

## FIRST BREEDING RECORD OF THE SNOWY PLOVER FOR SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND

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On 22 April 1989 I observed an adult and chick Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) standing within 10 cm of each other at West Cove at San Clemente Island. I found the birds at 2355 hr by spotlight while surveying the intertidal zone and observed them for 2 minutes from a distance of 15 m. The adult then took flight, leaving the chick, which I subsequently captured and examined for 3 minutes. I took no measurements, but from its feather development I estimated the chick would not fledge for at least 1 or 2 weeks.

Snowy Plovers are fairly common winter visitors on San Clemente Island, as established by numerous reports (Howell 1917, Jorgensen and Ferguson 1984, Linton 1908, Page et al. 1986). However, there are no breeding records for this species at San Clemente Island. Breeding of Snowy Plovers on the California Channel Islands is documented only for Santa Rosa, San Miguel, and San Nicolas, with an estimated minimum of 130 breeding pairs (Page and Stenzel 1981).

San Clemente Island is the southernmost of the California Channel Islands, lying 103 km west-northwest of San Diego. Jorgensen and Ferguson (1984), Olmstead (1958), and Raven (1963) provided excellent descriptions of the Island, its geological features, and vegetation, respectively.

Large coastal sandy beaches typical of Snowy Plover breeding sites are absent from San Clemente Island. The 88.5-km coastline of the island is mostly rocky except for five small sandy beaches, constituting 4.6 km of coastline. Three of these, at China Cove, Horse Beach Cove, and Pyramid Cove, are at the southern end of the island; the other two, at Northwest Harbor and West Cove, are at opposite sides of the northern end of the island. West Cove is the smallest of the five, measuring only 120 m along the mean high tide line. Its depth, measured from the mean high tide line to clay soil substrate, is 105 m. In general, the beach is shaped like a half circle, with little to no vegetation and no adjacent dunes. The topography above mean high tide is flat.

At San Clemente Island, not only are sandy beaches few, but some of them are used for minor military maneuvers, and Island Foxes (*Urocyon littoralis*) and Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) frequent them. These factors combine to preclude the establishment of a large breeding population of Snowy Plovers on the island. Small groups or solitary pairs, however, may exist, having been overlooked previously because of infrequent and short sampling efforts.

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