

## Farallon Islands Monthly Report

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

September 2020

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### Southeast Farallon Island Visitors

**Point Blue crew:** Steve Dougill, My-Lan Le, Evan Lipton, Mike Mahoney, and Jim Tietz.

September 5<sup>th</sup>: **“Salty Lady”** (skipper Jared) brought out Andrew and Chloe Carothers-Liske.

September 9<sup>th</sup>: Andrew and Chloe Carothers-Liske departed on the **“Salty Lady”** (skipper Jared Davis).

September 12<sup>th</sup>: **“French Kiss”** (skipper Harmon Shragge) brought out My-Lan Le and supplies.

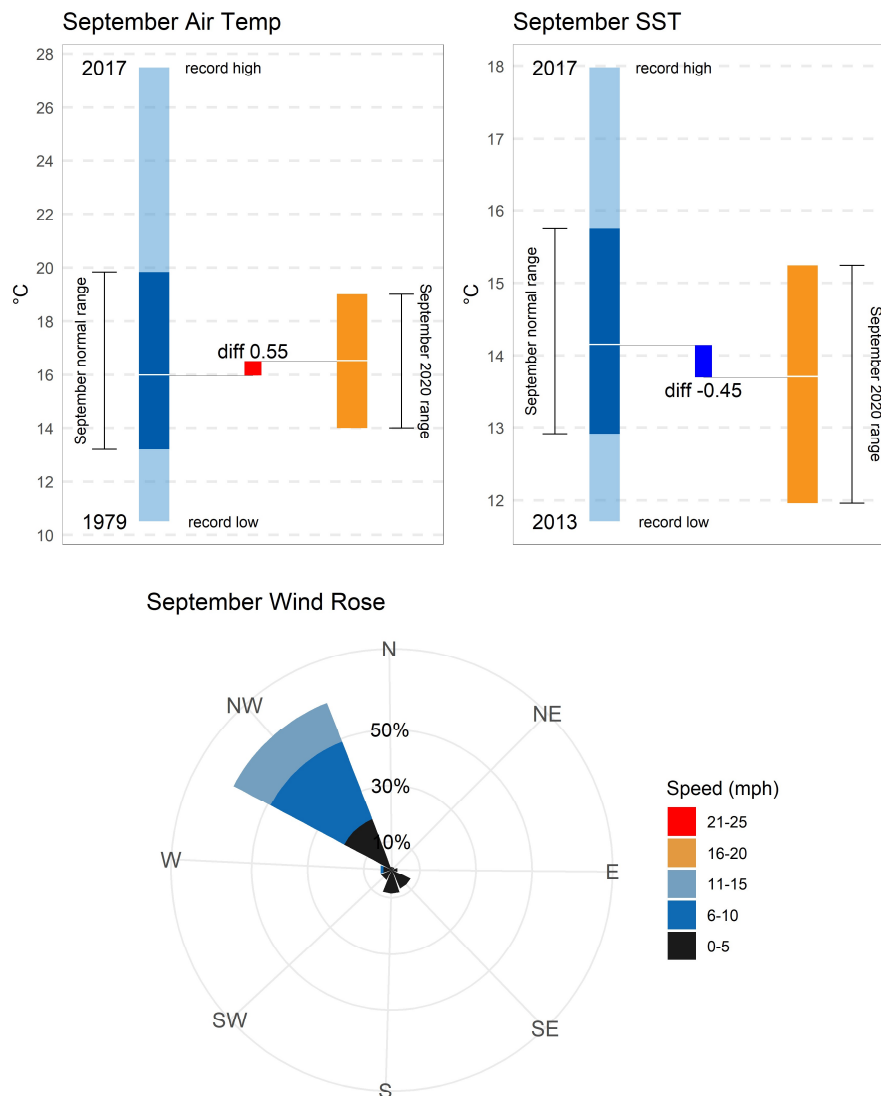
**COVID-19:** In response to ongoing concerns over impacts of this global pandemic, certain precautionary measures were taken this month to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infecting island personnel: The use of PPE was required by newly arriving interns prior to and during the landing; the frequency of regular supply runs was reduced from twice a month to once a month; no off-island breaks were granted to crew members; and no visitors were permitted to tour the island. Only essential personnel are currently permitted on the island until further notice.

### West End Island Visitors

September 29<sup>th</sup>: Dougill, Lipton, and Tietz visited West End Island.

## Weather/Ocean

Monthly weather is summarized in Figure 1. Light to moderate NW winds again dominated this month, but turned to the south and southeast a few times. The island received 0.06 inches of rain this month, which fell as drizzle. Fog was noted on 39% of weather observations and haze on 7%. The range of midday air temperatures fell within the long-term normal range for this month, with an average of  $16.5 \pm 1.36$  °C. This was 0.55 °C higher than the long-term average for the month. Sea surface temperature (SST) readings from the island were slightly lower than the long-term normal range for this month, with an average of 13.69 °C. This is 0.45 °C below the long-term average for the month.



**Figure 1.** Noon air and sea surface temperature data summary. Light blue depicts the long-term (1971 – 2019) range of observations with years given for record highs and lows; dark blue shows the long-term range of averages for August. Orange depicts the range of current (2020) observations. Differences between the long-term and current means are shown in red if above normal, and blue if below normal. Daily wind speed (color scale) and direction binned into sectors for morning, noon, and afternoon observations for this month. Larger bars indicate more wind from that direction.

## Oiled & Entangled Wildlife

Ten *Zalophus* (1 adult male, 2 sub-adult males, and 7 immatures) were seen with monofilament, packing strap, or unknown material embedded tightly around their necks. One *Callorhinus* pup was seen on West End Island with unknown plastic material wrapped tightly around its neck.

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, a California Gull was seen on the east Marine Terrace with half of its head covered in oil (total body coverage = 10%).

## Breeding Birds

**Storm-petrels** – At the beginning of the month, 35 Ashy sites were active with chicks and still being followed from the previous month. An additional six Ashy sites that had not been followed previously this year were found to be active during the first half of the month and added to the number of Ashy sites being checked to bring the total to 41. Of these 41 nests, 13 fledged and 8 failed by the end of the month, while 20 were still being monitored into October. The one known breeding site in the Ashy Castle was still active at the end of the month. No Leach's sites were active this month.

**Brandt's Cormorant** – At the beginning of the month, large numbers of chicks were still creching along the shoreline and in the colonies, while several unmonitored nests with partly- and mostly-feathered chicks continued. All chicks were fully feathered at the end of the month, and most birds had moved from creching areas to offshore islets for roosting.

Fifty cormorant pellets were collected from the Corm Blind Hill colony on September 10<sup>th</sup>, and fifty were collected from the Shubrick Cove colony on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Pelagic Cormorant** – Approximately a hundred birds were observed daily roosting on cliffs.

**Double-crested Cormorant** – Numbers of chicks remaining on Maintop declined through the month. Flocks of adults were observed flying to the coast in the mornings to obtain food for provisioning their chicks.

**Western Gull** – Several partly- to fully-feathered chicks from unmonitored nests were still being provisioned by their parents during most of the month. Many fledged juveniles were seen daily in the evening roost flocks on the Marine Terrace.

**California Gulls** – Juveniles dispersing from the mainland were observed throughout the month.

**Common Murre** – A few dozen murre were seen offshore through the month.

**Pigeon Guillemot** – Only a few chicks in unmonitored nests continued to be provisioned at the beginning of the month. A couple dozen birds were seen offshore at the beginning of the month, but numbers declined to just a few observed per day during the latter half of the month.

**Rhinoceros Auklet** – Single birds were seen offshore six times this month.

**Tufted Puffin** – A few dozen birds were observed daily at the beginning of the month, which were prospecting for future nest sites and socializing. A few birds were observed carrying fish toward nesting areas early in the month. Numbers declined rapidly through the first two weeks of the month, and the last observation of this species, a juvenile, was seen offshore on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Cassin's Auklet** – There were 28 monitored nests still active with second broods or relays at the beginning of the month, 20 from the Known-Age boxes and 8 from the PRBO boxes. Among the Known-Age boxes, 11 chicks fledged and 9 died or disappeared. Among the PRBO study boxes, 7 chicks fledged and 1 died. The final chicks fledged from the Known-Age boxes on the 25<sup>th</sup> and the final chicks fledged from PRBO boxes on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Oystercatchers** – A few adult pairs escorting fledged chicks were seen around the island this month.

## Pinnipeds

**California Sea Lion** – On average there were 9,434 (std  $\pm$  2330) individuals counted during the weekly pinniped census from the lighthouse, with a high count of 12,116 individuals on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The high count for pups was 711 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. No new dead *Zalophus* were discovered this month.

**Steller Sea Lion** – On average there were 70 (std  $\pm$  21) individuals counted, with the high count of 94 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The high count for pups was 15 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Elephant Seal** – Numbers increased this month, with an average count of 60 (std  $\pm$  38) individuals. A high count of 96 individuals occurred on the 25<sup>th</sup>. All were immatures or sub-adult males.

**Harbor Seal** – On average there were 17 (std  $\pm$  8) individuals counted, with a high count of 26 on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

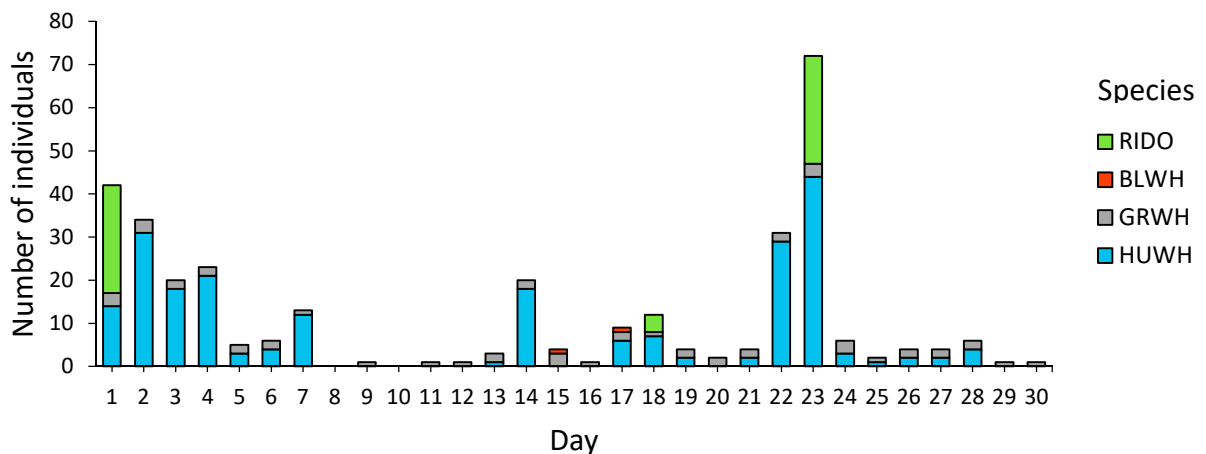
**Northern Fur Seal** – Numbers continued to grow for the colony on West End this month. On average there were 1318 (std  $\pm$  41) individuals counted, with the high count of 1,347 observed on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The high count for pups was 302 on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

On a trip to West End Island on the 29<sup>th</sup>, we counted 1650 total individuals which included 565 pups. We resighted tags on 21 individuals, including one blue tag on an individual we tagged in 2018.

## Cetaceans

**Standard Survey** – Thirteen one-hour standard whale watches were conducted this month from the Lighthouse using the Spotter App. Fog and/or wind frequently hampered our ability to conduct these surveys. One resident gray whale was observed around the island all month. Large numbers of humpback whales were seen early in the month and mid-month. Only two blue whales were observed this month. Pods of Risso's dolphins were seen on three days.

### September 2020 Cetacean Sightings



## Sharks

The first day of shark watch occurred on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. The first attack we spotted this season occurred on the 19<sup>th</sup> off Shubrick Point. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, we observed a scavenging on an unknown carcass off Shubrick Point.

## Salamanders

No salamander surveys were conducted this month, but an individual was seen on a couple days in the lighthouse.

## Owls

The first Burrowing Owl survey of the fall season occurred this month on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The first owl this fall season arrived on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. This individual was banded by us during the fall of 2019 with the combination P33/S, but was not confirmed as overwintering.

## Crickets

No crickets surveys were conducted this month.

## Bats

One hoary bat was observed flying around the lighthouse on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. On the same day, a small, brown bat (species and genus unknown) was flushed from a crevice off Corm Blind Hill.

## Mice

A few mouse holes were plugged in both the PRBO house and Coast Guard house. Mice were heard every night running around in the walls of the PRBO house. Although all the mouse entryways seemed to be plugged in the PRBO house, mice continued to get into the upstairs of the Coast Guard house, but based on mice trapped there, they were in very low numbers. Mice were easily seen this month running around outside during the day and night.

## Inverts and Intertidal

Pacific sea nettles (*Chrysaora fuscescens*) increased around the island over the month, with a high count of 750 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 50 greater moon jellies (*Aurelia labiata*) were seen around the island on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Large numbers of winged ants (hymenoptera) were seen at the lighthouse on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A grasshopper (Acrididea) was seen in Twitville on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Two species of butterfly were seen this month: Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) were seen throughout the month, and a single Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*) was seen on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Dragonflies were seen throughout the month, which included several gliders (*Pantala* sp.), two twelve-spotted skimmer (*Libellula pulchella*), one blue-eyed darter (*Rhionaeschna multicolor*), one variegated meadowhawk (*Sympetrum corruptum*) and several black saddlebags (*Tramea lacerata*).

## Plants

New Zealand spinach (*Tetragonia tetragonoides*) is covering approximately 30% of the southwest side of SEFI. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, many New Zealand spinach plants were seen on the southwest slope of Main Top on West End Island. The annual non-native plant control was not conducted this month due to precautions taken during the ongoing Covid-19 global pandemic.

## Violations

Seven boats were documented fishing in violation of the State Marine Reserve. Two boats were seen violating the Special Closure restrictions this month when they boated between Saddle Rock and Southeast Farallon Island; neither boat appeared to have disturbed wildlife.

## Maintenance

Island biologist Tietz conducted routine weekly maintenance checks on the PV system and generators. Monthly changes of water filters and crane greasing were conducted. A crane training was conducted at North Landing on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The north antenna (Dish 1) was aligned with help from Tim Pozar on the 7<sup>th</sup>. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, corrosion on the struts holding the antenna to the lighthouse were wire brushed and painted with cold zinc. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, wire rope lubricant was sprayed on the hoist wire rope. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, fluids in the eye wash station in the powerhouse were replaced, and the throw ring on the SAFEboat was replaced. A two-foot deep, old junction box between the Coast Guard house and the Powerhouse was found to be killing birds that were getting trapped, and so it was filled with rubble to prevent birds from getting trapped. Several mouse holes were filled in both the PRBO and the Coast Guard houses. Plumber Andrew and assistant Chloe Carothers-Liske performed several plumbing repairs,

including: replaced clogged drains in both PRBO and Coast Guard House downstairs bathtubs, replacing the existing 1-1/2" P-trap and waste arm for the bathtubs with upgraded 2" ABS P-trap, a 2" waste arm and a 2" x 2" inlet x 1-1/2" vent run tee; replaced the 1/2" copper hot water supply line to the PRBO bathtub; replaced Coast Guard house kitchen sink faucet hot and cold water supply lines with upgraded new high quality braided stainless steel faucet hoses; and replaced the Coast Guard House kitchen drain.

## 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 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 gutters and flashing on both houses are degrading and will need to be improved or replaced.
- Aluminum railings at East Landing and the lighthouse need repair.
- Powerhouse roof-access ladder mounts are badly corroded and need to be replaced.
- There is now a small leak in the closet next to the downstairs bathroom in the PRBO house. It only leaks when it rains, which may mean there is a failure in the roof above.
- The load cell battery and antenna at the EL crane were replaced, but now the load cell needs to be recalibrated.
- The HONDA portable gas generator has a mysterious leak behind the air filter and is currently unusable.
- The UPS located in the lighthouse communications locker does not work and needs to be replaced.

## Solar/Electric

### PV System

Distilled water used:	11 gallons
Distilled water reserves:	59 gallons

### Generator run times

Kohler 15ROZ (Buffy):	0 hours	(1830.5 on meter)
Kohler 30REOZJC (Speedwagon):	1.9 hours	(664.5 on meter)
Kohler 40REOZK (Zeke):	7.7 hours	(506.2 on meter)
Kohler 15ROY61 (Peevey):	0 hours	(3954.2 on meter)
Webasto:	0 hours	

### Power use

Facilities power use: Start = 86,831; End = 87,387; for total of 556 kWh

### Fuel Reserves

Diesel used:	6.3 gallons
Diesel drums: 9.8 @55gal:	545 gallons
Kohler 15ROZ (Buffy) Tank:	Full
Kohler 30REOZJC (Speedwagon) Tank:	Full
Kohler 40REOZK (Zeke) Tank:	Full
Kohler 15ROY61 (Peevey) Tank:	½
Webasto Tank:	Full
Surplus gasoline for boat motors:	10 gallons
Gasoline for portable generator:	12 gallons
6 gallon boat tank:	Full
3 gallon boat tank:	Full

### Water Reserves

Water used this month: Start = 298,995; End = 300,405; for a total of 1,410 gallons	
Cistern:	6' 4" or ~80,000 gallons
Gravity Tank:	empty
Settling Tank:	empty

## Sightseeing Boats

The **Salty Lady** was the only boat seen observing wildlife at the Farallon Islands this month – it was seen 4 times with an average of 12 POB.

## Non-breeding birds

Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, Clark's Grebe, Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, Pink-footed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Brown Booby, Red-footed Booby, Northern Gannet, Brown Pelican, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Sora, American Coot, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Wandering Tattler, Spotted Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Ruddy Turnstone, Black Turnstone, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Red Phalarope, South Polar Skua, Pomarine Jaeger, Parasitic Jaeger, Long-tailed Jaeger, Heermann's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, California Gull, Herring Gull, Elegant Tern, Arctic Tern, Mourning Dove, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Barn Owl, Burrowing Owl, Short-eared Owl, Vaux's Swift, Anna's Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Red-shafted Flicker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Hammond's Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Western Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Hutton's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rock Wren, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Varied Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, Sage Thrasher, American Pipit, Cedar Waxwing, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut – sided Warbler, Audubon's Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend's



Warbler, Hermit Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Palm Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, American Redstart, Yellow Warbler x American Redstart hybrid, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, MacGillivray's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Spotted Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Oregon Junco, Lapland Longspur, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Painted Bunting, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Hooded Oriole, Bullock's Oriole, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and Lesser Goldfinch.