

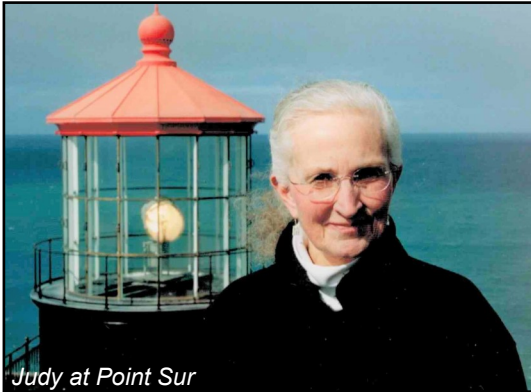
# The Beacon

## PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA ~PART OF THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL NATIONAL MONUMENT~

VOL. 13, ISSUE 2

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### LOCAL ARTIST GIFTS HER PAINTINGS TO PIEDRAS BLANCAS



*Judy at Point Sur*

Judy Lyon, a resident of Cambria for 38 years, is well known for her watercolor landscapes of California's Central Coast. She has participated in many group shows and solo exhibits, winning numerous awards. Her paintings are known for their luminous watercolor washes and delineation of nature's precious designs in minute detail. Judy has contributed her art to numerous land conservancy benefits, and served as First Vice President of the National Watercolor Society. She recently moved to the Pacific Northwest.

Among the many local groups who have benefited from Judy's generosity over the years are Greenspace, the Fiscalini Ranch, and SLOPE (San Luis Outdoor Painters for the Environment). Judy chaired the SLOPE benefit for Pacific Wildlife Care. But we at Piedras Blancas Light Station will always be grateful to Judy for her generosity in creating a collection of watercolors to benefit the light station. During 2002-2003, Judy devoted a whole year to painting a series of watercolors of the lighthouse and light station. Those paintings have been on display in the Hearst Castle Theater lobby since October 2003. She granted permission to the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association to print reproductions of the paintings, which are sold in the gift shop. All proceeds from sales of her prints and cards benefit the light station.

After her move to Washington state, Judy gifted her Piedras Blancas watercolor collection to the Bureau of Land Management, Piedras Blancas Light Station. Saying thank you doesn't seem to be enough when reflecting on Judy's generosity. We have been so fortunate to have Judy Lyon capture the essence of the light station in her exquisite paintings. We wish you well in your new home, Judy! Thank you for being a part of the Piedras Blancas Light Station for so many years.



*Three of the six watercolors Judy gifted to PBLA (from left to right): 1874, Piedras Blancas Lighthouse, The Lens. Also donated: The Past, Iron Steps and Looking North.*



The Beacon is a joint publication of the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association and the Bureau of Land Management. The PBLA is a nonprofit 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 2019





# COUNTING WHALES: PAST AND PRESENT

## SAN SIMEON WHALING STATION 1864 - 1893

In 1864, a shore whaling station was established at San Simeon Point by Captain Joseph Clark (née Machado). The whales most commonly taken by shore whalers were gray whales, which yielded 25-35 barrels of oil. Humpbacks yielded about 35-45 barrels (31 gallons per barrel). Gray whale baleen was short and of no commercial value. Other species of whales provided more oil and better quality baleen. Whale oil was used for illumination, lubrication, and in soap and paint.

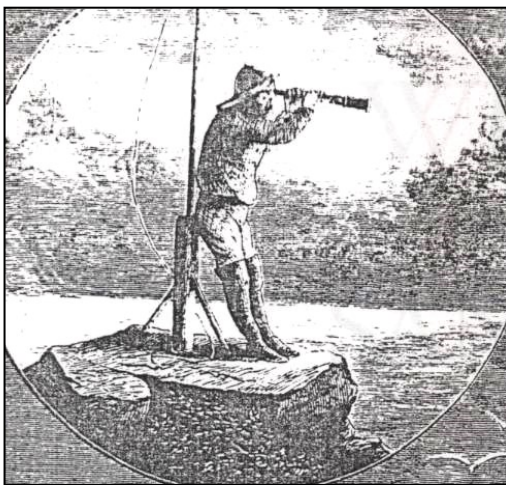
The San Simeon Station usually operated between November and March, coinciding with the gray whale migration. The men worked at other jobs off-season.

During the shore whaling era, the number of whales killed was counted. The years 1865-1873 were good years. After that, numbers dwindled.

YEAR	# taken	YEAR	# taken
1865	25 whales	1877	13 whales
1866	23 whales	1878	3 whales
1867	24 whales	1879	14 whales
1868	25 whales	1880	13 whales
1869	20 whales	1883/84	11 whales
1870	23 whales	1884/85	16 whales
1871	22 whales	1885/86	14 whales
1872	21 whales	1889	5 whales
1873	22 whales	1890	7 whales
1874	16 whales	1891	7 whales
1875	12 whales	1892	5 whales
1876	7 whales		

Numbers from "A History of California Shore Whaling," by California Fish and Game Commission, 1922.

Right: A lookout at an unknown whaling station searching for a whale. Crews in small boats used lances, guns, and bombs to kill whales.



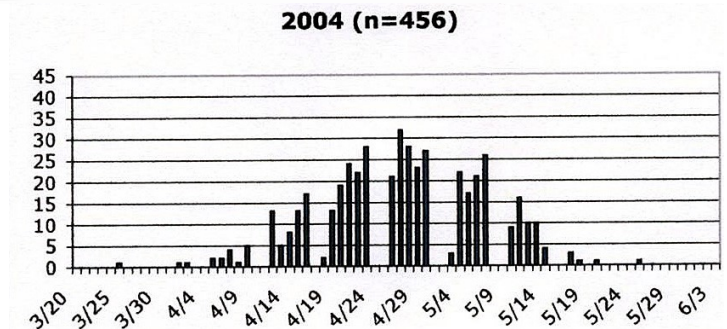
## GRAY WHALE CALF CENSUS 1994 TO PRESENT

In 1994, scientists from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) began taking an annual count of gray whale mothers and calves as they passed Piedras Blancas in April and May on their way to feeding grounds in the Arctic seas. Gray whale mothers and calves travel close to shore.

In the 1990s, gray whales were in danger of extinction. However, by 1994 they had recovered sufficiently to be removed from the Endangered Species list.

Gray whale calf counts vary from year to year. The scientists use complicated formulas factoring in actual counts and the number of hours spent counting in an effort to determine an estimate of the total number of calves. For instance, in 2016, the actual number of calves counted was 367 and the estimate was 1351. Since 1994, actual counts have ranged from a low of 71 to a high of 501; total estimates have ranged from a low of 254 to a high of 1528.

Counting whales is still a seasonal activity, coinciding with the gray whale migration. The biologists have full-time jobs with NMFS.



The chart above shows how many calves were counted on each day of the 2004 survey. The peak number of calves usually pass Piedras Blancas in late April and early May, although there can be variations.



Above: Scientists counting whales work in pairs while on watch. One person scans near-shore while the other scans offshore. Modern whale counters use binoculars and cameras.

## PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION ASSOCIATION RECEIVES GRANT

The Community Foundation of San Luis Obispo awarded the nonprofit Piedras Blancas Light Station Association (PBLSA) with a \$2,500 grant to begin initial planning for a major capital campaign. They will be working with SPOKES, a local resource for nonprofits based in San Luis Obispo.

PBLSA will be raising funds to put the top three floors back onto the 19th century lighthouse, including its ornate lens room, and retrofit the structure for stability. Other projects scheduled for restoration are the Victorian keeper's duplex circa 1876, the head keeper's cottage (1906) and the barn (1910). PBLSA is currently submitting grants to place the power lines underground to improve the viewshed and reduce risk to the bird population. PBLSA plans to launch its capital campaign in 2020.

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association was formed in 2004 to provide for the restoration, conservation, interpretation, and stewardship of the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of Piedras Blancas Light Station. Recently completed restoration projects include the Fog Signal Building listed on the National Historic Register, water tower, replica entrance gate, watch room and fuel oil building.

Donations are welcome and may be mailed to PBLSA, P.O. Box 127, San Simeon, CA 93452, or donate online at [piedrasblancas.org](http://piedrasblancas.org). PBLSA is an IRS 501c3 tax-exempt organization EIN 90-0181171.



*Pictured from left to right: John Brass, Holly Gant, Harry Thorpe, Jim Harris, Ryan Cooper, Gary O'Neill and Zale Schuster. Not pictured: David Cooper and Tim Postiff.*

### JOIN US FOR WALK-IN WEDNESDAYS THIS SUMMER

On the last Wednesday of June, July and August the light station will be open to hikers from 10 am - 2 pm. Admission fee: \$5/adults, free for kids. Bring a lunch and enjoy the views. This is a rare treat for visitors to be able to walk the grounds at their own pace. Sorry, no dogs and no smoking. Parking is available at the elephant seal viewing area and involves over a one mile hike to get to the light station. Visit our website for details.

### LOOKING FOR A UNIQUE GIFT? WE HAVE AN ONLINE GIFT SHOP!

We offer custom ornaments, etched wine glasses, shot glasses, mugs, t-shirts, fleece jackets and vests just to name a few. An engraved brick installed at the light station makes a memorable gift, too! Prices include tax and shipping and all the proceeds stay here at the light station. You may also join PBLSA or renew your membership online. Visit us at: [piedrasblancas.org/gift-shop](http://piedrasblancas.org/gift-shop)



### CRITTER CORNER

Our majestic national symbol, the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), is occasionally seen in this area. Eagles may nest along the Central Coast in trees during the winter months. They are opportunistic and may be a predator or scavenger depending on available food sources. Their diet is mostly fish when available, but also birds and small mammals. They often feed on carrion. Bald eagles may mate for life and often lay two eggs. The young are incubated for about 35 days and will take their first flights at about 10-12 weeks old.

*Photo by Gary O'Neill*

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Jim and Roberta Major have been light station volunteers since 2012 and they love interacting with the folks on tours. Jim may be found guiding a tour while Roberta enjoys staffing our gift shop. Before moving to Cambria in 2010, Jim worked as a purchasing manager in the electronics industry and Roberta was in Real Estate having sold over 2,000 new homes. The Majors thought they would lay back and enjoy retirement, but they also wanted to meet people. So they joined clubs: Mah Jongg was the first, then came bridge for Jim. And they were both living history docents at Hearst Castle for their night tours and met lots of people. Jim and Roberta are also involved with delivering Meals on Wheels and as part of the board of directors for the Joslyn Center where Jim was President and Roberta was Secretary for three years. Lately, Roberta is co-Vice President for the Cambria Neighbors Club and they enjoy outings with the Porsche Club, which Jim adores. Their family consists of three adult children, five adult grandchildren, and two adorable great-granddaughters, whom they are very proud of. Jim and Roberta both love meeting new people and they are a welcoming presence at the light station. We are happy they always have time for the light station in their busy retirement.



## MEET THE NATIVES

California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) was selected as the state flower in 1890, but the state legislature didn't make it official until March 2, 1903, when the California poppy became the official state flower of California. The plant's bright orange flowers are an unmatched symbol of the Golden State and are commonly seen blooming in the spring and summer along roads and hillsides throughout much of the state.

Here at Piedras Blancas the perennial, coastal form of the California poppy, the Seaside poppy (*Eschscholzia californica* var. *maritima*), is prevalent with its abundant yellow flowers with orange centers. Beginning in March and continuing through the summer, its cheery blooms frequent the coastal bluffs at the light station.



*Did you know that April 6th is California Poppy Day?*

## LIGHTHOUSE NEIGHBORS

### Point San Luis Lighthouse

(58 miles south of PBLs)

Located in Avila Beach. For a complete listing of guided tours and special events and to reserve a ride on the shuttle, visit: [PointSanLuisLighthouse.org](http://PointSanLuisLighthouse.org) 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: [PointPinosLighthouse.org](http://PointPinosLighthouse.org)



## JOIN OUR MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS ON THE 4TH WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association meets every 4th Wednesday of the month at 6 pm at Rabobank in Cambria. The public is always welcome to come listen, ask questions or voice concerns.

We are currently accepting resumes from anyone who is interested in becoming a board member. The board is made up of people from varied backgrounds and education who live in different parts of the county. We especially need someone who has fundraising or grant writing experience.

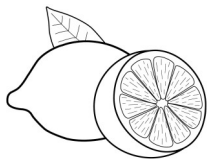
Please send us an email if you are interested or have questions: [contact.pblsa@gmail.com](mailto:contact.pblsa@gmail.com)



## COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

### Dee-licious Lemon Pie

- 1 1/2 C sugar
- 5 Tbl cornstarch
- Dash of salt
- 1 1/2 C boiling water
- 2 Tbl butter or margarine
- 4 eggs beaten separately
- Grated rind of 1 lemon
- 6 Tbl lemon juice



Mix the sugar and cornstarch together very thoroughly. Add the salt and boiling water, then cook together, stirring constantly, over hot water 8 minutes. When nearly done add the butter or margarine. Beat the egg yolks enough to blend, add the grated rind and lemon juice. Combine with the cornstarch mixture and cook for two minutes more. Set aside to cool. Pile into a baked cooled pastry shell. Cover the top with meringue made from egg whites, using 1/2 C of sugar (2 Tbl) to each egg white). Bake until meringue is browned, in a moderately slow (325 degree F) oven about twenty minutes.

Variation: Two of the egg whites may be stiffly beaten and folded into the filling, if desired, making a meringue of the remaining egg whites - and four tablespoons of sugar.

*Excerpted with permission from Beverly Praver's cookbook "Dinner at the Lighthouse" available in our gift shop.*

## TRIVIA TIME

Did women serve in lighthouses?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Which is the only lighthouse equipped with an elevator?

- A. Sullivan's Island, SC
- B. Cape Hatteras, NC
- C. Portland Head Light, ME
- D. Heceta Head, OR

Which was the first lighthouse to use electricity?

- A. Cape Henry Light, VA
- B. Boston Light, MA
- C. Statue of Liberty, NY
- D. Cape Hatteras, NC

Answers: Yes! It was one of the first government jobs available to women in the 19th century. There were at least 80 female keepers, but most obtained their positions after their husbands died or were incapacitated. A. Sullivan's Island in Charleston, SC, was built in 1962. C. The Statue of Liberty was used as a lighthouse from 1886 - 1902. During that time, its torch was illuminated by 9 arc lamps powered by an on-site generator.

## TAKE A PEEK AT THE LIGHTHOUSE ANY TIME

Since our live webcam was installed in 2016, many visitors have written to say how much they enjoy the live 270 degree view from the light station. You may see elephant seals on the beach or a beautiful moonrise. Check us out:

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

## POINT SAN LUIS LIGHTHOUSE PLANKS: GENEROSITY AND TEAMWORK IN ACTION

On April 2, 2017, Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers walked the Boucher Trail between the elephant seal viewpoint and the Piedras Blancas Light Station. After hiking through wet and muddy areas, Executive Director Deb Foughty said, "You need more planks! We've got some you can have." Fast forward one year to April 10, 2018, when a State Parks crew began picking up the donated wood and then in November, 2018, the Student Conservation Association (SCA) crew constructed double wide plank passage through the wetland. In February, 2019, a State Parks crew began cutting batches of planks and delivering to the trail where they were assembled by trail steward volunteers. On March 16, 2019, a California Conservation Corps (CCC) crew hauled 50 planks out to the trail. In total, the wood donated by Point San Luis ended up producing 100 planks.

Appreciation goes to Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers for their generous donation; the State Parks crew for picking up the planks, storing, cutting, and delivering them; Bureau of Land Management staff for their support and for scheduling the SCA and CCC crews; the trail stewards (Tim Postiff, Duffy Burns, Jim Townsend, Stephen Beck, Carole Adams, Phil Adams, Jim David) who helped carry, place, and move planks; and special thanks to trail steward Jim David for transporting planks in his truck and attaching all the cross pieces.



*Above Right: The CCC crew hauls planks into place.*

*Below Right: The first group of happy hikers using the planks and keeping their feet dry.*

## 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 two 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 advanced  
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!**



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and Instagram:  
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