

POINT LOBOS

Magazine



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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

We are now moving into fall—that wonderful time at Point Lobos when the interior valleys cool and the ocean fog bank visits the coastal areas less frequently and for shorter periods. That means we can enjoy more clear and balmy days at the Reserve. If you have not been out here for a while, this is the time to do it.

As you will read in this issue of *POINT LOBOS Magazine*, we are planning two big events this fall. The first is exclusively for Association members—our annual Moonlight Walk and chili buffet on September 22nd. If you have not yet made your reservation (Sept. 12 deadline), please don't put it off any longer and call 831-625-1470 now. Those who attended last year's event were treated to a fogless evening with a beautiful full moon rising over the eastern hills, while they indulged themselves with delicious food provided by the Association. We can't promise you a fogless moonrise, but we can promise a great evening at the Reserve with friends and fellow members. If you have friends who are not PLA members, they can reserve space and sign-up to become members right at the event. See page 4 for further information.



On October 6th, the Association and California State Parks are co-sponsoring the first ever Community Appreciation Day at the Reserve. This will be a day when visitors will be given free entry by simply using off-site parking and taking an Association-provided free shuttle into the Reserve. It will be a great time for you, your family, and friends to witness firsthand the beauty and magic of Point Lobos in the fall. See page 4 for further information, and be sure to mark your calendar *now* for this exciting event.

In August, the Association broke ground on construction of a new Docent Center facility that will house the docent library, administrative office space, and Docent Council (and Association) meeting room. For the past several years, State Parks has provided space for these activities in homes at the Reserve that were originally built for State Parks staff. With the growing need for staff housing, State Parks has found it necessary to ask the docents and the Association to move out of the current facility. The new Docent Center will be developed by renovating an old, currently unused, State Parks shop building at the Reserve. Although it will represent a sizeable investment by the Association to convert the building to useable space, it will ensure a long term home for Docent Group and Association activities. Mailing addresses and telephone numbers will not change.

Finally, I want to introduce you to our new Editor of the *POINT LOBOS Magazine*, Candida (“Dida”) Kutz. This is her first issue and we look forward to a very long association with Dida. I also want to thank Ranger Chuck Bancroft for filling in as guest editor for the past three editions of the Magazine, and for lending his artistic eye in helping to change it to its present format.

Upcoming Events



photo courtesy Lawrence Wallace

Community Appreciation Day

The Point Lobos Association joins with California State Parks in sponsoring the first Annual Community Appreciation Day at Point Lobos on October 6, 2007. The purpose of this event is to set aside a day to express appreciation to the community for their support of Point Lobos State Reserve. An expanded docent program will be available that day showcasing the extraordinary education and interpretation potential provided by the Point Lobos docents and the park rangers. The Association will provide free shuttle bus service both within the Reserve and to and from a parking area set aside at the Crossroads shopping center in Carmel.

Reminder for Members Old and New

If you haven't already reserved your place at the FREE September 22nd Point Lobos By Moonlight buffet, you should act right away because the reservation deadline is September 12th. Phone (831) 625-1470 for reservations and information. You might want to review the information that was in last quarter's PLA Magazine (Summer Edition). This annual "members only" annual event is not to be missed.



photo courtesy Steve Ligas

Bobcat Magic

Patrick Driskel and Eugenie Childress

On a recent Sunday in July, one that was unusually warm and clear, we were enjoying an evening walk on the road just south of the Allen Grove parking area. The two of us were in our meditation walk when looking ahead, we spotted the back legs of a bobcat slipping into the bushes east of the road. As we had earlier heard from docents that bobcats were in the area, we moved quickly in hope of getting a glimpse of the cat.

Yes, there he was, sitting about five yards off the road in a clearing of dried rattlesnake grass. He, too, was enjoying the evening rays of the setting sun, relaxed, observing us and it seemed to us, preparing for the evening hunt. He moved slowly, with light steps, always parallel to the road. We stood observing in awe and excitement and prayed that no cars would come along. Our hopes of a glimpse turned into a good ten-minute observation and not a car in sight.



Then suddenly, the cat lay flat in the grass, his head facing north. At that moment we too looked north, and saw a hawk in full flight bearing down on the cat. In an instant, the cat leaped four feet vertically, fully extended, grabbed the hawk and twisted in the same movement, and threw the hawk to the ground. An instant kill. No fuss or fight. Just a few dandelion tufts drifting away in the light breeze.

As we stood in utter amazement, the cat observed his kill and then slowly walked into the trees and within their protection, he sat and licked himself. Perhaps the talons of the hawk had caught his fur.

It took a few moments for us to recover from our astonishment. We would have been pleased with a brief sighting of the cat. Then Patrick walked over to the dead bird and upon inspection saw that only the throat feathers of the hawk showed evidence of the event, a broken neck.

We are most appreciative to those who made the new closing time, a half hour past sunset, possible.

Under My Brim

Ranger Chuck Bancroft

There are more than forty institutions and organizations in the greater Monterey Bay area currently examining various aspects of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, an internationally recognized location for marine research, resource management, and policy. SIMoN and PISCO and are two organizations working along the central coast to further this mission. The following are excerpts from their websites, www.mbnms-simon.org and www.piscoweb.org respectively:

*The **Sanctuary Integrated Monitoring Network**, enables researchers to monitor the sanctuary effectively by integrating the existing monitoring programs and identifying gaps in information. By avoiding duplication of these programs, resources can be more effectively directed towards surveying and characterizing habitats, assessing the impact of natural processes or human activities on specific resources, and long-term monitoring. Finally, SIMoN serves to make the*

monitoring data available to managers, decision makers, the research community, and the general public.



*With core funding from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation . . . , the **Partnership for Interdiscipli-***

***nary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO)** is a research consortium involving marine scientists from four universities along the U.S. West Coast.*



PISCO divers ready for their training dive.

*. . . Under the direction and leadership of **Steve Lonhart**, PISCO divers will be monitoring sites inside and adjacent to the recently established Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) along the central coast of California. In cooperation with the Point Lobos State Reserve, divers undertook several training*

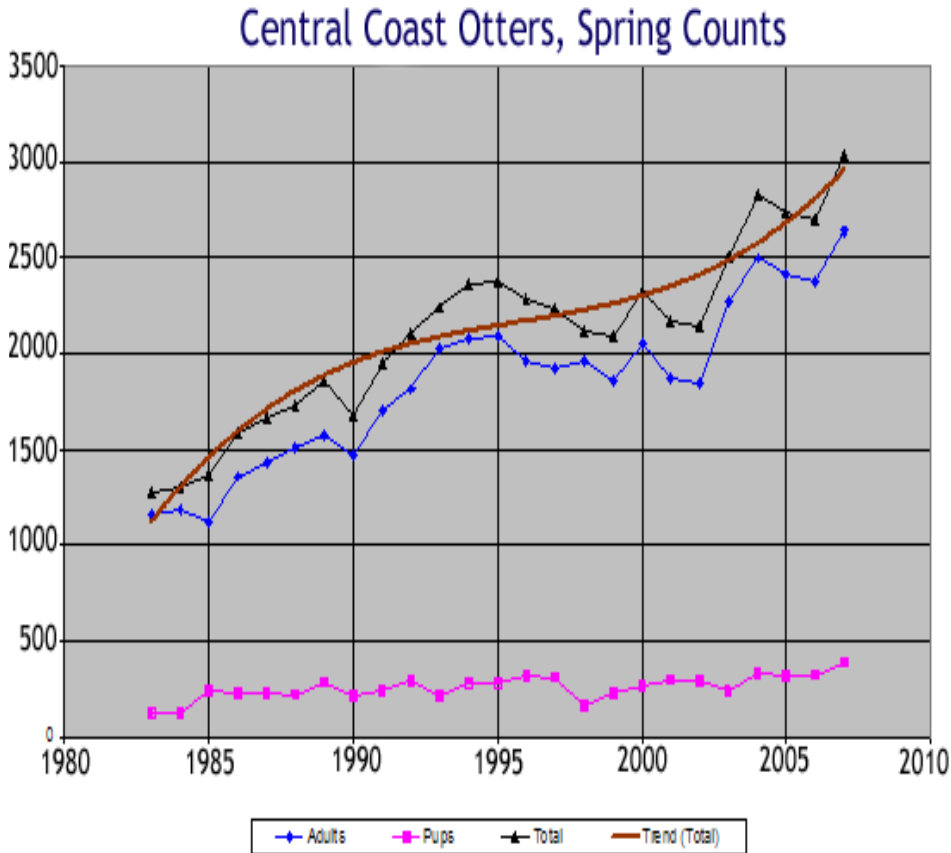


Steve Lonhart is second from the right.

dives at Whaler's Cove in one of the premier marine protected areas in the state.

Otters Making Slow Comeback

Stan Dryden



Each month a team of intrepid otter surveyors, docents all, set out along the shoreline of Point Lobos to record every otter seen. Regular readers of this publication have seen the results of these counts reported by our fantastic Otter Count leader, Dione Dawson, in the Quotes from the Docent Log.

Each May and November, the Point Lobos data are fed into a

survey of the otters along their entire central California coastal range, conducted by the US Geological Survey since 1983. While the data have had their ups and downs, the trend is clearly up. And for the first time since otters were nearly wiped out by fur hunters, the total count along the California coast has topped 3000. A total of 3062 otters were counted in May of this year, including 2673 “independents” (adults) and 389

pups. This is more than double the 1983 count of 1277.

The graph shows the count progression since 1983. About ten years ago there was quite a bit of concern because the numbers had apparently peaked and were heading downward. But in the early part of this decade the pattern reversed itself and the numbers climbed enough to show a clear positive trend.

The red line on the graph is a “regression” line, which smooths out the ups and downs and shows the trend. The polynomial type trend line is somewhat arbitrary, but seems to fit the data points better than a straight line (linear regression) or others.

The variations from year to year are partly real and partly due to differences in sighting conditions (weather and sea swells) from year to year. The survey dates are chosen in advance, and the count goes on unless the conditions are such that observation would be impossible or dangerous. The spring and fall timing

Otters Making Slow Comeback *continued*

makes it unlikely that the count would have to be aborted. But the variation due to the imprecise nature of otter counting makes long-term analysis much more valuable than year-to-year comparisons. This year's conditions were particularly favorable, and that undoubtedly accounts for some, but not all, of the record numbers.

The increase in the numbers of pups sighted from 1983 to 2007 has been particularly encouraging. The counts have more than tripled in these 24 years, from a 1983 count of 121.

But the otter population continues to be stressed by factors that have kept it from growing at a pace that scientists believe would be possible under better conditions. These factors are not completely understood, but many are believed to be caused by pollutants

associated with human habitation in the watershed of the sea otter's range. These pollutants--petroleum products, pesticides, biological toxins, and others--wash into the sea and are taken up by the invertebrate animals that make up the otters' diet. This may affect the health and abundance of these prey animals

and may be passed into the otters. The biological toxins are the most troubling; adult otters of an age where they should be in robust health are showing up dead on the shore.



So while we celebrate the steady growth in the population size, our joy is tempered by the knowledge that the numbers should be even greater. And we need to be ever mindful of the way we treat our environment and the environment of other species, especially those, like the sea otter, that bring us such pleasure.

Green Light for Blue Whales

Jerry Loomis



have been common where krill swarms are massive, and many more are being seen off the coast of San Diego and Orange counties.

They locate krill most likely by the taste of the water and the sounds krill make, which can be detected by the blues' sensitive sound receptors located along the lower jaw of all baleen whales.

It's interesting that these huge animals feed on such a narrow food range—from diatoms to krill. As filter feeders, their baleen plates form a sieve that hangs in a row from the entire upper jaw, allowing them to trap food in huge mouthfuls. The massive tongue pushes out the excess water between the baleen plates. Food items are retained and swallowed.

For those of you who haven't yet seen blue whales, you differentiate them from the others by the size of their tremendous blow or exhalation. The blow is no less than 30 feet tall; coupled with the size of the whale and its bluish gray color, it is easily recognizable. We will continue to see whales through November, so stay tuned. There may be a blue whale experience to be had this fall.

In 1980, when I moved to Point Lobos State Reserve, blue whale sightings were uncommon. Since then, we have seen blues from shore in larger numbers. During the early 2000's, people in whale watching boats were seeing them on almost every trip during July, August, and September.

Scientists think the blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*) we have seen this year and last have been scouts looking for krill. (Krill are small shrimp-like invertebrates.) Blue whales feed primarily on krill.

However, for reasons that are not clear, krill have been scarce in Monterey Bay in recent years. The August sightings of 50-70 blue whales per trip near the Northern Channel Islands

We could begin to see blue whales appear off the Monterey coast this fall. The California summer population of blue whales is typically the largest in the world, numbering 2200. (The world wide population of blues is only about 11000, having been hunted to near extinction.) For a food-scouting blue whale to leave the Channel Islands and venture up here takes only a day's travel at 25 miles per hour. This year, for the first time, they have been seen as far north as Canada. Why are they there? No one knows for sure; however, in all probability they are scouting for additional food resources.

Once focused on a food source, blues can send back deep low-frequency sounds that can be heard hundred of miles away.



Just one small group out of hundreds of Brandt's cormorants and chicks. All images by Chuck Bancroft.

Observations

Sparky Starkweather, State Park Squirrel

Nesting season this year has been one of the best in many years. Hundreds of Brandt's cormorants arrived in the spring, and began courtship and nest building on the Bird Islands. Western gulls built their own comfortable nests on the edges of the greater cluster of cormorant sites. As spring changed into summer, eggs were colorful and

plentiful and seen by many visitors. Chicks started hatching and created an almost deafening sound playing counterpoint to the sounds of waves surging against the rocky outcroppings. Bird enthusiasts were plentiful with cameras in hand and patience the guiding force. Five Black crowned night heron nesting sites were discovered and easily seen from Pelican Point. Ranger Chuck was out photographing frequently and exhibited perfect timing.



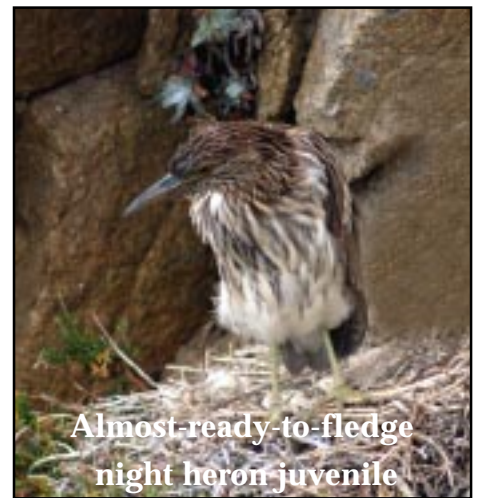
Western gull with well camouflaged chick



Night herons protecting 3 eggs



Adult night heron standing over one of the week old chicks



Almost-ready-to-fledge night heron juvenile

Point Lobos at Twilight

Steve Ligas

Most of the visitors have left. The parking lots are nearly empty. Stillness pervades Point Lobos State Reserve broken only by the barking of California sea lions. As the sun sinks in the west, the light softens imparting a gentle reddish hue to the landscape. Exploring the Reserve becomes a solitary pursuit. One can imagine journeying with John Muir but this is the land of great photographers. Edward Weston and Ansel Adams walked these trails, explored this terrain, and immortalized its beauty in inspiring images.

Twilight is a magical time at Point Lobos. As of May 1, it has been made more accessible to the public. Now, Point Lobos remains open until thirty minutes after sunset.

From spring to fall, walking the Allan Memorial Grove trail at twilight is a sublime delight. Going right at the loop, one can enjoy the setting sun filtered by Cypress trees. Occasionally, a beam of light will break through the forest tangle illuminating the grassy floor. The short path down to Cypress Cove offers views of the rocky North Shore and an occasional otter below. Across Carmel Bay, Pebble Beach and the white sands of Carmel's beaches beckon. Further along the main trail, lace lichen and orange *Trentepohlia* drape tree branches to frame a postcard view of the Pinnacle. Ascending the staircase, one reaches a great spot to pause and relish the last rays of the day. A quick glance backward reveals windblown cypress and weathered rocks taking on a warm glow as the sun settles below the horizon.

Take a moment to savor the experience. Remember the tranquility. Finally be thankful for the chance to enjoy Point Lobos at twilight.

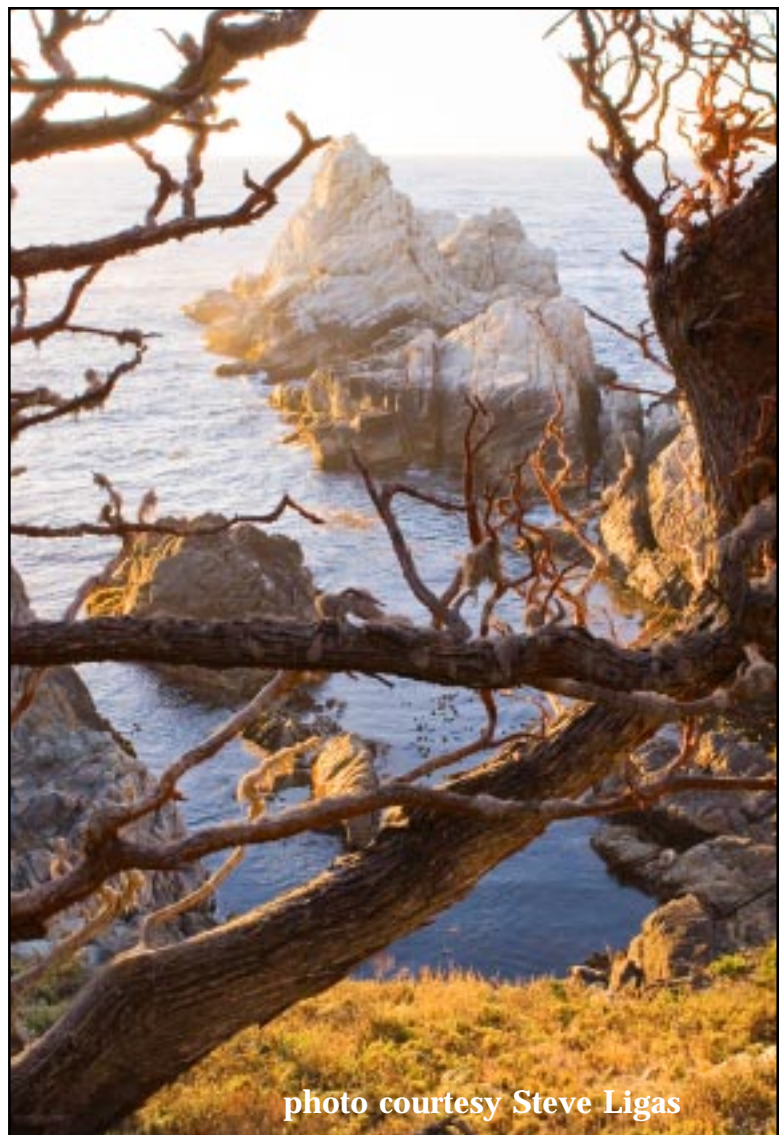


photo courtesy Steve Ligas

Quotes from the Docent Log

edited by Stan Dryden

May 25: Joe Bova

I had the pleasure to visit the Whaler's Cabin this morning when another docent was on duty. At about 9:30 a.m. we spotted a large group of school children approaching the cabin. Leading the group from Mission Park School in Salinas was Carolyn Pybas—a former Docent from Class #1. The meeting was interesting and exciting in that there were 4 families with links to the cabin—a cousin of Spanish Mary, descendants of Jacinto deAmeral, and descendants of the Silva and Machado families.

May 25: Joy Osborne

My walk at Whaler's Cove from the Whaler's Cabin across the Carmelo Meadow on the trail clear out to the Reserve boundary was full of discoveries. There were many flowers in the meadow. Along the side of the path, the gum plants (*Grindelia*) appeared right on schedule and with the regularity and spacing of mechanical planting.

The seals indeed were not anywhere on the beaches... but the

rocks were occupied at low tide. One baby seal draped over a rock looked dead, but I saw it move. Its head was swollen, but the strangest thing—the seal had no

seems to be a brotherhood movement – there are Brandt's Cormorants, with the blue gular pouches, very close to the Pelagic Cormorants (with white flank



Marine diatom, *Aulacodiscus* sp., courtesy
Diatom Collection, California Academy of Sciences

spots whatsoever and was colored white and silvery gray. The outlook did not seem positive, since it seemed thin and mopey. At the Pit area, birds were nesting on the steep sides of eroded conglomerate—often with a roof of rock above. Years ago only Pelagic Cormorants nested in these niches. Now I see there

spots). I am wondering about the Pelagic Cormorant population, since there seem to be few nests on the South Point island off the Cypress Grove trail. Again Brandt's were nesting there on steep rocks the smaller Pelagics used to occupy. In fact the Brandt's seem to be vamoosing the Western Gull which has

always nested there. A lot changes.

June 3: Carol Bloner

6:30 a.m. tidepool walk? On a Sunday morning? Oh yes! What a reward 12 docents had for our early rising. Dr. John Pearse led a 2-1/2 hour walk at Weston Beach. The algae covered almost every surface below the splash zone. It was a new sight for most of us, who are more familiar with the area's less lush summer-to-winter look. Unusual (for us) was the dense growth of low-growing nori (yes, the edible wrap), and more strange was learning that the aptly named tar-spot alga is the reproductive stage of nori. Truly a transformation from ugly duckling to swan.

Equally fascinating were the diatoms, which are the basis of the ocean food chain, covering many of the rock surfaces, and they are just as slippery as the algae. John's educated eye noticed copepods swimming in a pool. When caught in a bottle they were easy to see.

We learned much about limpets. They are sedentary in the daytime as a defense against our Oyster Catcher, but at night they crawl around their personal territory on a rock, scarfing down the algae. In some areas their rasping tongue marks were visible.

June 3: Peggy Grier

Found 4 eggs, twice the size of chicken eggs, on the ground below the Great blue heron nests on Coal Chute Point—broken, of course. Also saw 4 huge chicks sitting in 3 nests above.

June 9: Larry Richener

One of the Heron nests is easily visible from near Whaler's Cabin, and 2 large chicks are on the nest. We set up a scope trained on the nest, and there was a lot of visitor interest.

June 16: Rosemary Foster

After 20 years of walking the Bird Island Trail, I saw something I'd never seen before--a California poppy with 8 petals. There were 3 plants at the point where the Pelican Point loop splits. (*Rosemary is a recognized native plant expert, so if she says something is unusual you can bet that it is. Ed.*)

June 16: Carol Bloner

The visitors looking through my scope at the raft of sea otters off of Sea Lion Rocks were awed at the sight of the biggest raft I had ever seen, 46 otters! And 5 of them had pups. There were not many sea lions on the rocks, but the ones there were very vocal.

June 19: Wayne Kelley

What? No sea lions at Sea Lion Point? That's right, there were none to be seen.

June 22: Curt Cureton

At about 9:10 a.m., I finished an early morning trail watch at Sea Lion Point and started driving south along the South Shore Drive. As I passed the turnoff for the Sand Hill Trail, I saw an animal walking slowly down the road about thirty yards ahead of me. It was a large coyote, and it didn't seem at all disturbed by my presence. I stayed well behind it, and it kept checking me every half-minute or so, turning its head toward the ocean, at right angles to our direction of movement on the road. Just beyond the turnoff for the main gate at the bottom of the hill, something on the west side of the



Horned puffin photo courtesy John Sorenson

road caught its attention. The coyote stopped, took a couple of steps forward, and froze in its tracks. Then, without warning, it leaped over a five foot tall shrub at the side of the road and disappeared in the brush. I waited for almost half a minute before the coyote reappeared and continued walking south along the road. Apparently its prey had gotten away. The coyote's ribs were quite visible, and its gray coat was scraggly. I did admire its head, long and pointed, and its

teeth were quite prominent. Apparently the coyote was still working on its early-morning meal, because it turned left, still hunting, and crossed into the open area adjacent to the road.

June 24: Stan Dryden

An eventful day at Point Lobos. The question of the day was, "Where are the puffins?" Yesterday's local paper ran an article on the numerous sightings of Horned puffins all around the Monterey Peninsula, with a photograph taken

at Point Lobos. It said that these birds are rarely sighted south of Puget Sound. Don Roberson's *Monterey Birds* says they are very rare visitors to Monterey County and mentions that sightings of three birds constitute a "particularly good year."

A couple came to the Information Station to ask about the birds they had seen near Bird Island, including one they said looked like an owl. I showed them a picture of the Horned puffin and they said, "That's it!" I went charging out to the place they described, but was unable to spot it.

June 26: Jon Dungan

Walked the Granite Point/Moss Cove trails. Saw prolific wildflowers in all states of their life spans—gum plants in bloom and pre-bloom, bush lupine gone to seed, lizard tail at its peak. The nesting Great blue herons at Coal Chute Point were noisy and active. I wondered if the young were about to fledge—there was a lot of wing flapping going on.

July 10: Dione Dawson

The otter count for July was 29 adults and 2 pups, with all but 2 seen on the South Shore. It was a gray and dreary day but very good for viewing, with no glare or wind, and the obvious spot for a raft was south of Sea Lion Rocks as usual. That really is the place for the otters to go in summertime. The North Shore was bare, but an interesting sight was a turkey vulture on top of a dead harbor seal near shore, having a feast. Meanwhile on a high bluff about 5 smaller (younger) vultures were quietly viewing the procedure and probably anticipating their turn. Interesting to see a vulture so close to the water.

July 11: Sharon Hoffman

Another great day at Point Lobos—unusually warm. Whaler’s Cabin had a visitor who flew in and promptly disappeared into the roof, a bat. The creature decided to take a nap hanging from a rafter over the entrance to

a bedroom. Some of the visitors wanted to see it, and others didn’t want anything to do with it. I’m sure it was comfortable, because a guest said its eyes were shut.

July 15: Ann Muto

A visitor from Chicago reported to us at the Information Station, “My trip is complete; I saw sea lions, seals, and otters!” A big smile shone on her face.



July 20: Stan Dryden

Took a group of Carmel Bach Festival musicians on a tour, and one of them later sent me a photo of Sea Lion Rocks with Sea Lion Point in the foreground. That photo showed something I had never seen before—a face in the rocks! Apparently, it only shows up on sunny mornings. Took this

photo later through my scope. Looks like John Steinbeck to me – what do you think?

Two of the musicians told me that the Point Lobos trip was the highlight of their 5 weeks in Carmel.

July 24: Connie Dallmann

Two visitors reported seeing a mountain lion on the North Shore Trail. They were certain it was not a bobcat.

August 4: Ann Muto

A cute little ground squirrel followed me around on Sand Hill Trail, putting his hand-like front paws together, clearly begging. Being a

well-trained docent, I did not succumb to his entreaties. Visitors passing by pulled out their cameras and shot photos, one even carried her child closer to the squirrel for a better look. I was waiting for one of them to pull out food. Thankfully no one did. Even after the visitors left, he kept after me. It was then I

realized the banana peel I had earlier picked up on the trail was the attraction. His begging behavior reminded me that despite our “rules,” that squirrel had been fed by humans before. I was reminded of the stories about squirrels attacking children for their muffins in a Mountain View park. Yet as persistent as that squirrel was, he did not attack the plastic bag holding the banana peel. Hopefully he never will be fed enough to develop that kind of craving.



August 9: Joe Hendrickson
Wonderful day at Whaler’s Cabin! Many interesting visitors, including Eugene Kodani (son of

Gennosuke Kodani) and his family. He remarked on how well the museum was run and expressed admiration at how well the history of the Kodani family was portrayed in the displays. Mr. Kodani complimented docent Kurt Loesch on his design of the museum, and we all received his personal thanks. In addition, descendants of the Silva family also visited today, and were interested in the cattle brands displayed in the cabin.

Point Lobos Association

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