



# Point Reyes National Seashore 2008 Year in Review



## *Giacomini Wetlands Restoration*



“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

President John F. Kennedy



## A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends of Point Reyes,

This past year marked another successful year preserving the coastal wilderness and irreplaceable resources at Point Reyes National Seashore while providing an exceptional experience to visitors by park staff, partners and volunteers.

Projects ranging from the final phase of restoration on the Giacomini Wetlands on Tomales Bay, to major upgrade to five structures at the Home Ranch were accomplished last year.

As you read on, many of the past year's highlights are illustrated in this document. The park served over 2.2 million visitors this year and continues to be one of the top thirty most visited parks in the nation. The park staff are some of the most dedicated public servants in the national park system.

We hope you will continue to join us in working to save this coastal sanctuary as a legacy for future generations.

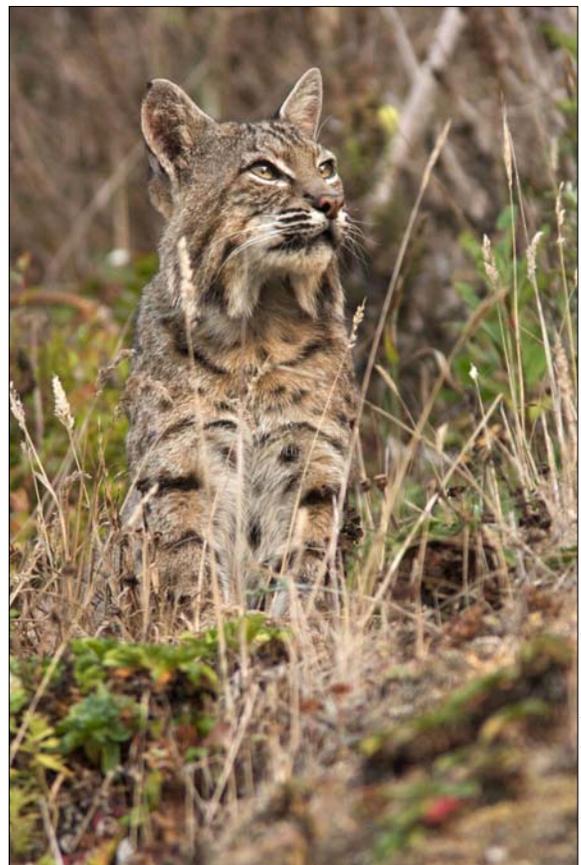
Sincerely,



Don L. Neubacher  
Superintendent



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# Park Map



One of America's greatest coastlines, Point Reyes National Seashore comprises over 71,000 acres, including 32,000 acres of Congressionally-designated wilderness area. Estuaries, windswept beaches, coastal grasslands, salt marshes, and coniferous forests create a haven of 80 miles of unspoiled and undeveloped coastline. Located just an hour's drive from an urban area populated by eight million people, the park receives over two million visitors annually. Abundant recreational opportunities include 147 miles of hiking trails, backcountry campgrounds, and many beautiful beaches.

Geologically, Point Reyes National Seashore is a land in motion. The great San Andreas Fault separates the Point Reyes Peninsula from the rest of the North American continent. Granite bedrock found here matches the bedrock in the Southern Sierra Nevada range. This indicates the peninsula

has moved over 300 miles northwest over a period of 30 million years. As wildland habitat is lost elsewhere in California, the relevance of the Point Reyes Peninsula as a protected area with a notably rich biological diversity increases. Over 45% of North American avian species and nearly 18% of California's plant species are found here due to the variety of habitat and uniqueness of the geology. Twenty-seven threatened and endangered species exist within the Seashore.

Point Reyes contains examples of the world's major ecosystem types. For this reason it was internationally recognized in 1988 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man and the Biosphere program and included as part of the Central California Coast Biosphere Reserve.

The cultural history of Point Reyes dates back some 5,000 years ago to the Coast Miwok Indians, the first human inhabitants of the peninsula. Over 120 known Coast Miwok village sites exist within the park. According to many experts, Sir Francis Drake landed here in 1579, the first European to do so. In response to the many shipwrecks on the treacherous coastal waters, key lighthouse and lifesaving stations were established by the United States Government in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the early 1800s, Mexican land grantees established ranchos. These were followed by a wave of American agricultural operations which continue to this day in the Seashore's pastoral zone.



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# Highlights from this past year



## Preservation Crew Preserving the Past

This year we completed 16 projects including one at SAFR and one at CARE. This year we completed the two year Repair/Rehab project at Home Ranch which resulted in the upgrade in condition of 5 structures listed in the LCS from poor or fair to good. These structures are the Hog and Hen House, the Machine Shop, the Dog Shed/Storage, the Garage and the Granary/Shed. Other work included roofing the east half of the D Ranch Old Milking Barn, siding and door repairs on the Teixeira Ranch Old Milking Barn, window repairs on the Teixeira Ranch Grade A Dairy and fence repairs at Pierce Ranch and the RCA Transmitting site at Bolinas. Stabilization/mothball work was completed on the Marconi Transmitter Bldg. #1 at Bolinas

and the Zanardi Ranch Old Milking Barn. We also built the accessibility ramp to the museum entrance at the W Ranch Red Barn (Park Headquarters).

Museum Collections highlights of ongoing activities for FY08 were:

- Accessioned 13,218 new items into the collection
- Cataloged 29,220 items in the collection
- Assisted 124 researchers with requests for natural and cultural materials and information
- Completed an museum Integrated Pest Management Plan
- Met our GPRA goal for improving collections preservation and protection
- Conducted environmental monitoring and housekeeping at 4 park sites with the

assistance of Interpretation and Facility Divisions

- Met regularly to consult with Miwok tribal committees on museum issues and projects and Sacred Sites Committee of FIGR
- Served as consultants to numerous community cultural groups: Jack Mason Museum of West Marin History, Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin, Marin History Museum Advisory Committee, Bay Area Discovery Museum Manila Galleon Exhibit Advisory Committee, Maritime Radio Historical Society
- Installed new museum cabinets at NDOC radio room and began setting up satellite archives storage and processing areas at NDOC
- Facilitated the stabilization of a broken lens in the Lighthouse by lampist Jim Woodward
- Completed a major rearrangement and organization of park library and reference files
- Completed high quality photographic catalog of representative samples of items from the archeological collection with park archeologist and VIP. A paper and electronic catalog is to follow from the images.
- Began planning efforts for four year museum collection digitization project



Stabilization of roof at the D Ranch Milking Barn

## Explore, Discover, Connect

The Point Reyes National Seashore Association (PRNSA) completed Phase Two of the Giacomini Wetlands Restoration Project in 2008, in partnership with the National Park Service. PRNSA has raised over \$6 million dollars for this project, which will restore 550 acres of critical wetlands at the headwaters of Tomales Bay. These restored wetlands will improve water quality in Tomales Bay and provide habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species.

PRNSA also continues its focus on environmental education, through its Field Seminars, Summer Camp, Environmental Education school programs, publications, and bookstores. Support from its members and grants enabled PRNSA to award scholarships to over 300 lower income young people to attend its Summer Camp and Environmental Education programs in 2008.



Watercolor artist Birgit O'Connor leads one of the many Field Seminars sponsored by PRNSA



Some of the children who participated in Summer Camp last year



## Using Resources to Teach, Inspire and Reconnect

During 2008, over 7,000 students used Point Reyes as an outdoor classroom through our curriculum-based interpretive programs. Additionally, over 48,000 people attended our ranger-led programs geared for all ages. When attendance at visitor centers and other outreach programs are included, over 640,000 visitor contacts were made by the interpretive staff.

Through the NPS Centennial Initiative, an additional six seasonal employees were hired which allowed for and additional 1,000 interpretive programs and 10,000 additional contacts over 2007 statistics.

Projects completed this past year included the redesign of the Sir Francis Drake panels in the courtyard at Drakes Beach and final redesign of the Lighthouse Visitor Center panels. Special events such as the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Big Time Native American Festival and the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Sand Sculpture Contest were held with record crowds.

Continued efforts to educate the public through stories in newspapers and other forms of media continued with over 30 press releases and follow-up stories on various topics. Additionally, two biweekly shows on a local FM radio station are hosted by staff.



Centennial Rangers assisted in providing informational and educational programs to an additional 10,000 park visitors this past year



Park visitors reading the new wayside exhibits on Sir Francis Drake at the Drakes Beach courtyard

## Fire Management and Communications

The beginning of FY08 started out with Point Reyes National Seashore Wildland Fire personnel assigned to the Cosco Busan oil spill incident. Helicopter management and agency representative assignments were filled by wildland fire personnel.

The field season saw the hiring of 9 seasonal employees, including 2 fire effects monitors. The seasonal crews (hazardous fuels removal crew and engine crew) removed hazardous vegetation fuels around 50 park structures at the beginning of summer. This was followed by off-park fire assignments to Monterey County. The bulk of the mid-summer was spent up on Bolinas Ridge, thinning out standing small diameter fir and redwood and piling downed concentrations of larger diameter logs to be chipped along approximately 1 mile of roadway. Afterwards the crews were mobilized to wildfires near Upper Lake in Mendocino County, Humboldt County, Crater Lake National Park, and SW Oregon. PORE crews traveled to Yosemite National Park several times in September and October to assist them with prescribed burns.

In late September and early October, staff conducted prescribed burns along Limantour Road (25 acres) and Highway One (approximately 100 acres). The burns were highly successful in keeping invasive shrubs from creating larger more dense patches of vegetation. These burns also provided a opportunities for other agencies in West Marin to train together. Agencies providing assistance on our prescribed burns were Golden Gate NRA, Yosemite NP, Marin Municipal Water District, Marin Open Space District, Stinson Beach Fire

Department, East Bay Regional Parks, East Bay Conservation Corps, Inverness and Nicasio Volunteer Fire Departments, and Marin County Fire Department.



Prescribed burn at Limantour (above) and along Highway One (below)



## Protecting Our Resources

Fiscal Year 2008 was a successful year for the Visitor and Resource Protection Division. The year started with the Cosco Busan oil spill. Working with the rest of the park, the VRP staff spent several days attempting to place booms at Drakes Estero in order to protect it. We learned a lot about boom operations. Since the spill, we have participated in several interagency boom trainings and exercises along with our local partners in order to learn more about boom implementation, and to develop better strategies for protecting Drakes Estero.

An increase in funding led to more VRP staff, including 4 new commissioned rangers and two non-commissioned seasonal

trail patrol positions. With the added staff we were able to perform more backcountry trail and beach patrols, as well as more boat patrols on Tomales Bay and the Pacific Ocean coast of the park. The added patrols resulted in additional visitor contacts and increased resource protection for the parks resources, including the Western Snowy Plover.

We obtained a utility terrain vehicle (UTV) which has proven to be very useful tool for many projects and incidents including search and rescue operations, vessel groundings, and vehicles stuck on beaches. We have developed an effective UTV training program for park operators.

2008 saw success with our counter-marijuana efforts as well. The added law enforcement ranger positions enabled us to be more proactive in our scouting and surveillance operations. We also assisted the Marin Sheriff's Office on several grow sites outside of the park. The park has been the leader in developing an effective interagency effort to combat marijuana growing on public and private lands within Marin County. We have worked with the Marin County Sheriff's Office, Marin Municipal Water District, California State Parks, Golden Gate NRA, and California Fish and Game to coordinate counter marijuana efforts. No active marijuana fields were found within park boundaries this year, indicating that our stepped up detection and deterrence efforts are being successful. This was the first time in three years that no fields were found.

The Special Park Uses Branch was busy this year with re-issuing several ranch permits and with issuing a new Concession contract for the Stewart Horse Camp. Four of the concession operations underwent an environmental audit, which will help them in running their business's in a more eco-friendly manner.



NPS Ranger deploying boom during Cosco Busan oil spill and marijuana plot



## Preserving the Seashore's Native Ecosystem

**M**anagement of the two species of non-native deer, axis and fallow, began in July 2007, in accordance with the Preferred Alternative in the Environmental Impact Statement. Approximately 600 non-native deer have been lethally removed from Point Reyes National Seashore-administered lands. Safety of visitors and staff, as well as humane treatment of dispatched animals, was paramount. Over 80 % of culled deer were donated as food for the needy to Bay Area charities, local Native American tribes and condor recovery programs throughout California.

In addition, approximately 80 fallow does were treated either with an experimental long-duration contraceptive injection (USDA's GonaCon™), or with a new non-surgical sterilization technique involving laparoscopy. Because of the success of the culling and contraceptive program, experts and biologist have determined that the non-native deer population at PORE is essentially non-reproductive and can heretofore be managed solely with non-lethal means to achieve eventual eradication. 2008 monitoring of fallow deer lek sites has demonstrated marked regrowth in areas previously damaged by fallow deer rut activities.



## Habitat Restoration Highlights

**C**ompleted 1st of 2 years of project to restore paleodune dynamics at the Point Reyes Headlands. Monitoring plots were installed and read to collect pre-treatment vegetation data. A contract was awarded for initial removal of about 25 acres of iceplant and 3 acres of European beachgrass, with work completed in mid-October.

In conjunction with SFAN I&M, implemented pilot season for early detection and mapping of highly invasive, low-abundance species. We mapped over 40 priority species on and near 36 miles of trails and roads.

An AmeriCorps intern helped coordinate 459 volunteers who provided over 4,600 hours to our invasive plant control and monitoring projects. Funding targeted follow-up cape-ivy removal at Lagunitas and Glenbrook Creeks and throughout all previously treated sites, and European beachgrass follow-up at Abbotts Lagoon. Over 30 acres were treated with volunteer assistance. Hosted 12 school and 6 corporate, non-profit, and YMCA groups; two week-long national Sierra Club service trips; Alternative Spring Break groups from the University of Utah and Chico State; and 84 teenagers from the Marin Conservation Corps' Project Regeneration.

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## Bay Area Fire Ecology and Fire Effects Program

The Fire Effects Monitoring crew had another productive year during FY08. They left the park on six different monitoring trips including visits to Pinnacles National Monument, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Channel Islands National Park, Lava Beds National Monument and Crater Lake National Park. Locally, they also completed plot work at Point Reyes and Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

In February 2008, researchers from UC Berkeley, in collaboration with the Bay Area Network Fire Ecologist, completed the report on spatial distribution and impacts of *Phytophthora ramorum* and Sudden Oak Death in Point Reyes National Seashore. This report summarized a year long research effort which quantified the distribution of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) in the park and the changes to forest structure, composition, and fuel loading caused by the disease. The researchers presented their findings which was well attended both by Point Reyes staff and the local community.

The Fire Ecology and Fire Effects program was able to secure several grants for Sudden Oak Death work including funds for the treatment of high value trees with AgriFos and funds to participate in a collaborative effort to test for SOD-resistant tanoaks.



Tan oak infected with Sudden Oak Death.

## Inventory & Monitoring (I&M) Program

### Western Snowy Plovers

The Seashore is an important nesting and wintering area for the federally threatened western snowy plover. The Point Reyes National Seashore Association and PRBO Conservation Science (PRBO) worked closely with the Seashore to monitor and protect nesting plovers. Although, the US Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the population has increased over the past 15 years, the population at Point Reyes continues to fluctuate from year to year. While last year was one of the best in many years, 2008 had poor productivity, despite the strong management actions that have been implemented at the Seashore.

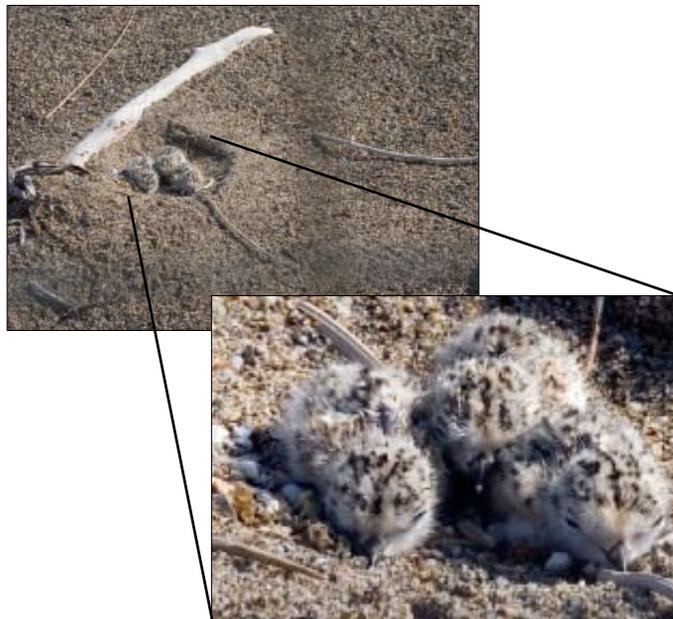
The Seashore erected exclosures around most nests, created seasonal closures around nesting habitat and continued to remove invasive plants. Twenty one nests were located, with 55 eggs laid but only 30 eggs hatched (54.5%) compared to 77.1% last year, and only 5 chicks survived to fledge, yielding a 16.1% fledging rate compared to 37.5% in 2007 and 45.0% in 2006.

The restoration of coastal dunes continues to greatly benefit the recovery of plovers at the Seashore because they have more habitat to nest and forage in, and to avoid predators. Four of 21 nests were located in the restored area in 2008. Nevertheless, accidents do happen and in 2008 a shipwreck landed within plover habitat resulting in disturbance of birds and habitat, but fortunately no direct mortality.

An outreach and education coordinator continued the important distribution of information to park visitors because the birds are easily disturbed by recreationists on beaches. When disturbed, chicks are exposed to predators and use energy needed for

growth. Egg failure and chick mortality are high for many reasons including disturbance, predation, and environmental factors. In 2008, egg failure resulted from predation by ravens and possibly rodents, high winds in the spring and summer, high tides and unknown reasons.

In 2009, the Seashore will continue to monitor and protect plovers, and restore habitat. In addition, the program will develop a formal monitoring protocol for the Seashore, following national standards. Most important is a planned 300+ acre coastal dune restoration project that is proposed to start in 2009. This large project likely will substantially improve the plovers chances for avoiding predators and disturbance from park visitors.



Three western snowy plover chicks well camouflaged on the nest

## Inventory & Monitoring (I&M) Program (cont'd)

### Spotted Owls

The 2008 monitoring study is part of an ongoing, long-term program initiated in 1999 at Point Reyes National Seashore, Muir Woods National Monument and Golden Gate National Recreation Area. In contrast to 2007 when no successful nesting was observed on federal lands, spotted owls had the highest reproductive success in the program's history in 2008. Despite this high productivity, though, the number of sites occupied by pairs was at its lowest level in the program's history (20%). Researchers on federal lands in Marin County documented successful nesting at 67% of the fecundity sites

(10 of 15) monitored in 2008. Pairs of spotted owls occupied 60% or 15 of the 25 long-term monitoring sites. In 2008, researchers also monitored for barred owls, one of the main threats to spotted owls. The number of known barred owls on federal lands in Marin County is currently three adults (a pair and a single male). No known barred owl nests occurred in Point Reyes lands in 2008; however, a pair successfully fledged two young at Muir Woods.



Spotted owl fledglings

### Range Management

During Fiscal Year 2008, the range program successfully implemented nine best management practices within the Tomales Bay Watershed that will significantly improve water quality leaving pasture. The projects include two stream restoration projects, headcut repairs, riparian fencing and upland watering facilities. We also extended the riparian fence

along Kehoe Creek to remove cattle from accessing the creek. The Range Program has been systematically closing seven rock quarries within the pastoral zone. Five have been filled and graded and are awaiting fall seeding and planting. The remaining two will be closed during 2009. The Range Program recently restarted the annual one-on-one meetings with the ranch operators.





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