

Point Reyes

NATIONAL SEASHORE • CALIFORNIA

The story of Point Reyes is one of movement—of the sea breaking on the shore, of the flashing wings of birds in flight, and of the comings and goings of different peoples.

Sir Francis Drake, on a voyage of exploration and plunder in 1579, sailed his damaged ship, the *Golden Hind*, into a "faire and goode baye" at 38° north to make repairs. Some historians believe that this was Drakes Bay. Drake claimed the land for Queen Elizabeth and named it Nova Albion for its white cliffs and banks and its resemblance to England. After Drake and his crew repaired the ship, they sailed west and completed their voyage around the world.

Coast Miwok Indians greeted the strange visitors with ceremony. These friendly Indians, who hunted, fished, and gathered nuts, also watched Capt. Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeño and his crew build a small launch on Limantour Spit in 1595. Cermeño's ship, the *San Agustín*, was completing a trading voyage between the Philippines and Mexico. The captain anchored his storm-battered vessel in Drakes Bay before beginning an exploration of the coastline south to Mexico. A sudden storm drove the ship aground and it broke up. Cermeño sailed to Mexico in the small craft that he had just built.

Another explorer, Don Sebastian Vizcaino, gave this place its name on January 6, 1603. He called it La Punta de los Reyes, the Point of the Kings.

By 1776 Point Reyes was under the control of Spain as part of the Spanish province of Upper California. Early in the 19th century, when Mexico gained its independence, the Mexican governors had authority to make land grants. Soon beef cattle ranches were started and thrived on Point Reyes; then dairying became important. About the time California became a State in 1850, land ownership changed. One New England family owned all the land on the peninsula for a brief period. As time passed, independent ranchers purchased the land from the family.

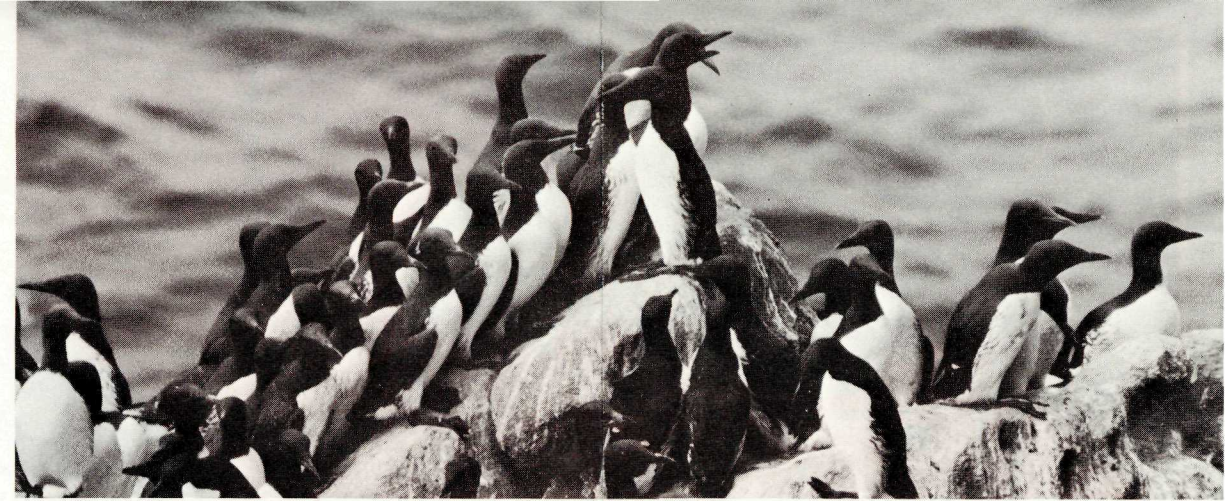
Through the years transpacific radio receiving stations have been established on Point Reyes because of its quiet and isolation.

On September 13, 1962, Congress authorized a 64,000-acre national seashore on Point Reyes. Today, purchase of the land has been nearly completed, but some residents and ranchers have retained rights of use and occupancy. Please respect private property rights.

NATURAL HISTORY

The peninsula's many habitats range from heavy forest to exposed coast. They provide living space for more than 300 species of birds, 72 species of mammals, many other land and marine animals, and for a great variety of plants.

Geologically, Point Reyes is an island separated from the mainland by the San Andreas Fault. This extensive fault trends northwest-southeast for about 600 miles. As pressures increase within the earth, tension will be released periodically by vertical or horizontal movement along zones of weakness such as this fault. As a result, the rocks to the west are completely different in type and age from those they rest against on the mainland in this



The California murre spends its winters at sea, but nests on the rocky shore of Point Reyes in summer.

area. It is reasonable to expect future movement along the fault.

In the past, earthquakes in this fault zone have caused disasters. San Francisco was almost destroyed by the earthquake of 1906. Buildings toppled, communications were disrupted, water and gas mains were broken, and fires burned entire sections of the town. At Point Reyes, land on the west side of the fault moved northward as much as 21 feet.

WEATHER AND SEASONS

The ocean strongly influences the weather of Point Reyes. The ocean beaches are frequently foggy and windy enough to make warm clothing welcome. Throughout the summer these beaches experience more days of fog than sunshine, but spring and autumn can be mild and pleasant. The country east of Inverness Ridge, accessible by hiking trails, is free of summer fog, but it has heavy rains in winter and spring.

The best flower season begins in February and lingers until late July, reflecting mild temperatures and moist conditions.

WHAT TO DO AND SEE

All beaches are open to visitors, except the Headlands Research Natural Area. Major public roads within the seashore are Sir Francis Drake Highway, Pierce Point Road, and Limantour Road. Hiking and bicycling are encouraged in areas where vehicular traffic is prohibited.

Shore activities. Picnicking and surf fishing can be enjoyed on all beaches. California fishing regulations apply to all marine life taken within the seashore. The Research Natural Areas are closed to all fishing and collecting. Hunting is prohibited.

Caution! Pounding surf and rip currents make Point Reyes Beach and McClures Beach too dangerous for swimming, surfing, and wading.

Inland activities. Bear Valley Trailhead is a gateway to more than 100 miles of trails. The 4.4-mile Bear Valley Trail is the most popular route, winding through grassy meadows and forests to the sea. Other trails branch from it and ascend steeply into the high country of the Inverness Ridge and the southern portion of the seashore. Four hike-in camps—Sky, Coast, Glen, and Wildcat Group, with

12 sites each—are at strategic places on the trail system. Campsites must be reserved. To obtain a camping permit, please register at headquarters. No wood fires are permitted; campers should bring charcoal or stoves. *Pets are prohibited on trails, in campgrounds and on designated beaches; they must be kept leashed elsewhere within the seashore.* Bicycles may be used on the Bear Valley and Coast Trails. Horses are permitted on all trails except the main Bear Valley Trail on weekends and holidays.

Stay on designated trails; wandering off trails may result in losing your way or being exposed to poison oak, which is very common here. Carry a canteen—stream water is not potable.

A privately operated tent and trailer campground is one-half mile from seashore headquarters. Bicycles and horses can be rented nearby.

Sightseeing. To obtain detailed information, visit headquarters, one-quarter mile west of Olema on Bear Valley Road. There you can take a self-guided nature trail, watch a seismograph in action, and see evidence of the famous San Andreas Fault. From headquarters, you can drive along the west shore of Tomales Bay through the town of Inverness and over the Inverness Ridge. Here the road branches north to Tomales Bay State Park and McClures Beach, and west to Drakes Beach and entrances to Point Reyes Beach. You can also drive to the road's end on Point Reyes. Point Reyes Lighthouse is not open to the public. Tide pools can be seen at McClures Beach.

Interpretive services. The story of Point Reyes is told at information centers, and by publications and interpretive programs. Campfire programs and nature walks are conducted near headquarters in summer; Earthquake and Woodpecker nature trails are self-guiding. At the Point Reyes Morgan Horse Farm, self-guided tours are available, and interpretive talks and horse training demonstrations are given to groups if they make advance arrangements with the superintendent.

Environmental education facilities. Teacher guidebooks may be obtained for school groups using the Bear Valley and Tidepool National Environmental Study Areas. A camp is available for schools participating in the National Environmental Development program. Contact the superintendent in advance.

ADMINISTRATION

Point Reyes National Seashore is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Point Reyes, CA 94956, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
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