CHANNEL ISLANDS
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

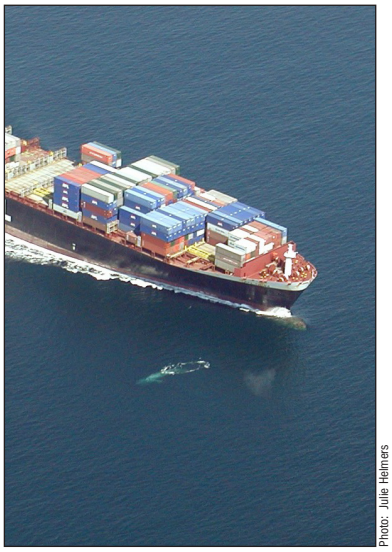

Photo: Julie Heimers

Sanctuary and Partners Work to Protect Whales from Ship Strikes

Following the unprecedented deaths of five blue whales in 2007, the sanctuary and NOAA Fisheries continued efforts this year to protect endangered whales from ship strikes in the Santa Barbara Channel. The sanctuary advisory council endorsed a response plan calling for a recommended reduced ship speed when high numbers of whales are present. During blue whale season (May-November), the sanctuary conducted aerial surveys, collected data from whale watch vessels, and provided weekly sighting maps to the shipping industry. The U.S. Coast Guard broadcast a NOAA-recommended speed reduction of 10 knots for ships transiting the Santa Barbara Channel. Progress was also made developing shipping industry outreach products and education strategies. In October a dead fin whale was found draped across the bow of a container ship arriving at the Port of Long Beach, but the location of the strike could not be determined. Efforts will continue as the sanctuary advisory council develops recommended long-term management options. For more information, visit http://channelislands.noaa.gov/focus/alert.html.

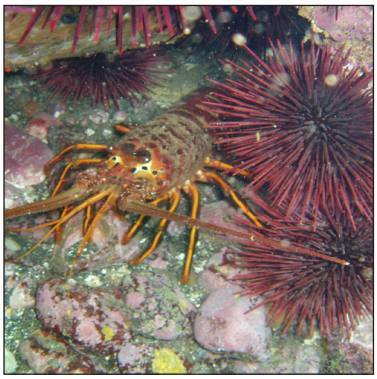

Photo: Claire Fackler

Channel Islands Symposium Examines Five Years of Research on Marine Reserves

The Channel Islands Marine Reserves Special Symposium in February 2008 focused on a five-year review of the state marine reserves established in 2003 in the Channel Islands. The symposium, which was co-hosted by Channel Islands sanctuary staff, featured speakers on education, enforcement and ecological monitoring. Studies by Channel Islands National Park and the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans indicated that densities and biomass of harvested fish species were higher inside the reserves than outside, as well as recording more and different kinds of fish inside reserves compared to outside. Research on tagged fish also showed that some fish species are remaining in the reserves for significant portions of time, thereby gaining protection from the reserves. Other speakers at the symposium discussed research on the effects of marine reserves on the Channel Islands' kelp forests; strategies for promoting stewardship of marine protected areas; and regulation enforcement and compliance statistics. Over 250 participants attended the three sessions, including scientists, resource agency personnel, fishers, members of the public, policy makers and educators. For more information, visit: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/channel_islands/specialsession.asp or download the booklet "Channel Islands Marine Protected Areas: First 5 Years of Monitoring" at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/channel_islands/fiveyears.asp.

Photo: NOAA

Maritime Heritage Cruise Surveys Ship, Aircraft Wrecks

A five-day expedition in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary aboard the NOAA research vessel *Shearwater* examined important maritime heritage artifacts off Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel Islands. The mission focused on ship and aircraft wrecks including the California Gold Rush passenger steamer *Winfield Scott* (1850-1853), fishing vessel *Reliance*, four-masted sailing bark *Goldenhorn* (1883-1892), three-masted sailing ship *Aggi* (1894-1915), passenger cargo steamer *Cuba* (1897-1923), and a Grumman AF-2W Guardian (1950-1954) antisubmarine aircraft. The shipwreck reconnaissance program at the Channel Islands dates back to the early 1980s.

Sanctuary maps available at sanctuaries.noaa.gov

Annual Event Recognizes 2008 Channel Islands Volunteers

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Channel Islands National Park hosted the Third Annual Volunteer Recognition Event for over 220 park and sanctuary volunteers on September 16, 2008. Awards were presented to several dedicated volunteers that have donated from five to fifteen years of service, and special recognition was given to the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps Volunteer of the Year (Catherine French), the Channel Islands National Park Lighthouse Award (Ed Mayer), and the Sanctuary Advisory Council Leadership Award (Dianne Black). With more than 29,000 volunteer hours donated in 2008, the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps program brings together over 150 trained volunteers who provide public outreach on vessels touring the sanctuary and in the park. They represented the sanctuary and park at 47 community events in FY08 and informally reached over 237,000 people from San Diego to Santa Barbara. These events included Earth Day festivals, whale festivals, school science fairs, boat shows, county fairs and conferences.

Sanctuary Advisory Council Endorses Ocean Acidification Report and Recommendations

With foresight and strong community leadership, the Channel Islands Sanctuary Advisory Council unanimously adopted a major report prepared by its Conservation Working Group: "Ocean Acidification and the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary: Cause, Effect, and Response." The predicted increase of ocean acidification, which is the ongoing decrease in pH of the Earth's oceans caused by uptake of human-caused carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, could harm many calcifying organisms such as corals, mussels, algae and plankton. The advisory council's 43-page report, developed through more than a year of literature research and consultation with experts, provides a thorough explanation of ocean acidification and includes a series steps NOAA can take in the sanctuary to focus research, monitoring and education on ocean acidification, and to demonstrate leadership on this important issue. The report is available at: http://channelislands.noaa.gov/sac/report_doc.html.

To learn more about these and other accomplishments, visit sanctuaries.noaa.gov