**Farallon Island NWR**

**Monthly Report**

**September 2016**

Biologists: Jim Tietz

**Island Visitors**

Point Blue crew this month included: Jacob Drucker, Garrett Duncan, Dan Maxwell, Zack Mikalonis, Alyssa Olenberg-Meltzer, Adam Searcy, Jim Tietz, and Claire Wallis

USFWS crew included: Gerry McChesney, Mark Harris, Jonathan Shore, and Ed Van Til

**Sep 7:** “**Outer Limits”** (skipperJim Robertson) brought out Gerry McChesney, Mark Harris, John Daley, and Saul Kolb to inspect houses for bidding process on fire alarms and sprinkler installation.

**Sep 9: “Coast Guard”** brought out Jonathan Shore and Ed Van Til.

**Sep 10: “French Kiss”** (skipper Don Bauer) resupplied the island. Five crew members toured the island.

**Sep 13: “Coast Guard”** landed and departed with Jonathan Shore and Ed Van Til.

**Sep 17: “Salty Lady”** (skipper Jared Davis) brought out Garrett Duncan.

**Sep 23: “Coast Guard”** brought out Jonathan Shore.

**Sep 24:** “**Outer Limits”** (skipperJim Robertson) brought out Dan Maxwell, Zack Mikalonis, and Adam Searcy. Point Blue staff Grant Ballard and Pete Warzybok led a tour of volunteers. Jonathan Shore departed.

**West End Island Visitors**

No trips to West End were conducted in September.

**Weather/Ocean**

The month of September was dominated by moderate to strong NW winds, with mostly clear skies and just occasional overcast or fog. The wind direction had a southerly component during only 16% of weather observations. There were a total of 0.02 inches of precipitation recorded this month, mostly as condensed fog. Mean noon day air temperature was 15.6°C, with a standard deviation of 2.4°C, a high of 24.5° C recorded at 1200 hours on the 26th, and a low of 12.0 recorded at 0600 on the 29th. Mean sea surface temperature was 13.73°C, with a standard deviation of 0.83°C, a high of 15.19°C on the 14th and a low of 12.11°C on the 5th. This mean sea surface temperature is 0.23°C below the long term (45 year) mean for September.

**Oiled & Entangled Things**

**Common Murre** – On Sep 6 one murre seen on Low Arch had 30% of its body covered with dark, tar-like oil left flanks, sides, rump and tail. On Sep 14, one murre near Fertilizer Flat had 20% oil on body on lower flanks.

**California Sea Lion** – Eleven individuals with embedded entanglements around the neck were observed this month.

**Humpback Whale** – One seen in Mirounga Bay with party balloon and string was observed trailing off a pectoral fin.

**Breeding Birds**

**Ashy Storm-Petrel –** The first confirmed fledge occurred on the 6th. Five nests fledged by the end of the month, and 23 nests were still active.

**Leach’s Storm-Petrel** – None were noted this month.

**Brandt’s Cormorant** – Chicks were observed throughout the month creching near colonies. Adults and independent juveniles were observed roosting on offshore islets and foraging in feeding flocks around the island. A hundred regurgitated pellets were collected in three colonies to determine diet.

**Pelagic Cormorant –** Adults were observed roosting at normal roost sites.

**Double-crested Cormorant** – Numbers of individuals returning to the colony on top of Main Top dwindled through the month.

**Western Gull** – Most late chicks were abandoned by adults during the first half of the month to meet their own fate. Number of adults occupying territories and roosting at night on the Marine Terrace dwindled through the month.

**California Gulls –** Very few birds were seen this month.

**Common Murre –** All healthy birds were seen offshore, either rafting in small groups or foraging with other birds. A few sick or oiled birds were seen roosting along the shoreline.

**Pigeon Guillemot** – The last followed nest fledged on the 2nd. The last adults were seen flying to the island during the second week of the month. Numbers of juveniles in the nearshore waters dwindled until there were only a few left by the end of the month.

**Cassin’s Auklet –** The final followed nest fledged on the 25th. Late in the month during foggy nights, many birds came ashore to dig and vocalize. On the 29th, several were seen close to shore during the day, which was the first time that had been seen this month.

**Rhinoceros Auklet –** None were seen this month.

**Tufted Puffin –** Numbers dwindled through the month, and the last was seen on the 15th.

**Black Oystercatchers** – Birds were observed roosting at usual locations along shoreline.

**Canada Goose –** None observed this month.

**Pinnipeds**

The lighthouse pinniped census was conducted every Thursday this month for a total of five surveys.

**California Sea Lion** – Overall numbers dipped mid-month before rising again at the end of the month. Many individuals continued using the Marine Terrace. The mean lighthouse count was 3980, with a high count of 4664 on the 29th. The highest pup count was 142 on the 29th, with most counted on Dead Sea Lion Flat.

**Steller Sea Lions** –Overall numbers fluctuated throughout the month. The mean lighthouse count was 66, with a high of 92 counted on the 8th. The highest pup count was 11 on the 1st.

**Northern Elephant Seal –** Numbers slowly increased this month, with larger animals leaving and immatures and sub-adult males replacing them. The mean lighthouse count was 59, with a high count of 103 on the 22nd. These are the lowest Sep elephant seal counts in at least the past ten years.

**Harbor Seal –** As usual overall numbers are heavily dependent upon tide and swell conditions (high tide or swell results in reduced haul out areas). The mean lighthouse count was 47, with a high of 86 counted on the 22nd. No pups were conclusively noted.

**Northern Fur Seals** –Overall numbers decreased through the month. The mean lighthouse count was 757, with a high of 895 counted on the 1st. The highest pup count was 264 on the 8th.

**Cetaceans**

There were 13 one-hour standardized whale watches conducted this month using the Apple iPad and Spotter App. Numbers below include individuals seen incidentally and hourly 5-minute scans from the lighthouse during shark watch.

**Humpback Whale** – There were 405 individuals observed during Sep on 29 days. The high count was 58 observed on the 26th. Many animals were seen breaching, pectoral fin and tail slapping and lunge feeding all month around the island.

**Blue Whale** – There were 16 individuals observed during Sep on 7 days. The high count was 4 observed on the 25th.

**Minke Whale** – Two were seen on the 26th.

**Risso’s Dolphin** – There were 30 observed during Sep on 2 days. The high count was 26 observed on the 14th.

**Sharks**

Shark watch surveys started on the 2nd day of the month. The first attack was seen on the 20th off Blowhole Peninsula. Two more attacks were seen on the 29th and 30th, one off Saddle Rock and the other in Maintop Bay.

**Bats**

Bat surveys were conducted daily through the month. Although no bats were seen on survey, a single bat was observed flying during the morning of the 25th. It did not appear to be of the expected *Lasiurus* genus, and we observed it fly into a crevice on the side of Lighthouse Hill.

**Salamanders**

There were no surveys conducted this month.

**Owls**

The first Burrowing Owl of the fall was found during area search on the 15th. Five more arrived on the island during the second half of the month.

**Crickets**

There were no surveys conducted this month.

**Mice**

Two island-wide trapping surveys were conducted this month. The first three-night session was initiated on the 5th and had a 75% success rate, while the second session was initiated on the 17th and had 52% success. During the second session, there were several traps with missing oats that did not spring shut. In future sessions, we will add peanut butter to the bait to make it more difficult to remove.

**Plants**

**On the 11th** USFWS pulled New Zealand spinach from Upper Shubrick to Fertilizer Flats for two hours.

**Violations**

**Sep 5th** – During the afternoon, a white Sea Swirl Striper 2600 (CF 0037 PB) had three people fishing within the MPA.

**Sep 10th** – During the morning, a white Whaler (CF 3457 RW) had 3 men, a woman, and a child fishing half a kilometer southwest of Saddle Rock

**Sep 18th** – The Reel Time (port of call = San Francisco) had two people fishing in the MPA just a few hundred meters north of the Aulon Islets.

**Sep 25th** – A North River, Seahawk OS 2500s (CF 4436 RW) had people fishing within the MPA just off Shubrick.

* An unidentified boat had people fishing on it during the afternoon.

**Sep 26th** *–* Two unidentified boats that we observed fishing in Mirounga Bay in the MPA were asked to depart by the Bayliss.

**Sep 29th –** One unidentified boat with fishermen aboard briefly drifted into the MPA off West End before motoring back towards Mid-Farallon.

**Maintenance**

Island biologists conducted routine maintenance checks on the PV system and generators weekly**.** Monthly changes of water filters, crane greasing and outboard motor operation were also conducted. On 9 Sep, Ed Van Til installed the foldable railings at North Landing. On 11 Sep, North and East Landing training was conducted for Jacob Drucker and Alyssa Olenberg-Meltzer. In addition, Jonathan and Ed worked on the cart path rails by the powerhouse. On 12 Sep, Jonathan and Ed exercised Honda 25 and 15 hp engines at North Landings. Then they repaired a leak in the Coast Guard house boiler room. Crane training for Jacob and Alyssa was concluded. Ed dry fit new Davey pump to ensure it would fit. On 13 Sep, Jonathan collected water for sample. On 23 Sep, Jonathan and Jim installed a new 25 hp Yamaha engine on the Zodiac.

**Maintenance Needs**

* Replace East Landing hoist wire rope due to two separations that revealed the central core of the wire rope.
* Repair liner in the Gravity tank
* The 30Kwh Kohler “Speedwagon” has a small but persistent coolant leak apparently emanating from the water pump. While the leak seems to have subsided in the last couple of months, it should still be monitored carefully.
* The dumper jet battery appears to be losing its charge quickly despite regular recharges. The reason for the rapid discharging is not known. The batteries are fairly new so the issue may be with the charger not bringing them up to full capacity.
* Webasto heater is not functioning and needs a new fuel pump.
* Cistern is losing water at a rate ~250 gallons per month and needs to be inspected.
* Settling Tank appears to have a leak in it when water is above 5.1 feet
* Some of the wooden railing on Light House Hill still needs repair.
* Cart path rail line needs several major repairs.
* Clean water line going to upstairs bathroom in PRBO house needs to be cleared to increase water pressure.
* PRBO upstairs toilet needs to be fixed so it flushes properly.
* Drain line from PRBO kitchen sink needs to be replaced.
* Front door and frame to PRBO house are rotting at bottom corner and need to be repaired or replaced. The weather stripping for all doors needs to be replaced to keep out weather, flies, and mice.
* Refurbishment of North Landing platform

**Solar/Electric**

**PV System**

Weekly checks were conducted on Wednesdays. All five arrays were on this month.

**Generator run times**

White Kohler (Buffy): 0 hours

Black Kohler (Speedwagon): 9.1 hours

PV Kohler: 0 hours

Webasto: Not working

Power Used: Start of month = 55,192; end of month = 55,698 for a total of 506 kwh

**Fuel Reserves**

Fuel Remaining:

Drums: 6 X 55g = ~330 gallons

PV Kohler Tank: Full

White Kohler Tank: Full

Black Kohler Tank: Full

Webasto Tank: 1/4 full

Diesel Fuel used in September: 6.1 gallons

**Water Reserves**

Cistern: ~90,000 gallons (6’10”)

Gravity Tank: empty

Settling Tank: empty

No water was pumped this month. Water use at PRBO house water meter was 1,063 gallons.

**Sightseeing Boats**

Numbers of people on board are estimates.

**Kitty Kat** was sightseeing on 6 days with an average of 44 people on board.

**Salty Lady** was sightseeing on 8 days with an average of 37 people on board.

**Silver Fox** was sightseeing on 1 day with 30 people on board.

**Akula** was shark diving on 2 days with an average of 6.5 people on board.

**Highlight Bird Observations**

**Hawaiian Petrel –** Sep 21 \*First Island Record\*

**Brown Booby –** Four individuals seen in Sep

**Northern Gannet –** Continuing bird seen on 4 days

**Bald Eagle –** Sep 2

**Long-tailed Jaeger** – Sep 21

**Olive-sided Flycatcher** – Sep 8

**Tropical Kingbird –** Sep 28

**Bell’s Vireo (Eastern) –** Sep 26

**Hutton’s Vireo –** Sep 8, 14

**Philadelphia Vireo –** Sep 14

**Red-eyed Vireo** – Sep 16

**Purple Martin** – Sep 1, 16

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** – Sep 16

**Red**-**throated Pipit** – Sep 25

**Ovenbird –** Sep 12

**Tennessee Warbler** – Sep 9

**Mourning Warbler** – Sep 8

**American Redstart** – Sep 8, 11, 12

**Blackburnian Warbler –** Sep 11

**Chestnut-sided Warbler –** Sep 9, 11, 25

**Blackpoll Warbler –** Sep 9, 26

**Prairie Warbler –** Sep 14

**Brewer’s Sparrow** – Sep 27

**Black-throated Sparrow** – Sep 27

**Lark Bunting** – Sep 14

**Bobolink –** Sep 8, 12

**Yellow-headed Blackbird –** Sep 1,

**Orchard Oriole** – Sep 25

**Baltimore Oriole** – Sep 10, 26

**Landbirds Banded**

132 individuals of 44 migratory bird species were banded this month: Anna’s Hummingbird (2), Western Wood-Pewee (2), Willow Flycatcher (1), Dusky Flycatcher (2), Western Flycatcher (3), Black Phoebe (1), Bell’s Vireo (1), Hutton’s Vireo (1), Cassin’s Vireo (1), Philadelphia Vireo (1), Warbling Vireo (2), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (4), Swainson’s Thrush (4), Hermit Thrush (4), Northern Mockingbird (2), Tennessee Warbler (1), Orange-crowned Warbler (3), Nashville Warbler (2), Mourning Warbler (1), Common Yellowthroat (3), Blackburnian Warbler (1), Yellow Warbler (16), Chestnut-sided Warbler (2), Blackpoll Warbler (3), Palm Warbler (1), Yellow-rumped Warbler (8), Prairie Warbler (1), Black-throated Gray Warbler (2), Townsend’s Warbler (5), Wilson’s Warbler (2), Yellow-breasted Chat (1), Chipping Sparrow (3), Clay-colored Sparrow (2), Fox Sparrow (7), Dark-eyed Junco (3), White-crowned Sparrow (18), Golden-crowned Sparrow (5), Vesper Sparrow (1), Savannah Sparrow (3), Lincoln’s Sparrow (5), Spotted Towhee (1), Western Tanager (1), Yellow-headed Blackbird (1), Orchard Oriole (1)