

# ABOUT CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY



CATALINA ISLAND  
CONSERVANCY™

The Conservancy's mission is to be a responsible steward of its lands through a balance of conservation, education and recreation.

In 1975 the Santa Catalina Island Company deeded 42,000 acres of land to the newly formed Catalina Island Conservancy positioning the organization to enact wide scale restoration of the Island.

Early actions by the Conservancy focused on recovering native vegetation habitat that had been badly degraded. A critical first step to recovery of native vegetation was the need for removal and management of the large, non-native herbivores overgrazing the landscape. With the help of the Institute for Wildlife Studies (IWS), the voracious feral goats and pigs were eradicated from the Island by 2004. The Conservancy then launched the Catalina Habitat Improvement and Restoration Program (CHIRP). This program continues to combat invasive plants on the Island and to restore

native species to the landscape. The American bison are being maintained at a manageable herd size to minimize impact on the Island while supporting eco-tourism. The non-native California mule deer population, managed by CA Fish and Wildlife, continues to impact plant populations and solutions are actively being explored.

Island accessibility and safety are priorities of the Conservancy. New trails, signs and shade structures have made Catalina a world-class hiking destination enabling visitors from around the world to learn more about the Island's biodiversity.

See inside panel for spotlights on our conservation success stories.



## NATURALIST GUIDE

Catalina is one of eight Channel Islands located off the coast of California and the only one that is privately owned. It lies 26 miles from Los Angeles across the San Pedro Channel. It is the only privately owned Channel Island with 88% of its land mass under the care of the Catalina Island Conservancy. Located in one of only five Mediterranean climate zones on earth, the Island is comprised of Chaparral and Coastal Sage Scrub plant communities. These plants are adapted to the warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Catalina is the ancestral home of the Pimu Tongva.

## BE SAFE STEWARDS OF CATALINA ISLAND



Hiking permits are available online, at the Trailhead visitor center and the Nature Center. Campground reservations available through the Catalina Island Company

### CARE FOR CATALINA

- Pack out all trash and leave the area cleaner than you found it.
- Leave archaeological sites and natural specimens undisturbed.
- Do not feed wildlife.
- Clean your shoes and gear to prevent spreading invasive species.
- Boaters should check boats for stowaways, such as rats and raccoons.

### CARE FOR YOURSELF

- Make sure to carry an ample supply of water at all times and identify stops to refill water ahead of time.
- Wear sturdy, supportive and protective shoes, dress in layers and wear sunblock and a sun hat, regardless of the weather.
- Poison oak is common throughout Catalina's canyons and creek beds. Stay on established trails and wear long pants and long sleeve shirts. If you brush against poison oak, wash the affected area as soon as possible.
- Be aware of the current fire safety rules.
- Do not approach or harass wildlife and always maintain a safe distance.
- Rattlesnakes can be seen all year, but are more common between the months of April and October. Please be aware of your surroundings.
- Bison are wild animals. Stay at least 125ft from bison at all times and identify an escape route if you feel threatened.

### QUICK FACTS

- 76 square miles
- 60 miles of coastline
- 21 miles long
- 8 miles at its widest
- ½ mile at its most narrow
- 4500 Island residents
- 1 million annual visitors



## LEARN MORE THROUGH THE CONSERVANCY'S NATURALIST TRAINING PROGRAM!

### RECREATION INFORMATION

Trailhead Visitor Center: 310.510.2595 x 100

Nature Center: 310.510.0954

Shuttle information | Airport in the Sky: 310.510.0143

Camping Information | Island Company Two Harbors Visitor Center: 310.410.4205

To help protect the wildlands of Catalina Island and receive discounts on services, become a Conservancy member!

CatalinaConservancy.org

CatalinaConservancy.org

# NATURAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF CATALINA ISLAND

## CATALINA EMERGES FROM OCEAN

Catalina was formed through tectonic plate activity and was never connected to the mainland. Weathering and erosion of the newly exposed rock island combined with the arrival of lichen led to the slow formation of soil. This led to an abundance of plant life.



## LIFE ARRIVES

Plant and animal species arrived on Catalina by three methods: **wind, wing, and wave.** Wind brings wispy or winged seeds as well as invertebrates. Birds and bats and hitchhiking seeds and small animals arrive by wing. Waves transport buoyant seeds and lucky rafting animals to Catalina's shoreline.

## ISLAND SPECIES EVOLVE

Catalina plants and animals are specially adapted for Island life. Dwarf and giant species evolved on Catalina due to fewer predators, less competition, and different food than on the mainland. The Catalina California squirrel and St. Catherine's lace are larger than their mainland ancestors. The Catalina Island fox is smaller.



## ~3-5 MILLION YEARS AGO

### EUROPEAN SETTLERS CHANGE THE LANDSCAPE

About 2,000 to 3,000 Tongva lived on Catalina when Europeans first made contact in 1542. Early explorers were searching for riches in gold. With a change in global politics, the Spanish began colonizing Alta California in 1769. They established the San Gabriel Mission in the 1770s, coining the name Gabrielino for the Tongva. These Spanish colonizers drove sprawling herds of cattle, horses, and sheep onto the edible landscape that the Tongva had thrived on for thousands of years. By the 1860s, it was estimated that there were already 15,000 goats and 20,000 sheep on Catalina Island. Russian and Alaskan otter hunters were also altering the marine environment. Degradation of the landscape, as well as disease and cultural persecution, removed the majority of Indigenous people from their ancestral homes.

### SEA, LAND AND PEOPLE - A RELATIONSHIP OF RECIPROCITY

For at least the last 8,000 years, the Gabrielleno/Tongva have inhabited Catalina (called Pimu), the Lost Angeles Basin and southern Channel Islands. They lived in villages of 50-100 extended family members that cooperated on trade, harvests and ceremonies. Major village sites include Two Harbors, Avalon, and Little Harbor. Houses called Kiiys, were framed with willow branches and covered in reed mats. The Tongva traded goods with people from the other Channel Islands and the mainland. Soapstone was an important trade item. The Tongva had a rich and varied diet. They harvested shellfish nearshore, and used redwood plank canoes, called tiats, shell hooks and nets of plant fiber to catch fish and larger marine animals. They accompanied this protein by preparing edible plants.



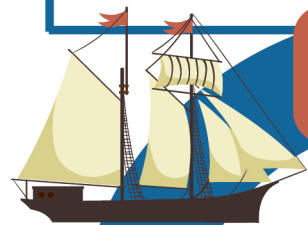
AN **ENDEMIC** IS A NATIVE SPECIES THAT OCCURS NOWHERE ELSE

Catalina has over 60 endemic species and sub-species

## 1542-1840S

### AVALON THEN AND NOW

In 1848, Catalina transitioned to private ownership through a land grant from the last governor of Mexico to Thomas Robbins. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 increased accessibility to the west and entrepreneurial developers set out to make their fortune. The Island changed hands many times in the second half of the 19th century.



## ~8,000 YEARS AGO

- 1887-1891** Avalon named, first pier and hotel built by George Shatto.
- 1894** Banning Brothers start the Santa Catalina Island Company.
- 1917** Flax-leaf broom planted as ornamental in Descanso Canyon.
- 1919** William Wrigley Jr. buys majority stock interest of SCICo.
- 1924** American bison first brought to the Island.
- ~1930** Wild boar and CA mule deer brought to Island.
- 1972** Formation of Catalina Island Conservancy.
- 1975** 88% of the Island is deeded to the Catalina Island Conservancy

## 1887-PRESENT

## CONSERVANCY SPOTLIGHT STORIES

### Catalina Island Fox

Conservation efforts brought this island-dwarf species back from an outbreak of Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) in the early 2000s. Since 2010 the fox population has been holding steady between 1500-2300. It is still currently listed as threatened. Since 2005 the Catalina Island Conservancy's biologists have been responsible for monitoring the fox population through annual trapping.

### Bald Eagles

2019 was the most successful year to date for bald eagles on Catalina since the recovery from the national decline of the species in the mid-1900s. Due to use of the pesticide DDT, no bald eagles were left on the Island by the 1960s. In 2007, due to the efforts of the Institute for Wildlife Studies, for the first time on Catalina in 50 years, a bald eagle chick hatched without assistance.

### American Bison

In the early 2000s the Conservancy established the goal of maintaining between 100 and 150 bison on the Island. The bison are considered cultural heritage animals on the Island, and though they are not native, are being kept to support the eco-tourism economy of the Island.

