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Record Seabird Breeding on Farallon Islands in 2010

PRBO Conservation Science (PRBO) in collaboration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service has monitored the reproductive performance of seabirds on Southeast Farallon Island (SEFI) continuously since 1968. The 2010 breeding season was extraordinarily successful for most seabirds on the Farallones (Fig. 1). Strong upwelling, favorable oceanic conditions and a high abundance of both krill and juvenile rockfish resulted in exceptional breeding success.

Cassin's Auklets exhibited unprecedented productivity this season with the number of chicks fledged per breeding pair more than double the long-term mean and the highest ever recorded for this species. This record productivity was driven by very high abundance of euphausiids throughout the season and an exceptionally high rate of successful double brooding. Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the breeding pairs that fledged a chick attempted a second brood, and nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of those successfully fledged a second chick.

Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots, Rhinoceros Auklets and Pelagic Cormorants also exhibited very high productivity, likely in response to a greater abundance of juvenile rockfish. Juvenile rockfish were the most prevalent prey item observed in chick diet (the highest proportion observed since the late 1980s) and feeding rates were among the highest ever observed, suggesting that foraging adults were able to quickly locate prey.

In contrast, Western Gulls had their poorest year on record. Brandt's Cormorants continued to suffer very low reproductive success, though

they did manage to fledge a small number of young this season after two years of near complete breeding failure. A decline in the abundance of anchovies and other large forage fish species likely resulted in reduced breeding effort and production for these species.

Main Points

- Ocean productivity exceptionally high during 2010, resulting in highly successful breeding for most species.
- Krill were abundant around the island throughout the year.
- Juvenile rockfish extremely abundant in chick diet but anchovy absent.
- Cassin's Auklets exhibited the highest breeding success ever recorded and an extremely high rate of successful double brooding.
- Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots, Rhinoceros Auklets, and Pelagic Cormorants also had exceptionally high breeding success.
- Brandt's Cormorants and Western Gulls continued to have poor success.

For more information see:

Warzybok and Bradley. 2010. Status of seabirds on Southeast Farallon Island during the 2010 breeding season (<http://www.prbo.org/cms/159>)

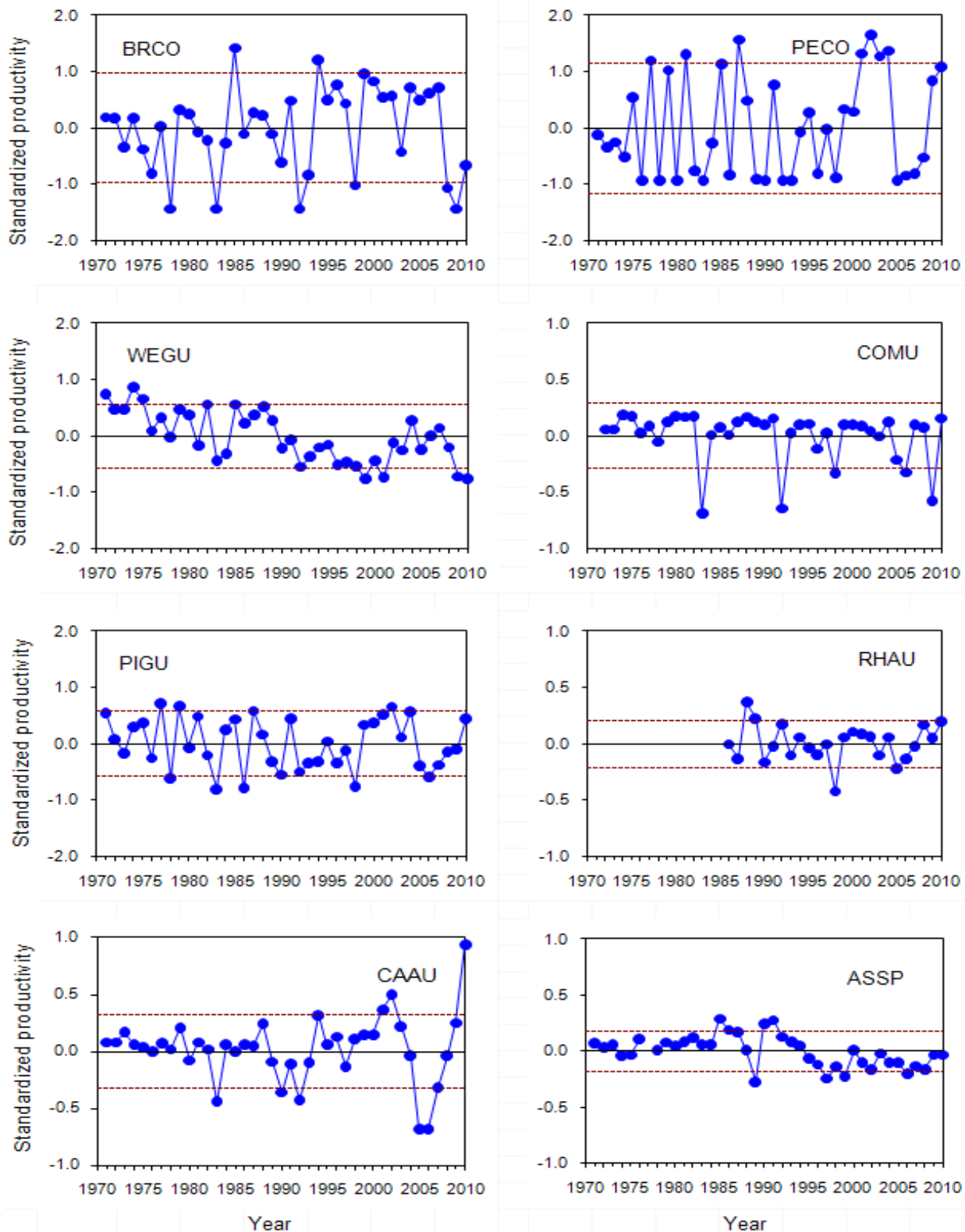


Fig. 1 Standardized productivity anomalies (annual productivity - long term mean) for 8 species of seabirds on SEFI, 1971-2010. The dashed lines represent the 80% confidence interval for the long term mean.