

SPRING/SUMMER SEASON (MAY-JULY 1999) BEACH CARCASS SURVEY
SUMMARY (MARINE BIRDS AND MAMMALS), REDWOOD NATIONAL AND
STATE PARKS (RNSP)

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Introduction

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). This season, Crescent Beach was added to the snowy plover/carcass surveys as reach #8. Reach #1 (Stone Lagoon) is still being surveyed (plovers only) by California Dept. of Parks and Recreation, and Reach #7 (N Klamath Spit) was not surveyed since it is still almost non-existent from the Klamath River mouth migrating north and reducing the north spit's size considerably.

Results

Since average high tides were well up on the beach this year, many of the carcass surveys were performed while doing snowy plover surveys high up on the dry sand area; the wrack lines (beach debris concentrations) were easily observable from standard plover survey routes.

DATE	REACH NAME	REACH #	SPECIES
5/4/99	Freshwater Spit	2	None found
5/5/99	Klamath S	6	Harbor Seal
5/5/99	Crescent Beach	8	None found
5/6/99	Gold Bluffs S	3	2 Surf Scoters
5/10/99	Carruthers Cove	5	2 Skates Surf Scoter Gull
5/12/99	Gold Bluffs N	4	Unknown Seabird 2 Surf Scoters 2 Common Murres
6/14/99	Carruthers Cove	5	Unknown Seabird
6/15/99	Gold Bluffs N	4	2 Unknown Seabirds
6/16/99	Gold Bluffs S	3	Sea Lion Gull
6/16/99	Freshwater Spit	2	None found
6/17/99	Klamath S	6	2 Gulls Sturgeon
6/17/99	Crescent Beach	8	Surf Scoter

BEACH CARCASS SURVEY RESULTS, CONTINUED			
DATE	REACH NAME	REACH #	SPECIES
7/13/99	Gold Bluffs S	3	2 Unknown Seabirds 7 Gulls Unknown Phocid Sea Lion Common Murre Pigeon Guillemot
7/14/99	Crescent Beach	8	3 Common Murres 2 Gulls 3 Unknown Seabirds
7/14/99	Klamath S	6	Unknown Phocid Grey Whale Cormorant
7/15/99	Gold Bluffs N	4	Cormorant Common Murre Unknown Phocid Unknown Seabird
7/15/99	Freshwater Spit	2	Gull
7/28/99	Carruthers Cove	5	Common Murre

Totals: **Mammals=7**

- 1 Harbor Seal
- 2 Sea Lions
- 3 Unknown Phocids (seal or sea lion)
- 1 Grey Whale (dead estimated 2 months)

Birds=42

- 11 Unknown Seabirds (most wings and keel only)
- 6 Surf Scoters
- 14 Gulls
- 8 Common Murres
- 2 Cormorants
- 1 Pigeon Guillemot

Fish=3

- 2 Skates
- 1 Sturgeon (probably fishing mortality)

No oil was found on any of the carcasses; nor was any sign of oil present on the beaches surveyed. Total number of seabirds found was considerably less in 1999 than in 1998, even with the addition of another reach (#8, Crescent Beach). Comparing the top three categories found from the 1998 survey to the 1999 survey:

	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
Common Murres	29	8
Unknown Seabirds	19	11
Gulls	25	14

However, seven marine mammal carcasses were found this season compared to last year's total of three. These short-term trends are probably insignificant; only after many years of data collection will any natural patterns become evident. Mortality based on man-made events will be more immediate and causative. The Fish and Wildlife Branch maintains a Microsoft Access database of all species found on the surveys. It can be found at: S:/Team/FWL/Birds/carcasssurveys/carcass.mdb.

Recommendations

Perform an additional carcass survey on all reaches at least once in mid-August or mid-September. This is the time period when many juvenile seabirds are most subject to natural mortality, due to decreased ocean productivity at the end of the summer's upwelling (Schultz, 1990).

Literature Cited

Schultz, S.T. 1990. The Northwest Coast: A Natural History. Timber Press, Inc. Portland, OR.