

Oregon Coast Wide Tufted Puffin (*Fratercula cirrhata*) Colony Survey

Shawn Stephensen
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
shawn_stephensen@fws.gov

Alyssa Nelson
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Shoreline Education for Awareness

Background

The Tufted Puffin (TUPU) is a medium-large pelagic seabird and member of the Auk family. Populations have generally declined from British Columbia to northern California. The USFWS visited 62 historical nesting colonies along the Oregon coast by boat to assess presence or absence of TUPUs and their burrows.

Methods

Surveys were conducted from 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM between July 12th and August 25th, 2021, from a 26' Boston Whaler using binoculars, spotting scopes, and cameras. Colonies were identified as active if TUPUs were present on or nearby each colony, and a count of individual birds and active burrows was also documented. All observation data was recorded onto an iPad with the Survey123 App

Results

The Oregon map in Figure 2 shows 62 historical TUPU colonies surveyed, 17 active colonies were documented, no new colonies were found, and the estimated Oregon TUPU breeding population was 553 individual birds in 2021. The previous estimated Oregon TUPU breeding populations surveyed in 1979, 1988, 2008 were 6,632 individual birds at 38 colonies, 4,858 individual birds at 49 colonies, and 142 individual birds at 15 colonies respectively (Kocourek et al. 2009). The 2021 estimated breeding population remains low but stable compared to previous coast wide surveys shown in Figure 1. Repeating boat-based rapid assessment surveys on a more regular basis is recommended to keep track of sites actively used by TUPUs.

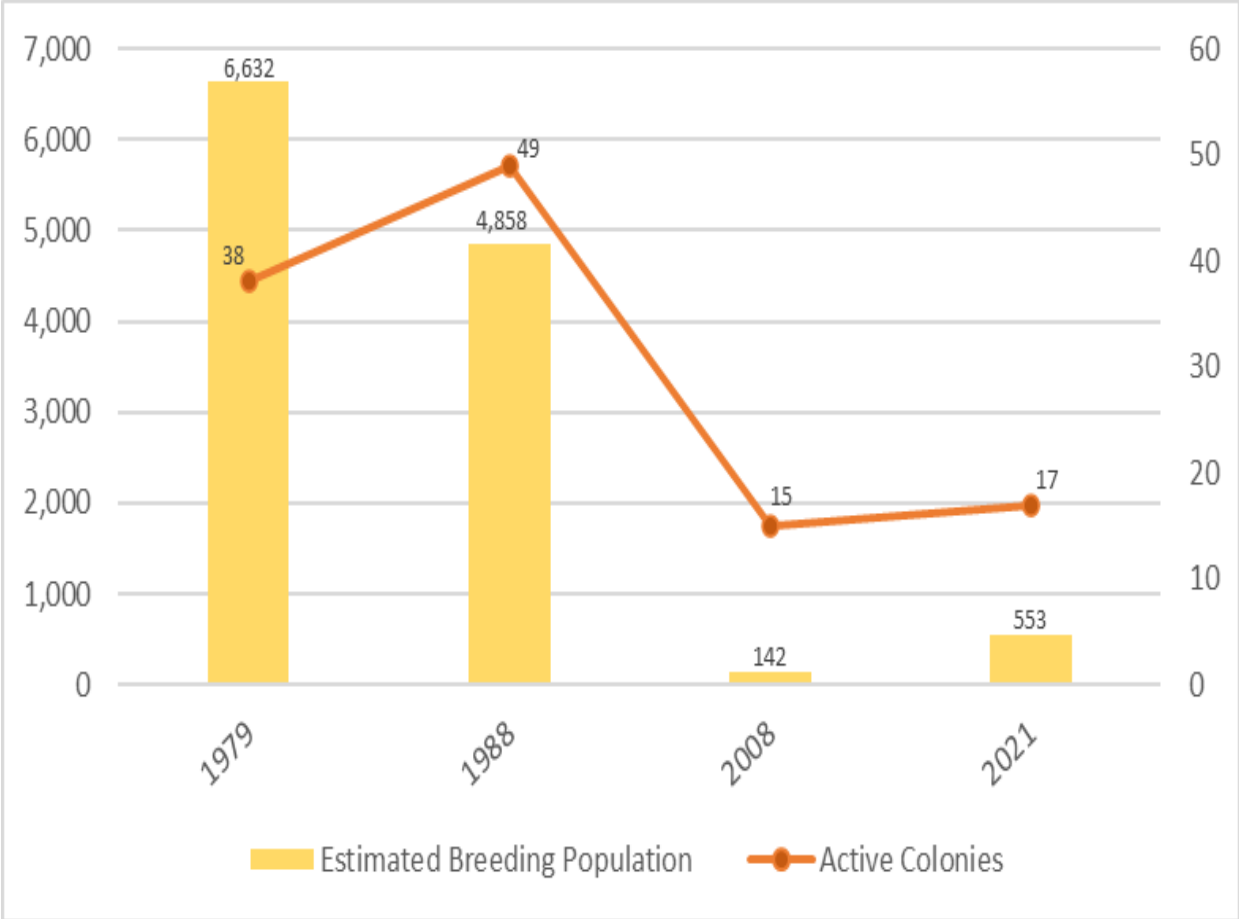


Fig1. The estimated breeding population of TUPUs and number of colonies documented during 1979, 1988, 2008, and 2021 coast wide survey.

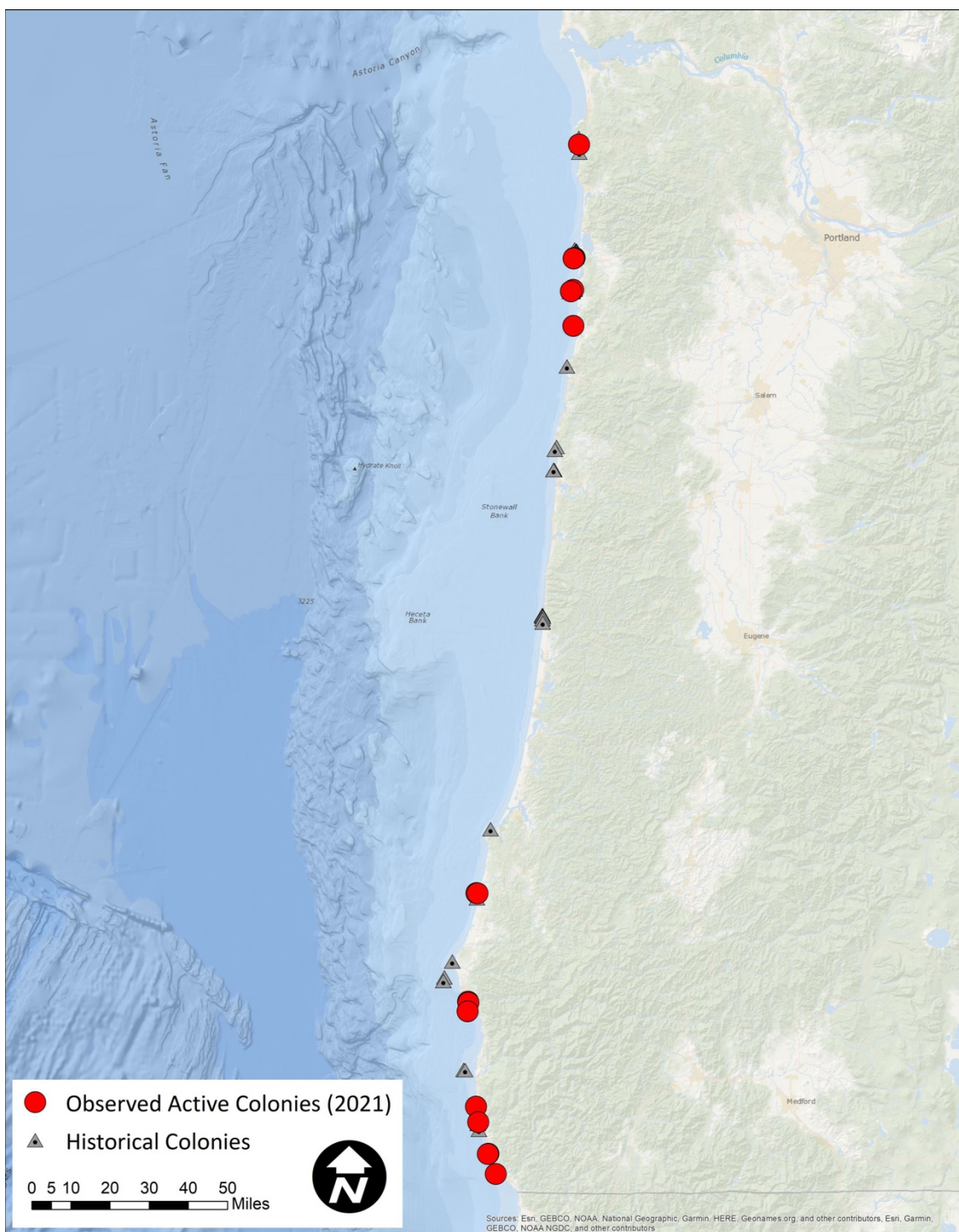


Fig2. Map of historical and active TUPU colonies in Oregon. The red circles indicate observed active TUPU colonies in 2021 and black triangles indicate historical TUPU colonies.

Acknowledgements

The dedication, support, and contributions by many individuals made the project a success, including FWS staff and volunteers along the Oregon Coast. Float following was accomplished by Mary Kostiew and Kate laquinto. Mike Olson (Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians law enforcement official) allowed the survey crew access to tribal land at Gregory Point. Friends of Haystack Rock contributed funds to support the project.

References

Kocourek, A.L., S.W. Stephensen, K.J. So, A.J. Gladics, and J. Ziegler. 2009. Burrow-nesting seabird census of the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, June – August 2008. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report. Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Newport, Oregon. 63pp.