset.

Your personal safety should always come first. I took the picture of the wave from higher ground, well back from the surf.

Best times of the year for photography:

South Shore: Winter months.

The largest waves come in the wake of winter storms.

Weston Beach: Summer brings the greatest variety of life and color to the tide pools.

Pinnacle Cove: Late spring and summer for fog and mystery; late fall and winter for hard, clear, dramatic light.

David Hibbard is a fine art photographer based in Menlo Park. His first book, Natural Gestures, will be published later this year. You can see more of his work at Modernbook Gallery in Palo Alto, CA and at www.DavidHibbard.com.



Quotes from the Docent Log

edited by Stan Dryden



February 19: Rick Petit

An extraordinarily quiet day on the North Shore. Some rain midday, so an afternoon with few visitors. No wind, a near-imperceptible swell, and, under gray skies, a minus tide. In Whalers Cove: a heron on the western edge, statuesque; wary crabs methodically working the algae-covered rocks; scoters and grebes dotting, then breaking, the glassy surface. In Moss Cove, the muted day is accented by the bright orange of sea stars, and graced by a snowy egret stalking the shallows. Even off Coal Chute Point, the waters are calm, the kelp still. The view northwest recalls Ansel Adams; motionless, tranquil . . . our stunningly lovely world. The only sounds are a gentle lapping of waters, the *chip chip* of an unseen black phoebe, and the occasional snuffling of the seals, draped on their rocks.

Meanwhile, high in a ridge pine overhead, standing silent sentinel, a peregrine falcon.

February 19: Stan Dryden

This morning's light rain made it marginal to go out to the Reserve for my public walk. It was still raining when I got there, and the parking lot was practically empty. My marketing director, Wayne Kelley, was on the job but had not found any customers for my walk. Trainee Sally Smith and I stood around and watched the rain for several minutes, and just before I decided to scrub the walk a couple from San Diego got out of their car and asked for a tour. So off we went, later joined by a woman from Los Angeles, and then by a couple from London.

It turned out to be a most productive walk indeed. We saw over fifteen otters scattered around the perimeter of

Cypress Grove, including at least three pups. Lots of pelicans flew by, and oystercatchers were complaining in all directions. A junco sang to us from a tree at North Point, and we saw both red-shouldered and red-tail hawks. Oh, yes—we really didn't get very wet. Seven people went away very satisfied with the time well invested, including yours truly.

February 21: Connie Dallmann

Bird watching at Whalers Cove netted a double-crested cormorant, pelagic cormorants (never noticed their green sheen before), surf scoters, horned grebes, a great egret, and a great blue heron. On land: juncos and bushtits.

In the past few days I have seen mother and baby otters at Bird Island, Sand Hill Cove, Headland Cove, and in the Pit.

February 25: Hope Hale

Two young women reported seeing a mountain lion near Ichxenta Point at about 2 pm. I missed it.

March 2: Phyllis Hilton

It was a beautiful warm sunny day at the Information Station after all the cold and rain of the past two weeks. I didn't expect to see any whale spouts as I had heard that none had been seen for a few days. A visitor asked if there were whales in the area, and I said it was probably too late for the southern migration. As I said that, I looked out and saw a great spout, which the visitor had also seen. Other visitors showed up

and we eventually saw a separate group of whale spouts.

A large hawk with a very red breast (*most likely a red-shouldered hawk-SD, Ed.*) was perched on a distant pine tree, and visitors were observing and photographing it.

March 5: Carol Bloner

Thought we would be taking a solitary walk around Whalers Cove. It was late afternoon on a minus tide, and the sun's thin warmth was diminishing. We were not alone. A mother otter was sharing her abalone prize with her pup while a waiting gull remained hopeful but unfulfilled. Harbor seals draped every available rock; pelagic cormorants made repeated forays over the cove just to return empty billed to the cliff nesting sites. A great egret was flying west and a snowy egret shared a flat rock with an oystercatcher. One great blue heron was fishing while what I hope was a mate was resting in the top of the tree that houses last year's heron nest. Being alone was never better.

March 7: Joe and Pat Bova

On a beautiful day we walked out past Moss Cove to the grinding stone. A bobcat was sunning himself in the meadow by the grinding stone, and nearby a young buck was grazing. We also saw a great blue heron fishing in the Pit, a great egret, and many harbor seals. The fields were orange with poppies.

March 11: Dione Dawson

The March otter count was 34 adults and 13 pups, a count very similar to last month's. Again the North Shore produced the largest number, with many of the otters being moms with an accompanying pup. This seems to be the right time of year as an otter was hauled out on one of the Bird Rock islands, and there was a mating pair in the same area. As for other wild life, there were two strutting male turkeys



in the meadow near Hudson House. We also saw an otter who had been diving for food—leaving her sleeping pup on the surface—come up to find a seagull waiting to share the reward. The otter took one look and leapt in the air, driving the gull away with the pup sleeping peacefully during the ruckus!

March 13: Jinny Robertson

At the Info Station I noticed a visitor studying his highlighted paperback novel. He described himself as a fan of the popular writer, Phyllis Whitney, and this book, *The Flaming Tree*, begins and ends in Point Lobos. Mr. Philip Tyo is the creator of her official web site and travels the country photographing the scenes [Whitney] describes in her "Gothic romances." After an interesting conversation I sent him off to the Cypress Grove

Trail for his photographs. If anyone is interested, he plans to have the photos on the web site (www.phyllisawhitney.com) by fall.

March 16: Louise Stuart

A former navy diver was visiting Whalers Cabin. He used to dive to check the exterior of submarines, wearing suits and helmets similar to the one on display. They got their air from a compressor rather than a hand pump. His

helmet had a valve to release air when he wanted to sink. The extra weights were so heavy that he could not stand on his own when out of the water.

March 18: Marcia Malis

What an amazing morning! We saw whales circling, blowing, and surfacing in Whalers Cove for almost two hours. I only saw one, but visitors re-

ported seeing a calf as well. It/ they were within a dozen yards from shore, surfacing as I was watching an otter. What a thrilling sight—the closest I have been to whales when standing on the shore!

March 23: Jinny Robertson

Scurrying along to Granite Point on Friday I was surprised to come upon a young spotted bobcat the size of a small house cat lying in the grass just beside the trail above the Pit. It just stared at me as I continued on, not wishing to disturb it or to encounter a hostile mother. It was gone when I crept back, and so two days later I returned with my family to look for it. But first two visitors approached us saying they had just seen a large cat on Granite Point. Then, returning to my spot above the Pit, just beyond it we sadly found the unviolated body of a young bobcat. Was it the kit I had seen, or as we hoped, had his mother produced twins, and was now caring for her survivor on the Granite Point? We explored but are awaiting answers.

March 23: Norma Davis

Showed visitors two black oystercatchers, moon jellies, otters with pups, and—best of all—a peregrine falcon having Easter Sunday brunch, feathers flying, on a Monterey pine branch near China Cove.

March 25: Marty Renault

Gerry Low-Sabado, the speaker at our January meet-



ing, came by the Cabin today. While we were chatting, a German couple came in and were delighted when I introduced her as the great-grand daughter of Quock Mui. Then Gerry surprised all of us by talking to them in German! She sheepishly confessed that with all her research

in Chinese history she couldn't speak Chinese, but could get by with her high school German.

The latest development in Gerry's quest for her family's history was a phone call from a woman who is a descendent of the immigrants on the Chinese junk that sailed on from Point Lobos to Mendocino. Gerry knew that one of the junks had gone north from here, but had no further information. She is planning a meeting with the Mendocino lady to compare notes and family stories, perhaps piecing together missing facts that will help determine which village the immigrants started from and other mysteries.

March 29: Joy Osborne

On a morning public walk around Sea Lion Point, I saw many lone otters. The big surprises were two pairs, not rafting. Number one pair seemed a straight forward mating situation of two very brown, not grizzled otters rolling around together in the water. They were near shore, but not in a cove.

The other pair was a bit of a mystery. One was tagged, red and green, but I couldn't

tell where the tags were. One was grizzled-headed and had a red nose – aha, a sign of a female that had mated! The other was smaller, with no sign of grizzlement (white on the face). It pawed the female's belly considerably. Was this a mate or an offspring? The two otters hauled out on a conglomerate rock near shore and curled up together. Then the female started to groom the other otter's head, which soon had its nose in the female's groin and seemed to be suckling. I deduced that this was one huge baby, too big to get on board of Mom's stomach. Maybe it could not nurse in the water.

March 30: Jacolyn Harmer

Along the North Shore Trail there was a special sight: three brand new seal pups, with one mom still bloody from labor and another expelling the afterbirth, which immediately appeared on the gulls' radar. The three turkey vultures nearby must have been tuned to the wrong station.

I saw five pods of gray whales puff their way north, and hoped to catch a glimpse of the orca sighted a few days ago—no luck.

April 4: Joy Osborne

The Cypress Grove trail is full of new growth, especially



Above left: Witches Teeth courtesy Ann Muto
Seaside painted cups above courtesy Chuck Bancroft

Ceanothus sp., Zygadine lilies, buttercup, monkey flower, and Seaside painted cup. The scrub area east of the point should be called “Zygadine Alley.”

April 8: Dione Dawson

The April otter count was 33 adults and 9 pups. We still seem to be heavy on pups, a very good sign, and the trend for rafting off of the South Shore seems to have begun as the bulk of the count was there. It was a cold, cloudy day with turkey vultures en masse hovering and landing at the beach opposite the Whalers Cabin as they were feasting on what probably was harbor seal pup remains – there appeared to be several. An otter was seen hauled out on the rocks by Bird Island and in the Cannery Point area was the most unusual sight—an otter hauled out far from the water’s edge and in a place one would never consider looking. In fact, it was a visitor who alerted our counters to this location. The otter had climbed over all sorts of rocks and boulders to get to this hidden site that was at least fifty feet from the water, and was lying comfortably in a tide pool puddle grooming himself.

April 22: Jacolyn Harmer

I was nodding off at the Information Station when a mother and baby gray whale showed up at the mouth of Headland Cove. It looked like they wanted to climb out onto the parking lot!

April 27: Stan Dryden

Point Lobos was quiet on this Big Sur Marathon morning. A black-crowned night heron

nest that had been busily under construction two weeks earlier now appeared to be abandoned. Too bad, because this one is easily seen from Pelican Point. An adult bird was apparently brooding eggs on another nest, at the exact spot these birds have nested in previous years. One night heron was seen foraging at low tide at Weston Beach.

There were very few active Brandt’s cormorant nests on Bird Island. Lots of milling around, and several birds gathering kelp from the sea, but the shelf of the island was not covered with nests as expected at this time of year. There were several nests on the island between Pelican Point and Bird Island.

The happy news is the sighting of two brown pelicans flying along South Shore, the first I’ve seen since they all went south to their nesting grounds earlier this year.

May 3: Stan Dryden

First Saturday of Point Lobos’ 75th anniversary celebration. Went up to Granite Point to spy on the great blue herons’ nests on Coal Chute Point. Saw two nests, one with two chicks, possibly more. An adult appeared to be brooding eggs in the other nest.

May 6: Dione Dawson

We had a lot of very helpful new eyes for counting this month. It was great having them along, and I hope they enjoyed it as much as the “regulars.” The count was excellent, the best in ages, and



photo courtesy Les Ellis

strangely enough exactly the same amount of adult otters (64) as last year and ten more otter pups (19) than previously, leaving us with a count of 64 adults and 19 pups. An otter was seen hauled out on the North Shore in a very lounging fashion and just off of Sea Lion Point appeared a mom whale with calf no more than 30 yards off shore with stealth breathing very apparent. (“Stealth breathing” is a term used to describe the soft exhalations that whales use when they don’t want to alert predators to their presence – as when orcas may be nearby. – SD, Ed.)

We also included the harbor seal count, which resulted in a total of 96 adults and 43 pups. The adult count seemed down from previous years, but our timing was not the greatest, as a low tide seems to produce the best results and we were just about in the midst of low/high tide. Also an interesting factor was a large tree in the water in Bluefish Cove partially blocking the beach area on one of the little coves which has always been a popular spot for moms and pups.

Announcements

New Entrance Hours and Fees Effective June 1

8 am until half hr. after sunset, year round.

\$10 with or without map. \$9 seniors.

Walk or bike in free.

Point Lobos' Online Store

Show the love! Buy Point Lobos 75th Anniversary commemorative tees, mugs, caps, bags, baby apparel and more online. Proceeds benefit *Point Lobos Association*.



photo version of logo:
www.CafePress.com/pointlobos



“watercolor” version of logo:
www.CafePress.com/pointlobos75wc



*Moonlight photo from last year's event
courtesy David Hibbard*

Save the Date: Member's Party and Walk by Moonlight, Oct. 11, 2008

Join fellow members at a light buffet featuring Glen McGowan's famous clam chowder, and afterwards walk in the light of a harvest moon. Watch for more information in the Fall issue of this magazine.

Point Lobos Magazine Now Online

PDF versions of past issues (through Winter 2006) of the magazine can be viewed and downloaded free at www.PointLobos.org/Magazine.html

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