

The Beacon

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

VOL. 13, ISSUE 3

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2019

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2019

Dinner & Libations for THE STATION

Sunset Fundraiser for the
Piedras Blancas Light Station

LIBATIONS by **HARMONY CELLARS** * **927 BEER COMPANY**

Wood Fired Pizzas * **Live Music** * **Silent Auction**

Event will be held on the Piedras Blancas Light Station
grounds in San Simeon from **4-6:30PM. Ticket price: \$65.**
Tickets available at **HarmonyCellars.com** & **PiedrasBlancas.org.**
Questions? Please call 805.927.1625



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



THAR SHE BLOWS!

A blow is the most commonly seen whale behavior observed at the sea surface. The blow is the exhaled breath of a whale. Blowholes are nostrils located so high on the whale's head they can breathe when barely breaking the surface. The blowholes are connected directly to the lungs so a swimming whale may have a mouthful of water, but it won't interfere with breathing. The whales most often seen off Piedras Blancas are gray whales (winter and spring) and humpbacks (summer and fall).

A whale blow is not a fountain of water, as depicted in cartoons. It is mostly comprised of condensation created when their warm, vaporous breath meets cool, ocean air. It does contain some droplets of sea water and small amounts of oil and mucous, but it is basically a blast of warm, wet air. Remember the word "blow" by thinking of the old whalers, who called out, "Thar she blows," not "Thar she spouts!"

Both gray whales (*Escrichtius robustus*) and humpbacks (*Megaptera novaengliae*) have short, bushy blows that are 10-15 feet high. When viewed from up front or behind, a gray whale's blow can appear heart shaped.

Although experienced whale watchers can identify whale species by their blows, most of us need to observe parts of the body to make an identification. Gray whales lack a dorsal fin, but rather have a hump and a series of 6-12 bumps down their backs. Humpbacks have a hump and a small dorsal fin. Coloration and flipper length are also clues. Maximum length for gray whales is 45-50 feet long, weighing up to 80,000 pounds. Maximum length for humpbacks is about 50-55 feet long, weighing up to 90,000 pounds. Females of both species are slightly larger than males.

Other species of whales are rarely seen from Piedras Blancas. Blue whales (98 feet long, 400,000 pounds) have a tall columnar blow up to 30 feet high. Minke whales (32-35 feet long, 20,000 pounds) have a low, bushy, inconspicuous blow.



Photos by Gary O'Neill

TWO INTERNS ARRIVE AT PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION



Daniel Dodero is one of our two new interpretive interns that will be working here through the summer. Daniel is looking forward to developing his interpretation skills and educating the public about this beautiful and fascinating location. A Colorado native, Daniel grew up in Grand Junction, Colorado, and studied at the University of Colorado, Boulder, majoring in Environmental Studies and minoring in Geography. Prior to this internship, Daniel worked for the Utah Conservation Corps doing restoration, trails, and maintenance work in Capitol Reef National Park and worked for the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy doing a trails internship in the Golden Gate Recreation Area in San Francisco. Daniel's goal is to build a career in land conservation with one of the federal land management agencies and to become a park ranger. He also plans on pursuing higher education in the coming years. An avid outdoorsman, Daniel enjoys exploring new national parks, landscape and wildlife photography, and

hiking, including climbing 14,000+ foot mountains. He even summited Mount Kilimanjaro, one of the seven summits of the world at 19,341'.

Veronika Kocen is from Castaic, California. She graduated this past spring from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, with degrees in biology and environmental studies. Her favorite animal to see at Piedras Blancas Light Station is the sea otter and her favorite light station fact is that the Keeper's cottage was sold for only \$1 and is now used as a vacation rental. When Veronika is not interning at the light station she enjoys going to farmers markets, reading mystery novels, and traveling. Next year, she hopes to travel to Italy and visit Venice.



Welcome aboard, Daniel and Veronika!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

A hearty welcome to our newest volunteers: Sue Rounsvelle, Imkelina Nicolai and Kathy Escobar!

We are fortunate to have three new enthusiastic volunteers join our team. Sue Rounsvelle recently retired from teaching at Vineyard Elementary School in Templeton and visited the light station several times as part of Piedras Blancas Light Station's 4th Grade Outreach program. Sue is still passionate about teaching, and shares her talents with the light station by volunteering as a guide for those same 4th grade field trips as well as our regular public tours.

Imkelina Nicolai is also a retired teacher and has been a volunteer camp host at San Simeon State Park for several seasons. She recently began volunteering for the Bureau of Land Management to survey Black Oystercatchers and their nesting sites as part of a joint effort with BLM and California State Parks to conserve this rocky intertidal species.



In addition to guiding and assisting lighthouse tours, Kathy Escobar also volunteers with Friends of the Elephant Seal. She has become a valuable member of our weekly tours.

Thank you all for your help!

MEET THE NATIVES

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) acquired its scientific species name because its foliage appears to consist of thousands of tiny leaves: "mille" means thousand, and "folium" pertains to its leaves. In reality, yarrow has 7 - 8 dark green leaves with a midrib running the length of each leaf. The blade on each side of the rib is made up of numerous smaller divisions. This adaptation helps increase the total surface area exposed to the sun for photosynthesis and it is also resistant to the heat of the sun because smaller parts shed heat more easily. It is native to the western US and is equipped to thrive during hot, dry summers in California. Our yarrow blooms in spring and summer and the flowers vary from white to pink.

Native Americans used yarrow to treat cuts and sores and to stop bleeding wounds. They also used the leaves to relieve pain and reduce fever because yarrow contains salicylic acid, the active ingredient in aspirin.



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 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 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



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.

The board consists of people from varied backgrounds and education who live in different parts of the county. We are always interested in speaking with anyone who is interested in becoming a board member. 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

CALIFORNIA COASTAL NATIONAL MONUMENT REPORT

Members of four of the six Friends Groups representing on-shore units of the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) met in Pt. Arena, Mendocino County, on May 2-4, 2019. The meeting was convened and facilitated by the Conservation Lands Foundation (CLF). The purpose of the gathering was three-fold: (1) Build a shared vision that the CCNM coalition can work towards together; (2) Broadly outline key strategies for achieving that vision; and (3) Foster strong networking and relationship-building that will help empower and inspire the coalition as it embarks upon this new endeavor.

The group included representatives from Cotoni-Coast Dairies (Santa Cruz), Piedras Blancas, Point Arena-Stornetta Lands, and Trinidad Head. Four CLF staff members participated. Two BLM staff also took part.

The meetings included coalition visioning and strategy mapping, yielding over a dozen shared goals and outcomes the CCNM coalition would like to see implemented over the next three years. They include a management plan for every unit and adequate resources in place to staff the on-shore monuments; website, brochure, and map development and social media promotion that includes all units; signage and common branding; and stewardship and protection of resources from overuse and over-commercialization. Equal consideration was given to the importance of engaging local communities through Friends groups and developing strong gateway partnerships with other local nonprofit groups and enterprises. Participants stressed development of California Coastal Trail segments at each unit. Much attention was focused on developing strong youth education programs and supporting robust scientific research complemented by respecting and advancing traditional tribal knowledges. Additionally, cultural, historic, and archeological sites must be protected and restored, where appropriate. The coalition will meet again next year at host site Trinidad Head.



Participants from friends groups representing on-shore units of the CA Coastal National Monument enjoy an informative hike along the bluffs near Point Arena. Photo by David Cooper

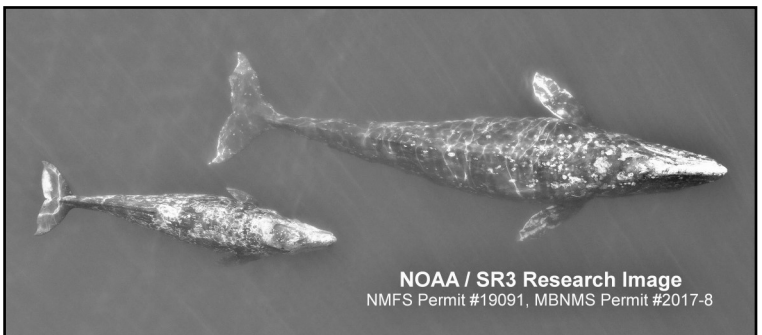
2019 GRAY WHALE SURVEY RESULTS

Dave Weller, the team lead for the gray whale survey gave us this update: The total count for 2019 was 85 mom-calf pairs - this is a low count but not outside the boundaries of what we have seen before. While we are uncertain what may be driving the low count, it is likely that sea ice conditions and shifting benthic food resources (those found near the sea bottom and in sediments) in the Arctic have played a role.

John Durban, one of the drone operators with the NOAA whale team, said all of the observed cow/calf pairs have looked well fed.

Pictured is an aerial image of an adult female gray whale and her calf as they migrated north off California in April 2019. Images like this are being used to assess the condition of the mothers and the growth of their calves.

Image by NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center and SR3: SeaLife Response, Rehabilitation and Research, collected using an unmanned octocopter flown at >150ft under NMFS research permit #19091 and MBNMS permit #2017-8



CRITTER CORNER

Although it is found on six continents, the Peregrine Falcon is uncommon in most areas; it was seriously endangered in the mid-20th century because of the effects of DDT and other persistent pesticides. These fighter jets of the bird world hunt by flying very high, then stooping in a spectacular dive to strike prey out of the air at nearly 200 mph. Nest sites are usually on cliff ledges including in the large rock just offshore of the light station. Some sites may be used for many years. Peregrines feed on a wide variety of birds including shorebirds and gulls. We are fortunate to see falcons most of the year, but especially in the spring and summer. If you see a large bird perched atop the lighthouse, it is probably a peregrine!



Photo by Gary O'Neill

COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

Artichoke Salad

Combine:

4 small or 2 large jars marinated artichokes, drained
2 cans plain artichokes
2 baskets cherry or olive tomatoes, halved
1 pound sliced fresh mushrooms

Toss with marinade:

1 C olive oil	1/2 tsp dry mustard
2 tsp oregano	1/2 tsp pepper
1 tsp salt	1/3 C wine vinegar
2 cloves garlic, pressed	

Serves 16-20 and is easily halved for fewer servings.

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

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. Suggested donation: \$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 additional details.

TRIVIA TIME

Ida Lewis drew national attention for rescuing nearly 25 people in Newport Harbor while she was a lighthouse keeper at Lime Rock in Rhode Island.

- A. True
- B. False

Betty Byrnes' father was a lighthouse keeper in northern Michigan. She and her siblings were grounded for a week after they:

- A. Tried to run away
- B. Rescued a fisherman
- C. Charged visitors for tours to the top of the lighthouse

Teenager Abbie Burgess was famous for:

- A. Keeping the lights burning while her father was gone.
- B. Designing a lighthouse.
- C. Rowing a boat for five miles.

Answers: A. True! Fifteen-year-old Ida moved to the tiny island of Lime Rock in 1857 where her father was the lighthouse keeper. After he had a stroke and could no longer work, the keeper duties fell to Ida and her mother. C. The Byrnes children decided to hang out in the station's parking lot and when tourists would arrive after tour hours, they would take them up in the tower. The children made decent money in tips, but when their father discovered the source of their new-found wealth, he grounded them for a week. Accepting gratuities for tours was strictly forbidden, and Keeper Byrnes was afraid he could lose his job. A. While her father was gone, Abbie kept the twin lights burning of Matinicus Rock Light in Maine during a terrible storm and for three weeks afterward.

MEET THE SCIENTISTS AT PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION

On April 28th, the Piedras Blancas Light Station hosted the third annual "Meet the Scientists" event for local volunteers, fellow government agencies, and non-governmental partners. Biologists from a variety of agencies and organizations were on hand to present their research and answer any questions visitors might have about their work.

Dr. John Durban and Dr. Holly Fearnbach, from the NOAA Satellite and Information Service, were on hand to demonstrate the drones they use to take aerial photographs of gray whales and check on the health of the cows and newborn calves on the migration north.

From NOAA, one of the official gray whale counters discussed the annual gray whale count and was kind enough to let visitors use the "big eyes," the massive binoculars the biologists use for their work.

Participants also heard from Amy List with Ventana Wildlife Society on the California Condor Recovery project. Brian Hatfield of the U.S. Geological Survey presented on California Sea Otter Recovery. Heather Liwanag of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo presented on the pilot elephant seal surveys she and her graduate students are working on.

BLM staff had a wonderful time and enjoyed hosting so many people from the area who give their time and energy to contribute to the conservation of this extraordinary area. Piedras Blancas had visitors from Friends of the Elephant Seal, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center, California State Parks, Caltrans Headquarters, as well as BLM volunteers and their friends and families. The weather was beautiful, whales and otters made an appearance, and the wildflowers were in full bloom.



Above: Dr. Holly Fearnbach prepares to catch the octocopter drone. Photo by David Cooper

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
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
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San Simeon, CA 93452-0127
805-927-3719
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
Thank you for your support!



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