



501 W. Ocean Blvd. Suite 4470 • Long Beach, CA 90802 • 562.980.3236

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Yvonne Menard, National Park Service, 805-658-5725
Milena Viljoen, MSRP, 562-980-3236
Jane Hendron, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 760-431-9440

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

First Peregrine Falcon Chicks on Santa Barbara Island in over 50 years.

SANTA BARBARA ISLAND, CA – Last Friday, for the first time in over 50 years, biologists discovered a pair of peregrine falcon chicks on Santa Barbara Island. Although successful nests have been recently recorded on other Channel Islands, this is the first documented breeding success on Santa Barbara Island since about 1940. Peregrine falcons disappeared from the island in the mid-1950s.

Peregrine falcons, bald eagles and many seabirds in the southern California marine environment, have had problems breeding in recent decades due to DDT and PCBs that contaminate the local food web. The chemicals can cause birds to lay thin-shelled eggs that dehydrate or break during incubation.

Peregrine falcon nests, or eyries, rest high on cliffs and are usually very difficult to monitor. This one was no exception – biologists thought the eggs were still nearly a week away from hatching, if at all.

“I climbed to the eyrie, hoping to recover an unhatched egg we could use for contaminant analysis,” said Brian Latta, the field biologist from the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Group (SCPBRG) who discovered the chicks. “Imagine my surprise to find two recently hatched young and another beginning to hatch!”

Although a pair of peregrine falcons established themselves on Santa Barbara Island by 1995, no successful reproduction had been documented or confirmed at this nest site until last week. For the last decade, lack of funding and logistical issues made monitoring peregrine falcons on Santa Barbara Island difficult.

This year, however, the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program funded SCPBRG to conduct more comprehensive monitoring as part of an effort to restore a variety of resources injured by past DDT and PCB releases.

“The more we know about the status of peregrines on the Channel Islands, the better we can protect and restore them,” said Greg Baker, program manager for the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program. “As top predators of their food chain, peregrine falcons are also an excellent indicator species of the overall health of the ecosystem in which they live.”

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The **Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group** (SCPBRG) was formed in 1975 to restore an endangered peregrine falcon population in California. Based out of U.C. Santa Cruz, they captive breed and released over 800 peregrine falcons throughout California, including the Channel Islands. Today, they continue to monitor and work with peregrines and other birds of prey in the Channel Islands and California. More information on SCPBRG can be found at www.scpbrg.org

The **Montrose Settlements Restoration Program** (MSRP) is a multi-agency effort to restore resources injured by past DDT and PCB releases. The program uses funds from a 2000 settlement with the Montrose Chemical Corporation and other defendants to fund bald eagle, seabird, and peregrine falcon restoration projects, as well as projects to restore fishing and fish habitats. Further information on the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program can be found at: www.montroserestoration.gov.

This publication is available at: www.nps.gov/chis/parknews/newsreleases.htm