

*Alcatraz Island Seabird
Interpretation, 2007-2008*



Final Report to the
Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA)
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC)

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INTRODUCTION

In 1993, GGNRA completed a management plan for Alcatraz Island, which included provisions for maintaining breeding populations of colonial waterbirds. This plan emphasized protection of the island's natural resources, while maintaining opportunities for visitor access, special events, and other island uses. To address protecting natural resources while maintaining visitor and event services, PRBO, with support from GGNPC, is conducting education and outreach programs about Alcatraz seabirds. Our objectives in 2007-2008 were to reduce human-caused disturbance to nesting seabirds on Alcatraz by promoting safe-use actions to the public and specific user groups, as well as to improve public interest in and understanding of seabirds as a critical natural resource on Alcatraz as a way of reducing conflict between cultural and natural resource management. This report is a summary of our education and outreach efforts for 2007-08.

PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Building on past outreach efforts centered on reducing disturbance to the seabird colonies on Alcatraz, we conducted a coordinated outreach program in 2007. Our actions were based on existing information on the causes of disturbance to Alcatraz seabirds. The following programs were delivered:

International Migratory Bird Day Celebration

On 2 June we conducted the second on-island celebration and public awareness day of Alcatraz seabirds. With more activities planned than in 2006, we reserved tickets to the island for groups to attend the IMBD event. Volunteer docents and PRBO and GGNRA staff were stationed at each of the key breeding colony sites easily viewed by island visitors. At these areas visitors viewed seabirds through spotting scopes and binoculars provided by PRBO and NPS and learned about the natural history of the birds. The electric shop was opened to visitors and operated as a seabird education center where visitors sipped shade-grown coffee, ate shade-grown chocolate, walked through a photo gallery of the wildlife of Alcatraz, and received materials about seabirds, including the Blue Ocean Institute Guide to Ocean Friendly Seafood card. Other activities included a station where visitors could check out binoculars, look through field guides, and participate in a scavenger hunt. Visitors were also able to learn and see for themselves first hand through microscopes how scientists study the diet of the birds of Alcatraz. A booth was also staffed by representatives of the Golden Gate Audubon Society.

Alcatraz Seabird Docent Program

On 21 March, we began training several volunteers to become seabird docents on Alcatraz to help educate the public about seabirds found on the island and to potentially help reduce human-caused disturbances to their nesting areas. The first step in building a docent program was to develop a detailed curriculum and set of educational resources for the docents. The final product is the Alcatraz Seabird Docent Binder, which contains 27 pages of information helpful to docents in interpreting the natural history of seabirds, as well as some general information about Alcatraz. To deliver the resource binder and training outline, we held 2 classroom training sessions where we familiarized the docents with the National Park Service, PRBO, and the history of the island with a focus on the wildlife that inhabits it. We also held 1 field training session where we took the docents to the island and gave them an orientation on what a typical day for them would entail. A total of 10 docents were trained of which 7 completed the entire season.

The Alcatraz Seabird Docent Program was a huge success both for getting the word out about the importance of Alcatraz seabirds, as well as to connect a group of people with the island and the birds inhabiting it. The docents spent a total of 112 hours on the island and reached over 3,000 visitors.

On-island Tours and Presentations

Sara Acosta and PRBO intern, Amy Groesbeck delivered 4 presentations as well as led bird walks to on-island staff and other invited guests on various days between 10 May and 2 August, including, pre-season presentations on breeding ecology and sensitivity of nesting seabirds. Additionally, on the 12th of August during a special Alcatraz Anniversary event, we set up an interpretive station at the gull shack, overlooking breeding Western Gulls. We talked to the public about the seabirds and the natural history of the island. Attendance was good and feedback of its informative impact was positive.

Targeted Outreach to Key User Groups and the Public

To inform our targeted outreach efforts, we summarized disturbance data by user group (Table 1). From this, we developed a list of Bay Area marine and air operation groups to target. We then developed a presentation discussing the natural history of seabirds on Alcatraz, effects of disturbance, and ways to prevent disturbance by humans on foot, in boats, and in aircraft. Formal and informal presentations, meetings, media outreach, and delivery of disturbance reduction information are summarized in the table below.

Summary of Alcatraz Outreach Presentations Feb 2007-March 2008.

Date	Audience	# People
February 15, 2007	GGNRA Educators Symposium	50
Spring 2007	Letter to boating/rowing groups	Sent to 8 groups†
Summer 2007	Alcatraz Seabird Disturbance Podcast	www.yourwetlands.org
June 20, 2007	Hosted Seabird Colony Protection Program meeting on Alcatraz	10
July 4, 2007	Fisherman's Warf Canvassing*	9 fishers
July 26, 2007	Fisherman's Warf Canvassing*	5 fishers
August 22, 2007	National Wildlife Federation Magazine Interview‡	
January 4, 2008	Marin Audubon Society	8
February 2, 2008	SF Bay Flyway Festival	30
February 27, 2008	Golden Gate Breakfast Club	30
March 20, 2008	Berkeley Audubon Society	30
March 25, 2008	Golden Gate Audubon Society	30

* On 2 occasions in July, we passed out Alcatraz seabird ID cards including boater safety tips to fishers and tour boats along Fisherman's Wharf that frequent the waters near the island.

† Letters went to the following: Marin Canoe, Open Water Rowing Center (Sausalito), South End Rowing Club, Sea Trek (Hayward), Wahine Kayak, Bay Area Sea Kayakers, Pier 1 Harbor Master Hadley Prince.

‡ After an interview with National Wildlife Federation magazine, a short article will be published in a spring issue of 2008 highlighting unexpected places where people can get great views of wildlife, including Alcatraz Island.

Outreach Materials Created (summary)

- Docent binder
- Seabirds of Alcatraz
- Disturbance reduction presentation
- Boater/Kayak Disturbance Letter
- Boater Tips to Protect Seabirds

Outreach Recommendations

- Continue participation in central California Seabird Colony Protection Program (SCPP) to ensure that minimum approach distances are set to benefit Alcatraz seabirds.
- Work with NPS staff to develop interpretive signs and deliver tours around the island to help protect breeding seabirds as well as educate visitors about wildlife on this unique island.
- Continue the on-island docent program for seabird colonies during the nesting season
- Incorporate Alcatraz as a key outreach site for existing marine outreach programs (GFNMS Webs Under Waves and SCPP for example) since other seabird colony sites are largely inaccessible to humans.
- Deliver presentations and outreach materials to marine and air users during and just prior to the nesting season with an emphasis on the early part of the season as colonies are most vulnerable during this time.
- Continue outreach to on-island staff regarding Alcatraz seabirds, using the seabird training packet, three presentations, and bird tours delivered by PRBO on island biologists and/or docents.
- Conduct another International Migratory Bird Day celebration to reach the general public (June).
- Incorporate monthly/quarterly participation of PRBO outreach/biologist personnel into Bird Management Team Meetings
- Investigate recruiting environmental education graduate student (SFSU) to further outreach programs.

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Table 1. Summary table showing frequency (and percentage) of types of disturbances to Brandt's Cormorants on Alcatraz Island, 1997-2007.

Type of Disturbance	Number of disturbances observed											
	1997 (205.5 hours)	1998 (226.5 hours)	1999 (313.4 hours)	2000 (216.4 hours)	2001 (251.3 hours)	2002 ¹ (95.5 hours)	2003 ² (224 hours)	2004 ² (339.7 hours)	2005 (334.4 hours)	2006 (363.4 hours)	2007 (307.8 hours)	
External:	Marine traffic	38 (51%)	28 (30%)	98 (49%)	97 (48%)	79 (38%)	22 (33%)	92 (62%)	17 (40%)	17 (50%)	8 (30%)	35 (55%)
	Air traffic	20 (27%)	18 (19%)	59 (29%)	61 (30%)	102 (49%)	23 (34%)	47 (32%)	14 (33%)	13 (38%)	7 (26%)	7 (11%)
	Other	2 (3%)	4 (4%)	10 (5%)	24 (12%)	9 (4%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	4 (9%)	1 (3%)	1 (4%)	3 (5%)
Island-Based:	Human interference	5 (7%)	5 (5%)	3 (1%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (19%)	3 (2%)	5 (12%)	1 (3%)	9 (33%)	6 (9%)
	Interspecies event	3 (4%)	23 (24%)	26 (13%)	12 (6%)	10 (5%)	7 (10%)	4 (3%)	1 (2%)	2 (6%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
	Other	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
Unknown Cause:	6 (8%)	15 (16%)	5 (2%)	8 (4%)	5 (2%)	2 (3%)	2 (1%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (9%)	
Total:	74	94	201	203	207	67	149	43	34	27	64	
Frequency of disturbances³	0.36	0.42	0.65	0.84	0.82	0.70	0.67	0.13	0.10	0.07	0.21	

¹ The total hours observed was reduced in 2002 due to observer inconsistency.² In 2003-2007, includes extra disturbance monitoring on the North End of the island.³ This frequency represents the minimum number of disturbances per hour. Observers could not see the whole island at once, therefore the actual disturbance rate is likely to be higher.