

Black Oystercatcher Conservation
Mendocino County, CA
Final Report on Reproductive Monitoring
2018 Season

California State Parks – Mendocino Coast Audubon Society – U. S. Bureau of Land
Management



Photo by Ron LeValley Spring Ranch Headlands, Van Damme State Park

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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. 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 provide knowledge in support of current conservation efforts to preclude the need for an Environmental Species Act listing. Oystercatchers are associated with healthy, productive marine intertidal habitat, and serve as an indicator species of intertidal marine health.

The goal of the 2018 Reproductive Monitoring Project is to continue recording baseline data begun in 2012 on habitat status including: nest success and fledging success trends in Mendocino County, California. Weekly surveys were performed May through September at selected sites. The following data is provided to Audubon California's Seabird Program Manager and will assist the United States Fish & Wildlife Service's (USFWS) range-wide working plan to identify the best conservation practices needed to address threats and reverse declines. This project can also be used to identify priority sites for implementing the best conservation practices.

The project is directed and funded by Mendocino Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) and in collaboration with California Audubon. Collaborative in-kind support is provided by California State Parks Department of Natural Resources. Public outreach is funded by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's California Coastal National Monument Program (CCNM).

Project Timeline and Accomplishments

April – Ron LeValley conducted a two-hour volunteer training workshop for attendees.

May-August – twenty-six volunteers, three state park environmental science personnel, and regional chapter coordinator began weekly surveys of pair/nest identification along the coastline at the following sites: Ten Mile State Marine Reserve, MacKerricher State Park, Laguna Point, Glass Beach North, Noyo Headlands North Trail, Caspar Headlands State Natural Reserve, Point Cabrillo State Historic Park & Preserve, Russian Gulch State Park, Mendocino Headlands State Park, Van Damme State Park, Little River Headlands and Navarro Point Preserve

July – Ron LeValley submitted progress report to Mendocino Coast Audubon Society.

September – 741 survey hours were completed with conclusive monitoring of 132 territorial pairs. We conducted an end of season meeting, reviewing; preliminary results, data collection methods, and project feedback by surveyors

October – Submission of final report and invoice by Ron LeValley.

Survey Sites

The total linear survey included 33.62 kilometers. The sites and the number of surveys, number of nests monitored and the linear survey for each site are listed in Table 1. A discussion of each site is included here.

Hardy Rock

This area is north of Westport about 5 miles just before Highway One turns inland. There is a rock that Roger Adamson discovered a nesting pair of oystercatchers. After he told me about it, I surveyed there 5 times and documented 3 chicks, 2 of which fledged.

Ten Mile Marine Protected Area (Maps 1-4)

This area was surveyed by Roger Adamson and Ron LeValley. The Ten Mile MPA survey area runs from the Vista Point south of Westport to just north of Abalobadiah Creek. Four sites are accessible for surveys. A stretch of shoreline is accessible from the Vista Point parking lot and trails. The north end of this area is very good feeding habitat, but nesting sites are not available. As many as 14 Black Oystercatchers were documented feeding in this area this year, fewer than previous years. Numerous birds were yearlings based on the darker tips to their bills. The southern portion contained two potential nest sites with pairs present, but none were documented with an egg or chicks.

The second area is viewed from the privately-owned Pacific Star Winery. Two pairs were somewhat territorial at times. One potential nest site was just below the winery, but it was never documented having eggs. No nests were active here.

The third area is viewed from the privately-owned Inn at Newport Ranch. Kibesillah Rock is just north of the viewing area and had a potential pair on it, but no nests or chicks were ever seen. Another territorial pair was around the smaller rocks closer to shore, but no nesting site was ever seen. South of the Ranch was one nest also visible from the Abalobadiah Creek viewing area. Two eggs were documented at this site, but no hatching was seen. When there could have been chicks, two Peregrine Falcons were harassing the oystercatchers at the site.

The fourth survey viewing area is just north of Abalobadiah Creek to a viewpoint about a ¼ mile north of the creek. Five pairs were seen on territory this year, and one had chicks, one at the south end of the area (TM-02). These chicks did not appear to have fledged. They disappeared.

Laguna Point, MacKerricher State Park (Map 5)

This area was surveyed by Dan Knowles, Marcia Riwney and Jean Mann. The area surveyed extends along the coast south of Laguna Point for a little over 2 kilometers. Four pairs were monitored there and four had nests. One pair hatched two chicks, but none fledged.

Glass Beach North, MacKerricher State Park (Map 6)

This area was surveyed by Art Morley, Sonya Popow, Gail Nsentip, and Jim Gibson. The survey area extends from north of Pudding Creek up to Virgin Creek. Four pairs were monitored, and two nests were present., two chicks hatched but none fledged.

North Noyo Trail (Map 7)

This area was surveyed by Les Rohssler, Jim Havlena and Mary Rogers. The survey area extends from Glass Beach south to Soldier Point, 1.63 kilometers away. Only two nests were seen, one hatched 3 chicks and the other hatched 1 chick. At least two fledged.

Caspar Headlands (Map 8)

This area was surveyed by Roger Adamson and Marcy Snyder. The survey area is a cluster of rocks off the north point of the headlands. California Sea Lions are abundant at times on one of the rocks. Four pairs of oystercatchers were documented, and three had nests. Three nests hatched chicks, two with two chicks and one with one chick. Only one chick eventually fledged.

Point Cabrillo (Map 9)

This area was surveyed by Sue Coulter and Ron LeValley. The survey area extends north and south of the Lighthouse. A fair amount of people are present regularly. Seven pairs were monitored, three of them had nests. Only five chicks were seen and none of them actually fledged.

Russian Gulch State Park (Map 10)

This area was monitored by Alison Cebula, Terra Fuller and Robert Kunicki. The survey area is north of Russian Gulch and extends over six kilometers south. Fourteen oystercatcher territories were monitored, eleven of them had active nests and ten hatched one or two chicks. Only two of the chicks fledged.

Mendocino Headlands (Map 11)

This area was surveyed by David Jensen, Judy Steele and Ron LeValley. The survey area extends around the complete headlands west of the town of Mendocino. Seven territories and nests were monitored and four of them hatched chicks. One chick which was a partial albino. Only three chicks fledged after the albino disappeared.

Spring Ranch (Map 12)

This area was surveyed by Charlene McAllister and Peggy Martin. The area is the northern portion of Van Damme State Park and is an old ranch with almost 2 kilometers of rocky shoreline. Nine territories were monitored this year, seven of them had visible nests, three of them hatched a total of five chicks of which only two fledged. Fisherman are common here.

Little River Headlands (Map 13)

This area was surveyed by Charlene McAllister, Peggy Martin and Ron LeValley. It is primarily on private property with offshore CCNM rocks. Four pairs were monitored this year and only two nested. They hatched four chicks and one of them fledged. Many kayakers are present in this area.

Navarro Bluff (Map 14)

This area was surveyed by Linda Perkins and Bill Heil. It is an area owned by the Mendocino Land Trust and is well protected. Two territories were active this year and two chicks hatched from one nest and both fledged.

Table 1 – Mendocino County Survey Areas

Survey area	Nest ID Prefixes	Same as Previous Year?	# of Surveys	# of Territories Surveyed	Linear Survey Distance (km)	Hours surveyed
Hardy Rock	MEN-HR	No	6	1	.25	5
Ten Mile State Marine Reserve	MEN-TM	Yes	12	12	8.04	52
MacKerricher State Park, Laguna Point South	MEN-LP	Yes	19	4	2.21	154
MacKerricher State Park, Glass Beach North	MEN-GB	Survey only south of Pudding Creek	14	4	2.65	112
Noyo Headlands North Trail	MEN-NN	Yes	15	2	1.63	36
Caspar Headlands State Natural Reserve	MEN-CH	Yes	16	4	0.65	48
Point Cabrillo State Historic Park	MEN-PC	Yes	8	6	3.38	18
Russian Gulch State Park	MEN-RG	Yes	34	14	6.48	122
Mendocino Headlands State Park	MEN-MH	Yes	18	7	4.18	54
Van Damme State Park, Spring Ranch	MEN-SR	Yes	17	9	1.94	51
Little River Headlands	MEN-LR	Yes	22	4	1	45
Navarro Bluff Preserve and Scenic Trail	MEN-NB	Yes	21	2	1.46	44
Totals			202	69	33.62	741

Results

A total of 69 territories were monitored this year. Only 33 of those nests hatched. Of these, only 14 nests fledged a total of 16 chicks. This year was not a successful year in the area for most coastal seabirds including Black Oystercatcher. The ocean was very low in nutrients until quite late in the season and we suspect that food supply for oystercatchers was low this year. Many hundreds of dead mussels were found on beaches, presumably because of the lack of nutrients.

Table 2
Survey Results

Site	Nest #	Location	Onshore or Offshore	Incubation/ Potential eggs	Hatched chicks	Fledged chicks
Hardy Rock						
	MEN-HR-01	39-42-24, 123-48-24	Offshore	Yes	3	2
Ten Mile MPA						
	MEN-TM-01	39-33-55.59, 123-46-13.96	Offshore	No		
	MEN-TM-02	39-34-00, 123-36-21	Offshore	Yes	1	0
	MEN-TM-03	39-34-02.52, 123-46-20.39	Offshore	No	0	0
	MEN-TM-05	39-34-22.28, 123-46-38.03	Offshore	No	0	0
	MEN-TM-06	39-34-28.21, 123-46-43.53	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-TM-08	39-34-48.49, 123-46-52.85	Offshore	No	0	0
	MEN-TM-09	39-35-24, 123-46-59	Onshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-TM-10	39-35-31.31, 123-47-07.80	Offshore	No	0	0
	MEN-TM-11	39-35-35, 123-47-08	Onshore	No	0	0
	MEN-TM-13	39-35-40.37, 123-47-06.36	Onshore	No	0	0
	MEN-TM-14	39-35-45.95, 123-47-12.13	Onshore	No	0	0
Laguna Point South						
	MEN-LP-02	39-29-12.50, 123-48-13.36	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-LP-03	39-28-54.08, 123-48-13.72	Offshore	No	0	0
	MEN-LP-04	39-28-58.88, 123-48-11.04	Onshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-LP-06	39-29-9.12, 123-48-11.03	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-LP-07	39-28-51.86, 123-48-12.28	Offshore	No	0	0
Glass Beach North						
	MEN-GB-04	39-28-052, 123-48-415	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-GB-05	39-28-6.91, 123-48-29.24	Offshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-GB-06	39-28-11.38, 123-48-32.02	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-GB-07	39-28-12.38, 123-48-32.43	Offshore	No	0	0
North Noyo Trail						
	MEN-NN-01	39-26-48.07, 123-49-1.41	Offshore	Yes	3	1
	MEN-NN-05	39-26-56.46, 123-48-58.98	Offshore	Yes	1	1

Survey Results (2)

Site	Nest #	Location	Onshore or Offshore	Incubation/Potential eggs	Hatched chicks	Fledged chicks
Caspar Headlands						
	MEN-CH-01	39-21-43, 123-49-32	Offshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-CH-02	39-361930, 123.825723	Offshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-CH-03	39.361897, 123.825768	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-CH-04	39.358001, 123.825457	Offshore	Yes	1	1
Point Cabrillo						
	MEN-PC-01	39-20-36.14, 123-49-19.38	Offshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-PC-02	39-21-14.05, 123-49-25.83	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-PC-03	39-20-58.47, 123-49-36.97	Offshore	Yes	0	1
	MEN-PC-04	39-20-41.11, 123-49-25.69	Onshore	No	0	0
	MEN-PC-05	39-20-50.78, 123-49-33.58	Onshore	No	0	0
	MEN-PC-06	39-21-0.16, 123-49-36.74	Onshore	No	0	0
	MEN-PC-07	39-20-38.85, 123-49-22.37	Onshore	Yes	3	0
Russian Gulch						
	MEN-RG-01	39-19-07.61, 123-48-15.59	Offshore	Yes	1	0
	MEN-RG-02	39-19-18.49, 123-48-21.06	Offshore	Yes	1	0
	MEN-RG-03	39-19-40.12, 123-48-36.21	Onshore	No	0	0
	MEN-RG-04	39-19-36.49, 123-48-23.30	Offshore	Yes	2	1
	MEN-RG-09	39-19-24.16, 123-48-23.09	Onshore	No	0	0
	MEN-RG-10	39-19-43.43, 123-48-30.11	Onshore	No	0	0
	MEN-RG-12	39-19-07.78, 123-48-11.40	Offshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-RG-13	39-18-53.96, 123-48-09.77	Offshore	Yes	1	0
	MEN-RG-14	39-19-17.29, 123-48-14.47	Offshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-RG-07	39-19-51.99, 123-48-48.86	Offshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-RG-08	39-19-45.74, 123-48-48.11	Offshore	Yes	2	1
	MEN-RG-11	39-19-45.24, 123-48-47.36	Offshore	Yes	1	0
	MEN-RG-06	39-19-50.41, 123-48-42.37	Onshore	Yes	2	0
	MEN-RG-05	39-19-45.16, 123-48-47.77	Offshore	Yes	0	0

Survey Results (3)

Site	Nest #	Location	Onshore or Offshore	Incubation/ Potential eggs	Hatched chicks	Fledged chicks
Mendocino Headlands						
	MEN-MH-02	39-18-33.08, 123-48-41.44	Offshore	Yes	1	1
	MEN-MH-03	39-18-27.16, 123-48-44.28	Offshore	No	0	0
	MEN-MH-05	39-18-11.28, 123-48-31.12	Offshore	Yes	2	1
	MEN-MH-06	39-18-27.94, 123-48-43.48	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-MH-13	39-18-06.00, 123-48-22.18	Onshore	Yes	2	1
	MEN-MH-15	39-18-42.83, 123-48-29.88	Onshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-MH-16	39-18-08.13, 123-7-58.56	Offshore	Yes	1	0
Spring Ranch						
	MEN-SR-01		Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-SR-02	39-16-34.27, 123-48-06.63	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-SR-03	39-16-40.06, 123-48-09.69	Offshore	Yes	1	1
	MEN-SR-03A	39-16-42.12, 123-48-10.09	Offshore	Yes	1	1
	MEN-SR-04	39-16-44.35, 123-48-09.93	Onshore	Yes	3	0
	MEN-SR-04A	39-16-47.76, 123-48-11.25	Onshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-SR-05	39-16-55.24, 123-48-13.35	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-SR-06	39-16-50.60, 123-48-12.53	Offshore	Yes	0	0
	MEN-SR-07	39-16-58.44, 123-48-11.68	Offshore	No	0	0
Little River Headlands						
	MEN-LR-01	39-16-20.65, 123-47-46.97	Offshore	Yes	3	0
	MEN-LR-02	No nest this year	Offshore	No	0	0
	MEN-LR-03	39-16-18, 123-47-54	Offshore	Yes	1	1
	MEN-LR-04	39-16-18.77, 123-47-56.24	Offshore	No	0	0
Navarro Bluff						
	MEN-NB-01	39-11-46.64, 123-46-21.87	Offshore	Yes	2	2
	MEN-NB-03	39-11-56.53, 123-46-17.67	Offshore	Yes	2	2
Totals		Number of Territories -68		53	66	15

Table 3. Summary of survey data over the past five years

A quick comparison with our five years of data shows that this was not the worst year.

Year	# of territories	# Chicks Hatched	# Chicks Fledged
2012	No data	43	18
2013	No data	52	17
2014	No data	50	18
2015	73	No data	42
2016	61	45	14
2017	67	64	19
2018	68	66	15

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