

Helping the Black Oystercatcher



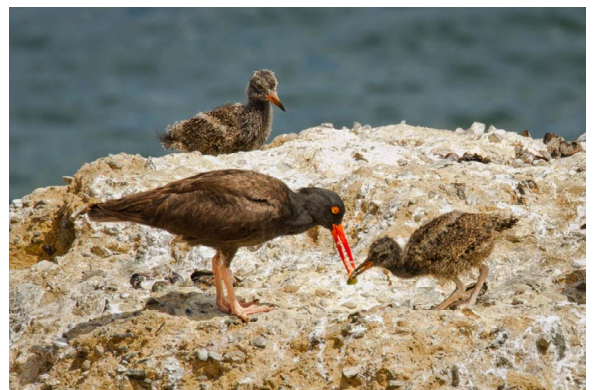
The Black Oystercatcher is considered an indicator for the health of rocky intertidal shorelines. Threats to this habitat are real and growing: sea level rise, ocean acidification, and increased recreational and commercial use of coastal areas. **But there is hope -- Oystercatchers can thrive into the future with our help.**

Commonly seen yet globally rare, there is no mistaking the bright orange beak or distinctive call of California's only year-round resident rocky intertidal bird. It can be seen prying limpets, mussels, and other sea life from dynamic Pacific shoreline. There are thought to be no more than 12,000 of these beloved birds ranging from the Aleutian Islands through Baja.

Despite the popularity of Oystercatchers, little was known about its status in California. This lack of information has constrained conservation activities that could help secure the species. Audubon California and the Audubon network is gathering essential life history, and using this information to identify and undertake conservation practices to protect Oystercatchers.

Accomplishments

- Together with our chapter volunteers and agency experts, in 2011 we conducted the first ever statewide breeding season survey, showing higher than expected densities of oystercatchers in some areas.
- In 2011-2014, citizen and agency scientists tracked the success of 80-100 Oystercatcher nests per year, finding variable nest success. This cadre of volunteers will track nests annually, providing an invaluable assessment of the status of oystercatchers.
- For the first time ever, we identified and mapped the most important habitats for Oystercatchers in the state and shared with agencies and land managers.
- We developed a list of conservation best practices now being applied by Mendocino Coast, Madrone, Morro Bay, Monterey, Redwood Region Audubon chapters and the California Coastal National Monument.



Black Oystercatcher feeding chicks.

Alice Cahill

Goals

- Continue to coordinate statewide monitoring, including measuring nest success and tracking the status of Oystercatchers in a subset of California's new marine reserves as part of the state's Marine Reserve Monitoring Enterprise.
- Evaluate the multi-year population and nest success information to generate a picture of the health of the Oystercatcher population throughout the state.
- Refine and help to apply conservation best practices including reducing disturbance to breeding sites with a focus on areas that may serve as refuge against climate change.
- Raise awareness of Black Oystercatchers through on the ground outreach, media, and online campaigns.

What You Can Do

You can help Black Oystercatchers by watching and listening for their alarm calls in the spring and summer, when they nest on rocks, islets, and sometimes mainland areas. Leave the immediate area where they are likely defending their nest and brood. Tell others about oystercatchers and how to protect them. Enter sightings into eBird. And just enjoy this handsome, territorial marine shorebird!

More information

Please visit ca.audubon.org/black-oystercatcher to learn more about the species, watch video, and hear the bird's alarm call.



Black Oystercatcher on rocky intertidal.