

# Oceanic Society

Non-profit

Since 1972

## FARALLON ISLANDS NATURAL HISTORY CRUISE Confirmation & Pre-trip Information

Oceanic Society Expeditions, a nonprofit education and research group, welcomes you aboard for an adventure into the Gulf of the Farallones, to observe the wildlife of Farallon Islands, just 25 miles west of San Francisco. This information packet confirms your space and contains important details for an enjoyable and successful excursion. It is vital to review the entire packet, as it contains essential departure and policy information, and trip preparation recommendations.

The Farallones are noted for their abundant bird and marine life. Elephant seals, harbor seals and California sea lions use the Islands as a refuge; Steller's sea lions, now on the Endangered List, breed here. More than eighteen species of cetaceans have been observed in the waters around the Farallones, including orcas, Dall's and harbor porpoise, humpback, blue, fin, minke and gray whales.

Twelve species of seabirds are known to nest on the Farallones, including tufted puffin, pigeon guillemot, Cassin's auklet, common murre, and three species of cormorant. Because disturbance is a major threat to nesting birds, human presence is restricted to authorized research scientists and the Coast Guard. Therefore, participants on our Cruise are not permitted to land on the Islands.

### DEPARTURE INFORMATION

**Check In: 7:30AM**

**Boat departs promptly at 8:00AM and returns approximately 4:00PM.**

**NO-SHOWS AND LATECOMERS WHO MISS THE BOAT FORFEIT THE ENTIRE FEE.**

Each trip is approximately 8 hours in duration or longer, depending on sightings.

**Location:** Your Oceanic Society naturalist will issue your boarding pass outside the San Francisco Yacht Harbor/Marina Green Park Harbor master's office. Our vessel departs from a nearby gate, west end of Marina Green Park. (directions and map on reverse).

**Trip Status:** Trips may be cancelled by Oceanic Society Expeditions due to under-subscription, hazardous sea conditions, or other acts of God. Be sure to call **415/ 441-1347** the morning of your departure to determine the status of your trip. This announcement will be on by 6:00 a.m. Trip status will not be available earlier, as sea conditions can change overnight. The captain will make his decision the morning of your departure.

**Trips depart rain or shine.**

<<<<< **TRIP STATUS: 415/ 441-1347**>>>>>

Please call this phone number after 6:00 a.m. the morning of your departure.

Important additional information on reverse

**PLEASE NOTE THESE IMPORTANT PRE-TRIP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**CLOTHING:** Even on the sunniest day, when the vessel is underway, it is cold (average temperature is 50 degrees) and windy, and sea spray is likely. **RAIN GEAR IS ESSENTIAL.** Bring waterproof rain gear (if using ponchos, should be belted) for sea spray, rain or wet fog; gloves, hat, sweaters, jacket, heavy socks and warm non-skid shoes or rain boots (limited seating). Warm, layered clothing works best. Our trips go rain or shine, so be prepared. There is limited indoor and outdoor seating.

**SEASICKNESS:** We strongly urge that you take sea-sickness precautions. Medications that provide effective relief from sea-sickness are available. Consult your pharmacist or physician. Adhere strictly to manufacturer's directions (especially if medication must be taken hours prior to boarding). Be well rested the morning of your trip, avoiding alcoholic beverages the previous night. On the day of your trip, eat a high-protein, non-fatty breakfast. Bring crackers and soda if you anticipate queasiness. Remember, prevention is the only cure.

**EQUIPMENT:** Bring binoculars, sunglasses and sunscreen. Optional: Still or video camera; telephoto lens, lens tissues, and extra film. Bring plastic bags to protect equipment from spray. Insect repellent is optional; we may encounter non-biting kelp flies at the Islands.

**FOOD:** Our vessels do NOT have food available. **BRING YOUR OWN FOOD & BEVERAGES.** Please note: the vessel cannot accommodate coolers or picnic baskets, a day pack is suggested for personal effects and lunches.

**GROUP BOOKINGS:** If you are the coordinator for a group booking, you are responsible for ensuring that copies of this information - including **CLOTHING/RAIN GEAR AND TRIP STATUS PHONE NUMBER** - are distributed to all your group members.

**CONDITIONS & TERMS - READ CAREFULLY!**

**CANCELLATION:** All trip sales are final. If you cancel, no refund will be given. You may reschedule, however, provided you reschedule two weeks or more prior to your original departure date; rescheduling less than two weeks prior to departure is not permitted. Rescheduling must be within the current Farallones season. If you or a member of your group cannot participate due to illness or other emergency, you may give or sell your space/s to another party. We cannot issue refunds, or make exceptions to this policy.

If Oceanic Society cancels a trip, call our office at 415/ 474-3385 within 30 days of your scheduled departure to reschedule or to request a refund. Due to the special nature of whale watching trips and the potential of cancellations due to weather, the following policy applies: no administrative charge will be assessed for rescheduling; refunds will be assessed a processing fee of \$2 per ticket. In no event, however, shall our liability exceed the obligation to refund the amount you paid to us. There are no automatic refunds. No refunds will be issued unless a trip is cancelled by Oceanic Society.

In the unlikely event of an expedition being cancelled after departing the dock, Oceanic Society Expeditions has the following policy:

1. Return to the dock within the first four hours, a \$50 per person fuel charge will be assessed on all refunds or reschedules.
- 2.. Return to the dock over four hours, the trip will be considered completed. No refunds or rescheduling will occur.

There is a service charge of \$10 on all returned checks.

Unpredictable sea conditions and trip duration necessitate age restrictions: anyone under age 15 years must be accompanied by an adult; children under 10 years are not permitted on this trip.

**DIRECTIONS :** San Francisco Yacht Harbor is in the Marina District on San Francisco's north waterfront. Enter SF Yacht Harbor at the intersection of Scott Street, Cervantes Blvd. & Marina Blvd. From the **GG Bridge**, bear left through the Toll Plaza, exit onto Marina Blvd., continue to the second stoplight (Scott St.); left into SF Yacht Harbor. From **East Bay**, Bay Bridge to Embarcadero; north on Embarcadero to Bay Street. Left on Bay Street, curve right on Laguna Street, continue past Safeway (street turns into Marina Blvd.); continue until Scott St., make a right into SF Yacht Harbor. From **Peninsula**: Hwy 280 north to Park Presidio (19th Ave.), continue north to Downtown/Marina Blvd. exit; continue along Marina Blvd. to the second stoplight at Scott Street; left into SF Yacht Harbor.

Location: Your Oceanic Society naturalist will meet you at the San Francisco Yacht Harbor (enter at Scott Street and Marina Boulevard; turn right into lot and find parking). Check-in and orientation outside of the harbor master's office. The vessel departs from nearby gate, west end of Marina Green.

Ample free parking is available at the Marina Green within walking distance of your departure point. Do not park in red zones. Call our office for wheelchair access information. Office hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

REMINDER: Check-in time is 7:30 a.m. No-shows and latecomers who miss the boat forfeit the trip fee.

### **TRANSPORTATION NUMBERS**

**East Bay** - Bay Area Rapid Transit **BART** (510) 465-2278

**North Bay** - Golden Gate Transit (415) 457-3110

**Peninsula** - Sam Trans (800) 660 4287

**San Francisco** - Municipal Railway **MUNI** (415) 673-6864

Non Profit Oceanic Society Expeditions supports conservation through education and research.  
**Oceanic Society Expeditions, Quarters 35 North, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123**



## **The Oceanic Society**

### **Conservation through education and research**

Established in 1969 as a non-profit marine conservation organization, our mission is to protect marine wildlife worldwide through an integrated program of environmental education, scientific research and volunteerism.

Locally, the Oceanic Society has an active conservation research project. The Gulf of the Farallones Marine Mammal Research Project is a long-term study collecting information on the occurrence and behavior of marine mammals in the Sanctuary and nearby waters. We also provide logistical support to the Farallones for the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, The International Bird Rescue Center and the Marine Mammal Center.

Internationally, a major focus of the Oceanic Society is the establishment and maintenance of marine reserves and wildlife sanctuaries. The scientific data produced from our research projects make a compelling case for environmental protection. Our expeditions program offers opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn about natural habitats. This program also serves as our primary and consistent fundraising vehicle. We also offer opportunities to participate in research expeditions, working side-by-side with researchers while contributing to both the labor and cost of field research.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.oceanic-society.org](http://www.oceanic-society.org)

OCEANIC SOCIETY  
WELCOMES YOU TO

# Life on the Edge...

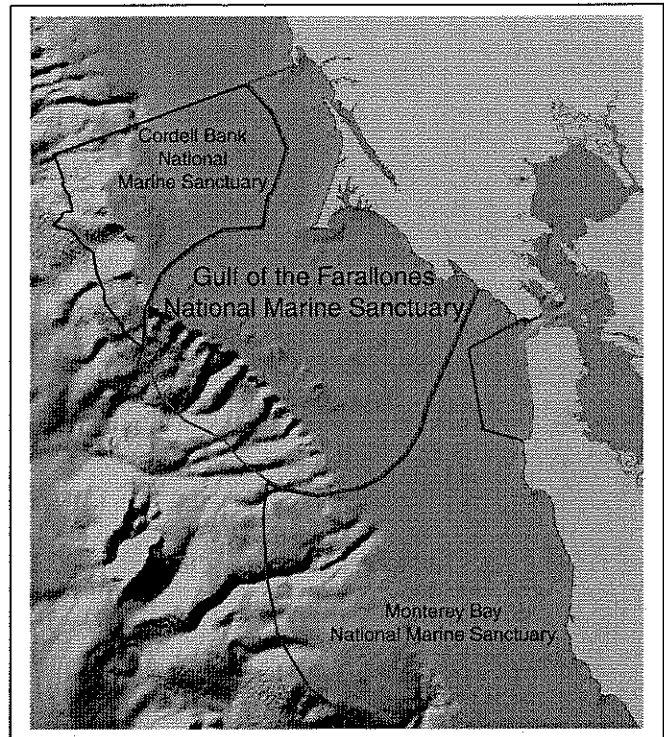
## THE BIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY OF THE FARALLON ISLANDS

The Farallon Islands are a unique ecosystem 28 miles west of the San Francisco Bay. These islands are located within the boundary zone between two of the Earth's major tectonic plates, the North American and Pacific plates. The stark granite cliffs of the Farallon Islands are parts of continental plates slowly pushed up above the surface of the water over several million years. The water around the Farallon Islands plunges to depths of 6,000 feet.

The oceanographic conditions surrounding the Farallones create a complex and resource-rich environment. The California Current flows from north to south; bringing cold waters from Alaska to the waters of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. Winds bring warmer surface water westward to the Farallones, where it meets and mixes with deep, cold water from the bottom of the ocean in a process called upwelling.

Upwelling occurs most notably in the spring, when the wind and water currents work together to mix the surface and deep waters, creating a nutrient-rich soup. When this mixture reaches the sunlit zone, plant plankton blooms, creating one of the most biologically productive places on earth. Animal plankton, such as krill, take advantage of this food source, and the sea is filled with microscopic plants and animals upon which many animals come to feed.

The waters surrounding the Farallones provide a unique opportunity to observe the many types of marine organisms which take advantage of this rich biological mixing zone. The Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge is refuge for the largest seabird rookery in the continental US. The islands are also home to thousands of seals and sea lions. The Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary is a bountiful marine ecosystem attracting endangered whales, sharks and huge schools of dolphins.

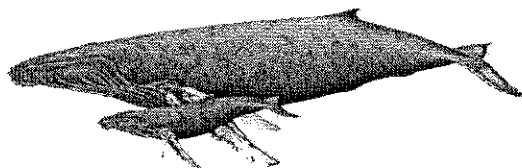


OCEANIC SOCIETY EXPEDITIONS  
QUARTERS 35 NORTH, FORT MASON  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94123  
(415) 441-1106 or (800) 326-7491  
(415) 474-3395 fax.  
[www.oceanicsociety.org](http://www.oceanicsociety.org)

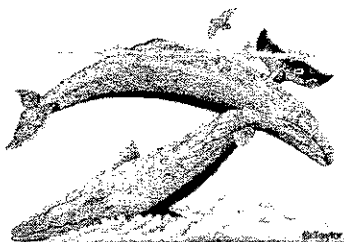
## MARINE MAMMALS OF THE FARALLONES

The Gulf of the Farallones attracts at least 33 species of marine mammals, including some which are federally listed as endangered, such as the humpback whale and blue whale. Baleen whales, which use long plates of fingernail-like threads to filter plankton out of the water, take advantage of the rich waters off the Gulf of the Farallones.

**Humpback Whales-** These baleen whales use the Gulf and Cordell Bank to the north as feeding grounds during the summer and fall months. Their prey consists primarily of krill. These acrobatic whales have long white pectoral fins, and can be seen leaping from the water.



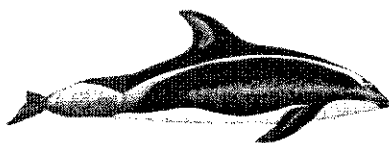
**Gray Whales** – Gray whales pass through the Farallones during their annual migration from their feeding grounds in the Arctic Ocean and Bering Sea in the north to the warm waters of Baja California, where they give birth to their young. Gray whales are baleen whales, and feed primarily on the shallow bottom (less than 400 ft deep).



**Blue Whales** – These whales are the largest animal found on earth, measuring to 85 feet in length and weighing up to 100 tons. They migrate to the Gulf of the Farallones during the late summer and are found throughout the fall. These baleen whales feed primarily on krill.



*Numerous species of dolphins and porpoises frequent the waters surrounding the Farallones. Most commonly occurring are the Pacific White-sided Dolphin, Common Dolphin, Northern Right Whale Dolphin, Harbor Porpoise, and Dall's Porpoise.*

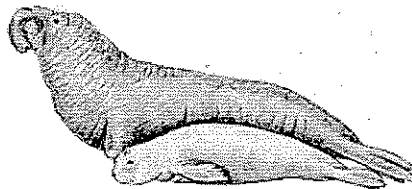
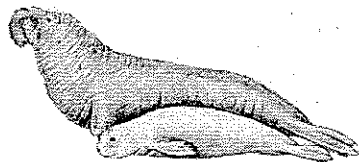


**Northern Right Whale Dolphin** – These dolphins lack a dorsal fin, and fins are small compared to the rest of the body. They have a black body, with a white spot by the lower jaw. They are commonly

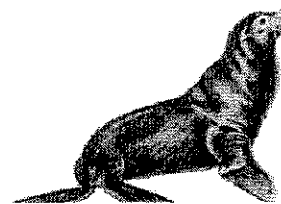
**Pacific White-sided Dolphin** – These fast and powerful swimmers jump acrobatically above the water. They eat small schooling fish such as anchovy and herring.



*There are 5 species of pinnipeds found at the Farallones. Species not shown include the northern fur seal, harbor seal, and the threatened Steller Sea Lion.*



**California Sea Lion** – These are

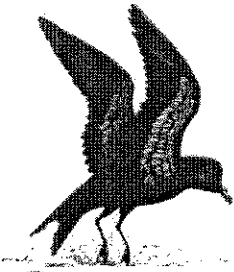


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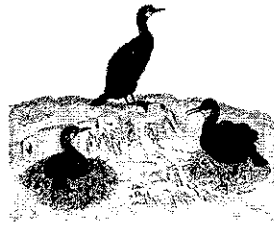
**Northern Elephant Seal** – Named for its large size and the trunk-like snout of mature males. One of the deepest diving marine mammals, males can dive to depths of 5,700 feet. Hunting and feeding take place underwater. They only come on land to breed and molt.

## SEABIRDS OF THE FARALLONES

In the Gulf of the Farallones there are 12 species of breeding seabirds, including Common Murre's, Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklet, Western Gull, Brandt's and Pelagic cormorants, Storm Petrel, Black Oystercatcher, Pigeon Guillemots and Tufted Puffins. Another 35 species of migrant seabirds visit the Farallones, including the Black-footed Albatross.



**Ashy Storm-Petrel** – These birds usually nest in rocky crevices, but will also use cliff walls and building foundations. Adults are nocturnal at the colony and may only return with food every few nights. Half the world's population comes to breed in the Farallones.



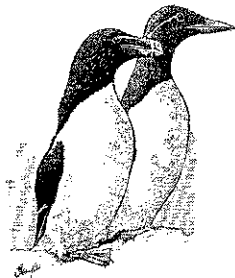
**Brandt's Cormorant** – These birds nest on flat tops of steep cliffs. They feed on fish, swimming through water with large, webbed feet. Unlike other cormorants, these will communally hunt.

**Pigeon Guillemot** – The Farallones have the largest population in California, found breeding from March - September. They usually nest in natural rock crevices, but also use man-made structures. They feed close to shore, and dive for food using their wings for propulsion. They have red feet and white wing patches.

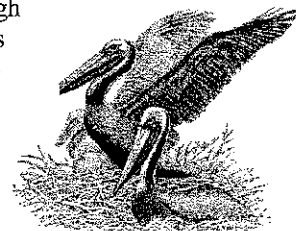
**Rhinoceros Auklet** - Gets its name from the horn found on its beak during breeding season. They nest primarily in burrows dug into the ground. They are excellent swimmers with predominantly nocturnal behavior.



**Common Murre** - These birds can be found in dense colonies covering the islands. Population size estimated at 100,000. They use their strong wings to fly underwater, and can go to depths of 600 feet. They are often seen during fall and winter months. They lay a single pear-shaped egg that will not roll off cliffs.



**Brown Pelican** – This endangered species is found by the hundreds along West End Island from late summer through fall. They alternate lazy flights with exciting plunge dives into water.



**Tufted Puffin** – These colorful seabirds can often be found standing in front of their nesting burrows. In fall, adult puffins lose their brightly colored bill sheaths.

## WHITE SHARKS

The Farallon Islands are a noted hotspot for the Great White Shark. Every fall, white sharks are observed around the Farallon Islands, preying on seals and sea lions. The peak in predation is related to the number of young elephant seals. The Farallones are a prime research spot, where great whites can be seen observed hunting right off the rocky shores.

## HUMAN HISTORY

The human history of the Farallones goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- \* There are reports of Sir Francis Drake taking seal meat from Southeast Farallon Island in 1769.
- \* The next humans were sealers in the early 1800's, especially Russian sealers. They hunted elephant seals and fur seals to local extinction. Elephant seals started to recolonize the islands after 100 years, in the 1960's.
- \* During the Gold Rush, common murre eggs were harvested for a booming market in San Francisco, so many so that the population dropped from an estimated one million to almost zero by 1900.
- \* Theodore Roosevelt established the Farallones Wildlife Refuge in 1909.
- \* With maritime trade flourishing, a lighthouse was placed on Southeast Farallon in the 1850's.
- \* Caretakers remained on the island until the lighthouse was automated in 1972.

## CONSERVATION ISSUES

Over the past 200 years, seabird populations have been impacted by anthropogenic disturbance, especially oil pollution, gill net fishing, contaminants, disturbance of breeding colonies, loss of nesting habitats, and depredation.

- Since the 1970's, the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) has worked with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to provide protection, monitoring, research and management of the Farallones. Management activities include removing non-native plants that cover nesting burrows and creating habitats for crevice-nesting seabirds.

The Oceanic Society has been conducting Whale Watching/Natural History trips in the Gulf of the Farallones for over 30 years. From 1983-1987, the Oceanic Society sponsored a research project during which biologists accompanied each Farallon Island natural history trip and collected data on the occurrence, numbers and behaviors of marine mammals and sea turtles.

- Beginning in 2003, Oceanic Society began a multi-year study, conducted in the same manner as the previous study, utilizing the natural history trip boats as opportunities for data collection.

Since the California Gold Rush, vast quantities of contaminated sediment from mining were carried to the San Francisco Bay and Gulf of the Farallones. Since then, hundreds of millions of tons of waste have been dumped into the Gulf of the Farallones. This includes sand and mud from shipping channels, waste from oil refineries, acids from steel production and barrels of low-level radioactive waste. Because the San Francisco Bay will have always need to be dredged, studies are underway to find new areas to dump dredge materials. Only sediments that the EPA evaluated as "clean" may be disposed.

For more information on environmental issues regarding the San Francisco Bay, The Farallon National Wildlife Refuge and The Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, visit:

[www.savesfbay.org](http://www.savesfbay.org), [www.prbo.org](http://www.prbo.org), [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov), [www.farallones.noaa.gov](http://www.farallones.noaa.gov)



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