

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve

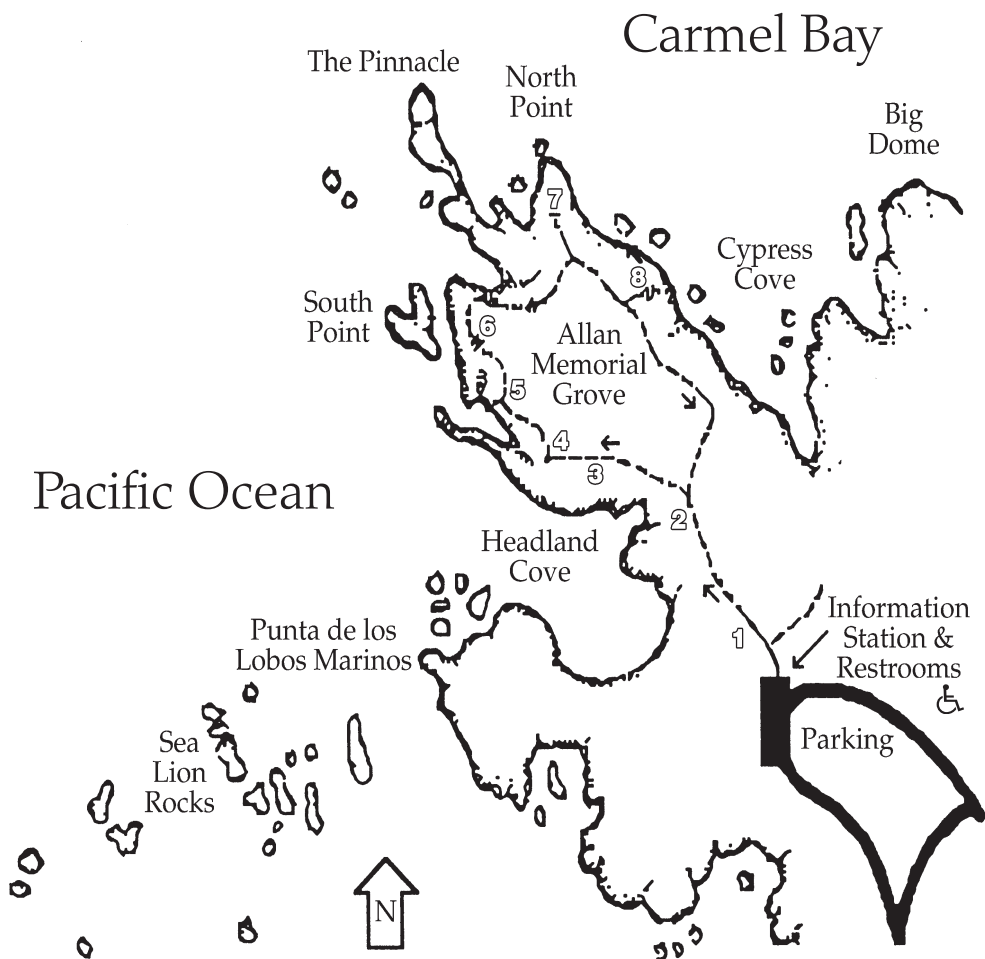
# ***Cypress Grove Trail***

and

**Allan Memorial Grove**



This loop trail of great beauty takes about a half hour to walk (0.8 mile). It winds through coastal scrub and woods to cliffs with dramatic and spectacular ocean views. Bring binoculars.



## ***Cypress Grove Trail Guide***

- |                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. The Coastal Scrub Plant Community | 5. Sea Lion Rocks Viewpoint  |
| 2. Trail Junction                    | 6. South Point               |
| 3. Headland Cove Viewpoint           | 7. North Point               |
| 4. At the Rounded Boulder Views      | 8. Big Dome and Cypress Cove |

This Reserve is held in trust for generations yet unborn.

Please remember to comply with the Reserve rules:

- Stay on the trail. Remain within the guide wires.
- Take nothing with you but memories and photographs.
- Do not smoke, eat or drink on the trail.

No numbered signs appear on this trail.  
Please refer to this text and to the map (opposite).

# **1 The Coastal Scrub**

## **Plant Community**

Begin your walk with a good look at the Poison Oak warning sign. This plant is sometimes bare of leaves, but even in this condition it can cause severe skin irritation if touched. Poison Oak, a natural part of the coastal scrub plant community, is found throughout the Reserve where it often grows along the trails. Two other shrubs seen here in abundance are Coyote Brush and the gray-green California Sagebrush. Colorful blossoms appearing seasonally include blue Wild Lilac (*Ceanothus*), orange Bush Monkey-flower, white Poison Hemlock and yellow Lizard Tail.



Poison Oak



Monterey Pine

## **2 Trail Junction**

At the trail junction, notice the Monterey Pine tree behind the Allan Memorial Grove sign. The pine has long needles and large, pear-shaped cones. Turn right to compare it with a Monterey Cypress tree which has tiny, overlapping, scaly leaves and walnut-sized cones. Point Lobos is famous

for this grove of Monterey Cypress trees. These trees have a very restricted natural distribution. The only other native grove in the world is found at Cypress Point on the north side of Carmel Bay. More widespread ancient groves may have succumbed to changing climatic conditions. Monterey Cypress trees are commonly cultivated for landscape uses in many areas.

Gray-green Lace Lichen hangs like a beard from the trees and bushes along the trail. A lichen is an association of a fungus and an alga in which the fungus provides the framework and condenses moisture from the atmosphere, while the alga produces food by photosynthesis. Lace Lichen flourishes only where air quality is excellent, thus, it is a key indicator of the health of our cypress forest.



Monterey Cypress

### **3 Headland Cove Viewpoint**

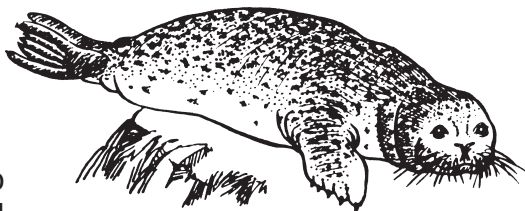
Now, turn left and walk through the woods until you reach a large open area. From here you can look down into Headland Cove and see the floating brown seaweeds, or kelp. These are anchored to the rocks on the sea floor by rootlike holdfasts. Much like a terrestrial forest, the kelp forest provides habitat and food for a wide variety of animal life, such as marine snails, kelp crabs and sea urchins. These animals feed on the kelp. Other invertebrates attach to this seaweed and feed by filtering out plankton from the water. Fish hide in the canopy where the waters are calm and the light is dim.

Southern Sea Otters often rest in the kelp. If you look carefully, you may find them floating on their backs or diving for food. You may also see Harbor Seals on the rocks below.

#### **• HARBOR SEAL •**

*Phoca vitulina*

From the Headland Cove viewpoint look down and left. Harbor Seals often haul out on this rocky shore. Use these clues to spot these camouflaged animals.



They:

- lie close to the water on the rocks or on the beach
- are barely distinguishable from the rocks
- are torpedo-shaped, up to 6 feet in length, and up to 300 pounds
- come in various colors from creamy white to brown or black and are usually spotted
- are often motionless, usually silent

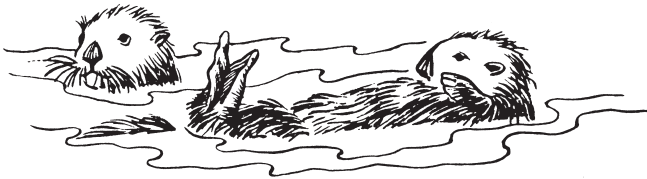
## • CALIFORNIA SEA LION •

*Zalophus californianus*

From the Headland Cove and Sea Lion Rocks viewpoints look far out at the offshore rocks. You may hear the sea lions barking before you see them. Here are tips for finding this noisy resident:



- they sit with heads back and noses skyward, or lie close to each other, draped on the rocks
- sometimes they rest together in the water, each with a flipper in the air to help control their body temperature
- adult males are up to 8 feet in length, up to 850 pounds
- color ranges from dark brown to tawny yellow
- most migrate south to mate in late spring, leaving a small, non-breeding population here



## • SOUTHERN SEA OTTER •

*Enhydra lutris nereis*

From viewpoints at Headland Cove and Cypress Cove, look for otters both inside and outside the kelp beds. Look carefully; even veteran otter watchers can be fooled by Bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) heads, which can look like otters.

Here are hints to find these furry mammals. They:

- are in the water, usually in kelp
- look like a log with bumps on each end — the head and hind feet
- may be floating on their backs to rest or groom, or diving for food
- are up to 4-1/2 feet in length, including the tail
- have an average weight of 45 pounds for females, 65 pounds for males
- have deep brown fur and often have a whitish head

## ***4 At the Rounded Boulder***

Continue along the trail and stop at the rounded boulder. The boulder is a good example of the Santa Lucia granodiorite found along this coast. It was formed deep in the earth where rock melted and recrystallized about 80 million years ago. Portions of this recrystallized rock subsequently were pushed to the surface and constitutes the granodiorite that we see. The two native Monterey Cypress groves have grown mainly on soil formed from the decomposition of these igneous rocks.

The sedimentary rock across Headland Cove and along the south shore is part of the Carmelo Formation, a complex deposit of conglomerate and sandstone, thought to have been laid down by underwater landslides and avalanches some 50-55 million years ago. The colorful, rounded rocks cemented into the sandstone matrix are of volcanic origin.

## ***5 Sea Lion Rocks Viewpoint***

The Sea Lion Rocks viewpoint is identified by the downed, weathered, silvery cypress tree polished by resting visitors. Look at the distant offshore rocks where large numbers of California Sea Lions haul out. A few may climb to the top of the rocks where you can see their silhouettes.

Birds often seen on these rocks include Brown Pelicans and black, long-necked cormorants.

## 6 *South Point*

When you come out of the woods, you are at South Point. Fifteen miles to the south is the lighthouse on Point Sur; forty miles to the north you may see Santa Cruz.

Between December and early May look for California Gray Whales, which swim close to the shore as they migrate between the Bering Sea and Baja California, Mexico.

Two cormorant species are found in the Reserve year-round, the Pelagic Cormorant and the Brandt's Cormorant. Look for them on the Pinnacle, the outermost rock. Between March and August they nest on the rocks offshore.

The Pelagic Cormorant nests on the steep sides of cliffs. You can find the nests by looking above the white streaks of bird droppings on the rocks. The Brandt's Cormorant

nests in large colonies on sloping or flat surfaces. Western Gulls (with slate-gray wings) also nest here and on other inaccessible rocks throughout the Reserve.



Brandt's Cormorant

As you descend the steps, look up at the natural wall of granite where the succulent Bluff Lettuce grows in crevices. In late summer, its pale yellow blossoms will top a pinkish stem above the basal circle of gray-green leaves. Ahead on the trail, depending on the season, you may see yellow Lizard Tail, red-orange Seaside Painted Cup and lavender Seaside Daisy.

Observe the velvety, rust-colored alga growing on trees and rocks as you continue along the trail. This alga, *Trentepohlia*, makes its own food and does not directly harm the trees on which it grows. The color comes from carotene, the same

pigment that gives color to carrots.

You are approaching one of the photographer's favorite spots, overlooking the Pinnacle.



Lizard Tail



Seaside Painted Cup

## **7** *North Point*

Follow the trail through coastal scrub to a junction in the woods. A short trail to the left leads to large boulders where you may sit and contemplate Carmel Bay. This is North Point.

As you look across the bay, left to right, view the outlines of the other native Monterey Cypress forest, the greens of the Pebble Beach golf course, the white sands of Carmel Beach, and the coarse yellow sands of the Carmel River mouth.

What you cannot see is an underwater canyon. The water reaches a depth of 1,200 feet between North Point and



Pebble Beach golf course. From February through September, cold water rich in mineral nutrients wells up from below along the entire west coast. Near Point Lobos, water masses of differing salinity and temperatures meet and overlap. This mixture, along with proximity to the underwater canyon with its variety of depth zones and rocks, provides added conditions for an exceptionally rich marine habitat.



Seaside Daisy

It is the cold, upwelled water (48°–50°F.) that causes the warmer moisture-laden air above to condense into the fog bank seen off the coast in summer. When inland areas become hot during the day, a resulting sea breeze pushes the fog up against the coastline and inland. Thus, summers here are apt to be foggy. The shell fragments that you will see along the path were left by Native Americans of the Ohlone peoples who ate mussels, abalone, and other shellfish they collected at sites such as this along the coast. They used the shells for ornaments and to fashion fishhooks.

## **8 *Big Dome and Cypress Cove Views***

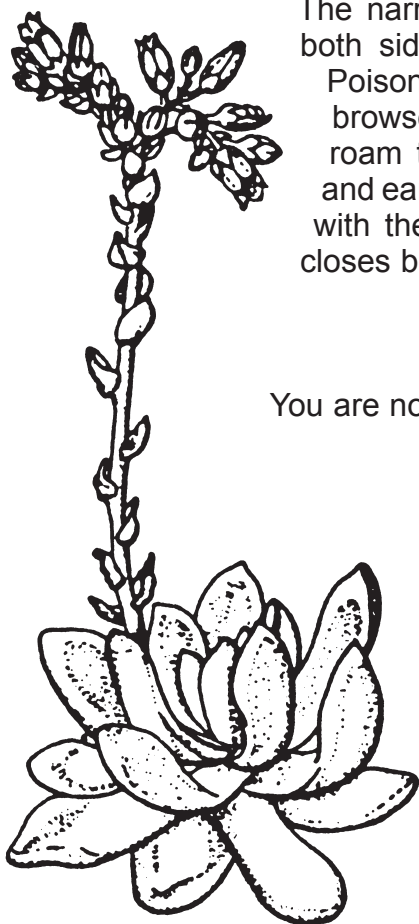
The next side trail leads left to a view of Cypress Cove and Big Dome. At 260 feet, Big Dome is the highest point in the Reserve. Monterey Cypress trees cling here in the barest minimum of granitic soil needed to sustain life. Bluff Lettuce dots the cliffs. Look for sea otters around the mouth of the cove.

Returning now to the main trail, you will soon turn right at an open meadow and start walking back through coastal scrub.

Walk about 40 feet and look to your left. Through the brush you will see a large pile of sticks about four feet high — a woodrat house. The Dusky-footed Woodrat is not the scaly-tailed city rat that lives on garbage. This shy, native, nocturnal pack rat is a vegetarian. It builds a sturdy house on the ground or in a tree. The house contains many entrances and chambers, with tunnels for escaping from nighttime predators such as bobcats, foxes and owls. A house is inhabited only by one adult, but if vacated, will be used by successive generations.

The narrow animal paths in the brush on both sides of the trail are bordered with Poison Oak. Here the Black-tailed Deer browse and, along with other animals, roam the Reserve in the late afternoon and early morning. In order not to interfere with these activity patterns, the Reserve closes before sunset.

You are now leaving the Cypress Grove.



Bluff Lettuce

## ***History of the Allan Memorial Grove***

The public has long been aware of the importance of caring for these special Monterey Cypress trees and preserving them for future generations. Point Lobos in the early days had many owners who put the land to various uses — pastureland, a whaling station, an abalone cannery, a granite quarry and a shipping point for coal. In 1888, numerous claimants to the land banded together to form the Carmelo Land and Coal Company and started a real estate development at Whalers Cove. Ten years later the company sold 640 acres to A. M. Allan. He limited the uses of his land and proceeded to buy back the lots which had been sold to others. Recognizing the value of this cypress grove, Allan erected a fence, added a toll gate, and allowed only picnickers to enter. In 1933, Allan's heirs donated these 15 acres in memory of Allan and his wife, Satie, and sold most of the present Reserve to the California State Park system.



Point Lobos State Natural Reserve  
Route 1, Box 62 Carmel, CA 93923  
831-624-4909  
website: [pointlobos.org](http://pointlobos.org)

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