

## **Dr. Nathan Van Schmidt Presentation Summary**

This presentation examines the ecological connections between Mono Lake and San Francisco Bay through the lens of California Gull population dynamics. Following the abandonment of traditional nesting colonies on Mono Lake's Negit Island in the early 1980s, California Gulls established breeding colonies in South San Francisco Bay, where the population grew rapidly and became a significant predator of several threatened and declining waterbird species.

The presentation will explore how management efforts to reduce gull-related impacts on species such as the Western Snowy Plover, California Least Tern, American Avocet, and Black-necked Stilt have altered population trajectories, while also creating new conservation challenges. As California Gull numbers at Mono Lake have declined and the South Bay population has become the largest in California, resource managers are increasingly faced with balancing competing conservation objectives across interconnected ecosystems.

The discussion will also examine broader implications for migratory bird conservation, including substantial declines in Wilson's Phalaropes, Red-necked Phalaropes, and Bonaparte's Gulls within the South Bay. These trends highlight the complex ecological linkages among Mono Lake, San Francisco Bay, and the Pacific Flyway, and underscore the importance of understanding how changing conditions at Mono Lake may influence bird populations and conservation outcomes elsewhere in California.