PHOTO GALLERY

URBAN SCAVENGERS: HUMAN ACTIVITIES UNDERPIN SANDY BEACH SCAVENGING DYNAMICS

Francis D. Gerraty, Ann Gobei-Bacaylan, and Kaia Diel

Study Description

Sandy beaches are hotspots for urban development and human recreation, yet the influence of these anthropogenic disturbances on shoreline ecosystem function remains poorly understood. We investigated how sandy beach scavenger assemblages and scavenging rates vary across a gradient of coastal urbanization in central California. We found that urbanization alters the composition of vertebrate scavenger guilds and that beaches with more domestic dog activity had substantially lower scavenging rates. These results demonstrate the pervasive influence of human activities on sandy beach scavenging dynamics and suggest that interventions, such as coastal habitat restoration and restrictions on dog walking, could enhance ecosystem function on urban beaches.

Gerraty, F. D., A. Gobei-Bacaylan, and K. Diel. 2024. Urban Scavengers: Human Activities Underpin Sandy Beach Scavenging Dynamics. Bull Ecol Soc Am 0(0):e02210. https://doi.org/10.1002/bes2.2210

Photo 1. Motion- and infrared-triggered camera traps baited with Pacific herring carcasses were used to document sandy beach scavenging dynamics. Photo credit: Francis Gerraty.

Photo 2. Scavenging rates were suppressed on beaches with more domestic dog activity, suggesting that dogs interfere with critical scavenging ecosystem functions. Photo credit: Jenna Contuchio.

These photographs illustrate the article, “Urbanization alters sandy beach scavenging assemblages and dogs suppress ecosystem function” by Francis D. Gerraty, Ann Gobei-Bacaylan, and Kaia Diel published in *Ecosphere*. https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.70016