



California State Parks

Video Transcript



The Allan Memorial Cypress Grove at Point Lobos State Reserve

Good morning, and welcome to Point Lobos State Reserve. We consider it the crown jewel of the State Park System. My name is Chuck Bancroft, and I'm going to be taking you on a nature walk out onto the Granite Headland and the Allan Memorial Grove.

It's amazing how all the people that have lived and worked at Point Lobos really haven't changed it. If we go back in time, the Rumsien people, the Native Americans, were the first to utilize and live near Point Lobos. They hunted the invertebrates, especially the abalone. During the Spanish exploration, Point Lobos was used as grazing land for cattle. The capital of Spanish California was in Monterey, and Point Lobos was part of a huge land grant. During the Mexican period, the same thing—soldiers and people had grants and raised cattle down here. American businessmen came to Point Lobos. At one time there was a granite quarry, a gravel quarry, an abalone cannery operated here for thirty years. Chinese fishermen lived here. Portuguese whalers hunted the gray whales during the season.

A gentleman named Alexander McMillan Allan came to Point Lobos in the late 1890s. He went to work for the Carmel Land and Coal Company. At that time Joseph Emory was trying to subdivide Point Lobos into a small town, called Carmelito. It wasn't selling very well, and Allan started buying up the property. In 1898 he put it back under one ownership. With his partner, Gennosuke Kodani, they operated the abalone cannery here up until 1930, when Mr. Allan passed away. It was at that time that the State Park System and the Save-the-Redwoods-League had earmarked Point Lobos for acquisition. Working with the heirs to the Allan family, the State was able to acquire Point Lobos State Reserve in 1933, for about \$645,000. At that time his family donated the memorial grove to the State in honor of Alexander McMillan Allan and his wife, Sadie.

We're going to go out and explore that grove today. We're going to talk about some of the painters and photographers and poets that worked here as well, that were inspired by this beautiful landscape. So I hope you have a good time, take copious notes, take lots of photographs, and we're going to get started by walking up the trail. So if we can go up this way. . .

One of the truly unique plant communities in the reserve is the coastal scrub plant community. As you look around you, you see varying shades of greens, some highlights of reds, the oranges of the monkey flower. We're backed by the hill of Whaler's Knoll with the pine trees. And look behind you, you can see the Monterey pine forest. Then we look out toward the ocean and you'll see another plant community, the kelp forest.

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But as you look at the coastal scrub plant community, we can see some sagebrush in the background, some coyote bush, the wonderful flowers, the monkey flower. They're all mixed in tightly together. It provides a great camouflage for all the critters that are living out there. Just think of the small rodents that are so well hidden under the brush—gophers, moles, voles. How about snakes? Garter snakes, striped racers, and gopher snakes. Brush rabbits. A lot of the small birds, and you can hear one in the background right now. They're in here, and they're nesting. They can find lots of seed for food.

Looking down here we see this very unique swirling path, a wonderful trail left in the decomposing granite. And I have no idea who might have left that. It could have been a snake; I don't see any footprints on the sides. That is really unique. But then you look at these swirls right here and these curves. The animal or critter that made this was sure having a good time.

Now there is something over here, and I do know who did this. We were talking about all the rodents, and small birds, that live in the coastal scrub plant community, but we didn't talk about the things that eat those. We look at red-tailed hawk and red-shouldered hawk that fly overhead; great horned owl and barn owl working at night. The snakes that work during the day when it's nice and warm. But here's some stuff leftover by the bobcat. Some wonderful scat, and if we look at this, we can see little bones in there and feathers from what that animal ate. We also see some other small bones in here, probably from the rodents that it was feeding on, even a little jawbone in here. Look at that, some teeth. Yeah, luckily this is nice and dry. Bobcat coming along here will actually mark its territory by leaving its scat behind on the side of the trail, and the scent from that is going to let the other bobcats in the area know that "this is my territory." Now some people have actually seen fox and coyote working in the reserve as well, but they tend to work in the meadows on the north side of the reserve. They actually supplement their diet with manzanita berries from up on top of the ridges. The bobcat doesn't do that. So if you carefully pick through this wonderfully dried scat you won't see any berry seeds at all. Having been here for a number of years I know that there's a huge male bobcat that dens up out here in the Cypress Grove. So we'll leave this here for somebody else to find along the trail. We're going to move on up the trail now, and I'm going to show you a wonderful plant that has the most unique fragrance.

Now one of the imports that we're always trying to get rid of in the reserve is this member of the carrot family. I bet everybody recognizes this, this is poison hemlock and it does belong to the carrot family, same type of leaf structure. As this plant gets taller, on that green stem you'll see all these little purple dots. And this plant will get quite tall with a white cluster umbel-shaped flowers at the top. Now the book says it smells sort of like cat urine, but I think of corn tortillas myself. And of course this was used as a wine to "do in" a very famous philosopher. Supposedly as he was dying from the poisoning of this, it was a wonderful experience that he was able to describe. Poison hemlock.

As we walk along, we can look for more footprints. There's some black-tailed mule deer prints right along the edge there. That wonderful snail. That still unidentified path that we saw. You know I find bobcat scat all over the reserve. There are probably five or six that live here. And, on occasion, we even get a mountain lion coming through here. Their favorite food is the black-tailed mule deer, and a lot of times we won't see the mountain lion but we'll see evidence

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that it's been here—the remnants of lunch or that big pile of scat left out in the open. You look for that coarse deer fur that's inside.

Now one of my favorite plants in the reserve is right here, and luckily there's no poison oak around it so we can really experience this. This is coastal sagebrush. It's in the sunflower family, *artimisia*, and if you'd like to, go ahead and squeeze this in your hands and then smell. It has a wonderful, wonderful fragrance. The Native peoples would actually use this as an incense. They used it for ceremonies by drying it and then lighting it during the ceremonies. It provided a wonderful fragrance. Right next to it we have the sticky monkey flower with its beautiful orange trumpet-like flower. And then right next to that, this is one of the five varieties of ceanothus that we find in Monterey County. There are actually a number of species all over the state. It has these beautiful lilac-colored flowers, and this is the one with the unique smell—wild lilac or blue blossom. In the springtime, there are certain trails here that are just covered with it and it's a beautiful fragrance.

Yes, we see this as a ground cover. Behind us we see some quite large ones as trees, and a little bit further up the trail a complete canopy over the trail, just wonderful. Later on when the flowers disappear and there's a nice seed cluster there, we'll see a lot of quail in this area, because the quail love those seeds. And then of course the bobcat likes the quail. So we have a wonderful little food chain here—everything they need is provided. Let's move on up the trail, see how many more little tracks we can find as we walk along.

The giant rye grass that we see here along the side was actually harvested by the native peoples. The grass seeds were wonderful for dried cakes and food that they could store all winter. The people probably burned occasionally to improve that crop of grasses coming up. And of course now over the years, without any grazing or fires, the coastal scrub plant community has really grown up. We're going to continue on here to the left and we're going to get our first really great glimpse of the Cypress Grove.

Well here's our first opportunity to see these magnificent old cypress trees. These are *Cupressus macrocarpa*, the Monterey cypress. *Macrocarpa* meaning big cone. Of all the cypresses around the world, the Monterey cypress has the largest of all the cones. Now when we look at this forest, we also want to think back in geologic time, when the climate was much more moist and this tree was much more widespread. In fact, cones of this tree have been found in the La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles. Now climatic changes have isolated the tree to two granite outcroppings. Here at Point Lobos we have the east grove and here the Allan Memorial Grove, and then over at Pebble Beach, the Crocker Grove.

Now one of the unique things is Carmel has a lot of cypress trees, but at the turn of the century they weren't there. Robinson Jeffers built his home, Tor House, right there at Carmel Point from the native San Lucia granodirite. And I guess he was like the Johnny Appleseed for cypress trees, because he planted them all over. And now we have a wonderful tree city there with cypress and pine, thanks to Robinson Jeffers.

I'm always amazed at these trees—many of them are probably 250 to 300 years old. If you'll look at the trees you'll notice that there's a nice thick canopy overhead and the limbs below that canopy are bare of needles and leaves. The lower limbs die off naturally from that thick shading appearance. Only shade tolerant plants are found on the ground floor underneath.

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Now the trees are very, very healthy, but when we look up into those trees and we see those bare branches and then we see *Ramalina reticulata*, lace lichen, hanging and drooping down under that thick canopy. Now the lace lichen doesn't hurt the trees, remember they die naturally. *Ramalina reticulata*, or lace lichen, is actually an algae and a fungus that are growing together in a mutual relationship. The fungus is what you see, and it collects moisture and provides that moisture to the algae growing within it. The algae, through photosynthesis, provides the sugars and all that for both plants. And, again, they don't hurt the trees. When looking closely at the lace lichen, it reminds me of my grandmother's lace doilies that went over the armchair—there's intricate patterns and just so unique. It provides great food for black-tailed mule deer. It's bedding for the wood rats and their homes. Birds use it for nesting. It's a wonderful plant. In areas where you find it hanging from the oak trees, that dripping of the moisture actually provides nutrients to the oak trees as well.

As you look more around the outside edges of the forest here, you'll see the coastal scrub in those nice sunny lit areas. In the darker areas, we look over here to our right, and we see some wonderful Douglas iris. And then again, looking back up at that thick canopy of the trees and that lace lichen, I think of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his poem "Evangeline." Now, Longfellow didn't actually work here, but the movie "Evangeline" was filmed here at Point Lobos many years ago, and every time I read this poem I do think of the Monterey cypress.

*This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.*

Let's move on down here.

Just look at that. Isn't it beautiful? Well, I think this time I will start with the poem. This came out in 1953, by Laban Thomas Johnston. It's called "On the Sea Cliffs of Point Lobos."

*Blue is not blue, no white is white
Until this ocean's gathered might
Comes foaming through the rocks offshore
And up through a sky of warm sunlight
To flood these cliffs with a shattering roar;
The high on the wind its fragments soar
As each cliff bursts into milk-white bloom.
Petals droop and downward pour,
Down through a veil of swirling spume
Back into the sea, and a moment's gloom
Holds 'til the next high surge is due
When white is white and blue is blue.*

Just love that one. And this is such a great example of that poem. If we look out here across the cove, we can see the granite islands that make up the sea lion rocks. We look down below

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us, and we see these wonderful outcroppings with the succulents, *Dudleya farinosa*, clustered in the nice little protected crevices. And off to the left over here we see our version of the lone cypress. If we're lucky enough, we can look down the coastline and we can see the Point Sur Lightstation, twenty miles away. The undulating and convoluted shoreline. Just incredible.

As we look around there's some beautiful windswept and contorted trees. Over here to my left is what we call the Weston Tree. Edward Weston was one of the great black-and-white abstract photographers of the '20s, '30s and '40s. And he captured that particular tree on film.

Now a lot of people are really familiar with the work of Ansel Adams and his work at Yosemite. But where did Ansel Adams live? And where did he spend his Wednesdays? He lived about a mile down the coast and he came here every Wednesday and he held court. At Weston Beach, at that time it was known as Pebbly Beach, there were picnic tables, and he would come with his small entourage of staff and they would picnic at Weston Beach. And anybody that was here and recognized him would go up with a camera, and he'd talk to them about their camera and taking pictures. It didn't matter if it was a sophisticated single lens reflex or one of those little pocket cameras, snap and shoot and take it to Long's Drugs and have it processed. He loved people and he loved talking to them about photography. He even gave annual passes to all of his staff so they could come to Point Lobos on a regular basis free of charge. Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, two of the great photographers of this area. Well, we're going to move on down and around the corner now and we're going to head off to the Land of Orange.

As we look toward the north here, we can look out over the San Lucia granite diorite sea stacks, and it reminds me of both Robinson Jeffers, the great poet of Carmel, and Elliot Roberts, he lives up here in the Carmel highlands. He taught at Monterey Peninsula College for years. He's been a member of our Natural History Association forever, and he's one of our great local poets. This is called "At the Tip of Lobos"—for Robinson Jeffers:

At the tip of Point Lobos stand the great outcroppings of granite; silent, still, light and shadow; unmoved by the swirling, roiling foam-covered surf that pounds at their base; unmoved by winds that snap cypress branches, topple pines, lift hawk and gull. Now I know why you've loved stone, why you willed your spirit to lurk in rock: the scratch of a dog on the door, the sword that threatens sons, the woman's footfalls on the stone stairs. These granite outcroppings do not weep for the ancient, gnarled cypresses slowly dying under the fury of the wind; this rock is not moved by the rabbit frozen in fear under the shadow of the hawk; this stone silently bears the cold strokes of the disquiet sea. Turn your heart to stone. Make stone love stone, dispassionately, silently, grandly—dark peace, while the world howls in fury around us.

Now for those of you that don't like the wind in your face and the cool temperature in this little microclimate, we're going to move around the corner to the Land of Orange.

Over here on this northwest facing side of the reserve, it's always damp, it's always moist, that beautiful breeze comes in here. And it's the only place in the reserve that we find this particular green algae. This Land of Orange, it is a green algae, because it has the photosynthesizing cells and chlorophyll producing cells. But it's all orange from all the carotene pigment that it possess. If you get a good close look at it, you'll see that right underneath the edges is the green of the chlorophyll. We see it on the trees and on the

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rocks. It's here in the Cypress Grove and it's at the East Grove further out the North Shore trail. It's also reported to be over in Pebble Beach, at Point Reyes National Seashore, and, I've never been to Siberia, but I was told that it occurred there as well. Now as we go around the corner, I've got a wonderful spot—we're going to stop and we'll get a good look across Carmel Bay, toward Carmel and Carmel Point, and I have a wonderful poem for you. I love this spot on the North Shore, where we can look across the bay toward Carmel and Carmel Point, where Robinson Jeffers had his home, Tor House. This poem is called "Granite and Cypress" by Robinson Jeffers.

White-maned, wide throated, the heavy-shouldered children of the wind leap at the sea-cliff. The invisible falcon brooded on water and bred them in wide waste places, in a bride-chamber wide to the star's eyes. In the center of the ocean, where no prows pass nor island is lifted the sea beyond Lobos is whitened with the falcon's passage, he is here now. The sky is one cloud, his wing-feathers hiss in the white grass, my sapling cypresses writhing in the fury of his passage dare not dream of their centuries of future endurance of tempest. I have granite and cypress, both long-lasting, planted in the earth; but the granite sea-boulders are no prey to the hawk's wing; they have taken worse pounding. Like me they remember old wars and are quiet; for we think that the future is one piece with the past, and we wonder why treetops and people are so shaken.

Robinson Jeffers.

Now we're going to continue on over to Pinnacle Point, and we're going to go find the Sperm Whale.

We're standing at the overlook for Pinnacle Point with Cypress Cove in the background. And if you look off to your right, you'll see one of the uniquely shaped rock forms of the reserve. This is John Ware's Sperm Whale. John was a long time volunteer, and he discovered that. As a boy he loved looking at clouds and trying to figure out what they were. He spent walking days out here trying to identify the different rock forms and what they were. And there's John's Sperm Whale always here in the reserve.

Now that wind and the rain and the storms also create other unique forms. If you look at the cypress trees that are surrounding us, especially the one behind me, they do an interesting adaptation called buttressing. On the leading edge of the tree and that full force of the wind, it's very narrow and tapered to allow that wind to pass by it. On the backside it's nice and thick and rounded, and that's the holding wood that keeps the tree upright. That's called buttressing, a unique adaptation of the cypress trees. Then you can look behind you, and we look across Carmel Bay and there's the 17th and 18th fairways of the Pebble Beach Golf Course. The white sands of Carmel City Beach, Carmel Point, and then further off to the northeast is the beige sands of Carmel River State Beach. Every day it's different—the lighting, the wind, the rain, the fog—it's just beautiful here.

Well we just got to see the Sperm Whale and the interesting buttressing of the cypress trees here, and as we come down off that little rocky outcropping, look at all these shells. I mean there's abalone, there's mussels, and there's clams. But how did these shells get to be 120 feet off the water? An easy question to answer. Some people think the seagulls dropped them here. Some people think that the otters left them here in eons past and as the earth

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rose and the sea receded the shells were exposed. But we have to remember that the Rumsien people lived here for probably 2,500 years before even the Spanish came. And Point Lobos was the site of temporary villages, fishing villages, where they collected all the invertebrates. If we look back at that tree up on the hill, we can see some fire scarring, and here we see the remnants of a kitchen midden, a junk pile, leftovers from their harvesting. Within the reserve there are nineteen different midden sites, some of them dating back several thousand years. It's just amazing. The village of Ichxenta was across the street and up the San Jose Creek Canyon, where the major midden site is for their permanent village. But Point Lobos was a great land of wealth for all the people that have come here. Let's walk on over to Cypress Cove.

Here we are at the Cypress Cove overlook, with Big Dome in the background. Big Dome is, again, that igneous rock formation, the San Lucia granite diorite—the highest point in the park at 220 feet. We look across the cove at the waves crashing at the base of those rocks, and then we look at the cypress trees and the pines that are precariously perched on those pinnacles. Their own success actually can bring about their own demise; the cracks in the fissures in the granite diorite create those openings for the root systems to cling on and hold, to find moisture and nutrients. And, of course, as the tree is more successful and gets bigger and bigger, those cracks and fissures get bigger and bigger as well. The exposed granite will weather and eventually it cracks and falls apart, and if it cracks and falls too much, the tree can go with it.

Now this also brings about another poem by Heinz Engler. Heinz and Charlotte Engler escaped from East Germany after the war. He came here and became the head of the German Department at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey. But they both loved to walk at Point Lobos. He did watercolors of the flowers and wrote a number of poems about the reserve. This one is just simply called "Point Lobos."

When you walk where ocean waves are broken by granite rock, you feel the mist on all the ways where life guide tidal clock. Everybody everything is ready for the reception of the refreshing ocean drink that awakens life to new action. The ocean is in the air you breathe, is giving being a greater dimension, is feeding all rocks, plants and trees, dissolving what hardened, dried out in tension. The wind carries a pungent smell from Bird Rock, white, far out where cormorants in large groups dwell, sea lions bark, roar, and shout. These black birds with craned necks fly low over the water in file or sit for hours black silhouettes on their white excrement pile. Brown pelicans on another rock crane their mighty beak; in the air another flock in V-form flies out to feed. When fish from ocean's depth come up for a last glimpse of light, they meet with sudden death by a hungry pelican's dive.

Thank you, Heinz. Well now we're going to move on, and I've got a quiz for you, a test, a challenge, with prizes awarded to the winner at the end. Let's move on up this way.

Let's stop right about here. We've had a wonderful time in the Cypress Grove and we talked about a lot of different things, but everything must come to an end. But it's going to be a happy ending, because I'm going to pose a test for you, a challenge, and there's rewards at the end. We talked a little bit about the dusky-footed wood rat as we walked along. You know that's the pack rat, *neotoma*. It's not like the wharf rat; this is a friendly rat. My wife likes to call it the fluffless squirrel. Well, we find them in great numbers out here, and

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throughout the Cypress Grove we can see their wood structures, almost like a pyramid. The dusky-footed wood rat will come out at night to feed. The females will build their nest on the ground; it has several different rooms, a latrine, and food storage, and a nursery. They even sublet to lizards and other things. They can come in the front door and go out a back door. And they usually have a verandah. Now if we look really carefully back here in the brush, we can see that pyramid-shaped stack of dried dead branches. It's about this tall. The dusky-footed wood rat's nest. Of course, one of the main predators of the dusky-footed wood rat is the bobcat. And sure enough we have some old bobcat scat right here on the trail.

Now as you walk back to the main area where we started, I want you to really use your powers of observation and see how many wood rat nests you can find. We'll get a closer look at it. Come on up here a little bit closer, and if we get down right here, look through this maze of poison oak and stuff, get down nice and low, and you can actually see that structure in the background. Now how many are there? This is the last one I'm going to point out to you, so you all start with one. What are you going to find on the way back? So let's quietly and carefully head back up to the main starting area and see what we can find.

Well we've come full circle on the Cypress Grove trail; we've seen those beautiful magnificent trees, precariously perched on the pinnacles. We've talked about the plants and the rock forms, we've read some wonderful poetry and then we had our final test. How many wood rat nests are on that section of trail, camouflaged by the coastal scrub plant community? Well guests let me have a number. You saw two? You saw five? Well see, here's the unique part, there are actually about fourteen. Now remember with the nice thick leaves and the cluster of plants, especially all that poison oak, the dusky-footed wood rat is so good at camouflaging its nest you can't see them but they're there.

To conclude I've got one more poem for you, and it's something that I think about every day. Elliot Roberts, again the poet from the Carmel Highlands that taught at MPC, he wrote "Running in Point Lobos."

Today I am the massive gray whale, exploding great bursts of salt spray plumes, as I glide through rolling seas. Yesterday I was the fork-antlered, Y-headed buck, prancing on the needled floor of moss-drooped pine forests. Tomorrow...tomorrow I shall be the wind. My bare feet will never touch ground.

Thank you.

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