

# SEABIRDS OF AÑO NUEVO

A guide to the breeding seabirds  
of Año Nuevo State Park



Año Nuevo Island lighthouse, California State Parks

## History

In 1872 a fog signal station was established on Año Nuevo Island and later a large residence was built for the light keepers and their families to live on the island. The station was closed in 1948. Seabird populations rebounded on the island after it was protected as a state preserve in the 1960s. Access to the island is now limited to scientific researchers to protect breeding seabirds and their colonies.



Speckled seabird eggs on Año Nuevo Island in 2017

## Why Año Nuevo Island?

To raise their young, seabirds require islands that are free of mammalian predators and human disturbances. Año Nuevo Island is one of the few suitable breeding sites for seabirds in central California and its protection is crucial for maintaining healthy seabird populations.



Construction of pipes and early nest restoration. (Photo credit: Oikonos)

## Habitat Restoration

2017 marked the 25th consecutive year of seabird research and conservation at Año Nuevo Island. Each year seabird population, reproduction, and diet is monitored by a small crew of biologists.

Habitat restoration for nesting seabirds focuses on protection of nest burrows from trampling and erosion damage. A custom sea lion-exclusion fence (above) protects core nesting areas from trampling by sea lions. Ceramic artificial nest sites (above) were installed to provide auklets with erosion-proof nest sites that mimic natural burrows. In areas protected from trampling, native plants have been restored to stabilize eroding soil and prevent loss of burrowing habitat.



## More Information

### Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge

Oikonos is an international non-profit organization dedicated to studying and protecting imperiled ecosystems with a focus on engaging diverse communities through scientific and artistic collaborations. Oikonos works with the State Park to study and protect seabirds at Año Nuevo. Learn more at [www.oikonos.org](http://www.oikonos.org).

### Año Nuevo State Park

Learn more at [www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=523](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=523)

Please return to Año Nuevo Visitors Center for reuse



Produced By Danielle Devincenzi

In collaboration with UC Santa Cruz Professor Karen Boll



# Breeding Seabirds

Seabirds at Año Nuevo lay eggs in April, hatch chicks in June, and finish breeding in August

Seabirds such as Auklets, Pigeon Guillemots, and Gulls mate for life and share parenting duties equally

Seabirds generally have long life spans: Rhinoceros Auklets can live to be up to 50 years old!



(Chris Wright, 2017)

## Rhinoceros and Cassin's Auklets

Nest in long underground burrows that they dig using their sharp toenails

Return to the colony only at night to avoid predators

Dive deep to catch fish and krill, propelling with their wings

Raise only one chick each year

Rhinoceros Auklets (below) can carry over 20 small fish in their bill at once

In 2017, 396 Rhinoceros Auklets and 136 Cassin's Auklets (above) nested on the island

Año Nuevo Island is one of only three breeding colonies in California for Rhinoceros Auklets



(BBA Studios, 2017)



## Pigeon Guillemots

Breed on Año Nuevo Island and on mainland cliffs

Nest in rocky crevices or earthen burrows

Feet and inside of their mouths are bright red

Active during the day and visible from the shores of Año Nuevo

## Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants

Raise one to four chicks per year, depending on food availability

Propel with their feet to dive and catch small fishes

Visible from shore year-round

Brandt's Cormorants (left) nest on flat areas on Año Nuevo Island

Pelagic Cormorants (right) nest on cliffs on the island and mainland, including on the eaves of the lighthouse keeper's house

Brandt's Cormorants are the most abundant nesting seabird at Año Nuevo, with 1,985 nests on the island in 2017



## Western Gulls

Gather seaweed, sea lion fat, and plants to make their nests on the island

Raise families of one to three chicks each year

Found on the Pacific coast of North America from Washington to Baja

Nine species of gulls visit Monterey Bay, but only Western Gulls breed locally

In 2017, 646 pairs nested on the island



## Black Oystercatchers

Nest in rocky areas on the island and mainland

Look for their bright red bill and feet, and listen for their loud rattling call from the Año Nuevo shores year-round

