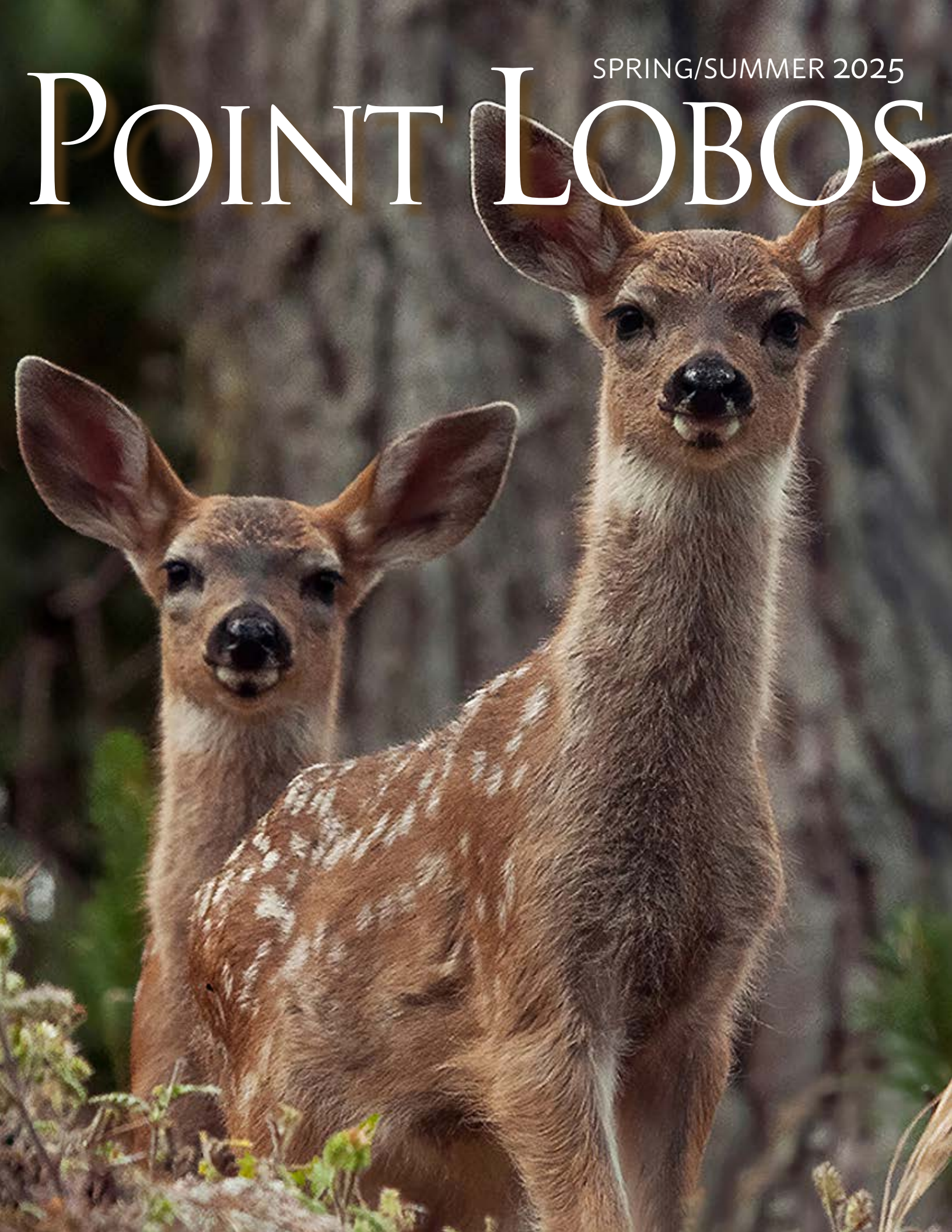
SPRING/SUMMER 2025

Point Lobos



POINT LOBOS FOUNDATION

Our mission is to protect and nurture Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, to educate and inspire visitors to preserve its unique natural and cultural resources, and to strengthen the network of Carmel Area State Parks. **pointlobos.org**

A mule deer among the trentepohlia, a green algae that appears orange. Photo by Gregory Pimentel.

Contents

Cover: Two fawns on the North Shore Trail. Photo by Chuck Bancroft.

Center Spread: Mound Meadow as seen from Weston Beach. Photo by Dave Evans.

Steffanie Gamecho brings 20 plus years of experience in strategy, business development and nonprofit consulting to the Point Lobos Foundation as Executive Director. She also leads the ParkIT! project, working with California State Parks to protect Point Lobos and Carmel Area State Parks in both roles. A dedicated conservationist, she serves on the board of the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy and supports local grant-making through the Community Foundation for Monterey County.

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Conservation in action

2024 set the stage for future sustainability

by Steffanie Gamecho

Before 2025 skips by, I want to reflect on our incredible past year and share our vision for the future. It is such a privilege to serve as Executive Director of the Point Lobos Foundation, working alongside talented staff and a dedicated community committed to the protection and stewardship of one of California's most treasured natural landscapes.

Our mission — to protect and nurture Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, educate and inspire visitors and strengthen the network of Carmel Area State Parks — guides every decision we make, and your unwavering support has been instrumental in our success.

In 2024, we made significant strides in expanding access to the Reserve for underserved communities. We launched a scholarship program that provided children from Community Partnership for Youth with immersive outdoor experiences at Summer Adventures Camp.

Additionally, we supported docent-led educational walks for children from CHISPA communities in Salinas, Castroville and Greenfield, fostering early connections to nature that will last a lifetime.

Our commitment to stewardship remained strong. We invested in trail maintenance, invasive species removal and native habitat restoration to ensure the ecological health of the Reserve. Visitor safety was also a top priority, with the implementation of pedestrian crossing markers and the repainting of crosswalks.

A major milestone of 2024 was the drafting of the Long-Term Conservation and Stewardship Program in support of, and in collaboration with, California State Parks. This initiative includes four critical infrastructure assessments that will inform strategic improvements across Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, Carmel River State Beach and Ishxenta State Park. By taking a proactive, long-term approach, we are laying the foundation for sustainable visitation and preservation for the next century.

In 2025, we remain dedicated to sustaining our current support while broadening our impact. This year the Long-Term Conservation and Stewardship Program begins with two critical assessments focused on utilities and sea level rise.

Funding for the docent program will increase by 20 percent, further strengthening one of the most respected volunteer programs within State Parks. In addition, we will advance key research initiatives, including monitoring of Highway 1 wildlife crossings from Ishxenta State Park to the Reserve and an expanded bat monitoring program to deepen understanding of local biodiversity.

Your generosity is at the heart of everything we do. Thanks to you — our dedicated members, donors and partners — Point Lobos and the Carmel Area State Parks receive the critical resources needed for protection, expanded access for underserved communities, and thoughtful stewardship to ensure visitation for generations to come.

In this issue of the magazine, we celebrate the incredible impact of your support, beginning with more on the PLF's partnership with our State Parks Cooperating Association Liaison John Hiles **(page 4)** and a more detailed article from me explaining our future plans **(page 14)**.

Together, we are shaping a future where nature thrives and our shared legacy endures. Thank you for being an essential part of this journey.

Reg Henry, a Point Lobos Docent, is editor of the Point Lobos Magazine. In a newspaper career of more than 35 years, he worked at the Courier-Mail in Brisbane, Australia, The Times of London, the Pittsburgh (Pa.) Post-Gazette, and The Herald in Monterey, where he was the editor from 1988 through 1993.

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Metaphorically speaking

Saving the world one Point Lobos at a time

by Reg Henry

If you are a writer by vocation, or just an avid reader, you may be prone to a bad case of metaphoritis, a strong tendency to see a likeness or analogy linking separate things.

That has been my problem for years. If a language doctor existed, I would make an appointment and would probably be told to take two aspirational figures of speech and see the doctor in the morning.

There may be no cure for a rash of metaphors. To me, for example, Point Lobos is not just a beautiful State Natural Reserve, it is also a metaphor for much else that goes on in the world.

I remember in 2016, when I was learning to be a docent, they told us how the sea otters are a keystone species, one that affects everything in the food chain.

When the Southern sea otters were hunted almost to extinction for their fur, the kelp beds receded. That's because the otters were eating the little critters — urchins, crabs etc. — that were eating the kelp. No otters, more kelp-eating critters, less kelp, fewer fish to hang around in the disappearing kelp. Everything is connected.

But when laws were passed to protect the remnant otters, they began eating those kelp-eating critters again with the result that more kelp survived and more fish came to swim in the kelp. It was a story of cascading benefits.

And as I thought "thank goodness everything is connected," a metaphor came upon me: Maybe we can save the world one Point Lobos at a time — a world made like Point Lobos many times over embodying the ideal of preservation.

But who is to save Point Lobos?

Does it have to be saved, you say? Well, yes, it is in danger of becoming a victim of its own popularity. Hundreds of thousands of visitors come here every year.

Sadly, that is always the way with beautiful places. People flock to them for beauty and tranquility, to experience an unspoiled spot, but the spoiling can come with them too. In our little corner of the world, you can lie in bed at night and hear San Jose sneaking up on you.

I feel another metaphor coming on: Point Lobos is not just an area south of Carmel but in a larger sense the whole world. Their problems are ours. We must inevitably live with more people and more urbanization. What can we do? We can't put a roadblock just north on Highway 1.

What we can do is to manage change; we can put in the infrastructure to handle the visitors who won't stop coming. We can manage traffic. We can save the beauty and keep our Reserve as unspoiled as possible, despite the various stresses, in the hope that others elsewhere will do the same.

And that is what this edition of the Point Lobos Magazine is largely about. The PLF's Executive Director Steffanie Gamecho and State Parks' Sector Manager John Hiles lay out the plan to secure with your help the future in the present.

To put you in a more helpful mood, we also have stories on the otters, the deer and the mysterious Mound Meadow to attest that the beauties of Point Lobos remain unspoiled, no matter how many visitors come.

Enjoy. Help save the world, maybe beyond metaphorically speaking.

John Hiles is the California State Parks Monterey Sector Manager. John began his State Parks career in 2004, starting in Big Sur as a seasonal worker on the Natural Resources Crew, then transitioning into various maintenance positions throughout the Monterey District. He is currently overseeing operations and planning efforts in the Monterey Sector, which includes Point Lobos. A Monterey local, John feels fortunate to work alongside State Parks staff and volunteers with the goal of providing a safe, educational experience for the public while protecting state resources.

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Mission possible

State Parks makes a statement to serve the people

by John Hiles

"To provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation."

In my 20-year career with California State Parks, I have reviewed the mission statements of other state, county and federal agencies — and I have yet to find one more rewarding and challenging to fully accomplish than that of California State Parks (above).

Whether you view our work on a micro or macro level — at the unit, district, or statewide level — there are countless obstacles to overcome to ensure that all aspects of our mission are being met.

Once those challenges are addressed, witnessing the resulting accomplishments is one of the greatest rewards a State Parks employee can experience. Every day, I keep this mission in mind. I'm proud to report that, thanks to the dedication of State Parks staff, volunteers, and partners like the Point Lobos Foundation — with support from you — we are on the right track and should all be proud of what we're building together.

In my current role as Area Manager for the Monterey Sector, my focus includes collaboration with the Point Lobos Foundation, oversight of planning efforts within the Monterey District, and day-to-day operations across 12 park units — from Garrapata State Park to Zmudowski State Beach. This has been one of the most rewarding positions I've held during my more than 20 years with State Parks.

I began as a seasonal employee working in natural resources, transitioned into trails and maintenance, spent time in Sacramento Headquarters, and eventually returned to the Monterey District. Every position along the way has filled me with deep gratitude, allowing me to work alongside like-minded professionals who are committed to resource protection, facility maintenance, public safety, and the many vital programs that define our department — along with dedicated PLF staff and volunteers.

Partnerships are key to the success of California State Parks. With 280 park units stretching from Pelican State Beach near the Oregon border to Picacho State Recreation Area near Yuma, Arizona, California's system includes more units than any other state park system — and many of them rival our national parks in both visitation and the uniqueness of the resources they were created to protect.

Many of these parks rely heavily on nonprofit partnerships and private donations. The Point Lobos Foundation is a shining example of how this model can thrive — leveraging both public and private funding to enhance the visitor experience, protect our natural and cultural resources, and expand access for all visitors and stakeholders.

Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, we're entering an exciting phase of growth and vision. With the launch of our Long-Term Conservation and Stewardship Program, we have an opportunity to reimagine and shape the future of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve and the surrounding Carmel Area State Parks units for generations to come.

David Laws, a Point Lobos Docent, was born and raised in London. His love of travel brought him to California, where he worked in the semi-conductor industry in Silicon Valley for nearly 50 years. He now lives in Pacific Grove, where he exercises the other side of his brain by photographing and writing about gardens, travel and his beloved Reserve. David's latest book, "Secret Monterey: The Weird, Wonderful and Obscure," features little known and underappreciated aspects of his beautiful adopted county. His email address is david.a.laws@gmail.com

The mystery of the mounds

Who or what put the mounds in Mound Meadow?

by David Laws

Compared to the dramatic, surf-etched headlands, the quiet, cathedral-like majesty of the cypresses in the Allan Memorial Grove, and the wealth of colorful wriggling sea creatures in the tide pools of Weston Beach, the open grass meadows behind the beach are probably the least memorable features of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve to most visitors. In the words of the late comedian Rodney Dangerfield, Mound Meadow and Little Mound Meadow "Don't get no respect."

But to those who look closer, the dry raised hillocks and damp depressions of the meadows reveal a rich and diverse collection of plants and wildlife in a landscape of mysterious origin.

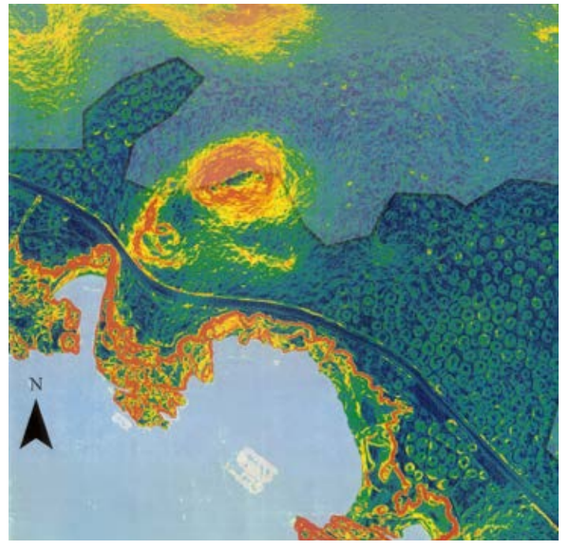
Plant lovers know that the meadows support more native species, including several endangered wildflowers, and fewer invasives than the nearby forest and scrub habitats. Former Ranger Chuck Bancroft recalls one spring when, after heavy rain flooded the low-lying depressions, the blooms favored the mound tops, creating islands of color across the meadow.

Wildlife enthusiasts report higher concentrations of birds and mammals in and around the meadows than in other areas of the reserve. Birders like to focus their binoculars along the intersection with the encroaching pine forest, where hawks, kites and other raptors perch on snags that offer an aerial view of their dinner table.

The authors of a report, "Vertebrate Animals of Point Lobos Reserve," prepared in 1936 to recommend management practices for the new state Reserve, also found the neighboring meadows and their mounds of great interest. The word "mound" appears 150 times in the text compared to 28 times for "chaparral" and just 18 times for "forest." They included a dozen photographs of the diggings of Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*) and suggested that they may help answer

Mound meadow in the fall. Photo by David Laws.

Aerial view of Mound Meadow Trail and mounds circa 1934 before forest encroachment. Photo from Point Lobos, Calif. Olmsted Archives.



LIDAR image of the mound formations in Mound Meadow and Little Mound Meadow. Photo by Naval Postgraduate School.

the mystery of how the mound landscape was formed.

The meadows are identified as coastal prairie habitat. Coastal prairies are open grasslands where vegetation consists only of grasses and low-growing herbaceous plants. California's coastal prairies support one of the highest plant diversities in North America, including over 250 wildflower species. And, because of their rich soil and flat terrain, they comprise one of the nation's most threatened ecosystems. Due to intensive agriculture and urban development, only 2 percent of California's native grasslands still exist.

The extent of summer fog and the resulting predominant plant species give rise to distinct southern and northern prairie habitats. One of the southernmost examples of a northern coastal prairie, Mound and Little Meadows are considered an especially unique resource as they have been free from livestock grazing longer than any other prairie community in the state.

To discourage encroachment into the meadows by scrub and forest and to enhance native plant propagation, California State Parks manages a quinquennial program of controlled burns to restore the native biodiversity to conditions found before European settlers arrived. The most recent burn on Nov. 19 last year left a blackened habitat that has been blooming anew in the spring.

Mima mounds. The eponymous mounds comprise hillocks of loosely packed soil and rubble, three to four feet high and about 12 feet in diameter. Known as mima mounds, they are covered in bunchgrasses and low shrubs that prefer dry soil. In contrast, the inter-mound areas are populated by herbs and grasses that tolerate moist and saline conditions left by seasonal pools. The green blobs of the LIDAR image photo indicate their random distribution across the meadows. It also shows that they remain under the tree canopy long after the forest encroached into the meadow.

The name mima is derived from a word in the Chehalis indigenous language meaning "newness." It was first used in this context to describe rounded humps spread across five square miles at Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve, south of Puget Sound in Washington State. Chehalis tribal legends say they were caused by a huge wave that inundated the area, leaving stranded porpoises and whales behind to form the new bumps.

Mima mounds are found in widely differing climatic and geological conditions worldwide. Their origins are largely unknown and may be different in each location. Early explorers thought they were native middens, but no bones or relics were found inside.

Modern explanations range from debris deposited by glaciation, vulcanism, and floods to frost, earthquakes, water or wind erosion, and prehistoric animal behavior. Fringe origin theories range from extraterrestrial aliens to mythical figures, such as giant lumberjack Paul Bunyan.

One of the first peer-reviewed scientific explanations, published in the "Journal of Geology" in 1942, proposed that they are formed by pocket gophers burrowing in

Controlled burns like this in 2018 are done periodically. Photo by John Drum.

The scene after the burn last year. Photo by Don Blohowiak.

A pocket gopher emerges from its burrow. Photo by David Laws.

shallow soil overlaying a hardpan layer. This posited that their activity loosens the soil and pushes it upwards, stimulating vegetation growth. This, in turn, furnishes food and encourages them to concentrate their activities in the vicinity.

When gophers find sufficient food on their mounds to maintain them year-round, it is unnecessary to forage further afield. And being elevated, their burrows survive flooding during the rainy season. However, as no one had ever observed mound building in progress, this theory was discounted by many.

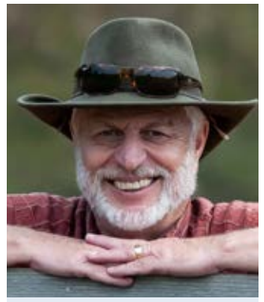
A persuasive explanation. Similar mounds to those at Point Lobos are present in two coastal prairie areas on the U.C. Santa Cruz campus. Computer modeling, predicting soil build-up by generations of burrowing rodents on these sites for 500 to 700 years, developed at San Jose State University and published in the journal "Geomorphology" in 2014, renewed credence in the gopher hypothesis.

As lead author Manny Gabet noted, relative to their size, mima mounds are the largest structures built by any non-human mammal. "In terms of effort, it would be like a single person building the pyramids." Analysis of carbon fragments in the Washington mounds confirms that they are thousands of years old. According to Gabet's model, that's plenty of time for the diminutive miners to complete their monuments.

A critical element of the model is shallow soil over a level hardpan that pools water during the wet season. At Mound and Little Mound Meadows this is sandstone of the Carmelo formation on top of non-porous granodiorite. Combined with the presence of gophers, although entirely circumstantial, this does make a persuasive explanation for the Point Lobos mounds.

So, next time you visit the Reserve, consider the mystery of the mounds. Do they look like the work of a four-ounce rodent? Or are you a proponent of a conspiracy theory claiming the weather instrument tower in the meadow is a covert homing beacon for extraterrestrial landscape architects?

Mound Meadow green in the spring. Photo by Sara Courtneidge.



Chuck Bancroft spent 31 years of his 35-year career as a State Park Ranger at Point Lobos and, in retirement, has led programs and nature walks for the Point Lobos Foundation.

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Get along, little mule doggies

The Columbian black-tailed mule deer is a sight to see

by Chuck Bancroft

Nicknames for animals I really like have always been one of my favorite interpretive quirks. I have long called otters the teddy bears of the ocean. Although the coyote on occasion is our resident dog, I humorously call the harbor seal the harbor dog.

When talking about our resident deer population I loved using the name black-tailed mule doggies. I used these nicknames frequently on my school walks. Students would laugh at my alternate naming. Adults seemed to like them as well.

The Columbian black-tailed mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) is found from the Pacific Northwest and coastal British Columbia to Santa Barbara County in Southern California.

These deer derive their name from their large, mule-like ears, but they are also distinguished by the branching pattern of their antlers and the black tips of their tails.

Mule deer live at the edge of the forest. Most forests lack the underbrush and grasslands the deer prefer for food sources and the large open areas lack hiding spots and cover they need from harsh weather. Therefore, they really do thrive at the edge of our pine forests utilizing both habitats.

Deer are browsers. The deer often are most active at dawn and dusk feeding on a variety of plants from huckleberry, thimbleberry, ferns and many different herbaceous plants and grasses. I've actually seen deer standing on their hind legs to reach the tasty lace lichen hanging from the pine trees.

One food source I didn't expect was poison oak. They will stand in a thicket and feast on the shiny leaves. Mule deer are immune to the effects of urushiol and can safely eat the leaves and berries.

A doe and her fawns. Photos by Chuck Bancroft.

A buck standing tall.

The mating or "rutting" season occurs during November and early December. Bucks can be observed running back and forth across the roads in the pursuit of does. After the rut, the bucks tend to hide and rest recovering from wounds they suffer during rutting engagements.

"Bambi" among the lizard tail flowers.

Gestation lasts for about seven months. Fawns are usually born in warm spring and summer months, with brown coats and white spots that disappear as they mature. They are weaned within two to three months but remain with their mothers for a full year. I was lucky to find and photograph a doe with twin fawns at Mound Meadow.

Between January and March the males drop their antlers. Antlers on the forest floor provide a source of calcium and other nutrients to other forest inhabitants. Bucks regrow their antlers beginning in April through to August.

I've been very fortunate to capture images of different stages of a deer's life. I think everyone would agree that Bambi is our favorite. One day Bambi was hiding in the brush and peaked its head out from the lizard-tail yarrow.

On another occasion at Whalers Cove, I found two young bucks browsing. One still had young antlers in velvet and the other smooth antlers. My all-time favorite image was taken on the North Shore Trail. Docent Stan Dryden told me of a hairy woodpecker nest with two chicks. I followed his exact directions and was able to get several really nice images.

What I didn't realize was that two fawns were above me on the hill staring down watching my movements. When I finally saw them I was able to take one shot before they turned tail and disappeared (see magazine cover).

Oh, the joys of being in the right place at the right time to see nature's wonders. Thank you, Mother Nature.

Young bucks in the grass.

The great otter census

Docents count the iconic residents monthly in Point Lobos

by Deborah Ju

Deborah Ju is the Point Lobos Otter Count Coordinator. She became a docent in 2011 and has participated in monthly otter counts since that time. She also helped create the Indigenous Peoples docent training program and the docent book group. Deborah was born and raised in the Chicago area and has lived in California since 1977. She went to Grinnell College and Boalt Hall Law School (now Berkeley School of Law). She and her husband, Werner, raised three kids in Palo Alto, and now have four grandchildren. Deborah enjoys leading public walks and school walks, scoping, and sharing the wonders of Point Lobos with all she meets.

Most visitors to Point Lobos hope to see sea otters and they are rarely disappointed, as Point Lobos has sea otters year-round. One wonders, however, how many otters we have and whether those numbers vary over time. An intrepid group of docents has been doing monthly otter counts for over 35 years to answer those questions.

The surveys record the number of adult and pup sea otters counted, along with the location and behavior observed, and is used as an indicator of the population trend of sea otters at Point Lobos.

Using binoculars and spotting scopes, docents divide into groups and cover the entire Reserve perimeter. Counting conditions vary. Sometimes we are lucky and have nice weather. Other times it takes grit to spend hours in cold fog with blustery winds. We count through light drizzle but must cancel when there is rain or impenetrable fog.

We take the opportunity to enjoy the whales, birds, wildflowers and other delights that come our way, and since we are not "on the clock," we linger at the harbor seal nurseries, hoping to witness a new birth. We also spend time interacting with visitors in each location, giving them a close-up view of the otters. You can tell by their delighted exclamations that you have made their day!

The spotting scopes afford us an opportunity to watch the otters' behavior and not just count. We nearly always observe at least one mating interaction each month. We enjoy watching the moms share food with their pups. One cannot help but see tenderness in the way moms groom and hold their pups.

Otters rest in kelp beds, when possible, for safety. When there is good kelp coverage, otters often gather in groups called "rafts" as large as 50 or more. When there is scant kelp, otters are harder to spot because they are more spread out. Our hardest task is counting otters in a large raft, because the bodies are tightly packed, and the otters often rise and fall with the swells.

Docents enjoying themselves on the otter count. Photo by Susan Lambert.

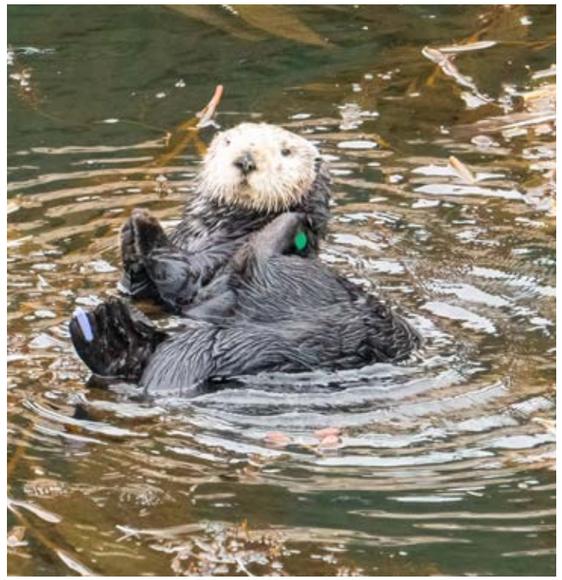
Otter mom and pup. Photo by Sara Courtneidge.

Care must be taken to count only actual otters and not "kelp otters" masquerading as real otters. Otters have an annoying habit of disappearing just as you are trying to count them. Luckily, they only stay underwater for up to five minutes at a time, so with a little patience you can wait them out.

During counts, we sometimes see otters that have been rescued and released by the Monterey Bay Aquarium's sea otter program ("SORAC") and that have colored tags on their flippers to identify them.

When we observe a tagged otter, we note the color combination and placement of its tags and report the finding to SORAC. In June 2024 we observed an otter with lavender and green tags and learned that she is Otter 878, a 5-year-old female, rescued and released by SORAC. Our updates to SORAC include an observation of her mating in September 2024, and of her with a brand new pup in March 2025.

The number of otters varies widely, depending on the time of year and the weather, with a highest of 142 and a lowest of 14. On average, we count 58 otters, with the highest numbers in May and June, and the lowest in January and September.



Otter with tags. Photo by Yvonne Wright.

While pups are born throughout the year, peak birthing season is January through March. Our highest pup counts are in May, with an average of 12.

Our counts allow us to track the number of otters at Point Lobos; however, this does not give the full picture of regional otter population health, which would require coverage of Pebble Beach, Pacific Grove, Monterey and other areas. Regrettably, there is not currently a program to carry out such a land-based count.

USGS periodically does aerial regional counts but one has not been done since 2020. Elkhorn Slough has an excellent otter count program. We are looking for ways to collaborate with their team with the goal of answering questions related to otters' seasonal movements and regional population health.

From 1985 to 2024 we recorded our monthly data on a program linked to the NOAA website. That system was discontinued. In July 2024, Docent Chris Long developed a new digital system tailored to our precise counting conditions and it is working great.

We are currently working with NOAA to link the historical and current systems together to share with researchers and the public. It would be most rewarding if our data could further scientific understanding of sea otters in any way.

A raft of many otters, which can be hard to count. Photo by Susan Lambert.

A plan for the ages

Building the future on a legacy of conservation

by Steffanie Gamecho

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve stands at a pivotal moment in its history. Much like the early visionaries who laid the groundwork for its protection, today we are called upon to steward its future. With record visitation levels placing unprecedented strain on the land and its delicate ecosystems, we must act with the same foresight and collaboration that defined the past century of conservation at Point Lobos.

The preservation of Point Lobos was no accident; it was the result of determined individuals who saw beyond their own time. In the 1930s, George Vaughan, a landscape architect working under Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., played a key role in shaping the future of the Reserve.

From 1934 to 1936, Vaughan lived at Point Lobos, meticulously mapping the area and photographing its landscapes to inform the first master plan for the Reserve. His detailed documentation provided not only a foundation for the park's early conservation efforts but also a lasting reference that continues to guide stewardship and preservation efforts today.

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., son of the famed designer of New York's Central Park, lent his expertise in landscape preservation, advocating for the long-term protection of Point Lobos. Alongside him, paleontologist John Campbell Merriam understood the Reserve's value beyond its scenic vistas — he saw it as an irreplaceable ecological and cultural treasure. Their efforts, supported by financial backing facilitated by Merriam, shielded Point Lobos from the rapid development sweeping California's coast.

Even before them, A.M. Allan took an unprecedented step to manage visitor impact by gating the property and implementing an entry fee. Recognizing the delicate balance between access and preservation, he set a precedent for considering sustainable visitation strategies and the increased protections of a Reserve.

Nearly a century later, we find ourselves facing familiar challenges. Point Lobos is experiencing extreme visitor pressure, and without careful planning, the very resources that make it special — its coastal bluffs, rich marine life and tranquil Cypress groves — are at risk. California State Parks, in partnership with the Point Lobos Foundation and allied thought leaders, is developing long-term solutions to ensure that our beloved Reserve thrives for the next 100 years.

The Long Term Conservation and Stewardship Program aligns with the California State Parks Carmel Area General Plan and outlines key projects that will shape the future of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, Carmel River State Beach and Ishxenta State Park. These initiatives include:

- **Utilities Assessments:** The infrastructure that supports Point Lobos — water, sewer and electricity — was largely developed between the 1960s and 2000s. Today, these systems are overwhelmed. A comprehensive utilities assessment will determine the most effective ways to modernize infrastructure while minimizing environmental impact.

  These upgrades are essential to maintaining access, ensuring visitor safety, and protecting delicate ecosystems. A Utilities Assessment is needed at Carmel

Labor Day crowd at the entrance to Point Lobos. Photo by Don Blohowiak.

Holiday crowd at the Carmelo Meadow Trail. Photo by Don Blohowiak.

Photo by Dave Evans.

River State Beach as well to determine how to make it public-use ready.

- **Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning:**The coastlines of Point Lobos and Carmel River State Beach are already experiencing the effects of climate change. Rising sea levels and intensified storms threaten trails, habitats and cultural sites.

  This initiative will develop a long-term adaptation plan to protect critical areas from erosion and flooding while maintaining safe visitor access. It is a proactive approach to ensure that we are prepared to adapt to the environmental changes expected in the coming decades.

- **Cultural Resource Assessments:** The history of Ishxenta State Park is layered with cultural significance. Archaeological sites, historic structures and indigenous heritage must be protected as part of our commitment to conservation. This assessment will define sensitive areas, ensuring that infrastructure improvements respect and preserve these irreplaceable resources. Understanding cultural history is integral to sustainable management and future land-use planning.

- **Trails Management Plans:** These are a cornerstone of the Long-Term Conservation and Stewardship Program. Needed at both Ishxenta State Park and Carmel River State Beach (CRSB), they will be informed by both the Sea Level Rise and Cultural Resource Assessments (currently underway at CRSB). Rising tides and erosion will shape where and how new trails are developed, ensuring that paths remain viable for visitors while reducing environmental damage. Likewise, cultural assessments will guide trail placement to avoid disrupting historic and archaeological sites. This thoughtful, interconnected approach ensures that new trails enhance visitor experience without compromising the land we seek to protect.

  These projects are not just about improving infrastructure; they are about protecting the very essence of what makes the Carmel Area State Parks a sanctuary. Just as our predecessors took decisive action to protect this land, we must do the same.

Conservation is not a passive endeavor. It requires vision, collaboration, and investment. The Point Lobos Foundation is committed to funding and supporting these critical initiatives, but we cannot do it alone.

We invite you to join us in this historic moment — whether through advocacy, financial support or spreading awareness. Together, we can ensure that Point Lobos and the Carmel Area State Parks remain not only a place of breathtaking beauty but also a model for sustainable conservation.

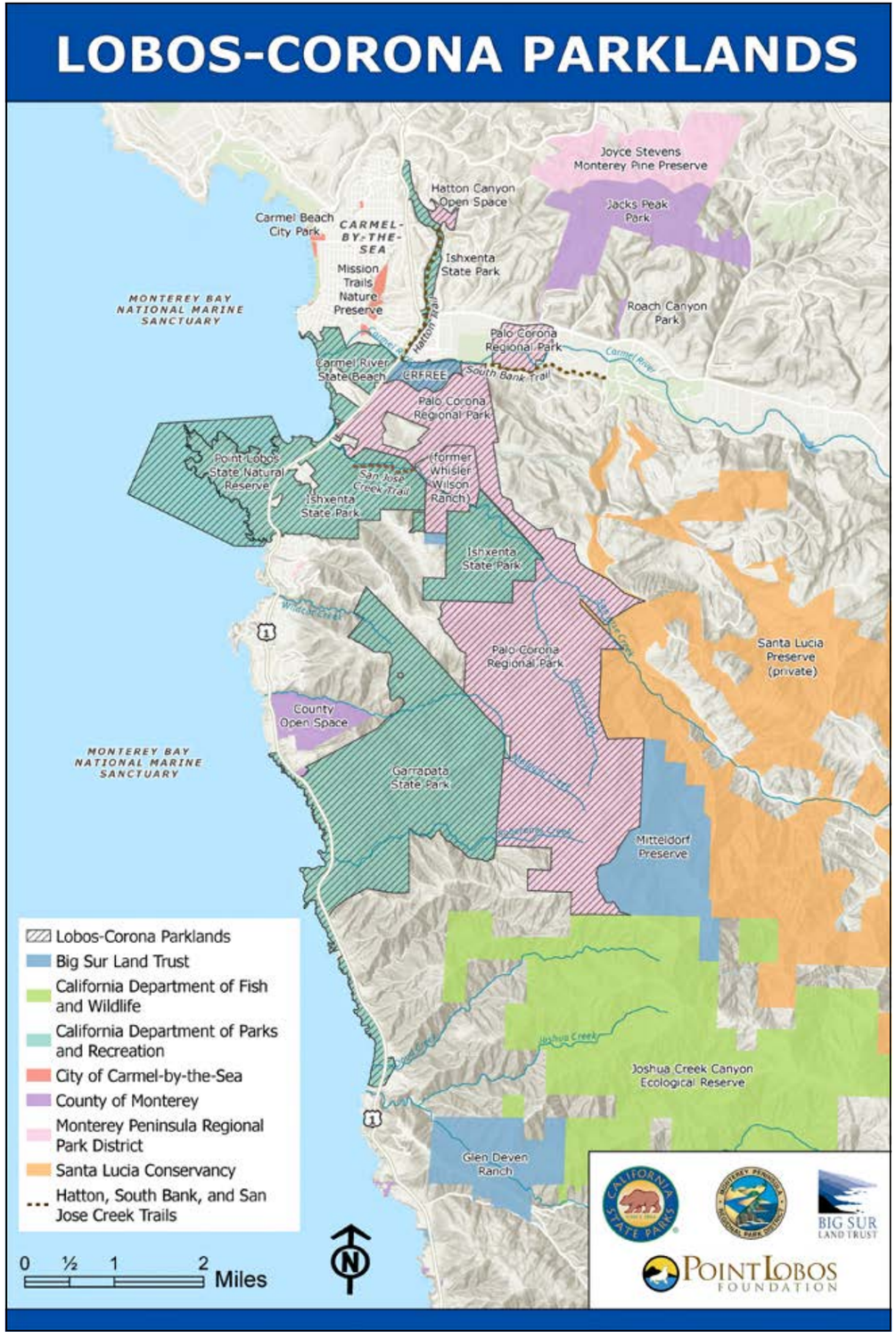
Steffanie Gamecho is the PLF's Executive Director.

Monterey District Crew placing rocks to stem erosion. Photo by Don Blohowiak.

John Hiles, California State Parks, and Steffanie Gamecho, Point Lobos Foundation, are partners in leading the Long-Term Conservation and Stewardship Program to align resources for lasting impact. Photo by Tracy Gillette-Ricci.

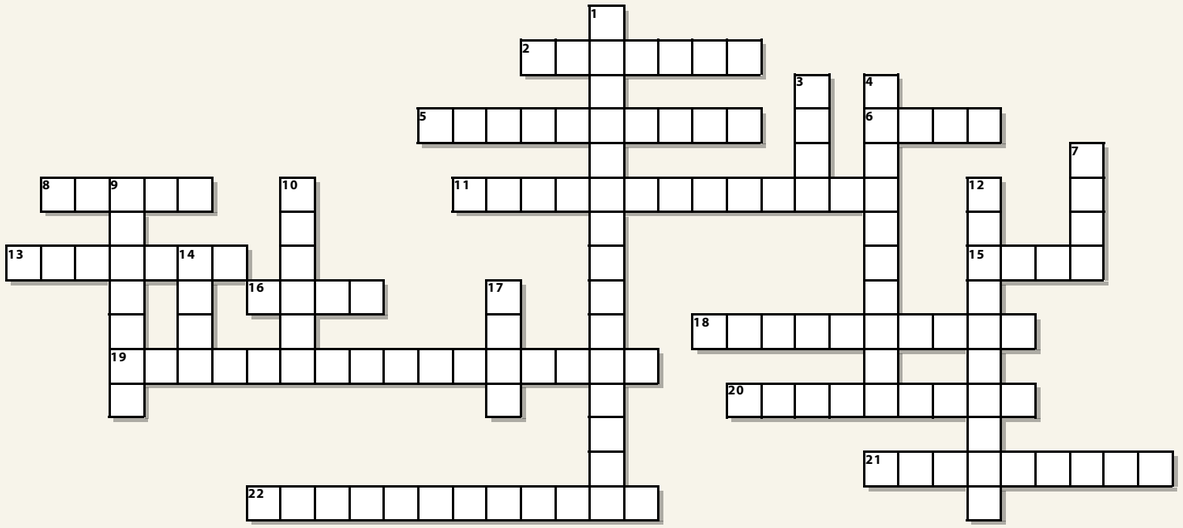
The fundraising efforts for the Long-Term Conservation and Stewardship Program are now beginning. The Point Lobos Foundation is actively seeking funding from grants, donors, and community partnerships to make these cornerstone projects a reality.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can support this critical work, please reach out to us. Your contributions, whether financial or through advocacy, ensure that Point Lobos continues to be a sanctuary for future generations.



Puzzle: Mounds, Deer and Otters

by Ann Pendleton



ACROSS

2 Antlers which have been dropped on to the forest floor, provide a nice source of _____.

5 One Citizen Science project that occurs monthly at Point Lobos is the _____ (2 wds)

6 Point Lobos docents have until recently, linked otter count information to the _____.

8 Monterey Bay Aquarium's sea otter program is called _____.

11 _____ comprise one of the nations most threatened ecosystems. (2 wds)

13 Meadows offer space where some _____ like to hunt.

15 Deer are the most active during _____ & dusk.

16 _____ Mounds are found in widely different conditions worldwide.

18 While at Point Lobos it's helpful to use _____ to view wildlife.

19 Only 2 per cent of CA's _____ still exist. (2 wds)

20 Mima Mounds might be the largest structure built by _____ mammals.

21 Mound Meadow is extremely unique because it has been free from _____ grazing longer than any other prairie in the state.

22 _____ gopher is the most common gopher found in CA. (2 wds)

DOWN

1 The deer that can be found at Point Lobos are Columbian _____ deer. (3wds)

3 A deer remains with its mother for a _____.

4 Deer eat the _____ & grasslands.

7 The name of a baby deer.

9 _____ for our deer is typically November & December.

10 Meadows support many _____ species of plants.

12 Otters hunt for food _____.

14 A group of otters is referred to as a _____.

17 Otters rest in _____ beds.

Answers at pointlobos.org/magazine/crossword-solution

Pine Ridge Trail
by Ann Muto

The awakening of spring:
wild lilac blossoms crowd the trail.
Sticky monkey flowers' golden blossoms
light up secluded bowers,
young pines flaunt bright green boughs.

Bird Island pops into view.
The land, the trees seem to fall away,
as if bowing in homage to nobility.
A white island encircled
by courtiers decked in blue-black cloaks.

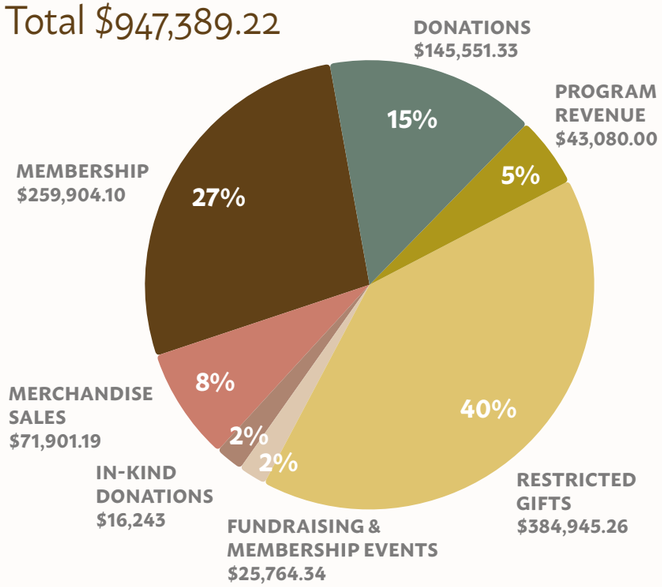
Further on a golden aura
glows beneath the canopy of pines,
spotlighting blades of grass, trees.
Where the sun shows through,
buttercups glisten,
lighting up the edges of the trail.

Ahh, the riches of Pine Ridge Trail

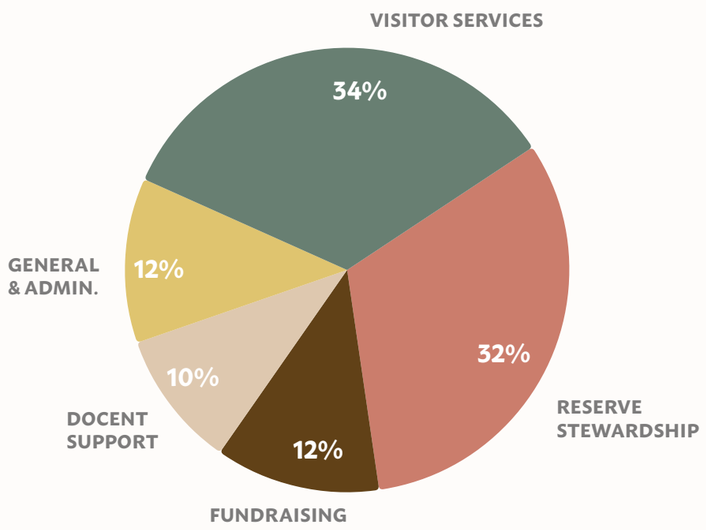
The author wrote this poem as a member of the docent poetry group, "Write on Point." Photo of a Monterey pine by Chris Long.

Our Impact 2024

Revenue Sources
Total $947,389.22



What We Fund



Revenue by Category

Membership revenue includes membership dues, both annual and monthly donations. Gifts to the Monterey County Gives campaign for membership renewal are also included.

Donation revenue includes non-member donations, unrestricted grant donations, non-member tribute gifts. Non-member donations are made by individuals by mail, to fundraising campaigns like the Monterey County Gives campaign, for docent-led group walks, or at donation boxes at PLSNR.

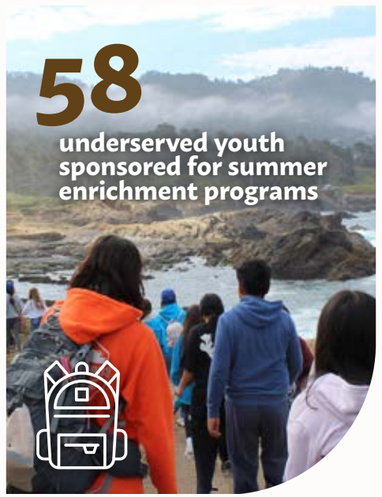
Restricted Gift revenue includes grants from individuals, foundations, and other sources that are given for a specific use.

Fundraising and Membership Event revenue includes ticketed events, raffle sales, and merchandise sold at an event.

In-kind donation revenue records the value of the donation or goods or services given to Point Lobos Foundation for fundraising efforts.

Merchandise sale revenue includes merchandise sold through the PLF online store and merchandise sold at PLSNR.

Program Revenue includes California State Parks events and programs administered by the Point Lobos Foundation. Includes the Summer Adventures Summer Camp program and the California State Parks tours at Ishxenta State Park.



Notes from the Docent Log

Compiled by Emily Hull-Parsons

Emily Hull-Parsons, originally from Illinois, arrived on the Monterey Peninsula over 40 years ago. During those years she ran an active consulting practice in the areas of management and philanthropy. Now retired, she has found time to enjoy serving as a Point Lobos Docent and has become an avid landscape artist, as well as a very enthusiastic grandparent.

Mom and pup. Photo by Jac Harmer.

The first seal pup of the season is born today!

Jac Harmer, 03/25/2025

Velella velella. Photo by Elaine Gehrmann.

They're back! Look what the wind blew in! It's our old friends, the Velella velella – commonly called By-the-Wind Sailors (a type of jellyfish).

Elaine Gehrmann, 03/25/2025

Photo by Loren Hughes.

Nothing placid about Weston Beach this morning at high tide.

Loren Hughes, 02/14/2025

Remains of a whale. Photo by Don Blohowiak.

The South Shore otter count group came upon a very interesting find today. Docent Mary Conway drew my attention to what she believed were remains from a whale, possibly whale blubber, but we really didn't know what part of the whale they were. We sent the photos to Docent (and former Ranger) Jerry Loomis and he identified them as throat pleats from a humpback whale. It is always so cool to discover something new and mysterious!

Deborah Ju, 02/11/2025

In news that is a crushing blow to crows, dusky-footed wood rats, gulls, raccoons and other opportunistic gatherers of human toss-offs, State Parks has replaced many of the dilapidated refuse containers around Point Lobos. The creaky, shaky, old garbage stations often spilled trash out onto the ground and were accessed by all manner of curious, hungry critters. The new, sturdy (might one say attractive?) trash receptacles now invite responsible disposal of garbage throughout the Reserve. These fixtures are expensive (about five grand a pop to purchase and install). Thanks to the Point Lobos Foundation for funding them and State Parks for installing them.

Don Blohowiak, 04/04/2025

Winter arrives. On land, the silent chemistry of emerging leaves. Woodmint, blackberry, yarrow. In counterpoint, the loud and many-voiced sea. Its long rhythms curl into white-top ridges that slam the granite bluffs and burst explosively. Mineral form and fluid chaos, the long-enduring land and the ever-restless sea. In the misty sky, gulls wheel, coalesce, scatter, and wheel again.

Rick Pettit, 12/22/2024

An incredibly lucky sighting was made today of a California Condor flying in the distance, briefly going over Gibson beach, heading south.

Yvonne Wright, 01/29/2025

While walking South Shore Trail with my family, we came across an engagement photo shoot near the top of the stairs to Hidden Beach.

I had just explained that hiding somewhere under the beach, the granodiorite and Carmelo formation meet up. An engagement photo in this area, where two different rock formations collide, is a beautiful metaphor!

Julie McFadden, 12/17/2024

The trail near Bird Island picnic area was a complete slugfest this afternoon — banana slugs to be specific. Every few feet right near (sometimes on) the trail, a banana slug or two were spotted.

Julie McFadden, 11/11/2024

Saturday evening bird buffet: The heron quickly caught and gulped down a fish from a pool.

Michele Hardoin, 10/20/2024

Great Blue Heron. Photo by Michele Hardoin.

Headland Cove was inundated with hundreds of pelicans today, the first time I have seen so many there. Numerous humpback whale spouts offshore were a nice addition to visitor delight.

Stan Dryden, 10/03/2024

Acknowledgments

Memorials, tributes and grants October 16, 2024 - April 15, 2025

IN HONOR OF

Melissa Gobell
Tom and Eileen Fukunaga
Kelly Francis
Dean Francis
Dean Francis
Kelly Francis
Leanne Barsotti
Ken Lippi
Cameron Torgenrud
Mary Metteer
Don Hubbard and Darrah Blanton
Simone Hollander
Susan Greene
Marion Keyworth
Lester T. Hibbard
David and Jane Hibbard
Jerry Loomis and Trisha Bennett Mayer
Jean Lovell
Jack Arnold and Molly Hammerstrom
Jean Lovell
Steffanie Gamecho
Jeanne Porter
Staci Alziebler-Perkins
Karin Stratton
Betty and Michael Maurutto
Point Lobos Docents
Mark Hetherington
Cynthia Wagner Weick
The Wild Geese
Katie Jahns
Matthew Nellans
Gordon Grimm
Anonymous
Deborah and Werner Ju
Shirley Keenan
Alfred and Helen Shamble
Dana Richards
The Kiskinen Family
Anonymous
Dr. John S Foster, DVM
James Foster
Mary Gray-Reeves and Tom Switzler
Holly Hudson-Louis
Peter Fletcher
Ryan Fletcher
Barbara Bullock-Wilson
Michelle Merrill
Peggy Grier
Mary Conway

IN MEMORY OF

Lorraine G Barr
Neil Glick
Brian Hentschel
Amanda and Cameron Zinsli
James and Alan Hatch
Jennifer Hatch
Sheila Lillian Krieger
Robyn Krieger
Dede White
Roger and Jeane Samuelsen
George and Lilo Miller
Jim and Anne Rurka
John and Laurel Fosness
Connell and Nancy Gallagher
Wolfgang Baer
Kathleen Baer
Harold Wheeler
Terry Wheeler
David B Keister
Ruth Keister
Stephanie Drum
John Drum
Ed and Barbara Morrill
The Morrill Family
Rusty Roo
Stefanie Kaku
Maureen Mason
Rick Parsons
Tracy Gibbons
Hester Parker
Peggy Downes Baskin
Karen and Lorin Letendre
Bruce Cowan
Judy Cowan
Sister Anna Voss
Mary Barrett
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Matthew Hoy
Peggy Downes Baskin
Cammy Torgenrud
Grace K Scott
Jon Jennings
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William Postle
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Sharon Perry
Tony Day
Susan Day
Ethel Arnold
Jack Arnold
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Bonnie and Richard Fremgen
Linda Moreda
JW and Marilyne C Dieckert
Julius and Pamela Dieckert
Warren Chin
Noreen Hui
The Hamady Family Trust
Lillian Lum
Sonya Lee
Rick Manning
Mary Conway

GRANTS & RESTRICTED GIFTS

Manitou Fund
For Trail Maintenance & Restoration Program and Docent Program

Jean H Kukulan Reilly Charitable Fund
For Summer Adventures Scholarships and Long-Term Conservation and Stewardship Plan

California State Parks Foundation
For Stewardship and Hudson House

Alice Glasser and Jesse Thompson
For research and trails

Bloomer Family Foundation
For greatest need

Carrie Mehdi Foundation
For greatest need

SISTER ANNA VOSS FUND

In honor of
Steve and Sona Dennis
Gin Weathers

In memory of
Ronald Miller
Susan Miller

Maureen Mason
Carol Greenstreet

Diane E Dawson
Doug McCall

Ed Clifton
Beth Robertson
Doug McCall

Sister Anna Voss
Henry Imwalle

CARMEL RIVER STATE BEACH FUND

The Carmel River State Beach Fund exclusively supports maintenance and habitat and trail restoration projects at Carmel River State Beach

In memory of
Mike Turbow
Ellen Turbow
Susan Hahn
Lisa Freeman

Photo by Davol Tedder

POINT LOBOS FOUNDATION

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