

The Beacon

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

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PBLSA BOARD AND BLM TAKE STEPS TOWARD LIGHTHOUSE RESTORATION

On February 18, PBLSA board members and BLM staff, including engineers and an archaeologist, met with Shoreline Engineering and Wellsona Iron to discuss proposed work on the lighthouse.

Damage to the lighthouse is occurring due to the ironwork surrounding the windows and doors. When the lighthouse was constructed in 1874, cast iron was embedded in the brick, and as the iron rusts, it expands and pushes at the surrounding brick, a process called rust-jacking. To halt this process and begin stabilizing the lighthouse, Shoreline Engineering proposes removing the old ironwork and replacing it with concrete. In the process, the unique features of the ironwork will be preserved and used as a mold to shape the concrete replicas. The goal is to not only prevent further damage to the lighthouse, but to preserve the historic structure as much as possible.



PBLSA board members and BLM staff discuss the proposal to restore the window with Shoreline Engineering and Wellsona Iron staff. Photos by David Cooper.



Before work can proceed, there is still the lengthy process of reviewing the proposal and getting the correct permits to ensure the historic feel of the lighthouse will be preserved and the surrounding environment will not be damaged. In the meantime, the PBLSA board is working on a funding plan.

If this proposal is approved and the work proceeds, it will serve as an important step forward in stabilizing the lighthouse, paving the way toward restoring the top of the tower.



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.
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SIERRA CLUB SERVICE TRIP AT PIEDRAS BLANCAS

In December 2021, a Sierra Club Service Trip group continued a tradition that began in 2008, when the first service trip to help at Piedras Blancas pulled ice plant at the light station. This year's participants were willing and eager to help in any way possible. The twelve participants and three staff members came from all over the country.

The group stayed at Camp Ocean Pines in Cambria and spent their first day pulling ice plant and planting trees on the Fiscalini Ranch in Cambria.

They worked at Piedras Blancas for three days. At the light station, work included weeding and trimming cypress. On the State Park side of the Outstanding Natural Area they removed thistle, mustard, and radish from a wetland, and pulled non-native plants from sensitive dune areas. From detail weeding to tackling huge patches of ice plant and New Zealand spinach, this group excelled. Teamwork and positive energy always get the job done!

Thank you Sierra Club for another outstanding service trip at Piedras Blancas.



On the right, Jodie Nelson, BLM Recreation Planner, shows a detailed weeding team how to remove oxalis.



Removing non-native plants on the Outstanding Natural Area north of the light station.

JOIN THE PBLSA BOARD MEETINGS ON THE 4TH WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. (except for November and December). Due to COVID concerns, we are currently holding virtual Zoom meetings.

The public is always welcome to listen, ask questions, or voice concerns, so please email us if you would like to participate. Meeting minutes are published on the pedrasblancas.org website on the About Us page.

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

Please email if you are interested in the board or have questions concerning the Light Station: contact.pblsa@gmail.com.

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, visit:
PointSanLuisLighthouse.org
or call 805-540-5771.

Point Sur Light Station

(65 miles north of PBLs)
Visit their website: PointSur.org or call 831-625-4419 for the current tour schedule. No reservations; first come, first served.

Point Pinos Lighthouse

(90 miles north of PBLs)
Located in Pacific Grove. Open Saturdays and Sundays 1 - 3 p.m. Tours are outside on the lighthouse grounds. For more information, visit: PointPinosLighthouse.org.

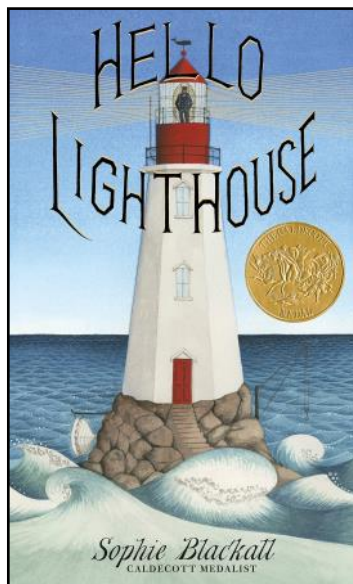


Find out more about Piedras Blancas Light Station at pedrasblancas.org

GIFT SHOP UPDATES

NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK IN THE GIFT SHOP!

The Caldecott Medal-winning picture book *Hello Lighthouse*, by Sophie Blackall, beautifully illustrates lighthouse life. It tells the story of the keeper and his duties, in clear weather and stormy. When the keeper falls ill, his wife tends to him and keeps the light going. All throughout, the logbook must be kept. And one day, the light is automated and the lonely life of the lighthouse keeper and his family changes forever. Recommended for ages 4-8.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: AZUL

Azul is one of the smiling faces you may see if you stop by the gift shop on your next visit to the light station. Azul joined the volunteer crew in August 2021 and has been a regular help since. If you stopped by around the holidays, you witnessed her creative decorating in the gift shop.

In addition to volunteering at the light station, Azul also volunteers at the Marine Mammal Center and Pacific Wildlife Care. Not only that, but she volunteers in the gift shop for Morro Bay State Park and as an interpretive guide at Spooner's Ranch at Montaña de Oro. We're lucky to have her share her time with us at the light station.

In her free time, Azul is a poet and likes to travel. She says she is always learning and loves to pass that on to others. She has lived in China, where she taught a class on cultural differences. Azul loves the peace and quiet of the Central Coast, where she has lived for over 50 years.

Say hello to Azul next time you see her in the gift shop!

DID YOU MISS AN ISSUE?

Check out the archive of *The Beacon* on our website at piedrasblancas.org/newsletter. We have digital versions of the quarterly newsletter going back to 2015.

PBLSA MEMBER BENEFIT!

Join the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association and get 10% off all gift shop purchases!*



Simply enter coupon code: **MEMBER** in your shopping cart at shop.piedrasblancas.org, or let the gift shop volunteer know that you are a member the next time you visit the light station.

**Does not apply to donations, engraved bricks, memberships, or tour fees.*

To join PBLSA, complete and mail the form on the back of *The Beacon*, or join at shop.piedrasblancas.org.

Questions about your membership status? Email us at membership.pblsa@gmail.com.

Thank you for supporting the light station!



Gift shop volunteer Azul.

BOUCHER TRAIL ON “BEST HIKE” LIST

AFAR digital travel magazine has listed the Boucher Trail as one of the best hikes along the California Coastal Trail. In a June 2021 article, the Boucher Trail is listed third, following Redwood National and State Parks (Humboldt County) and Tomales Point Trail (Point Reyes National Seashore.)

The description of the Boucher Trail hike includes the following: “As home to the largest northern elephant seal rookery in the mainland U.S., this secluded trail offers intimate views of the elephant seals in the natural beach environment. Midway along the trail sits the Piedras Blancas Light Station, built in 1875 and still operating today. The lighthouse provides a glimpse into the maritime history and heritage of this part of the Central Coast.”

The Boucher Trail is an easy 2-mile hike on California State Park property, stretching between the paved elephant seal parking lot and



Piedras Blancas Light Station viewed from along the Boucher Trail

a small parking lot about half a mile north of the light station. The trail is named after the former manager of the Piedras Blancas Light Station, Jim Boucher, who played a major role in delineating the trail.

The California Coastal Trail is a network of trails that could eventually allow the public to traverse the entire 1,230 mile coast of California. It is now about 70% complete.

RESTORING NATIVE PLANTS: TREE LUPINE (*Lupinus arboreus*)

Tree lupine, also known as yellow bush or coastal lupine, is a familiar sight on coastal bluffs, especially when it blooms in the spring. The return of tree lupine to the light station is one of the success stories of our efforts to restore the native plants once overrun by ice plant and other invasives.

In 2001, we began removing ice plant and other non-native plants. Ice plant was cleared from the area southwest of the parking lot in 2007.

The dominant plant seen in the 2009 photo is tree lupine, one of the first plants to come up in newly cleared areas.



By May of 2012 the yellow blossoms of seaside woolly yarrow* (*Eriophyllum staechadifolium*) can be seen, and by 2015 it was the predominant native plant.

(*Other common names for woolly yarrow include seaside woolly sunflower and lizardtail.)

May 2012



Our goal was not to “garden” in the native plant areas, but to allow a natural succession of plants. The results have been stunning.

May 2015



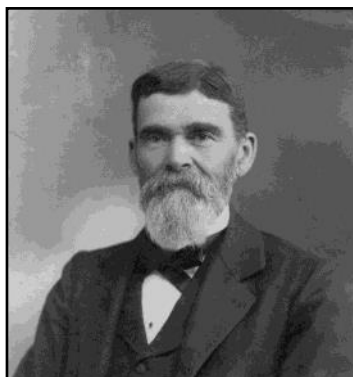
May 2007



SEBASTIAN'S: A LOCAL LANDMARK WITH TIES TO THE LIGHT STATION

On January 31, Sebastian's General Store in Old San Simeon was moved from its temporary location back onto a new foundation as part of the restoration process undertaken by Hearst Corp., the current owners. There are plans to re-open as a General Store & Delicatessen in 2022, continuing the over-150-year-old history of Sebastian's serving San Simeon.

In 1904, Captain Lorin V. Thorndyke, one of the most prominent Principal Keepers at the Piedras Blancas Light Station, bought Sebastian's, then called the Frankl store after the previous owner. The store was managed by Thorndyke's son, also named Lorin. When Captain Thorndyke retired from the light station in 1906, he and his wife



Captain Lorin V. Thorndyke. Photo courtesy of Donna Jean Schneider.

Margaret moved into a small cottage behind the store. The Thorndyke store was sold in 1914 to Manuel Sebastian, and it is still known as Sebastian's.



Standing in front of the Thorndyke Store, later known as Sebastian's, are three generations of Thorndykes. From left to right: Maud; her son, Roger; Captain Thorndyke; Margaret; and Lorin, the son who managed the store.

Photo courtesy of Donna Jean Schneider.

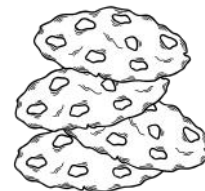


Sebastian's moving onto a new foundation. Photo by David Cooper

COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

Chocolate Potato Drop Cookies

- 1/3 cup butter or butter substitute
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 squares bitter chocolate (melted)
- 1 cup mashed potatoes
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 eggs (separated)
- 1 cup flour
- 1/3 cup raisins



Sift flour and baking powder. Cream the fat and beat in the sugar, then the egg yolks and chocolate; add the mashed potatoes, then the nuts and raisins rolled in the flour and baking powder mixture, and last the beaten whites of the eggs. Drop in small portions onto the aluminum cookie sheet and bake in moderate oven, 350 degrees F.

From the recipe book of Maud Rogers Thorndyke, daughter-in-law of Principal Keeper Lorin V. Thorndyke.

Excerpted with permission from Beverly Praver's cookbook *Dinner at the Lighthouse*, available at the Piedras Blancas gift shop and online at shop.piedrasblancas.org.

VISIT THE LIGHT STATION ANY TIME, DAY OR NIGHT . . .

. . . with our live webcam, courtesy of Surflife. Enjoy a view of the light station grounds, the beaches to the north and south, and the waves crashing on the rocks offshore. Look for elephant seals on the beach and pelicans and seagulls perched on the rocks. Whether it's a foggy morning or a moonlit night, check us out:

piedrasblancas.org/webcam



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. Make your reservations online through our website, piedrasblancas.org. Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel located 1.5 miles north of the light station at 9:45 a.m.

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 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
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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)
- ___ Donation \$ _____

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks payable to PBLSA,
or join online at shop.piedrasblancas.org.

Thank you for your support!



Find us on Facebook
and Instagram:
PiedrasBlancasLightStation



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