

## Field Notes, Coastwide Seabird Surveys July-August 2006

Boat operator / Crew Leader: Biologist David Pitkin

Assistants: Aaron Drew, Amanda Gladics, Neil Holcomb, Chuck Homme, Kay Homme, Amy Kocourek, Dave Ledig, Roy Lowe, Elise Elliot-Smith, Khem So, Mike Szumski, Stan Van deWetering

Sunday, July 2: Pitkin transported 24' Boston Whaler to Bandon; RON @ Bandon.

Monday, July 3: Surveyed Bandon. WX 0800 hrs: 90% cloudy, wind NW@ 10 kts. Dave Pitkin, Dave Ledig, Amy Kocourek and Neil Holcomb departed Bandon boat basin at 0915. The tide was ebbing and the bar was fairly rough; we waited for several minutes inside the jaws before getting an opportunity to cross. Surveyed Bandon rocks beginning at 0936 w/ small group of rocks (270-013) N. of Table Rock and worked south through Table Rock, Coquille Point rocks, Cat and Kittens, Face Rock and all the unnamed colonies down to Haystack and Monkey rocks.

At 1115 we finished surveying Monkey Rock and headed south toward Blacklock Point. We were running south at about 25 kts / 4500 rpm when a problem developed in the port engine off the New River Bottoms approx. 10 miles south of Haystack Rock. The engine was being starved for fuel; the primer bulb was sucked absolutely flat and the engine was shuddering from lack of fuel. I shut down both engines and Ledig and I removed the external water separator from the port engine and checked it for water. We found a little water in the filter, but also lots of black particulate matter – looked like corrosion of some sort. We emptied the filter into a bucket and replaced it, but the engine still experienced fuel starvation over 3000 rpm. We emptied the filter a second and third time, but could not solve the fuel problem. By 1230 p.m. we were off Floras Lake and the wind had increased to approx. 25 kts. and wind waves were 3'-4'. With the fuel starvation problem on the port engine we were able to make only 8-9 kts, so I decided to run south with the wind to Port Orford, rather than trying to beat 12 miles back to Bandon against the wind. Chuck and Kay Homme (volunteers at Bandon) drove the pickup and trailer down to Port Orford to meet us. It took us approximately 1.5 hours to reach Orford Head, by which time the wind had increased to 35 kts. with blowing spray and 5'-6' wind waves. We were able to cobble together a lifting harness with the help of a local fisherman and we lifted the whaler out of the water approx. 60' up to the parking lot level (hoist fee was \$15).. The hoist operator was able to set the whaler on our trailer without any trouble. We transported the trailer back up to the Bandon office, where we replaced both external fuel separation filters with new ones.

Tuesday, July 4: Surveyed Blacklock Point to Gold Beach. WX: partly cloudy, wind NW @ 10 kts., swell 3'. Pitkin, Ledig and Kocourek departed Bandon at 0830 on an ebb tide and headed directly south to Blacklock Point. The port engine was still experiencing fuel flow issues, but was able to hold approx. 3500 rpm without starving out. This enabled us to just barely hold a plane at 18 – 19 kts. Surveys began at Tower Rock at 0940, and we surveyed south from there to Gold Beach, where we completed surveys at Pyramid Rock on the Rogue Reef at 1930 hrs. Our ruggedized laptop quit working fairly

early in the morning, so took hard copy notes only on pre-printed datasheets. Winds increased to 25 kts. by afternoon but survey conditions were otherwise fairly good. RON at the Azalea Lodge in Gold Beach.

Wednesday, July 5: Boat Repair. Attempted to survey from Gold Beach to Brookings. Pitkin drove the pickup and trailer down to Brookings at 0600, but on the way north from Brookings with Holcomb encountered heavy fog near Cape Sebastian with more coming onshore. The decision was made to put off surveys for one day and attempt to clear the fuel lines leading from the fuel tank to the engines. Pitkin, Ledig and Kocourek spent the day in Gold Beach trying to clear the fuel lines in the whaler, while Holcomb drove to the Boardman State Park area for BLOY surveys. We borrowed a portable compressed air cylinder from a performance car repair shop in Gold Beach and blew out all the fuel lines that were accessible. We also bypassed the fuel separator for the port engine and ran the fuel line directly from the tank to the engine, using the small internal filter attached to the engine as the primary filter. Our suspicion was that we may have had an obstruction in the filter housing assembly attached to the rear bulkhead. This seemed to help fuel flow somewhat, but there still seemed to be diminished flow in the port engine. RON Gold Beach.

Thursday, July 6: Surveyed Gold Beach to Brookings. 0630 -- Pitkin drove the pickup and trailer down to Brookings and was transported back to Gold Beach by Holcomb. WX 0800: scattered clouds, winds NW @ 5-20 kts., swell 1', some fog in a.m. Pitkin, Ledig, Kocourek and Holcomb departed Gold Beach at 0945 and headed south to begin surveys at 270-069.1 north of Cape Sebastian at 1007. Survey conditions were good all day as we worked south along coast. Winds did not exceed 25 kts. and the swell was not more than 2' all day, although our three ring data binder was blown overboard at one point (recovered successfully). Port engine still had fuel flow issues, however, so speed was limited to about 20 kts. during the long runs. We finished surveying at 2100 hours at colony 270-128.1. We had the boat out of the water and on the trailer by 2130, and Pitkin drove the pickup and boat back to Bandon. Arrived at Bandon office at midnight.

Friday, July 7: Pitkin transported whaler to Y Marina in Coos Bay for repair of fuel flow restriction to port engine.

July 8-12: Very large swell developed from low pressure system in the Aleutians. Swells ranged from 7' – 9' during this period, with NW winds often exceeding 30 knots. Boat surveys not possible during this period.

Thursday, July 13: Surveyed Seal Rock area. Pitkin and Gladics departed Newport in the Ribcraft at 1330 and headed south to survey the Seal Rock area. Swell was 7' – 9', wind NW @ 5 kts., partly cloudy. Swell was very large and spooky around the Seal Rock reefs. We surveyed 243-022 from a distance of approx. 200 meters to stay out of the breaking swells nearer shore. After completing Seal Rock colonies, we headed north to Yaquina Head but the swell prevented boat surveys there. Hundreds of CAAU were observed between Seal Rock and Yaquina Head on our track line; probably low

thousands in area. I have not seen a concentration of CAAU like this in the Newport area before.

Friday, July 14: Surveyed Yaquina Head and Yaquina Bay colonies from mainland and by boat. Pitkin surveyed Yaquina Head from mainland and beach N. of Yaquina Head from 0730 to 1030. Surveyed most of the north side of Yaquina Head (243-011 to 016) from beach because swell was so big. Boat survey: Pitkin and Lowe departed Newport at 1145 in Ribcraft and headed north to Yaquina Head. Swell was 6'-8', wind NW at 5 kts., partly cloudy. Swell was breaking all the way from tip of Yaquina Head to beach on the south side. On the south side we stayed close to cliffs in protected water and the rollers went by us without incident. Breakers not nearly as bad on the north side of the Head. Yaquina Head surveys were completed by 1330.

Yaquina Bay was surveyed from 1400 to 1545. Excellent survey conditions; tide was adequate to allow full boat survey of Yaquina Bay bridge.

Monday, July 17: Pitkin drove to Y Marina in Coos Bay to pick up 24' whaler following repair. (Y Marina had replaced the two fuel pick-up tubes inside fuel tank. Tubes were fully corroded and almost completely obstructed.) RON at Bandon.

Tuesday, July 18: Pitkin did south coast mainland surveys between Brookings and Bandon. Began at Cape Blanco at approx. 1000 hrs and finished at Brookings at approx. 1230 p.m. WX clear, wind NW @ 10 kts., swell 3'.

Wednesday, July 19: Pitkin surveyed Blacklock Point rocks in early a.m.. WX at 0730 hrs.: Clear, wind NW @ 25 kts, 55 F. Pitkin drove whaler to Newport in p.m.

Thursday, July 20: Surveyed Haystack Rock, Pacific City to Depoe Bay. Pitkin, Elise Elliott-Smith and Stan Van deWetering. WX: Clear, swell 2', NW winds 10 kts with an opposing easterly push from inland thermal trough. We departed Depoe Bay in whaler at 0800 and headed north for Pacific City, but got only 3-4 miles before developing engine trouble off Lincoln Beach. The symptoms were the same as before: fuel starvation in the port engine. I phoned Y Marine from the boat and told them that the problem hadn't been fixed, and they were very apologetic. I called the Newport office and asked Roy to bring the Ribcraft north for us. In the meantime, we motored back to Depoe Bay at about 8 knots, checking a couple colonies on the way, and were just coming into port as Roy arrived with the Ribcraft. By the time we swapped boats and were ready to go it was about 1045 a.m. We deadheaded north to Haystack Rock and surveyed south from there with following seas. The NW wind had increased to 15-20 kts, with higher gusts, but we encountered fairly calm conditions near shore between Lincoln City and Cascade Head where the easterly flow had pushed out over the ocean a short distance. However, NW winds dominated north of Cascade Head, and were blowing at about 25 kts. when we arrived at Haystack Rock at 1230. Sea conditions were very rough around the north and west sides of the rock; I was unable to survey with binocs. Took a visual estimate on PECO nests, but they are extremely cryptic on this rock, often hidden behind large clumps of grass with little or no whitewash showing.

After surveying Haystack Rock we headed south and surveyed all colonies as we went. At Two Arches Rock at Cascade Head the NW wind had increased to 30+ knots, with gusts over 40 knots. The Ribcraft performed extremely well under these conditions, and caught much less wind than the big whaler. Our three-ring data binder was blown overboard twice, but fortunately floated well and we were able to retrieve it with a salmon net. One data page was also ripped out of the notebook by the wind, but we were likewise able to recover it. We completed surveys and returned to Depoe Bay by 1715 hrs.

Friday, July 21: Pitkin drove whaler back down to Y Marina in Coos Bay for repairs. NW winds too strong to survey at sea.

Monday, July 24: NW winds 25-30 kts, clear, swell 6'. Pitkin did land-based surveys in Clatsop County.

July 25 – July 29: Strong NW winds and large swell prevented boat surveys.

Saturday, July 29: Pitkin drove pickup and Ribcraft north to Garibaldi; met Aaron Drew and Mike Szumski there in p.m. Stayed at Comfort Inn at Garibaldi.

Sunday, July 30: Surveyed Three Arch Rocks NWR. Survey Crew: Pitkin, Drew, Szumski. Survey Vessel: Ribcraft. Forecast in a.m. was for light winds from the NW swell 4' and dry conditions. However, the NWS had missed a small disturbance in their forecast. Actual WX at 0630 was heavy rain showers, SW wind @ 20+ knots and 52 F. Aaron, Mike and I crossed the Tillamook Bay bar at about 0700. Bar was quite rough with ebbing tide and winds, but we timed it right and crossed without incident. However, a 26' boat behind us refused to cross. We started heading north to Tillamook Rock to begin surveys, but I was hesitant to run north with a southerly wind blowing. I decided to hold in the lee of Twin Rocks to see if the wind would change, but they were still out of the SW at 0900 and we decided to return to Garibaldi. We recrossed the bar at 0915 and headed back to port.

The weather began to clear in the late afternoon, so Pitkin and Szumski relaunched the Ribcraft and headed south from Tillamook Bay at 1745 to survey Three Arch Rocks NWR. Survey conditions were very good, with 2' swell and light winds from the NW. Because of the seasonal closure our survey distances were >500', resulting in code 2 data, but otherwise conditions were very good. We finished surveying Three Arch Rocks and headed back to port, arriving at the Garibaldi boat basin at 1955.

Monday, July 31: Surveyed Tillamook Head, Clatsop County to Tillamook Bay, Tillamook County. Survey crew: Pitkin, Gladics, Szumski. Survey Vessel: Ribcraft. WX: partly cloudy, swell 4', wind NW at 10 kts. We crossed the Tillamook Bay bar at approx. 0800 and deadheaded north to Tillamook Head. A problem with the fuel gauge became apparent enroute, and by the time we reached Tillamook Head the gauge read almost empty, even though we'd started with more than half a tank indicated at Garibaldi.

Since it's impossible to look into the fuel tank or drop a line into it, I couldn't manually determine the fuel level. so I couldn't be sure whether the fuel gauge was incorrect or whether we had developed a fuel leak, in which case the fuel gauge would possibly have been correct and we would have been SOL. Tillamook Head is 20 miles away from the nearest fueling facility, so I made the most conservative decision and began surveying back south toward Tillamook Bay, turning off the boat whenever possible and skipping some minor colonies in order to save fuel. The fuel gauge continued to drop, and by the time we reached the entrance to Tillamook Bay (1415 hours), the fuel gauge showed zero fuel remaining. We made it back to the dock without running out of fuel, and when I filled the tank in Garibaldi we took on only 31 gallons, indicating that we still had 19 gallons onboard (50 gallon tank). So we knew the fuel gauge was bad at that point.

Tuesday, August 1: Surveyed Tillamook Bay to Haystack Rock, Pacific City. Survey Crew: Pitkin, Gladics, Szumski. Survey Vessel: Ribcraft. WX: overcast, swell 3', wind north at 5-10 kts. We crossed the Tillamook bar at approx. 0730 and deadheaded to Haystack Rock at Pacific City, where we began surveying at 0830. Ocean conditions were much better than on our original attempt to survey Haystack Rock on 7/20/06, when the rock was virtually uncountable because of very high winds and high sea conditions. We worked north from Haystack Rock without incident, skipping Three Arch Rocks, which Pitkin and Szumski had surveyed on 7/30. Ended survey at Pyramid Rock (219-044) at 1325 hours, and headed back to Garibaldi. This completed the north coast segment of the survey.

Friday, August 4: Received call from Y Marina in Coos Bay; 24' Boston Whaler finally fixed.

Monday, August 7: Pitkin drove to Coos Bay to pick up whaler at Y Marina. Left Newport at 2:45 p.m. and arrived at Y Marina at 4:45. RON in Bandon at bunkhouse.

Tuesday, August 8: Surveyed Bandon to Coos Bay. Survey Crew: Pitkin, Ledig, Kocourek, Homme. Survey Vessel: 24' Boston Whaler. WX: clear, swell 2'-3', wind N. at 5 kts. Crossed the Bandon bar at 0930 and headed north. Began survey at Five Mile Rocks (new colony 270-012.3) at 1010 hrs., and surveyed north to Coos Head, where the survey ended at 1510 hrs.

Wednesday, August 9: Pitkin, Ledig and Kocourek attempted to survey from Florence to Heceta Head. WX: NW wind 25 kts, heavy fog onshore. We launched at Florence and proceeded downriver to the jaws, where we encountered very heavy fog onshore. Survey attempt was terminated at that point, as Heceta Head and Sea Lion Caves would have been under heavy fog.

Wednesday, August 16: Surveyed from Depoe Bay to Otter Rock. Survey Crew: Pitkin and So. Survey vessel: Ribcraft. WX: Overcast, swell 7', N. wind @ 5kts., 50 F. We launched at Depoe Bay at approx. 0830 and surveyed south toward Otter Rock (243-010.2) where we completed our survey at 1015 hrs. Whale Cove was skipped because of

large breaking swells blocking the entrance to the cove. Rocky Creek cove was surveyed, but it was a very long-distance look because of the large swell.

Thursday, August 17: Surveyed Sea Lion Caves and Heceta Head. Survey Crew: Pitkin, So and Elliott-Smith. Survey vessel: Ribcraft. WX: Fog bank to west, swell 6', wind N @ 5 kts., 55 F. We launched at Florence at approx. 0900 and began surveying at the north end of Heceta Head at 1000 hrs. We completed the survey at Cox Rock at approx. 1115 a.m. Survey conditions were good. This completed the at-sea surveys for 2006.