

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release On Receipt (prepared 7/8/74)

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BROWN PELICANS, CLAPPER RAILS, AND LEAST TERNS AIDED IN CALIFORNIA

The future of three endangered bird species has been brightened by the establishment of a National Wildlife Refuge on the Seal Beach Naval Station, one of the few remaining natural salt marshes in Southern California, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service announced today.

A special act of Congress in 1972 set this area aside for study and establishment of formal boundaries.

"An area of 800 acres of marsh is now set aside for over 40 species of shorebirds," Greenwalt said. "The significance of the marsh is not so much in the number of birds it serves but in the fact that there is any wildlife present at all in an area so extensively developed and surrounded by human activities. This relatively small area is biologically essential to the perpetuation of the area's resident and migratory birds.

"Even more incredible is the presence of not one, but three, endangered bird species. The California least tern population appears to be successfully nesting in the marsh. This colony is the second largest remaining in California and is one of only two presently capable of producing significant numbers of young birds. Over 100 California brown pelicans roost on jetties in the marsh. About half of these are young, indicating that they, too, are nesting successfully. The California clapper rail is a resident species of the Anaheim Bay area. It is a very secretive species, but our biologists have spotted 50 clapper rails residing and possibly breeding in the marsh."

The area will be open to the public for observation, photography, and nature study. No hunting or water skiing will be allowed. The California Department of Fish and Game will participate in the care and preservation of the marsh.