

RESTORING SEABIRDS TO THE CHANNEL ISLANDS



Google Earth Image

MSRP seabird restoration projects will be conducted on a number of the California Channel Islands, including San Miguel, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara and San Nicolas Islands. Additional projects will be conducted on Coronados and Todos Santos Islands in the Mexico Baja California region

MSRP Priority Seabird Species

Natural resource damage regulations define eggshell thinning in birds as an injury if the current eggshells are more than 15 percent thinner than pre-DDT era eggshells. In 1992, the Trustees funded a study of eggshell thinning and organochlorine contamination levels in seabirds of the Channel Islands. These studies demonstrated that a suite of seabirds showed evidence of eggshell thinning of greater than 15 percent. As a result of these studies, the following seabirds are of priority for MSRP restoration efforts based on evidence of eggshell thinning:

ASSP	Ashy Storm-petrel	DCCO	Double-crested Cormorant
BRCO	Brandt's Cormorant	PECO	Pelagic Cormorant
BRPE	California Brown Pelican	WEGU	Western Gull
CAAU	Cassin's Auklet	XAMU	Xantus's Murrelet

Other species that may benefit from MSRP projects include:

BLSP	Black Storm-petrel
PIGU	Pigeon Guillemot
RHAU	Rhinoceros Auklet

Photo Credit:
 Scott Screit
 Roy Lowe
 Duncan Wright-Wikipedia
 Josh Adams



For more information contact:

Gabrielle Dorr
 (562) 980-3236
 gabrielle.dorr@noaa.gov

www.montroserestoration.gov

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RESTORING SEABIRDS PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS



Restore Seabirds to San Miguel Island*

San Miguel Island and its associated islets, Prince Island and Castle Rock, support regionally important and diverse seabird colonies, including one-third of the breeding seabirds in the Channel Islands. The goal of this project is to enhance critical seabird nesting habitat on San Miguel Island by eradicating the introduced black rat and preventing future rodent introductions. Using the successful Anacapa Island Restoration Project as a model, bait will be delivered by bait stations, aerial broadcast, or by hand to all potential rat territories on the island. The project will be designed and implemented in a manner that avoids, minimizes, and mitigates impacts to the natural environment on San Miguel Island, including those to local fauna such as the San Miguel Island deer mouse and island fox.

ASSP BRCO CAAU
WEGU XAMU PIGU

Restore Seabirds to Scorpion and Orizaba Rocks

Scorpion and Orizaba Rocks, located off of Santa Cruz Island, are important nesting islands for burrow-nesting seabirds in California. The goal of this project is to restore seabird habitat through habitat enhancement, social attraction and reductions in human disturbance. Restoration on Scorpion rock so far has included vegetation mapping to plan for the mechanical removal of exotic plants, revegetation with native plants, and installation of nest boxes. Signage around the rock and in the visitor center will inform the public that the rock is closed to protect nesting seabirds, and funding will ensure an additional NPS presence at the rock to enforce the closure and educate visitors. On Orizaba Rock, restoration will involve nest boxes, and

the possible use of vocalization playback systems. Disturbance reduction efforts will include signage and light meters will be deployed to better understand any impacts of high-intensity lights near the colonies.

ASSP BRPE CAAU
DCCO XAMU RHAU

Restore Alcids to Santa Barbara Island

Santa Barbara Island supports California's largest colony of Xantus's murrelets (a state threatened species). Recent studies, however, indicate a decline in murrelet numbers on the island. Santa Barbara Island at one time also supported a sizable population of Cassin's auklets before the colony was decimated by cats. The goal of this project is to facilitate the recovery of Cassin's auklets and Xantus's murrelets on Santa Barbara Island through nesting habitat improvements. Two sites targeted for attracting auklets and murrelets have received exotic vegetation removal and native plant restoration during the non-breeding season (to avoid impacts to nesting birds) in 2007. Nest boxes insulated against the elements will also be installed, and vocalization playback systems will be used to attract auklets. Additional habitat enhancements and nest boxes will be made specifically for Xantus's murrelets, with the goal of providing a secure nesting area and increasing recruitment and reproductive output.

CAAU XAMU

Restore Seabirds to San Nicolas Island*

Cats were first introduced to San Nicolas Island during the 1800s, and later by U.S. Navy personnel occupying the island. Negative impacts from feral cats on the island's fauna, including seabirds such as Brandt's cormorants and western gulls, have been documented. The goal of this project is to eradicate feral cats and increase seabird colonies on San Nicolas Island

by expanding the current and ongoing control efforts of the U.S. Navy. This action will explore various techniques for feral cat eradication, but will use methods that pose the least risk to the native state threatened island fox. This project is expected to begin in Summer 2008.

ASSP BRCO CAAU
WEGU XAMU PIGU

Restore Seabirds to the Baja Pacific Islands

Historically, both Coronados and Todos Santos Islands supported important seabird colonies, including Cassin's auklets, Xantus's murrelets, California brown pelicans and double-crested cormorants. In addition to negative effects from DDT, seabird populations on these islands also declined due to the presence of introduced animals (goats, burros, cats, rabbits) and human disturbance. With the many recent successful removals of introduced species from these islands, opportunities exist to enhance the recovery of these seabird colonies within the Southern California Bight. On the Coronado Islands, restoration will include using social attraction techniques (such as decoys and vocalizations), improving nesting opportunities with artificial nests, and reducing human disturbance. On the Todos Santos Islands, restoration actions would include social attraction techniques, improving nesting opportunities with artificial nests, shielding lights, and the reduction of human disturbance. A request for proposals will be released in early 2008 with restoration efforts beginning in Spring 2008.

ASSP BRCO BRPE
CAAU DCCO PECO
WEGU XAMU BLSP

*These projects will undergo additional NEPA and/or CEQA documentation (and associated public review) to detail specific methodologies, expected benefits and impacts, and mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts.