

RisingTides 2010 Expedition

California

Avalon, Catalina Island

In February 2010 RisingTides launched the expedition leaving the home berth of Wilmington, California. The destination was La Paz Mexico. Although an overcast morning was present, the crew anticipated swells of six feet with durations of up to 11 seconds and decided it was feasible to begin the journey. Additionally, the crew had to take into consideration, that on the same morning, there had been an earthquake in Chile, and the advice to Mariners was to be aware of a possible tsunami of approximately six feet. On the way out of Long Beach harbor, there was a Coast Guard warning for marine vessels to take appropriate action as there was an imminent tsunami. Brian and Claudia did experience what appeared to be a wave of turbulent sea conditions, as Brian described it, "all across the horizon", with "approximately six foot boulders" that rolled through the vicinity.



Our route was to take us by the eastern tip of Catalina Island, however, the sea conditions continued to worsen with frequent squalls, and soon the crew were soaked and tired. Realizing, that it would be better to wait out the rough conditions, the crew detoured and moored in Avalon Harbor on Catalina Island.

27 nautical miles sailed from Wilmington to Avalon



As California residents and divers, both Brian and Claudia are very familiar with Avalon. Touted a premier dive site for the western United States, Casino Point is a Marine Protected Area (MPA) and enjoyed by divers around the world. Casino Point is monitored by both the Catalina Conservancy Divers and Reef Check California. As an MPA, this area has flourished with Giant Kelp, Garibaldi's, California Sea Lions, and has recently seen the comeback of

rarely seen endangered species, such as the abalone and giant black sea bass.

It took approximately three days for the weather to improve, on the second day, the crew decided to go ashore for a brief hike in Avalon. Their hike took them to the Catalina Island Conservancy Center where Brian and Claudia took the opportunity to visit with the center's dosen and to learn about their conservation efforts on the island.

The Catalina Island Conservancy protects 42,000 acres (88 percent) of



the island and offers many opportunities to learn about the islands, its wildlife and native plants. Their mission is to preserve the natural beauty for generations to come. A walk through the center allows for leisurely reading of the many poster boards they have on display. The poster board shows the efforts of the Conservancy and their partnering with organizations on many ongoing projects. Following are a few examples:



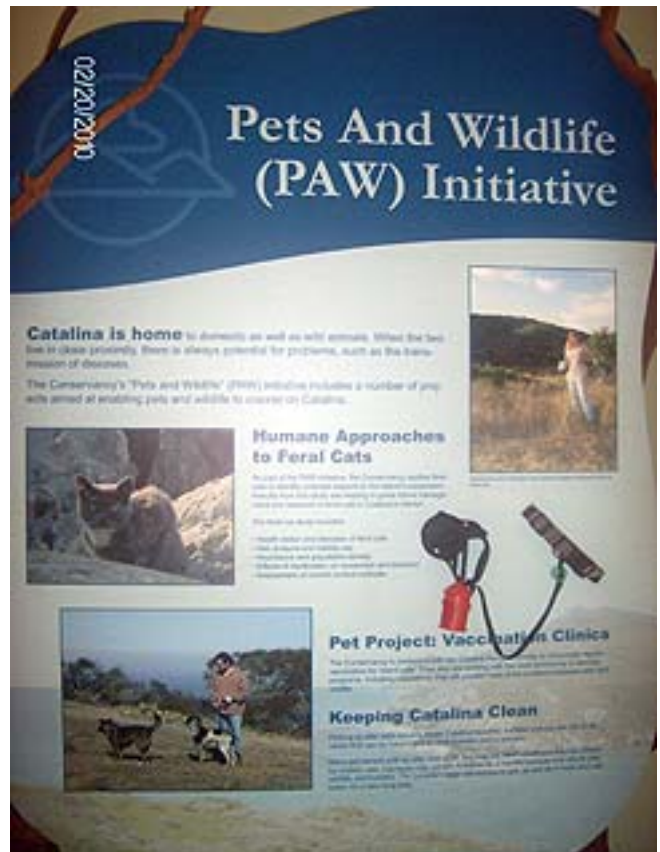
Along with the Institute for Wildlife Studies (IWS), efforts are taken to save the California Bald Eagles whose eggs were weakened by the use of pesticides on the California coast.

The IWS exchanged the weakened eagle eggs and swapped the eggs with dummy eggs that would later be replaced with the newborn hatchlings for the parents to raise.

The Catalina Island Fox is also on the endangered species list. The Conservancy successfully vaccinated the island fox, whose population was decimated by the distemper virus. The fox were also successfully bred in captivity and the fox pups were then introduced back into the wild.



The conservancy teams up with the Humane Society to instruct owners in the care and vaccination and neutering of their pets as well as monitoring the feral cats on the islands and controlling its populations.



The Catalina Bison were brought to Catalina Island for a movie in the 1920s, only to be left on the island. The population thrived. Although, the bison are enjoyed on the island, studies were performed and it was determined that the herd and the native grasses were stressed due to the increasing population. The Conservancy relocated many bison to the grasslands of South Dakota, where they have successfully adapted.



Brian Basura at the Catalina Conservancy Center

Although the crew took an unexpected break in their journey to Catalina Island, it provided a chance to recuperate from a rough crossing and to learn new information in conservation efforts of the Conservancy and how one organization can work hand in hand with other entities to serve environmental efforts for the island's wildlife and native plants.

The crew was ready to leave Catalina Island on the third day. However, when starting up the engine to depart, the engine was flooded with saltwater and burned out the starter. Utilizing the spare on board, Brian replaced the starter only to have it burn out too. A mechanic was brought on board to aid in trouble shooting the system. Two starters were then purchased, one for replacement and a second for spare. After two additional days, the crew was anxious to be underway again, the weather forecast was checked and under clear skies the crew departed for Mexico. This time, alternative routes were selected for San Diego Bay and Cedros Island, Mexico, should the weather not be hold up and safe harboring is needed.