

Feral Cats to be Eliminated from San Nicolas Island

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service makes final decision to protect native seabirds.

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The Humane Society of the United States will be allowed to take any healthy adult cats from San Nicolas Island and transport them to an approved facility. The feral cats are getting removed from San Nicolas Island for the sake of the native seabirds they hunt, the U.S. government has decided.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently unveiled the release of a final Environmental Assessment for the San Nicolas Island Seabird Restoration Project, and based on the comments received during the May-June 2008 comment period, the removal of an estimated 100-200 feral cats will proceed this year. The Navy-owned island is about 60 miles off the Southern California coast and provides nesting habitat for numerous native seabirds and shorebirds, as well as other threatened species.

Nonnative feral cats are affecting the native species on the island by preying on adult seabirds and their young, according to Fish and Wildlife Service. The public had a chance to give their input regarding the project, and a provision has been made, said Jane Hendron, spokeswoman with the Fish and Wildlife office in Carlsbad, Calif.

A change in the final project allows for the Humane Society of the United States to take any healthy adult cats from the island and transport them to an approved facility, Hendron said. All other feral cats will be trapped and euthanized.

The project calls for live trapping as the primary removal method. Specially trained dogs may be used to track the scent of feral cats, but won't have direct contact with them.

In addition, a trap-monitoring system will minimize the time animals are stuck in traps. Ultimately, the project will restore the island's natural balance, Hendron said.