

2013 Piedras Blancas Northern Elephant Seal Breeding Season Summary

The elephant seal colony at Piedras Blancas continues to grow. The total number of live pups, weaners (weaned pups), and orphaned pups counted at the end of the 2013 season was just over 4,800 seals - up 4% from the 2012 season (Figure 1). Based on a rough estimate of the actual number of births, it appears that pre-weaning mortality was fairly low again this year (about 7%), which is not surprising considering we had another mild winter. There were increases in three of six survey segments compared to last year, with the biggest increase being in the area from Arroyo Laguna and South, followed by the area from Pt. Piedras Blancas to South Point (Figure 2). With the exception of a single pup born (and weaned) just up coast of the Piedras Blancas Motel (site), there was no expansion of the breeding range along the coast.

Figure 1. Total Live Pup, Orphaned Pup, and Weaned Seal Counts at Piedras Blancas (Late February/Early March)

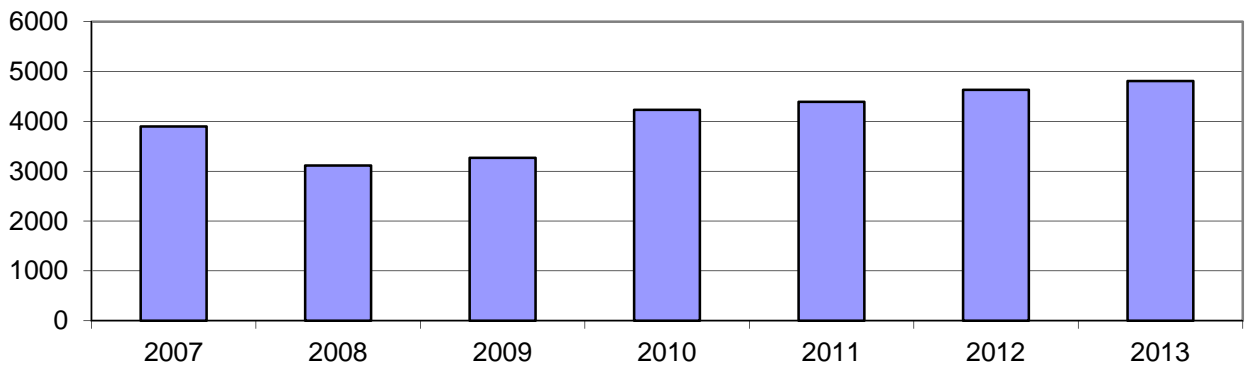
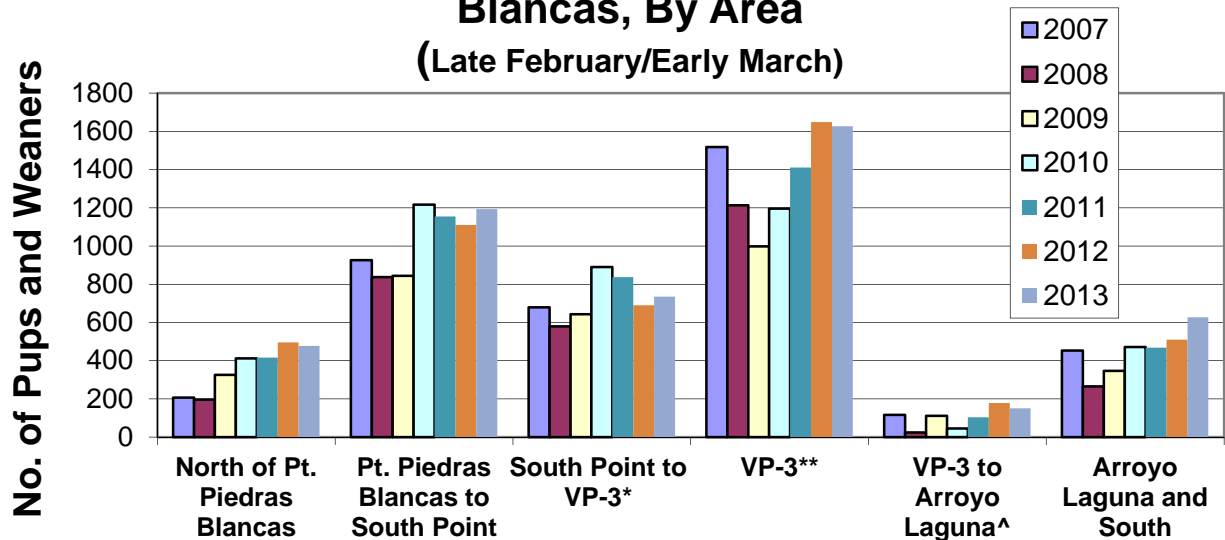


Figure 2. Live Pup and Weaner Counts at Piedras Blancas, By Area (Late February/Early March)



* does not include VP-3

** includes cove just south of dunes

^ does not include beach at Arroyo Laguna

