



San Nicolas Island Seabird Restoration Project Fact Sheet

Goals of Project:

- Improve nesting success for seabirds (Brandt's Cormorants, Western Gulls)
- Restore island ecosystem by removing non-native predator
- Provide benefits to threatened and endangered species on San Nicolas Island

San Nicolas Island:

- 14,562 acres (ac) in size.
- U.S. Navy owned island used for launching missiles and communication
- Cats were originally brought to the island by Navy personnel
- Cats were found across the island by the late 1950s

Partnership: U.S. Navy, Montrose Settlements Restoration Program, Island Conservation, Institute for Wildlife Studies, The Humane Society of the United States

Unique Species of San Nicolas Island:

- State threatened San Nicolas Island Fox
- Federally threatened Island Night Lizard
- Federally threatened Western Snowy Plover
- Endemic Deer Mouse

Key Dates:

- 2004-2008: Project planning
- 2006: Feasibility Study
- Dec 2008-Jan 2009: Pilot Project with The Humane Society of the United States
- May 2009: Completion of Final Environmental Assessment
- June 2009: Start of official project
- June 2010: Last cat detected and removed
- Monitoring: Dec. 2009 – Dec. 2011
- Confirmation Phase: June 2010-Dec. 2011

Highlights:

- Largest-sized island in world for successful cat eradication without use of toxicant
- 5th largest island in world to successfully complete a cat eradication
- Largest island in United States to complete cat eradication to date

Cats/Foxes:

- Total of 66 cats removed (of which 59 were transferred off-island to The HSUS)

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- Total of 10 kittens were transferred off island and adopted to indoor-only homes
- Cats were transferred to the Fund for Animals Wildlife Center in Ramona, CA for permanent care. The welfare of the cats was an important consideration during the project
- A total of 1,011 fox captures of 459 individuals occurred with an injury rate of less than 8%. The majority of the injuries were minor and required little, if any, intervention
- There was an extensive program in place to minimize impacts to the fox (automated trap telemetry system, modified leg-hold live traps, Fox Hospital, avoidance of fox breeding season, weather restrictions, caring for foxes not injured by cat removal project)

Project Complexities:

- Presence of endemic, State threatened Island Fox
- Navy operations, area closures
- Live removal and transfer of cats off-island
- Marine mammal, seabird nesting area restrictions
- Avoidance of extensive archaeological sites on island
- Rugged terrain, windy conditions

Funding:

- The Montrose Settlements Restoration Program spent ~\$3M on project (includes all planning, project, and mitigation costs from 2006-2012)
- Navy also contributed in-kind resources
- The HSUS funded transportation of cats off-island and is providing long-term care of cats

Confirmation Phase:

- 54 Reconyx cameras were deployed across the island
- Total # Camera Trap Nights since last cat detection (6/27/10-12/9/11): 27,224 trap nights
- Distance covered doing sign search since last detection (6/27/10-12/9/11): 172.8 mi (278.04 km)
- A Biosecurity Plan for San Nicolas Island is in place to prevent future introductions

Project Monitoring:

- Island Fox- Baseline surveys were conducted in 2007, 2010, and will be repeated in 2012. Navy also does annual fox monitoring
- Seabirds- Aerial surveys were conducted in 2007, 2008, 2010, and 2011. Annual surveys will continue to be conducted
- Island Night Lizard, Deer Mouse, Western Snowy Plover- The Navy conducts annual monitoring for these species
- Landbirds- The Navy will conduct monitoring of landbirds in 2012