

CELEBRATING THE VICTORIES

I was a junior in high school on a three-day ocean adventure with my dad and his friends in 1974 as we sailed among several islands of Channel Islands National Monument. Travel by boat was a very exciting prospect, and in the hours and days it took to navigate from nearby Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, Anacapa, and Santa Cruz Islands a change had begun to take place in me. Just 80 miles from home I was really a world away, enjoying a fresh breeze, warm sun, and good companionship. The experience was deeply satisfying and would help to form a lasting desire to incorporate nature, challenge, curiosity, and stewardship into my lifestyle and career. Though the work of the National Park Service may not have been much on my mind as we sailed, I took in the beautifully rugged scenery of Anacapa Island (photo) and wondered about its geology, the force of the surf pounding its rocky shores, and the animals and plants that must live there. At the time, I had no idea that the island had already lost some of its natural character and diversity on account of introductions of nonnative plant and animal species. From my perspective, it seemed a mysterious place.



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More than 30 years since my introduction to what is now Channel Islands National Park, nonnative species are still a tremendous conservation problem throughout the park. Despite this reality, we are able to report what is beginning to look like a solid victory on Anacapa: the recovery of a tiny seabird called Xantus's murrelet. A true highlight for this issue is the summary of monitoring results on page 9 that indicate a significant increase in nesting success and effort in the population of this rare and secretive species. This exciting turnaround comes almost certainly as a result of the recent, multiyear effort to eradicate nonnative black rats from the island. Though island ecosystems remain as vulnerable as ever to nonnative plant and animal invasions, I think it's important to recognize the undaunted efforts that led to this encouraging progress toward reestablishing Anacapa as a place that is more distinct—at least in terms of murrelets—than it was in 1974 or just a few years ago. I look forward to my next visit to the Channel Islands with the knowledge that a special black-and-white seabird is on its way to recovery. Our hats go off to the park staff and their hardworking partners and supporters for this terrific news.

Also in this issue, we mark a very different milestone in natural resource management with the announcement on page 12 of the publication of *Cougar Management Guidelines*. One of the first articles I edited for *Park Science* 11 years ago detailed a workshop to improve the understanding and management of cougar-human encounters, which were increasing in parks throughout the West. While that effort led to basic management guidelines applicable to several western national parks, the new guidelines—published independently with involvement of numerous collaborators, including the National Park Service—synthesize decades of research on cougar biology and conservation and are relevant wherever humans and cougars might meet. This authoritative resource should be very useful to biologists, managers, and others involved in making decisions regarding this complex human safety and wildlife preservation issue.

To my way of thinking, these are conservation victories because they advance resource management through science and deliver meaningful results on the ground. Moreover, these successes could not have been accomplished without persistence, professionalism, and collaboration—qualities that are extremely important for effective resource management. Given the continual challenges we face in our daily efforts to understand and conserve park resources, let's not forget to celebrate the victories as they occur.



Jeff Selleck