



Globally Important Bird Areas



Mugu Lagoon (NAWS Point Mugu), California

Ornithological Highlights: Up to 60,000 shorebirds have been counted here in a single day.

Location: near Oxnard, Ventura County

- *Coastal California* (NABCI Bird Conservation Region #32)
- *Central and Southern Calif. Coast and Valleys* (PIF Physiographic Area #90)

Ownership: U.S. Navy

Size: 2,000 acres

Designation: Wetland of Regional Importance in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network

Land use: military base

Habitats: Tidal wetland; shrub/scrub; coniferous and mixed woods; riparian; marine.

Site description: Mugu Lagoon is located within the Naval Air Weapons Station Point Mugu and is adjacent to a hunting club. The lagoon is fed with freshwater by Calleguas Creek and Revolon Slough. The surrounding wetlands comprise the largest coastal wetland between Morro Bay and Bolsa Chica, a linear distance of some 175 miles.

Birds: The lagoon receives heavy use seasonally by waterfowl (including up to 100,000 Northern Shoveler and 70,000 Pintail) and shorebirds (up to 60,000 in a daily count); the adjacent hunting club reports that 300,000 waterfowl use its lands annually. Western Snowy Plover and California Least Tern breed there, as do two rare subspecies, Light-footed Clapper Rail and Belding's Savannah Sparrow. The lagoon is surrounded by a major weapons testing facility with hundreds of buildings, airstrips and more than 50 aircraft.

Conservation issues: High pesticide and nutrient levels have been measured in the water of the lagoon because of agricultural runoff. High concentrations of banned pesticides are found in the sediment and the biota. Further, there is potential pollution from oil exploration or spills. The Navy has restored 23.5 acres of tidal mudflat, sandflat, channels, ponds, salt marsh and sand islands in three separate wetland restoration projects; it plans to restore a 37-acre site to salt marsh.

Visitor information: There is no public access to the site.

References:

Harrington, B. and E. Perry. 1995. Important shorebird staging sites meeting Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network criteria. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.