

Dramatic changes in the number of Black Oystercatchers nesting in Sitka Sound, Alaska

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In 2007, we re-surveyed Sitka Sound, Alaska, to determine changes in nesting Black Oystercatchers that were first studied in 1940; we found an almost 80% decline in the number of nesting pairs between the two years. Whereas human development and the beaching of sawmill logs clearly eliminated nesting habitat, the lack of occupancy by pairs at other historic nest sites was more perplexing. Ancillary evidence suggests that the population has been depressed for at least 13 years, and additional, more intensive study is needed to determine what is limiting Black Oystercatcher population growth or use of Sitka Sound.