



## Hiking Program Talking Points

REV\_08232019

### PVIC/Vicente Bluff Reserve/Lighthouse

This easy hike starts at the Point Vicente Interpretive Center. We will be taking guests on a tour of the Interpretive Center and the native plant garden, followed by a stroll along the bluffs in the Vicente Bluff Reserve. The hike ends with the Coast Guard hosting us for an up close look at the Point Vicente Light house, the light house grounds, and a tour of the small museum. The light house tower is no longer open to the public.

#### ○ **Ocean Front Estates and the Vicente Bluffs Reserve**

Ocean Front Estates is part of a 132 acre development in Rancho Palos Verdes. 79 homes were built covering 46% of the land. 71 acres on 4 open lots on the ocean side of the property were set aside as a nature preserve. Planting of the native Coastal Sage Scrub habitat was financed by the developer and maintained for 5 years. The native plants are “cultivars,” hybridized to grow shorter than normal so as not to block ocean views. Approximately 2400 container plants were planted with a drip watering system used for 2 years to establish growth. \$750,000 was donated to the city for ongoing maintenance. The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy will continue to maintain the area on the City’s behalf.

#### ○ **Some of the native plants seen in the area:**

- ✓ **Sagebrush:** Native Americans (NA) used it for medicinal purposes by making a tea to relieve cramps, pain at childbirth, and as eyewash. Also, it was used as an aromatic in sweat baths, and as an insecticide sprinkled on the floors of dwellings as a flea and tick repellent. The seeds were ground and used in a flour mixture to make flatbread similar to a tortilla. It is sometimes called “cowboy cologne”. The plant is the nesting site of the [California gnatcatcher](#).
- ✓ **Saltbush:** The leaves collect salt through the root system and from ocean spray. NA would add leaves to their fires the brush off the ash and collect the salt crystals.
- ✓ **Sage (black and purple):** Black sage has dark green leaves, and the purple sage has grayish-green leaves. Both have purplish pom-pom like flowers. Both are very aromatic and smell like stuffing when crushed.
- ✓ **Buckwheat:** California buckwheat has dark green slender leaves and looks like rosemary. Ashy leaf buckwheat has grayish-green colored leaves. Both have pinkish flowers above the leaves that turn brown in the fall. Many birds and insects eat the seeds. The NA used the ground seeds in a flour mixture to make flatbread.
- ✓ **Lemonade Berry Bush:** It is a large shrub with dark green leaves and red berries that ripen with a white coating that tastes sour. The NA made a refreshing drink from the berries and also roasted the berries to grind for a coffee-like drink.
- ✓ **Prickly Pear Cactus:** It is an edible plant and the NA ate both the paddle and the fruit. You may spot 3 varieties; beaver tail, coastal, and chaparral. It is a good habitat for the [cactus wren](#). It is known in Mexican cuisine as “nopales” and tastes like green beans. The fruit is sweet and is known as “tuna” in Spanish.
- ✓ **Jumping Cholla:** Segments detach as if jumping at you. It has barbed spines and is also a good habitat for the cactus wren.
- ✓ **California Bush Sunflower:** The plant has bright yellow flowers and is a good bird habitat. The lack of water makes for dry branches that appear dead during the summer.
- ✓ **Coyote Bush:** Separate male and female plants that produce fluffy white flowers. When in bloom the stalks resemble a coyote’s tail.
- ✓ **Bladderpod:** This shrub has a distinctive smell to the leaves. It has yellow flowers and large seedpods. It is the host plant for [harlequin bugs](#), which are true bug, and go through incomplete

metamorphosis (egg, nymph, adult). You can often see both adults and nymphs on the same plant.

- ✓ **Giant Rye Grass:** NA also used these seeds to ground into a flour mixture to make flatbread. The shafts were used as arrows to stun birds, and the leaves were used as thatch.
- ✓ **Mule Fat:** This plant was at one time used for food for horses and donkeys. They, however did not like it, but the mules did and grew fat, hence the name. NA used the branches as a hand drill with tinder and a wooden block when starting fires and the long straight branches were used to make arrow shafts.
- ✓ **Dudlea:** This evergreen perennial succulent can be found on steep, rocky slopes and other areas containing rocky soils. Under proper conditions Dudlea can survive up to 100 years, hence their nickname "Live forever".

○ **Other topics of discussion**

- ✓ On the cliff faces along the bluffs you will see deposits of **Altamira shale and basalt**. Altamira shale, aka Palos Verdes Stone, is a sedimentary rock formed from sediments that settled to the ocean floor forming sea beds between 14 and 16 million years ago. As layers of this Altamira shale were being formed, volcanic lava was being injected into these beds forming areas of the igneous rock called basalt. About 1 million years ago pressures under the earth's crust caused the ancient sea beds to push up out of the ocean, forming an island that later became the Palos Verdes peninsula. As the land or sea levels shifted dramatically, peninsula beaches were submerged and exposed. Over time, new beaches were formed and old beaches became **terraces**. There are 13 marine terraces on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.
- ✓ Look for the blows (up to 30 feet high) of **blue whales** that can sometimes be seen in the summer months. Blue whales are the largest animal on earth reaching a length of up to 100 feet and can weigh up to 300,000 pounds. Its heart is the size of a Volkswagen Beetle car and its tongue is the size of an African elephant. It mostly eats animals called krill, which are tiny shrimp like creatures. The blue whale may eat as many as 40 million krill per day
- ✓ **Animals** found in this habitat include snakes, lizards, foxes, raccoons, opossums, cottontail rabbits, and a large variety of birds, including the cactus wren, California and blue-grey gnatcatchers, kestrel, red tailed hawks, coopers hawks, and many others.
- ✓ The healthy [kelp forests](#) now evident have a bit of history. There was a die off of the kelp up until the 1970s due to pollution, warm water conditions, and an overabundance of sea urchins that ate the holdfasts of the kelp. Members of dive clubs gathered spores from the waters off Catalina to replant the kelp, and they also helped to cull the urchin population. Giant kelp is one of the fastest growing plants on earth, and can grow over 2 feet per day. Kelp provides habitat for a variety of marine life, and is itself food for some animals. Harvesting of kelp is a huge industry as it has uses in household items such as cosmetics, paints, adhesives and is also use as an emulsifier in a variety of foods such as ice cream pudding and mayonnaise, and is even in toothpaste. Algin is the substance extracted from kelp
- ✓ You may also share with the public any knowledge you have about the [Point Vicente Light House](#).