

# The Beacon

## PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA

VOL. 11 ISSUE 3

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2017

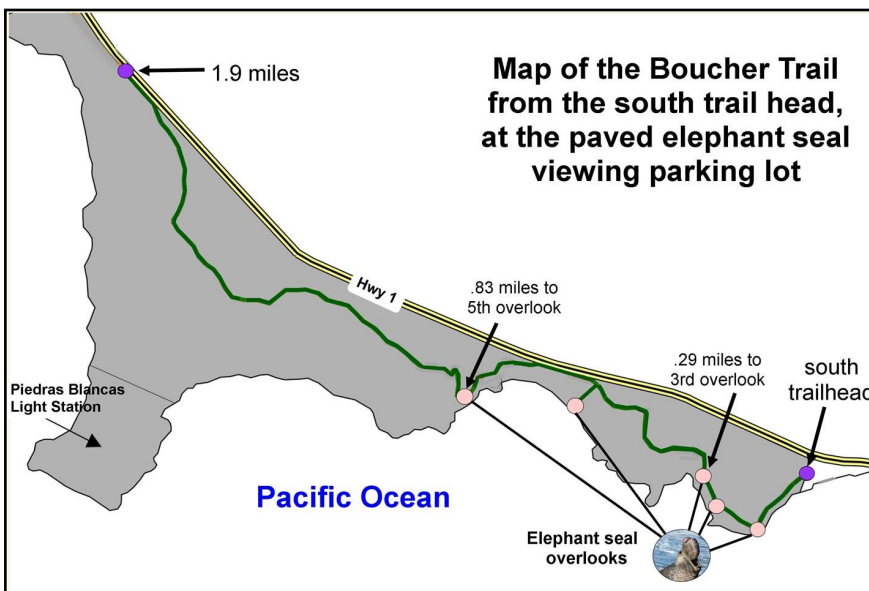
### HIKING PIEDRAS BLANCAS: THE BOUCHER TRAIL

Come experience the stunning vistas of Point Piedras Blancas between the Piedras Blancas Light Station and Highway One by walking the Boucher Trail (pronounced boo-shay). Along this new blufftop trail, hikers enjoy spectacular scenic vistas and wildlife viewing opportunities. The trail meanders through Coastal scrub, grassland and wetlands between the south trailhead (at the paved elephant seal viewing parking lot) and the north trailhead (about .5 miles beyond the Piedras Blancas Light Station). The trail is 1.9 miles long and is on State Park property.

There are five overlooks along the trail that are perfect spots to enjoy the view and look for marine mammals. Elephant seals can be seen in pristine habitat. Keep an eye out for whales! During March and April, gray whale mothers and calves pass close to land as they migrate north. California sea lions, and occasionally Steller sea lions, can be seen (and heard) on the wedge-shaped rock just off the first overlook. Harbor seals and sea otters are commonly observed. If you visit, bring your binoculars because you never know what you might see. Keep an eye out for animals on land, too: brush rabbits, birds, snakes, maybe even a coyote, might be seen. The trail also offers beautiful views of the Piedras Blancas Light Station.

The beauty of the area, and the presence of the elephant seals, draws many visitors. Symbolic fencing (eyebolt posts and cable) helps define the trail and protect the land and the animals. In 2016, a new group of State Parks volunteers was formed called the Piedras Blancas Trail Stewards. Trail stewards help maintain the trail, remove non-native plants, and act as ambassadors for the environment. Most visitors have questions and are eager to learn more about the marine and terrestrial environment.

The trail is named after Jim Boucher, former Piedras Blancas Light Station manager. Jim was instrumental in planning the trail with a focus on public access, while at the same time protecting cultural and natural resources. The Boucher Trail has been designated as part of the California Coastal Trail and is listed on the database of the California Coastal Trail Association. We hope you will enjoy a stroll along this beautiful coastline.

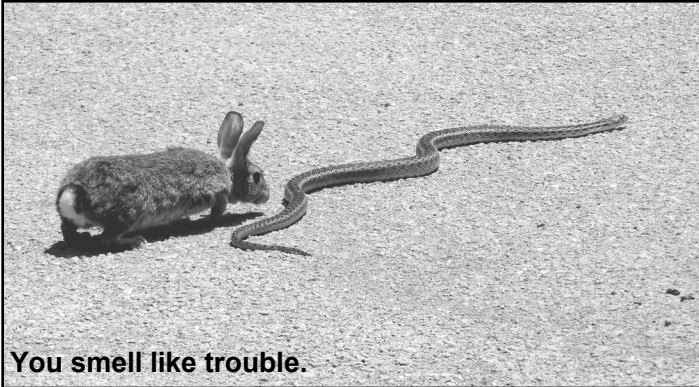


The Beacon is a joint publication of the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association and the Bureau of Land Management. The PBLSA is a non-profit partner of the BLM and provides support for the restoration, conservation, interpretation, and stewardship of the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. © Copyright 2017

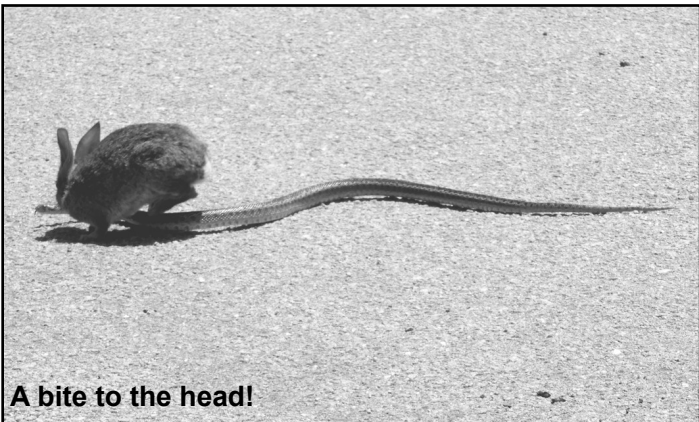


## BRUSH RABBIT VS. GOPHER SNAKE

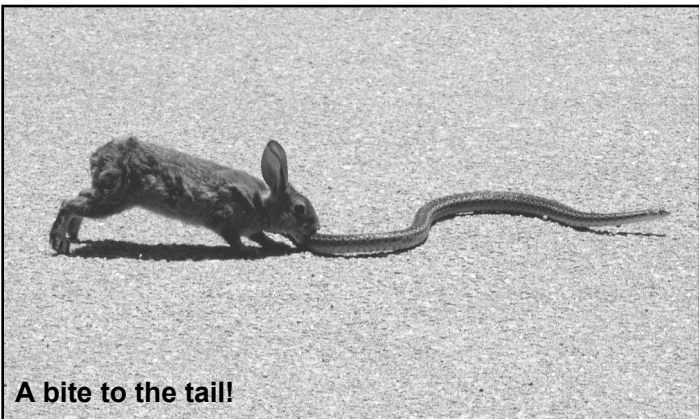
A spunky brush bunny was spotted defending its territory from a gopher snake near the elephant seal viewing area. It was a happy ending for both parties involved – they ended up going their separate ways.



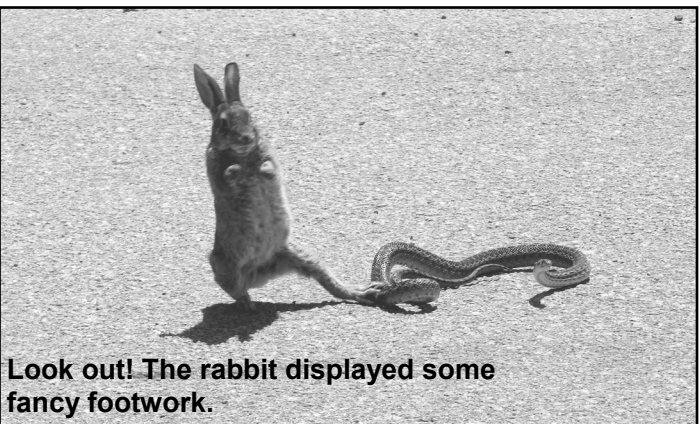
**You smell like trouble.**



**A bite to the head!**



**A bite to the tail!**



**Look out! The rabbit displayed some fancy footwork.**

## HAVE YOU SEEN OUR WEBCAM?

Since it was installed last year, many visitors have written to say how much they enjoy the live 270 degree view from the light station. Depending on the time of year, you may see elephant seals lounging on the beach, waves crashing on rocks, flowers in bloom, and beautiful sunsets.

[www.piedrasblancas.org/webcam](http://www.piedrasblancas.org/webcam)

## COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

*This is a quick salad for a warm summer day courtesy of former BLM volunteer, Carole Adams who says: "I brought this slaw to several lighthouse volunteer potlucks, and it was always well received."*

### Lighthouse Keepers' Slaw

In a bowl, combine:

1 head of cabbage, shredded

1 onion, sliced

3/4 C sugar

In a saucepan, mix together:

1 tsp dry mustard

1 1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp celery seed

1 C vinegar



Boil. Add 1 C vegetable oil and blend. Pour the hot mixture over the cabbage, onion, sugar mixture. Chill 24 hours.

*Excerpted with permission from Beverly Praver's cookbook "Dinner at the Lighthouse."*

## BLM UPDATE

### RYAN COOPER, PARK MANAGER

Summertime is upon us and things are bustling out here at Piedras Blancas Light Station. On June 15th, we began our extended summer tour schedule with tours every day except Sundays and Wednesdays through September 1st. Even with the closure of Highway One, we have had a lot of visitors this spring and are waiting to see if the road closure will have an effect on summer visitation.

Back by popular demand are the free Hike-In Tours. On Wednesday, July 26th, and Wednesday, August 30th, you are invited to hike from the Elephant Seal parking area to the Light Station and enjoy a free open house tour. Buildings will be open with docents roaming around to answer your questions. You are encouraged to pack a lunch to enjoy. The grounds and gift shop will be open from 10am to 2pm. A map and more information are on our website: [piedrasblancas.org](http://piedrasblancas.org)

Another notable happening at Piedras Blancas includes the seismic retrofit of the Fog Signal Building. This is a project we have been working on for a few years and it is finally going to be completed. It will include fixing or stabilizing cracks in the bricks, wall stabilization, installing a new roof and applying a fresh coat of paint. Construction should start mid-summer and is being funded by the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association.

We hope to see you this summer. If you have any questions about things going on at the light station, please give me a call at (805) 927-2968.



## FAREWELL TO LONGTIME VOLUNTEERS KEN EBERLE AND PETER ROMWALL

Volunteer Ken Eberle has retired from volunteering at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. Ken has worked at the light station since 2001, when BLM began managing the site. He was a major part of our efforts to remove ice plant from the grounds, and has done everything from tree trimming to assisting with our public tours. Ken's contributions to Piedras Blancas are immeasurable, and we are so grateful for his service. Ken always has a smile on his face and a friendly word for everyone. We will miss him tremendously!



Above: Peter was a knowledgeable tour guide.

Volunteer Peter Romwall retired from his work as a tour guide at Hearst Castle and volunteering at the Piedras Blancas Light Station this spring. We are sad to see him go, but happy that he has relocated to Southern California to be closer to his soon-to-be wife. Peter also has plans for future adventures as a world traveler. Congratulations and bon voyage, Peter!

We also bid adieu to Intern Alexandra (Lexi) Kookootsedes who worked at Piedras Blancas for a year. Her kind nature and strong work ethic made her an invaluable member of our staff. Lexi graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo this spring with a degree in Environmental Management and Protection. She leaves Piedras Blancas to travel through Europe for the summer. Lexi will be pursuing a position in botany or ecology when she returns to the States. She will be missed, but we wish her the very best in her future adventures and career!



Above: In the beginning, Ken was waist deep in discarded ice plant.

## MEET THE SCIENTISTS

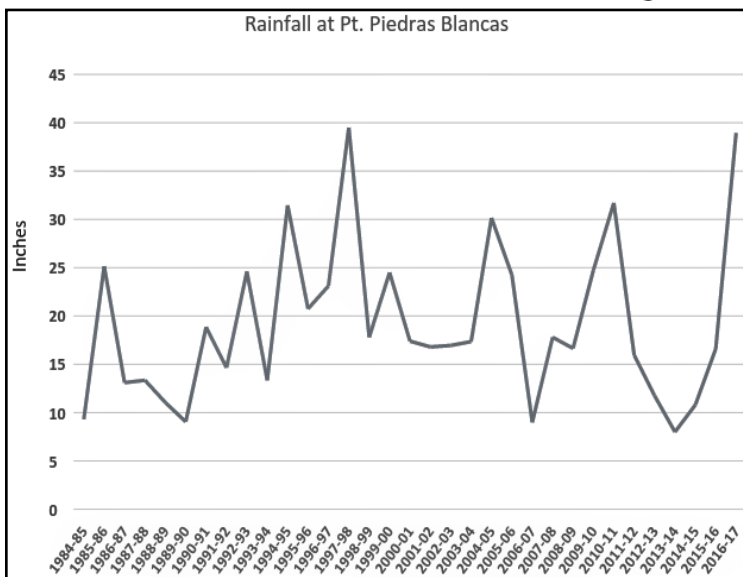
Piedras Blancas hosted a "Meet the Scientists" event in April for local volunteers. Volunteers for the Piedras Blancas Light Station, California State Parks, Friends of the Elephant Seals and other partner organizations were invited to a pancake breakfast. They had the opportunity to meet NOAA biologists working on the gray whale cow/calf study and interns with the Ventana Wildlife Society working with the California Condor recovery program. The event was an open house format and NOAA biologists John Durban, Holly Fearnbach and Morgan Lynn were all on hand to answer questions and explain their roles in the whale study. Patrick Vershoor, an intern with the Ventana Wildlife Society, showed a presentation on condor biology and described VWS's role in the species' recovery.



Morgan Lynn (NOAA) discusses the gray whale cow/calf study at PBLS with volunteers, and offers people the opportunity to look through the biologists' "big eye" binoculars.

## DID YOU KNOW?

From July 2016—June 2017, the light station received 38.95 inches of rain! During the five years prior, we averaged approximately 13 inches of rain annually.



## LIGHTHOUSE NEIGHBORS

### Point San Luis Lighthouse

(58 miles south of PBLs)

Located in Avila Beach. For a complete listing of guided tours and to reserve a ride on the shuttle, visit: [sanluislighthouse.com](http://sanluislighthouse.com) or call 805-540-5771

### Point Sur Lightstation

(65 miles north of PBLs)

From November through March tours are offered at 10 AM on Saturdays and Sundays and at 1 PM on Wednesdays. During the summer there are additional days and times. For a complete listing of tours: [pointsur.org](http://pointsur.org) or call 831-625-4419

### Point Pinos Lighthouse

(90 miles north of PBLs)

Located in Pacific Grove, open Thursday through Monday, 1 PM - 4 PM. For more information: [ci.pg.ca.us/lighthouse](http://ci.pg.ca.us/lighthouse)

Looking for that perfect gift? Visit our online gift shop to purchase items unique to Piedras Blancas.

Free shipping, too!

[www.piedrasblancas.org/store](http://www.piedrasblancas.org/store)

## WILDLIFE STUDIES AT PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION

### Elephant Seals at Piedras Blancas

The number of elephant seals born at Piedras Blancas Rookery in 2017 was estimated to be 5,050. Population estimates of elephant seal pups at Piedras Blancas is based on the number of females counted at the rookery by USGS biologist Brian Hatfield. Brian's 2017 count showed that there were 100 fewer females at Piedras Blancas rookery this year than in 2016, so there was a correlated decrease in pups.

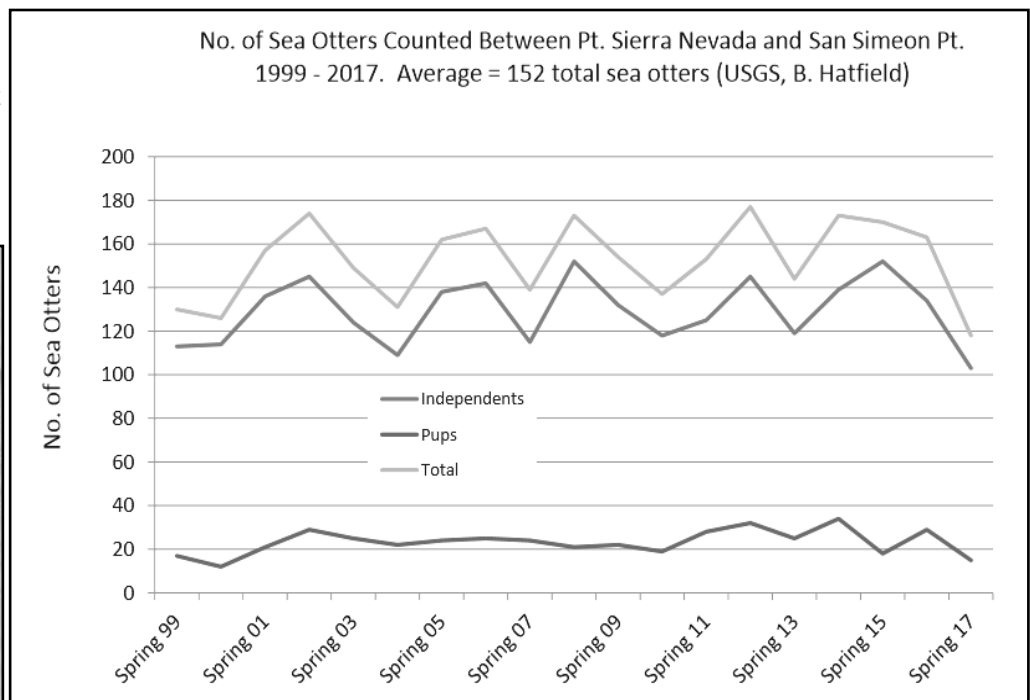
### Gray Whale Cow/Calf count

A team of NOAA biologists work together to count the newly born gray whale calves as they migrate north from Baja California, Mexico, to their feeding grounds in the Chukchi Sea near Alaska. This year, there were a total of 317 cow/calf pairs counted over the course of the 10 week study.



### Sea Otters

The number of California Sea Otters counted near Piedras Blancas this year was less than in years past. But the population is still doing well; the decrease in numbers may be attributed to poor weather and poor visibility on the days of the otter count this year.



## PEREGRINE FALCONS BREEDING AT THE LIGHT STATION

Four Peregrine Falcon chicks hatched and fledged at Piedras Blancas this year. The mating pair of falcons make their nest in a small cave near the top of the large rock immediately offshore of the light station. The young falcons have been testing their wings acrobatically as they sail around the lighthouse. The adults are very vocal and are often calling to their young or scolding the public.



## GATE DEDICATION HONORS JIM BOUCHER

On April 8th, friends and family gathered at the light station to remember former park manager Jim Boucher. The replica entrance gate was a project close to Jim's heart and it was a special day to officially dedicate the new gate in his honor.



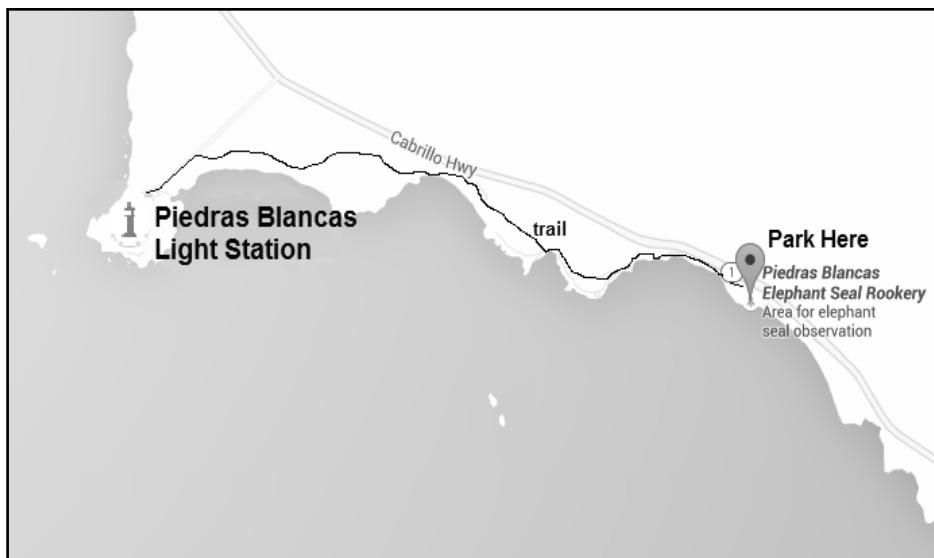
*Left: Some of Jim's family members were able to attend.  
Above: A bronze plaque was unveiled at the ceremony.*



*Above: Photo taken circa 1934.  
Right: Entrance gate today.*



## FREE HIKE IN TOURS THIS SUMMER - JULY 26TH AND AUGUST 30TH



On Wednesday, July 26th, and Wednesday, August 30th, join us for a free tour of the light station. Begin your hike at the paved parking lot at the Elephant Seal rookery, 1 mile south of the light station. Follow the trail north, approximately 1.5 miles, to the light station grounds. Docents will be available to answer questions and provide light station history. Restrooms and a gift shop will be open and you are encouraged to bring a picnic lunch and enjoy the view. All buildings will be open from 10 am—2 pm so please begin your hike early enough so you have time to enjoy the light station. Sorry, dogs are not allowed on the trail or at the light station.

For more information, email us at:  
[PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com](mailto:PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com)



## PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION TOURS

Tours are offered year-round on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. From June 15 through August 31, tours are offered daily except Wednesdays and Sundays. There are no tours on federal holidays. Tours last about 2 hours and include the historic Piedras Blancas lighthouse and support buildings along with a half mile interpretive trail that provides spectacular ocean views and opportunities to view wildlife. Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel located 1.5 miles north of the light station at 9:45 AM.

***Please do not wait at the gate to the light station!***

For information, email [piedrasblancastours@gmail.com](mailto:piedrasblancastours@gmail.com)  
or call 805-927-7361

Groups of 10 or more  
please make advance  
arrangements.

\$10 for adults, \$5 ages  
6-17, no fee for children  
5 and under.

Tours may be  
cancelled on the day  
of the tour due to  
inclement weather.



Dress warmly and wear comfortable  
walking shoes. Sorry, no pets!

PBLS Association  
P.O. Box 127  
San Simeon, CA 93452-0127  
805-927-3719  
[membership.pblsa@gmail.com](mailto:membership.pblsa@gmail.com)



All memberships include our quarterly newsletter. Your dues help with the maintenance and restoration of the Piedras Blancas Light Station.

- \_\_\_ \$50 Friend of the Lighthouse  
(1 complimentary tour )
- \_\_\_ \$100 Acting Keeper  
(2 complimentary tours )
- \_\_\_ \$250 Assistant Keeper  
(4 complimentary tours)
- \_\_\_ \$500 Principal Keeper  
(engraved brick)
- \_\_\_ \$1000 Superintendent of Lights  
(engraved brick & private tour for up to 6)

***Help restore  
and preserve  
Piedras Blancas  
Light Station  
by joining PBLSA***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to PBLSA  
You may also join online at [piedrasblancas.org](http://piedrasblancas.org)

***Thank you for your support!***

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION ASSOCIATION  
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