A FLORA OF SANTA CATALINA ISLAND, CALIFORNIA

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INTRODUCTION

LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Santa Catalina Island, part of Los Angeles County, is the largest (about 73 square miles) of the southern group of California Channel Islands. Mt. Orizaba, the highest point on the island (2080 ft.) and also near its center, lies at 33°22.5' N latitude, 118°23.5' W longitude. Santa Catalina is also the closest of the southern group to the coast, 20 statute miles S from Pt. Vicente on Palos Verdes Peninsula. Avalon, on the island's SE end and its only town, is approximately 31 miles S of Long Beach, 30 miles S of the Civic Center of Los Angeles, and 81 miles NW of San Diego. The nearest island is San Clemente Island, about 21 miles to the S at the nearest point. Santa Cruz Island lies about 65 miles NW and Guadalupe Island, off Baja California, about 250 miles due south.

Santa Catalina Island is about 22 miles long, with the long axis running SE to NW, more or less parallel to the mainland. It is about 5 miles wide near its center and 3 miles wide at various narrow points. The Isthmus, however, is less than a half mile wide and about 20 ft. above high tide level. The island is mountainous and rugged, traversed along its main axis by a high ridge generally about 1500 ft. high. Only at the Isthmus, about 7 miles from the NW end of the island, is this ridge broken down to a structural sag with faulting and subsequent erosion (Smith, 1933).

The two highest mountains are Mt. Orizaba, formerly 2080 ft. before the Federal Aviation Agency leveled off 20 ft. in 1960 to install Air Navigation facilities, and Black Jack Mt., 2010 ft. and site of radar storm detection units (Overholt, 1962). Superimposed upon the mature topography of the summit ridge and other high points is the youthful topography represented by deep, V-shaped canyons separated by steep, sharp ridges. The coastline consists mostly of precipitous cliffs up to 1400 ft. high except where broken by coves and bays at the canyon mouths. The coves mostly have cobble-stone beaches although a few of the larger ones have sandy beaches. On the Channel slope the canyons are broader and less steep. On the Pacific slope, the windward side of