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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Stork Visits Bald Eagles on Santa Cruz Island

SANTA CRUZ ISLAND, CA – Yesterday, biologists announced that a pair of bald eagles laid an egg in a nest on Santa Cruz Island off the coast of Southern California. This is the same pair that, last year, produced the first bald eagle chick to hatch naturally in over 50 years on the Channel Islands.

This is an event that carries significance for the recovery of bald eagles on the Channel Islands. Like bald eagles on the mainland, human pressures such as hunting caused a severe decline in bald eagle populations by the 1960s – a decline worsened by heavy use of DDT throughout the nation, which caused them to lay thin-shelled eggs that broke in the nest. Bald eagles were listed as federally endangered in 1973, and are currently considered “threatened”.

However, unlike bald eagles on the mainland, which rebounded after DDT was banned in the 1970s, eagles on the Channel Islands have not fared as well. Hundreds of tons of DDT waste products released into the ocean south of Los Angeles continue to contaminate the regional food web and affect eagle reproduction on the islands.

After approximately 35 days of incubation, the egg is due to hatch in the second week of April. Last year, the same pair successfully reared a chick, raising hopes for the future of bald eagles on the Channel Islands. The 2006 chick, wing-tagged as “A-49,” remains healthy and resides on the northern Channel Islands.

Over the past five years, biologists from the Institute for Wildlife Studies have released over 60 bald eagles on Santa Cruz Island as part of a study to see whether birds on the northern Channel Islands would be able to breed on their own.

“We will be watching this egg closely, as each successful hatching of a bald eagle brings us hope for the recovery of the ecosystem on the Northern Channel Islands” said Russell Galipeau, Superintendent, Channel Islands National Park.

The bald eagle efforts on Santa Cruz Island are funded by the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program (MSRP), a multi-agency effort that uses money from a 2000 settlement with the DDT manufacturer to fund the bald eagle restoration work on the Channel Islands. MSRP also funds efforts across southern California to restore other resources injured by DDTs and PCBs in the marine environment.

Watch the Eagles Live

Progress of the egg is being watched closely not just by biologists, but by the public too. Thrilled with public interest in last year’s chick, MSRP, the National Park Service, and the Ventura County Office of Education unveiled a webcam that brings live images of the nest into the schools and homes of millions of Americans. This year, the EagleCAM is back, with added audio to enhance the viewing experience.

The Santa Cruz Island EagleCAM and associated discussion board can be viewed at: http://chil.vcoe.org/eagle_cam.htm. A blog by biologists from the Institute for Wildlife Studies at www.eaglefix.com completes the multimedia experience.

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Further information on the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program can be found at: www.montroserestoration.gov.

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