



Flora and Vegetation of Clipperton Island

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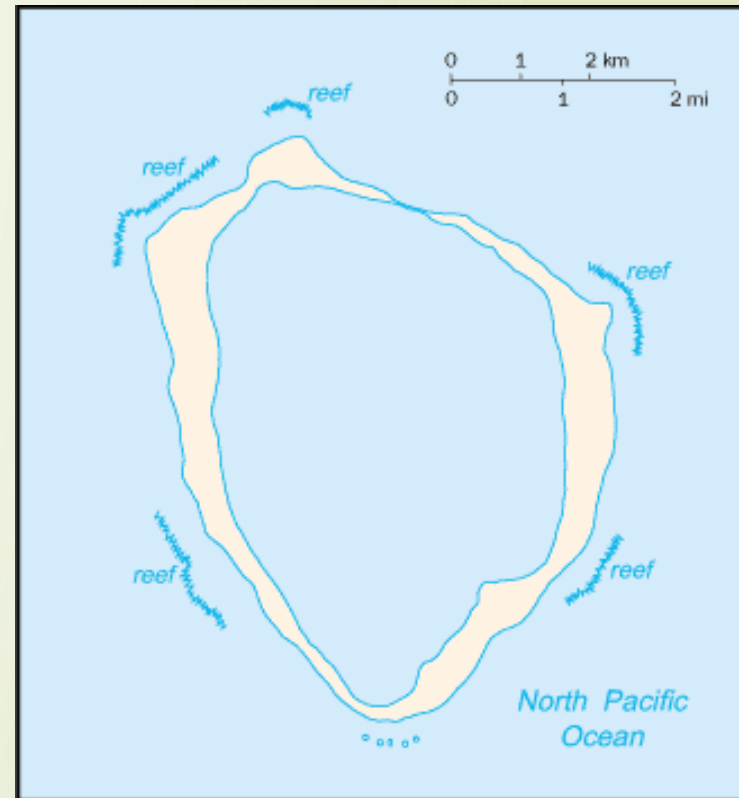
What and Where is
Clipperton?

- Clipperton is one of the smallest and most isolated islands in the Pacific
- The nearest land is approx. 600 nautical miles NNE
- Only coral island in the Eastern Pacific
- Named after pirate John Clipperton



The Lagoon

- An atoll is a ring shaped island made of coral
- https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/kits/corals/media/supp_coral04a.html



Currents, climate, and winds:

- During the winter, the North Equatorial Current flows westward past the island, with the equatorial countercurrent south of it
- In the summer months, this countercurrent runs farther north and may reach the atoll
- Seasonally humid tropical climate
- Northeast tradewinds dominate much of the year, but the summer months bring winds from the south or west, bringing squalls and storms



Fauna



- Many types of birds are found on Clipperton Island. Blue faced-boobies, noddies, seabirds, and ducks are among the most common.
- These birds influence the plant life on the island in various ways

Fauna cont.

- Other fauna on the island included pigs, crabs, geckos and skinks
- The pigs were eventually eradicated as part of a project, causing vegetation to disappear as land crabs returned
- Invertebrates include many different types of moths



Herse cingulata





How did plants come to the island?

- It is suspected that there are no plant species native to Clipperton
- Birds!
- Influence of birds on plant life
- Floral composition shows that it could possibly be from Indo-Pacific regions
- Most likely from Hawaiian chains and Ekman's East Pacific Barrier

Flora

- ❑ Vegetation on the island includes many species of shrubs, grasses, small flowering plants, creepers, and low thickets.
- ❑ Some of the most abundant species of these include *Cenchrus echinatus*, *Sida rhombifolia*, and *Corchorus aestuans*, shown below.
- ❑ These plants compose a shrub cover up to 30 cm in height and are intermixed with *Eclipta*, *Phyllanthus*, and *Solanum*, as well as a taller plant, *Brassica juncea*.
- ❑ Other vegetation includes coconut palms







Brief Island History

- ▮ Thought to have been discovered by John Clipperton on his voyage from Peru to China
- ▮ First written history comes April 3rd, 1711 when two French ships happen upon the island
- ▮ A hundred years later was the first recorded landing and recording of vegetation
- ▮ There were many political storms surrounding the ownership of the island and experiments conducted with different flora and fauna



Paper overview and criticisms

- This paper was written in order to explain the background and vegetation of Clipperton Island. The article was written based on a personal account by a scientist in 1958
- Criticisms: the article seemed to have some scattered thoughts and jump around quite a bit. The article listed a great deal of plant life, but does not describe what each species is, making it difficult to figure out



Sachet, Marie-Helene. 1962. Flora and Vegetation of Clipperton Island