

CARCASS SURVEY SUMMARY 1996-97. REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS (RNSP)

As part of RNSP Fish & Wildlife staff western snowy plover surveys on park beaches, carcass surveys are performed simultaneously to record sea bird and marine mammal mortality on the coast. This information can help determine background levels of oil in marine fauna populations, as well as any unusual natural events (for example, El Nino, a warming of ambient sea temperature).

Winter 96/97 surveys turned up only 4 dead seabirds; none showed the presence of oil, and cause of death could not be determined.

Surveys in May-July of 1997 (July is outside the plover survey protocol, but it was felt that with a known El Nino occurring, another survey should be undertaken to note if mortality increased). Summer surveys turned up marine mammals as well (7 total; sea lions, harbor seal, unk. whale species, and unk. porpoise sp.). The greatest difference occurred with seabird mortality; a total of 108 dead seabirds were found washed up on the parks' beaches. The bulk of these (89 birds, 82% of the total) were found during a mid-July survey after we had read of increased common murre mortality in Oregon (from an AP wire service story). Most of these July mortalities turned out to be common murre hatch year (HY-recently fledged) birds. None of these birds or mammals had visible oiling, and cause of death was unknown. Most of the birds were found on Gold Bluffs Beach, from Fern Canyon to Ossagon Creek (79 of 89, 88% of the July total). It should be noted that the only other reaches surveyed in July were Gold Bluffs Beach from the entrance kiosk to Fern Canyon; and Freshwater Spit (this leaves a portion of Carruthers Cove, Stone Lagoon, and the Klamath estuary unsurveyed and consequently, not part of the July totals). Had we surveyed these additional reaches, undoubtedly more seabird mortality would have been noted. Results from the first season of carcass surveys have not turned up the presence of oil on any carcasses; this may be due to the fact that the shipping lanes are far offshore, and most birds probably sink and are carried away by currents before they reach park beaches.

Table 1 details the totals (by species) of carcasses found for each survey (by reach and date) during winter 96/97. Table 2 details totals for summer surveys. Figure 1 compares total numbers of carcasses (by species) for the entire survey (both winter and summer).

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DATE	REACH # & NAME	SPECIES NAME & #
Winter Surveys 1996/97		
12/17/96	#3-Gold Bluffs S	Comm. Murre-1
2/4/97		None found
1/9/97	Redw est.-Mussel Pt	None found
1/14/97	#2 Freshwater Spit	None found
1/27/97		None found
1/15/97	#5 Carruthers Cove	None found
2/3/97		Unk seabird-1
2/11/97	#4 Gold Bluffs N	Gull sp.-1 Cormorant?-1
Total for winter 96/97 surveys (none oiled): Comm. Murre-1 Gull sp.-1 Unk seabird-1 Cormorant?-1		

Table 1. Winter Carcass Survey Totals.

DATE	REACH # & NAME	SPECIES NAME & #
Breeding Season Surveys, 1997		
5/7/97	#5 Carruthers Cove	None found
6/18/97		Unk seabird-1 Cormorant-1 Sea lion-1
5/12/97	#4 Gold Bluffs N	Harbor seal-1
6/12/97		Cormorant-1 Unk seabird-1
7/16/97		Unk seabird-27 Comm. Murre-41 (Most HY birds) Gull sp.-9 Brown Pelican-1 Cormorant-1
5/13/97	#3 Gold Bluffs S	Gull sp.-3 21 ft. Whale (sp unk)
6/23/97		Gull sp.-3 Unk porpoise-1 porpoise or sea lion-1 Unk seabird-1 Comm. Murres-2 sea lion-1
7/16/97		Comm. Murre-4 Gull sp.-3 Unk seabird-1

9/22/97		Pigeon Guillemot-1 Loon sp.-1 Gull sp.-5 Brown Pelican-1 Unk duck-1 Unk seabirds-8 Unk songbird-1 Comm. Murre-1
5/13/97	#2 Freshwater Spit	Gull sp.-1
7/28/97		Comm. Murre-1 Gull sp.-1
6/23/97		Western gull-1
5/15/97	#1 Stone Lagoon	Surf Scoter?-1
6/18/97		Sea lion-1 Comm. Murre-1
5/21/97	#6 Klamath Spit S	Sea lions-2
6/19/97		None found
5/30/97	#7 Klamath Spit N	None found
6/19/97		None found
Totals for summer/early fall '97 (None oiled): Unk seabirds-39 Gull sp.-26 Cormorants-3 Comm. Murres-50 Brown Pelicans-2 Pigeon Guillemot-1 Unk Loon sp.-1 Surf scoter-1 Unk duck sp.-1 Unk songbird sp.-1 Sea lions-5 Harbor seal-1 Unk whale sp.-1 Unk porpoise sp.-1 Porpoise or sea lion (partial carcass)-1		

Table 2. Summer Carcass Survey totals

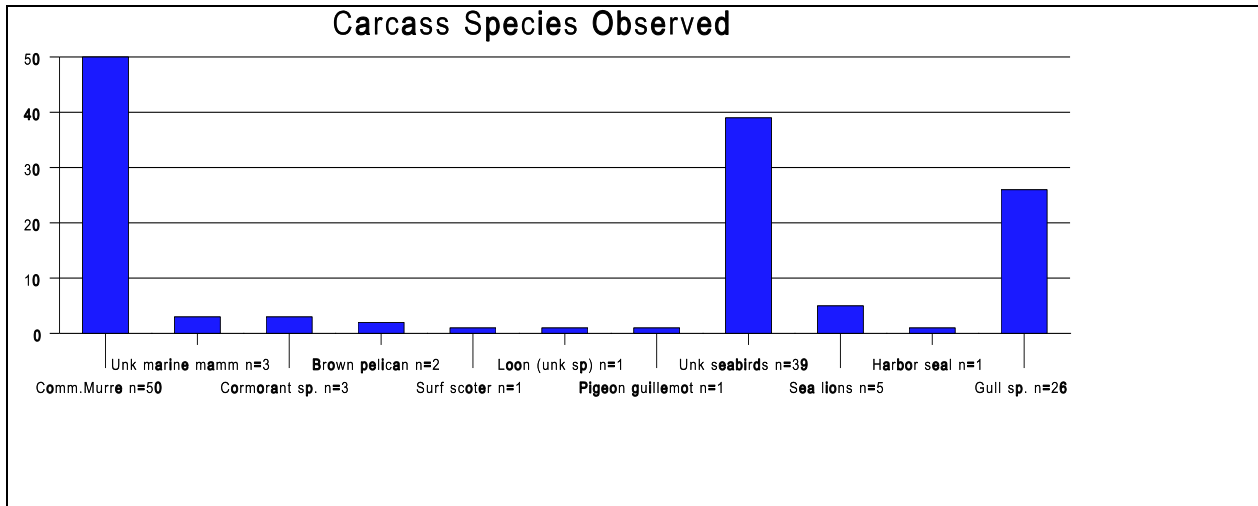


Figure 1. Total Numbers of Carcasses Observed (by species)