

Common Murre Nesting Ledge Report

November 15, 2010

The Sea Lion Cove colony – adjacent to the habitat ledge, was relatively stable in 2010 – despite heavy disturbance from California Sea Lions. Since the project was built and we started monitoring in 2007, the colony has increased by ~11.3%. Numbers were down slightly from 2009 - is based on 5 day counts during the peak of incubation (late May to early June). Currently, counts during this period show an average of 390 birds in this colony (2010) with all birds in areas where the wall is shielding birds from potential human disturbance.

Birds which normally attended lower areas of the colony were not present this year, likely due to heavy sea lion attendance in that area, often 25-50 animals. Several incidents were observed where breeding murre were flushed off of eggs by lone sea lions moving high up into the colony – even to the base and on top of the habitat ledges. These ledges were rebuilt early in the season due to heavy damage in the winter when hundreds of sea lions hauled up into this area.

While numbers of birds using on the habitat ledges created by the project is still small (an average of 6.6 during this count period) it is up dramatically from 2008 (2.1 birds). No birds have yet bred on these ledges, but a small number have attempted to breed directly at the base of the blind. Despite the productivity losses from sea lion impacts; birds which were not impacted by sea lions had high feeding rates and reproductive success.

We predict that the ledge and blind will continue to provide habitat for increasing numbers of murre and more breeding sites – if sea lion pressure does not increase.

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