

COMMAND TRUSTEE COUNCIL SEABIRD RESTORATION PROJECTS NOW UNDERWAY!

Projects to restore marbled murrelets through corvid management, remove invasive rats from sooty shearwater habitat, and educate the public about seabird disturbance are now in full swing.



Case History

The oil and tarballs resulting from the *T/V Command* spill affected large numbers of seabirds, including Common Murres, California Brown Pelicans, and endangered Marbled Murrelets. Sandy beach and rocky intertidal shoreline habitats were also affected, and human recreation was interrupted at several beaches in the area.

The group of federal and state agencies, together known as the Natural Resource Trustees, that initiated legal action

against the Pearl Shipping Corp. and Anax International Agencies, Inc are:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
- CA Department of Fish and Game,
- CA Department of Parks and Recreation, and
- CA State Lands Commission.

Handouts Hurt!

Marbled murrelet restoration begins in the Santa Cruz Mountains

On the Thursday evening before Memorial Day, staff at Big Basin Redwoods State Park geared up for the on-coming crowds of campers. Their mission included a new focus: limiting the access of corvids (jays and ravens) to human food waste, and thus protecting Marbled Murrelets from excessive nest predation by the corvids.

The endangered Marbled Murrelet is small seabird in the alcid family (akin to puffins) found along the Pacific Coast from Alaska to California. Unlike most alcids, the Marbled Murrelet nests up to 50 km (30 miles) inland in old growth coniferous forests. The Marbled Murrelet population of the Santa Cruz mountains is small, isolated and declining. The *Command* spill is estimated to have killed six to twelve of these birds.

The Command Trustee Council was impressed to see that California State Parks has begun implementing the Marbled Murrelet Restoration and Corvid

Management Project with great enthusiasm. From park superintendents to rangers to docents, all staff have been trained regarding the project. Throughout the state parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains, educational signs have been posted at every campsite and roving "crumb patrols" encourage campers and picnickers to do their part in restoring balance to the forest ecosystem. Campfire programs feature skits and puppet shows to explain the links between human food waste, artificially enhanced jay and raven populations, and predation of endangered murrelet nests.

At Big Basin Redwoods State Park, new garbage cans and dumpsters are being installed. A small number of ravens have also been removed from Big Basin. Implementation of garbage control and educational efforts at Memorial County Park have been delayed due to staff turnover, but the project is expected to begin there before the 2006 camping season.



State Park Interpreter Julie Siedel teaches young campers about the connection between human food waste, raccoons, jays and ravens, and marbled murrelets.

A Marbled Murrelet nests on an old growth tree.



Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project

With support from the Command Trustee Council, Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge along with NZ partner, Ka Mate Nga Kiore Society, and technical support from the university of Otago Kia Mau Te Titi Mo Ake Tonu Atu research team and Department of Conservation eradication specialists, The Rakiura Titi – Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project has successfully implemented the first phase of a project aiming to restore Sooty Shearwaters by removing introduced rats from four nesting islands in New Zealand. Initial implementation activities included drafting operational planning and quarantine documents, ordering bait supplies, preparing environmental consents, and conducting pre-eradication monitoring and public outreach.

Initial monitoring studies revealed that, in addition to rats, wekas (a large, flightless rail endemic to New Zealand, but which did not historically occur on the four target islands) were also depredating sooty shearwater chicks. The removal of this species will likely contribute to even greater long-term benefits to Sooty Shearwaters and the island ecosystem than removal of rats alone.

During 2005, Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge developed a variety of educational outreach materials using the Rakiura Titi – Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project as an example to promote understanding of migratory species, threats and solutions to seabird

conservation. Members of Oikonos presented several public lectures and classroom visits to audiences in Aptos, Santa Cruz, Salinas, and Cambria, CA. Real-time satellite tracking of shearwaters was used a novel approach to bring a web-based audience into understanding the migratory nature and conservation issues related to this species. Finally, Oikonos and Ka Mate Nga Kiore Society are seeking funds to develop an educational video about Rakiura Titi – Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project. This project illustrates a real-world example of international and multi-faceted approach to conservation of a highly migratory seabird.

*Watermark:
Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project logo/Sophie Webb*

Seabird Colony Protection Program

Implementation of the Command Trustee Council’s Seabird Colony Protection Program has begun! The goal of the program is to improve the survival of California’s seabird species by reducing human disturbances at their breeding and roosting sites on the central California coast.

This summer, researchers at the Point Reyes Headlands began monitoring important seabird colonies. Monitoring will address concerns regarding the potential impact caused to these colonies by aircraft and boat disturbance.

Meanwhile, the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary will be spearheading the implementation of the outreach and education component of this project. The Sanctuary will gather seabird researchers and managers in early November for an initial kick-off meeting. The goal of the meeting will be to identify and prioritize disturbance issues impacting seabird colonies along the central California coast. Project staff will then use recommendations from the meeting to develop and implement outreach actions for the project.

For more information on the activities of the Command Trustee Council, please contact:

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T/V Command Restoration Program Preferred Restoration Projects
Natural Resource Restoration Projects
1. Marbled Murrelet Restoration and Corvid Management Project
2. Marbled Murrelet Land Aquisition and Enhancement Project
3. Seabird Colony Protection Program
4. Common Murre Nesting Ledge Creation Project
5. Brown Pelican Roost Site Enhancement and Protection Project
6. Brown Pelican Entanglement Reduction and Outreach Program
7. Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project
Lost Human Use Restoration Projects
1. Improve Beach Access at Half Moon Bay State Beach
2. Improve Beach Access at Seal Cove Beach (Fitzgerald Marine Reserve)
3. Create Coastal Trail and Coastal Access at Mirada Surf Property

Summary of T/V Command Trustee Council Budget	
Original Natural Resource Damages Settlement	\$3,973,159
Total Interest Accrued	556,946
Total Amount Available for Restoration	\$4,530,105
Seabird Colony Protection Project	\$ 112,355
Common Murre Nesting Ledge Creation Project	35,331
Marbled Murrelet Restoration Project	300,965
Sooty Shearwater Restoration Project	297,365
Total Project Expenditures (to date)	\$ 746,020
Total Admin/Planning Expenditures (to date)	\$ 527,567
Total Funds Allocated (to date)	\$1,273,587
Total Amount Remaining for Restoration (to date)	\$3,256,518