



Channel Islands

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

October 16, 2023

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in staunch support of the current efforts by the Catalina Island Conservancy (CIC) to remove deer from the island. The presence of the deer has been a long-standing concern, frustration and struggle in managing the restoration and conservation of the lands with which the CIC is charged, and that countless people hold dear.

Having worked on Catalina Island from 2006-2010 conducting Invasive Species control and eradication as well as trapping Island foxes for 5 seasons, I have seen first-hand the devastation the deer have caused, and the poor health in which they constantly struggle to maintain. I have also seen the countless vehicle strikes killing deer, visitors using them as stage props for their children to take photos, as well as deer coming into Avalon to eat peoples landscaping.

It is well known and documented that the deer were introduced to the island by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife for the sole purpose of hunting. That's correct. In short, they were introduced with the sole purpose of being killed. They are not native to the island - on the mainland, deer populations migrate throughout the seasons looking for food and climates that are more tolerable. They do not have this option on islands, which is a major reason they cause so much damage and why they are starving to death. Other Channel Islands land managers have been successful in removing non-native ungulates and the response of island vegetation has been astoundingly dramatic. Santa Rosa Island is the most recent success story in the archipelago on this front. Deer are also one the major contributing factors of tick presence on Catalina Island, which also poses human health concerns. Ticks are known to carry lime disease, recurring fever and other virus loads that can cause long-term health challenges for residents and visitors alike.

Given the opposition related to deer removal for Catalina Island specifically, Catalina now has the highest number of listed plant species in all of the Channel Islands. These are plants that don't occur anywhere else and should be valued by those visiting Catalina and more importantly those calling Catalina Island home. These plants are just one of the many aspects that make Catalina the gem it is. Endemic plant species of the islands do not have the same defenses that mainland plant species have and thus are more susceptible to harm.

The use of helicopters and wildlife biologists as hunters/sharpshooters has been proven **around the globe** to be the most humane and most effective way to remove non-native ungulates from landscapes. The company being hired for the removal on Catalina, is the same company that did the eradication of deer and elk on Santa Rosa Island. I had the privilege of working alongside them, and no one can do it better. They are trained wildlife biologists; they are not mercenaries as many are depicting them. Utilizing helicopters is the surest way to remove the animals in the most efficient and most humane way possible, which will ultimately cause the least disturbance for residents and visitors.

While I acknowledge change can be difficult and disruptive, I implore the residents of Catalina Island and the local mainland coast to envision a green Catalina Island that shimmers like an emerald on the horizon, rather than the mottled

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landscape it is currently. After the goats were removed, many people once in opposition begrudgingly acknowledged the island looked much healthier and that they didn't truly realize the damage that was being caused. This is another chance for everyone to help support the health of this struggling landscape, in a very tangible way and reap the rewards of the stunning beauty and magic that is currently being suppressed and irreparable damaged.

Good luck to the Catalina Island Conservancy in this effort to remove deer from Catalina Island. The island will thank you and many of your partners and neighbors are staunch supporters.

In solidarity,
Robyn

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