

**2017 Piedras Blancas Northern Elephant Seal
Breeding Season Summary
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The number of adult females counted at the rookery (and therefore the number of estimated births) this breeding season was lower than last season by about 100 animals, resulting in an estimate of the number of births being down approximately 2% from last year (to roughly 5,600). The number of live young-of-the-year seals (suckling, weaned, and orphaned pups) counted at the end of the season was up slightly (1%) from last year to approximately 5,050 (Figure 1). The difference between the number of estimated births and the number of live pups/weaners/orphans indicates that mortality was down from approximately 12% last year to about 10% this year.

The pupping distribution along the coast was similar to last year. Four of six coastal segments had slight decreases in pup production compared to last season (Figure 2). The largest drop (~140 animals) occurred at Arroyo Laguna and beaches to the southeast. There was a small satellite harem again this year in a small cove beyond the continuous sandy beach. Again this year, no pups were born south of San Simeon Point.

Only two of the six coastal segments showed slight increases in pup production over last year. The increase north of Pt. Piedras Blancas was due to more seals at Arroyo del Corral this season (Figures 2 and 3). A similar number of seals were born this year north of the Piedras Blancas Motel (site) as last year. For the third consecutive year a very small harem was located on the beach at the mouth of Arroyo de la Cruz. The other area with a modest increase in pups over the 2016 season was at the south end of VP-3 (where about 200 of the weaned seals were up in the dunes when the survey was conducted).

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

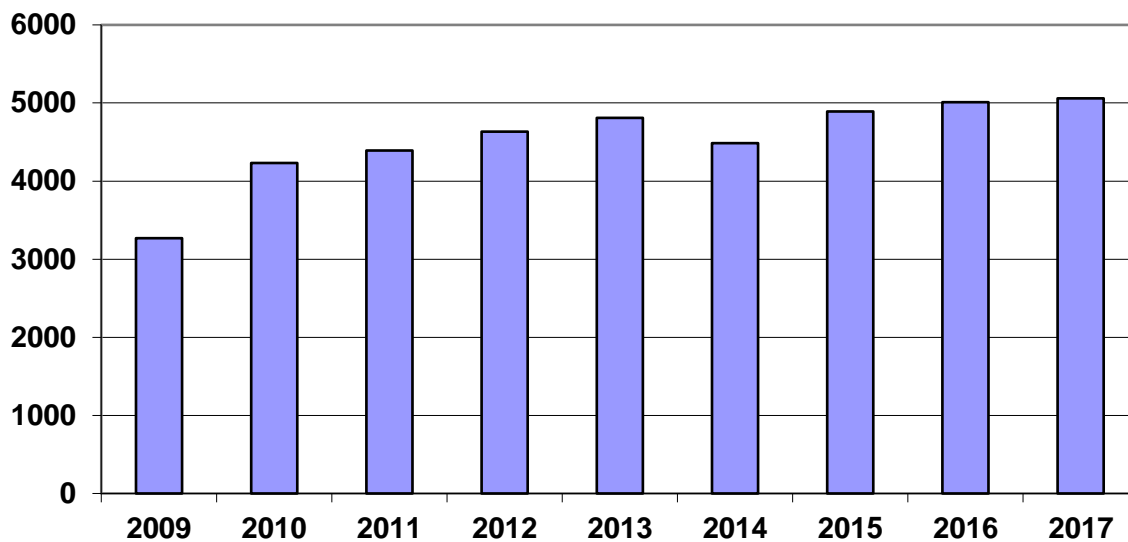
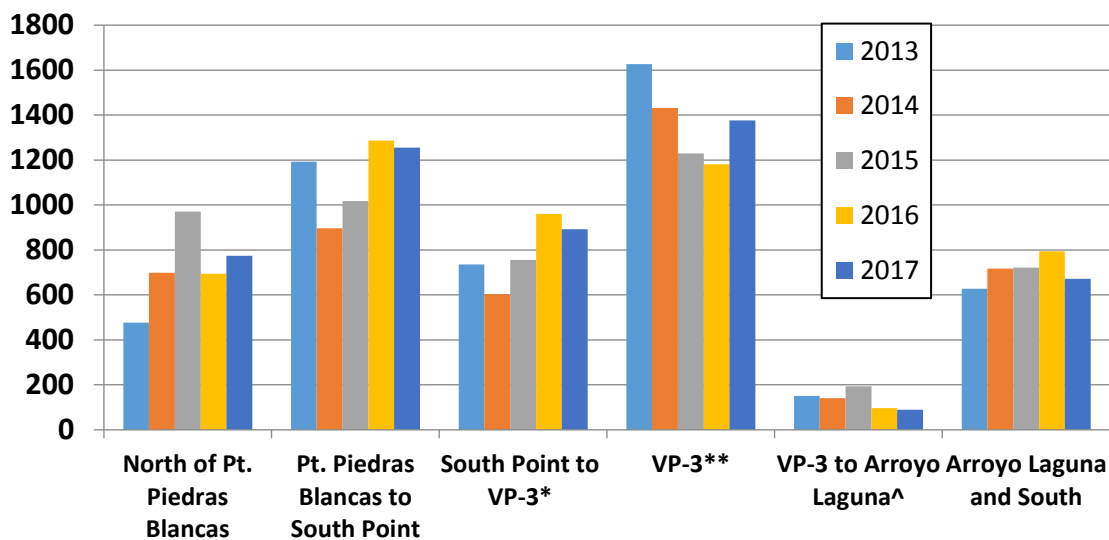


Figure 2. Live Pup and Weaner Counts at Piedras Blancas, By Area (Late February/Early March)



*does not include VP-3 **includes cove just south of dunes ^does not include beach at Arroyo Laguna

Figure 3. Live Pup and Weaner Counts at Arroyo del Corral Beach

