

# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2013

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A Sign of Recovery

## **Least Tern Colony at Malibu Lagoon, First Time in 73 years**

California State Parks, Angeles District, is pleased to announce that a colony of the federally-endangered California Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum browni*) is nesting at Malibu Lagoon State Beach. This is the first time nesting has been documented at Malibu Lagoon in 73 years.

The population of this species has been reduced by loss of habitat due to increasing development and recreational pressures and by predation by native and non-native species. Only two other nesting locations for this bird are found in Los Angeles County, at Venice Beach and the Port of Los Angeles.

California Least Terns nest on exposed tidal flats and beaches where vegetation is sparse. Their nests are slight depressions in the sand that contain small pebbles for camouflage. They are extremely vulnerable to trampling by humans and disturbance and predation by species such as dogs, crows and gulls. The terns hunt in shallow estuaries and lagoons where small fish are abundant and often feed near shore in the open ocean.

"We are obviously thrilled to have these birds nesting at Malibu Lagoon so soon after the completion of our lagoon restoration project," said Suzanne Goode, Senior Environmental Scientist at California State Parks, Angeles District. "The birds may have decided to move here after experiencing predation at other sites, but they obviously are finding Malibu Lagoon to their liking."

"Major credit goes to Los Angeles Audubon's efforts over many years installing protective fencing for the benefit of western snowy plovers at Malibu Lagoon" added Goode. "This year's installation protected a much larger area than before, and the terns have likely taken note of the secure space."

California State Park staff will be working closely with Los Angeles County Lifeguards and with the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors to monitor the nesting site and to keep beachgoers out of the fenced enclosure that has been set up to protect the birds. Particular attention will be paid to keeping all dogs off of the beach.

While the presence of nesting California least terns at Malibu Lagoon is the most exciting wildlife event since the completion of the Malibu Lagoon Restoration Project, park staff has also noted two sightings on the project site of the two-striped garter snake, a California Species of Special Concern, and an occurrence of the least Bell's vireo, another federally-endangered bird, north of the Pacific Coast Highway bridge.

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**California State Parks on the Internet: [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)>**

