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Seabird Colony Protection Program

Program Goal

To improve the survival of California's seabird species by reducing human disturbances at their breeding and roosting colony sites from Point Sur to Point Reyes, working in collaboration with State and Federal agencies and non-governmental organizations.



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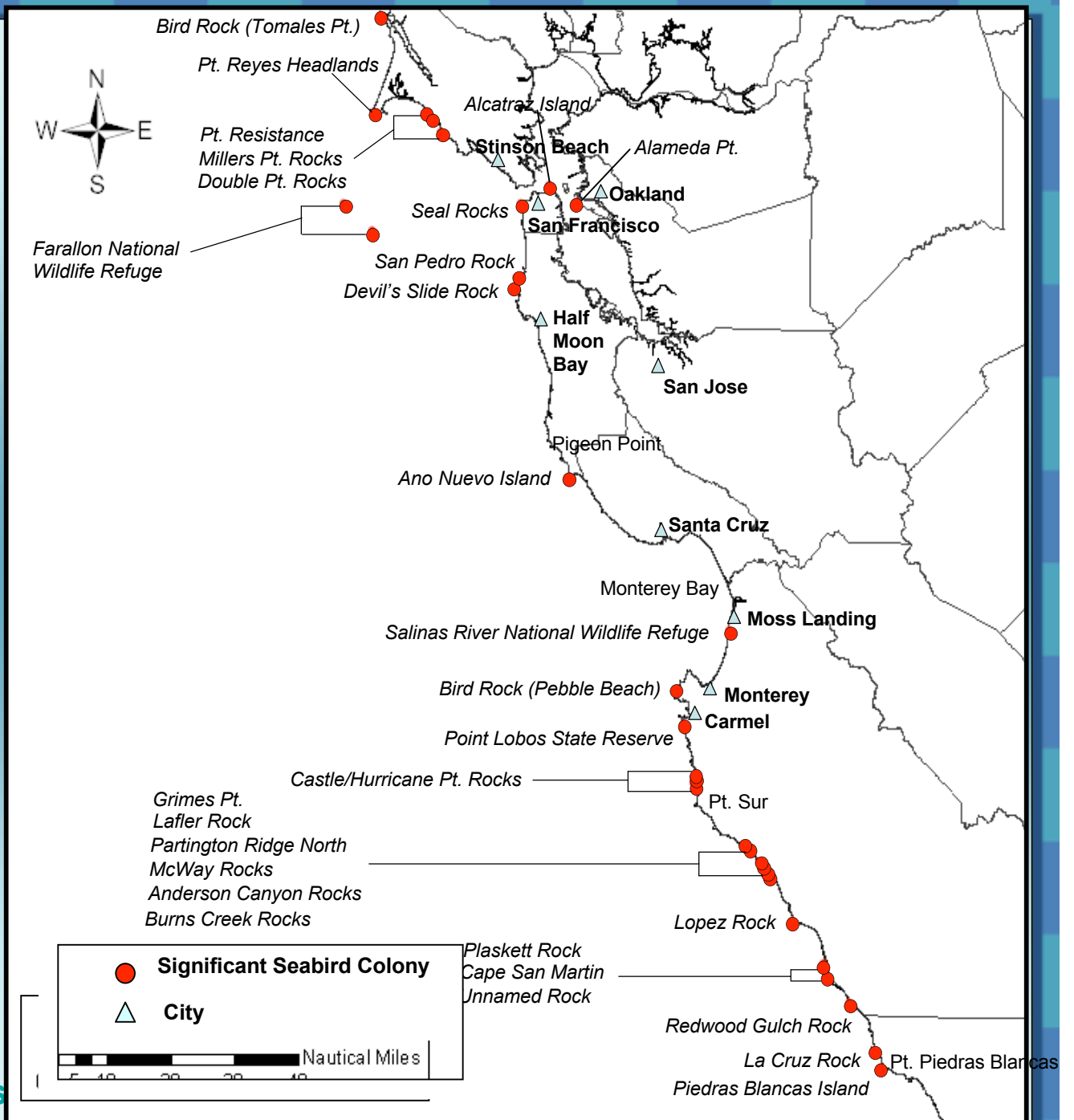
Seabird Colony Protection Program

Focus Area

Pt. Reyes to
Pt. Sur



Res



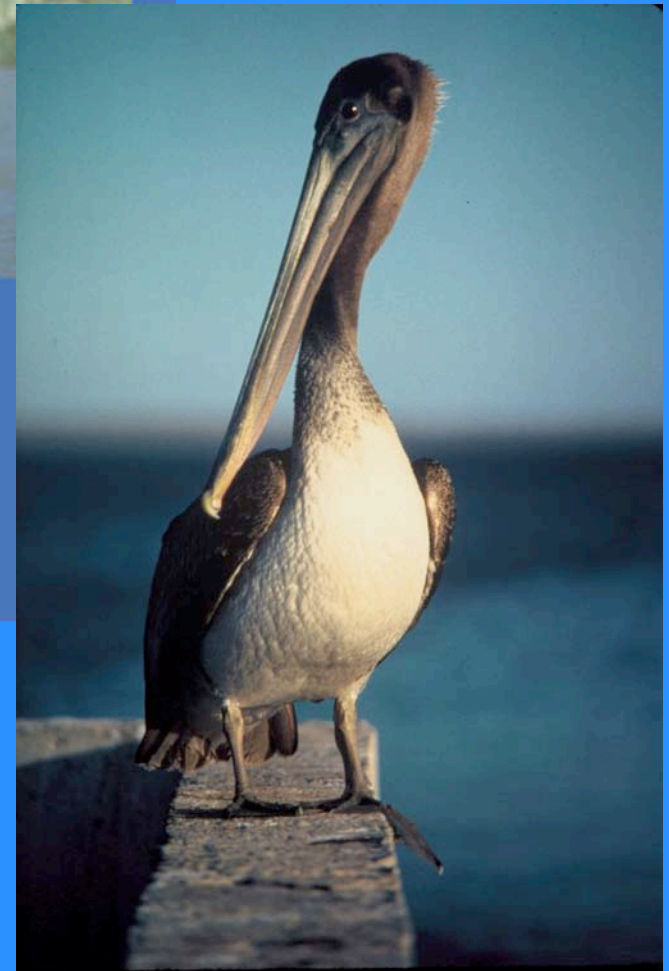
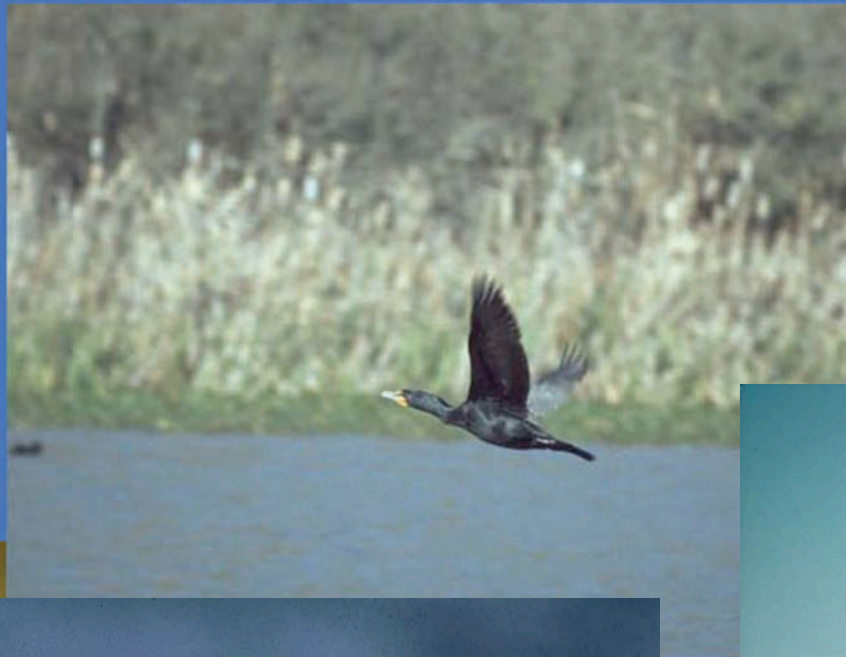
Seabirds of Concern

Seabirds are highly susceptible to negative impacts to their populations caused by human disturbance.



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Seabirds of Concern



Seabirds of Concern

Other surface-nesting, burrow-nesting and roosting seabirds



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassin's_Auklet



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Workshop November 3, 2005

- ⊗ Reviewed findings from monitoring efforts;
- ⊗ Identified types of seabird disturbances and prioritized outreach strategies; and
- ⊗ Discussed possible regulatory and management strategies.



Top Three Disturbances

- 1) Low-Flying Aircraft: Helicopters have been shown to cause the most flushing per incident.
- 2) Boats: In areas that are regularly monitored, boats have caused the most severe observed impacts.
- 3) Humans on Foot: humans on foot are currently considered a moderate problem for the Central California offshore colonies. They have not been an observed source of disturbance at some colonies, but do remain a threat at certain mainland breeding sites.



Recommended Strategies and Program Action Items

Monitoring

- General

Education and Outreach

- General
- Low Flying Aircraft
- Vessels
- Humans on Foot

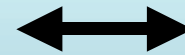
Enforcement and Coordinated Management

- General
- Low-Flying Aircraft
- Vessels



Technical Advisory Committee

- NOAA
- Bureau of Land Management
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- CA Dept. of Fish and Game
- CA Coastal Commission
- CA Boating and Waterways
- CA State Lands Commission
- CA State Parks
- US Coast Guard



NMSP



GFNMS Advisory Council



- Education and Outreach WG
- Enforcement and Coordinated Management WG



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Final Action Plan October 2006



SEABIRD COLONY PROTECTION PROGRAM



ACTION PLAN



October 2006

Seabird Colony Protection Program Technical Advisory Committee

REPRESENTATIVE	AGENCY
	FEDERAL
Sarah Allen/Ben Becker Maria Brown	Point Reyes National Seashore Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary
Rick Hanks	Bureau of Land Management, California Coastal National Monument Manager US Fish and Wildlife Service
Jim Haas Daphne Hatch Mendel Stewart/Joelle Buffa	Golden Gate National Recreation Area USFWS, San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Dan Torquemada/Lisa Querin	NOAA, Office of Law Enforcement
	STATE
Chet Bardo Dan Blankenship	California State Parks California Department of Fish and Game, Oil Spill Response and Prevention
Vivian Matuk	California Coastal Commission and California Department of Boating and Waterways
Gary Strachan John Ugoretz	Año Nuevo State Reserve California Department of Fish and Game
	FEDERAL
Jennifer Boyce Daniel Welsh	NOAA Restoration Center US Fish and Wildlife Service
	STATE
Steve Hampton	California Department of Fish and Game, Oil Spill Response and Prevention
Joanne Kerbavaz Jennifer Lucchesi	California Department of Parks and Recreation California State Lands Commission

Funding for this program provided by the Command Trustee Council.



10/6/06

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Working Groups

Education and Outreach Representation

- **SAC Rep: Bob Breen**
- MBNMS
- USFWS
- California Boating and Waterways
- PRBO Conservation Science
- NPS
- Oikinos
- Stakeholders (2 pilots and a recreational boater)



Enforcement and Coordinated Management Representation

- **SAC Rep: Bob Wilson**
- MBNMS
- NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
- USFWS
- BLM
- NPS
- Department of Fish and Game
- California Boating and Waterways
- Stakeholders

Program Fact Sheet Created



FACT SHEET SEABIRD COLONY PROTECTION PROGRAM

PURPOSE AND NEED

Breeding seabird species, particularly those species that nest on cliffs or offshore rocks, are highly susceptible to human disturbances. The potential to harm or disturb breeding seabirds can come from various sources: popular coastal activities including kayaking, boating and coastal hiking; planes and helicopters; water-based ecotourism such as wildlife watching or diving; and fishing operations. When human disturbance events occur near seabird colonies, the birds can vacate their nests, leaving their eggs and chicks unprotected from predators and adverse weather conditions. In addition, eggs and chicks may be dislodged from the rocks or moved into areas where they may be attacked or killed. Repeated disturbance may result in total colony abandonment.

Currently, no coordinated management and conservation program for seabird colonies and roosting sites exists in California, while overlapping jurisdictions have made it difficult to adequately address human disturbance issues. Seabird restoration efforts have been underway for several years, but human disturbance has been a main factor impeding recovery at some colonies. An organized outreach and education program, focused on individuals who recreate and work along the coast, is the best way to boost these recovery efforts.

PROJECT GOAL

To improve the survival of California's seabird species by reducing human disturbances at their breeding and roosting colony sites from Point Sur to Point Reyes.



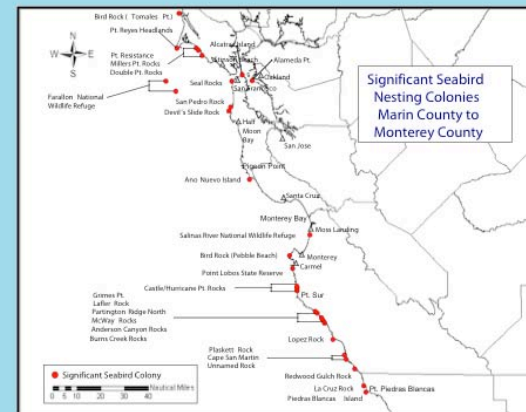
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Seabird Colony Protection Program (SCPP) is funded by the Command Oil Spill Restoration Fund. The successful prosecution of the Command and the recovery of natural resource damages mark the first time a tanker vessel has been held accountable for illegally dumping oil in California. Common Murres, Marbled Murrelets and other seabirds were killed and many miles of beaches between Ano Nuevo and Pacifica were lightly oiled. An estimated 3,000 gallons of oil was spilled and oil sat offshore of the San Mateo County coast for approximately four days before any came ashore. Natural resource injuries included \$4,000,000 in estimated resource damages, as well as 1,490 Common Murres and other surface-nesting seabirds killed.

These damages spurred the formation of the Command Oil Spill Natural Resource Trust. The SCPP is overseen by the Trustees, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) is taking a lead coordination role in implementing the SCPP in collaboration with NOAA Restoration Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other sanctuaries, agencies and organizations.

For more information or questions regarding the Seabird Colony Protection Program please email California.Seabird@noaa.gov.

HOW CAN I HELP PROTECT SEABIRDS?



FOLLOW THESE RESPONSIBLE WILDLIFE VIEWING GUIDELINES:

- Avoid getting too close to the colonies listed on this map.
- Be aware of the wildlife around you. Note the behavior of birds as you approach.
- Head bobbing, calling, and fluttering are all signs that you are too close.



ADDITIONAL TIPS TO REMEMBER:

- AIRCRAFT:**
- Remain 2000 feet above coastal shoreline and islands. Avoid sudden changes in direction, altitude and speed. In designated marine sanctuary zones, it can be a violation to fly below 1000 feet.
- BOATING:**
- Watch and avoid seabird roosting, feeding, and nesting areas.
 - Steer around groups of birds rather than through them.
- FISHING:**
- Do not chum if seabirds are nearby, and keep all food and bait covered.
 - Do not throw fishing line into the water, and use barbless hooks or artificial lures when possible.
- HIKING:**
- Watch quietly, from a distance, and keep noise to a minimum, maintaining a viewing distance that does not disrupt birds.
 - Do not feed or attempt to feed seabirds.



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Pilot Outreach Packet



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex
P.O. Box 524, Newark, CA 94560



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary
Fort Mason, Building 201, San Francisco, CA 94123

March 6, 2006

To All Pilots:

During the breeding season, from **March 15 to August 15**, seabirds are particularly sensitive to aircraft disturbance.

What happens when aircraft fly too close to colonies?

- It disrupts nesting activities and causes adults to flush from their nests, which can break and knock eggs from the nest, or it leaves eggs and chicks exposed to predators.
- High levels of disturbance, including frequent disturbance or a single, severe event, can cause colony abandonment.

Where do seabirds nest?

- Seabirds nest along the coast on most offshore rocks, islands, and cliffs. Endangered Least Terns nest between runways at the former Alameda Naval Air Station in San Francisco Bay.
- The most sensitive colonies located from Marin to Monterey counties, including Alameda County, are shown on the accompanying maps.

What can you do to prevent seabird disturbance?

- Fly at least **2,000 feet** away from the nesting colonies.
- Avoid sudden changes in direction, altitude, and speed near these areas.

It's the LAW!!!

- Disturbance of wildlife by aircraft can be a violation of 50CFR19.11, punishable by a \$1,000 citation or a mandatory court appearance that could result in a fine of up to \$10,000, one year in jail, aircraft forfeiture, and/or revocation of pilot's airman certificate.
- The following can be a violation under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act: 1) disturbing seabirds or marine mammals by flying motorized aircraft at less than 1000 feet over designated zones within the Gulf of the Farallones Sanctuary; 2) flying motorized aircraft at less than 1000 feet over designated zones within the Monterey Bay Sanctuary; or 3) taking any marine mammal, sea turtle or seabird in or above the Monterey Bay Sanctuary (15 CFR, Part 922, Subpart H; and Subpart M, Appendix C). See attached "Agencies with Overflight Restrictions" for specific zones.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE!

PLEASE POST THESE ITEMS TO YOUR BULLETIN BOARD AND DISTRIBUTE TO OTHER PILOTS
For more information please contact Kelley Higgason at (415) 561-6622 ext.202.

Sincerely,

Mendel Stewart
Project Leader
San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Maria Brown
Superintendent
Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary



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Overflight Restriction Map



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Pilot Flight Book Leaflet

PREVENT WILDLIFE DISTURBANCE

- It is recommended to **remain at least 2000 feet AGL** when flying within 1/4 mile of the coast, over offshore rocks and islands or within California National Marine Sanctuaries
- Avoid sudden changes in direction, altitude, and speed
- Avoid flying directly over, and making multiple passes over seabird and marine mammal colonies and resting areas
- If birds or marine mammals are observed fleeing or reacting to your presence, vacate the area
- Report wildlife disturbances caused by low flying aircraft to the **NOAA Enforcement Hotline: 1-800-853-1964**



IT'S THE LAW!!!

- Harassment of wildlife by aircraft can be a violation of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service law, punishable by a \$1,000 citation or a mandatory court appearance that could result in a fine of up to \$10,000, one year in jail, aircraft forfeiture, and/or revocation of pilot's airman certificate. Harass means to disturb, worry, molest, rally, concentrate, harrass, chase, drive, herd, or torment.
- In addition to the 1,000 ft AGL overflight restrictions within the local national marine sanctuaries (see map inside), the following can be a violation under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act: taking any marine mammal, sea turtle or seabird in or above the Monterey Bay Sanctuary. "Take" means: (1) if listed as endangered or threatened: to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect or injure, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct; (2) for any other: to harass, hunt, capture, kill, collect or injure, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. This includes... to operate a vessel or aircraft.
- Download the file titled, "Agencies with Overflight Restrictions" for a list of state and federal regulations and authorities related to aircraft disturbance at:
www.farallones.noaa.gov/ecosystemprotection/mapsandregulations.html

PILOTS: PLEASE HELP PROTECT MARINE WILDLIFE OF CENTRAL AND NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



For more information
please contact:
California.Seabird@noaa.gov
or visit the following websites:
www.farallones.noaa.gov/ecosystemprotection/seabirdprotect.html
www.fws.gov/sfbayrefuges/index.htm
www.sanmateocountyparks.org

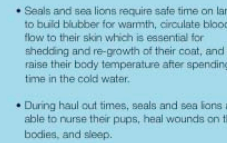
For more information on the National Marine
Sanctuary Program, please visit:
www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov

It is very important for seals and sea lions to haul out on intertidal ledges, beaches, and rocky inlets. At haul out sites, resting marine mammals can be frightened into the water by **LOW FLYING AIRCRAFT**.



During pupping season,
LOW FLYING AIRCRAFT

- Can cause a mother and pup to become separated
- Can result in stampedes which may cause trampling and death of animals



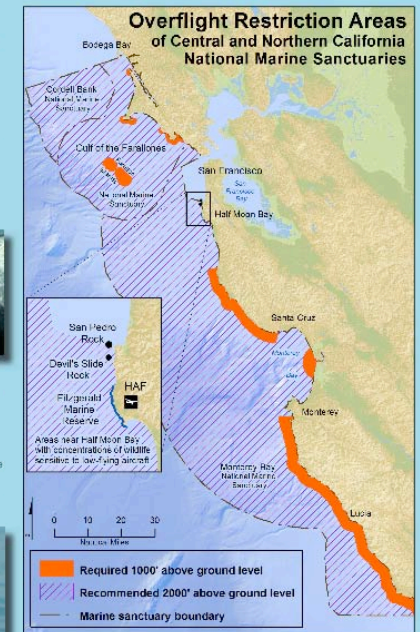
Seabirds nest along the coast on most offshore
rocks, islands, and cliffs.

LOW FLYING AIRCRAFT

- Disrupts nesting activities and causes adults to flee from and abandon their nests, which can break and knock eggs from the nest, or leave eggs and chicks exposed to predators.

- Monitoring data has shown that high levels of disturbance, including frequent disturbance or a single severe event, can cause complete breeding season failure of a seabird colony, and/or result in colony abandonment.

- Many seabirds need locations on shore where they are safe from predators to rest, preen, sleep, and in the cases of pelicans and cormorants, to dry their feathers.



For more details on these overflight restrictions, please visit:
www.farallones.noaa.gov/ecosystemprotection/mapsandregulations.html



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Fishing/Kayaking Shows and Expos



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Website

<http://farallones.noaa.gov/ecosystemprotection/seabirdprotect.html>

ecosystem protection | seabird colony protection program

[Workshops](#) | [Seabird Publications](#) | [Action Plan](#) | [Maps and Regulations](#)

[Click here for the Live Murre Cam](#) at Devils' Slide Rock.

Seabird species, particularly those species that nest and roost on cliffs or offshore rocks, are highly susceptible to human disturbances. When human disturbance events occur near seabird colonies, the birds vacate their nests, leaving their eggs and chicks unprotected from predators and adverse weather conditions. In addition, eggs and chicks may be dislodged from the rocks or moved into areas where they may be attacked or killed. Repeated disturbance may result in total colony abandonment.

The potential to harm or disturb breeding seabirds can come from various sources such as a number of popular coastal activities including kayaking, boating and coastal hiking; flying planes and helicopters; water-based ecotourism such as diving or surfing; and fishing operations. Increased public awareness, coupled with coordinated management and strategic partnerships is necessary to effectively address the sources of seabird disturbance.

The Seabird Colony Protection Program (SCPP) is funded by the [Command Oil Spill Restoration Fund](#). (308KB PDF) The successful prosecution of the *Command* and the recovery of natural resource damages mark the first time a tanker vessel has been held accountable for illegally dumping oil in California. Common Murres, Marbled Murrelets and other seabirds were killed, and many miles of beaches between Año Nuevo and Pacifica were lightly oiled. Nesting seabird populations are significant living resources of Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) and its surrounding waters, with the Farallon Islands supporting one of the largest concentrations of breeding seabirds in the contiguous United States. The islands, waters, and surrounding coastal rocky shores and sandy beaches, are breeding seabird hotspots that were possibly affected by the *Command* spill.

The goal of the SCPP is to improve the survival and recruitment of California's seabird species by reducing

Easy Way: Google GFNMS, Click on the Ecosystem Protection Button

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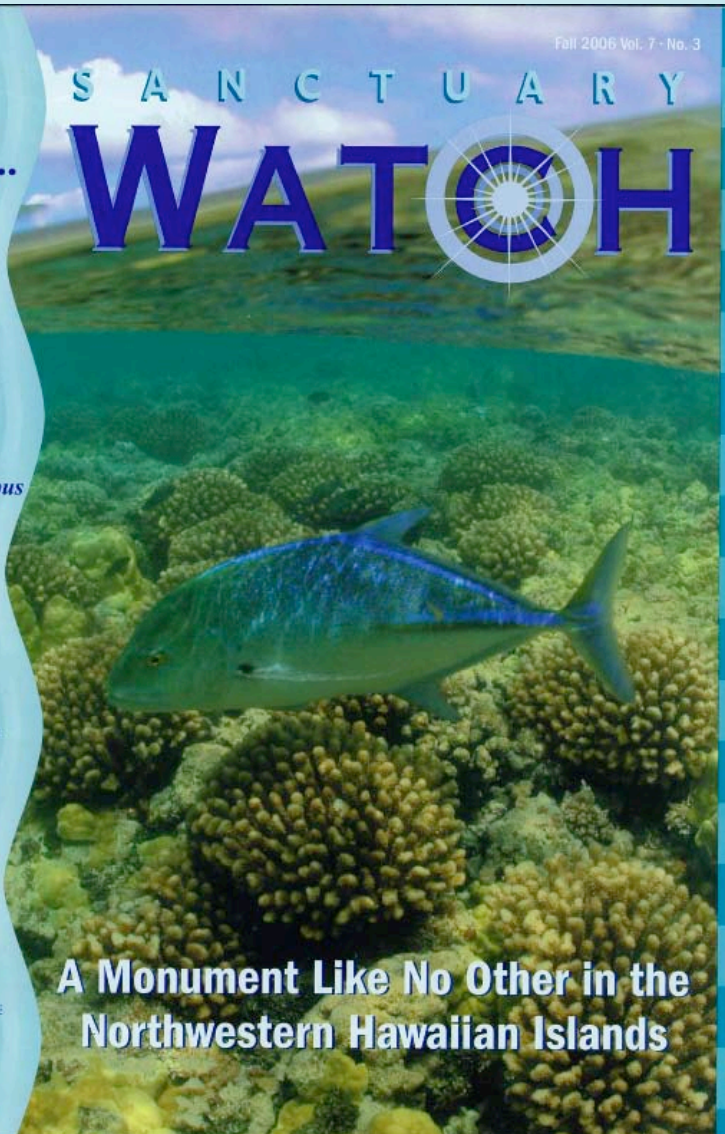
Feature Articles

Fall 2006 Vol. 7 - No. 3

S A N C T U A R Y
W A T C H


Inside...

- New Coral Discovery*
- Saving Seabirds*
- Sanctuary Discovery Centers*
- Critter Files: Dumbo Octopus*
- Star of the Sea: Jean-Michel Cousteau*
- Sanctuary Voices: James L. Connaughton*



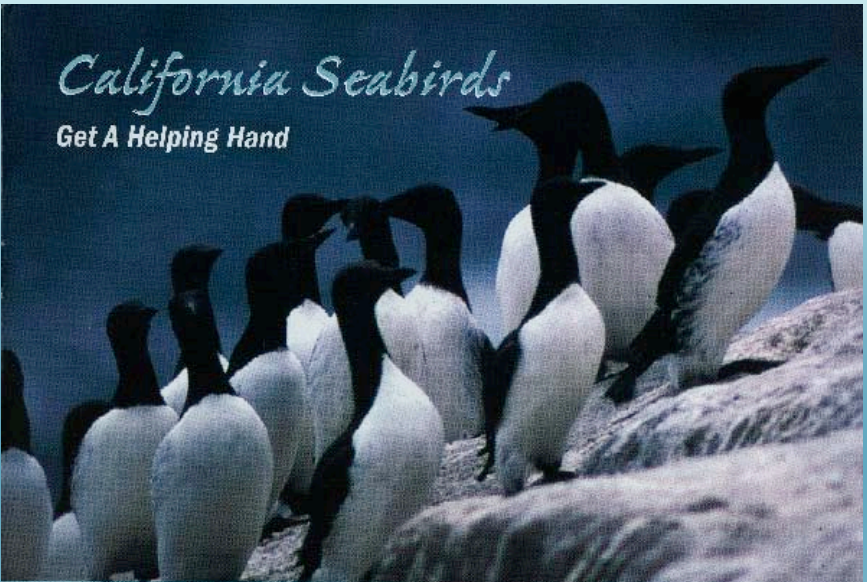
A Monument Like No Other in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES



California Seabirds

Get A Helping Hand



The NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program and other federal agencies aim to protect and restore populations of seabirds along the Central California coast, the three common murres, whose numbers declined dramatically in the 1980s. Photo: NOAA

Seabirds. They are as much a symbol of the ocean as ships, sailboats and sandy beaches, and are featured in countless photographs, paintings, films, books, and even songs about the sea. But along California's central coast, their numbers have been nothing to sing about.

Over the past century, seabird populations in the region have been on a downward slide, and humans have been a big part of the problem. By the late 1980s, tens of thousands of birds had been killed by gill nets, spill incidents and other human activities, leaving once thriving nesting grounds virtually barren. In 1986, more than 6,000 murres were killed by a single tanker spill off San Francisco.

One of the most significant threats that humans pose to seabirds, say scientists, comes from disturbing the birds where they nest and breed.

"Too often, when people get too close to the bird colonies, whether by aircraft or by boat, the birds scatter en masse," says Jennifer Hoyle, a restoration ecologist with NOAA's Restoration Center. "When this happens, nests, eggs and chicks are abandoned, leaving them vulnerable to the elements and exposed to predators like gulls and ravens. Repeated disturbances can result in birds abandoning their colonies forever."

But help is on the way. To put seabird colonies on California's central coast back on the road to health, NOAA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and several California state and non-governmental agencies have created the seabird Colony Protection Program, an innovative outreach and monitoring effort that solicits the help of those who use and enjoy the sea, shore and sky to minimize their impact on seabird nesting and breeding grounds.

"We are excited about developing this program," says Karen Reyna, a resource protection specialist with Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. Reyna coordinates the effort for the NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program. "It is a chance to address human disturbances through an organized, monitoring and management system, and restore once thriving seabird populations."

Nesting seabird populations are significant living resources of Gulf of the Farallones sanctuary and its surrounding waters, with the Farallon Islands supporting one of the largest concentrations of breeding seabirds in the contiguous United States.

To get the bird numbers healthy again, the seabird program team will apply creative outreach efforts and rely on prevention.

Continued on pg. 73

Poster Presentations

Pacific Seabird Group Annual Meeting, California and the World Ocean Conference, Fish and Wildlife Service Annual Conference, Coastal Zone 07



CENTRAL CALIFORNIA COAST SEABIRD COLONY PROTECTION PROGRAM

KAREN REYNA, KELLEY HIGGASON, GERARD J. MCCHESENEY, JENNIFER BOYCE AND RICHARD T. GOLIGHTLY



BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Seabird Colony Protection Program is a new program aimed at improving the survival and recruitment of Central California Coast seabird colonies harmed by the 1998 Command oil spill. An estimated 1,400 Common Murres and other surface-nesting seabirds were killed or injured, and many miles of beaches between Año Nuevo and Pacifica were lightly oiled. Specifically, an estimated 3,000 gallons of IBF-380 Fuel Oil No. 6) was spilled and oil sat offshore of the San Mateo coast approximately four days before any came ashore.



The Command was held criminally accountable for illegally dumping oil, which led to the recovery of \$4,000,000 for natural resource damages. These damages spurred the formation of the Command Oil Spill Natural Resource Trust and the Command Oil Spill Restoration Fund. This program will use a portion of these funds to address one of the biggest obstacles to the recovery of these populations: human disturbance. Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary is taking a lead coordination role in implementing the program in collaboration with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other sanctuaries, agencies and organizations.



PROGRAM GOAL:

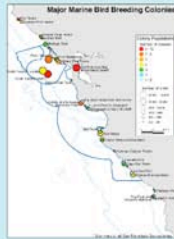
To improve the survival and recruitment of seabirds by reducing human disturbances at breeding and roosting sites from Point Reyes to Point Sur, with an emphasis on species most affected by the Command oil spill.

DISTURBANCE AT A GLANCE:

The program's primary target species are seabirds that nest and roost on the surface of cliffs or offshore rocks including: Common Murres, Brandt's Cormorants, Double-crested Cormorants, Pelagic Cormorants and Brown Pelicans. These populations are still recovering from past declines. Restoration efforts, such as the restoration projects at Devil's Slide Rock and Castle/Hurricane Rocks, have been underway for several years, but human disturbance has been identified as a main factor impeding recovery at some colonies.

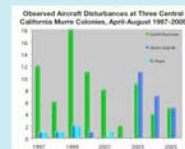
Human disturbance impacts seabird survival and recruitment by: disrupting courtship, nest defense, nest prospecting, and foraging; increased egg and chick abandonment or loss; increased stress levels; and higher energy costs.

High levels of disturbance, including frequent disturbance or a single severe event, can cause colony abandonment.

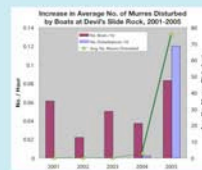


TOP THREE TYPES OF OBSERVED DISTURBANCE:

1) **LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT**- including law enforcement, military and private planes and helicopters, ultralight crafts, commercial or film crews and media. Aircraft disturbance has been the biggest problem and is increasing in some areas. Helicopters have been shown to cause the most flushing per incident.



2) **BOATS**- including kayakers, wildlife viewing boats, commercial and recreational fishing vessels, private motorized vessels and jet skis. Boats have caused the most severe observed impacts, but tend to be less frequent.



3) **HUMANS ON FOOT**- including beach walking and recreation, coastal hikers and pets that are unleashed in sensitive areas. Humans on foot have not been an observed problem for the offshore colonies, but it can be a problem at mainland breeding sites.



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- Documenting types and levels of human disturbance at Central California Coast seabird colonies and any changes occurring over time as the program is implemented;
- Increasing seabird disturbance information exchange at key events/venues;
- Increasing awareness among organized users who impact nest prospecting, pre-breeding, roosting, nesting and breeding seabird colonies;
- Increasing Central California Coast seabird protection coordination among agencies, non-governmental organizations, researchers and stakeholders;
- Increasing the number of agencies, non-governmental organizations and interested public reporting incidents of seabird disturbance; and
- Documenting program success levels through colony monitoring/surveillance.



THE PROGRAM WILL TAKE A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO ACHIEVING ITS GOALS BY:

- Determining where and what kind of human disturbance has the greatest effect on seabirds;
- Providing education and outreach at organized events, association meetings, conferences and air and boat shows, while targeting ecotourism vendors and individuals such as researchers, rangers, sea kayakers, coastal recreational users, commercial and recreational fishermen, whale watchers and students;
- Reviewing regulatory approaches, performing a gap analysis, and determining current and future enforcement and regulatory needs; and
- Working with enforcement agencies on the federal, state, and local level to ensure laws that protect seabirds are enforced.



What's Next?

- Tide Books
- Updated Map of Breeding and Roosting Sites
- Updated Brochure
- 2 Displays
- Outreach Poster
- Scoping New Venues
- PSAs and Articles in Stakeholder Publications

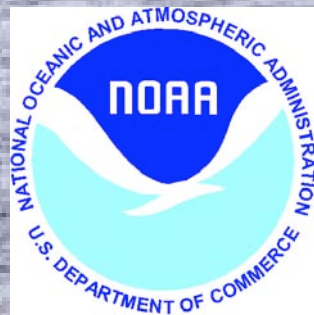


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Desired Results

- 1. Elimination or reduction of human disturbances to seabird colonies**
- 2. Increased awareness of potential impacts of adverse human-seabird interactions**
- 3. Increased awareness of safe methods of observing seabirds while engaged in recreation**
- 4. Increased ocean user/pilot awareness**
- 5. Increased awareness of decision makers**

Thanks to the *Command* Oil Spill Natural Resource Trustee Council





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