

# Transportation at the light station

How did people who lived at the light station get around in the past? The first keepers relied on foot power or horses. Principal Keeper Thorndyke, who served from 1879-1906, had horses and a wagon. Private rigs could be hired at San Simeon.



*Left: Thorndyke's rig filled with people, possibly heading to Cambria 4th of July celebration.*

We don't know when the first automobile came to Piedras Blancas Light Station, but after it did, life changed dramatically for the keepers. Goods could be more easily obtained and outside entertainments enjoyed.



*Left: This photo, probably taken in the 1930s came to us through Jan Mattson, who obtained it from Shirley Null, daughter of a lighthouse keeper at Point San Luis.*



*Left: The same car as seen above, driving over a trestle that enabled cars to cross the sand dunes.*

Advancements in transportation also made it easier for visitors to come to the light station.

*Right: In a 1945 photo recently acquired from Gene Duclo, his parents are seen beside the tall fence that surrounded the Keepers Dwelling. Gene's parents, Earl and Eva Duclo were good friends of the McBeths.*

*Clifford McBeth was Assistant Keeper at Piedras Blancas from 1938-1949.*

*Read more about Gene Duclo on page 5.*



Bert Breedlove was Officer-in-charge from 1948-1951. He and his wife belonged to a square dance club and hosted square dance parties in the attic of the Keeper's Cottage.

*Right: Bert Breedlove's Buick in front of the houses, circa 1950. The upper three levels of the lighthouse were removed in 1949.*



*Right: Sue Wright, 1953. George Wright was stationed at Piedras Blancas from April 1953-Aug 1954. They shopped at San Simeon and went to movies in Cambria. On weekends, the Coast Guard crewmen gave public tours to visitors.*





## BLM update

### Public Access and Piedras Blancas Light Station

by Jim Boucher, Park Manager

Like most lighthouses, Piedras Blancas has always had limited public access. The function of a lighthouse was to be an aid to maritime navigation and light stations were designed to accommodate employees, not a large number of vehicles and visitors. Historically we know there was limited public visitation at Piedras Blancas Light Station. Lighthouse Service personnel would entertain visitors and guests on occasion. During the US Coast Guard era, public tours were held on most Saturdays at Piedras Blancas but the demand for tours was never great and public visitation was not a significant part of operations.

Today it is a different scenario. There is much interest by the public to visit light stations such as Piedras Blancas. Lighthouses have evolved to be marginal aids to navigation to major visitor attraction sites. This is certainly true of Piedras Blancas Light Station. It is hard to estimate how many visitors traveling on State Highway 1 would visit Piedras Blancas Light Station if public access was not limited. There is potential for substantial visitation increases.

Current annual visitation at Piedras Blancas has peaked at about 7500 visitors annually, not from a lack of visitor interest but from a lack of infrastructure to handle large numbers of vehicles and visitors. The public's desire to visit this important heritage site far exceeds what is currently offered. Currently the Bureau of Land Management and the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association are exploring possibilities to provide greater opportunity to the public to visit Piedras Blancas Light Station.

Some possible improvements might include a shuttle bus system with a remote staging area or a public parking facility in the vicinity of the light station.

## New donation



Linda Torgersen and her fiancé, Guy Wainscott, visited the light station on May 7, 2014, the day before their marriage. Linda's grandfather was Captain William Karl Bode, commanding officer of the lighthouse tender *Lupine* in the 1930s. The *Lupine* delivered supplies to Piedras Blancas .



Linda donated a cup and saucer and a collection of buttons, that once belonged to Captain Bode. They are now on display in the lighthouse. Thank you Linda!



Linda also donated papers that belonged to her grandfather. Tenders delivered much needed supplies to lighthouses and light stations. The work could be dangerous and the seas treacherous, as described in a report written by Captain Bode on December 26th, 1931, when he was Captain of the tender *Columbine*.

*"The bay was very rough and after rounding Yerba Buena Light Station (San Francisco Bay) I tried to keep the sea on the port quarter as much as possible because the tender was rolling excessively. The lubricating oil spilled out of the motor bearings, the fire extinguishers started leaking and nobody could stand up without holding on.*

*The cook was in the act of preparing our Christmas dinner, but on account of the quick jerky motion and the slippery tile floor in the galley, his legs flew from under him and he made six round trips the length of the galley before he slowed down sufficiently to be able to grab hold of some support to check his progress. In the meantime, pots and pans jumped the sea rails on the stove and dishes and other utensils ignored the rolling strips on the dresser and joined the cook on the floor. In other words our Christmas dinner was a total wreck.*

*Other damage included broken dishes, two wooden buckets with lead line lost overboard and two broken lamp shades."*

## Spotlight on people

### Student intern

Meet Ariana Haro, who will be interning at the light station this summer. Ariana lives in Orcutt and is a student at Allan Hancock College. Her interests lie in environmental studies.

Ariana will be helping with tours and vegetative rehabilitation.

Welcome Ariana!



Above: New tour guides (left to right): Jim and Jackie Howlett, Jim Majors, Sandy and John Bosworth.. Not pictured are new assistants, John Brass and Nancy Acosta. Welcome to the tour family!

**For information on Piedras Blancas Light Station**

[www.piedrasblancas.org](http://www.piedrasblancas.org)  
or [www.piedrasblancas.gov](http://www.piedrasblancas.gov)

# Animal bytes

## Peregrine falcons

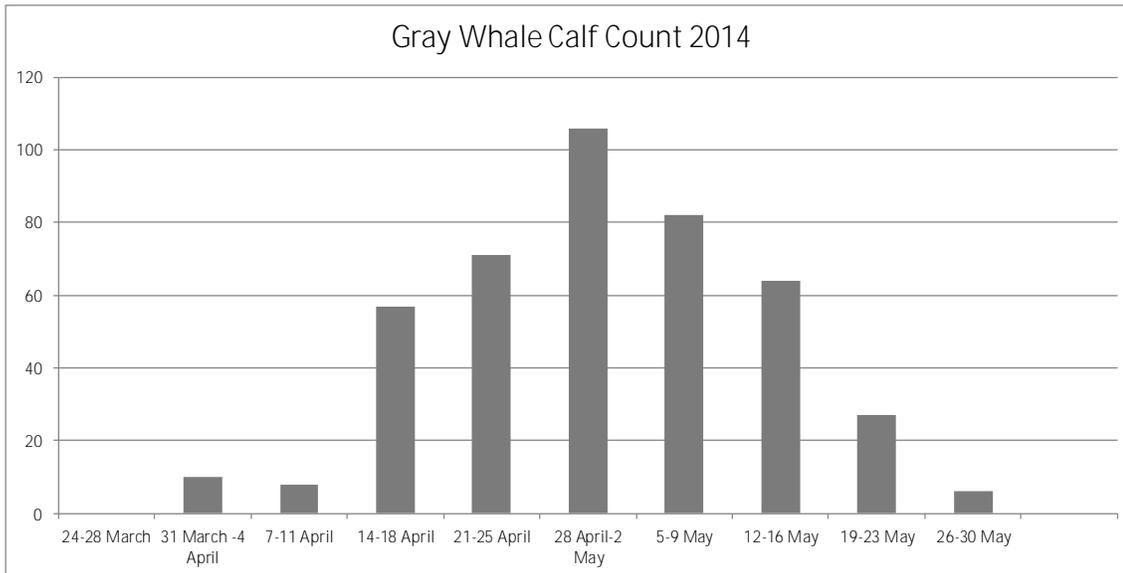
The peregrine falcon pair that nested on the Outer Islet this year has successfully fledged 3 chicks. On June 6th the chicks were seen perching on the fog signal building, lighthouse, and replica water tower. The proud parents were nearby, offering encouragement. One chick seemed particularly reticent to fly; it paced back and forth along the lighthouse ledge, occasionally putting a foot out and then withdrawing it quickly



Photo at far right is an adult peregrine, perched on the lighthouse. Photo taken by Jack Morehead. Photo at right is one of the chicks, perched on top of the replica water tower.

## Gray whale calf report by Wayne Perryman, Southwest Fisheries Service

We had a drop in ice cover in May of last season and this led us to predict that the 2014 calf count would be higher than what we had in 2013. It clearly was much higher (431 vs 313) and it was higher than our model based solely on the extent of seasonal ice predicted. So what is this telling us? One thing it is saying is that the Eastern North Pacific population of gray whales appears to be doing quite well. This is the fourth consecutive year of high calf production and the animals look big and robust. However, the pattern we have seen in the past is that we have 3-4 years of high calf production and then we get a few years with estimates that are lower than we would predict based on ice alone. Also, we have an El Niño brewing which can mean a drop in primary production in northern waters. So, next year should be exciting. Stay tuned! Wayne Perryman



The graph at left shows the number of gray whale calves seen during the 10 weeks the survey was conducted. As usual, the greatest numbers of calves were seen during the end of April and the first part of May. This year's total of 431 is a very good year in terms of calf production.

The photos below show a gray whale calf breaching off Point Piedras Blancas. Photos were taken by Dave Weller.



## Harrier nest

Look carefully in the photo at right to find a harrier nest with three chicks. The nest was hidden in seaside woolly yarrow. Photo by Alex Covello.



## Baby garter snake

Garter snakes are a common sight at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. Babies are about the size of a pencil.



# Join us on the path to restoration!

Your purchase of a personalized, engraved brick will help with restoration of the light station. It will also be viewed by generations of lighthouse lovers.

Maximum of three lines. Each line can have up to 16 characters, including spaces and punctuation. All letters are capitalized. Not all three lines have to be used. You may purchase multiple bricks. Minimum donation \$100.

Line 1																	
Line 2																	
Line 3																	

I am paying by check (Made out to PBLSA)  MasterCard  or Visa

MC or Visa number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

Donor's name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form to:  
 Piedras Blancas  
 Light Station  
 Association.  
 P.O. Box 127,  
 San Simeon, CA  
 93452  
 or order online:  
[www.piedrasblancas.org](http://www.piedrasblancas.org)  
 To order by  
 phone, call  
 805-927-3719.  
**Thank you!**

## People from the past

Thanks to the generosity of Sharon and Duane Budge, we have met Gene and Rosemary Duclou. Sharon and Duane purchased an engraved brick for their friend, Gene Duclou, whose family had a historic connection to the light station. Sharon graciously obtained the following information from an oral interview with Gene.

*In June, 1945 Gene (age 23) along with his parents, Earl and Eva Duclou visited their good friends, the McBeths, at Piedras Blancas Light Station. Clifford McBeth was an Assistant Keeper at Piedras Blancas from 1938-1949. The McBeths greeted them at the gate. (See photo on page 1) and gave them a grand tour of the whole complex, including tooting the fog horn.*

*The lighthouse was an imposing structure. The Fresnel lens was there. They went into the lantern room. It was fascinating. Gene was amazed by the lens and described it as having "glistening gem colors".*

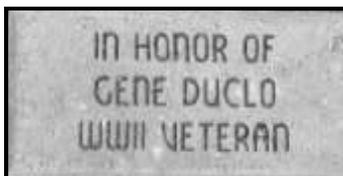
*Gene, an accomplished sailor, recounted the time (circa 1951) he and three other men were taking a 47 foot sloop from Avila to its new owner in San Diego. It was dark and the wind was blowing like crazy. The tiller broke. It was terrifying. Using marine charts and angles of the lights from Point Arguello, Point Conception, and Hope Ranch (Santa Barbara) he was able to navigate dangerous waters. Gene said if not for the lighthouses, he and the others might not be alive.*



Above: Gene Duclou standing next to his engraved brick



Above: left to right: Gene and Rosemary Duclou, Sharon and Duane Budge



Left: The brick purchased in honor of Gene Duclou and his service during WWII.

## Lighthouse neighbors

**Point Sur Lightstation** For a complete listing of tours, go to [www.pointsur.org](http://www.pointsur.org) or call 831-625-4419. Thanks go to the Central Coast Lighthouse Keepers for their purchase of engraved bricks.

**Point Pinos Lighthouse** Located in Pacific Grove, open Thursday through Monday, 1:00-4:00. [www.ci.pg.ca.us/lighthouse](http://www.ci.pg.ca.us/lighthouse).

**Point San Luis Lighthouse** For a complete listing of tours and access, go to [www.sanluislighthouse.org](http://www.sanluislighthouse.org) or call 805-540-5771 to reserve a ride on the trolley. A new signature event, the Lighthouse Jubilee, is offered the third Sunday of the month, through October.



The Central Coast Lighthouse Keepers (Point Sur) purchased an entire row of 9 engraved bricks that say:

MEMBERS OF CENTRAL COAST LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS AND VOLUNTEERS OF POINT SUR LIGHTSTATION LIT AUGUST 1889



# PBLSA update

by Jack Morehead, Ex-Chair

You may have heard that due to health reasons, I have reluctantly resigned from the board of PBLSA; David Cooper will be the new chair. I've enjoyed the last 2 years serving as chair, and I will miss working closely with all the talented members of the board. Given this last opportunity to do an article for the Beacon, I felt it appropriate to briefly list what I consider some major accomplishments that have occurred during the past couple of years. I have intentionally decided to avoid mentioning individual names as I consider these items to be board achievements, and literally all members have contributed to the progress.

- We now have a Memorandum of Understanding with BLM that allows us to spend money on projects suggested by the manager of the light station. This agreement allows us to be reimbursed by BLM after we fund approved items such as salaries, procurements, or contracts. If you have never worked for the government, with its smothering purchasing, contracting, and hiring rules, you cannot comprehend how significant this is. It gives Jim added flexibility, speed, and discretion that has never been there before. And while the accounting/reporting procedures are complex and time consuming, this is one of the most major advances for PBLSA ever.
- In the past, the Association has banked most of its money in CDs, which at the present time are bringing in almost 0 interest. We are now investing most of our money in Fidelity accounts, and our money is now bringing in very significant profit and dividends.
- The gift shop has been rearranged and reorganized, and is now making a substantial profit for the Association.
- We now finally have an outstanding, up to date website which provides excellent information to interested visitors.
- The engraved brick program has been implemented, with over \$14,000 added to our restoration efforts so far.
- The Association members are now involved in several projects that have the potential for important improvements and advancements for the light station. Among these are such things as: 1) National Monument status for the Outstanding Natural Area, 2) improved access and parking for the area, which would greatly improve public visitation, 3) approval and construction of the California Coastal Trail, 4) continued support of several restoration projects, including the Fog Signal Building and the eventual replacement top of the Lighthouse, 5) several grant proposals for increased funds, 6) and others.
- Perhaps most significant of all, I feel the Association now has a truly good working relationship with the BLM and the volunteers. Things have finally evolved to what everyone has hoped and worked for: an open partnership with obvious, mutual working benefits.

The biggest thing now lacking is concentrated emphasis on major fund raising. While making significant progress in the areas listed above, I feel the board needs some real expertise and experience in the area of major fund raising. With the current status of government funding, the light station needs our help. I feel very good about the progress made in the past few years, but we can always do better. Please, if you're not already involved, do so. Join the Association, attend and contribute to the meetings, become a member of the board. Participate. Good things are happening.

Thanks to all for the opportunity to serve on the board, it's been interesting, challenging, exciting, and rewarding.

Jack Morehead

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association  
board members welcome your comments or questions.  
805-927-3719 or membership.pblsa@gmail.com

Board meetings are held at the Rabobank in Cambria,  
at 6:00 PM on the fourth Wednesday of every month.  
The public is welcome.

## Praise for Jack Morehead

by Carole Adams, volunteer

Jack Morehead has made so many positive contributions to Piedras Blancas Light Station it is impossible to list them all. He served many years on the Association Board before becoming Chairperson.

Nowhere is Jack's influence more apparent in fostering a sense of partnership than in the gift shop, where the Association Board, PBLS volunteers, and BLM staff work together. Because of Jack's vision, the gift shop operates like a partnership, in which each partner has a meaningful role to play. This working partnership has resulted in a very successful operation in which all parties work toward one goal, each doing their part.

Jack, thank you for your wisdom, leadership and caring. Thank you on behalf of the BLM staff, the volunteers, and the Association members and Board.

A brick in Jack's honor has been placed in the Lighthouse Path.



*Above: Jack Morehead leading a tour group. Jack will continue to lead tours, assist, and help in the gift shop.*

## National Lighthouse Day

Piedras Blancas Light Station will be celebrating National Lighthouse Day on Saturday, August 9th. Enactors in period attire will portray life at the light station in the early 1900s.

This special tour is offered at the regular fee of \$10 for adults and \$5 for ages 6-17. Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel, located 1.5 miles north of the light station, by 9:45. Because a big turnout is expected, it is advisable to arrive early.



*Photo at left: Abel Martinez portraying a keeper at work in the lighthouse*

## Piedras Blancas Light Station Tours

Tours are offered year round on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. From June 15 through August 31, tours are offered 6 days a week, Mondays through Saturdays. There are no tours on Federal holidays. Tours last about 2 hours and include the historic Piedras Blancas lighthouse and support buildings and a half mile interpretive trail that provides spectacular ocean views and opportunities to view wildlife. Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel located 1.5 miles north of the light station at 9:45 a.m.

### ***Please do not wait at the gate to the light station!***

Groups of ten or more please make advance arrangements.  
\$10 for adults, \$5 ages 6-17, no fee for children 5 and under.

For information on tours email [PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com](mailto:PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com) or call 805-927-7361.



Dress warmly and wear comfortable walking shoes.  
No pets!

Tours may be cancelled on the day of the tour due to inclement weather.

PBLA Association  
P.O. Box 127  
San Simeon, CA 93452-0127  
805-927-3719  
[membership.pblsa@gmail.com](mailto:membership.pblsa@gmail.com)



All memberships include the quarterly newsletter and knowledge you are helping with restoration and maintenance of the Piedras Blancas Light Station.

- \_\_\_ \$50 Friend of the Lighthouse  
(1 complimentary tour)
- \_\_\_ \$100 Acting Keeper  
(2 complimentary tours)
- \_\_\_ \$250 Assistant Keeper  
(4 complimentary tours)
- \_\_\_ \$500 Principal Keeper  
(engraved brick)
- \_\_\_ \$1000 Superintendent of Lights  
(engraved brick & private tour for up to 6)

*Help restore and  
preserve  
Piedras Blancas  
Light Station  
by joining  
PBLSA!*

Name:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Phone:

Email:

Please make check payable to PBLSA.  
You may also join online at [www.piedrasblancas.org](http://www.piedrasblancas.org).

***Thank you for your support!***

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association  
P.O. Box 127  
San Simeon, CA  
93452-0127