

# Shoring up Seabird Protection in CINMS

By Sean Hastings



Bright lights, loud noises, low flying aircraft, kayaking in sea caves, invasive species, oil pollution—all are potential threats to the sensitive and diverse seabirds found in CINMS.

Disturbing and/or flushing birds off their nests and roosting sites can stress the birds and leave their eggs and young vulnerable to predators. An entire breeding season can be lost due to a single disturbance incident. The significance is dire to many species that are listed as endangered, threatened, rare, or in decline, including the California Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*), Xantus's Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*), and Ashy Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma homochroa*).

## A Multi-Agency Effort

Seabirds are afforded protection by the Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. Regulatory agencies include the Channel Islands National Park (CINP), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and CINMS.

Current CINMS regulations create a one-mile, 1,000-foot overflight restriction zone around the Channel Islands to minimize disturbances to seabirds from low overflights. In addition, oil development and exploration and the discharge of pollutants is prohibited within CINMS.

DFG regulations require shielding bright lights and set a maximum wattage for squid vessels to curtail the impacts of fishing lights on sensitive seabird colonies.

CINP has produced a video depicting proper etiquette for kayaking and exploring near sensitive bird areas. CINP and CINMS continue their work to sensitize wildlife-oriented businesses so that the region's seabirds will be protected for generations to come.

A suite of regulatory measures, such as the development of a Squid Fishery Management Plan, proposed marine reserves or no-fishing zones, and new CINP and CINMS management plans will broaden the scope of seabird protection to address threats and to be consistent with other seabird protection laws and regulations.

In particular, the proposed establishment of marine reserves offers protection to seabirds by minimizing recreational and commercial fishing interactions where reserve areas abut roosting areas, nesting colonies, and feeding grounds.



CINMS' Sanctuary Naturalist Corps volunteers educate visitors about Sanctuary marine life, including seabirds.

CINMS, CINP, and other agencies dedicate staff time and resources to the long-term monitoring of seabirds. As knowledge improves on the ecology of seabirds in CINMS, management approaches can be further refined.

## Seabird Entanglement Education and Outreach Program

CINMS education staff is developing a seabird entanglement education and outreach program for Santa Barbara and Ventura with support from the American Trader Trustee Council. The goal of the program is to increase public awareness of seabirds and reduce unnecessary human disturbances. Program partners include the City of Santa Barbara's Bird Education Program and the Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network.

The outreach program has three components: pelican signs, brochures, and an Entangled Seabird Rescue Training Program. All three components will be implemented in 2002.

Pelican signs will be posted at fishing piers and other areas in Santa Barbara and Ventura that are heavily used by both anglers and pelicans. The signs will encourage fishers to recycle lines and hooks, and to avoid harassing and feeding pelicans.

Brochures will inform the public about the location and season of the pelican closure area at Anacapa Island and contain Tips for Fishing that apply to all seabirds. The brochures will be distributed at bait shops, restaurants, sportfishing operations, CINMS outreach events, and Visitors Centers.

The Entangled Seabird Rescue Training Program will train community volunteers and sport fishing/whale watching operators on techniques for capturing and treating hooked or entangled seabirds. CINMS will oversee the program, and the Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network will conduct the training.

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