



Globally Important Bird Areas



San Clemente Island, California

Ornithological Highlight: Two federally listed endemic subspecies are found on the island.

Location: in the ocean about 70 miles offshore, northwest of San Diego

- *Coastal California* (NABCI Bird Conservation Region #32)
- *Central and Southern Calif. Coast and Valleys* (PIF Physiographic Area #90)

Size: 35,800 acres

Ownership: U.S. Navy

Habitats: beaches, maritime shrubland

Land use: training facility for the Navy and Marine Corps

Site description: This 21-mile-long island and its surrounding waters make up an important military training area. There are buildings and a landing strip associated with military activities. The island rises to an elevation of 730 feet.

Birds: The San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike is one of the rarest birds in North America. A subspecies of the more widespread Loggerhead Shrike, it lives only on San Clemente Island. The San Clemente Sage Sparrow, a federally listed threatened subspecies, inhabits the shrub habitat along the island's west shore. Snowy Plover also nests on its beaches.

Conservation issues: The Navy uses San Clemente Island as a naval bombardment area to calibrate ships' guns. The island is also used to conduct Marine and Navy SEALs training exercises. ABC and several partners on its Policy Council have encouraged the Navy to reduce military operations such as bombardment and Marine training exercises, especially during shrike nesting. The Navy has retained a full time shrike recovery coordinator, and is now spending about \$2.5 million annually to restore the shrike, whose numbers in the wild had shrunk to just 14 birds.

In January 2002, 71 shrikes were detected on the island, up from 39 in January 2001 and the low point of 14 in the spring of 1999. Much of the increase is due to a successful captive breeding program conducted by the San Diego Zoo, in addition to improved breeding and fledging success in the wild and to supplemental feeding of released birds over the winter. In all, 53 birds were released from captivity in 2001, and in that year 21 pairs of wild shrikes produced nestlings, contrasted with only 4 pairs in 2000. Predator control of introduced rats and cats is ongoing and the island's plant nursery is propagating more than 1,000 native plants for shrike habitat enhancement. The Navy has also installed artificial perches at sites where captive shrikes are released and is beginning a habitat evaluation system based on characteristics of occupied territories. Point Reyes Bird Observatory does the shrike monitoring and the predator

management program to protect nesting shrikes and their offspring. The carrying capacity of the island is estimated at 550 to 700 birds, but to reach even half that number in 20 years will require continued population monitoring, captive propagation and release, predator management, and habitat conservation.

Visitor information: The island is not open to visitors.

References:

San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike homepage: <http://www.iws.org/shrike.htm>

San Clemente Sage Sparrow homepage: <http://www.iws.org/sparrow.htm>

San Clemente Island web site: <http://www.scisland.org/>