



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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2009 Whale Festival in Fort Bragg and Mendocino California State Parks News Release

FORT BRAGG, Calif. – 2009 Whale Festival activities are planned at three state parks in unison with the Mendocino and Fort Bragg Whale Festival celebrations on March 7 & 8, and March 20, 21 and 22. The activities are centered on three spectacular whale viewing vantage points: MacKerricher State Park north of Fort Bragg, Point Cabrillo Light Station State Historic Park, and the Ford House Visitor Center at Mendocino Headlands State Park. For more about art and crafts, food tasting and more, visit www.MendoWhale.com.

MacKerricher State Park: (located three miles north of Fort Bragg on Highway 1)
MacKerricher State Park's 2009 Whale Festival is a popular 'Must-Attend' event on March 20, 21 and 22 at this free, day-use park. Activities are listed below. For additional information, visit <http://mendoparks.org/html/mackerricher.html>, call the MacKerricher State Visitor Center at 707-964-8898.

An ideal location for watching migrating whales, MacKerricher provides a wheelchair accessible boardwalk, allowing an easy traverse across the headlands to a deck situated on Laguna Point near the whale route. Docents will present public talks on whales on the dates below, and will provide binoculars and a spotting scope to help visitors study whales and other fascinating marine and bird wildlife near MacKerricher's shores. A rare, reconstructed Gray Whale Skeleton is on permanent display near the visitor center and Entry Kiosk. The skeleton is a composite of two whales that beached on the Mendocino Coast, two years apart. Humpback Whale bones are also on display giving a visual size perspective between the grays and humpbacks.

Schedule of Events at MacKerricher State Park

Friday, March 20: 7 p.m.

Close Encounters of the Marine Mammal Kind - Stories of personal encounters with marine mammals, including whales, told by people who experienced them. The public is invited to attend and share their stories of encounters with marine mammals. Meet at the MacKerricher Visitor Center, near the Entry Kiosk and Whale Skeleton.

March 21 and 22: 11 am. Whale walks are scheduled every Saturday and Sunday now through the end of March.

Whale Walk - Docents present an informative overview of whales. The talk/walk starts at the MacKerricher Visitor Center and then proceeds to the whale skeleton before caravanning to Laguna Point for whale watching.

Saturday, March 21, 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Whale Scavenger Hunt for children and adults

Start at the MacKerricher Visitor Center and follow clues to different activity stations (including arts and crafts) for answers to the questions on your Scavenger Hunt Questionnaire. Those who complete their answers receive a free prize.

Sunday, March 22, 1:00 p.m. to 3p.m.

Help us paint the whale skeleton.

The steel base that holds up the whale skeleton needs to be repainted. Paint and brushes will be provided.

The Point Cabrillo Light Station State Historic Park: (located between Mendocino and Fort Bragg on Point Cabrillo Drive) The 300-acre Point Cabrillo Light Station, with its restored and working lighthouse and 3rd Order Fresnel lens, has numerous events and activities planned for children and adults for both festival weekends (March 7-8 and March 21 – 22).

<http://www.pointcabrillo.org/index.html>

Each weekend celebration will begin with an Audubon guided Bird Walk at 9 a.m., starting at the entrance parking lot. whale watching and children activities will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day.

Gray whales, migrating from the Gulf of Mexico, will be highly visible just off the Lighthouse bluffs, and Point Cabrillo Lightkeepers Association's (PCLK) docents will be available (with lending binoculars) to point whales as they swim just off the headlands (approximately 200-700 yards from the viewing areas). Children are encouraged to also watch the whales, and they will have the opportunity to participate in numerous games and activities (face painting, fishing print making, and putting together a life-size gray whale jig-saw puzzle) throughout the day.

Visitors will also be able to visit the Lighthouse with its collection of historical photographs, displays, and Frolic shipwreck exhibits and the Lightkeepers Museum (located in the recently restored Assistant Lightkeepers House). A 250-gallon coastal aquarium provides opportunities for visitors to get an up-close view of marine life that reside in nearby coastal tide pools and inter-tidal zones. The U.S. Coast Guard and Auxiliary will be on-hand with coastal and harbor navigational displays, water and boating safety information, and tours will also be available of the USCG 25-foot marine search and rescue boat used by the USCG Station (located in Fort Bragg's Noyo Harbor). Members of USCG Auxiliary Flotilla 87 will be available to discuss the cleaning and maintenance of the Lighthouse's 3rd Order Fresnel lens.

The Marine Mammal Center and Mendocino Audubon Society will also be represented by local volunteers, who will provide bird and mammal information, displays, exhibits, and demonstrations.

Schedule of Events at Point Cabrillo Light Station State Historic Park

Saturday and Sunday, March 7 - 8, and March 21 - 22:

9 a.m. – **Bird Watching Tours – Mendocino Coast Audubon Society**

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Exhibits and demonstrations: U.S. Coast Guard and

Auxillary, Mendocino Audubon, and Marine Mammal Center rescue representatives

Mendocino Headlands State Park: (located in Mendocino village on Highway One) The park will hold the following events at the Ford House Visitor Center and Museum, 735 Main Street. Built in 1854 for Jerome Ford, the acknowledged founder of Mendocino, the Ford House has exhibits highlighting the area's natural and cultural history, including a scale model of Mendocino as it was in 1890. For additional information, visit the Ford House online at <http://mendoparks.org> or by calling the Ford House Visitor Center at (707) 937-5397.

Schedule of Events at the Ford House

- **“Whale Tales”** Exhibit at the Ford House Visitor’s Center, featuring bones from a Gray Whale, information regarding the grays whale migration, and an interactive exhibit that lets you quiz yourself on whale facts. Throughout the month of March.
- Knowledgeable docents will be on hand at the Ford House throughout the Whale Festival with tips on when and where to watch for whales, and to answer questions regarding gray whale natural history.
- **Docent-led whale watch walks** are scheduled throughout the month of March at 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturdays, and on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. A limited number of binoculars and a spotting scope are available. Meet at the Ford House.
- **Thanksgiving Coffee will be providing free coffee tasting** at the Ford House during the Mendocino Whale Festival (March 7 - 8) 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Mendocino Bakery will provide free baked treats** at the Ford House during the Mendocino Whale Festival (March 7 - 8) 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

About The Whales

The 2009 celebration is all about the migration of the Eastern Pacific Gray Whale from the protected lagoons of western Baja California to their ancestral feeding grounds in the cold waters of the Bering and Chukchi Seas. The migrating whales, numbering 20,000 – 24,000 individuals, pass by the Mendocino Coast twice each year: once going south between the months of December, January and February, and again going north between the months of February and April.

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