

POINT SAINT GEORGE, DEL NORTE COUNTY



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

Location and Size

“Point St. George is a scenic windswept headland located just northwest of Crescent City in Del Norte County, approximately fifteen miles south of the California-Oregon border. (Fig. 1,2) [...T]he 339-acre coastal terrace with its steep cliffs, offshore sea stacks and crashing surf is increasingly appreciated and used by local people and Redwood Coast visitors.”¹

Historical/Cultural Significance

“For centuries before the arrival of Europeans, ancestors of the present-day Tolowa, made use of the headland. Archaeological surveys and radiocarbon dating of artifacts suggest that the site was used since roughly 310 B.C. Placing it among the earliest occupied sites in the region.”²

“The archaeological resources at Point St. George are highly significant. Two major archaeological sites exist on the property; Both are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. [...] One of these is a keystone site for the interpretation of northwest California prehistory. [...] These sites produce important biological information on the ancient zoogeography of certain marine mammal species and have the potential to help with issues of habitat restoration. [...] What is now the Point St. George area was occupied in prehistoric times by the Tolowa.”³

[...] The main Tolowa villages at the time of European contact were at Battery Point (Ta'atun), Pebble Beach (Meslteltun), south of Point St. George (Tatintun), and north of Point St. George (Tawiatun).”⁴

“In 1865, the coastal side-wheeler steamer, Brother Jonathan, was wrecked on this reef with the loss of 215 lives; this event helped spur the construction of the lighthouse between 1882 and 1892.[...]In addition to being the most expensive lighthouse ever built in the United States,[...]it] was also one of the most dangerous duty stations in the U.S. Lighthouse Service;[...]several keepers lost their lives while serving at the station. [...] The Brother Jonathan shipwreck site and the Saint George Reef Light Station are both listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Other historical events related to Point St. George include the wreck of the Queen Christina in 1908 and the military use of the site during World War II in locating Japanese naval vessels by triangulation.[...] Rock extracted from the headland and on-site sea stacks was used to build the breakwater for the Crescent City harbor[.]”⁵



Figure 4.

“During World War II, the property housed a group of cryptographers and a highly specialized direction finder radio. [...] Direction finder radios can be used for two reasons: helping a lost vessel [...] or locating an enemy vessel [...] so we could sink it.”⁶

Landscape Ownership

“The Conservancy first worked with Del Norte County and the former owners of the principal Point St. George parcels in the early 1990s in an effort to resolve issues necessary for appropriate development under the Coastal Act. Despite extensive mapping, biological surveys and site analysis

a development plan acceptable to the property owner did not materialize. In the ensuing decade the value of the site's unusual resources became widely known and appreciated, and, in 2001, the owners of the property contacted the Conservancy to explore a potential sale for conservation purposes.”⁷

“The land [...] was] owned by the Steven Westerbrook family. [...] T]he Westerbrooks were looking to sell the land and concurrently, the California Coastal Conservancy was looking to buy it.”⁸

“Nicholas McNamara, one of the first businessmen to set foot in Crescent City, arrived [there] on March 12, 1853. [...] McNamara [...] was half owner of the Point Saint George Dairy Ranch (Figure 4.) with a man named Mr. Emetsburg.”⁹

Wildlife Values

“Wetlands comprise approximately 75 percent of [...] the Point St. George site (Fig. 5). These wetlands, together with the narrow, intervening dune ridges, form an environmentally sensitive wetland complex [...]. [T]he majority of the wetlands on the site are palustrine emergent wetlands [...] considered sensitive by the California Natural Diversity Database [...].”¹⁰

“Among the several unusual plant species found here is the increasingly rare western lily (*lilium occidentale*) (Fig. 6)[...].



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

A 1991 survey found the Oregon silverspot butterfly (*Speyeria zerene hippolyta*), the Yontucket ringlet butterfly (*Coenonympha tullia yontucket*), the Wolf's evening primrose (*Oenothera wolfii*), the black crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum L.*), and the arctic starflower (*Trientalis arctica*), all rare species. The rocky coast Pacific sideband snail (*Monadenia fidelis prontis*) and the sand dune phacelia were found in adjacent (*Phacelia argentea*) habitats on Point St. George. Over 100 different bird species have been sighted at Point St. George. Most renowned among these is likely the Aleutian Cackling Goose (*Branta canadensis leucopareia*).¹¹

“Point St. George/Castle Rock [... is] arguably the best birding spot in the county, according to Barron. This area boasts of rarities and super rarities, among them a second California record of the Redheaded Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), the first record north of San Francisco for a blue-footed Booby (*Sula nebouxii*), and White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*). Records include five of the eight records for Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*). Castle Rock [is] the second-largest seabird colony in the state. Eastern Warblers, the county's first White-winged dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) and a White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) have been spotted here. ... ‘In migration, just about anything might turn up here,’ writes Barron.”¹²

“Castle Rock, off of Point St. George (Fig. 5), is home to 3,500 pelicans ... and is home to the second largest sea-bird wildlife refuge on the California coast.”¹³

Recreation

“Point St. George is a significant recreational resource, providing an increasing number of visitor-use days, and drawing many local resident and visitors who enjoy a wide variety of activities, including: bird-watching, beach combing, surfing, clamming, walking on trails and on the beach, surf-fishing, jogging, through-hiking, bicycling, dog-walking, agate-collecting, sight-seeing, botanizing and other form of nature study, photography, picnicking and sunbathing. (Fig. 7, 8) [...] There is state level interest in creating a 1,200 mile California Coastal Trail from one end of the state to the other including a segment passing through the Point St. George site.”¹⁴

“A new brochure and [w]ebsite (www.californiaredwoodsbirdingtrail.org) spotlights[...] the birds that viewers can spot at such places as the mouth of Elk Creek, Point St. George, the Lake Earl Coastal Lagoon Boat Launch, and Marshall Pond.”¹⁵



Figure 7.

“In 1978, the primitive rendezvous started [...] along the Smith river trail near Point Saint George, with participants in full mountain regalia. They practice shooting [...] events [include] trail walks, ax splitting contests, tobacco spitting, tomahawk and knife throwing, muzzle loading, and primitive fire-making contests.”¹⁶

“[...] Point St. George provides some of the best Whale Watching in the Crescent City area.”¹⁷



Figure 8.

Major Threats

“Unregulated off-road vehicle use poses a significant threat to the cultural and natural resources of the site including rare plants and archaeological relics (Fig. 9). Now in public ownership, measures are urgently needed to safeguard these resources as proposed with this authorization.”¹⁸

“Residential and commercial development is increasing and spreads out ward from cities such as Crescent City [...]”¹⁹

[T]here needs to be 300 feet “free and clear” at the end of each runway. To do this, part of the surrounding wetlands will have to be mitigated. Parts will be filled in and then more wetlands will be put in somewhere else.”²⁰ “Fifteen acres of wetlands have to be graded and filled and then mitigated elsewhere [...]”²¹

“The new terminal could possibly impact the western lily, according to the report. In that case, the airport would have to improve one to three acres of “suitable, but overgrown” habitat for the western lily [...]. Wetlands: Construction would only impact about 0.18 acre of wetlands, which must

be mitigated off-site [...]”²²

“During surveys last summer, surface waters near Point Saint George were found to be corrosive enough to dissolve the shells of mussels, clams, and other marine life.”²³



Figure 9.

Conservation Efforts

“In 2002, the [Coastal] Conservancy approved the Point St. George Conceptual Enhancement Plan and provided funds to Del Norte County for the acquisition of the Pt. St. George property [...]. The management plan [...] focus[es] on protecting the natural and cultural resources of the site, as recommended in the conservancy's conceptual enhancement plan.”²⁴

“Vegetation manipulation may occur as controlled cattle grazing, mowing, or burning. Studies and initial permit applications to date at Point St. George have focused on the use of cattle grazing for habitat management (Fig. 10). Grazing has occurred on the site in past decades. Therefore, based on this initial work and historical precedent, the reintroduction of controlled grazing would be a primary habitat management tool essential to the recovery and maintenance of early successional species habitat. [...]

Another possible habitat management program would be based on a philosophy of allowing natural processes to occur with little or no human intervention. Under this approach, nature would be allowed to “take its course,” and site managers would generally not interfere with natural succession, except as necessary to control exotic species and noxious weeds. [...]

[... T]his plan provides for an invasive plant vegetation management program to identify and remove such plants. Tasks involving trail improvement and similar on-site improvements or management activities may be combined with invasive plant removal. Local community workdays could be sponsored by a “Friends of Point St. George”²⁵

“The North Coast Redwood Interpretive Association [has hosted] nature and cultural program each Sunday in June, July, and August. The field trips and presentations take place at Tolowa Dunes State Park, Lake Earl Wildlife Area, and Point Saint. George.”²⁶



Figure 10.

How To Get There/Public Access

“Go west on Front Street 0.5 mile to B Street, turn right, go 5 blocks north to 6th Street, turn left, go 3 blocks to Pebble Beach Drive, turn right, go 2.25 miles to Washington Boulevard, turn left, go to end of road and trailhead (Fig. 11). Access trails to bluffs and beaches through gate.”²⁷

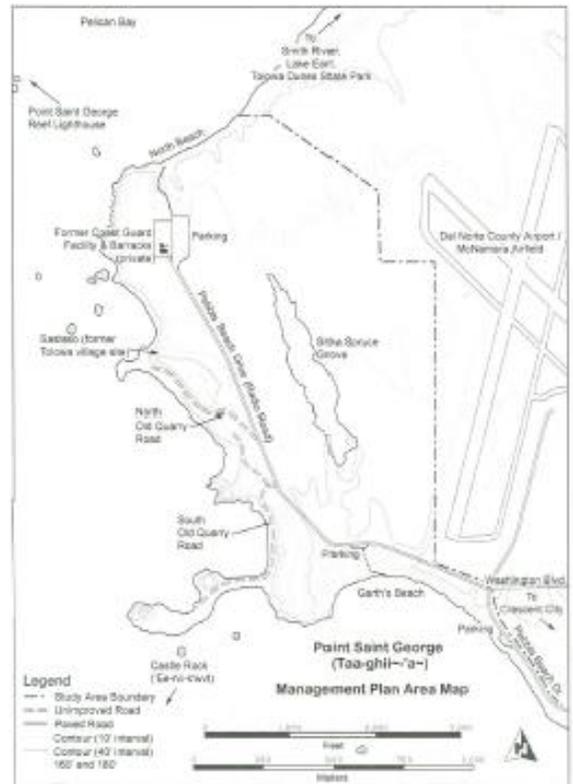


Figure 11.

Accommodations

“Crescent Beach Motel
Phone: (707)464-5436
[...] 1455 Hwy 101 South
Crescent City, CA 95531

Crescent City Super 8 Motel
Phone: (707)464-4111
[...] 685 Highway 101 South
Crescent City, CA 95531 [...]

HI-Redwood National Park Hostel
Phone: (707)482-8265
14480 Highway 101
Klamath, CA 9548”²⁸

