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Fort Ross and Salt Point parks have benefited greatly from many dedicated volunteers and staff who have given generously to these parks. Board of directors from FRIA and FRC have fundraised, organized events, overseen volunteers, spearheaded interpretation and restoration projects, and offered substantial support to California State Parks across many decades.

These digitized newsletters capture the activities over the following historic periods:

- Fort Ross Interpretive Association (FRIA): 1976 - 2012
- Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC is the same legal entity as FRIA but the organization changed its name): 2012 - present

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FORT ROSS INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

1988

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM BLACK BART TURN

In this newsletter I want to bring to your attention a matter of old buildings of the Ranch Era. At Fort Ross itself we start with the Ranch House. This building has to have a new foundation put in before we can open it to the public. The Ranch House Plan has been given to the State Department of Parks and Recreation. Most all the furniture is available, but we have not yet had funds available to put in the foundation. This funding should come from the State. They have said it is down the road, but not this year. Until this is done all the years of work we have put in readying the house will be for nothing.

Also in the Ranch Complex are other buildings that should be redone. They are the apple house, woodshed, meat hanging building, blacksmith shop (already collapsed and down), the small cabin for the hired man that was one of the first buildings, and also the horse barn that is not in the General Plan but should be included. The barn had tie stalls for horses, harness hanging pegs, a portion that sheltered work wagons, carts, buggies and the spring wagons, a hayloft that held the winter feed for the horses, and the stanchions for the milk cows for family use.

What a nice tour of Fort Ross it would be to enter through the Visitor Center, down and through all the Russian buildings in the stockade, and then on to the Ranch Complex. This would indeed make Fort Ross an interesting and historic park.

And while we are about old buildings, I see that the old Wells Fargo Building at Kruse Ranch is losing boards off the front of it. Let's not allow this building to fall down in disrepair. I know the State has much expense to keep its parks in order, but please don't let all these old historic buildings be lost.

Barbara Black

THE SCHOOLS OF THE AREA

We have talked of the Fort Ross School before and know it was built in 1885. It made its move up on the ridge site and after about 20 years it was moved to its present site. There were also neighboring schools. As children mostly walked to school, or rode horseback, the distance couldn't be too great between school and home.

Timber Cove School was the nearest neighbor of Fort Ross, and the building was off Timber Cove Hill Road to the east. The boundary for its students was the ranch line between the Call Ranch and the John Kolmer Ranch Estate, which was Kolmer Gulch Creek. It followed the Call Ranch line to the township line. Now this would be approximately north of Seaview down the Gualala River, then back to the north line of Timber Cove Properties. The road leading in to the school, which was in a small opening, was lined with redwood bark slabs. As this was and is yellow clay, the bark was a dry road to school. As time went on Timber Cove, like many of the schools, had too few children and the students then came to Fort Ross School, then on the ridge.

Gualala School was located on the now King Ridge Road. The children were from the nearby ranches. The family that lived on the Harold Richardson Ranch (where the mill is located) attended, as did the Browns, the Nobles, and a cousin of mine that lived on the Sewall Ranch. Much later when the school closed the last student rode from the Harold Richardson Ranch to Dirigo School, which was across a deep canyon and on to the old Haupt Ranch. Norman Richardson also attended that school; his home was on what is now Odiyan.

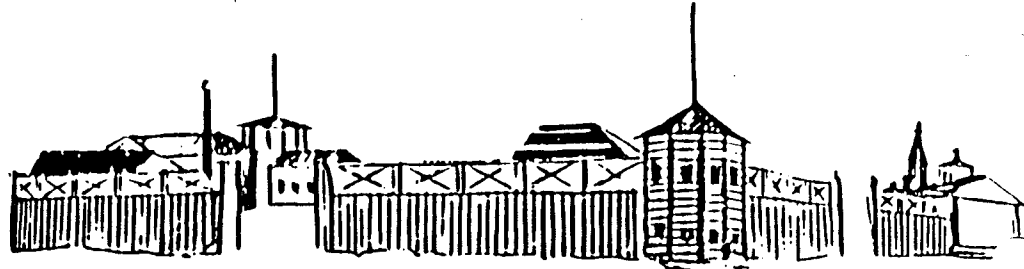
Fisks Mill School District had the following boundary. The upper line was the ranch line between Fisk and John Anderson (Don Mike Richardson). The line then went over to the Gualala River and south on it, including the Eckert and Von Amy (Tickner), and then west-south-west to the ocean along Timber Cove and Stillwater Cove. The school itself was known as the Plantation School and was on the Kruse Ranch Road.

There was also Table Mountain School that was on the ridge of Bohan-Dillon Road. This is the school that the Charles and, I presume, the Pivers attended.

Creighton Ridge School then took over that area and its boundary ran from the intersection of Fort Ross Road and Bohan-Dillon Road, taking in the land north and east of that including Neistrath Road. Many of the people whose names are on these roads are the people who attended this school. Their children also attended this school. As the schools closed the children came into the Fort Ross District.

As time went on and most people had cars, these various schools used to get together for programs and end of school picnics and graduations. Many times the programs were put on in "The Hall" at Plantation. There was always a picnic type lunch and either in or out of "The Hall" a program given by the students of each school. So, while each school was small, when we all came together there was quite a crowd. And it was always a great relief to the students when the program was over!

Barbara Black

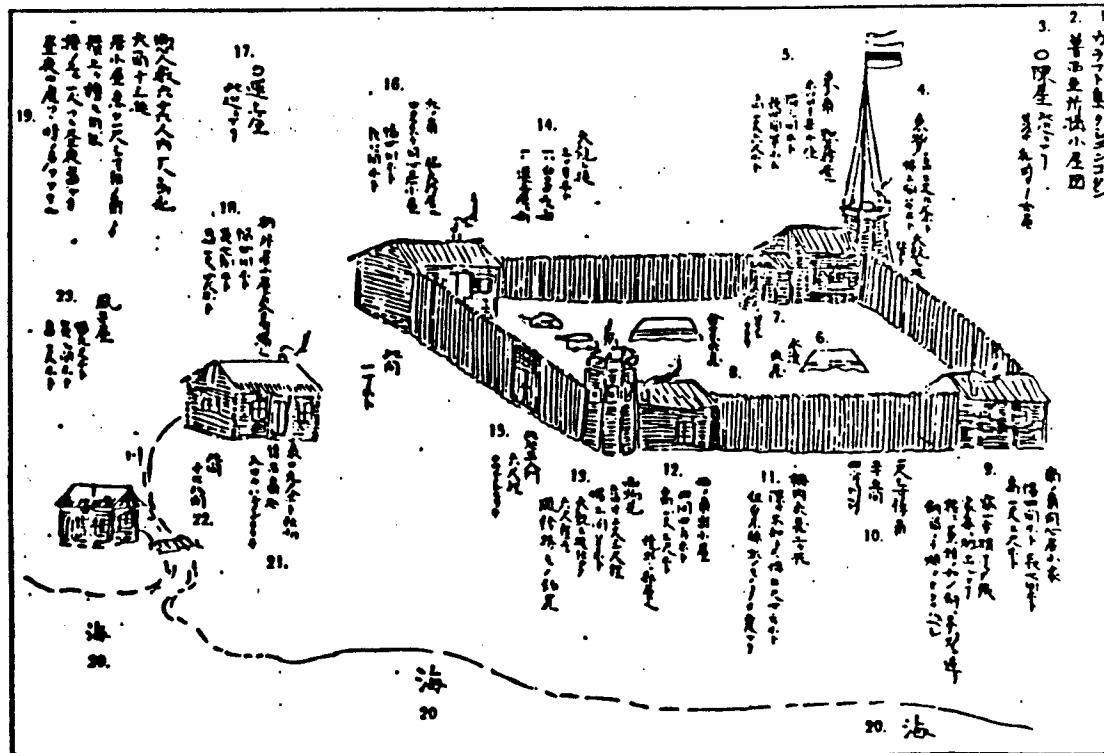
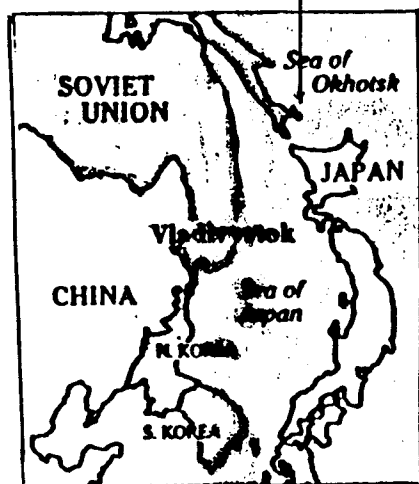


RUSSIAN FORT ON SAKHALIN ISLAND
by Nicholas I. Rokitiatsky

On April 23, 1853, Tsar Nicholas I ordered the Russian-American Company to occupy the Sakhalin Island. With the support of the Russian Military Governor, N. N. Muravev, the Russian-American Company began the construction of the Russian Fort at the southern end of Sakhalin Island. It is interesting to note that the plan of the Fort is almost a copy of Fort Ross in California built in 1812. The leading role here was taken by the Russian-American Company in safeguarding the island from possible incursion or prevention of foreign settlement. The instruction was to build a Fort with guns and the Russian-American Company flag was to be raised. In the fulfillment of this plan the military governor of Kamchatka was to dispatch one hundred military personnel. In this drawing, one can see the square fort with officers' and soldiers' quarters inside. The fort towers have six cannons, two special cannons inside located to defend the main gate. In total there were thirteen artillery pieces. Outside the fort are business offices, trade buildings and Russian steam baths. All buildings, like the ones at Fort Ross, were built of heavy lumber logs. The corner towers (bastions) were guarded day and night by soldiers and every hour on the hour they shouted to each other. One of the towers had alarm bells. This plan was obtained from Japanese sources.

Today the Soviet Government wants to restore the Fort as a memorial monument of the history and also to provide a museum. This place is known as Muravev's Outpost (Muravevskii Post). According to the law of the U.S.S.R. pertaining to restoration of historical monuments and culture, the Sakhalin's authorities resolved in March 1980 to restore this outpost of the Russian Empire. Source: Latyshev, V. M., Muravevskii Post, pp. 2, 4-5, 20-26, published in Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 1986

Muravev's Outpost

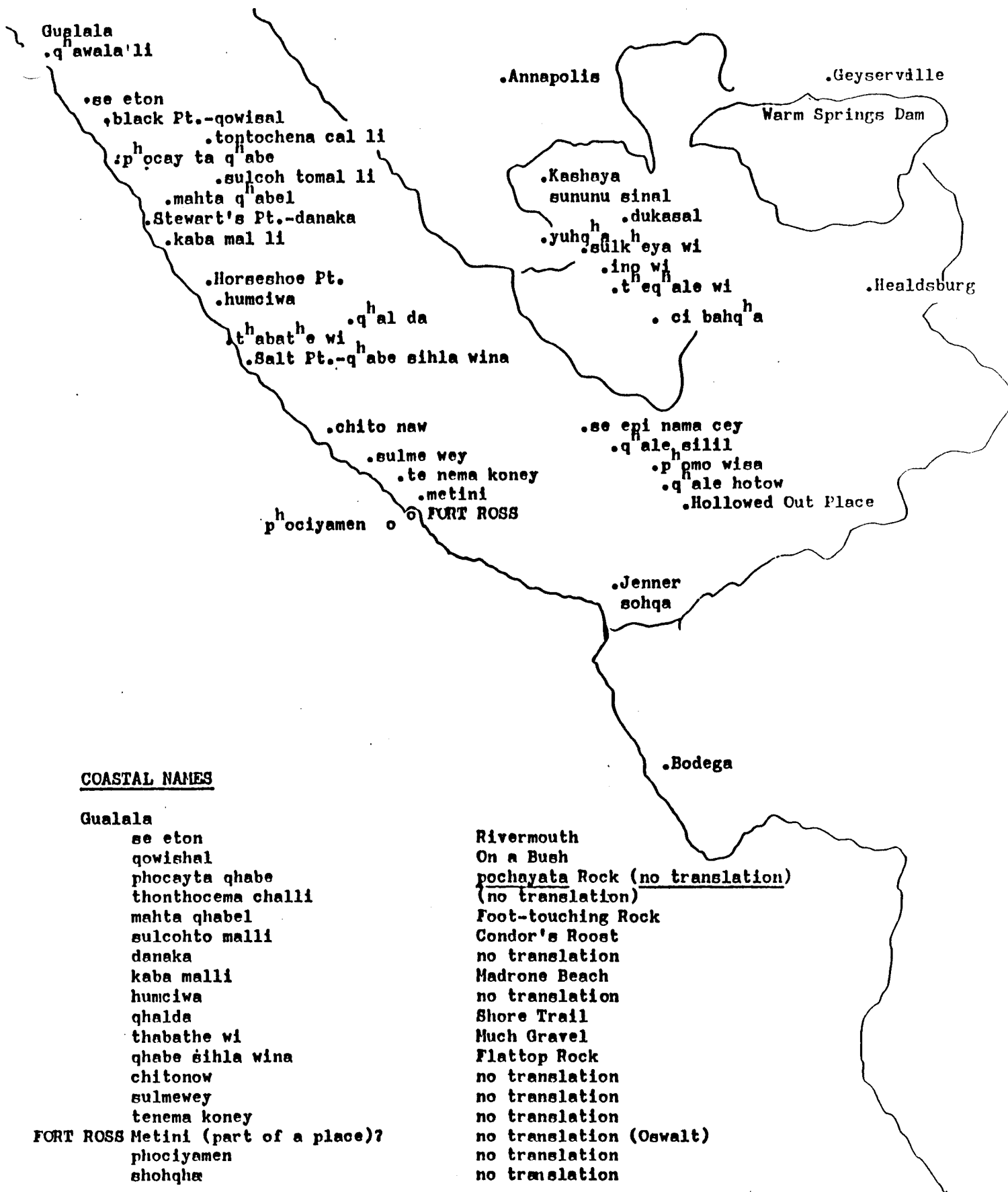


The map on the left indicated the location of Muravev's Outpost with an arrow. This Japanese illustration was obtained by me from A. Dolgoplov's collection in 1969. There still remains another (never published) Russian Fort on Kuril Islands--so called Kuril Ross. The picture of this fort was recorded by French naval officer during the bombardment by French-British naval squadrons during military operations in the Crimean War. This illustration of R.A.C. Fort Kuril Ross is in the file of the main French Military Naval archive in France.

Next article is to be historical Russian Forts in Hawaii.

KASHAYA POMO PLACE NAMES
PRE RUSSIAN CONTACT

by
Vana Dean Parrish Lawson



COASTAL NAMES

Gualala

se eton
qowishal
phocayta qhabe
thonthocema challi
mahta qhabel
sulcohto malli
danaka
kaba malli
humciwa
qhalda
thabathe wi
qhabe sihla wina
chitonow
sulumewey
tenema koney
FORT ROSS Metini (part of a place)?
phociyamen
shohqha

Rivermouth
On a Bush
pochayata Rock (no translation)
(no translation)
Foot-touching Rock
Condor's Roost
no translation
Madrone Beach
no translation
Shore Trail
Much Gravel
Flattop Rock
no translation
no translation
no translation
no translation (Oswalt)
no translation
no translation

Inland Areas

sununu shinal
dukashal
yuhqha
sulkheya wi
inowi
theqhalewi
cibahqha
se epinamacey
qhale silil
pohmo wisa
qhale hotow
no Kashaya term

Huckleberry Heights (Kashaya Reservation)
Abaloneville
Snowspring or Icespring
Condor's Crest
Dusty Place
Elderberry Place
Rush Spring
no translation
Forests Depths
pohmo Rise
Timber Edge
Hollowed out place

The Kashaya place names used in this map is written for the specific purpose of pronunciation for person not knowing the Kashaya dialect. These names have been checked for the correct translations using Oswalt as a reference and other Indian interpreters of the Kashaya language.

This letter is for everyone who has a question in their minds as to who I am. I feel that there are people out there trying to answer questions about me that only I could answer. So I hope that this letter will serve its purpose in dealing with that problem.

I am a Kashaya Pomo Indian; I am the daughter of Sidney and Essie Parrish. I am the youngest of the children. I am a traditionalist in every sense of the word as I was taught by my parents. Given that information I really don't feel anyone has the right to question my knowledge and traditions of my tribe, especially if their viewpoint is through theory.

Tis true, I am no scholar with degrees behind what I know, but then I feel very strongly that I don't have to possess any degrees to know my own history and to share it with people. I have an extensive background in Anthropology, Archeology, Native American Studies, Linguistics and other related classes. These only taught me the basics of what I should know, they did not teach me anything about my own culture only, what I already knew.

It surely doesn't take a Historian to know how to do research on the information I have within me. I feel that because of my age I am being questioned. But let me tell you that I have had two of the greatest teachers that any school could provide. Both of my parents did not have an extensive education background like I did, but I could say this for them, if I had any problems they were there with the answers.

I am proud of my social activities which include memberships on the Sonoma County Indian Health Board, the Statewide California Rural Indian Health Board in Sacramento, and Fort Ross Advisory Board. I am the author of the Kashaya Pomo Plant and Kashia Men's Dances. These papers were written specifically for the Southwestern Anthropological Association meetings, which were later published in their Journal. I am also the author of the book Kashaya Pomo Plant, which was based on my paper. I am proud to say the my plant book is one of a kind.

I would like to finish my letter by saying that I really don't like being negative about things because it puts a damper on being positive, and that I like to be and think positive because it contains growth.

Please if anyone has any questions of me contact me personally. I would welcome any questions you might have of me.

My home address is: 5121 Parkhurst Drive-B, Santa Rosa, CA 95409



In basketry the Pomos found an outlet for the highest conceptions of art that their race was capable of. Protected by their isolation from other tribes, they worked out their ideas undisturbed. With every incentive for excellence they had reached a height in basketry, when the American first disturbed them, which has never been equaled—not only by any other Indian tribe, but by no other people in the world in any age.

PORTRAITS OF PROMINANT RUSSIANS IN EARLY CALIFORNIA

This translation is just one of a series of handouts for this class. See the complete collection in the FRIA portion of the library at Fort Ross.

Baron Ferdinand Petrovich von Wrangell. "Einige Bemerkungen ueber die Wilden an der Nordwest-Kueste von Amerika" (Some Remarks Concerning the Savages along the Northwest Coast of America), in Statistische und ethnographische Nachrichten ueber die Russische Besitzungen an der Nordwestkueste von Amerika, collected by F. P. von Wrangell, edited by K. E. von Baer. St. Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1839.

BARON VON WRANGEL'S EXPLORATORY EXPEDITION UP THE RUSSIAN RIVER (Sept., 1833)

I came to know the Indian tribes which live near Fort Ross (38° 33' N. Latitude) on an excursion into the region surrounding the settlement. They inhabit the gorges of the mountain range which surrounds Ross on almost all sides, and they also live on the plain that lies beyond, to the east, through which the Slavianka River flows, discharging itself into the sea about seven [Italian] miles south of the colony.

After the wheat and barley harvest had been brought in from the steep mountain slopes, and after other necessary agricultural tasks had been completed at Fort Ross, we set out for the plains. . . . [W]e decided to render [the Indians] their due respects by providing ourselves with an escort and with loaded pistols. Besides three officers, our detachment consisted, accordingly, of 21 horsemen, which consisted of seven Russians, two Yakuts [from Siberia], six Aleuts, four Indian vaqueros, and two interpreters, all of whom carried well-filled quivers on their backs.

On September 10 (1833) [N.S. Sept. 22], we set off uphill en route to Bodega. At this season the horses, worn out from all too frequent use and from a meager diet, are usually quite thin. Around Fort Ross all the grass, which is dried up anyway by the long and persistent summer drought, is used for feeding numerous herds and flocks of all kinds. This circumstance compelled us to take along, besides the horses we rode, an equal number of reserve horses and two mules, which carried provisions for four days.

After we crossed the Slavianka River at its mouth, now silted up, we turned left and went uphill. Turning our backs upon the sea, we passed through hollows, forests, and copses before reaching areas that were flat and more open. Although we rode along foot paths which the Indians use for going to the seashore from their plains to collect shell-fish, we nevertheless met no one. When we finally reached a small, luxuriantly overgrown meadow, we heard a loud voice singing. Our interpreters hurried ahead to find out whether we had friend or foe to deal with. But the impatience to get to know the inhabitants of this desolate area drove us on to follow hard on the heels of our scouts. So we set off at full gallop and chanced upon an old Indian woman gathering seed grains in a basket woven out of fine root fibers. She went stiff from fear. Not without difficulty did we learn from her that beyond the next copse lived several Indian families, who no doubt had noticed us already and had hidden themselves for fear of falling into the hand of the Spanish, who often go out Indian-hunting, to convert their catch to Christianity. The woman told us further that she was gathering seeds for food and had sung so loud in order to drive off evil spirits; they always submitted to her voice, which resonated its echo from the mountains one hundred times over.

THE SANTA ROSA PLAIN AND FIRST ENCAMPMENT

Before evening we reached the largest of the plains. At first it is unforested, completely level, luxuriantly overgrown with fragrant vegetation, and so immense that its distance is no less than 25 miles across. Left and right, mountains rise again, whose familiar outlines we could notice not far from Fort Ross, where they also appear before one's eyes. We were about 18 miles [25 versts] from Ross, as the crow flies, but between us lay insurmountable mountains and ravines, which we traveled at least 50 miles to circumvent. Here the Slavianka River nestles against a westerly range of hills and absorbs a stream which meanders through the middle of the plain. We now turned aside and went along the meadows which lay on both sides of the river.

Nightfall took us unawares in one of the splendid oak groves which shade the plain here and there. The horses almost disappeared in the high, fragrant grass which covered the meadow. The campfire blazed up amidst the dark foliage of oaks a century old. Deep silence settled upon this land so richly endowed by nature. Scarcely had the night watchman - the coyote - intoned his plaintive howl, than our new friends, the Indians, arrived at the campfires. After we gave them tobacco, biscuits, glass beads, and other trinkets, they sat down with their fellow countrymen, our interpreters and vaqueros, in a circle and began their favorite activity - indeed, it can be said their only one, when circumstances permit - which is playing at odds-and-evens.

VISITING AN INDIAN VILLAGE

We found the Indian village on sandy ground, entrenched behind shrubbery and dry ditches. It was inhabited by five or six families related to one another. The women had set up temporary dwellings, made of pliable branches of sand-willow, easily stuck in the ground. They were set up in such extreme good taste that the sight startled me in a most pleasant way. . . .

The women and old men were frightened by our appearance, and it seemed as though they did not want us to disturb their tranquillity. However, they behaved in a friendly way and showed us everything that belonged to their meager economy. In a few baskets lay provisions of paste made of ground acorns and of a kind of groats prepared from wild rye and other seed grains. Moreover, there were fish, which they catch in the stream, when they sprinkle a powder upon the water's surface made from a root called soap-root; with this the fish become stunned and float along the surface. Hunting is the men's activity. By contrast, the women must carry all the heavy loads and undertake the difficult jobs in general. This unusual division of labor probably stems from the peculiar fact that the women here are generally of a much stronger physical constitution than are the men, who, although, large and well-proportioned, still seem to be weaker than the women.

* * * * *

POPULATION AT FORT ROSS: 1812-1841

By Ethnic Origin

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Russians</u>	<u>Creoles</u>	<u>Aleuts</u>	<u>Indians</u>	<u>Source</u>
1812	175	95	-	80	-	Khlebnikov
1812	120	40	-	80	-	Anon. (1831)
1818	105	27	0	78 (Kodiaks)	-	Census (Materialy)
1818	128	26	-	102	-	Golovnin
1820	273	23 - Russ 3- Yakuts	10	122 (various)	6+	Kuskov/Fedorova
1828	220	60	-	80 (Kodiaks)	80	Duhaut-Cilly
1832	330	-	-	-	-	"Intelligent Bostonian"
1833	293 *	50	88	83	72	Potekhin
1836	260	120	51	50	39**	Veniaminov
1836	400	60 ***	-	80		Slacum
1839	300			50-60		Belcher
1841	700	(300 Europeans)				Duffot de Mofras
1841	1000	100				Waseurtz

<u>By Sex and Age Group</u>	<u>Adult Male</u>	<u>Adult Female</u>	<u>Boys under 16</u>	<u>Girls under 16</u>
1820	148	71	54 altogether	
1833	128	71	54	40
1836	154	106	(included with adults)	

* Includes non-Indian children
 ** Baptized only
 *** Includes Finns

FORT ROSS STATE HISTORIC PARK
PROPOSED ADDITION

DESCRIPTION

Fort Ross State Historic Park is located on the Sonoma County coast 11 miles northwest of the Town of Jenner and two hours driving time from San Francisco. The unit contains 1,118 acres. Ninety acres of submerged lands and tidelands are managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation under a long-term lease from the State Lands Commission. The present lease began on August 1, 1981 and runs for 49 years. The park is bisected by State Highway 1.

Other State Park System units in the area are Salt Point State Park and Kruse Rhododendron State Reserve, about 8 miles upcoast, plus Sonoma Coast State Beaches downcoast.

Fort Ross is situated on a narrow flat coastal terrace marked by sheer cliffs that drop sharply to the ocean in contrast with gently rolling slopes east of Highway 1. The downcoast portion of the park is characterized by even steeper bluffs that drop several hundred feet into the sea. In contrast with the rugged shoreline is Fort Ross Cove which possesses a protected, quiet beach and still water. Four types of vegetation occur in the park; coniferous forest, grassland, scrub and coastal strand. Open grasslands predominate on the coastal shelf, while Bishop pine and Douglas fir occupy the open, inland slopes. Stands of old second growth redwood can be found in the protected hollows and ravines.

Most of the soils in the area are characterized as loams possessing a rapid rate of runoff and a high erosion hazard. Evidence of soil erosion can be seen in areas exposed to wind and rapid runoff.

The climate at Fort Ross is influenced by the dominant high-pressure area of the northern Pacific Ocean, inland low pressure conditions, and the temperature of the ocean waters. Temperatures range between the 60s and the low 70s during summer days, with nights in the 50s. Mean maximum July temperature is 64 degrees F.

Prevailing winds are from the northwest, commonly 10 to 25 miles per hour, with gusts up to 50 to 60 miles per hour. Summer fog will generally lie along the coast in the morning and late afternoon, usually moving inland only as far as the eastern edge of the redwood forest. Precipitation during the summer is very low and largely a result of fog drip. Moisture is also provided by frequent nighttime drizzle.

Winter storms frequently batter the coastline with gale force winds which can severely damage vegetation and structures. In contrast to the summer season, seasonal rainfall from November to April averages about 35 inches. Normal total annual precipitation is 44 inches. Air temperatures are relatively mild, with days averaging in the high 50s and low 60s, and night temperatures dropping to the 40s. Mean minimum January temperature is 41 degrees F. The freezing point is reached only occasionally.

The wildlife of Fort Ross consists of a wide spectrum of land animals, birds, and marine life. Land animals common to the project area include the black-tailed deer, brush rabbit, ground squirrel, pocket gopher, broad-handed mole, and black-tailed hare. Species of birds are quite diverse.

The present zoning in the immediate vicinity is agricultural. This allows a maximum of one single-family residence per 160-acre parcel and prohibits commercial development. This area is within the coastal zone and is therefore subject to the certified Sonoma County Coastal Plan, which designates this area's land use as "recreation". The plan also recommends that the project lands and certain other adjoining lands be acquired for State park expansion.

The proposed addition is owned by the Fibreboard Corporation which also owns most of the land surrounding the park. The present land use is commercial timberland and rangeland for livestock. Under a 10-year Timber Preserve Zone contract, the land is taxed on its timberland value rather than any higher valued potential use. The total number of acres included in the proposed addition is approximately 2,157 acres including a 12-acre ocean front parcel west of Highway 1. A ranch building complex is located inland of the highway and serves as headquarters for the livestock grazing use on both Fibreboard Corporation and State lands.

EVALUATION AND JUSTIFICATION

The project meets State Park System criteria and objectives for preservation of scenic, natural and cultural values and for provision of recreation opportunities for the public.

One of the Department's major goals at Fort Ross is to preserve the historic setting of the fort. This would be accomplished by protecting the natural and historic scene from encroachment of modern development that could be inconsistent with the historic purpose of the park.

The purpose of this proposed addition is to secure the most positive and permanent visual control of the area through the acquisition of fee title. Another purpose of the proposed addition is to preserve the historic Russian logging site that supplied lumber for construction of the fort.

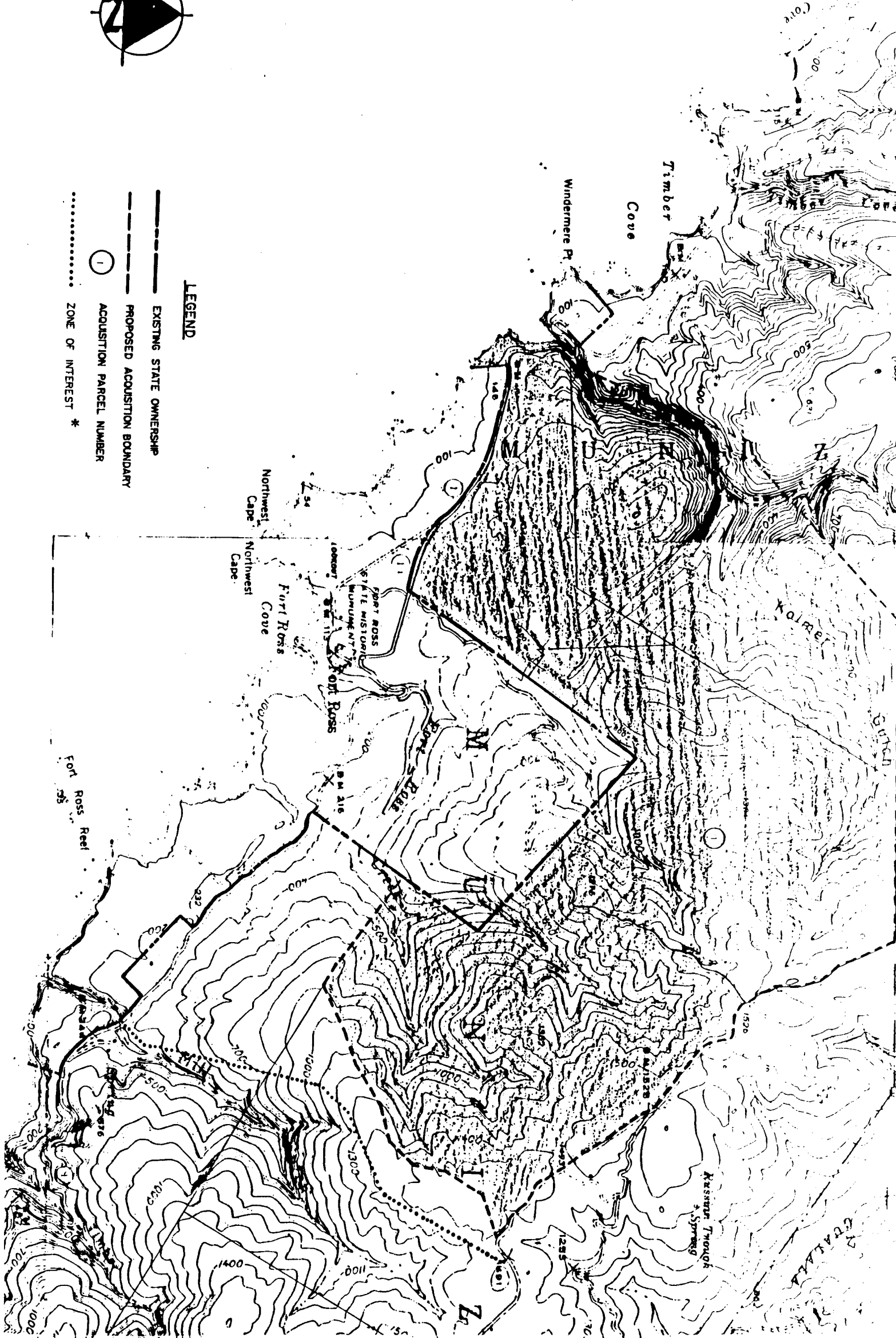
The proposed acquisition would also provide added opportunities for recreational uses. Day-use activities such as picnicking, hiking and sightseeing could be accommodated on the project lands. The shortage of overnight facilities, especially along the northern Sonoma County coast, has recently become more and more apparent. To help offset this shortage, camping areas could be developed on project lands without encroachment on the historic scene or serious impact on the natural environment. The General Plan for Fort Ross State Historic Park also recommends development of personnel housing and administrative facilities near the existing ranch complex which would be visually isolated from the primary historic zone of Fort Ross.

RECOMMENDATION

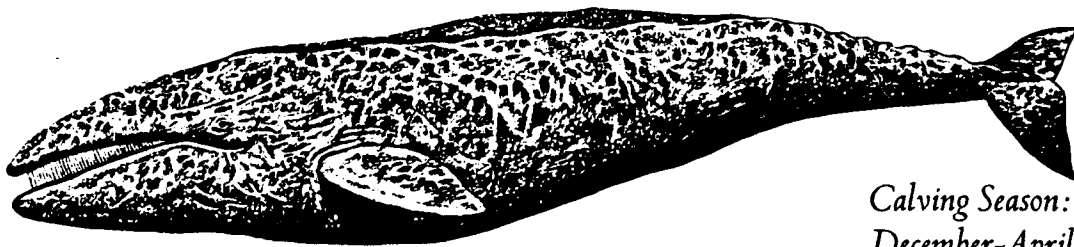
It is recommended that the Department of Parks and Recreation use funds available from the Wildlife, Coastal, and Park Land Conservation Bond Act of 1988 (Proposition 70) to acquire 2,157 acres of the land owned by the Fibreboard Corporation, and accept the Save-the-Redwood League's offer to donate 50 percent of the fair market value of the project lands described herein.



- LEGEND**
- EXISTING STATE OWNERSHIP
 - - - PROPOSED ACQUISITION BOUNDARY
 - ① ACQUISITION PARCEL NUMBER
 - ZONE OF INTEREST *



On October 27, 1988 a Public Hearing on Proposed Additions to Fort Ross State Historic Park was held at Northern Region Headquarters in Santa Rosa. Complete transcripts of this meeting will be sent to Sacramento to the Planning Department of California State Department of Parks and Recreation and then to the Legislature. After a thirty day waiting period, assuming approval, California State Department of Parks and Recreation may proceed with purchase negotiations. Inquiries may be directed to Dave Allan, California State Department of Parks and Recreation, P.O. Box 2390, Sacramento, Ca. 95811.



LOOK FOR WHALES!

Annual Life Cycle of the Gray Whale

Arctic Feeding: April-October

The Chukchi and Bering Seas lie north and south of the narrow straits separating Alaska's Seward Peninsula from the easternmost thrust of Siberia. It is in these sub-polar seas that most gray whales spend their summers, gliding through icy waters rich with nutrients. Unique among whales, they are bottom-feeders, a trait which earned them an earlier (and misleading) nickname: "mussel-digger." Although they occasionally feed on schooling fish or swarming crustaceans, small bottom-dwelling creatures called "amphipods" make up the bulk of their diet. In a typical feeding dive to the shallow sea floor, they roll onto their right sides (just like people, however, there are a few left-handers!) and suck up the bottom sediment, using their mouths like a huge vacuum cleaner. Then, with their tongue, they squeeze water and silt back out through the baleen filter, leaving behind a meal of amphipods. Although the total daily quantity of food consumed is not known, it is not uncommon to find ten or more wheelbarrow loads of amphipods in the gray's enormous, three-chambered stomach! The result by summer's end is an accumulation of six to twelve inches of oily blubber which will be an energy reserve during the winter months of migration and breeding, and nourishment for the developing calves of pregnant females.

Southern Migration: October-February

Early in October, as Arctic days shorten and the surface ice pack begins to thicken and expand southward, pregnant female grays, already well into their 12-month gestation, slip south through Alaska's Unimak Pass and begin their extraordinary annual 6,000-mile (9,600 km) journey to Baja California. Nonpregnant females, mature males, and juveniles follow over succeeding weeks. For the expectant females, the voyage is a demanding and determined one. Traveling alone or in groups of two or three, with little rest and seldom pausing to feed, they may travel 20 hours and 100 miles (160 km) each day in their urgency to reach the protected, sub-tropical lagoons in which their young are born. For the trailing whales, the journey is no less arduous. They swim in groups of up to 12 animals, and reach Baja in six to eight weeks. Males and in-season females court and mate throughout the migration, and great churning and thrashing of water frequently marks the courtship. (Because females usually give birth every other year, there are more mature males than in-season females with which to mate, resulting in competition among the males. Females may, however, mate with more than one male each year.) The migratory behavior of juveniles is less well understood. They appear to follow the adults over much of the route, but some stray from the migration, venturing away to feed, or to explore the shore or islands of Southern California. By mid-January, most females have reached the near-shore waters and lagoons of Baja California which are their destination. Stragglers continue to arrive for yet another month or more.

Calving Season: December-April

Most female gray whales mate one year and give birth the next, following this biennial breeding cycle from sexual maturity at the age of 6-8 years. Birth generally takes place in the shallow backwaters of Baja lagoons, although some calves are born early—during the migration itself or in near-shore waters adjacent to the Baja coast. At birth, the calves are darker than their mothers, their skin wrinkled and barnacle-free. During their time in the lagoons, they rarely venture far from their mothers, and her strong protective instincts can make her a dangerous adversary should she sense a threat to her calf's safety. (Experiencing her defense behavior firsthand, Pacific whalers gave the gray whale another of its early nicknames: "devilfish.") After two or three months, however, the calves begin to "socialize" among themselves, and to venture short distances from their mothers to explore their surroundings. Nourished by approximately 50 gallons (190 liters) a day of the mother's rich milk, a calf may gain up to 60-70 lbs (27-32 kg) each day, reaching 2-3 tons (1818-2727 kg) in weight and 18-19 feet (5.5-5.8 m) in length by the end of the winter. By mid-February, newly-pregnant females have left the lagoons for the long journey north. Adult males follow (continuing to court these females over the next several weeks), trailed by juveniles of both sexes. New mothers and their calves are last to leave, occasionally remaining as late as May or June.

Returning Home: February-July

Gray whales migrate northward in two distinct phases or "pulses," the first traveling from February to June, the second from March to July. The earliest returnees are newly-pregnant females, adult males, and juveniles. These whales generally retrace their southward trek, swimming point-to-point across bays and bights, averaging 95-100 days between Baja and Alaska. (In February, below Southern California, they encounter the last of the southbound migrants, unconcernedly tardy.) Some congregate at river mouths from northern California to Washington's Olympic Peninsula and Vancouver Island, B.C., in late March and early April, where they are frequently seen feeding on bottom organisms and swarming "mysid" shrimp. Some remain in these areas for the summer, but most continue on through Unimak Pass into the Bering Sea where they follow the receding ice edge. New mothers and their calves remain in the lagoons a month or more longer than other whales before they begin to move north. These female-calf pairs migrate close to shore, along surf lines and kelp beds, where they are frequently seen lingering for a few hours to a few days. Here it is believed that females feed, as do their calves, as they begin the transition from a milk diet to solid food. (Complete weaning occurs when the calves are 8-10 months old.) Some females arrive at the summer feeding grounds, with or without their calves, as early as June, others as late as August. There, in the abundance of the Arctic seas, the annual life cycle of the gray whale comes full circle and begins once again.

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THE OCEANIC
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FIELD GUIDE
TO THE
GRAY WHALE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FRIA BOARD MEETING--Saturday, December 10

FORT ROSS CLOSED--Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day

NEXT NEWSLETTER--Mid January--Due date for submissions is January 5--Please Contribute!

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