

Coastal Cactus Wren Working Group Regional Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Who We Are

The Coastal Cactus Wren Conservation Network is an ad hoc group of more than 100 individuals representing research institutions, land management agencies, local government, non-profit conservation organizations and wildlife agencies. Members work together to exchange research and management information to develop best practices, policies, and programs that promote conservation and recovery of this bird throughout its range (Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, and San Diego counties). This information will inform publication of a regional conservation strategy for the coastal cactus wren.

Conservation Challenge for the Coastal Population

Cactus wrens (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) are distributed across the arid regions of the southwestern United States and northern and central Mexico (Hamilton et al. 2011). While the desert populations are fairly abundant, populations of coastal cactus wrens have declined dramatically over the past 30 years, with extirpation and genetic isolation affecting many locations as a result of habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, edge effects of development, and catastrophic fires (Solek and Szijj 2004). The coastal population is unique in that it occurs exclusively within the coastal sage scrub plant community, ranging from Ventura County south into San Diego County, U.S.A. and northwestern Baja California, Mexico. The firestorms of 2007 impacted several strongholds for the coastal cactus wren in Orange and San Diego counties. The significant loss of habitat and birds was the impetus for formation of the Coastal Cactus Wren Network.

Goal

The goal of the Conservation Network is to ensure the long term persistence (>100 years) of coastal cactus wrens in southern California.

Objectives

- Increase effective population size in each genetic cluster.
- Enhance connectivity within and between genetic clusters.
- Increase genetic diversity.

Collaborative Approach

Over the past 10 years, land managers and other members of the Network have conducted extensive research to better understand current threats to and potential management actions for the recovery of the coastal cactus wren, including studies of distribution and abundance, genetic population structure and effective population size, reproduction, dispersal, habitat management and restoration, translocation, and predation. Some of these tasks are ongoing and others still need focus. This website is intended to centralize data and research to date as a resource for land managers.

Ongoing Strategies

- Document the historic and current distribution of coastal cactus wren and update this information as new information becomes available.
- Identify genetic clusters and genetic diversity, and identify those most at risk.
- Assess effective conservation size.
- Conduct studies of reproduction and survival.
- Identify best management practices for restoring and enhancing habitat.
- Implement land management actions in the reserves to control invasive plants, enhance/restore cactus wren habitat, and control access to nesting areas.
- Develop plans for restoring habitat destroyed by wildfire.
- Identify and implement anthropogenic predation risks.
- Document dispersal.
- Conduct translocation experiments.
- Establish cactus nurseries throughout the range to supply propagules for restoration efforts.

Regional Conservation Strategy

- Identify, conserve, and restore habitat between genetic clusters.
- Identify actions to maintain populations during drought.
- Develop and implement a standardized long-term monitoring program.
- Maintain a regional monitoring database that is readily accessible.
- Integrate conservation actions with established conservation plans.
- Prepare a special publication that describes a regional conservation strategy.