



Farallon Islands Monthly Report

Report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge

August 2018

James Tietz, Mike Johns, Pete Warzybok
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.

Island Visitors

Point Blue crew: Sophie Bennett, Gavan Borgias, Katie Douglas, Clare Flynn, John Garrett, Sarah Hecocks, Mike Johns, Cole Jower, Kurt Ongman, Katherine Snell, Amanda Spears, Jim Tietz, and Pete Warzybok.

FWS crew: Alice Lopes, Gerry McChesney, Anne Morkill, Adam Quade, Monika Richardson, Jonathan Shore, Brad Speno, and Jennifer Walton.

August 5: **“Hulicat”** (skipper Tom Mattusch) brought out FWS personnel (“Team Spinach”): Alice Lopes, Gerry McChesney, Anne Morkill, Adam Quade, Monika Richardson, Jonathan Shore, Brad Speno, and Jennifer Walton. FWS volunteer Andrew Carothers installed a toilet in the CG House, and Fernando Vigil of Alternative Energy conducted a site visit of the PV system; both departed with the Hulicat.

August 5: **“Kan Pai III”** (skipper Andy Jones) brought out Pete Warzybok and departed with Katie Douglas, Mike Johns and Cole Jower.

August 13: **“Hulicat”** (skipper Tom Mattusch) brought out David Gill and two assistants, Gary and Melinda, from Bonnie Doon, Charles Whitefield (contractor), and FWS personnel: Amy Wilson, Ellen Tong, and Louis Terrazas. All people departed on same boat along with FWS Team Spinach crew.

August 18: **“Starbuck”** (skipper John Wade) brought out John Garrett, Sarah Hecocks, Kurt Ongman, Katherine Snell, and Jim Tietz. Two crew toured the island. Boat departed with Gavan Borgias, Clare Flynn, and Pete Warzybok.

Weather/Ocean

The weather in August was dominated by overcast skies and northwest winds, with several days of southerly winds at the end of month. Skies averaged 87% overcast and fog was recorded on 43% of weather observations. There was 0.08 inches of precipitation recorded that fell as drizzle. Mean midday air temperature was 15.0° C, with a standard deviation of 1.55° C. The highest air temperature was 18.5° C recorded at 1500 hours on the 23rd, the lowest was 11.0° C recorded at 0600 hours on the 7th. Mean sea surface temperature was 12.58° C, with a standard deviation of 1.05° C, a high of 14.44° C on the 30th and 31st, and a low of 11.33° C on the 3rd. Mean SST was approximately 1° C lower than the long-term mean for this month, and 2.06° C lower than last August.

Oiled & Entangled Wildlife

Five adult and immature California sea lions were seen with monofilament line or nylon rope embedded in their necks. No oiled wildlife was observed.

Breeding Birds

Storm-Petrels – Of the 87 nest crevices monitored this breeding season, 60 had some activity this year and 27 did not. Three new Ashy nest sites were added in August – two of which were added following RFID detections. Four of the 60 active sites were confirmed as Leach’s nests, but two failed by the end of the month. The first Ashy chick and the first Leach’s chick both fledged on the 27th. By the end of the month, 37 of the 60 active sites had Ashy chicks, one site had a Leach’s chick, and four sites still had Ashy adults incubating/brooding. The remaining sites failed to reproduce. The last netting session of the 2018 breeding season occurred on the 12th, with 26 newly captured Ashy Storm-Petrels and zero recaptures.

Brandt’s Cormorant – On the 6th, the first fledgling was observed flying at Sea Lion Cove. On the 9th, 111 chicks were banded at the Corm Blind colony. On the 28th, the last chicks fledged from the Corm Blind and SLC colonies. Large numbers of mostly feathered to fully feathered chicks were observed at the end of the month creching along the shoreline below their respective breeding colonies.

Pelagic Cormorant – Several nests were observed at the end of the month with partly to mostly feathered chicks.

Double-crested Cormorant – Large numbers of chicks continued being fed in the Maintop colony. Groups of adults were observed flying east to the coast during the morning and returning later in the day.

Western Gull – Productivity was relatively good for western gulls this season. On the 8th, K-plot finished with 37 fledges, the highest total since 2013 and the second highest in the last 15 years. On the 11th, the last chicks fledged from H-west and C-plots. On the 26th, the last monitored chicks fledged from H-east. By the end of the month, most adults had abandoned their breeding territories and were using roosting flocks on the Marine Terrace.

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. Only 3 nests were observed on the island this year and none hatched any chicks.

Common Murre – All monitored nests fledged before August. By the end of the month, only a few murre were being seen around the island.

Pigeon Guillemot – There were 43 active nests this month, which fledged 37 chicks. Eight of the 37 chicks were from two-chick nests that fledged the first chick in July. Diet watches finished on the 9th at Garbage Gulch and on the 12th at Lighthouse Hill. The last monitored chicks fledged from the Habitat Sculpture on the 20th and Garbage Gulch on the 25th. At the end of the month, only four nests were still active on Lighthouse Hill and many fledglings were observed in the water around the island.

Rhinoceros Auklet – Only seven nests were still active this month, and chicks fledged from each by the end of the month. The last chick followed by camera fledged on the 20th, and the last chick in the breed study fledged on the 24th. At the end of the month, only a few were being seen in the water around the island on a daily basis.

Tufted Puffin – The late-season survey concluded on the 12th. The active burrow count was 169, with an additional 14 nest sites assumed active and 189 probable. The total population of breeding birds was estimated at 406.

Cassin's Auklet – Over the month of August, 16 chicks fledged from 97 followed nests, while 50 other nests were still active at the end of the month. Four of the 97 active nests this month were double broods, but two failed. Very few birds were noted on the water around the island at the end of the month, with few returning at night to vocalize.

Black Oystercatchers – Most pairs were seen foraging along the intertidal, and several were seen tending to recently fledged juveniles. On the 16th, 11 mostly to fully feathered chicks were seen around the island.

Pinnipeds

California Sea Lion – On average there were 4,508 (SD \pm 765) individuals counted during the weekly pinniped census from the lighthouse, with a high count of 5,181 individuals. The high count for pups was 501.

Steller Sea Lions – On average there were 91 (SD \pm 44) individuals counted, a high count of 156. The high count for pups was 25.

Northern Elephant Seal – Numbers of elephant seals remained low in August, with an average total count of 23 (SD \pm 10) individuals counted.

Harbor Seal – Harbor seal numbers were relatively low, reflecting high tide conditions during the weekly census. On average there were 38 (SD \pm 17) individuals counted.

Northern Fur Seals – Fur seal numbers remained high throughout July, reflecting pupping activity at their main site on Indian Head. The mean count was 706 (SD \pm 194) individuals, with a high of 872 on the 2nd. The high count for pups was 579 on the 16th.

Cetaceans

Standard Survey – Only six one-hour standard whale watch was conducted this month from the Lighthouse using the Apple iPad and Spotter App. Poor visibility, caused by a low cloud ceiling and haze caused from wildfires, precluded standardized cetacean surveys. Daily high counts from standard watches and incidental observations are summarized below.

A gray whale was seen on the 16th. Humpback whales were seen on half the days this month, with a high count of 20 on the 26th. A blue whale was seen on the 19th.

Sharks

The first attack of the fall season occurred on the 31st ~half a km east of Shubrick Point.

Salamanders

No salamander surveys were conducted this month.

Owls

No Burrowing Owls or Barn Owls were observed this month.

Crickets

No cricket surveys were conducted this month.

Bats

An unidentified bat was observed fluttering around in the Powerhouse on the evening of the 12th. Standardized surveys were initiated on the 20th. A Hoary Bat was found roosting in the Coast Guard Tree on the 28th, and one was found roosting in the PRBO Tree on the 30th and again on the 31st in the same spot. A small *Myotis*-sized bat was observed flying around the lighthouse on the evening of the 27th.

Mice

The first mouse trapping survey of the fall season was conducted from the 23rd to the 26th with 78% trap success.

Inverts and Intertidal

As is typical for the month of August, migratory insects were seen frequently during the latter half of the month. Dragonflies were the most abundant, and the following species were identified: Black Saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*), Spot-winged Glider (*Pantala hymenaea*), Variegated Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum corruptum*), Blue-eyed Darner (*Rhionaeschna multicolor*), and Green Darner (*Anax junius*). In addition, a Black Witch moth (*Ascalapha odorata*) was seen at the lighthouse on the 23rd, and a Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) was seen on the 25th. One jelly, a Pacific Sea Nettle (*Chrysaora fuscescens*), was seen on the east side of the island on the 30th.

Plants

FWS Team Spinach sprayed herbicide on invasive exotic plant species Aug 6-11. All areas of SEFI were completed except the slope above Orca Cove, which still had many young Brandt's Cormorant chicks. On Aug 12, Team Spinach completed all photo points.

Violations

In August, we recorded four fishing violations within the SE Farallon State Marine Reserve, with most reported to CDFW. The Special Closure around the island was not violated and no wildlife on the island were disturbed.

Maintenance

Island biologists Tietz and Warzybok conducted routine maintenance checks on the PV system and generators weekly. Monthly changes of water filters and outboard motor operation were also conducted as well as biweekly crane greasing. Training for crane operations and proper use of fire extinguishers were conducted for interns. A toilet was installed and connected to the gray water system in upstairs of the Coast Guard house by FWS volunteer Andrew Carothers. Team Spinach collected rusty metal from behind

Powerhouse and Boneyard and removed on the Aug 13 *Hulicat* boat. Pete installed new hose hanger on PRBO house and fixed door on propane shed. Floor tiles installed in phone room.

Maintenance Needs

- Repair liner in the Gravity tank
- Cistern has been losing water at a rate ~250 gallons per month. There appears to be a much more sizable leak when the cistern is above 8'6". A recent inspection of the cistern indicated serious structural decay that will need to be repaired in the future.
- Settling Tank appears to have a leak in it when water is above 5.1 feet.
- Many of the wooden railing on Lighthouse Hill needs repair.
- 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. The cart is falling off the tracks in several places now.
- Several separations have been seen on the East Landing derrick slewing rope, possibly from jogging the slew. Perhaps tightening the slewing rope will mitigate this issue slightly until replacement.
- Several inches of water accumulate in the pipe shop after a good rain. A new threshold is needed to seal the door.
- Several grease points on the crane are having difficulty taking grease.
- Broken section of pipe near Twitville needs to be properly repaired.

Solar/Electric

PV System

Distilled water reserves: 20 gallons

Generator run times

Kohler 15ROZ (Buffy): 0 hours

Kohler 30REOZJC (Speedwagon): 5.5 hours

Kohler 40REOZK (Zeke): 14.9 hours

Kohler 15ROY61 (Peevey): 17.9 hours

Webasto: 3 hours

Power Used this month: Start = 70,282; End = 71,108; for total of 826 kwh

Fuel Reserves

Diesel fuel used in August: 48.1 gallons

Drums: 2.5 x 55g = 137 gallons

Kohler 15ROZ (Buffy) Tank: Full

Kohler 30REOZJC (Speedwagon) Tank: Full

Kohler 40REOZK (Zeke) Tank: Full

Kohler 15ROY61 (PV) Tank: Full

Webasto Tank: 2/3 Full
Surplus gasoline for boat motors: 1.2 gallons
Safeboat tank: Full
Zodiac tank: Full

Water Reserves

Cistern: ~ 73,750 gallons (5'11")
Gravity Tank: empty
Settling Tank: empty
Water use at house meter was 4,261 gallons

Sightseeing Boats

The **Kitty Kat** was seen 7 times with an average of 36 POB; **Salty Lady** was seen 6 times with an average of 29 POB; **Hulicat** was seen thrice with an average of 19 POB; **Huck Finn** was seen twice with an average of 10 POB; **Outer Limits** was seen twice with an average of 30 POB; **New Captain Pete** was seen once with 15 POB; **Tigerfish** was seen once with 15 POB; and **Goldeneye 2000** was seen once with 25 POB.

Non-breeding birds

Eared Grebe, Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, Pink-footed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Short-tailed Shearwater, **Hawaiian Petrel**, Brown Pelican, **Brown Booby**, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, **Wood Duck**, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Surf Scoter, Osprey, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Semipalmated Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, Marbled Godwit, Wandering Tattler, Spotted Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Black Turnstone, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, Red-necked Phalarope, Red Phalarope, Parasitic Jaeger, **Bonaparte's Gull**, Heermann's Gull, California Gull, Herring Gull, Caspian Tern, **Arctic Tern**, **Scripps's Murrelet**, **Horned Puffin**, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Rock Pigeon, **Long-eared Owl**, **Short-eared Owl**, Rufous Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Willow Flycatcher, **Least Flycatcher**, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Cassin's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Purple Martin, Cliff Swallow, Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Barn Swallow, Pacific Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Mockingbird, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, **Virginia's Warbler**, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Hermit Warbler, **Blackburnian Warbler**, American Redstart, **Northern Waterthrush**, MacGillivray's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, **Canada Warbler**, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Savannah Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Indigo Bunting, **Yellow-headed Blackbird**, Brown-headed Cowbird, Hooded Oriole, Bullock's Oriole, and Lesser Goldfinch