



POINT LOBOS

Volume 32 • Number 1

Spring • 2009

Point Lobos Association

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*Cover: Pinnacle Ridge by Kenneth Parker.
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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.

Point Lobos Magazine
is printed on recycled paper
and published four times per year
by the Point Lobos Association.
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PDF versions available at
www.PointLobos.org.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Judd Perry



At the beginning of my third year as your President, I want to thank all of our Point Lobos Association members for their generous support over the years for the work of the Association and of the dedicated and talented Docent volunteers. Thanks also to those members who attended our 31st Annual Membership Meeting on January 10, 2009, and participated in the election of directors of the Association. In addition to re-electing three At-Large Directors who are returning for successive terms (Steve Dennis, John Hudson, and Joyce Olcese), you elected one new Docent Director, Gael Gallagher, to replace retiring Director, Kerstin Jones. I want to welcome Gael to our Board and thank Kerstin for her tireless efforts on behalf of the Association, not only as a Director but also as our Treasurer for the past three-and-a-half years.

Monterey District Superintendent Mat Fuzie addressed the Annual Meeting and presented the Association with California State Parks' Leadership Award, in recognition of the Association's contributions to Point Lobos State Reserve. In addition, Ed Clifton, a Director and former President of the Association as well as one of our

most respected Docents, was given the coveted State Parks "Golden Poppy Award" for his outstanding service to the Association and the Reserve.

Following the Annual Meeting, the Board elected Association officers for the coming year. They are: President, George ("Judd") Perry; Vice President, Robert ("Skip") Flohr; Secretary, Brandi Katz; and Treasurer Samuel ("Sandy") Hale. I want to thank each of them for the energy and dedication they bring to the Association's work.

If you have not visited Point Lobos recently, now is the perfect time to do it. With the January/February rains, we are expecting an abundance of spring wildflowers. Don't wait until May, when most of them will be gone. It is in March and April that they are at their glorious peak, so make it a point to enjoy them this year. If you are not familiar with all of the wildflowers of the Reserve, join a guided walk and let one of our talented and knowledgeable Docents do the identification.

March, April, and early May is also the time when you can personally witness one of the longest mammal migrations on earth, as the majestic gray whales make their way

back to their northern feeding grounds from the warm birthing waters of Baja California, Mexico. Mothers and calves will be close to shore to gain protection from the marauding orcas ("killer whales") who patrol our coast during this period looking for wayward calves. There will also be nesting cormorants and black-capped night herons at Bird Island, and harbor seals pupping on the beaches around Whalers Cove, Blue Fish Cove, and other secluded spots along the coast. If you look closely, you might even be able to spot our great blue herons nesting in the trees near Coal Chute Point. It is a truly wonderful time to be at Point Lobos, so come soon and often.

And finally, have you visited our website lately? There is a large amount of valuable information about the Reserve and the Association to be found there. We are also now archiving past copies of the *POINT LOBOS* magazine, so you can review past articles and photographs. You can access the site at www.PointLobos.org.

I hope to see you soon at Point Lobos State Reserve.

Announcements

Sign your kids up for our upcoming
Summer Outdoor Program
presented by State Park staff based
out of Point Lobos State Reserve.

Kids 9-15 years old will have the opportunity to experience California State Parks in a day camp setting.

Session dates:

June 22 thru July 3, 9:30–2:30

July 13 thru July 24, 9:30–2:30

Tuition: \$200.00

Telephone: 831-624-9423 for more
information or to reserve your child's spot.



Photo courtesy Tryntje Rapalje/Koduckgirl via Flickr.



Paintings of Point Lobos Reserve

by Mark Farina at the Pacific Grove Art Center

An exhibit of oil and watercolor paintings by local painter and art instructor Mark Farina will be on display at the Pacific Grove Art Center, April 10th through May 22, 2009. The show will be held in the Dyke Gallery and will consist of 25-30 works. Many of the smaller paintings have been painted on location in the Reserve.



There will be an opening reception on Friday, April 10, from 7 to 9 PM. Mark will be reading poems inspired by Point Lobos on Saturday, April 11 from 2-4 PM.

See Mark's websites for more details and a look at the paintings in the show:

www.mfarinaartstudio.com

www.mfarinaartstudio.com/blog

A portion of sales derived from this show will benefit the Point Lobos Association.

The Pacific Grove Art Center is located at 568 Lighthouse Avenue, downtown Pacific Grove, and is open Wednesday - Saturday 12- 5 PM and Sunday 1-4 PM.

UNDER MY BRIM

Ranger Chuck Bancroft



Let's continue our look into the past history of Point Lobos and see what takes place after Mexico wins its independence from Spain in 1822.

1833 – The Church has lost a great deal of her strength politically and economically. The Californios, seeing the vast developed ranchos, passed laws to secularize the missions and open these lands to private development. Point Lobos, for the first time since North America had become inhabited, came under private control.

1834 – The first person of record to legally own Point Lobos was Juan B. Alvarado, who on July 30, was given a grant called Rancho el Sur, which may have included a portion of the lands in the vicinity of Point Lobos.

1835 – Teodoro Gonzales applied for the rancho of Sur Chiquito on September 2. The map he submitted showed that this grant definitely included Point Lobos. The only real use for land in this area at this time

was cattle grazing.

1839 – Don Marcelino Escobar on April 16 was granted the Jose y Sur Chiquito Rancho. This was the first valid

grant confirmed by the Mexican government in 1840. The Rancho's boundaries ran from the Carmel River in the north, the mountains on the east, and the Palo Colorado Canyon in the south. It consisted of roughly two leagues of land. (One league is about 3.5 mi or 5.5 km. This unit of measurement is no longer in use.-Ed.)

1840 – Don Marcelino Escobar's Rancho San Jose y Sur Chiquito is confirmed by the Mexican government. All subsequent title claims concerning Point Lobos stem from this grant. This same year, Juan and Agustin, Don Escobar's two sons, seem to have obtained possession of the Ranch. No record or date of this transaction was recorded.

1841 – On August 26th, Dona Josefa de Abrego, holding power of attorney from her husband to buy and sell land, purchased the Rancho San Jose y Sur Chiquito for \$125 in silver and \$125 in merchandise.

Don Escobar had other children besides the two sons and these and their grandchildren began to claim portions of the land. Thus began a long complicated series of legal battles to determine ownership of the property.

1842 – January 16th. Dona Josefa Abrego deeded the land to a group of soldiers from the Monterey Presidio. The soldiers evidently paid nothing for it. Why? Legend tells of a gambler who once lost the rancho at cards. Perhaps this was a gambling debt of her husband.

1844 – June 7th, the soldiers of the Presidio (about ten in number) turned the Rancho over to their supervising officer, General Jose Castro. No other information is available about this strange dealing.

1848 – The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended Mexican rule of California and began a period of California history as a territory of the United States.

So, what takes place in California, Monterey, and at Point Lobos after the war with United States and Mexico is ended? You'll have to wait until the next issue of the Point Lobos Magazine is published to find out.

observations

Sparky Starkweather, State Park Squirrel



as the case may be). This mushroom is most popular in children's fairy tales as a Christmas tree ornament, and in its dried state as incense. Ranger Chuck just happened to take this image.

Up on Whalers Knoll we've been lucky to observe the monarch butterflies as they cluster together to avoid the colder temperatures. Although the numbers were relatively small this year we did have some wonderful groupings. When the weather turned almost too warm, these delicate creatures were flying all over the Reserve looking for nectar. The numbers at the Butterfly Sanctuary in Pacific Grove were wonderful. The monarchs there provided a great show as they flew through the canopies of the Eucalyptus trees and then clustered in the cypresses and eucalyptus.

When you take the time to really observe, you often find the most remarkable things. I was patrolling my forest looking for my favorite mushrooms when I came upon the most glorious of our fungal friends: *Amanita muscaria* . . . the fly agaric. Although you should not eat this fruiting body due to the toxins it contains, a camera is the better way to take it home with you. All things in the Reserve are protected and collecting is not permitted. I see photographers all the time lying on the ground looking for just the correct light and angle to capture this beautiful fungus on film (or digital



To protect this valued natural resource will require cooperative and sustained efforts on several fronts: university-based research, natural resource agencies at all levels of government, non-profit conservational and education organizations, involvement of the general public, and citizen scientists.
~The Monarch Butterfly in Western North America

Monarchs of Point Lobos

I stood in a bramble of poison oak with my little black and gold opera glasses, craning my neck up, chin pointed to the Monterey pines. That chilly December morning, the Point Lobos over-wintering monarch butterfly population roosted quietly in the pines amid the dewy morning lichen, in beautiful imbricated clusters. It was thus that I learned the art and science of counting butterflies. Docent and monarch enthusiast, Stella Presthus, had recruited me at the December Point Lobos Association meeting for the Butterfly Counting Committee. She explained that Jessica Griffiths, Monterey County Coordinator for Monarch Alert, had begun the cooperative counting program at Point Lobos the previous month. Griffiths oversees the weekly monitoring of butterfly numbers at all Monterey County monarch over-wintering sites, including the famed Monarch Grove Sanctuary in Pacific Grove, and some spots around Big Sur.



Western Monarchs

The Western Monarch summer breeding grounds extend from the Pacific Northwest/Canadian border south all the way to Baja, and from inland California to the Rockies. These monarchs west of the Rocky Mountains migrate in a south-westerly route; there are over 300 western habitat sites along the Pacific Ocean Coast. Their habitat is dominated by non-native eucalyptus trees; however, there are a few colonies that still roost in native trees species, such as Monterey cypress, coast live oak, and Monterey pine.

Eastern Monarchs

From eastern breeding grounds (east of the Rocky Mountains), monarchs follow a south to south-westerly migration route to the Trans-Volcanic Mountain Range in Mexico. It is sad-denning to note that the millions of monarch butterflies that migrate to Mexico from the eastern United States and Canada each fall to over-

Heidi Van der Veer

wintering sites in Mexico are highly threatened, due to deforestation caused by illegal logging.

Point Lobos Monarchs

Unlike other western monarch habitats around California, the secluded off-trail amphitheatre at Whalers Knoll is about as ideal as a butterfly can get for total privacy, protection, and microclimate conditions. The threats of habitat destruction by agricultural, commercial, or municipal development faced by monarch habitats elsewhere are a non-issue due to Point Lobos' status as a California State Reserve.

It is a tricky business to count butterflies and come up with an accurate number, and I am frequently asked how one does it. First, it must be done when it is still cool in the morning, while they are "asleep" clustering in the trees; they tend to congregate about a third of a way up the tree. Binoculars, scope, or opera glasses are indispensable to begin the count. It is necessary to do an initial inspection of the whole tree to see how many individual clusters you spot; we started with a tree that usually had eight separate clusters. Having at least two counters is an important measure to ensure accuracy and staying within a 20% margin of error. A laser pointer is helpful for accurately identifying clusters to counting companions who might be accidentally counting a different section than you.

Count out a group of ten individual contiguous butterflies on the edge of a branch, and then flex your powers of estimation and superimpose the mental image of that number over the rest of the monarchs; in this way, with guidance from an experienced counter, and practice, you will estimate your final answer, cross-check it with fellow counters (there must not be more than a 20% difference between your numbers), and record the tabulation. Each week's numbers are sent to Monarch Watch for inclusion in county and state-wide monarch-tracking reports. The highest numbers we got for the 2008-2009 over-wintering season were 2,008 monarchs at Point Lobos.

The height of monarch mating season conveniently falls around Valentine's Day, and as was remarked by Griffiths in her e-mailed Monarch Update that week, Love is in the air! Liter-

ally. The monarch mating ritual is fascinating. Around January, monarchs are coming out of reproductive diapause and males start to initiate mating attempts, chasing females, grabbing them in mid-air, or pouncing on females that are resting in vegetation. Either method of capture results in a struggle, where he wrestles her in a free fall to the ground. They struggle in this fashion on the ground for some time in a battle of wills as males are incredibly persistent, and females tend to resist quite strongly.

The male probes the female abdomen with his abdomen tip, uses claspers to tightly clasp

onto her, then he flies into the canopy of a nearby tree with her dangling beneath.

The female has ways to avoid these coercive male tactics: she will often flip upside down on the ground, extend her wings, and arch her abdomen tip into the

substrate, making it nearly impossible for him to mate with her. Fortunately, they succeed in their entomological mating endeavor, enabling the cycle to continue the next generation of migrating monarchs. Unfortunately, these mating activities have high energetic costs, and in addition to increasing the damage to their wings, the male does not have long to live. It is the female who completes the last leg of the migration to deposit her eggs on Central Valley milkweed.

The Monarch Butterfly in Western North America, a 34 minute VHS available at many libraries, delivers "dramatic closeup video of mating behavior."

The next monarch counting season will start around November 2009. We will need to recruit brave counters willing to tiptoe through the poison oak on cold mornings every week through February 2010. The pay-off is getting to be one of the rare visitors to Pt. Lobos who is allowed to wander off-trail to view and keep track of these protected beauties. And you will have the satisfaction of knowing that to count them, is to love them. And to love them is to protect them. Wings Away!

Heidi Van der Veer, a music historian and docent for Monterey State Historic Park, is a local music teacher and performer of historical music. She is a current member of the Point Lobos docent training class.





WHISPERS OF THE IMAGE; WORDS IN PLEIN AIR

Photographs: Kenneth Parker

Prose & Poetics: Joselyn Ignacio Zimardi

Sounds of the ocean, the wetness of the bough, the fragrance of the earth,
the coolness of rock, captured in poetry and photography.

How One Writer Experiences Point Lobos: Joselyn Ignacio Zimardi

There are power spots on this earth and Point Lobos is one of them. Like a gem among many in the palm of the “one force” (Mani Bhaumik), this sacred place is offered to you and me as a gift. Is Point Lobos shaped by our need for a secret spot, a community venue, a respite? Yes, yes, and yes; Point Lobos exists. And so we try to make sense of its beauty, put an order to nature—like unwitnessed layers of life; nature’s pentimento. The following is a fragment of what comes of a writer’s perspective; a photographer’s eye—enter language, enter visuals—all tincture and taint.

*Enveloped in the natural quiet
Senses ablaze
I think not. I say least*

I bring my out-of-town and local friends to Point Lobos. We are enveloped in the power and beauty of this area. It is a cold morning and my physicist friend Robert from Boston gazes down at a sheltered cove, crowned with seaweed. We are cold and huddle closer together. For a moment, reality bites, the wind bites. We are on the edge of the bluff; the cove comes into focus. “How do we market such beauty,” I ask? “Make a jacket stuffed with Point Lobos kelp.” We laugh and continue our hike, immersed once again in our private thoughts.

*Sea surface
Full of seaweed
Epiphany!
A jacket born*

I meet up with Christine, a long-time county resident, just a few feet from the gate entrance. We are in single file. We hike. Our experience is cerebral; human utterance abounds. Rocky stone steps ascending to the sky, prickly brush scraping our skin, sprites on the ocean waters. We round the perimeter of Point Lobos in 30 minutes flat. Then as quickly as we had met, we embrace, promise to meet again; then depart.

*Beauty buzzing by—
Heart in high gear; we trail
Life ahead of itself waving*

Point Lobos is a community. It brings a town together for activities, events, and meetings. CK is my friend and colleague. Our day jobs keep us indoors most of the time. Point Lobos is our respite, when we are up, when we are down; it becomes our private place to journey inside of ourselves. It is CK’s own backyard to contemplate, her swimming hole to research dive. With other Point Lobos advocates at a moonlight picnic, we pass bread and wine—it is our “first supper” and before and below us, the sea.

*Visitors
From all walks of life
Taken by the view
Shutterbug*

How One Photographer Experiences Point Lobos: Kenneth Parker

The first time I was exposed to the awe-inspiring Point Lobos was at the end of that archetypal cross-country-family-car-trip-that-changes-your-





life, all the way back in 1963. Then elusively beckoning me back in 1977 while a transfer student at UCSC, Point Lobos was indeed destined to become my favorite local treasure power spot back then and especially now, privileged as I've been the past fifteen years to be living here in blessed Carmel.

Having a breathtakingly craggy expanse of mystic wildness as a beckoning backyard to stroll through is an important reason for cherishing

this land as my home. The astonishing shoreline that begins at that Point and continues along the transcendent spectacularity [*sic*] that is Big Sur is unsurpassed by any other on the face of the Earth. I endeavor to keep pace with such echoing beauty at every turn along the Cypress Loop and North Shore Trail! And it remains a lifelong dream to mine its secret haunts, along with others southward down the coast . . . until I've produced

a compelling portfolio of rocky jagged yet intimate color landscapes.

A uniquely rare convergence of beachless land and sea, Point Lobos is like “a Chinese landscape painting” (Robinson Jeffers) with a delicate balance of exquisitely intricate line and form. It is

capturing a true trace of its *magic*.

Like Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony I often find myself transported by the iridescent palette of the Point Lobos North Shore—from its sweet somber laments and inscrutably subtle moods to gently soaring flights of ecstasy. Since my first



those gnarled old cypress trees flourishing there in the moist air that delight me the most . . . whorled and windswept, wizened with wisdom against an engrossing intrigue of bestial granite chiseled by storm and sea.

Striving as I do to capture with camera the pure impact of this enchanting scene, it happens authentically only when I am acutely *present* to its sense of place. It is an unspeakably poignant mystery really, just how or why which shots “hit” and which ones don’t; and all too insufferably infrequent of course. But when everything is just right, when the mind’s eye is open and tuned. . . it simply clicks. You become it, it becomes you, and then. . . well you’re really making art of it, really

*Parker working in Thubchen Temple,
Lo Monthang, Mustang, Tibetan Plateau.*

enthralled peek into its mysteries forty-five years ago, I’ve been fortunate enough to wander all over the world. But while Kauai’s astoundingly sculpted Napali cliffs are undeniably dazzling, my eyes have yet to embrace another coastline as mythically dramatic as our own beloved Point Lobos and Big Sur. It is truly an apotheosis of planetary landscape that *must* forever remain the finely unbridled, unfractured, lovingly appreciated jewel it has long been to our community.

Carmel-by-the-Sea, February 2009.

Quotes from the Docent Log

edited by Stan Dryden

Nov. 11: Chris Stone

Spent hours watching spectacular sets of huge waves. Lots of sea lions on their rock, but not keeping too dry. About five to six deer entertained the crowds by nonchalantly eating close to the trail. So many people this weekend, and so many great questions. Everyone I came in contact with was overwhelmed by the beauty of Point Lobos.



driving through the rain, I arrived at the Sea Lion Point parking lot in brilliant sunshine. There I found three freelance travel writers and photographers waiting for their paid guide, who did not show up. They were delighted to see “their” docent to guide them on a walk to the photogenic spots and answer their questions

Nov. 18: Dione Dawson

The otter count for November was 23 adults and 3 pups, the heaviest concentration being on the south shore, which yielded an excellent count of 16 adults and the 3 pups. It was an extremely foggy day, but with a higher ceiling so that the visibility was excellent, aided by a flat, calm sea. Lots of large jellies were seen around the north shore, and a group of dolphins moved around Carmel Bay. We were unable to pinpoint exactly what kind of dolphins they were. In fact, they might well have been sea lions in a cavorting mood, as they never stayed in sight for very long, although they hung around the same area.

to count otters had a marvelous time. We are happy to announce we had 30 adults and 8 pups. The north shore did much better than last month by increasing their count to 17 adults, beating the south shore count with only 13 adults. There was some excitement for the south shore otter counters. As they approached Bird Island no birds were visible. Lo and behold, there was the peregrine falcon having breakfast. It was interesting seeing him enjoy his meal piece by piece!

about the Reserve.

Off we went on the Cypress Grove Trail, which was bathed in sparkling sunlight the whole time. With the air and flora having been scrubbed clean by the rains, it was a photographer’s (and docent’s) paradise. I got my “15 minutes of fame” by being included in some of the less attractive photos. The visitors’ enthusiasm made this one of my more enjoyable public walks. (One account of this trek was posted on the following blog:

Dec. 16: Stan Dryden

My wife thought I was crazy to go out to Point Lobos on this cold, showery morning to give my scheduled walk. After



Dec. 9: Lynne McCammon

Point Lobos has been called “the Crown Jewel of the State Parks.” If you had been a visitor or a worker Tuesday morning you would have agreed! The ocean was calm and there was a nip in the air. The folks who went out

californiatravelgirl.blogspot.com/
-- see A Monterey Weekend)

Dec. 20: Brandi Katz

Moon jellies! Moon jellies everywhere. I've never seen them in the coves in December – they usually appear in "Indian Summer" each year. In the late December cold they looked like nothing so much as delicate snowflakes dancing on the face of the coves.

Dec 27: Frank & Duane O'Sullivan

Great day at Point Lobos. Gray whales going south. Two large separate groups of dolphins going north. Mating pair of otters at Whalers Cove. Great blue heron getting a fish at Whalers Cove.

Dec. 28: Jean Grace

A spectacular crystal bright winter day drew crowds to the Reserve. This Sunday between Christmas and New Year's showcased whales, otters, harbor seals, and sea lions – one of these requiring a Marine Mammal Rescue team because of a severe bite out of its flank. It's a pleasure and privilege to help all these excited visitors.

Dec. 29: Martha Dennis

At the Information Station I had a pleasant visit with Roy Hattori's grandson and his family. (*Roy was an abalone diver at Point Lobos and still loves to talk about his experiences.*) The family now lives in Washington State but said, "We just have to come back here to visit Carmel and Point Lobos."

A few whales and a small pod of dolphins were reported south of the Sea Lion Rocks.

Dec. 31: Brandi Katz

Quite a start to New Year's Eve at Lobos today. Did the opening Info Station shift, and the place was packed almost from opening moments. No surprises there – it was glorious out! My guided walk had about 30 participants – easily the biggest walk I've ever attempted. Among the group, incognito until about half-way through, though I had been alerted by a Ranger that she'd be in the Reserve, was Ruth Coleman (Director of California State Parks) and her party of about a dozen. No pressure there!!!!

Jan. 8: Jon Dungan

Dozens of whale spouts in just 30 minutes. Was able to show some visitors their first sightings. Six Australian men were deeply interested in our sea mammals as well as the comparisons with seals and elephant seals.

Jan. 9: Celie Placzek

Walking back from the Pit I heard a noisy bird in a tree above the trail. Stopping, I noticed an osprey perched on a bare snag. As it flew off across the cove a small fish dangled from its feet. The bird landed in another tree where I could share the sight with two excited visitors.

Jan 13: Lynne McCammon

These last few days have been glorious! Our team of otter-spotters met today, but before hitting the trails the whole group had their binoculars glued to the waters beyond Headland Cove. The gray whales were on the move. After seeing several pods move southward we decided to go on the otter count. We had a taste of

the warm weather, so before we started a few layers of clothing were left behind.

We are very happy to announce we observed 39 adults and 8 pups. Two different teams came in with the same number of otters: 17 adults and 3 pups. The third team had 5 adults and 2 pups. The count of 8 pups is great. Our count seems to be increasing month by month! The South Plateau team observed a few dolphins passing by. Bird Island was devoid of cormorants – only a lone great blue heron was observed.

Jan. 13: Stella Presthus

Finding the unexpected at Point Lobos came as a surprise to Ed and Daniel O'Neal. They made their first dive at Whalers Cove, in perfect dive conditions. At a depth of 25 feet before surfacing, their dive came to a halt. Ed blew out his regulator and yelled Daniel's name. Both anchored themselves to kelp stalks as a calm, curious 25 foot creature circled. Then on the second pass, at 20 yards away, were revealed the small eyes of a juvenile gray whale. After a ten minute encounter it swam out of the cove. The experience left the O'Neals: "...startled at first and then amazed and shocked..." With no regrets, as an object lesson, they vowed to bring their camera.

Jan. 13: Ed Clifton

The magic of Point Lobos is manifested in many ways, and recently I experienced something that was at once awesome, delightful, and mysterious! Tuesday, January 13, 2009, will be



remembered as the winter day when the thermometers at the Information Station registered 80° F in the shade. It was virtually windless, and the sky was without clouds. As I drove over the hill from the Information Station around 2:15, on my way to Weston Beach, I saw something in the ocean that literally stopped me in my tracks. About halfway to the horizon, a small part of the ocean was flashing with brilliant sparks of light. It reminded me of camera flashes during halftime at the Super Bowl. The glittering persisted as I drove along the South Shore and parked at Weston Beach, where I could study it in more detail. It occurred directly beneath the sun in an elongate patch of rougher water. With binoculars I could see an occasional dolphin or porpoise break the surface of this patch and surmised that their feeding caused the wave chop in the rough patch. The sun seemed to be in just the right position to reflect off these waves, creating the flashes I observed from shore.

Further offshore a large pod of gray whales contributed to the light show. As they broke the sea surface, their wakes created golden lines of light, often punctuated

orange, yellow, green, blue and violet randomly appeared and vanished. Shining through the colors were myriad dancing tiny flashing lights. It was eerily beautiful!

Late in the day, after closing the Information Station, I watched the sun set into the Pacific, and noted that a fog bank lay on the horizon. The thickness of bank corresponded to the light band I had seen earlier. With the red-gold setting sun behind it, I could see that the fog bank top was sharply defined and very irregular. I presume that a substantial wind accompanied the bank, constantly shifting and remolding it, which could account for the shifting color patterns I observed earlier. The sun must have been in exactly the right position to create a spectrum of light that changed as concentrations of mist shifted within the bank. Waves generated by that wind in the sea beyond could account for the tiny flashes of light.

As often occurs when we see something magical at the Reserve, frustratingly few visitors were present to share this with. The few that chanced by were enthralled. One visitor saw a leaping dolphin in the closest patch

by a spout.

Finally, the horizon was marked by a thin luminous band of light, which, with binoculars, resolved into a glimmering, shifting display of the rainbow spectrum: red,

of dancing light. Another told me later that he had observed the flashing spectrum at the horizon while eating a late lunch at the Bird Island picnic area. Finally, three excited visitors told me at the Info Station that they had seen a whale in one of the coves off the Cypress Point Trail, "Right below us in the water, about 30 feet long and covered with barnacles."

It was indeed a special day!

Jan. 14: Stella Presthus

While on trail watch, I had a rare encounter. With good depth visibility, I happily watched the panorama of pulsating moon jellyfish. As they swayed near the surface along the ocean current breeze, the kelp forest below parted. I held my breath in awe. Cautiously venturing to the sandy bottom, for a good rub - the striking stripes and spots appeared - of a fine leopard shark.

Jan. 27: Marty Renault

January just may be the most splendid month at Point Lobos. The holiday visitors have cleared out and tranquillity has returned. When the skies are not pouring welcome rain, they're crisp and sunny. Today a doe and two half-grown fawns lolled in the sun just off the Sea Lion Point trail, unconcerned by the gawking humans. The balmy weather this year has lulled the flowers into thinking it's already spring. Seaside painted cup, Douglas iris, poppy, seaside daisy, and of course the irrepressible Bermuda buttercup are now blooming. But the gray whales know exactly what month it is and are swimming south, right on

schedule.

Jan. 30: Jacolyn Harmer

Just as they were about to leave the Reserve this afternoon, I dragged a young Indian man and his parents out of their car again, blinking into the sunlight. The parents had just arrived from Gujarat yesterday to stay with their son in San Francisco. But I couldn't let them leave without seeing whales and filling their lungs with sweet Pacific air. It took a while for the lazy group of whales I had spotted to swim south and spout in front of us. The young man's mother stood shading her eyes, with her sari flapping in the warm breeze, smiling.

Jan. 30: Mary Beach

Volunteering brings surprises. How can a volunteer contain the excitement of seeing whales migrating south on a crisp and

sunny day in January? A woman was sitting on a bench but looking disinterested in the beautiful surroundings. Ah – a challenge for the volunteer! I engaged her in conversation and found out that she was a first-time visitor from New Jersey and had never seen whales. Her interest in the subject seemed to be increasing after being shown images of what the “blows” look like and the curve of the back and shape of the tail before the whale slips under the sea. However, when I added the facts about the long six-month migration to Baja to give birth, and the return all the way up the coast to Alaska, she stared into my eyes and shouted, “Nebraska? Nebraska? How are they gonna get to Nebraska?” I should have said, “don't ask-ka”, but I quietly said “Alaska.” Her friend returned from the restroom, and off they went. The beautiful



Otter and frisbee courtesy Anthony Steward.

sunny day went on, and a laugh and a smile will remain with me for a long time. I love volunteering!

January 31: Marty Renault

Everyone knows sea otters are playful, but when a couple of visitors came into the cabin today claiming they had seen an otter in Bluefish Cove playing with a Frisbee, I thought they were kidding. Sensing my skepticism, they whipped out their digital camera and proudly displayed the captured image. Convinced and delighted, I urged them to send us the photo.

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