

Celebration of Conservation

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Año Nuevo State Park Coordinates

Latitude: 37°07'20.1" N

Longitude: 122°19'56.2" W

FROM: Patrick Robinson
TO: Team Elephant Seal Virtual Science Team
SUBJECT: Hello from Año Nuevo!

Hello Team Elephant Seal!

My name is Patrick Robinson and I am one of the lead researchers studying elephant seals at Año Nuevo State Park in central California. Our goal is to understand more about the lives of the seals and ask questions about where they go, how deep they dive, what they eat, and how they find their way home.

Before I tell you more about the research we do, I would like to introduce you to the place we work and the seals we study. Here is a photo I took from high up in the air using a remote-control plane. This is Año Nuevo Point with Año Nuevo Island in the background. It is about one mile of coastline surrounded by a rocky reef which helps keep the water very calm.

The elephant seals like to group together all along the beach. Sometimes the younger ones venture inland into the sand dunes, small trees, and shrubs. There is also a large group of seals living on the tiny island one mile off shore. There are a total of about 5,000 elephant seals at Año Nuevo – a mixture of adult females, adult males, subadult males, and juveniles. It can take us a full day just to count the seals!

Elephant seals are one of the largest species of seals or sea lions on the planet. Females weigh about 1,000 pounds and males weigh up to 4,000 pounds. That's the weight of a pickup truck!

Elephant seals are excellent swimmers and very awkward on land. Instead of walking on legs like a dog, they move along the beach by undulating their whole body like a worm!

I've included some photographs of female with her young pup and an adult male. The seals have some funny hats – I will explain what those are soon!

—more—



HELLO FROM AÑO NUEVO!

Your teacher has a link to a video I took showing one of the trails I walk along to get out to Año Nuevo Point to study the seals. This morning was a beautiful sunny morning, but we also have to go out and do our work when it is cold, windy, and rainy. Despite the challenges, I definitely feel lucky to work in such an amazing place!

I look forward to writing more updates about our elephant seal research. Please let me know if you have any questions!

Take care!

Patrick

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