National Parks have become so much a part of American culture and heritage that it’s hard to imagine our country without them. These places are a way of preserving, unimpaired, some of the nation’s natural wonders and inspirational human stories for “the enjoyment of future generations.”

As early as 1929, Californians were increasingly concerned about the fate of their coastline. Development had swallowed most of the eastern seaboard, and was accelerating along the Pacific and Gulf Coasts. Congressional reports recommended the creation of a system of national seashores to protect these vanishing landscapes, and to provide public access to beaches.

In 1935, Conrad Wirth, then Assistant Director of the National Park Service, recommended that 53,000 acres of Point Reyes be purchased “because of the peninsula’s exceptional qualities and ... accessibility to the concentrated population of Central California.” The purchase price of $2.4 million, or about $45 per acre, seems a great bargain in retrospect, but, with the country still in the grip of the Great Depression, Congress thought otherwise. A new wave of land speculators aroused private conservation groups, who began to purchase Point Reyes themselves. The first 52 acres to be protected, in 1938, were the wetlands adjacent to Drakes Beach at a cost of $3,000. This property was deeded to Marin County.

A dream was born, but it would take the extraordinary work of many individuals working together to fully realize that vision of a national seashore at Point Reyes.

Welcome!
For nearly a century and a half, National Parks have been sanctuaries for people seeking peace from the turmoil of daily life. This year, Point Reyes National Seashore is commemorating its 50th year as a proud member of this community. John F. Kennedy signed the legislation setting aside the only west coast seashore park on September 13, 1962. Sadly, he didn’t live to visit the park, but on October 20, 1966, Lady Bird Johnson, a champion of national parks and outdoor spaces, came to Point Reyes for its dedication. In her speech, the First Lady called Point Reyes, “a bright star in the galaxy of conservation achievements,” and spoke of the urgent need urban Americans have for open spaces near their communities.

Point Reyes offers many opportunities to explore that natural world. From a peaceful walk through a fog-shrouded forest to a sun-drenched rocky perch above the immensity of the Pacific Ocean, here you can find many alluring retreats. In doing so, you may witness the drama of the changing seasons, as foggy summers give way to clear autumn days, and sun-browned autumn hillsides give way to winter’s replenishing rains.

In spring, the magic is found in tiny yellow sun-cups blooming in sandy soils, and razor-taloned peregrine falcons stooping to combat nest-marauding ravens. The elk bugling on Tomales Point is characteristic of fall on the peninsula, while the return of the northern elephant seal and the migration of the Pacific gray whale herald winter and the year’s end.

Enjoy your visit and help us to preserve this “bright star” so future generations may also find wonder and solace here. Through active stewardship, this place will remain a refuge for all.

Park Superintendent, Cicely Muldoon
Citizens Take Action

In the early 1940s, though recreation and beauty were of little concern to a country at war, local conservationists rallied once again. Mrs. Margaret McClure donated 2.9 acres of her Pierce Point Ranch to Marin County, providing access to the rugged, windswept shore now known as McClures Beach. Carolene Livermore, in concert with the Marin Conservation League, raised $15,000 to help Marin County buy 185 acres of Tomales Bay shoreline. Out of this nucleus grew Tomales Bay State Park, a refuge for those Ice Age survivors, the Bishop pines.

Following World War II, the country experienced an economic boom period that led to great industrial and urban growth. The federal government invested heavily in highway construction and oil prices were low. More Americans had leisure time, owned cars, and spent time traveling to the coast than ever before. Coastal communities were erecting hotels and motels, restaurants and amusement parks to accommodate and entertain these tourists. This development boom extended to the Point Reyes Peninsula, already a favored vacation spot where well-to-do San Franciscans had built summer homes.

Loggers began cutting down trees on Inverness Ridge and surveyors were marking off lots above Limantour Spit. A sense of urgency to save the land gained momentum with help from a powerful ally—Clem Miller, the new Congressional representative for Marin County. With the support of U.S. Senator from California Clair Engle, Congressman Miller introduced legislation for a 35,000 acre park. Conservationists, organized as the Seashore Foundation, promoted the park dream in the face of opposition from developers and others fearful of losing their traditional way of life.

Creating Seashore Parks

In 1953, the first national seashore was established at Cape Hatteras, on the dynamic barrier island system off the North Carolina coast. Local, state, and federal advocates for protection of the Point Reyes peninsula were encouraged by this success. However, Drakes Bay Estates, with proposed development of over 400 housing units, began construction near Limantour Beach in 1956, lending urgency to the conservationists’ endeavor.

In the late 1950s, legislation was first proposed to establish a national seashore at Point Reyes. When he took office, President John F. Kennedy announced two conservation agendas: the creation of national seashores, and the adoption of the Wilderness Bill. Having spent summers throughout his life along the Massachusetts coast on Cape Cod, the protection of these beautiful wild shores was close to Kennedy’s heart. Key players in these struggles were President Kennedy’s Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, Sierra Club executive director David Brower, Clair Engle, Clem Miller, and author Harold Gilliam, among many others. In August of 1961, Cape Cod became the second national seashore, lending further momentum for the Point Reyes cause. The 1962 Sierra Club publication of Gilliam’s book, Island in Time, brought much-needed publicity and a poetic voice to the campaign to protect Point Reyes. David Brower distributed a copy to every member of the 87th Congress.

In his book, Gilliam noted: “only 240 miles out of the 3700 miles of shoreline from Mount Desert Island to Corpus Christi are dedicated to public purposes. The National Park Service administers a mere 55 shore miles along the 1700 miles of Pacific Ocean coast.”
Momentum in favor of the park grew, prompting legislation to acquire the full 53,000 acres first proposed in 1935 by Conrad Wirth. Twenty-seven years later, the dream of creating a National Park site at Point Reyes seemed to be coming true. Congressional floor debates for the Point Reyes legislation took place in the summer of 1962, during which battles were waged over incorporation of ranches and other private property into the seashore. The intense effort finally ended with the passage of S. 476 and, on September 13, 1962, President Kennedy signed “The Point Reyes Authorization Act” into law. Sadly, President Kennedy did not live to visit the newly created seashore.

A Visit from the First Lady

On October 20, 1966, Lady Bird Johnson and Interior Secretary Stewart Udall came to Point Reyes to dedicate the park. Standing on Drakes Beach, with the Pacific as her backdrop, she warned that, “The growing needs of an urban America are quickening the tick of the conservation clock. Let us dedicate Point Reyes National Seashore to the vitality of the American people, and to generations yet unborn who will come here with the continent at their backs and gaze afar into immensity.” She called Point Reyes “a bright star in the galaxy of conservation achievements of the 1960s.”

Congress, however, dragged its heels in appropriating the authorized funds. The original $14 million ran out before half of the $3,000 acres were acquired, and as land values soared in the years to come, the National Park Service was often just one step ahead of the developers. Again, individuals with a dream of protecting the area rallied together. More than 450,000 people wrote to the White House in support of park funding. Their efforts, organized by Peter Behr of Save Our Seashore, finally got the job done. On April 3, 1970, an additional $43,500,000 was appropriated to reach the goal of $3,000 acres.

Additional legislation established the Point Reyes Wilderness on October 18, 1976. This designated 23,370 acres of wilderness in the park, and an additional 8,003 of potential wilderness:

“without impairment of its natural values, in a manner which provides for such recreational, educational, historic preservation, interpretation, and scientific research opportunities as are consistent with, based upon, and supportive of the maximum protection, restoration, and preservation of the natural environment within the area.”

Legislation like the Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972) and the Endangered Species Act (1973) shaped the Seashore’s protection of critical habitats.

In the 1970s, a new recognition evolved that the National Seashore must play a role in preserving the cultural heritage of the area. Kule Loklo, a replica of a Coast Miwok village at Bear Valley, was built as an introduction to thousands of years of Coast Miwok history. The Point Reyes Lighthouse was retired in 1975, and quickly became an icon and a visitor destination. The Seashore continues to support the traditions of dairies and ranches, even as thousands of acres of agricultural land has been lost state- and nation-wide.

Input from various community and environmental groups continued to influence policy at the National Seashore. The sentiment persisted that Point Reyes should protect the vibrant cultural history of the area, yet remain as wild as possible. It was recognized that merely protecting the area from development was not enough. Efforts had to be made to defend and re-establish the natural processes and critical habitats, which tied together and defined this place.

Tule elk, a species rescued from the brink of extinction, were reintroduced within a part of their former range at Point Reyes in the late 1970s. Efforts have been made to limit the effects of erosion on the streams critical to the populations of salmon and steelhead trout. Elephant seals returned to Point Reyes and hauled out onto isolated, the streams critical to the populations of salmon and steelhead trout. The Seashore entered a new era as it grappled with the best ways to protect and manage the assets in its care. Concerns over the protection of threatened and endangered species, the impacts of invasive species, the preservation of water quality, and the need for a baseline understanding of the resources led to increased scientific investigation and strategic planning.

Community groups, volunteers, and partners have always been key to Point Reyes’ success, but a new emphasis was placed on working together to carry out research and monitoring, provide education, and present opportunities to understand and appreciate the park.

At the end of the 20th Century, there was a growing awareness of new challenges facing parks. Global climate change and ocean health have led people to realize that the issues that threaten Point Reyes today are not just regional or national, but worldwide in scope.

As immense and overwhelming as problems may seem to an individual, remember what can be done when people have a dream. This place has always been a symbol of what can be accomplished when people work together—individuals taking an interest, getting involved, and making a change.

National Parks are one of the crucial places where citizens—both young and old—can develop a deeper understanding of our human interdependence with the increasingly fragile planet we inhabit. In our “progress” toward ever-more sophisticated technologies, we have harvested, mined, drilled, and developed our way through more natural resources than all of our ancestors combined. Focusing our sights on progress measured only through this same prism can’t be sustained.

Wild places provide opportunities for progress measured on a different plane—conservation, simplicity, stewardship, wonder, community, and compassion.

Throughout the park’s 50 years, millions of visitors have hiked the trails, surfed the waves, camped in its wilderness campgrounds, watched migratory whales and breeding elephant seals, and enjoyed the restful sound of waves lapping the shore. Only through our vigilance will the wild character of the forests and beaches—preserved through the efforts of our tireless predecessors—be enjoyed by generations to come.
Plan Your Visit

Bear Valley Visitor Center
Stop at the Seashore’s primary visitor center for general information and to view the Seashore’s orientation film. Indoor exhibits introduce the plants, animals, and people of the area. Free park maps and beach fire permits are available at the main desk. Permits for backcountry and boat-in camping are issued at the camping desk. Camping reservations are available up to six months in advance at www.recreation.gov

Hours:
Monday—Friday, 9 am to 5 pm
Weekends and holidays, 8 am to 5 pm

Outdoor Exhibits:
Earthquake Trail, Kule Loklo, Morgan Horse Ranch and Woodpecker Trail

Phone Number: 415-464-5137
visit our website: www.nps.gov/pore

Science On A Sphere
Science On a Sphere (SOS)® is a room sized, global display system that uses computers and video projectors to display planetary data onto a six foot diameter sphere, analogous to a giant animated globe. Researchers at NOAA developed Science On a Sphere® as an educational tool to help illustrate Earth System science to people of all ages. Animated images of atmospheric storms, climate change, and ocean temperature can be shown on the sphere, which is used to explain what are sometimes complex environmental processes in a way that is simultaneously intuitive and captivating.

Check at Bear Valley Visitor Center for program times.

Drives From Bear Valley

Lighthouse/Chimney Rock Parking
Drakes Beach
Limantour Beach
Point Reyes Hostel
Tomeals Point
San Francisco (via Sir Francis Drake Blvd)
San Francisco (via Highway 1)
Bodega Bay
Petaluma
Novato
Sonoma/Napa

1 hour
1 hour
20 minutes
15 minutes

45 minutes
30 minutes
30 minutes
30 minutes
1 hour
30 minutes
30 minutes
1 hour

Please drive carefully. Follow posted speed limits and watch for cyclists. Gasoline is only available locally in Point Reyes Station on Highway 1.

Bear Valley Outdoor Exhibits

Earthquake Trail
Starting from the Bear Valley Visitor Center picnic area, this short loop trail highlights the San Andreas Fault. View exhibits about geology and the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Open daily, sunrise to sunset. Wheelchair-accessible.

Kule Loklo
This Coast Miwok cultural exhibit provides a glimpse of life here before European contact. The replica village is an easy half-mile walk from the Bear Valley Visitor Center. Learn about Coast Miwok culture as you walk along the trail. Open daily, sunrise to sunset.

Kenneth C. Patrick Visitor Center
Drive 30 minutes from Bear Valley to the Kenneth C. Patrick Visitor Center and beautiful Drakes Beach. Enjoy exhibits on 16th and 17th century maritime exploration, marine fossils, and marine environments. You can find refreshments next door at the Drakes Beach Café.
The Annual Sand Sculpture contest is held on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend. Inquire at any visitor center or check the park’s website.

Hours:
Weekends and federal holidays, 10 am to 5 pm

Morgan Horse Ranch
This working ranch at Bear Valley is for Morgan horses used for hiking trail patrol at Point Reyes National Seashore. The Morgan is the first American horse breed. Self-guided exhibits, corrals and demonstrations are a part of the ranch.
Open daily, 9 am to 4:30 pm.

Woodpecker Trail
Take a lovely shaded stroll through mixed laurel, oak, and fir forest. This trail offers glimpses of acorn woodpeckers hard at work creating granaries in triside trees. Self-guided exhibits offer insights into deeper understanding of this forest dynamic.
Open daily, sunrise to sunset.

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Monday—Friday, 9 am to 5 pm
Weekends and holidays, 8 am to 5 pm

Kenneth C. Patrick Visitor Center: Thursday—Monday, 10 am to 4:30 pm
’Stairs: Thursday—Monday, 10 am to 4:30 pm
’Lens Room: Thursday—Monday, 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm
’High winds or maintenance work may close the stairs. Inquire at any visitor center.

Pets are not permitted beyond the bounds of the paved lighthouse visitors’ parking lot.

Hours:
Visitor Center: Thursday—Monday, 10 am to 4:30 pm

Woodpecker Trail

Bear Valley Visitor Center
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Monday—Friday, 9 am to 5 pm
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Pets are not permitted beyond the bounds of the paved lighthouse visitors’ parking lot.

Phone Number: 415-669-1354

Bear Valley Visitor Center

Hours:
Monday—Friday, 9 am to 5 pm
Weekends and holidays, 8 am to 5 pm

Outdoor Exhibits:
Earthquake Trail, Kule Loklo, Morgan Horse Ranch and Woodpecker Trail

Phone Number: 415-464-5137
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Phone Number: 415-464-5137
visit our website: www.nps.gov/pore
Hands and Hearts — Our Volunteers

Just as grass roots efforts by committed citizens helped create the park 50 years ago, today Point Reyes National Seashore volunteers play an indispensable role, often making the difference between whether a project is accomplished or not. But the experience of volunteering is a reward unto itself, as attested by the two volunteers below.

The famed Russian author Vladimir Nabokov said, “To be in a rarified land where a rare butterfly and it’s host plant exists: all that I love rushes in like a momentary vacuum ... and I am at one.” That is what volunteering is for me. The fates have handed me a Border Collie talent to id butterflies on the wing. I love being in a place where my talent is not only appreciated but needed. The staff are doing what they love and are sharing their knowledge environment with so much heart and dedication. The park interns devote their time and love to make the park a better place for their community to enjoy. This place is full of excitement, curiosity and drive. Never have I worked in an environment with so much heart and dedication. The park staff are doing what they love and are sharing their knowledge with us. Participating as a volunteer has allowed me to give back to my community, and express my love and passion for this amazing spot on the planet.

~ Liam

I volunteer because Point Reyes needs to be preserved so future generations can have the same enjoyment it has given me all these years. The park, its staff, volunteers, and interns devote their time and love to make the park a better place for their community to enjoy. This place is full of excitement, curiosity and drive. Never have I worked in an environment with so much heart and dedication. The park staff are doing what they love and are sharing their knowledge with us. Participating as a volunteer has allowed me to give back to my community, and express my love and passion for this amazing spot on the planet.

~ Ariel

If you would like more information about volunteering at Point Reyes National Seashore, please contact the Volunteers-In-Parks Program Manager at PORE_volunteer@nps.gov and 415-464-5225 or visit http://www.nps.gov/pore/supportyourpark/volunteer.

Explore Point Reyes

Paddling
Kayaking and canoeing are popular pursuits at Point Reyes. Tomales Bay, a narrow, 12-mile-long shallow estuarine bay provides wonderful opportunities for novice and experienced paddlers. From July 1 through February 28, paddling is permitted in Drakes Estero.

Cycling
Bicycles are permitted on all paved park roads and on a limited number of trails at Point Reyes. On the official park map, these trails are indicated with dashed red lines. Watch for horses and hikers; maximum speed limit is 15 mph.

Horseback Riding
Equestrians may use all trails at Point Reyes, except those marked in red above. On weekends and federal holidays, there are a few restrictions on trails in the Bear Valley area. Please check at a visitor center for restrictions and current trail conditions.

Visiting With Your Dog
Dogs, on leash, are welcome on four park beaches: Limantour Beach, North Beach, South Beach, and Kehoe Beach. The short trail leading to Kehoe Beach is the only park trail where dogs are permitted. Along the Bolinas Ridge Trail, in nearby Golden Gate NRA, dogs on leash are also allowed. For more information, please check at any visitor center or online.

Tidepooling — A Rare Treat

A common question asked here is, “Where can I see tidepools?” Only a few times a year, at negative low tides, does the intertidal zone open its doors to allow a glimpse of the harsh life of the plants and animals that live there. Plan ahead by finding out which days offer the safest opportunities for tidepool exploration. As the tide recedes more rocks are exposed, allowing you to see into these dynamic and enchanting life zones.

Look at the chart below to plan your next tidepool adventure and to see just how rare a perfect tidepooling day is. Keep your eye on the water for rogue waves, watch your footing on slippery vegetation, and be mindful of the creatures living there.

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Commemorating 50 Years 1962-2012
**Point Reyes, From the Ground Up**

Over 5,000 years of human history await your discovery at Point Reyes. More than just a natural sanctuary, this peninsula holds within its forested ridges, rolling grasslands, and coastal expanses the stories of people who came before us. Their cultures, interactions, and experiences are echoed in the landscape. These human layers offer a window into our past and hold the potential to shape our lives even today.

**Coast Miwok—The First People**

Coast Miwok people inhabited small family villages in present-day Marin and Sonoma Counties for thousands of years. They enjoyed a rich economy based on gathering, fishing, and hunting. At the time of European contact, an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 Coast Miwok lived in the area.

Acorns, a nutritious starchy seed, were a favored staple of the Coast Miwok. A family of four ate about 500 pounds of acorns a year. Acorns, collected in autumn, were stored in granaries, and later prepared and cooked by the women.

Miwok women also gathered and prepared plant materials—such as willow, hazel, lupine, and sedge—for making baskets. Many of these beautiful baskets are now in collections around the world. Some of these baskets were built from anchored poles, covered with bark, or, in summer, from bundles of tule—a wetland sedge. Many of these baskets were built from anchored poles, covered with bark, or, in summer, from bundles of tule—a wetland sedge. Many of these baskets were built from anchored poles, covered with bark, or, in summer, from bundles of tule—a wetland sedge.

You can learn more about Point Reyes’ first human inhabitants by taking a short walk to Kule Loklo, a recreation of a Coast Miwok village, near the Bear Valley Visitor Center (see map on page 5).

**Ranching at Point Reyes**

The Point Reyes Peninsula has a legacy of ranching. While cattle ranching existed during the Mexican Rancho period, dairying came to the Point Reyes peninsula soon after the California Gold Rush. The cool moist climate of Point Reyes provides ideal conditions for dairy cows—plenty of grass with a long growing season and abundant fresh water. Some early ranchers came west looking for gold, but, disappointed in that quest, found their fortunes making golden wheels of cheese and casks of butter.

The 1880 *History of Marin County* remarked of Point Reyes, “The grass growing in the fields on Monday is butter on the city tables the following Sunday.” The national symbol of quality in butter became the letters PR in a star stamped into cheesecloth-wrapped casks of butter.

Land disputes following the establishment of the state of California, and the resultant unpaid legal fees, led the San Francisco law firm of Shafter, Shafter, Park, and Heydenfeldt to own the entire peninsula. They sold the northernmost tip to Solomon Pierce and divided up the remaining land into tenant dairies named alphabetically: “A” Ranch—closest to the Lighthouse, “B” Ranch—closest to the Lighthouse, through “Z” Ranch—at the summit of Mt. Wittenberg. “W” Ranch is the site of Bear Valley Visitor Center.

The creation of the National Seashore in 1962 brought another change in ownership to the peninsula. Legislation creating the park provided funds to purchase ranch lands and then lease the land back to the existing ranchers. The National Park Service and the ranchers act as stewards of the natural landscape as well as the rich cultural landscape of agricultural history.

The open lands of ranch country provide a needed vista in the crowded urban landscape near the park. This agricultural landscape also provides fresh and healthy food to the local communities. Perhaps, more importantly, places such as this pastoral area provide a connection between past and present, an opportunity to appreciate the ways of our ancestors and a time to reflect on contemporary life.

“We need to keep some of our vanishing shoreline an unspoiled place, where all men, a few at a time, can discover what really belongs there—can find their own Island in Time.”

Point Reyes—A Mover and Shaker

Point Reyes National Seashore is a park on the move. The eastern border of the park parallels the San Andreas Fault, the tectonic plate boundary separating the Pacific Plate from the North American Plate. If you draw a line through the middle of Tomales Bay in the north through the Bolinas Lagoon on the south, this is the path of the San Andreas Fault Zone. Faults come in three types: divergent, convergent, and transform. The San Andreas Fault is an example of the third—a transform fault—where plates pass one another like cars on a two-way street.

Many visitors of our park are surprised to find that you are unable to look at a crack, chasm, or other defining feature that is the actual fault. The San Andreas Fault has created the Olema Valley, and the flooded sections of the valley form Tomales Bay to the north and Bolinas Lagoon to the south. The ridges parallel to the valley are called shutter ridges, a feature typically associated with transform fault zones.

Movement along the San Andreas Fault ranges from about 1.4 to 2 inches (3.5-5 cm) a year (about the speed your fingernails grow). However, instead of creeping along at a slow steady pace, the plates lock together for many years and build up stress. When the plates slip and release the stress, waves of energy are sent out and are experienced as an earthquake. The last time the plates here slipped by each other was during the great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. The greatest displacement in this area was about 24.5 feet (7.5 meters)!

The earth’s three rock types—igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary—are all found at Point Reyes. Our igneous rocks are granite, which cooled beneath the surface of other rocks before erosion revealed them. These 80 to 100 million year old rocks originated in southern California, probably near Tehachapi. They are our basement rocks, and other rock types overlie them. In some places—like Kehoe Beach—the parent rock in which the granitic rocks formed are found. Altered by heat and pressure, these metamorphic rocks are the oldest rocks in the park.

Our granitic rocks began moving before the San Andreas Fault formed and our igneous rocks are the oldest rocks in the park. Altered by heat and pressure, these metamorphic rocks formed are found. Altered by heat and pressure, these metamorphic rocks are the oldest rocks in the park.

Lessons Learned and Disasters Survived

In October 1995, an illegal campfire, smoldering in the pine duff, was rekindled by strong east winds and escaped initial suppression efforts. The fire raced rapidly through the resinous Bishop pine forest to the ocean. By the time it was contained, the fire had consumed 12,000 acres of park land and destroyed forty-five structures on Inverness Ridge. It came to be known as the Vision Fire for its origin near the Mount Vision summit.

The event led ecologists to important insights about the adaptations of the local flora and fauna to high intensity fires. Park scientists lobbied for park inventory and monitoring to develop baseline data for future comparison. Despite the great property damage, the ecosystems now abound with lush native vegetation, attesting to the cycle of destruction and renewal following a fire’s path.

Natural wetlands perform important functions for humans and wildlife. Wetlands retain floodwaters, improve water quality, and provide wildlife habitat. Since the early 1900s, levees constructed at the southern end of Tomales Bay for roads and dairy farms effectively disconnected Lagunitas Creek and its tributaries from their floodplains. These actions substantially degraded the wetland functions in what was once one of the largest integrated tidal marsh complexes in Tomales Bay.

In 2000, the National Park Service acquired the Waldo Giacomini Ranch for the purpose of wetland restoration, and in October 2008 the last levee was breached. One of the most dramatic changes in the new Giacomini Wetlands is the sweeping expanse of water that now spreads across the former dairy pastures with the twice-daily tidal flood. It is readily visible to people who live on the wetlands’ perimeter, who hike on the local trails, and who stop at the Limantour Road lookout. The Giacomini Wetlands is transforming from green pastures dotted with grazing cattle to a shimmering expanse of blue water teeming with birds, otters, and salt-tolerant plants.

Birding at Point Reyes

The Point Reyes peninsula offers wildlife enthusiasts many opportunities for viewing and experiencing the wildness of a California that is disappearing. One of those opportunities is seeing the diversity of bird life throughout the year.

Nearly 490 species of birds have been seen at Point Reyes National Seashore, totaling around 50% of North American bird species! With a variety of habitats from Bishop pine and Douglas fir forests, to coastal scrub and grasslands along with shoreline, and both fresh and salt water systems, Point Reyes National Seashore is uniquely situated for an avian assortment.

Regardless of your skill level, every season at Point Reyes has its highlights. Winter brings rafts of ducks such as Green-winged teal, Northern shoveler, Northwestern pintail, Gadwall, and American wigeon. Also arriving are a host of sparrows like the Fox, Lincoln’s, and Golden-crowned before they continue their journeys to other winter destinations. Spring reveals bevy’s of California quail and a parliament of owls raising and fledging their chicks. Summer divulges flights of Tree, Violet-green, Rough-winged, Cliff, and Barn swallows and charms of American goldfinches. Not to be outdone, fall exposes sieges of herons from the stately Great blue to the secretive Green, in addition to numerous wood warblers that appear to be completely lost.

There is no need to feel inferior to someone who may be using very expensive optical equipment. The most important thing to remember is that you learn to identify birds by watching and listening for them while you are in the field. Keep your eyes up and enjoy.

The Willet (Tringa semipalma) feeds by probing in the soft mud and sand for small invertebrates like mole crabs.
In the space below, capture your favorite view of Point Reyes National Seashore by drawing a “snapshot” of what you see.

Elephant Seals can weigh up to 6,000 pounds.

Tule Elk were nearly hunted to extinction. Their population has grown from 20 to 4,000.

Gray Whales migrate over 10,000 miles every year.

Brown Pelicans are bad divers. They swim in the water hunting for food.

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The animals of Point Reyes do amazing things!

Read the exhibits in the Bear Valley Visitor Center to see if the statements are true or false. Circle the correct answer.

1. What is your name and your job title?

2. How long have you worked for Point Reyes National Seashore?

3. List 3 things you do to help preserve the park.

Park rangers work hard to protect park resources and park visitors. Introduce yourself and interview a park employee to learn more about park jobs.

Hey Kids!
You can earn a Junior Ranger Badge by learning about the park and completing our Junior Ranger Activity Book. Pick one up at a visitor center today.

Find an animal in the Bear Valley Visitor Center that:

- Has spots
- Has stripes
- Has a shell
- Has feathers
- Has scales
- Has whiskers
- Is bigger than you
- Is smaller than you