



Center for Natural  
Lands Management

News from ...

# Dana Point Preserve

Spring 2008

## Preserve Facts

- 29.4 Acres
- Federally endangered mouse: Pacific Pocket Mouse
- Federally threatened bird: Coastal California Gnatcatcher
- 89 Animal Species
- 105 Species of plants

## Preserve Manager

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## About Our Organization...

The Center for Natural Lands Management was founded in 1990 to protect sensitive biological resources through professional, science-based stewardship of mitigation and conservation lands in perpetuity.

## Inaugural Issue of Our Newsletter

This is the first newsletter of a series that you will receive periodically. This newsletter is being provided to all nearby residents of the Dana Point Preserve (Preserve). The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you updated on the conservation activities ongoing at the Preserve, owned and managed by the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM), and to share information on how you can help keep the Preserve beautiful and functional for the native species that live there. It will provide you with contact information should you have any questions

about CNLM, the Preserve, or any of the activities that may occur in there.

The best way to ensure you receive future issues of this newsletter is to contact the Preserve Manager, Lee Ann Carranza, with your specific contact information (name, address, phone, and e-mail address). Please indicate whether you would prefer to receive future newsletters electronically. This newsletter and future issues will be available on our website at [www.CNLM.org](http://www.CNLM.org) by selecting Preserves and then Dana Point.

## What is the Dana Point Preserve?

The Dana Point Preserve is owned and managed by the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM). It encompasses 29.4 acres of natural vegetation. The City holds a Conservation Easement that legally restricts the uses of the property to those that protect the sensitive native species within the Preserve.

The portion of the greater Headlands Reserve Project area, that CNLM owns and manages, consists of the headlands promontory, the land to be revegetated with native plants under Marguerita Road, and the other side of Marguerita Road to the top of the ridge (area outlined in red in the figure below). The

remaining natural habitat that can be seen surrounding the Headlands Reserve Project area will be the responsibility of the City of Dana Point. CNLM and the City of Dana Point will coordinate our respective management activities to benefit the sensitive species found on both our properties.

Through the generous donation of 15 million dollars by the Harry and Grace Steele Foundation, the Dana Point Preserve was purchased by CNLM. These funds also provided for an endowment to manage the natural resources on the Preserve in perpetuity.



Dana Point Preserve



## Future Public Use of the Preserve



Current condition of trail and trail fencing.

The Preserve is currently not open to public use due to ongoing construction activities. However, we are very interested in having the Preserve open to the public for safe use as soon as possible. We are targeting late 2008 or early 2009.

Once open to the public, the Preserve will only be available for pedestrians. No bikes or mechanized vehicles are allowed.

The Preserve will be open daily from 7 a.m. to Sunset (the trail will be patrolled and the gates will be locked 30 minutes after official sunset).

Although the City will allow dogs on leash on their parks, the Preserve does not allow any pets, including dogs, even if they are on a leash. This is not only because of pet waste, but more importantly because native birds perceive dogs as predators and expend energy and show other predator responses, which can result in harm to the birds, eggs,

and chicks. Studies have shown that birds exhibit this response to four-legged animals such as dogs and horses, but do not exhibit the same level of predatory response to pedestrians.

We would appreciate your cooperation in helping educate the public about the allowed activities on the Preserve.

A Preserve Manager will be on-site frequently once the trail is open to the public. However, if you need additional information or have a non-emergency issue, you can contact the Preserve Manager, Lee Ann Carranza, at 949-218-1145, or by cell phone at 949-690-1118.

At any time, if you notice any illegal activity, please contact the Local Police Department at 949-770-6011 or 911, if it is an emergency.

## Ongoing Activities by CNLM on the Preserve

The field season for biological monitoring on the Preserve has begun. The Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) Preserve Manager is conducting coastal California gnatcatcher surveys, predator monitoring (scat analysis), and pacific pocket mouse (PPM) habitat enhancement by removal of leaf litter/branches in open sand areas that could be used by PPM. The Preserve Manager will continue to patrol the Preserve and trail, pick up trash within the Preserve, and address any trespass issues.

CNLM will also be contracting expert biologists to conduct rare plant surveys and PPM monitoring. Please be aware that PPM monitoring is conducted in the evening hours. Typically traps are set around 5 p.m., checked around midnight, and dismantled around 5 a.m.

The coastal California gnatcatcher and PPM monitoring is overseen by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). All the biologists conducting such activities possess the necessary Federal and State permits to conduct such activities.

If cats are identified within the Preserve, the Preserve Manager will remove the cats using humane live traps and take them to the San Clemente/Dana Point Animal Shelter at 221 Avenida Fabricante in San Clemente. Please ensure your pet cat is not outside at night and has identification.

You may also see contractors employed by Headlands Reserve, LLC working on the trail, trail fencing, and removing non-native plant species within the Preserve.



2 of 3 gnatcatcher juveniles produced on the Preserve in 2007.

## Plants on the Preserve

Over 105 plant species native to southern California have been identified on the Preserve.

The predominant plant community type on the Preserve is coastal sage scrub. This is the same plant community type you see on Crystal Cove State Park. Coastal bluff scrub is also present on the southern and western bluff edges. It is comprised of coastal sage scrub plant species with the addition of specific rare plants, such as cliff spurge and California boxthorn.

Cliff spurge is limited in distribution due to its association with coastal bluffs. It is threatened by development and all populations are recommended by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) for preservation.

California boxthorn has limited distribution in southern California and Baja Mexico. It is considered threatened and rare by CNPS.

Another unique species identified by a Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) botanist in 2006 is *Aphanisma*. *Aphanisma* is only found from Santa Barbara to Baja Mexico and is in severe decline throughout its range.

CNLM will be monitoring the plant community types every three years and the rare plants annually.



California boxthorn



The cliff spurge population on the Dana Point Preserve is comparable only to that found in Baja Mexico.

## Wildlife on the Preserve

Over 89 animal species call the Dana Point Preserve home, including the Federally endangered pacific pocket mouse and Federally threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (bird).

The pacific pocket mouse (PPM) was thought to be extinct until it was discovered on the Preserve in 1993. They then looked elsewhere and to date the only other occurrences are two locations within Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. It is a small mouse with large cheek pockets that lives in burrows in sandy soil. It only comes out at night and hibernates most of the winter.

Now that PPM are likely done hibernating, one of the greatest threats to their survival is predation by house cats and feral cats. In a study conducted in San Diego, California, researchers, Crooks, K.R. and M.E. Soule, found on average each outdoor cat returned 24 rodents, 15 birds and 17 lizards per year (Mesopredator Release and avifaunal extinctions in a fragmented system, 1999, *Nature* 400: 563-566). For more information, visit the American Bird Conservancy website at [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org).

The coastal California gnatcatcher is found in coastal sage scrub habitat from Ventura County to Baja Mexico. Three pairs of gnatcatchers have been documented foraging and nesting on the preserve for several years. We are currently in the beginning of nesting season. We have four pairs of gnatcatchers within the Preserve and one pair already has a nest with four eggs.

Other interesting species that occur on the Preserve include: short-eared owl, orange throated whiptail (uncommon lizard), red coachwhip (non-venomous snake), bobcat, and a pair of peregrine falcons that roost on the North cliff face.



Pacific pocket mouse

(photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)



Male coastal California gnatcatcher



**Center for Natural  
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More Preserve details  
may be found on our  
website:

**[WWW.CNLM.ORG](http://WWW.CNLM.ORG)**

Click on PRESERVES  
and watch the video

*"Rise Early, Stay  
Late, and Take Care  
of the Land."*

## How You Can Help

You can help ensure the continued beauty of this preserve and the safety of its native species in the following ways:

- **Keep cats indoors, particularly at night;**
- Report feral cats to City and/or Preserve Manager;
- Do not feed stray and wild animals;
- Secure all trash receptacles when outside;
- When possible encourage visitors to the area to not litter and trespass onto the Preserve; and
- Contact the Preserve Manager with any concerns.



Red area is biological open space to be preserved. Solid black lines represent trails. Yellow circles represent informational signs. Connected black dots represent fencing. This is a figure from the April 2006 Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan prepared by URS Corporation.