

# News Release



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## HD Sealcam

# Año Nuevo State Park Installs New High Definition Video Cam of Elephant Seals

## HD Sealcam Arrives in Time for Winter Breeding Season

Año Nuevo State Park has installed a new High Definition (HD) Elephant Seal camera (or Sealcam) as part of its newly remodeled Marine Education Center. As it came on-line for the first time during testing, the comment heard most often was "Wow! That's incredible!"

"This new Sealcam will provide our visitors with a unique and extremely clear, close-up window into the world of these magnificent sea creatures," said State Parks Director Ruth Coleman. "I am excited that HD technology and solar energy enables our visitors to get the kind of view you would only get otherwise if you were actually sitting next to these animals."

For the first time in the history of the Reserve, live High Definition video of the Elephant Seals located on Año Nuevo Island will be displayed real-time on a large plasma screen in the Visitor Center. The new High Definition Sealcam is located a mile and a half off shore on Año Nuevo Island in the middle of a very isolated colony of the Northern Elephant Seals. It is necessary to have a camera, because the island is a marine reserve, a restricted-access location, that is set aside for protection of the seals and a camera is the only way for the public to view this unique natural setting.

Powered by green energy (a 720-watt photovoltaic solar system), the HD sealcam, with its thirty magnification zoom lens, will provide visitors with a spectacular new way to observe the Elephant Seals as well as the other extraordinary marine life that frequents the island. This new video portal onto the island produces a clarity of image that is only possible using a High Definition video format.

Año Nuevo State Park is one of the largest mainland breeding colonies in the world for the northern elephant seal, and the parks interpretive program attracts tremendous interest every winter during the Elephant Seal breeding season. Elephant Seals have gained their name because of their

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large size and the long pendulous noses on the males. The male elephant seals at the Año Nuevo measure fourteen to sixteen feet in length and weigh up to 5,000 pounds each.

While the northern elephant seals may be seen year-round at the reserve, the largest number of seals can be seen during their breeding season, which extends from December through March. The huge bull elephant seals engage in violent battles on the beach to establish dominance and to take control of their "harems". The females give birth to their young on the dunes. Most of the adult seals are gone by early March, leaving behind the weaned pups that remain through April.

### **How to Get to Año Nuevo State Park**

Año Nuevo State Park is located on the coast of San Mateo County, south of San Francisco and Half Moon Bay. From the north, drive to the town of Half Moon Bay and head south on Highway 1, about 25 miles to the Año Nuevo State Park entrance. Park in the visitor lot and walk the short path to the visitor's center. From the Santa Cruz Area, go north on Highway 1, about 22 miles.

### **Sealcam Aids in Scientific Research and School Programs**

Funded by donations, the Elephant Sealcam will also provide university researchers with an exciting new opportunity to remotely monitor the nests of Pelagic Cormorants that breed on Año Nuevo Island during the summer. In addition, live video from the Elephant Sealcam will also be used as part of the "Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students" (PORTS) program for classroom education programs on the Elephant Seals at Año Nuevo. (See <http://www.ports.parks.ca.gov> for more information about PORTS.)

### **Sealcam Available On-Line From Your Home Computer**

The dramatic video produced by the new Año Nuevo Elephant Sealcam will also be available on the State Park web in a lower resolution format. To view the video remotely, go to the State Parks Web Site at: [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=523](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=523)

During the breeding season, December 15 through March 31, daily access to the Reserve is available only via guided walks. Advance reservations are recommended for walks. Reservations can be made by calling 800-444-4445.

### **Editor's Note**

California State Parks can provide high-quality photographs for use with news stories by emailing Lindsay Oxford at [loxford@parks.ca.gov](mailto:loxford@parks.ca.gov). Her telephone number is (916) 654-7538. For great on-the-scene information, call Gary Strachan, the Supervising State Park Ranger, at the number listed in the contact section of page one. If you really want a great experience, just go see these 5,000 pound giants in person.

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