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The Island Where the Seal is King



THOMAS POULTER
I like it out here"

Ano Nuevo May Be Opened to Public

By William Thomas

There is no other island like it in America. It is called Ano Nuevo, the Island of the New Year, and soon it may be open to the public for the first time in history.

Ano Nuevo is the home of the seal and the sea lion. Sometimes 5000 of the snorting, roaring, ponderous ani-

mals crowd the rocks of the island.

The inaccessible little spot of rock and sand, 47 miles south of San Francisco off the San Mateo coast, is presently under the benign rule of Dr. Thomas C. Poulter, senior scientific adviser for the Stanford Research Institute.

ADVENTURER

Dr. Poulter at 65 is a mild mannered, quiet, bespectacled adventurer, a veteran of four Polar expeditions, a chemist, a rocket expert, and most of all, an avid student of the seal.

In the morning, when the fog is low on the coast below Half Moon Bay, the abandoned lighthouse and deserted New England style houses sit ghost-like on the island.

Because the Steller sea lions are mating and three thousand surround the island, Dr. Poulter visits Ano Nuevo each day.

He crosses a half mile of shallow, deceptively peaceful channel to the island, named by a Spanish explorer who first saw it on New Year's day.

One day last week a small expedition heard a sound near the top of a sandy ridge like a thousand foghorns blowing all at once.

The sound was from the sea lions and the seals. Their voices, some complaining, some enraged, defeated the thunder of the surf.

From the saddle of the ridge, between the old Coast Guard lighthouse and the dwellings, could be seen the Elephant seal and the Stellar sea lion, some with fur wet and gleaming after a dip in the sea, others dust brown and lazy after lying in the sun.

Ano Nuevo, said Dr. Poulter, is the most northerly haunt of the Elephant seal and the most southerly breeding place of the Stellar sea lion.

In lesser numbers come the California sea lion and the Harbor seal until there can be 6000 seals, more than can be found anywhere south of Alaska on the Pacific Coast of North America.

Dr. Poulter discovered the island a few years ago. He was looking for a missile idea. Then he found the seals and "sort of forgot about the missiles."

The island was on the Federal Government's surplus property list and the State Division of Beaches and Parks purchased it.

Dr. Poulter persuaded them to set it aside as a marine research station under the auspices of the Stanford Research Institute.

Dr. Poulter has applied for



Dr. James Miller took a seal lion pup back to the mainland for study, while Dr. Poulter kept guard with a rifle—just in case some of the herd objected

a \$275,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to build a laboratory on the

mainland adjacent to the island and to establish a permanent staff of 30.

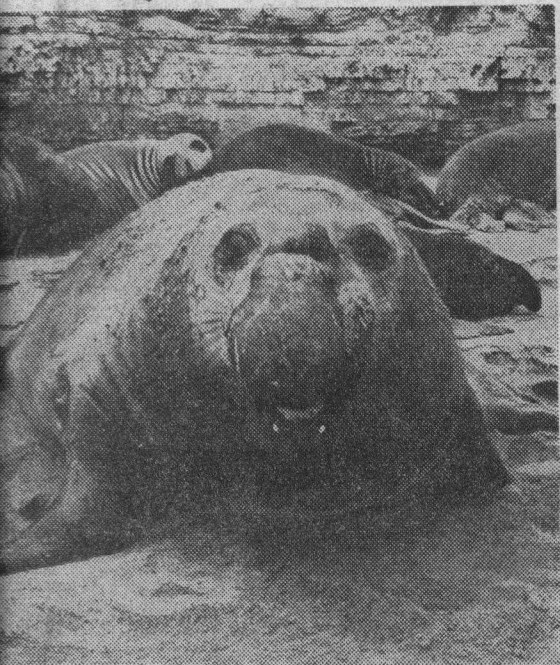
The public then will be able to reach the island on a landing craft donated by

the Navy, and will get a close-up look of the skittish seals and sea lions from behind carefully constructed blinds.

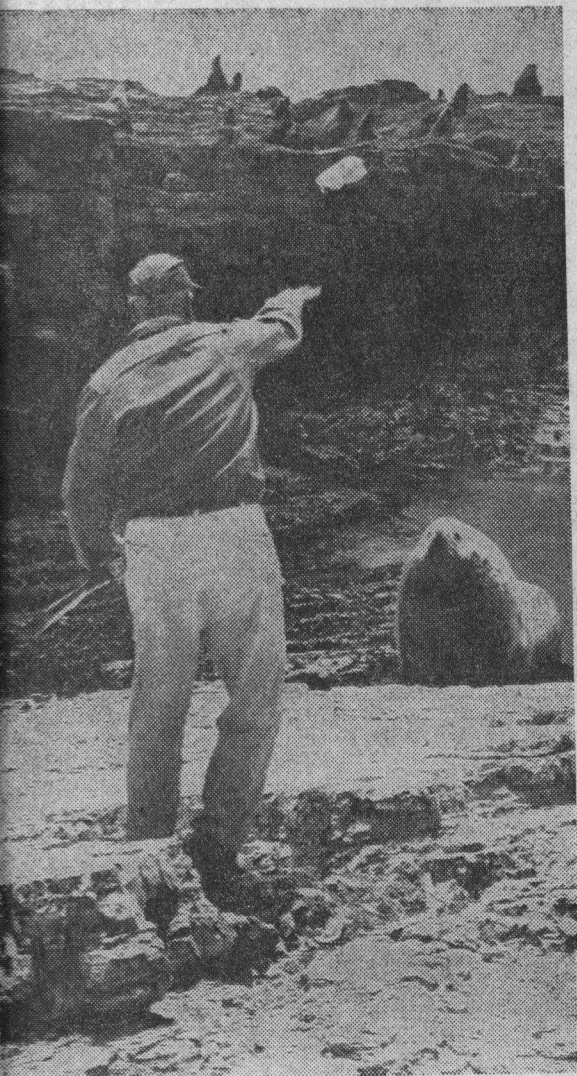
Also inhabiting the island are some 30 wild rabbits, progeny of four left there by someone in 1948. They are studied several days a month by Dr. James H. Miller, a 41-year-old Stanford Research Institute biologist.

As he left Ano Nuevo last week, Dr. Miller said, "I like it out here. I wish I could spend more time on the island."

TONIGHT?



A bull elephant seal, disturbed by an intrusion, started a lumbering charge at the cameraman



Photos by Barney Peterson

A bull sea lion got too close, and Dr. Poulter tried to scare it off with a piece of driftwood