

## INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this book is twofold: to provide general information for anyone interested in the California islands and to serve as a field guide for visitors to the islands. The book covers both general history and natural history, from the geological origins of the islands through their aboriginal inhabitants and their marine and terrestrial biotas. Detailed coverage of the flora and fauna of one island alone would completely fill a book of this size; hence only the most common, most readily observed, and most interesting species are included.

The names used for the plants and animals discussed in this book are the most up-to-date ones available, based on the scientific literature and the most recently published guidebooks. Common names are always subject to local variations, and they change constantly. Where two names are in common use, they are both mentioned the first time the organism is discussed. Ironically, in recent years scientific names have changed more recently than common names, and the reader concerned about a possible discrepancy in nomenclature should consult the scientific literature. If a significant nomenclatural change has escaped our notice, we apologize. For plants, our primary reference has been *The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California*, edited by James C. Hickman, including the latest lists of errata. Variation from the nomenclature in that volume is due to more recent interpretations, as explained in the text.

Certain abbreviations used throughout the text may not be immediately familiar to the general reader; they are as follows: sp., species (singular); spp., species (plural); n. sp., newly described species; and var., variety.

Because this book covers only California islands, some definitions are in order. Although the islands off northern Baja California, Mexico, are in the California floristic province, we do not discuss them except as

they relate to biogeographic distributions. Numerous small islets and rocks occurring along the coast are not considered, and the many large islands in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River deltas are also not covered. The main emphasis of the book is the Channel Islands that range along the coast from Point Conception in central California to San Clemente in southern California. We have also included the Farallon Islands or Farallones, Año Nuevo Island, and several islands in San Francisco Bay, including Alcatraz, Angel Island, Brooks Island, Browns Island, the Marin Islands, and Yerba Buena Island.

The islands have been grouped geographically so that the Northern Channel Islands (Anacapa, San Miguel, Santa Cruz, and Santa Rosa), the outer Southern Channel Islands (San Clemente, San Nicolas, and Santa Barbara), and the islands in San Francisco Bay are discussed together. The most frequently visited of the Southern Channel Islands, Santa Catalina, is discussed in its own chapter. Significant introductory material relevant to other islands is also found in the chapter on Santa Catalina Island. Each chapter focuses on an island's history and natural history, with a special emphasis on features that are interesting or unique. Although plant communities are covered for every island, a community is discussed in detail only in the chapter dealing with the island on which it is dominant. Thus the most thorough discussions of Coastal Sage Scrub and Island Chaparral occur in the chapter on Santa Catalina Island, and Mixed Evergreen Forest is discussed only in the chapter on islands in San Francisco Bay.

Several chapters discuss features that relate in general to all of the islands. Chapter 1 deals with biogeography and ecology, Chapter 2 with geology, Chapter 3 with early human history, and Chapter 4 with marine life.

Santa Catalina Island, the most visited of all the California islands, receives up to 10,000 people per day during the summer months, and more than 1.3 million people visit Santa Catalina by boat each year. At Channel Islands National Park, about 220,000 people go to the visitor center each year and about 40,000 people actually set foot on one or more of the Northern Channel Islands. In the San Francisco Bay area, visitorship is rapidly increasing. In 1997 Alcatraz was the most-visited island, with about 1.2 million visitors, and visitorship on Angel Island was nearly 300,000.

Santa Barbara Island and the Northern Channel Islands (Anacapa, San Miguel, Santa Cruz, and Santa Rosa) make up Channel Islands National Park. Anacapa, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz Islands are regularly visited by groups interested in birds, seals, sea lions, or various other aspects of the islands' natural history. Because good field guides to the birds and

marine mammals of these islands already exist, only the more common species are included here. However, because information on terrestrial plants is primarily located in scientific publications and not yet in field guides, plants are covered in more detail, with emphasis on unique or endemic species.

The reader interested in more specific information on a given subject or island can consult the scientific literature, and a list of selected references on California islands has been included. Companions to this volume include *Introduction to Seashore Life of the San Francisco Bay Region and the Coast of Northern California* by Joel W. Hedgpeth, *Seashore Plants of California* by E. Yale Dawson and Michael S. Foster, *Underwater California* by Wheeler J. North, *Marine Mammals of California* by Robert T. Orr and Roger C. Helm, *Marine Food and Game Fishes of California* by John E. Fitch and Robert J. Lavenberg, *Seashore Life of Southern California* by Sam Hinton, *Water Birds of California* by Howard L. Cogswell, and *A Natural History of California* by Allan A. Schoenherr.

There are numerous ways to reach Santa Catalina; ferries depart several times daily on a year-round schedule from Long Beach, Newport Beach, and San Pedro. A ferry has also been proposed for Dana Point Harbor. Contact Catalina Express in Long Beach or San Pedro, Catalina Cruises in Long Beach, or Catalina Passenger Service in Newport Beach. Air transportation is provided by Island Express in Long Beach and San Pedro, and Island Hopper/Catalina Airlines in San Diego. Tours and lodging are available for visitors to Avalon or Twin Harbors, and campsites are available at Blackjack Mountain, Hermit Gulch, Little Fishermans Cove, Little Harbor, and Parsons Landing.

Channel Islands National Park can be reached by boat or air. The boat concessionaire is Island Packers in Ventura, and air travel can be arranged by calling Channel Islands Aviation in Camarillo. All of the islands offer campsites. Bed-and-breakfast options at Smugglers' Cove and Scorpion Ranch on Santa Cruz Island are no longer available. For more information, contact Channel Islands National Park in Ventura.

San Clemente and San Nicolas Islands are the property of the U.S. Navy. Visitors are not allowed on these islands without special permission, although the coastline, with its many coves and abundant marine life, is accessible to fishermen and sailors.

Of the islands in San Francisco Bay, Alcatraz and Angel Islands are the easiest to visit. Ferries transport visitors to Angel Island from Berkeley, San Francisco, and Tiburon daily during the summer. Moorings and slips are available for boats in Ayala Cove on Angel Island. Most of the island features good hiking and bicycling roads. Many visitors bring picnic

lunches and spend the day playing baseball, hiking, or sunning on such beaches as Swimmer's Beach. Ferries to Alcatraz Island are also frequent during the summer months, departing from Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. Access to the remainder of the islands in San Francisco Bay is limited without a special permit, but Dolphin Charters in El Cerrito offers tours of the northern California islands, including the Farallons.