

Black Oystercatcher Conservation
Mendocino County, CA
Final Report

California State Parks Collaborative Grant
Audubon California – Mendocino Coast Audubon



Photo by J. Ossello – Juvenile Black Oystercatcher

October 2012

Prepared by:

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Project Goals and Background

The Black Oystercatcher, *Haematopus bachmani*, is a year-round shorebird along the rocky intertidal west coast of the United States, and is listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a species of focal concern. The long term goal of the Black Oystercatcher Conservation Project is to apply gainful knowledge to current conservation efforts that will preclude the need for an Environmental Species Act listing. Oystercatchers are associated with healthy, productive marine intertidal habitat, which prescribes them as an indicator species of intertidal marine health.

The goal of the 2012 Nest Success Survey is to establish initial data on habitat status and fledgling success trends in Mendocino County. The regional chapter coordinator advises volunteers and state park personnel on guidelines, protocol, and data collection. Weekly surveys from May 15th to August 15th are performed at select sites of high species density. Data is analyzed by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and assists the USFWS range-wide working plan in identifying the best conservation practices needed to address threats and reverse declines.

The project is a collaborative effort between California Audubon, Mendocino Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) and California State Parks, Mendocino District.

2012 Audubon California and Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Chapter Grant – Project Timeline and Accomplishments

- On May 5th Joleen Ossello, as regional chapter coordinator, conducted a five-hour volunteer training workshop including speakers: Anna Weinstein, the Seabird Program Coordinator for Audubon California, and Ron LeValley of Mad River Biologists (MRB).
- On May 15th sixteen volunteers, two state park environmental science personnel, and coordinator began weekly surveys of pair/nest identification at: MacKerricher State Park, Georgia-Pacific Mill Site Headlands, Noyo Headlands, Point Cabrillo State Historic Park & Preserve, Russian Gulch State Park, Mendocino Headlands State Park, Van Damme State Park, and Navarro Point Preserve.
- On June 18th the coordinator presented a fifteen minute presentation of the project for participants at the MCAS monthly chapter meeting.
- On June 19th the coordinator submitted a project progress report to Audubon California.
- On September 13th a front page article was published by the editor of the Mendocino Beacon newspaper.
- On September 18th the last fledgling was recorded and all weekly surveys completed.
- On September 19th Audubon California's *Make Every Oystercatcher Count* fundraising campaign featured Mendocino coordinator's involvement.
- On October 11th a meeting was conducted by coordinator to announce preliminary results and collect project feedback from volunteers and state park environmental science personnel.

Observations - BLOY

- Non breeding birds were reported flying in large groups of 7-10 throughout survey period
- Pairs exhibited territorial displays at nest sites throughout season
- Copulation after nesting failure
- Observation of hatched young became difficult when they migrated to west facing side of nesting rock
- No direct predation was observed, though sightings of Common Raven, Western Gull, and Peregrine Falcon near nesting areas was reported
- Several nesting rocks were shared with Western Gulls and Pelagic Cormorants
- Five pairs re-nested after initial failure, either in a new location on the same rock or territory nearby
- Several nesting sites are in the same general location as their 2011 sites
- Low tide is the ideal time to observe behavior, as adults alternate foraging responsibilities while intermittently returning to nesting sites
- The last fledgling was recorded on September 18th; one month later than the survey period anticipated

Observations – Survey sites

- Visibility was an issue at times due to heavy fog and wind
- Inaccessibility issues interrupted the GP Mill Headlands survey
- Recreational divers at public sites accessed the water close to some nesting sites

Results

Forty-one nesting sites were monitored (Appendix C - Table A) and thirty-two were determined to have conclusive data (Appendix C - Table B). Of the thirty-two, 37.5% of nesting adult pairs successfully fledged one or more young and 62.5% failed in various stages of progression.

Of the total young hatched, 41.9% successfully fledged, that is, they were capable of sustained flight and reached 38-40 days old.

No reports of adult mortality.

Ten of the sixteen participants expressed excited interest in contributing to the future of the project.

Expenditures

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society								
General Ledger								
For the Period From Jan 1, 2012 to Oct 31, 2012								
Filter Criteria includes: 1) IDs: Multiple IDs. Report order is by ID. Report is printed with Hide Period Subtotals on Multi-Period Report and in Detail Format.								
Account ID	Account Description	Date	Reference	Jrnl	Trans Description	Debit Amt	Credit Amt	Balance
42510G	BLOY Survey Grant	4/1/12			Beginning Balance			
42510G	BLOY Survey Grant	4/23/12	042312	CRJ	DEPOSIT - BLOY SURVEY GRANT		2,500.00	
42510G	BLOY Survey Grant	6/30/12			Change		2,500.00	-2,500.00
42510G	BLOY Survey Grant				Fiscal Year End Balance			-2,500.00
42510G	BLOY Survey Grant	7/1/12			Beginning Balance			
		10/31/12			Ending Balance			
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	1/1/12			Beginning Balance			
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	5/2/12	1922	CDJ	JOLEEN OSSELLO - FOOD FOR BLOY WORKSHOP BREAKFAST	300.00		
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	5/8/12	1990	CDJ	JOLEEN OSSELLO - INVOICE 107-BLOY SURVEY COORDINATOR	1,000.00		
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	5/8/12	050812	CRJ	DEPOSIT - REIMBURSE UNSPENT FUNDS FROM BLOY BREAKFAST		112.07	
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	6/30/12	2000	CDJ	JOLEEN OSSELLO	1,000.00		
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses				Change	2,300.00	112.07	2,187.93
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	6/30/12			Fiscal Year End Balance			2,187.93
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	7/1/12			Beginning Balance			
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	10/8/12	COUNTER CHECK	CDJ	JOLEEN OSSELLO - BLOY WRAP UP FOOD	312.07		
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses	10/23/12	BLOY WRAP FUNDS	CRJ	DEPOSIT - UNSPENT BLOY WRAP FUNDS		173.00	
88050G	BLOY Survey Expenses				Change	312.07	173.00	139.07
		10/31/12			Ending Balance			139.07

Recommendations

- Modify length of survey season; May 15th – September 15th or until the sight has exhausted nesting pairs
- Obtain smaller maps for field use to identify exact nest site
- Clarify protocol for survey of entire site throughout season; perhaps requiring use of the summary sheet
- Modify protocol to revisit successful or failed nest sites to determine there is no active nesting; does one pair finish and another pair move in?
- Clarify protocol for deciding if nest has failed
- Modify data sheet for clarity and organization: table format, total time/time observed, weather, disturbances, predators, other comments
- Clarify when to use which codes and provide several data entry examples, add re-nesting code
- Provide list of BLOY natural history resources and related habitat studies to participants
- Provide public relations information for participant dissemination

Appendix – A

2012 BLOY Nest Success Survey Results – Mendocino County

Nest Failure	Nest Success	Inconclusive data
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Table 1

Laguna Point, MacKerricher SP J. Ossello, T. Jensen		
Nest #1	Nest #2	Nest #3
5/21 N	6/11 I, ES	6/11 I, IE, 1E
5/28 2E	6/26 2Y	6/18 2Y
6/18 2Y	7/23 FS, C	7/2 FS
7/2 1Y	7/30 F	7/9 F, C, 1E
7/30 1FL		8/14 1Y
		8/23 2Y
		9/18 1FL

Table 2

Glass Beach, MacKerricher SP A. Morley, G. Nsentip, J. Mann						
Nest #A1	Nest #A2	Nest #A3	Nest #B1	Nest #C1	Nest #E1	Nest #E2
5/16 pair	7/11 I, ES	5/16 pair	5/16 I, ES	5/21 I, 3E (Same nest site in 2011)	5/23 I, ES, IE	6/28 I, ES
6/13 I	7/18 FS, UN	6/13 I, ES	6/1 2Y	6/20 YS	6/13 FS	7/18 FS
6/20 ES		6/28 FS	6/28 2Y	6/28 2Y	6/20 F	7/25 F
8/2 FS		7/5 F, No adults	7/12 2FL	8/15 2FL	6/28 new N @ E2 loc.	
8/8 F						

Appendix – A cont.

Table 3

Point Cabrillo State Historic Park	
D. Shephard, S. Tubbesing	
Nest #1	Nest #2
5/23 IE, 2E	6/28 N
5/26 I, 3E	7/6 I, 2E
6/13 3Y	7/12 I, 3E
6/19 FS	7/30 FS
6/20 F	8/4 F
6/28 N	
9/7 1Y	
9/16 1FL	

Table 4

Russian Gulch State Park					
A. Cebula, A. Hutchins					
Nest #1	Nest #2	Nest #3	Nest #4	Nest #5	Nest #6
5/21 ES	5/16 N	5/16 C	5/30 I, ES	5/24 I, ES	5/24 IE, 3E
5/30 I	5/21 ES	5/21 1E	7/5 UN	6/22 1Y	6/22 1Y
6/22 YS	5/30 I	6/22 UN	7/9 FS	7/11 3Y	7/6 UN
7/5 UN	6/22 2Y	7/5 FS	7/27 F	7/19 1Y	7/11 FS
7/6 UN	7/9 1Y	7/27 F		8/1 1Y	7/19 F
7/9 FS	7/27 YS				7/20 C
7/27 F	8/1 1FL				7/27 UN
					8/1 UN

Table 5

Noyo Harbor/Bay	
C. Hawthorne, J. Laxier	
Nest #1	
5/29 I, ES	
6/19 2Y	
6/26 UN	

Appendix – A cont.

Table 6

GP Mill Site (access problematic)			
T. Tobkin, T. Fuller, C. Kinet			
Nest #1	Nest #2	Nest #3	Nest #4
5/17 N	5/17 I	6/7 I, 1E	5/17 pair
5/31 I, 1E	5/24 (no access)	7/4 1Y	6/14 UN
6/21 3Y		7/19 FS	6/28 UN
6/28 2Y		7/26 F	
7/26 1Y			

Table 7

Mendocino Headlands State Park				
D. Jensen, J. Steele				
Nest #1	Nest #2	Nest #3	Nest #4	Nest #5
6/13 I	6/13 I	6/16 I	6/13 I	7/21 1Y
6/23 2E	6/23 2Y	6/30 I, ES	6/30 2Y	7/29 UN
6/30 2Y	7/29 1Y	7/29 FS	8/12 2FL	8/12 UN
7/8 UN	8/12 1FL	8/12 F		
7/15 FS				
7/29 FS				
8/12 F				

Table 8

Van Damme Headlands & Spring Ranch				
R. LeValley, C. McAllister				
LR Nest #1	LR Nest #2	LR Nest #3	LR Nest #4	LR Nest #5
5/15 1E	6/20 2Y	5/19 I	6/16 YS	6/21 YS
6/15 2Y	6/21 1Y	6/12 2Y	6/19 1Y	6/29 1Y
6/19 FS	7/6 FS	6/13 3Y	7/5 FS	7/5 2Y
6/20 F	7/7 F	7/27 2FL	7/6 F	8/5 2FL
7/11 1E				
7/23 2E				
8/9 1Y				
8/10 FS				
8/11 F				

Appendix – A cont.

Table 9 - Van Damme State Park – Spring Ranch

SR Nest #1	SR Nest #2	SR Nest #3	SR Nest #4	SR Nest #5	SR Nest #6
6/10 3E	5/15 3E	6/10 I	6/10 I	6/10 I	6/10 I
6/20 2Y	6/10 3Y	7/18 1Y	6/28 FS	6/20 1Y	6/20 F
7/18 FS	7/28 2Y	8/1 2Y	8/1 F	8/1 FS	6/28 N
8/1 F	8/1 1Y	8/14 2 FL		8/14 1FL	7/18 I
	8/14 UN				8/14 FS, F

Table 10

Navarro Point Nature Preserve		
L. Perkins, B. Heil		
Nest #1	Nest #2	
5/19 N	6/26 YS	
6/2 C	6/28 2Y	
6/3 ES	7/3 FS	
7/5 YS	7/16 F	
7/27 1Y		
8/20 FS		
8/26 F		

Appendix – B

2012 BLOY Nest Success Survey Results - Mendocino County Inconclusive data

Table 1a

Laguna Point, MacKerricher State Park

Nest #	1	2	3
# Young Seen	2	2	2,2
# Young Fledged	1	0	1

Table 2a

Glass Beach, MacKerricher State Park

Nest #	A1	A2	A3	B1	C1	E1	E2
# Young Seen	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
# Young Fledged	0	0	0	2	2	0	0

Table 3a

Point Cabrillo Historic State Park & Preserve

Nest #	1	2
# Young Seen	3,1	0
# Young Fledged	1	0

Table 4a

Russian Gulch State Park

Nest #	1	2	3	4	5	6
# Young Seen	0	2	0	0	3	1
# Young Fledged	0	1	0	0	1	0

Table 5a

Noyo Headlands

Nest #	1
# Young Seen	2
# Young Fledged	UN

Appendix – B cont.

Table 6a**Georgia-Pacific Mill Site**

Nest #	1	2	3	4
# Young Seen	3	0	1	0
# Young Fledged	1	0	0	UN

Table 7a**Mendocino Headlands State Park**

Nest #	1	2	3	4	5
# Young Seen	2	2	0	2	1
# Young Fledged	0	1	0	2	UN

Table 8a**Van Damme State Park - Spring Ranch**

Nest #	1	2	3	4	5	6
# Young Seen	2	3	2	0	1	0
# Young Fledged	0	1	1	0	1	0

Table 9a**Van Damme State Park - Little River Headlands**

Nest #	1	2	3	4	5
# Young Seen	2,1	2	3	1	2
# Young Fledged	0	0	2	0	2

Table 10a**Navarro Point Nature Preserve**

Nest #	1	2
# Young Seen	1	2
# Young Fledged	0	0

Appendix – C

2012 BLOY Nest Success Survey Results - Mendocino County

**Inconclusive data
(all nests
observed)**

Table A - Results

# Nests monitored		41		
# Young seen		56		
# Nests with young		27	0.659	65.9%
# Nests that fledged		15	0.366	36.6%
# Young that fledged		20	0.488	35.7%
Summary				
# of Successful Nests		UNKNOWN		
# of Failed Nests		UNKNOWN		

Table B - Final Results

# Nests with conclusive data		32		
# Young seen		43		
# Nests with young		21	0.656	65.6%
# Nests that fledged		12	0.375	37.5%
# Young that fledged		18	0.857	41.9%
Summary				
# of Successful Nests		12	0.375	37.5%
# of Failed Nests		20	0.625	62.5%