

Farallon Islands Monthly Report

Report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Farallon National Wildlife Refuge

August 2017

Jim Tietz, Pete Warzybok, Mike Johns

jtietz@pointblue.org

**Point Blue Conservation Science –**Point Blue advances conservation of birds, other wildlife and ecosystems through science, partnerships and outreach. Our highest priority is to reduce the impacts of habitat loss, climate change, and other environmental threats while promoting nature-based solutions for wildlife and people, on land and at sea. Visit Point Blue on the web [www.pointblue.org](http://www.pointblue.org).

**Island Visitors**

Point Blue crew this month included: Nina Duggan, Preston Duncan, Vivienne Hastie, Mike Johns, Lauren Lescure, Zack Mikalonis, Troels Ortvad, Cerren Richards, Adam Searcy, Claudia Tapia, Jim Tietz, and Pete Warzybok.

August 5: **“Hokahey”** (skipper Jon Passion) departed with Nina Duggan and Claudia Tapia. Six people toured the island.

August 14: **“Salty Lady”** (skipper Jared Davis) came to the island and brought Jonathan Shore, Alice Lopes, Sami Michishita, Jerel Crawford, Theresa Rizza, Heather Carey, Jeremy Gordon (all Team Spinach), Ed Fomna and David Gill (Bonny Doon), and Andrew Carothers (plumber). Four people toured the island. The boat departed with Pete Warzybok and Viv Hastie.

August 19: **Stillwater** (skipper Richard Webber) brought out fall crew Jim Tietz, Troels Ortvad, Preston Duncan, and Zack Mikalonis. Tim Pozar, and Logan Kahle also arrived to work on island networks and communications. Two people toured the island. The boat departed with Cerren Richards and Mike Johns.

August 21: **Outer Limits** (skipper Jim Robertson) brought out Jim Kurth, Cynthia Martinez, Polly Wheeler, Stacy Armitage, Chris Barr, John Tirpak, and Gerry McChesney from USFWS along with Pete Warzybok from Point Blue for a day visit to tour the island and discuss the research program and deferred maintenance projects. The boat departed with Team Spinach members Jonathan Shore, Theresa Rizza, Heather Carey, Jerel Crawford, Sami Michishita, Jeremy Gordon, Tim Pozar, Logan Kahle and all day visitors.

August 26: **“Salty Lady”** (skipper Jared Davis) brought out Adam Searcy.

**West End Island Visitors**

There were no visits to West End this month.

**Weather/Ocean**

The weather in August was dominated by overcast skies and northwest winds, with several days of southerly winds mid-month. Fog was recorded on 28% of weather observations. There was 0.02 inches of precipitation recorded that fell as drizzle. Mean midday air temperature was 16.27° C, with a standard deviation of 1.35° C. The highest air temperature was 19.0° C recorded at 1200 and 1500 hours on the 17th, the lowest was 12.0° C recorded at 0600 hours on the 1st. Mean sea surface temperature was 14.64° C, with a standard deviation of 0.79° C, a high of 15.86° C on the 22nd, and a low of 13.32° C on the 14th. Mean SST was approximately 1.09° C higher than the long-term mean for this month, and 0.77° C higher than last August.

**Oiled & Entangled Wildlife**

Three California sea lions were noted to have either monofilament or unknown substance embedded in their necks during August. One immature elephant seal had monofilament embedded in its belly. A Western Gull had a plastic shopping bag tightly wrapped around its body, but was still able to fly. On the 12th, a Common Murre at East Landing was seen with ~80% of its breast covered by oil and was being attacked by gulls.

**Breeding Birds**

**Storm-Petrels –** No netting/banding occurred this month. Of the 103 nest crevices monitored this breeding season, 49 had some activity this year and 54 did not. Of the 49 nests that had some activity, 40 were still active at the end of the month. All viable eggs hatched by the end of the month, and all chicks were in the downy feathered stage. All RFID readers were removed from sites on Lighthouse Hill.

**Brandt’s Cormorant** – All chicks fledged or died from followed nests at the Sea Lion Cove plot by the 8th, and all chicks fledged or died from followed nests at the Corm Blind Hill plot by the 18th. Several nests, however, were still active at the end of the month in other areas around the island, with chicks ranging from partly-feathered to mostly-feathered age status. At the end of the month, large numbers of chicks were creching at the shoreline.

**Pelagic Cormorant –** The first fledge of the year was from Tower Point on the 18th. From followed nests, 17 total chicks fledged by the end of the month and 29 remained in nests.

**Double-crested Cormorant** – Adults were observed flying from Maintop to the east early in the morning and returning later in the day to feed chicks still on the nesting colony. One active nest was noted in early September on the northeast side of Maintop, so at least one nest was still active in August. Independent chicks were occasionally seen foraging in coves and bays around the island.

**Western Gull** – All chicks from followed nests in C Plot fledged or died by the 11th. All chicks from K Plot fledged or died by the 14th. All chicks from H Plot West fledged or died by the 17th. All chicks from H Plot East fledged or died by the 26th. Numbers of gulls rapidly diminished around the island by the end of the month, and most were being seen in roosts on the Marine Terrace and roosts elsewhere. A few late nesters were still tending chicks at the end of the month.

**California Gulls –** A few adults were observed daily in afternoon roosting flocks. Low numbers of juveniles from colonies elsewhere have been observed daily in roosting flocks on the island and in the surrounding waters.

**Common Murre –** The last chick fledged from Upper Upper on the 5th. Very few murres were being seen around the island at the end of the month.

**Pigeon Guillemot –** The first fledges were seen on the water on the 4th. 38 chicks fledged from 37 followed nests, with five nests still active at the end of the month. Only one nest fledged two chicks this month, which occurred on the 30th. Many adults and chicks were seen sitting on the water at the end of the month.

**Cassin’s Auklet –** Over the month of August, 179 chicks fledged from followed nests, while 36 other nests were still active at the end of the month. Of the nests still active, all eggs had hatched but one. 35 of the 215 active nests this month were double broods. By the end of the month, three RFID readers were still deployed at nests. Very few were noted on the water around the island at the end of the month, but good numbers returned at night during the new moon to vocalize.

**Rhinoceros Auklet –** 31 chicks fledged from followed nests this month. The final followed nest fledged on the 29th. Only a few were noted on the water around the island at the end of the month, but individuals were spotted flying past the island most days.

**Tufted Puffin –** The late season survey concluded on the 11th, and located 171 active sites. Puffins were observed carrying fish to nests at the end of the month. Puffin congregations were noted on land during the mornings, and groups were observed flying around promontories. Many pairs and small groups were observed on the water around the island in the afternoons.

**Black Oystercatchers** – Most pairs were seen foraging along the intertidal, and several were seen tending to recently fledged juveniles. One nest was still active at the end of the month in Phoca Alley.

**Pinnipeds**

**California Sea Lion***–* On average there were 4,839 (SD ± 2,460) individuals counted during the weekly pinniped census from the lighthouse, with a high count of 7,776 individuals on the 10th. The high count for pups was 453 on the 10th.

**Steller Sea Lions** –On average there were 103 (SD ± 43) individuals counted. The high count for Steller sea lions was 146 on the 17th. The high count for pups was 19 on the 10th.

**Northern Elephant Seal –** Numbers of elephant seals slowly increased through the month, with an average total count of 12 (SD ± 14) individuals. The high count was 31 on the 24th.

**Harbor Seal –** Harbor seal numbers were highly variable, reflecting tide and swell heights during the weekly census. On average there were 57 (SD ± 30) individuals counted. The high count was 81 on the 10th, with a low count of 14 on the 24th.

**Northern Fur Seals** – Fur seal numbers remained high throughout the month, with numbers on land varying mostly due to temperatures, wind speed, and cloud cover. The mean count was 800 (SD ± 72) individuals, with a high of 858 on the 10th. The high count for pups occurred on the 10th with 485 individuals.

**Cetaceans**

**Standard Survey** – Only six one hour whale watches were conducted this month from the Lighthouse using the Apple iPad and Spotter App, due to thick fog and poor visibility due to smoke and haze caused by wildfires. Daily incidental observations were also recorded.

Gray whales were seen most days, with 1 to 4 residents observed. Humpback whale were seen almost daily and numbers peaked early in the month, when 56 were counted on the 6th. Blue whales were seen occasionally this month, with the most seen during the first week, when 12 were seen on the 3rd. Three fin whales were seen on the 6th. Killer whales were seen on two days: two on the 4th and 8 on the 17th. A large group of dolphins was noted on the 6th consisting of 12 Risso’s, 300 Pacific white-sided, and 300 common.

**Sharks**

The first attack of the shark season was observed on the 20th ~1 km east of Shubrick Point.

**Salamanders**

No salamander surveys were conducted this month.

**Owls**

No Burrowing Owls were seen this month.

**Crickets**

No cricket surveys were conducted this month.

**Mice**

The first mouse survey of the fall season was conducted from the 25th to the 28th and had 85% trap success. The mice appear to be getting under PRBO house laundry room door on a regular basis due to its dysfunctional weather stripping.

**Inverts and Intertidal**

# A lion’s mane jellyfish (*Cyanea capillata*) was seen on the 11th. A visit to Jewel Cave on the 12th noted two sea lemon nudibranchs (*Peltodoris nobilis***)**, “lots” of brown mottled sculpins (*Cottus bairdii*), and a sea star (*Pisaster* sp.). On the 14th, an egg yolk jelly (*Phacellophora camtschatica*) was seen near the island.

**Plants**

# On the 1st, it was noted that New Zealand spinach plants (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*) on Lighthouse Hill and at the Carp Shop were flowering and beginning to fruit. It was also noted that the malva was flowering. From the 15th to the 19th, Team Spinach sprayed herbicide on Southeast Farallon Island on the following invasive plant genera: *Chenopodium*, *Coronopsus*, *Ehrharta*, *Erodium*, *Malva*, *Plantago*, *Sonchus*, and *Tetragonia*.

**Violations**

A small motorboat (CF 7742 KW) came within 50 m of Low Arch while sightseeing. No wildlife were disturbed. No photos were obtained.

**Maintenance**

Island biologists Tietz, Warzybok, and Johns 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. Downstairs toilet was fixed so it does not need to be turned off to prevent it from running. New cables were laid down from the weather station to the PRBO house, so the anemometer and directional wind gauges function. Fiber optic cable was relocated from Powerhouse to PRBO house computer room. The septic system had its annual service. The toilet in upstairs of PRBO house was replaced and drain pipe cleared of debris, so that it now flushes properly. A rotting section of the ceiling of the Walk-through room in the PRBO house was replaced. The island’s network was upgraded and access points were added at the lighthouse, PRBO house, Coast Guard house, and Powerhouse.

**Maintenance Needs**

* Repair liner in the Gravity tank
* Wing-nut bolt needs to be drilled out of the threading and replaced on the NL derrick winch handle as it broke during a landing
* 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.
* Cistern is losing water at a rate ~250 gallons per month and needs to be inspected. There appears to be a much more sizable leak when the cistern is above 8’6”.
* Settling Tank appears to have a leak in it when water is above 5.1 feet.
* Some of the wooden railing on Lighthouse Hill needs repair.
* Webasto heater is not functioning and is currently off island for repair.
* Clean water line going to upstairs in PRBO house needs to be cleared to increase water pressure.
* 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.
* New screens are needed on the PRBO house to keep out flies on “warm” days.
* Refurbishment of North Landing platform
* Replace window blinds in PRBO bathrooms and kitchen.
* Corrosion of the cart path rail system appears to be accelerating and will need to be addressed soon, perhaps repaired with the old galvanized pipe when the water lines are replaced.
* Washing machine door lock is beginning to fail. It requires a bit of finesse to close and sometimes will get stuck in lock mode.

**Solar/Electric**

**PV System**

**Generator run times**

Kohler 15ROZ (Buffy): 3.0 hours

Kohler 30REOZJC (Speedwagon): 6.0 hours

Kohler 40REOZK (Zeke): 21.1 hours

Kohler 15ROY61 (PV): 3.8 hours

Webasto: Not working

Power Used: Start of month = 61745; end of month = 62370 for total of 620 kwh

**Fuel Reserves**

Fuel used in July: 31.2 gallons

Drums: 6.8 X 55g = 374 gallons

Kohler 15ROZ (Buffy) Tank: Full

Kohler 30REOZJC (Speedwagon) Tank: Full

Kohler 40REOZK (Zeke) Tank: Full

Kohler 15ROY61 (PV) Tank: Full

Webasto Tank: 1/4

**Water Reserves**

Cistern: ~102,860 gallons (7’6”)

Gravity Tank: empty

Settling Tank: empty

Water use at house water meter was 3,460 gallons.

**Sightseeing Boats**

During August, seven sightseeing boats visited the Farallones. The **Kitty Kat** was seen five times with an average of 40 POB. The **Salty Lady** was seen nine times with an average of 30 POB. The **Outer Limits** was seen twice with an average of 33 POB. The **Cap’n Pete** was seen once with 25 POB. The **Sea Wolf** was seen once with 15 POB. The **Happy Days** was seen once with 22 POB. The **Hulicat** was seen once with 25 POB.

**Non-breeding birds**

Yellow-billed Loon, Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, Pink-footed Shearwater, Buller’s Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Northern Gannet, Brown Booby, Blue-footed Booby, Brown Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Peregrine Falcon, Semipalmated Plover, Wandering Tattler, Spotted Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Black Turnstone, Least Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked Phalarope, California Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Barn Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Western Wood-Pewee, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Hammond’s Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Western Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Cassin’s Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pacific Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend’s Warbler, Hermit Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, MacGillivray’s Warbler, Wilson’s Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Chipping Sparrow, Brewer’s Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Savannah Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Bullock’s Oriole, Lesser Goldfinch