

Farallon Islands Monthly Report

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

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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 Residents

Point Blue crew: Danielle Butts, Abigail Crowder, Garrett Duncan, Alix Gibson, Mike Johns, Paul Ruiz-Lopez, and Amanda Spears.

Island Visitors

March 14th: “Starbuck” (skipper John Wade) brought out food supplies and departed with trash and recycling. 5 people toured the island.

March 30th: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers vessel “John A.B. Dillard Jr.” (skipper Kixon Meyer) brought out Mike Johns and Amanda Spears and departed with Danielle Butts and Abigail Crowder.

West End Island Visitors

March 4th: Butts, Duncan, and Gibson conducted pinniped counts and recorded tag resights. 11 weaned Elephant Seal pups were tagged on Indian Head Beach.

Weather & Ocean

The weather on the island this month was unseasonably dry with predominately west winds (45% from the northwest and 31% from the southwest). The island received 1.5 inches of precipitation. The average midday air temperature was 13.3 ± 1.6 °C, which was 0.47 °C warmer than the long-term average for March. The low for the month was 7.5 °C at 6 AM on the 16th and a high of 18.5 °C was recorded on the 9th. The average sea surface temperature was 12.18 ± 0.64 °C, with a low of 11.07 °C on the 1st and a high of 13.12 °C on the 30th. This was 0.04 °C cooler than the long-term average for March.

Oiled & Entangled Wildlife

No oiled wildlife was observed this month.

2 California Sea Lions were observed to be entangled with an unknown material around their necks.

Breeding Birds

Storm-Petrels – One Ashy Storm-Petrel was seen roosting during the day in the Habitat Sculpture.

Brandt's Cormorant – Several hundred adults were observed at typical roost locations such as Sugarloaf, North Landing, and West End Head. On the 25th, nest building activities were observed on Orca Ridge and on the 31st resighting of banded birds was initiated from Corm Blind.

Pelagic Cormorant – Adults were seen initiating nests on Lighthouse Hill and on West End.

Double-crested Cormorant – On the 31st the first nests were observed on Maintop.

Western Gull – Many adults were on territories. Several copulations were observed and band resighting was initiated.

California Gulls – Variable numbers seen in typical gull roosting areas on Mussel Flat, Low Arch, and in the water. A small group of potential breeding individuals could consistently be found within the breeding area on West Marine Terrace by the end of the month.

Common Murre – Colony attendance was consistently high throughout the month.

Pigeon Guillemot – The first individuals were seen on the water on the 5th and on land on the 18th. Raft counts were initiated on the 31st.

Rhinoceros Auklet – Individuals were seen around the island starting on the 29th.

Tufted Puffin – Two individuals were observed on Maintop on the 31st.

Cassin's Auklet – Checks of the PRBO study boxes was initiated on the 3rd, and by the end of the month 40 of the 44 boxes contained active breeding pairs (laid an egg) and the Habitat Sculpture had 11 active breeding pairs. Checks of the Known Age study boxes was initiated on the 15th, where 228 boxes of the approximate 404 boxes were found to have active breeding pairs.

Pinnipeds

California Sea Lion – On average there were 2,349 (SD \pm 314) individuals counted during the weekly pinniped census from the lighthouse, with a high count of 2,766 individuals on the 26th. Sea Lion Cove, Dead Sea Lion Flat, and Aulon Peninsula were the areas with the highest density of sea lions.

Steller Sea Lions – On average there were 59 (SD \pm 9) individuals counted on the standard weekly survey, with a high count of 70 on the 26th.

Northern Elephant Seal – Many breeding age and immature animals have started to arrive or in some cases return to haul out and molt. On average there were 76 (SD \pm 16) individuals counted on the standard weekly survey, with a high count of 98 on the 26th.

Harbor Seal – Harbor seal numbers fluctuated greatly with tide and swell conditions during the weekly census. On average there were 66 (SD \pm 23) individuals counted, with a high count of 90 on the 5th.

Northern Fur Seals – On average there were 189 (SD \pm 41) individuals counted on the standard weekly survey, with a high count of 225 on the 26th.

Cetaceans

Standard Survey – 40 one-hour standard whale watches were conducted from the Lighthouse using the Spotter App when conditions allowed. Numbers from standard watches were combined with incidental observations. Gray Whales were observed around the island every day this month, with a high count of 27 on the 19th. Two Humpback Whales were seen on the 25th and one on the 30th.

Sharks

No shark activity was observed this month.

Salamanders

Two surveys were conducted this month. On the 1st 11 large, 1 small and 2 tiny individuals were found under coverboards and on the 17th 31 large, 4 small and 1 tiny individuals were found. 2 Cassin's Auklet burrows with eggs were discovered under large coverboards near North landing.

Owls

Roost surveys were conducted daily, and three owls have been observed.

Crickets

No surveys this month.

Bats

No bats were detected this month.

Mice

House mouse numbers [appear to](#) have reached their annual low numbers. They are rarely seen.

Inverts and Intertidal

Several Painted Lady Butterflies were seen towards the end of the month. Many hoverflies were observed pollinating *Lasthenia maritima* including one individual in the *Eupeodes* genus.

Oceanic Events

Nothing to report.

Plants

Corosma repens (aka Burning Bush) is in bloom and appears to be male. *Crassula connata* is flowering and fruiting on Lighthouse Hill, *Erigeron glaucus* is flowering on the rocks around Garbage Gulch Annex, *Malva parviflora* and *Sisymbrium orientale* is blooming near the Ashy Castle, *Lysimachia arvensis* and *Spergularia marina* are blooming near East landing, and *Rumex crispus* is blooming near the Helo Pad. On the 31st, the first *Lasthenia maritima* (aka Farallon Weed) fruits were discovered.

Violations

Small private aircraft (N9055C) circled over the island 5 times and flushed several thousand Murre off Maintop and Saddle Rock.

“Faith” CF9482FF recreational powerboat went between the island and Saddle Rock and flushed over 100 cormorants.

Maintenance

Island biologist Duncan conducted routine weekly maintenance checks on the PV system and generators. Monthly changes of water filters, water testing, and crane greasing were conducted.

Maintenance Needs

- The Peevey and Buffy generators have been decommissioned and the island is in need of a new PV backup generator.
- The cistern and other elements of the water catchment system are showing their age and are need of major repairs or replacement. The cistern continues to lose water at a rate ~250 gallons per month.
- The Settling Tank also appears to have a leak in it when water is above 5.1 feet.
- The Settling Tank measuring stick came undone and fell into the tank.
- Many sections of the trail and wooden railing on Lighthouse Hill need maintenance.
- Several inches of water accumulate in the pipe shop after a good rain. There could be a crack in the foundation.
- The PRBO house kitchen counters especially around the sink continue to deteriorate. Replacement sometime in the next year is recommended.
- The HADS weather station is no longer transmitting data to the web. Attempts to reset the unit have failed, and will require expert guidance to fix.
- The Fisherman's Bay mooring ball has drifted away and needs replacement.
- The gutters and flashing on both houses is degrading and will need to be improved or replaced.
- The Webasto unit is not functioning properly and needs maintenance.

Solar/Electric

PV System

Distilled water used:	2 gallons
Distilled water reserves:	80 gallons

Generator run times

Kohler 15ROZ (Buffy):	0 hours	(1830.5 on meter)
Kohler 30REOZJC (Speedwagon):	5.7 hours	(647.6 on meter)
Kohler 40REOZK (Zeke):	7.4 hours	(454.6 on meter)
Kohler 15ROY61 (Peevey):	0 hours	(3954.2 on meter)
Webasto:	0 hours	

Power use

Facilities power use: Start = 83,240; End =83,827; for total of 587 kWh

Fuel Reserves

Diesel used:	14.1 gallons
Diesel drums: 11 @55gal:	590 gallons
Kohler 15ROZ (Buffy) Tank:	Full
Kohler 30REOZJC (Speedwagon) Tank:	Full
Kohler 40REOZK (Zeke) Tank:	Full
Kohler 15ROY61 (Peevey) Tank:	½ Full
Webasto Tank:	Full
Surplus gasoline for boat motors:	7 gallons

Gasoline for portable generator:	30 gallons
6 gallon boat tank:	Empty
3 gallon boat tank:	Full

Water Reserves

Water used this month: Start = 283,273; End =285,158; for a total of 1,885 gallons	
Cistern:	7'4" or ~100,000 gallons
Gravity Tank:	empty
Settling Tank:	~1.5 feet

Sightseeing Boats

No sightseeing boats were observed this month.

Non-breeding birds

Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, Sooty Shearwater, **Masked Booby**, Brown Booby, Northern Gannet, Brown Pelican, Canada Goose, Surf Scoter, Peregrine Falcon, Wandering Tattler, Spotted Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Black Turnstone, Rock Sandpiper, California Gull, Herring Gull, Iceland (Thayer's) Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, Glaucous Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Ancient Murrelet, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Barn Owl, Burrowing Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Anna's Hummingbird, Northern Flicker (Red-shafted), Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Rock Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, European Starling, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Fox Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Oregon Junco, Western Meadowlark