
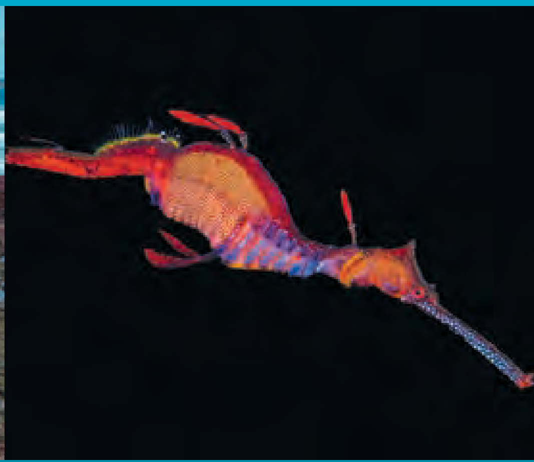


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Victorian Subtidal Reef Monitoring Program: The Reef Biota at Bunurong Marine National Park November 2014

M. Edmunds

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Parks Victoria Technical Paper Series No. 101

Victorian Subtidal Reef Monitoring Program:

The Reef Biota at Bunurong Marine National Park, November 2014

Matt Edmunds

Australian Marine Ecology Pty. Ltd.

November 2014

Executive summary

Shallow reef habitats cover extensive areas along the Victorian coast and are dominated by seaweeds, mobile invertebrates and fishes. These reefs are known for their high biological complexity, species diversity and productivity. They also have significant economic value through commercial and recreational fishing, diving and other tourism activities. To effectively manage and conserve these important and biologically rich habitats, the Victorian Government has established a long-term Subtidal Reef Monitoring Program (SRMP). Over time the SRMP will provide information on the status of Victorian reef flora and fauna and determine the nature and magnitude of trends in species populations and species diversity through time.

This report describes the monitoring of the Bunurong Marine National Park (MNP) and reference sites in the adjacent Eastern and Western Conservation Zones. There were 13 surveys from 1999 to 2014.

This report aims to provide:

- a general descriptions of the biological communities and species populations at each monitoring site and any changes over the monitoring period;
- an identification of any unusual biological phenomena such as interesting communities, strong temporal trends and the presence of any introduced species;

The ongoing monitoring surveys used a standardised procedure along a 200 m line divided into four transects. Each transect was surveyed for:

- abundance and size structure of large fishes;
- abundance of cryptic fishes and benthic invertebrates;
- percentage cover of macroalgae;
- abundance of a string kelp, *Macrocystis pyrifera*, when present; and
- abundance of manufactured debris.

Key observations during the monitoring program were:

- Seaweed species richness and has remained relatively high since 2005 but there have been recent reductions in species diversity and total seaweed abundance, both inside and outside the MNP.
- Most common algal species were relatively low in abundance in 2014, including larger canopy species such as *Seirococcus axillaris* and *Cystophora retorta*, crustose coralline algae, erect coralline algae and thallose red algae.

- The abundance of the reef-seagrass *Amphibolis antarctica* was relatively high in 2014.
- There was a decline in the abundance and habitat formation by giant kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera* from the start of the program in 1999 to 2001, after which it was largely absent. This change is attributable to climate change.
- Invertebrate species richness declined from a peak in 2002 to 2005 and has remained low from 2005 to 2014. Species richness has remained relatively constant over time.
- Most of the common invertebrate species had a marked peak in abundance in 2001, with a subsequent decrease to relatively low abundances by 2006 and relatively little change to 2014. This pattern was observed in species such as the red bait crab *Guinusia chabrus*, black lip abalone *Haliotis rubra*, elephant snail *Scutus antipodes*, warrener *Turbo undulatus*, sea urchins *Heliocidaris erythrogramma* and seastars.
- The decline of blacklip abalone *H. rubra* was concurrent with other species, suggesting a regional ecosystem process, however there was a sharp decline in mean size in 2011, indicating potential harvesting impacts as well. In 2014, mean sizes were the highest recorded inside the MNP and higher than the fished areas, indicating there is lower harvesting pressure inside the MNP.
- Fish species richness and diversity did not change markedly during the monitoring period.
- Blue throated wrasse *Notolabrus tetricus* was the most abundant species and had no apparent trends in abundance over the monitoring period. The mean size of *N. tetricus* was lower than normal in 2010 and 2011, but increased to higher than normal levels in 2014.
- The abundances of purple wrasse *Notolabrus fucicola*, senator wrasse *Pictilabrus laticlavius*, horseshoe leatherjacket *Meuschenia hippocrepis* and six-spined leatherjacket *M. freycineti* were comparatively low from 2003 to 2014.
- The abundance of rosy wrasse *Pseudolabrus rubicundus* increased inside the MNP in 2011 and 2014 to record high levels in 2014.
- Sea sweep *Scorpis aequipinnis* were in higher abundances inside the MNP from 2006 to 2014.
- The biomass of fished species over 200 mm was low from 2006 to 2011. This was also reflected in the size spectrum of fishes, however larger fishes were more abundant in 2014.

- There were no major shifts in community structure attributable to climate change or shifts in species biogeography since the disappearance of the giant kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera*.
- There were no marine invasive species observed at the Bunurong MNP or adjacent Conservation Zone monitoring sites.
- There was no manufactured debris observed at the monitoring sites.

Contents

Index of Figures

Index of Tables

1 Introduction

1.1 Subtidal Reef Ecosystems of Victoria

Shallow reef habitats cover extensive areas along the Victorian coast. The majority of reefs in this area are exposed to strong winds, currents and large swell. A prominent biological component of Victorian shallow reefs is kelp and other seaweeds (Figure 1.1). Large species, such as the common kelp *Ecklonia radiata* and crayweed *Phyllospora comosa*, are usually present along the open coast in dense stands. The production rates of dense seaweed beds are equivalent to the most productive habitats in the world, including grasslands and seagrass beds, with approximately 2 kg of plant material produced per square metre of seafloor per year. These stands typically have 10-30 kg of plant material per square metre. The biomass of seaweeds is substantially greater where giant species such as string kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera* and bull kelp *Durvillaea potatorum* occur.

Seaweeds provide important habitat structure for other organisms on the reef. This habitat structure varies considerably, depending on the type of seaweed species present. Tall vertical structures in the water column are formed by *M. pyrifera*, which sometimes forms a dense layer of fronds floating on the water surface. Other species with large, stalk-like stipes, such as *E. radiata*, *P. comosa* and *D. potatorum*, form a canopy 0.5-2 m above the rocky substratum. Lower layers of structure are formed by: foliose macroalgae typically 10-30 cm high, such as the green *Caulerpa* and the red *Plocamium* species; turfs (to 10 cm high) of red algae species, such as *Pterocladia capillacea*; and hard encrusting layers of pink coralline algae. The nature and composition of these structural layers varies considerably within and between reefs, depending on the biogeographic region, depth, exposure to swell and waves, currents, temperature range, water clarity and the presence or absence of deposited sand.

Grazing and predatory motile invertebrates are prominent animal inhabitants of the reef (**Figure 1.2**). Common grazers include blacklip and greenlip abalone *Haliotis rubra* and *Haliotis laevigata*, warrener *Turbo undulatus* and sea urchins *Heliocidaris erythrogramma, Holopneustes* spp and *Amblypneustes* spp These species can influence the growth and survival of habitat forming organisms. For example, sponges and foliose seaweeds are often prevented from growing on encrusting coralline algae surfaces through the grazing actions of abalone and sea urchins. Predatory invertebrates include dogwhelks *Dicathais orbita*, southern rock lobster *Jasus edwardsii*, Maori octopus *Octopus maorum* and a wide variety of sea star species. Other large reef invertebrates include motile filter feeding animals such as feather stars *Comanthus trichoptera* and sessile (attached) species such as sponges, corals, bryozoans, hydroids and ascidians.

Fishes are also a prominent component of reef ecosystems, in terms of both biomass and ecological function (Figure 1.3). Reef fish assemblages include roaming predators such as blue throat wrasse *Notolabrus tetricus*, herbivores such as herring cale *Olisthops cyanomelas*, planktivores such as sea sweep *Scorpis aequipinnis* and picker-feeders such as six-spined leatherjacket *Meuschenia freycineti*. The type and abundance of each fish species varies considerably depending on exposure to swell and waves, depth, currents, reef structure, seaweed habitat structure and many other ecological variables. Many fish species play a substantial ecological role in the functioning and shaping of the ecosystem. For example, the feeding activities of fishes such as scalyfin *Parma victoriae* and magpie morwong *Cheilodactylus nigripes* promote the formation of open algal turf areas, free of larger canopy-forming seaweeds.

Although the biomass and the primary and secondary productivity of shallow reef ecosystems in Victoria are dominated by seaweeds, motile invertebrates and fishes, there are many other important biological components to the reef ecosystem. These include small species of crustaceans and molluscs from 0.1 to 10 mm in size (mesoinvertebrates), occupying various niches as grazers, predators or foragers. At the microscopic level, films of microalgae and bacteria on the reef surface are also important.

Victoria’s shallow reefs are a very important component of the marine environment because of their high biological complexity, species diversity and productivity. Subtidal reef habitats also have important social and cultural values, which incorporate aesthetic, recreational, commercial and historical aspects. Shallow subtidal reefs also have significant economic value, through commercial fishing of reef species such as wrasses, morwong, rock lobster, abalone and sea urchins, as well as recreational fishing, diving and other tourism activities.

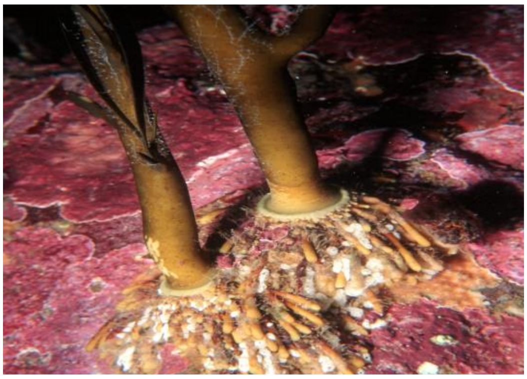
Common kelp *Ecklonia radiata* canopy

Crayweed *Phyllospora comosa* canopy

Thallose red algae *Ballia callitricha*

Red coralline algae *Jania rosea*

Green alga *Caulerpa flexilis*



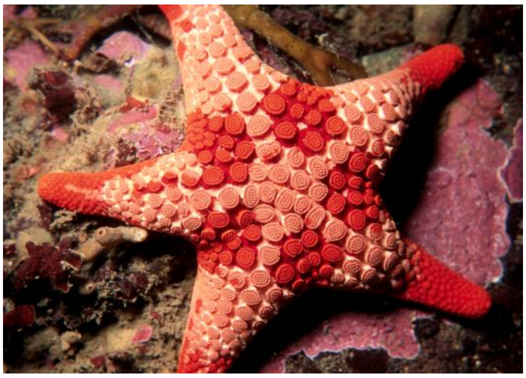
Encrusting coralline algae around crayweed *P. comosa* holdfast

Figure 1.1. Examples of common macroalgae in the Central Victoria bioregion.


Southern rock lobster *Jasus edwardsii*


Black-lipped abalone *Haliotis rubra*


Feather star *Comanthus trichoptera*


Nectria ocellata


Sea urchin *Heliocidaris erythrogramma*

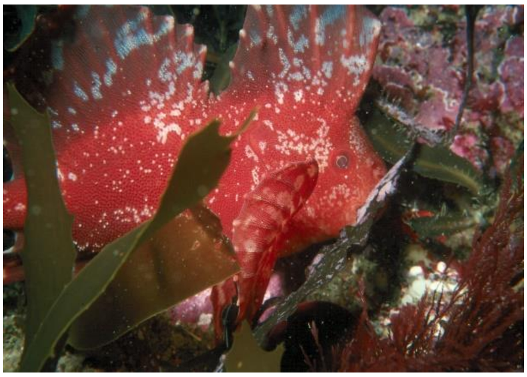

Red velvet fish *Gnathanacanthus goetzeei*

Figure 1.2. Examples of reef invertebrate species and cryptic fish in the Central Victoria bioregion.


Sea sweep *Scorpis aequipinnis* and butterfly perch *Caesioperca lepidoptera*


Old wife *Enoplosus armatus*


Scalyfin *Parma victoriae*


Magpie morwong *Cheilodactylus nigripes*


Blue-throat wrasse *Notolabrus tetricus* (male)


Six-spined leatherjacket *Meuschenia freycineti* (male)

Figure 1.3. Examples of reef fishes in the Central Victoria bioregion.

1.2 Subtidal Reef Monitoring Program

1.2.1 Objectives

An important aspect of the management and conservation of Victorian marine natural resources and assets is assessing the condition of the ecosystem and how this changes over time. Combined with an understanding of ecosystem processes, this information can be used to manage any threats or pressures on the environment to ensure ecosystem sustainability.

Consequently, the Victorian Government has established a long-term Subtidal Reef Monitoring Program (SRMP). The primary objective of the SRMP is to provide information on the status of Victorian reef flora and fauna (focussing on macroalgae, macroinvertebrates and fish). This includes monitoring the nature and magnitude of trends in species abundances, species diversity and community structure. This is achieved through regular surveys at locations throughout Victoria, encompassing both representative and unique habitats and communities.

Information from the SRMP allows managers to better understand and interpret long-term changes in the population and community dynamics of Victoria's reef flora and fauna. As a longer time series of data are collected, the SRMP will allow managers to:

- compare changes in the status of species populations and biological communities among highly protected marine national parks and marine sanctuaries and other Victorian reef areas (*e.g.* Edgar and Barrett 1997, 1999);
- determine associations among species and among species and environmental parameters (*e.g.* depth, exposure, reef topography) and assess how these associations vary through space and time (*e.g.* Edgar *et al.* 1997; Dayton *et al.* 1998; Edmunds, Roob and Ferns 2000);
- provide benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of management actions, in accordance with international best practice for quality environmental management systems (Holling 1978; Meredith 1997); and
- determine the responses of species and communities to unforeseen and unpredictable events such as marine pest invasions, mass mortality events, oil spills, severe storm events and climate change (*e.g.* Ebeling *et al.* 1985; Edgar 1998; Roob *et al.* 2000; Sweatman *et al.* 2003).

A monitoring survey gives an estimate of population abundance and community structure at a small window in time. Patterns seen in data from periodic surveys are unlikely to exactly match changes in the real populations over time or definitively predict the size and nature of future variation. Plots of changes over time will not exactly match the changes in real populations because changes over shorter time periods and actual minima and maxima may not be adequately sampled (*e.g.* Figure 1.4). Furthermore, because the nature and magnitude of environmental variation is different over different time scales, variation over long periods may not be adequately predicted from shorter-term data. Sources of environmental variation can operate at the scale of months (*e.g.* seasonal variation, recruitment and harvesting), years (*e.g.* El Niño), decades (*e.g.* pollution, extreme storm events) or even centuries (*e.g.* tsunamis, global warming). The monitoring program will begin to adequately reflect average trends and patterns as the surveys continue over longer periods (multiple years to decades). Results of this monitoring need to be interpreted within the context of the monitoring frequency and duration.

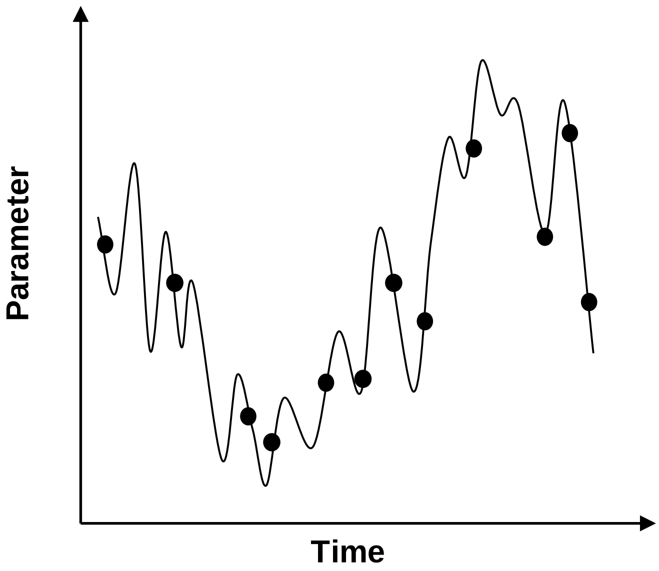


Figure 1.4. An example plot depicting change in an environmental, population or community variable over time (days, months or years) and potential patterns from isolated observations.

Figure 1.5. The Eagles Nest stack, eastern end of Shack Bay, Bunurong Marine National Park.

1.2.2 Monitoring Protocols and Locations

The SRMP uses standardised underwater visual census methods based on an approach developed and applied in Tasmania by Edgar and Barrett (1997). Details of standard operational procedures and quality control protocols for Victoria's SRMP are described in Edmunds and Hart (2003). The procedures have been added to since that publication.

The SRMP was initiated in May 1998 in the vicinity Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park. In 1999 the SRMP was expanded to reefs in the vicinity of the Bunurong Marine National Park, Phillip Island, Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park and Point Addis Marine National Park.

In 2003 and 2004, the Subtidal Reef Monitoring Program was further extended to include Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries throughout Victoria.

1.3 Monitoring at Bunurong

This report describes the subtidal reef monitoring program in Bunurong and the results of the 13 surveys, incorporating Bunurong Marine National Park and the adjacent Eastern and Western Conservation Zones. The objectives of this report were to:

1. provide an overview of the methods used for the SRMP;
2. provide general descriptions of the biological communities and species populations at each monitoring site over the monitoring period;
3. describe changes and trends that have occurred over the monitoring period;
4. identify any unusual biological phenomena such as interesting or unique communities or species; and
5. identify any introduced species at the monitoring locations.

2 Methods

2.1 Site Selection and Survey Times

Eight long-term monitoring sites were established along the Bunurong coast in June 1999 (Sites 1 to 8; Table 2.1; Figure 2.1) The sites were located in 4-7 m depth in three zones: Western Conservation Zone (2 sites); the Bunurong Sanctuary – which was subsequently encompassed in the Marine National Park (4 sites); and the Eastern Conservation Zone (2 sites). Three deep-water reconnaissance sites were surveyed in 16 m depth, with one site in each of the Western, Central and Eastern zones (Sites 9 to 11; Table 2.1; Figure 2.1).

A further four sites were established at 4-7 m depth during the second survey in January/March 2000 (Sites 12 to 15; Figure 2.1). The third survey in winter 2000 was limited by persistently bad weather and heavy rainfalls affected diving conditions and underwater visibility for much of winter and spring. Only four sites could be surveyed: Sites 6, 12, 7 and 8.

Table 2.1. Subtidal reef monitoring sites at Bunurong. Legend: (*) sites not part of the ongoing monitoring; (ECZ) Eastern Conservation Zone; (MNP) Bunurong Marine National Park; and (WCZ) Western Conservation Zone.

Region	No.	Description	Status	Depth (m)
Western Zone	3001	Cape Patterson	WCZ	4
	3002	Cape Paterson Boat Ramp	WCZ	6
	3015	Boat Ramp East	WCZ	7
	3009	Paterson West Deep	WCZ*	15
Marine National Park	3014	The Oaks Beach	MNP	7
	3003	Oaks East	MNP	6
	3004	Twin Reefs	MNP	6
	3005	Shack Bay West	MNP	5
	3012	Shack Bay beach	MNP	7
	3006	Shack Bay Middle	MNP	6
	3010	Twin Reefs Deep	MNP*	16
Eastern Zone	3007	The Caves	ECZ	6
	3013	Petrel Rock West	ECZ	6
	3008	Petrel Rock East	ECZ	5
	3011	The Caves Deep	Reference*	16

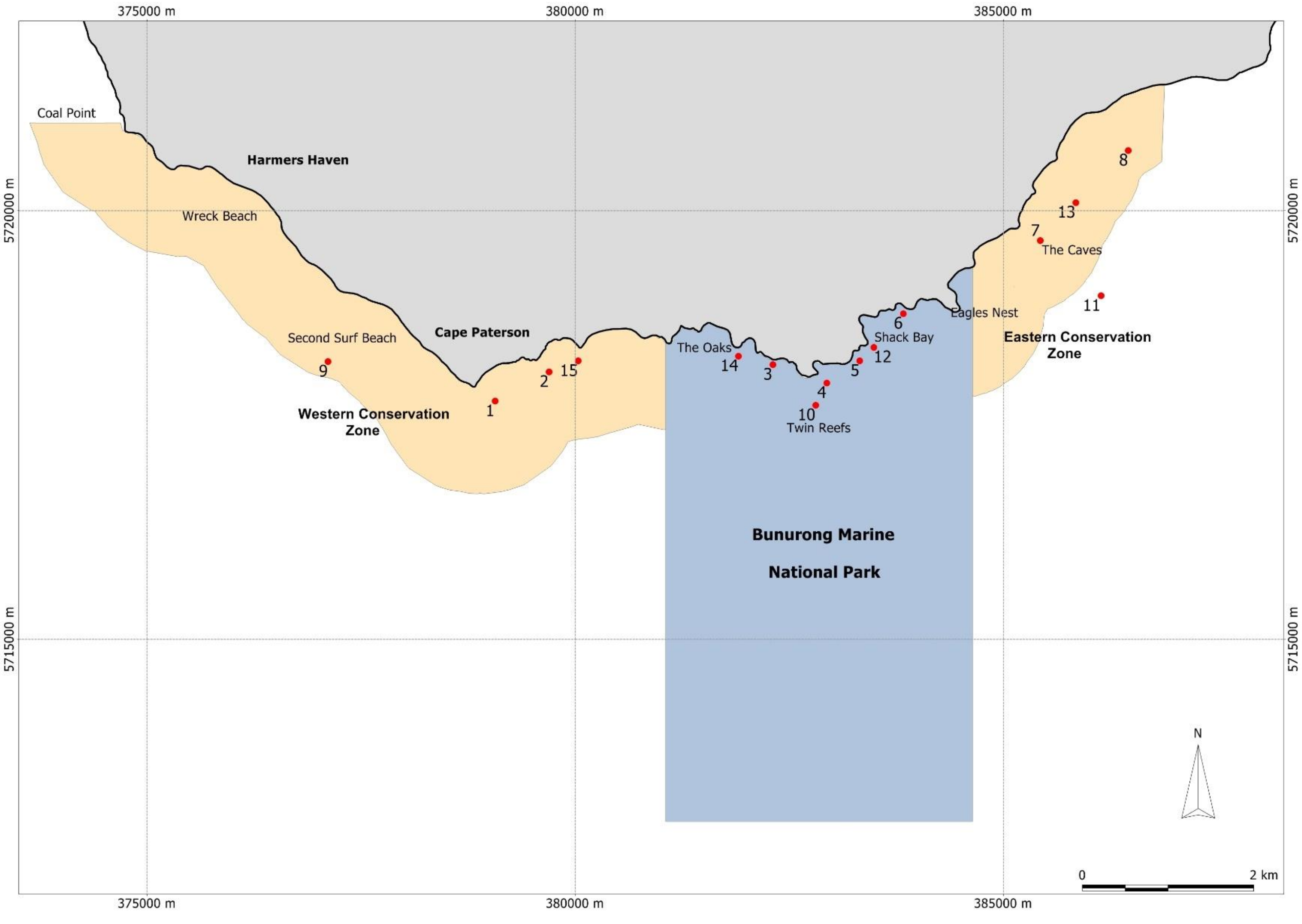


Figure 2.1. Location of survey sites associated with the Bunurong Marine National Park and conservation zones.

Table 2.1. Subtidal reef monitoring survey times at Bunurong.

Survey	Date	Sites
1	Winter 1999	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008
2	Summer 1999/2000	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
3	Winter 2000	3006, 3007, 3008, 3012
4	Summer 2000/2001	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
5	Winter 2001	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
6	Summer 2001/2002	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
7	Winter 2002	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
8	Autumn 2003	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
9	Summer 2004/2005	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
10	Autumn 2006	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
11	Summer 2009/2010	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
12	Autumn 2011	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015
13	Spring 2014	3001,3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015

2.2 Census Method

2.2.1 General Description

The Edgar-Barrett methods (Edgar and Barrett 1997, 1999; Edgar *et al*. 1997) are used for the repeated visual census of a set of sites within locations (usually within 10s km of the coastline). The position of each site is fixed, as with the position of transects surveyed within each site. Two hundred metres of four contiguous 50 m transects are surveys at each site. In accordance with the new Reef Life Survey methods data are now recorded for each side of the transect, termed 'blocks'.

Where possible, sampling was along the 5 m (± 1 m) depth contour, to minimise spatial variability between sites. The depth of 5 m was considered optimal for monitoring because diving times are not limited by decompression schedules and these reefs are subjected to heavy fishing pressure from wrasse fishers, rock lobster fishers and divers. Sampling at some sites had to be deeper or shallower, depending on the available habitat and exposure to wave action (with sites ranging from 2 to 12 m deep).

Each site was located using GPS and numbered and weighted transect lines were run along the appropriate depth contour. The resulting 200 m of line was divided into four contiguous 50 m transects (T1 to T4). The orientation of the transects was the same for every survey, with T1 toward the north or east along the coast (i.e. anticlockwise along the open coast: T1 is in the direction of "land-to-the-left").

For each transect, five different census methods were used to obtain adequate descriptive information on reef communities at difference spatial scales. These involved the census of: the abundance and size structure of large fishes (Method 1); the abundance of cryptic fishes and benthic invertebrates (Method 2); the percent cover of macro algae (Method 3); the density of string-kelp *Macrocystis* plants (Method 4); and the abundance and size structure of mobile fishes using a diver-operated stereo video system, DOVS (Method 5). The depth, horizontal visibility, sea state and cloud cover are recorded for each site. Horizontal visibility was gauged by the distance along the transect line to detect a 100 mm long fish (female wrasse). All field observations are recorded on underwater paper. The DOVS method records observations to a calibrated stereo video pairs.

2.2.2 Method 1 – Mobile Fishes and Cephalopods

The densities of mobile large fishes and cephalopods were estimated by a diver swimming up one side of the 50 m transect (5 m wide x 5 m high x 50 m long block). The observer recorded the number and estimated size-class of fish, within 5 m of each side of the line (50 x 10 m area). The size-classes for fish are 25, 50, 75, 100, 125, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350, 375, 400, 500, 625, 750, 875 and 1000+ mm. The data for easily sexed species were recorded separately for males and female/juveniles. Such species include the blue-throated wrasse *Notolabrus tetricus*, herring cale *Olisthops cyanomelas*, barber perch *Caesioperca rasor*, rosy wrasse *Pseudolabrus rubicundus* and some monacanthids. A total of four 50 m transects (two blocks per transect) were censused for mobile fish at each site. Dominant fish species observed in the Central Victorian Bioregion are listed in Table 2.3.

2.2.3 Method 2 – Invertebrates and Cryptic Fishes

Cryptic fishes and mega faunal invertebrates (non-sessile: *e.g.* large molluscs, echinoderms, crustaceans) were counted along the transect lines used for the fish survey. A diver counted animals within 1 m of one side of the line (a total of four 1 x 50 m transects). The diver had a known arm-length to chest measurement to standardise the 1 m distance. The maximum length of abalone and the carapace length and sex of rock lobsters were measured *in situ* using Vernier calliper, where possible. Some sites were designated abalone size monitoring sites (‘Ab100’ sites) and a minimum of 100 abalone were measured at these sites (where possible within diving limits). Sessile animals were not counted with the exception of any marine pest species of pre-determined ecological interest (such as the introduced feather worm *Sabella spallanzanii* and the native feather worm at Point Hicks *Sabellastarte australis*).

Selected specimens were collected for identification and preservation in a reference collection. Dominant cryptic fish and invertebrate species in the Central Victorian Bioregion are listed in Table 2.4.

2.2.4 Method 2b – Manufactured Debris

Manufactured debris items were counted along the invertebrate transect. The debris were classified into categories: fishing gear; plastic; cloth; metal; glass; wood; other and none (to indicate it was looked for but none seen). It was also recorded whether the debris was left or removed.

2.2.5 Method 3 – Macroalgae

The abundance of macrophytes (kelp, seaweeds, and seagrass) was quantified using a points-cover method. A quadrat, 0.5 m x 0.5 m, was placed at 10 m intervals along the transect line (5 quadrats per transect). The quadrat was divided into a grid of 7 x 7 perpendicular lines, giving 50 points (including one corner). Cover was estimated by counting the number of points intersecting with a species (Figure 2.2). The points-cover was determined independently for each species. Where there was a canopy or layers, the total number of points-counts from all species may be greater than 50. Selected specimens were collected for identification and preservation in a reference collection. Dominant macrophyte species in the Central Victorian Bioregion are listed in Table 2.6.

2.2.6 Method 4 – Macrocystis

Where present, the density of string kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera* was estimated at the same time by the seaweed (Method 3) observer. While swimming between quadrat positions, the diver counted all observable *Macrocystis* plants within 5 m either side of the transect for each 10 m section of the transect (10 x 10 m sections). This survey component commenced in spring 1999.

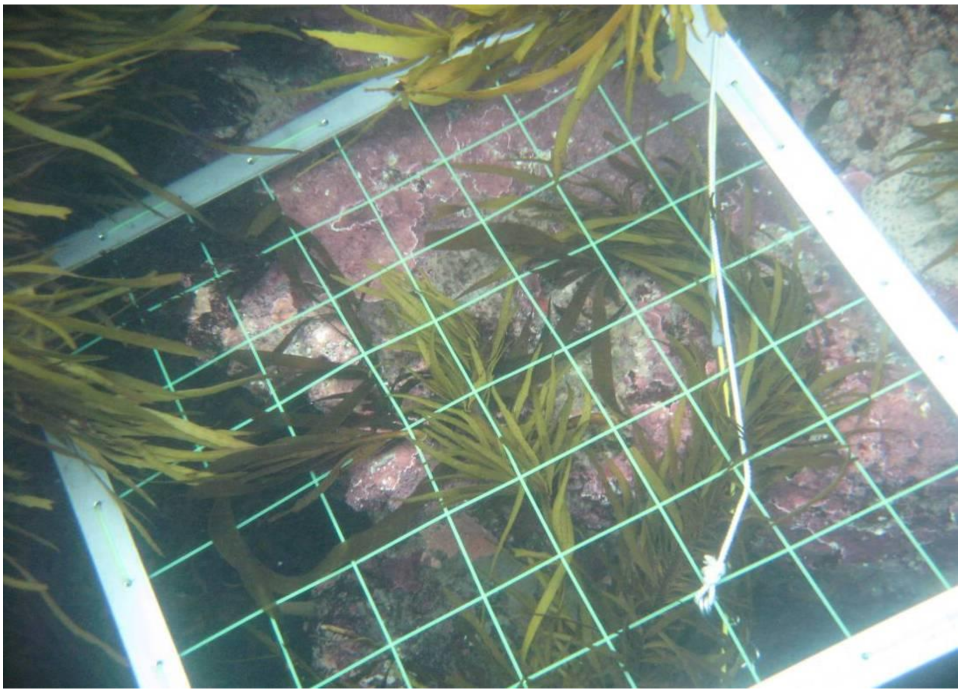


Figure 2.1. The cover of macrophytes is measured by the number of points intersecting each species on the quadrat grid.

2.2.7 Method 5 – Fish Stereo Video

A diver operated stereo video system (DOVS; SeaGIS design) was used alongside the diver UVC fish surveys. The videos were Canon HG21 handycams recording in 1080p format. The cameras were calibrated before and after each excursion using a SeaGIS calibration cube and SeaGIS CAL software for calibration of internal and external camera parameters. The cameras were mounted permanently to a diver frame. A flashing LED mounted on a pole in front of both frames was used for synchronisation of paired images from each camera.

The stereo camera system was operated simultaneously by the diver who did the UVC fish and done at the same time. The stereo camera frame had the underwater UVC slate mounted on it for the simultaneous observations. The camera system was pointed parallel with the transect line and downward 30º with the diver swimming 2.5 m to one side of the transect and 1.3 m above the canopy, as with the UVC method. The camera unit was tilted vertically (up or down) according to the fish seen to ensure adequate video for size measurements, but was generally tilted down at an angle of 30º. Lateral movement of the unit was minimised. The survey speed was 10 m per minute (0.17 m s^{-1}).

In the laboratory, the stereo video footage was converted from MTS to AVI format. The SeaGIS EventMeasure and PhotoMeasure software were then used for extracting and recording fish density and fish length estimates from the stereo video footage. Measured fish were those without body flexure and orientated transverse to the camera, as well as with the measurement points visible. Standard lengths (SL) were measured (tip of snout to end of caudal fin ray). The original video footage and frames used for fish length measurements were archived. The results of this method were archived for future analysis and were not reported here.

2.2.8 Method 0 – Off-Transect Sightings

Any species of interest sighted off-transect, or on transect but not during the formal survey, was recorded with the designation of Method 0 and Transect 0. Note that additional off transect abalone measurements were recorded as Method 2, Transect 0.

Table 2.3. Mobile fishes and cephalopods (Method 1) taxa commonly censused in the Central Victoria Bioregion.

Method 1		
Cephalopoda	**Mobile Bony Fishes**	**Mobile Bony Fishes**
Octopus maorum	*Upeneichthys vlaminghii*	*Odax acroptilus*
Sepia apama	*Girella tricuspidata*	*Olisthops cyanomelas*
Sepioteuthis australis	*Girella elevata*	*Siphonognathus attenuatus*
Sharks and Rays	*Girella zebra*	*Siphonognathus beddomei*
Heterodontus portusjacksoni	*Scorpis aequipinnis*	*Siphonognathus radiatus*
Parascyllium variolatum	*Scorpis lineolata*	*Neoodax balteatus*
Cephaloscyllium laticeps	*Atypichthys strigatus*	*Acanthaluteres vittiger*
Trygonorrhina fasciata	*Tilodon sexfasciatus*	*Brachaluteres jacksonianus*
Trygonorrhina guaneria	*Enoplosus armatus*	*Monacanthus chinensis*
Dasyatis brevicaudata	*Pentaceropsis recurvirostris*	*Scobinichthys granulatus*
Myliobatis australis	*Parma victoriae*	*Meuschenia flavolineata*
Urolophus cruciatus	*Parma microlepis*	*Meuschenia freycineti*
Urolophus paucimaculatus	*Chromis hypsilepis*	*Meuschenia galii*
Urolophus gigas	*Aplodactylus arctidens*	*Meuschenia hippocrepis*
Trygonoptera testacea	*Cheilodactylus nigripes*	*Meuschenia scaber*
Mobile Bony Fishes	*Cheilodactylus spectabilis*	*Meuschenia venusta*
Phyllopteryx taeniolatus	*Nemadactylus douglasii*	*Eubalichthys gunnii*
Caesioperca lepidoptera	*Dactylophora nigricans*	*Eubalichthys mosaicus*
Caesioperca rasor	*Latridopsis forsteri*	*Aracana aurita*
Hypoplectrodes maccullochi	*Scorpaena papillosa*	*Aracana ornata*
Trachinops caudimaculatus	*Sphyraena novaehollandiae*	*Tetractenos glaber*
Dinolestes lewini	*Achoerodus gouldii*	*Diodon nichthemerus*
Sillaginodes punctata	*Ophthalmolepis lineolata*	*Contusus brevicaudus*
Pseudocaranx wrighti	*Dotalabrus aurantiacus*	
Trachurus novaezelandiae	*Notolabrus tetricus*	
Trachurus declivis	*Notolabrus fucicola*	
Arripis spp	*Pseudolabrus rubicundus*	
Arripis georgianus	*Pictilabrus laticlavius*	**Mammals and Reptiles**
Pagrus auratus		*Arctocephalus pusillus*

Table 2.4. Invertebrate and cryptic fish (Method 2) taxa commonly censused in the Central Victoria Bioregion.

Method 2		
Molluscs	**Crustacea**	**Echinoderms**
Haliotis rubra	*Jasus edwardsii*	*Comanthus trichoptera*
Haliotis laevigata	*Guinusia chabrus*	*Comanthus tasmaniae*
Haliotis scalaris	*Nectocarcinus tuberculosus*	*Heliocidaris erythrogramma*
Scutus antipodes	*Paguristes frontalis*	*Goniocidaris tubaria*
Turbo undulatus	*Strigopagurus strigimanus*	*Amblypneustes* spp
Phasianella australis	Paguridae spp (other)	*Holopneustes inflatus*
Phasianella ventricosa	**Cryptic Fishes**	*Holopneustes porosissimus*
Phasianella ventricosa	*Gymnothorax prasinus*	*Holopneustes purpurascens*
Phasianotrochus eximius	*Pempheris multiradiata*	*Tosia magnifica*
Dicathais orbita	*Gnathanacanthus goetzeei*	*Tosia australis*
Australaria australasia	*Aetapcus maculatus*	*Pentagonaster dubeni*
Penion mandarinus	*Parascyllium variolatum*	*Petricia vernicina*
Cabestana spengleri	*Bovichtus angustifrons*	*Fromia polypora*
Charonia lampas	*Cristiceps australis*	*Echinaster arcystatus*
Conus anemone	*Heteroclinus johnstoni*	*Plectaster decanus*
Neodoris chrysoderma	*Cliniid* spp	*Nectria macrobrachia*
Ceratosoma brevicaudatum	*Norfolkia clarkei*	*Nectria ocellata*
Mimachlamys asperrima	*Forsterygion varium*	*Nectria multispina*
Octopus maorum	*Paraplesiops meleagris*	*Pseudonepanthia troughtoni*
Cnidaria		*Meridiastra gunnii*
Phlyctenactis tuberculosa		*Uniophora granifera*
Annelida		*Coscinasterias muricata*
Sabella spallanzanii		*Asterias amurensis*

Table 2.5. Manufactured debris (Method 2b) censused in the Central Victoria Bioregion.

Method 2		
Fishing gear	Metal	Glass
Plastic	Cloth	Wood

Table 2.6. Common macroalgae and seagrass (Method 3) taxa censused in the Central Victoria Bioregion.

Method 3		
Chlorophyta (green algae)	**Chromista (brown algae)**	**Chromista (brown algae)**
Ulva spp	*Homeostrichus sinclairii*	*Sargassum spinuligerum*
Cladophora prolifera	*Exallosorus olsenii*	*Sargassum varians*
Abjohnia lativaerens	*Chlanidophora microphylla*	*Sargassum verruculosum*
Caulerpa longifolia	*Cladostephus spongiosus*	*Sargassum vestitum*
Caulerpa trifaria	*Carpomitra costata*	*Ectocarpus spp*
Caulerpa scalpelliformis	*Perithalia cordata*	**Rhodophyta (red algae)**
Caulerpa remotifolia	*Bellotia eriophorum*	*Pterocladiella capillacea*
Caulerpa brownii	*Macrocystis pyrifera*	*Pterocladia lucida*
Caulerpa flexilis	*Ecklonia radiata*	*Gelidium asperum*
Caulerpa flexilis var *muelleri*	*Undaria pinnatifida*	*Gelidium australe*
Caulerpa obscura	*Durvillaea potatorum*	*Sonderophycus coriaceus*
Caulerpa sedioides f. *geminata*	*Xiphophora chondrophylla*	*Peyssonnelia* sp
Caulerpa cactoides	*Phyllospora comosa*	*Areschougia congesta*
Caulerpa hodgkinsoniae	*Seirococcus axillaris*	*Acrotylus australis*
Caulerpa vesiculifera	*Scaberia agardhii*	*Nizymenia australis*
Caulerpa simpliciuscula	*Carpoglossum confluens*	*Polyopes constrictus*
Codium pomoides	*Cystophora brownii*	*Erythroclonium* spp
Codium spongiosum	*Cystophora expansa*	*Solieria robusta*
Codium australicum	*Cystophora grevillei*	*Thamnoclonium dichotomum*
Codium duthieae	*Cystophora monilifera*	*Callophyllis rangiferina*
Codium galeatum	*Cystophora moniliformis*	*Stenogramme interrupta*
Codium harveyi	*Cystophora pectinata*	*Callophycus laxus*
Codium lucasii	*Cystophora platylobium*	*Plocamium angustum*
Chromista (brown algae)	*Cystophora retorta*	*P. cirrhosum*
Halopteris spp	*Cystophora siliquosa*	*P. mertensii*
Dictyota dichotoma	*Cystophora retroflexa*	*P. dilatatum*
Dictyota fastigiata	*Cystophora subfarcinata*	*P. preissianum*
Dictyota fenestrata	*Cystophora xiphocarpa*	*P. cartilagineum*
Dictyota gunniana	*Caulocystis cephalornithos*	*P. leptophyllum*
Dictyopteris muelleri	*Acrocarpia paniculata*	*P. patagiatum*
Dictyopteris acrostichoides	*Sargassum decipiens*	*Phacelocarpus alatus*
Zonaria angustata	*Sargassum fallax*	*Phacelocarpus complanatus*
Zonaria crenata	*Sargassum heteromorphum*	*Phacelocarpus peperocarpos*
Zonaria spiralis	*Sargassum sonderi*	*Asparagopsis armata*
Zonaria turneriana	*Sargassum decipiens*	*Delisea pulchra*

Table 2.6 (continued). Common macroalgae and seagrass (Method 3) taxa censused in the Central Victoria Bioregion.

Method 3		
Rhodophyta (red algae)	**Rhodophyta (red algae)**	**Rhodophyta (red algae)**
Ptilonia australasica	*Halopeltis australis*	*Gelinaria ulvoidea*
Gracilaria cliftoni	*Tylotus obtusatus*	*Echinothamnion hystrix*
Curdiea angustata	*Champia* spp	*Hypnea ramentacea*
Melanthalia obtusata	*Champia viridis*	Thuretia quercifolia
Melanthalia abscissa	*Ceramium* spp	Other thallose red algae
Melanthalia fastigiata	*Euptilota articulata*	Filamentous red algae
Amphiroa anceps	Griffithsia monilis	**Tracheophyta (seagrass)**
Jania sagittata	Griffithsia teges	*Zostera nigricaulis*
Jania rosea	*Ballia callitricha*	*Halophila australis*
Arthrocardia wardii	*Euptilota articulata*	*Amphibolis antarctica*
Metagoniolithon radiatum	*Dictyomenia harveyana*	**Abiotic**
Mastophoropsis canaliculata	*Dictyomenia tridens*	Sand
Metamastophora flabellata	*Jeannerettia lobata*	
Crustose coralline algae	*Hemineura frondosa*	
Botryocladia obovata	*Lenormandia marginata*	
Gloiosaccion brownii	*Epiglossum smithiae*	
Erythrymenia minuta	*Laurencia clavata*	
Cephalocystis furcellata	*Laurencia elata*	
	Laurencia filiformis	

2.3 Data Analysis – Condition indicators

2.3.1 Approach

Reef quality indicators were developed to encompass key features of MNP performance assessment and management interest. The selection of indicators for reef ecosystem management were reviewed by Turner *et al.* (2006) and further theoretical and field considerations are provided by Thrush *et al.* (2009). Both reviews suggest a variety of indicators, of both ecosystem structure and function, should be used. Rapport (1992) noted that stressors causing adverse changes in an ecosystem stand out beyond the natural range of variability observed in a system in 'good health'. Adverse changes to an ecosystem include:

- a shift to smaller organisms;
- reduced diversity with loss of sensitive species;
- increased dominance by weedy and exotic species;
- shortened food chain lengths;
- altered energy flows and nutrient cycling;
- increased disease prevalence; and
- reduced stability/increased variability (Rapport *et al.* 1995).

A suite of indicators was developed for the Tasmanian reef monitoring program, which uses the same Edgar-Barrett underwater visual census methods (Stuart-Smith *et al.* 2008). The indicators are grouped into the general categories: biodiversity; ecosystem functions; introduced pests; climate change and fishing. The Stuart-Smith indicators were followed and adapted for the Victorian SRMP. These indices are consistent with the reviews mentioned above. Key adaptations were the use of absolute values rather than proportions, as the Victorian data had considerable concurrent variation in the numerator and denominator of many indices, making proportional indices difficult to interpret. The Stuart-Smith approach for examining community changes was extended by using the multivariate control charting method of Anderson and Thompson (2004).

The indicators were calculated separately for the three survey components, fishes, invertebrates and algae.

The indicators presented in this report provide a basis for assessment and further refinement of indicators for marine protected area performance assessment and management.

2.3.2 Biodiversity

Community Structure

Community structure is a multivariate function of both the type of species present and the abundance of each species. The community structure between pairs of samples was compared using the Bray-Curtis dissimilarity coefficient. This index compares the abundance of each species between two samples to give a single value of the difference between the samples, expressed as a percentage (Faith *et al.* 1987; Clarke 1993).

Count data were log transformed and points-cover values were not transformed prior to multivariate analyses.

For fishes, only site-attached species were included in the analyses.

The multi-dimensional information in the dissimilarity matrix was simplified and depicted using non-metric multidimensional scaling (nMDS; Clarke 1993). This ordination method finds the representation in fewer dimensions that best depicts the actual patterns in the hyper-dimensional data (reduces the number of dimensions while depicting the salient relationships between the samples). The nMDS results were then depicted graphically to show differences between the sample periods at each location. The distance between points on the nMDS plot is representative of the relative difference in community structure.

Kruskal stress is an indicator statistic calculated during the ordination process and indicates the degree of disparity between the reduced dimensional data set and the original hyper-dimensional data set. A guide to interpreting the Kruskal stress indicator is given by Clarke (1993): (< 0.1) a good ordination with little real risk of drawing false inferences; (< 0.2) can lead to a usable picture, although for values at the upper end of this range there is potential to mislead; and (> 0.2) likely to yield plots which can be dangerous to interpret. These guidelines are simplistic and increasing stress is correlated with increasing numbers of samples. Where high stress was encountered with a two-dimensional data set, three-dimensional solutions were sought to ensure adequate representation of the higher-dimensional patterns.

Trends in Community Structure

Multivariate control charting was used to examine the degree of changes in community structure over time. Two criteria are applied for the SRMP, the first being the deviation in community structure at a time *t* from the centroid of baseline community structures (1998 to 2002). This criterion is more sensitive to the detection of gradual changes over time away from the baseline conditions. In this case, there was no before-period because the no-take zone was already established. The first five surveys were used as a baseline period to detect longer term deviations. The second criterion was the deviation in community structure at time *t* to the centroid of all previous times. This criterion is more sensitive at detecting abrupt or pulse changes.

Control charts were prepared for each site. The control chart analysis used the methods of Anderson and Thompson (2004) and calculations were done using the software ControlChart.exe (Anderson 2008). The analysis used the Bray-Curtis dissimilarity coefficient and the same data transformations described above. Bootstrapping was used to provide control-chart limits for identifying changes that are 'out of the ordinary'. In this case, a 90th and 95th percentile statistic was calculated from 1000 bootstrap samples as provisional limits. The 50th percentile was also presented to assist in interpreting the control charts.

Species Diversity

The total number of individuals, *N*, was calculated as the sum of the abundance of all individuals across species.

Species richness, *S*, was given as the number of species observed at each site. Cryptic, pelagic and non-resident reef fishes were not included.

Species diversity, as a measure of the distribution of individuals among the species, was indicated using Hill's N_2 statistic (which is equivalent to the reciprocal of Simpson's index). In general, Hills N_2 gives an indication of the number of dominant species within a community. Hills N_2 provides more weighting for common species, in contrast to indices such as the Shannon-Weiner Index (Krebs 1999), which weights the rarer species.

The diversity statistics were averaged across sites for the marine protected area and reference regions.

Abundances of Selected Species

Mean densities of selected species were plotted over time for the marine protected area and reference regions. The species presented included abundant or common species as well as any with unusual changes over time.

2.3.3 Ecosystem Functional Components

Plant Habitat and Production

Biogenic habitat and standing stocks of primary producers was indicated by the pooled abundances of macrophyte groups:

- crustose coralline algae;
- canopy browns – defined here as *Ecklonia radiata, Undaria pinnatifida, Lessonia corrugata, Macrocystis pyrifera*, *Durvillaea potatorum, Phyllospora comosa, Seirococcus axillaris, Acrocarpia paniculata, Cystophora platylobium, C. moniliformis, C. pectinata, C. monilifera, C. retorta* and *C. retroflexa;*

- smaller browns (all other brown species except Ectocarpales);
- erect coralline algae;
- thallose red algae (except filamentous species);
- green algae; and
- seagrass *Amphibolis antarctica*.

Invertebrate Groups

The abundances of invertebrates were pooled into the functional groups:

- grazers and habitat modifiers, including gastropods and sea urchins;
- filter feeders, including fanworms and feather stars;
- predators, including gastropods, crabs and lobsters but excluding seastars; and
- seastars, which are mostly predators, although *Meridiastra gunnii* may also be a detritus feeder.

Fish Groups

The abundances of fishes were also pooled into trophic groups:

- herbivores and omnivorous grazers;
- foraging predators, including pickers and foragers of stationary, benthic prey such as amphipods, crabs and gastropods;
- hunter predators, including fishes that hunt mobile prey, particularly other fishes, as chasers and ambushers; and
- planktivores, including feeders of zooplankton and small fish in the water column.

Sediment Cover

The percentage cover of sand and sediment on the survey transect (using Method 3) is the only relevant abiotic parameter measured for the SRMP. This index may indicate changes in hydrodynamic or coastal processes.

2.3.4 Introduced Species

The status of introduced species is initially reported as presence-absence of species. Where a species is established and the SRMP measures the abundance of that species, indicators of status are:

- number of introduced species;
- total abundance of introduced species; and

- where the data are suitable, time series of abundance of selected introduced species – noting the timing of surveys may influence the time series.

2.3.5 Climate Change

Species Composition

Climate change is likely to cause changes to current strengths and circulation patterns which affect both the ambient temperature regime and the dispersion and recruitment of propagules or larvae. In Victoria, there may be increased incursions of the East Australia Current into eastern Victoria and the South Australia Current into western Victoria and Bass Strait. Biological responses to such changes are potentially indicated by biogeographical changes in the species composition, toward that of adjacent, warmer bioregions. For this analysis, each species was assigned a nominal geographical range:

- cold water species, reflecting the 'Maugean' province, from approximately Kangaroo Island in South Australia, around Tasmania and into southern New South Wales;
- western species, reflecting the 'Flindersian' province, from southern Western Australia, along the Great Australian Bight and South Australia to western Victoria;
- eastern species, reflecting the 'Peronian' province, encompassing New South Wales and into eastern Victoria;
- southern species, including species ranging widely along the southern Australian coast; and
- northern species, including warm temperate and tropical species in Western Australia and New South Wales and northward.

The number of species and total number of individuals was calculated for the cold water, western and eastern groups.

Macrocystis pyrifera

The string kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera*, which includes the former species *M. angustifolia* (Macaya and Zuccarello 2010), is considered potentially vulnerable to climate change through reduced nutrient supply from drought and nutrient poorer warmer waters (Edyvane 2003). The mean abundance of *M. pyrifera* were plotted using densities from Method 4, or cover estimates from Method 4 where density data were unavailable. *Macrocystis pyrifera* provides considerable vertical structure to reef habitats and can also attenuate water currents and wave motion. The loss of *M. pyrifera* habitats may reflect ecosystem functional changes.

Centrostephanus rodgersii

The geographical range of the long-spined sea urchin, *Centrostephanus rodgersii,* has increased conspicuously over the past decades (Johnson *et al.* 2005). This grazing species can cause considerable habitat modification, decreasing seaweed canopy cover and increasing the area of urchin barrens. Abundances are determined using Method 2 and average abundances are plotted through time. The extent of urchin barrens, of any sea urchin species, will be monitored using data from Method 6, as time series data become available. The abundance of *C. rodgersii* are also influenced by interactions with abalone as competitors for crevice space, Abalone divers may periodically ‘cull’ urchins within a reef patch and the species is also of interest to urchin harvesters.

Durvillaea potatorum

The bull kelp *Durvillaea potatorum* is a cold water species that is likely to be vulnerable to increased ambient temperatures. There is anecdotal evidence of a retraction of the northern distribution down the New South Wales coast by approximately 80 km. Most of the SRMP sites specifically avoid *D. potatorum* habitats as these occur on highly wave-affected and turbulent reefs. Some sites contain *D. potatorum* stands, providing limited data on population status. *Durvillaea potatorum* is potentially two species, having genetically and morphologically distinct eastern and western forms (Fraser *et al.* 2009).

2.3.6 Fishing

Abalone

Indicators of harvesting pressure on abalone were mean density, mean size and the size frequency structure. The size structure indicators were the intercept and slope of the size spectrum. Size frequencies were first compiled for 10 mm size classes centred at 105, 115, 125, 135, 145, 155 and 165 mm and the spectrum slope and intercept was determined by a linear regression of ln(count + 1) versus ln(size + 1). The indicators were calculated for the blacklip abalone, *Haliotis rubra,* in most regions and for the greenlip abalone, *H. laevigata,* where present in suitable densities (in central and western Victoria).

Rock Lobster

The southern rock lobster, *Jasus edwardsii,* is present throughout Victoria. The monitoring transects generally did not traverse rock lobster microhabitats. Abundances and sizes were reported where data were available.

Fish

Potential fishing impacts or recovery of fishing impacts within marine protected areas were indicated by:

- abundances of selected fished species;
- mean size of selected fished species;
- total biomass of fished fish species and the portion of biomass > 200 mm length, this being the approximate legal minimum size for most fished species;
- biomass of fishes > 200 mm length, calculated using length-weight relationships; and
- parameters of the size-spectrum of fished species.

The size structure indicators were the intercept and slope of the size spectrum. Size frequencies were first compiled for 50 mm size classes centred at 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350, 400, 450, 500 and 550 mm and the spectrum slope and intercept was determined by a linear regression of ln(count + 1) versus ln(size + 1).

Biomass was calculated for the predominantly fished species, excluding incidentally caught or by-catch species. Lengths were converted to weights using published conversion factors for the power relationship:

$$weight(grams) = a \times Length(cm)^b$$

The weight estimations used the coefficients compiled by FishBase (www.fishbase.org). The length-weight parameters used are provided in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7. Fish length-weight conversion parameters used to calculate the biomass of fished species. Where parameters were unavailable, parameters for a similar species were applied.

Species	a	b	Source
Cheilodactylus spectabilis	0.01660	3.00	Fishbase
Cheilodactylus nigripes	0.01202	3.02	Fishbase
Cheilodactylus fuscus	0.01202	3.02	Fishbase
Latridopsis forsteri	0.01660	3.00	Fishbase: *C. spectabilis*
Notolabrus tetricus	0.00977	3.07	Fishbase: *N. fucicola*
Notolabrus fucicola	0.00977	3.07	Fishbase
Notolabrus gymnogenis	0.0977	3.07	Fishbase: *N. fucicola*
Achoerodus viridis	0.01800	3.044	Fishbase: *A. gouldii*
Achoerodus gouldii	0.01800	3.044	Fishbase
Sphyraena novaehollandiae	0.00813	2.80	Fishbase
Sphyraena obtusata	0.00776	2.91	Fishbase
Sillago flindersi	0.00851	3.09	Fishbase
Sillaginodes punctata	0.00389	3.15	Fishbase
Seriola lalandii	0.01820	2.944	Fishbase
Seriola hippos	0.01820	2.944	Fishbase: *S. lalandii*
Scorpis aequipinnis	0.01000	3.04	Fishbase: generic parameters
Pentaceropsis recurvirostris	0.01000	3.04	Fishbase: generic parameters
Pagrus auratus	0.02399	2.94	Fishbase
Meuschenia scaber	0.02884	2.96	Fishbase
Meuschenia hippocrepis	0.02884	2.96	Fishbase: *M. scaber*
Meuschenia freycineti	0.02884	2.96	Fishbase: *M. scaber*
Acanthaluteres vittiger	0.02089	2.92	Fishbase: *M. scaber*

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3 Results

3.1 Macroalgae

3.1.1 Macroalgal Community Structure

The canopy algae assemblages at Bunurong were characterised by a diverse range of medium-sized brown algal species and an absence of the larger canopy-forming species such as *Phyllospora comosa* and *Ecklonia radiata*. The predominant brown algal species included *Seirococcus axillaris*, *Cystophora platylobium*, *C. moniliformis*, *C. retorta*, *C. retroflexa*, *Acrocarpia paniculata* and *Sargassum fallax*. Other dominant components of the algal assemblages included the seagrass *Amphibolis antarctica*, coralline algae such as *Jania rosea* and *Metagoniolithon radiatum*, as well as the red algae *Phacelocarpus peperocarpos*, *Areschougia congesta* and *Plocamium angustum*. The dominant green algae were; *Caulerpa brownii*, *Caulerpa scalpelliformis* and *Caulerpa flexilis*, but in relatively low abundance.

The nMDS plots indicated there was an overall east-west gradient in changes in algal assemblage structure (Figures 3.1a, 3.1b). This change in site algal assemblage was largely attributed to an increasing predominance of the seagrass *Amphibolis antarctica* and the brown algae *Seirococcus axillaris* and *Cystophora pectinata* at the eastern sites. The eastern sites also had much lower abundances of *Acrocarpia paniculata* and *Phacelocarpus peperocarpos* compared with the western sites.

The sites within the Bunurong Marine National Park (MNP) were relatively similar in structure, however there was minor a distinction between Shack Bay sites (Sites 5, 6 and 12) and other sites (Figure 3.1a). These sites had a higher prevalence of seagrass *Amphibolis antarctica*.

Amongst the western reference sites, Cape Paterson (Site 1) was quite different in assemblage structure and was reasonably isolated at the top-rear of the MDS plot (Figure 3.1b). This can be explained by a higher abundance of *A. antarctica*, *Cystophora retorta* and *C. retroflexa*, lower abundance of *P. peperocarpos* and an absence of *S. axillaris*. There was considerable overlap in assemblage structure for the three eastern reference sites (Figure 3.1b).

The nMDS analysis and control charts indicated there were considerable oscillations in assemblage structure over the monitoring period (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

The algal assemblage control charts indicated a persistent deviation in assemblage structure at Shack Bay West (Figure 3.2a). The combined regional data indicated an average departure from baseline conditions for both inside and outside the MNP (Figure 3.2e).

3.1.2 Macroalgal Species Richness and Diversity

There was a substantial decline in the total algal abundance index between 2011 and 2014 (Figure 3.3a). This was to lowest recorded levels. species richness and diversity changed little over the same period (Figures 3.3b and 3.3c).

3.1.3 Common Algal Species

The giant kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera* was present in low abundances in isolated stands at the start of the monitoring program, but had essentially disappeared from all sites by 2003 (Figure 3.4a). Occasional isolated plants were observed since then.

The predominant seaweed cover is by the brown algae *Seirococcus axillaris* and *Cystophora retorta*. Both species have been relatively stable in cover over the monitoring period with 10-15 % cover (Figures 3.4b and 3.4c). *Cystophora platylobium* was also consistent in cover, with 6-9 % inside the MNP and 1 % outside the MNP.

Crustose coralline algae varied between 5-15 % cover with no obvious trends (Figure 3.4e).

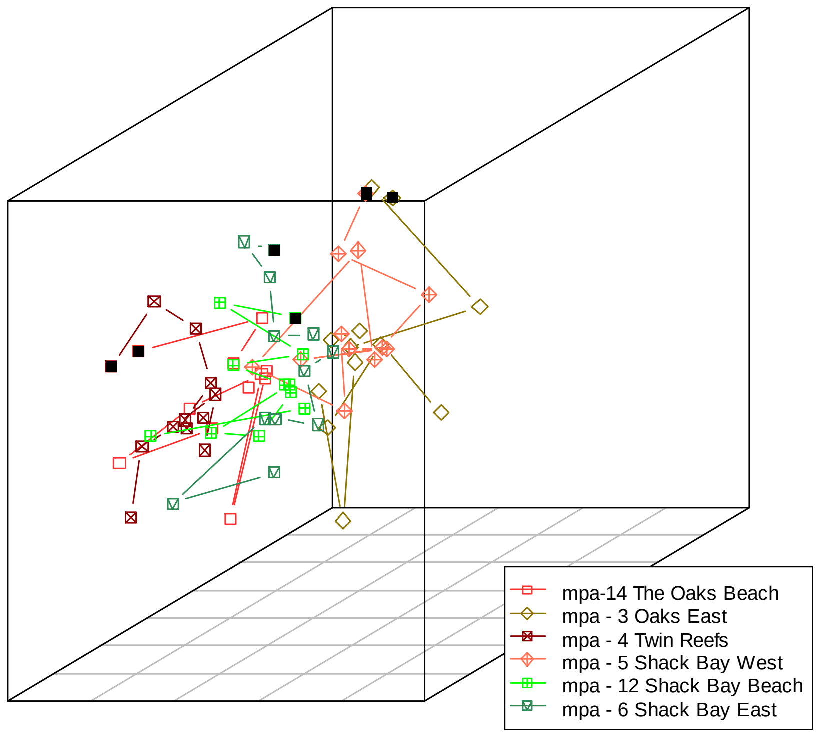
The erect coralline alga *Jania rosea* had an increasing trend in abundance from 2000 to 2003, with a subsequent gradual decline to 2014 (Figure 3.4f).

The thallose red algae *Ballia callitricha*, *Phacelocarpus peperocarpos* and *Plocamium angustum* were relatively stable in cover over the monitoring period, with abundances typically higher within the MNP. These species had a slight decline apparent between 2010 and 2014 (Figures 3.4g, 3.4h and 3.4i).

A slight peak in abundance was observed for the green carpet alga *Caulerpa flexilis* var *muelleri* in 2014 (Figure 3.4j).

The seagrass *Amphibolis antarctica* had a peak in abundance in 2011, with a return to commonly observed levels in 2014 (Figure 3.4k).

a. nMDS - Algae - MPA



b. nMDS - Algae - Reference

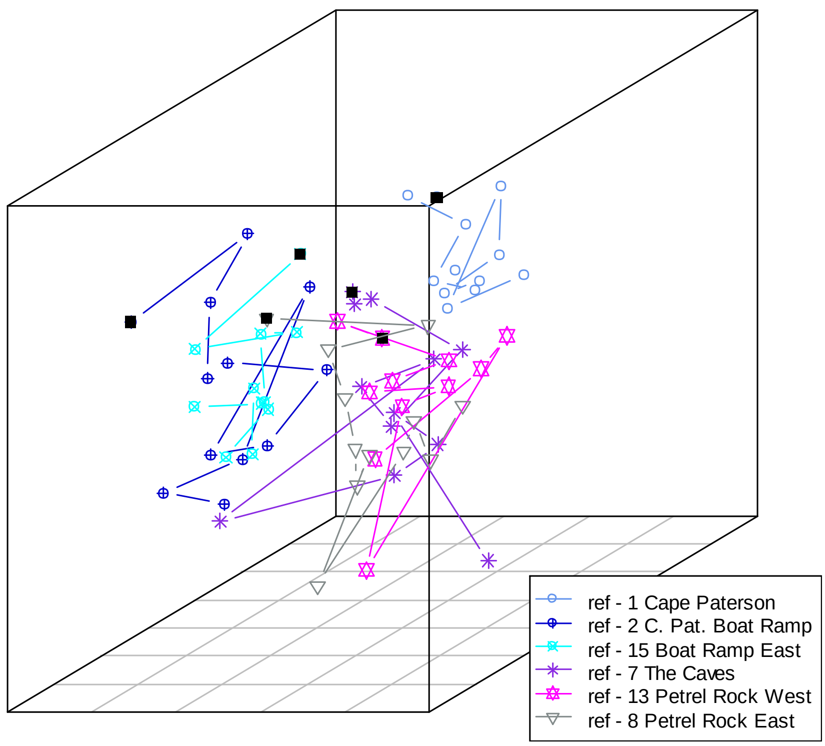


Figure 3.1. Three-dimensional nMDS plot of algal assemblage structure at Bunurong. Black filled shapes denote the first survey time. Kruskal stress = 0.13.

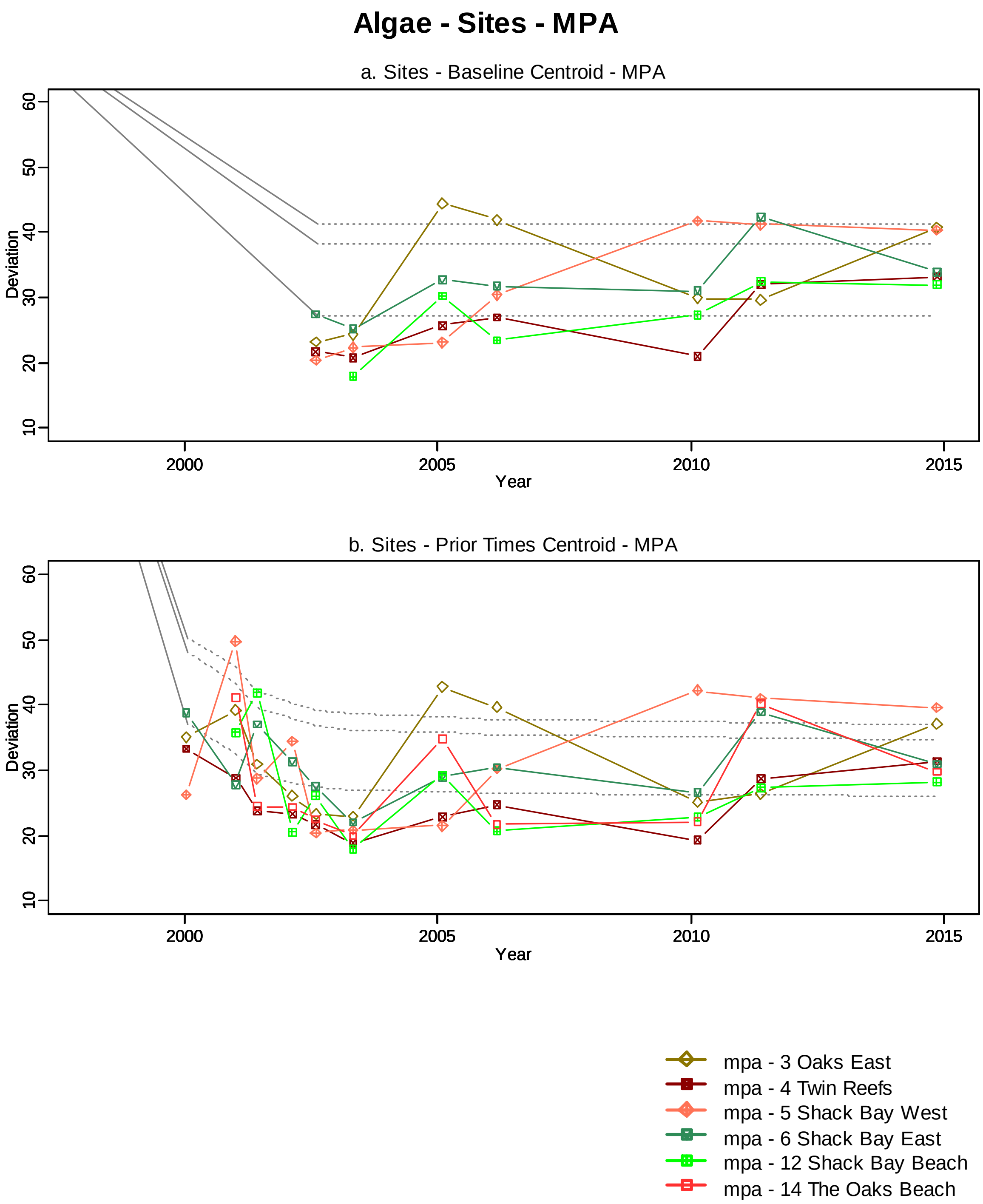


Figure 3.2. Control charts of algal assemblage structure in the Bunurong region.

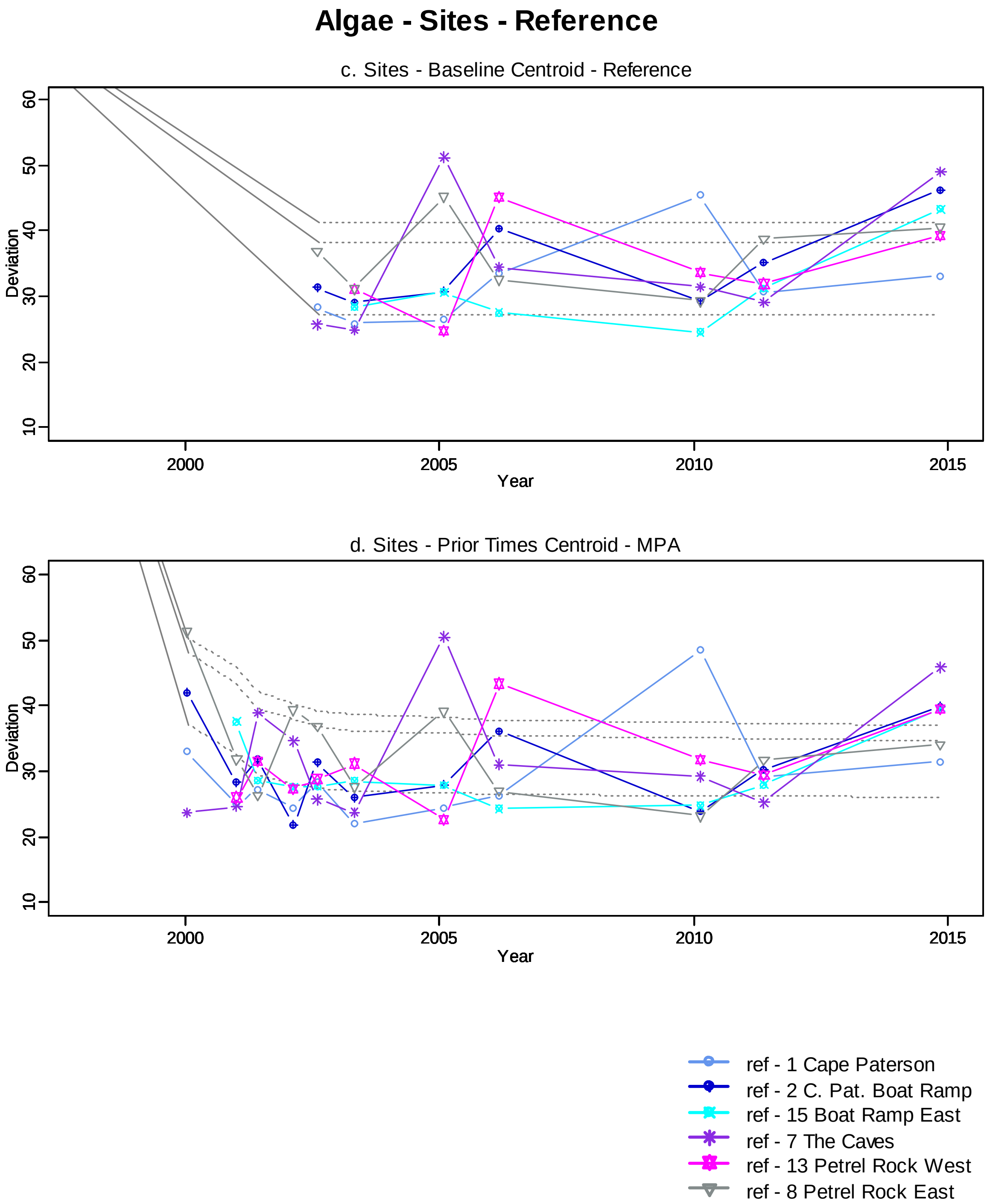


Figure 3.2 (continued). Control charts of algal assemblage structure in the Bunurong region.

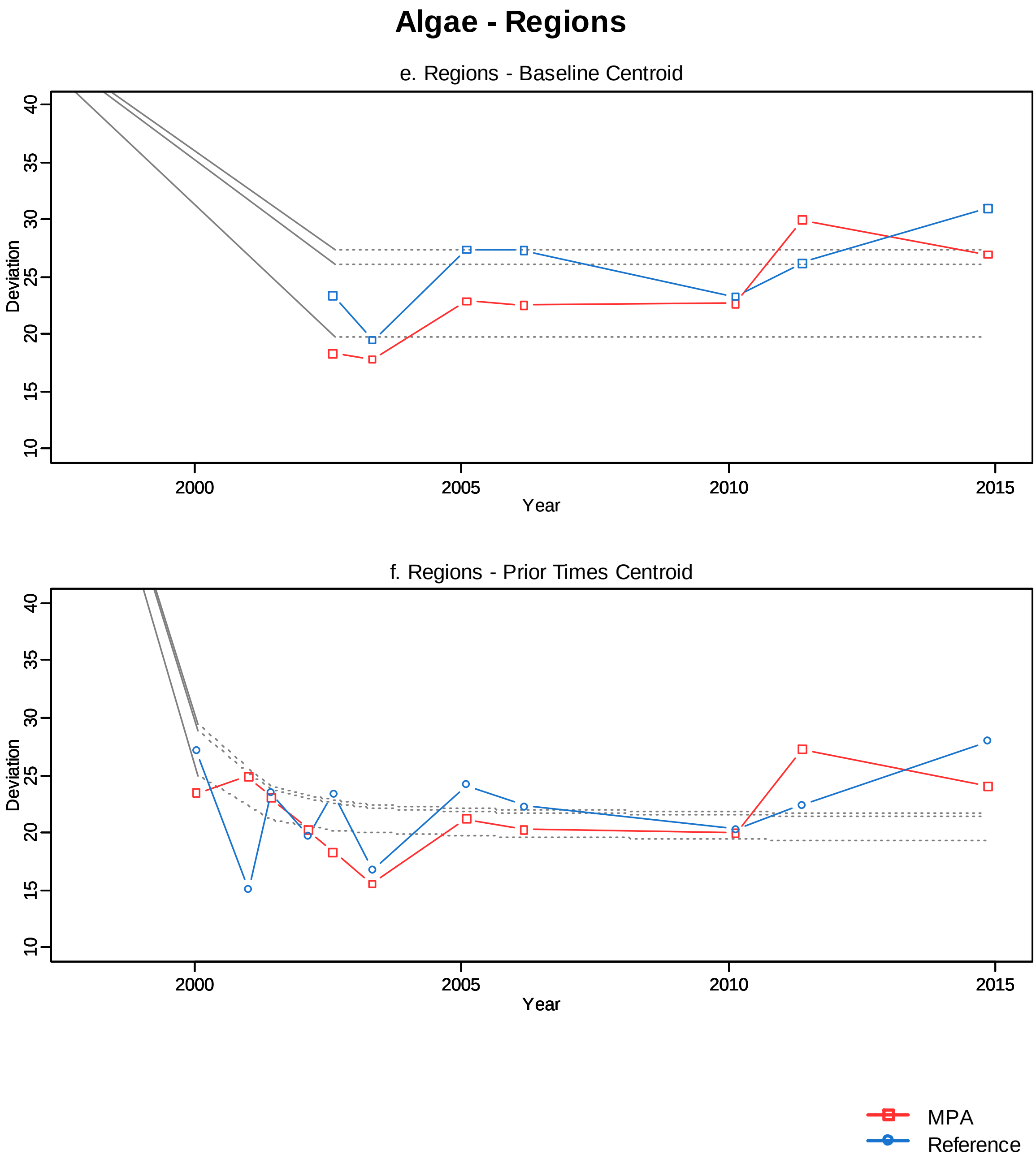


Figure 3.2 (continued). Control charts of algal assemblage structure in the Bunurong region.

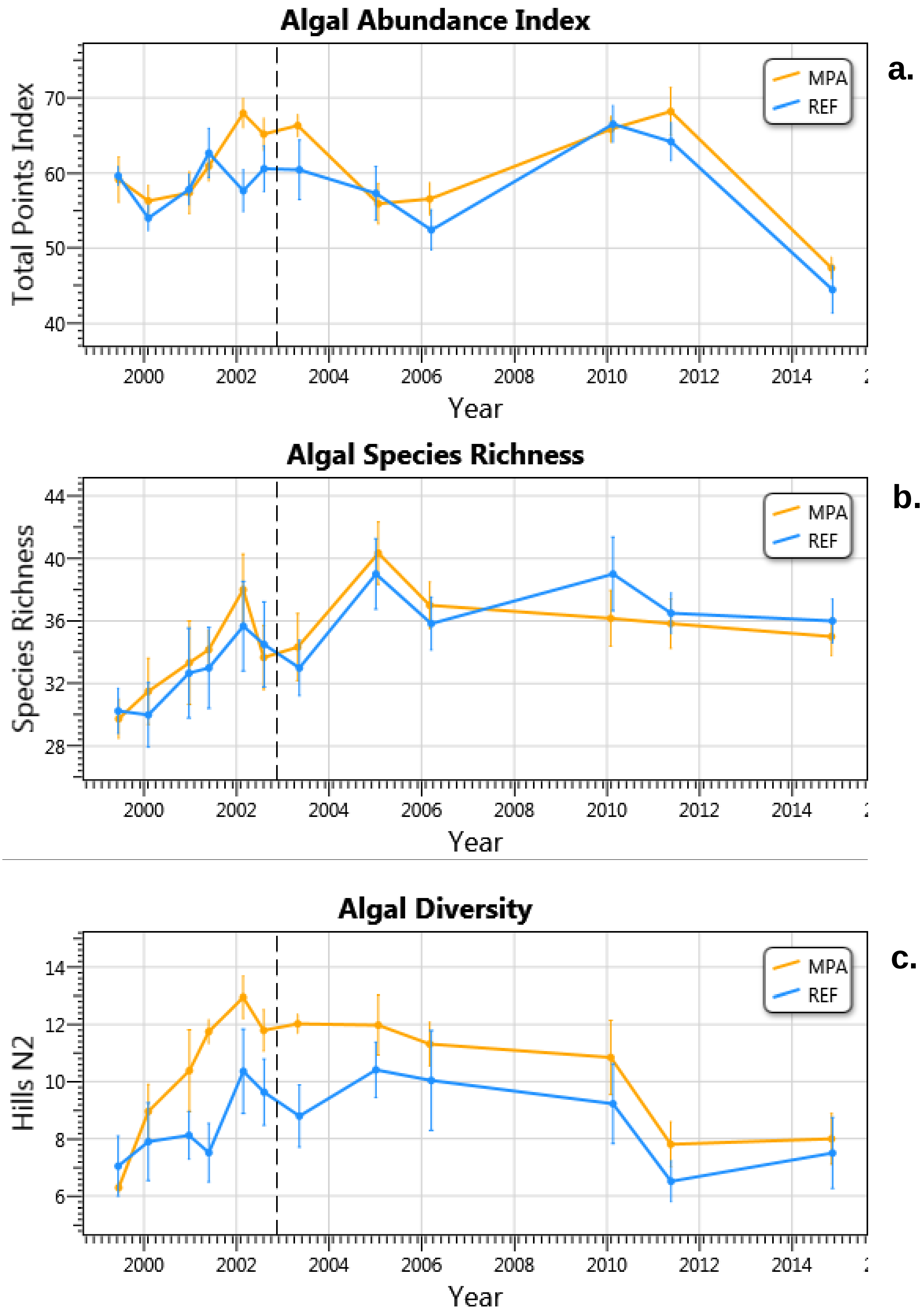


Figure 3.3. Algal species diversity indicators (± Standard Error) for MNP and reference sites at Bunurong.

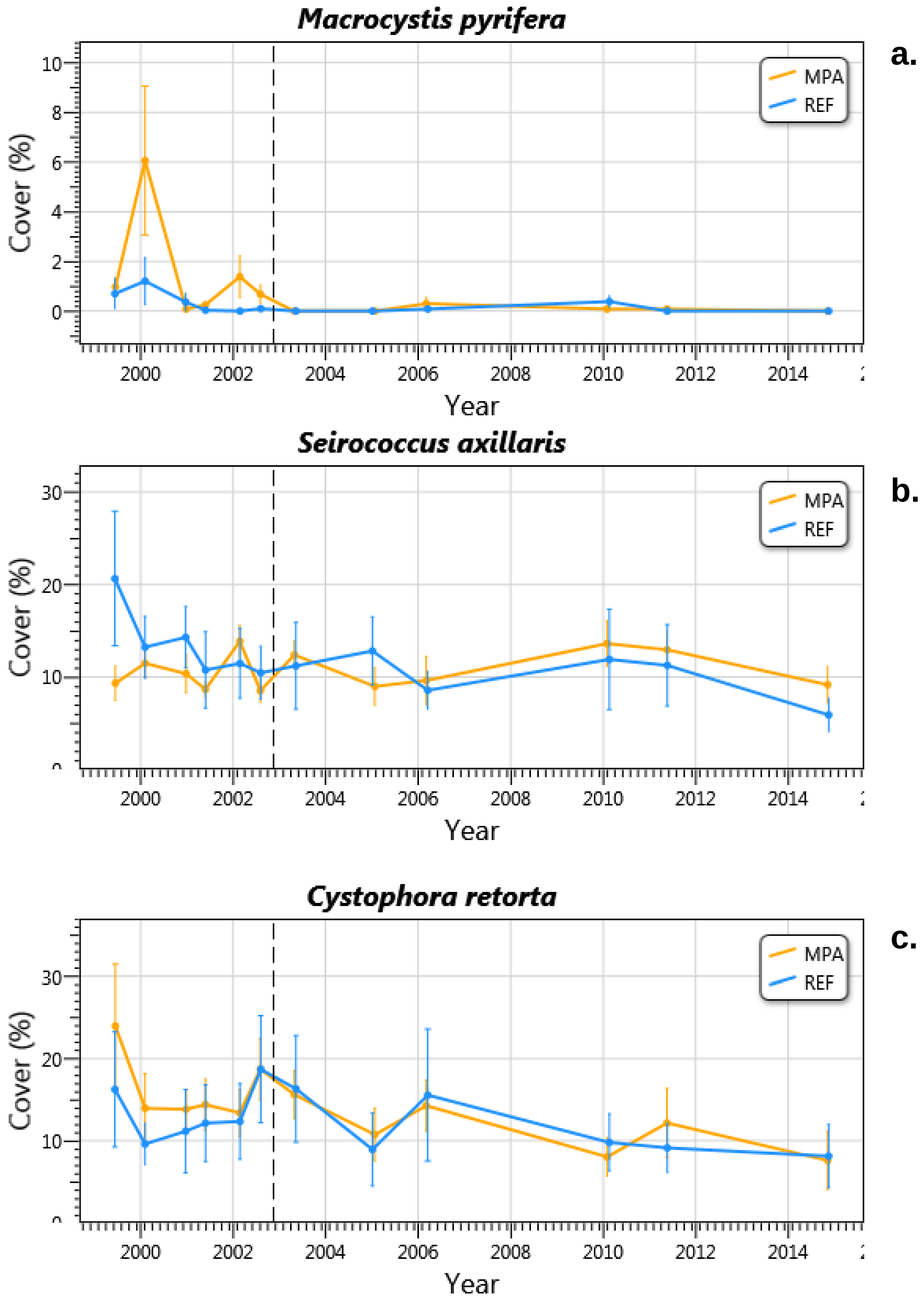


Figure 3.4. Percent cover of dominant algal species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

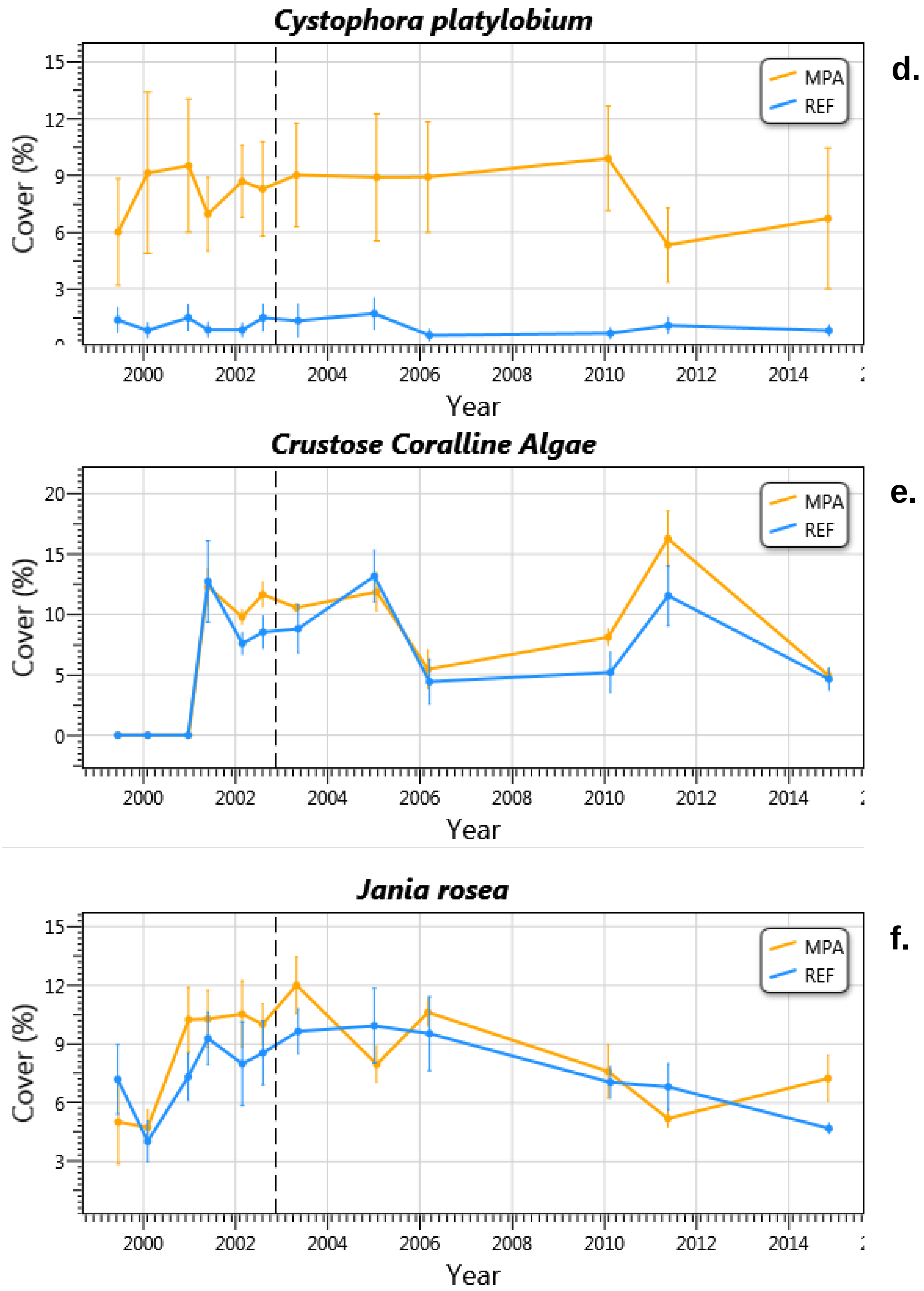


Figure 3.4 (continued). Percent cover of dominant algal species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

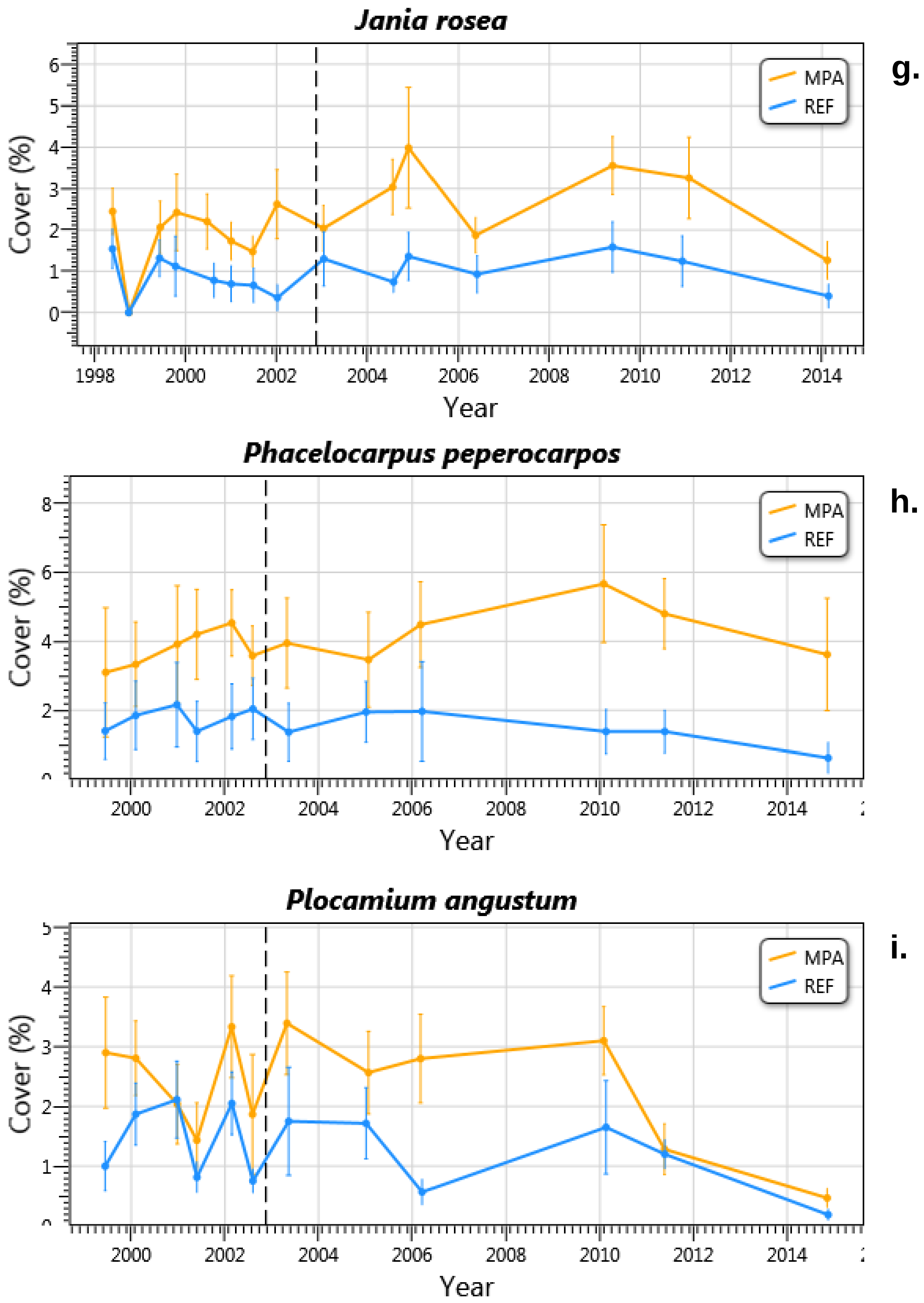
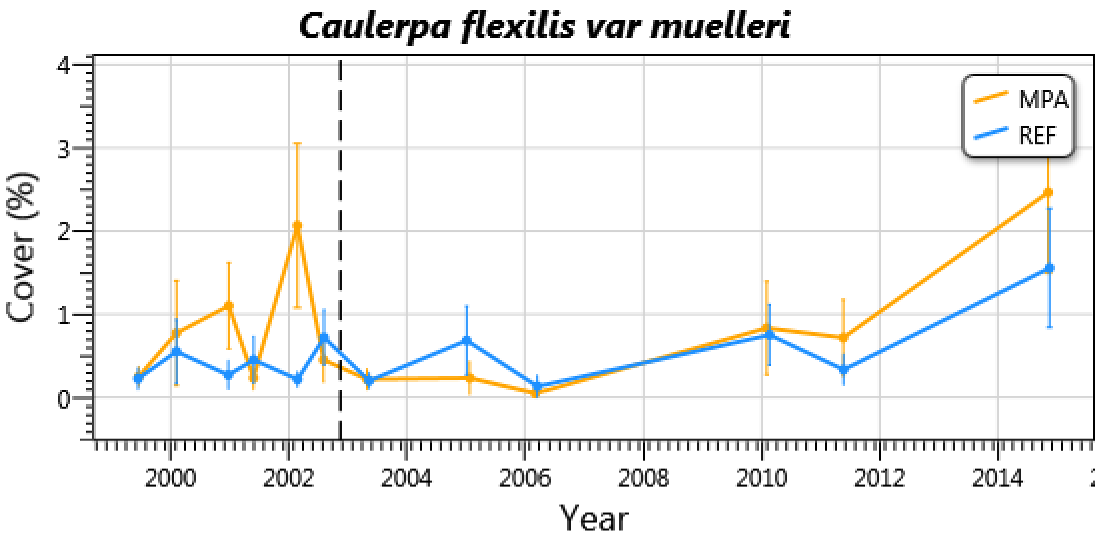


Figure 3.4 (continued). Percent cover of dominant algal species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.



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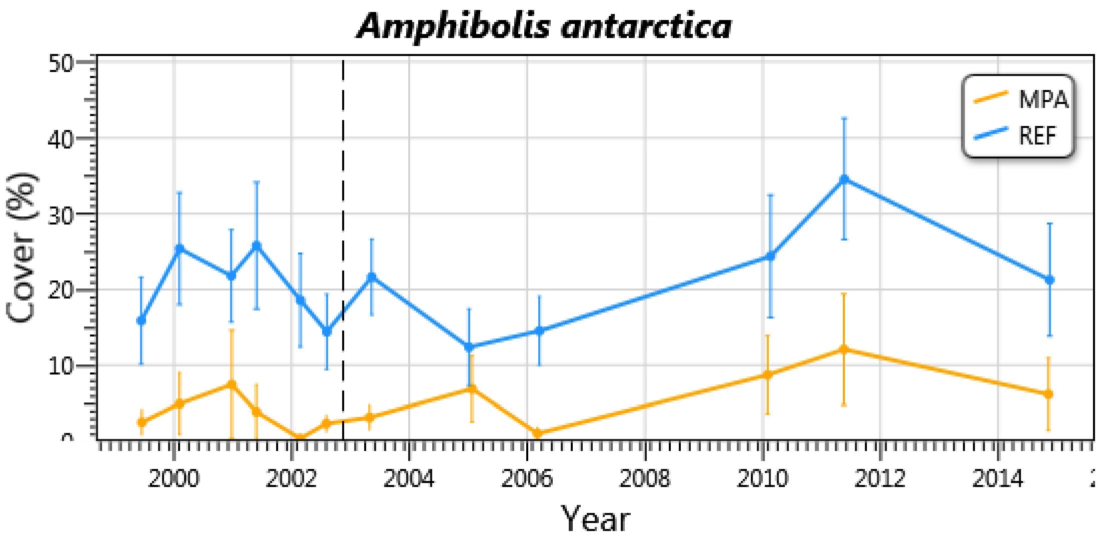

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Figure 3.4 (continued). Percent cover of dominant algal species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

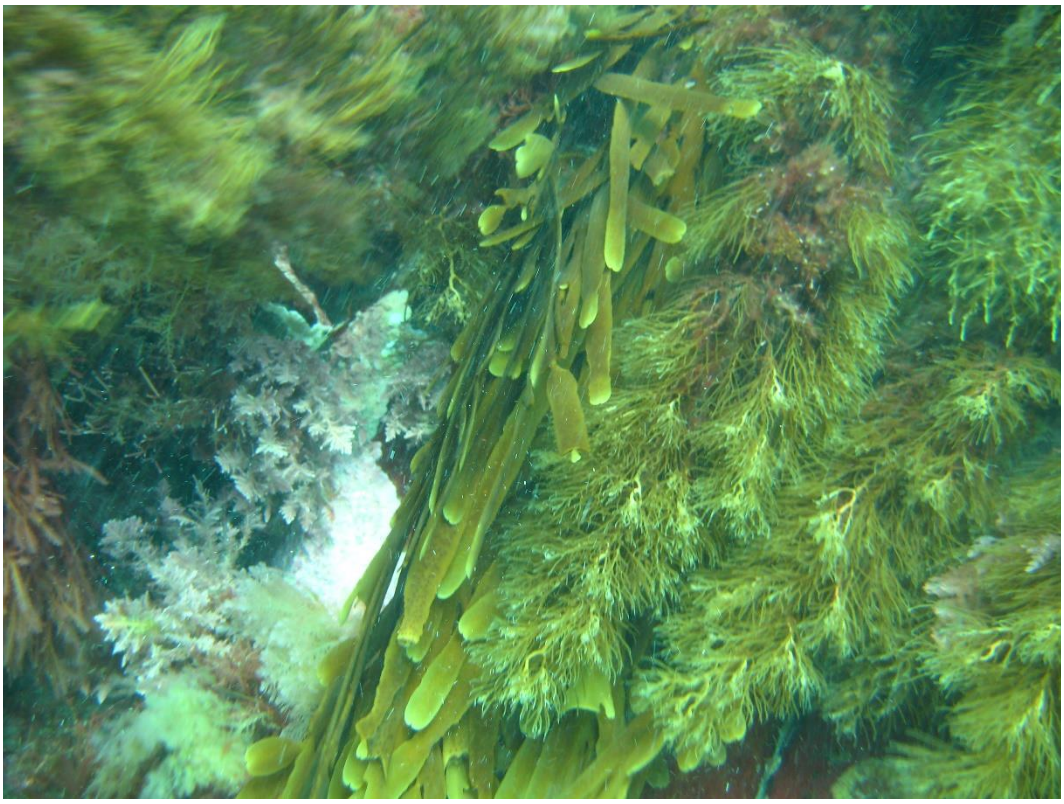


Figure 3.5. Example seaweed assemblage at Bunurong: *Carpoglossum confluens*, *Acrocarpia paniculata* and *Jania rosea*. Petrel Rock East (Site 3008), 13 November 2014.

Figure 3.6. Example seaweed assemblage at Bunurong: *Seirococcus axillaris*, *Acrocarpia paniculata*, *Jania rosea,* crustose coralline algae and *Peyssonnelia* sp. Shack Bay West (Site 3005), 13 November 2014.

3.2 Invertebrates

3.2.1 Invertebrate Community Structure

The invertebrate fauna was composed of the blacklip and greenlip abalone *Haliotis rubra* and *H. laevigata*, the warrener *Turbo undulatus* and a variety of sea stars, particularly *Meridiastra gunnii* and *Tosia australis*. Other commonly encountered species included the dogwhelk *Dicathais orbita* and seastar *Nectria ocellata*.

The nMDS analysis showed there were gradients in assemblage structure between sites, with some overlap in assemblage structure through temporal variability (Figure 3.7). The most variable sites were the eastern sites of The Caves, Petrel Rock West and Petrel Rock East (Figure 3.7b). These sites tended to have relatively lower abundances of *H. rubra*, *T. undulatus* and higher abundances of the seastar *M. gunnii* and sea urchin *Heliocidaris erythrogramma*.

The control charts indicated abrupt changes in the invertebrate assemblage at Twin Reefs in 2006 and 2010, with maintenance of these differences through 2011 and 2015 (Figures 3.8a and 3.8b). The assemblage at the eastern conservation sites, The Caves, Petrel Rock West and Petrel Rock East, also changed considerably through this period (Figures 3.8c and 3.8d). These eastern changes were reflected in the combined regional plots, with significant departures from baseline and prior times in the reference region. There have also been considerable changes from baseline conditions inside the MNP since 2005 (Figures 3.8e and 3.8f).

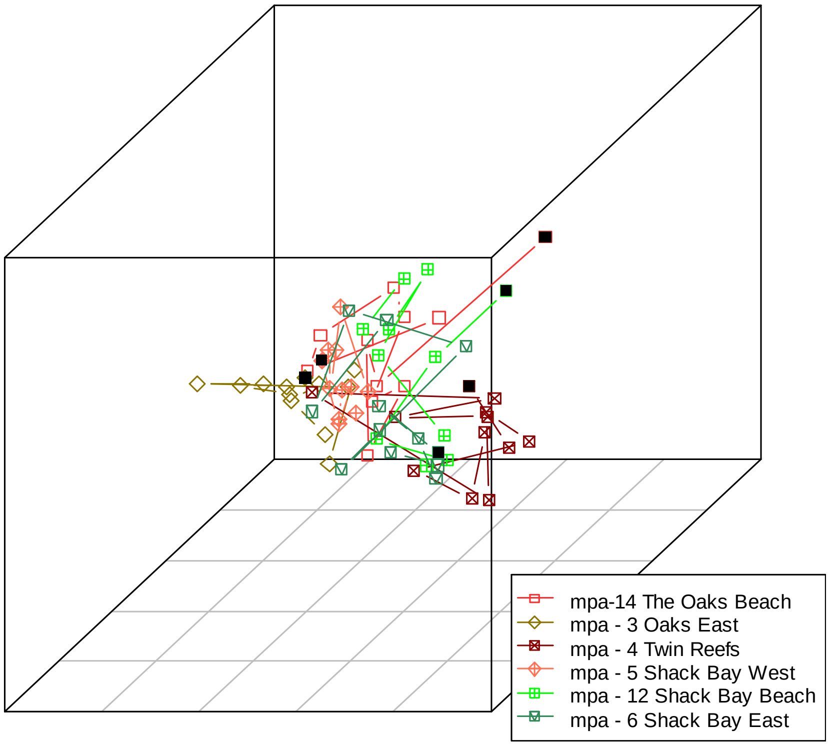
3.2.2 Invertebrate Species Richness and Diversity

The invertebrate total abundance and species richness indices peaked in 2001 with a subsequent decline to 2006. Since 2006, these indices changed little inside the MNP, but there was a continuing slow decline outside the MNP to 2014 (Figures 3.9a and 3.9b). Invertebrate species diversity has not changed markedly during the monitoring (Figure 3.9c).

3.2.3 Common Invertebrate Species

The observed pattern for total invertebrate abundance was reflected in all common species, with the exception of the feather star *Comanthus trichoptera*. All had increasing abundances from 1999 to 2001, with subsequent declines to 2006 (Figure 3.10). Marked changes occurred for blacklip abalone *Haliotis rubra* (35 down to 5 per 50 m^2; Figure 3.10b) and warrener *Turbo undulatus* (25 down to 5 per 50 m^2; Figure 3.10d).

a. nMDS - Invertebrates - MPA



b. nMDS - Invertebrates - Reference

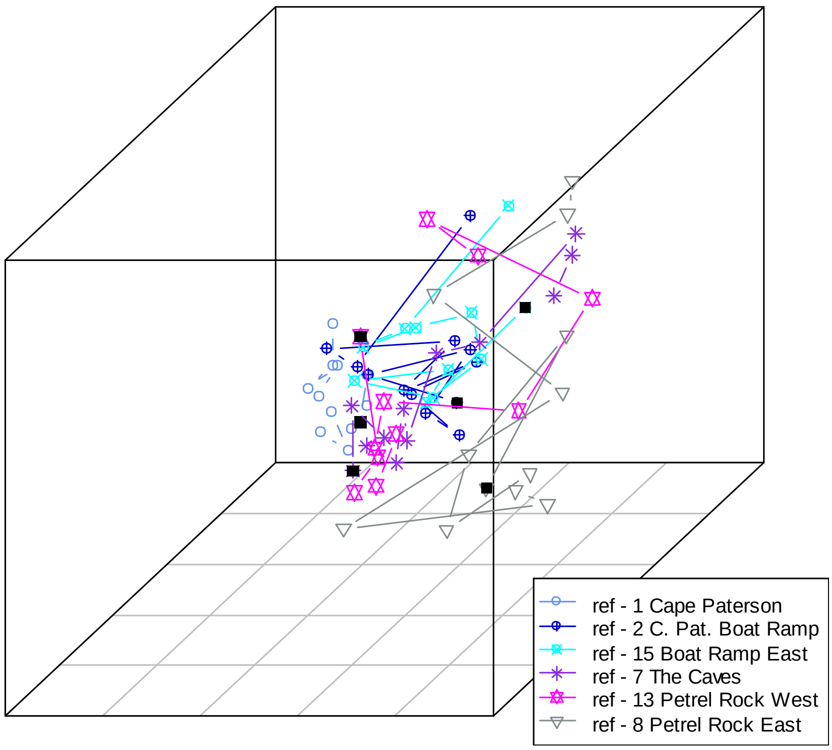


Figure 3.7. Three-dimensional nMDS plot of invertebrate assemblage structure at Bunurong. Black, filled shapes denote the first survey time. Kruskal stress = 0.15.

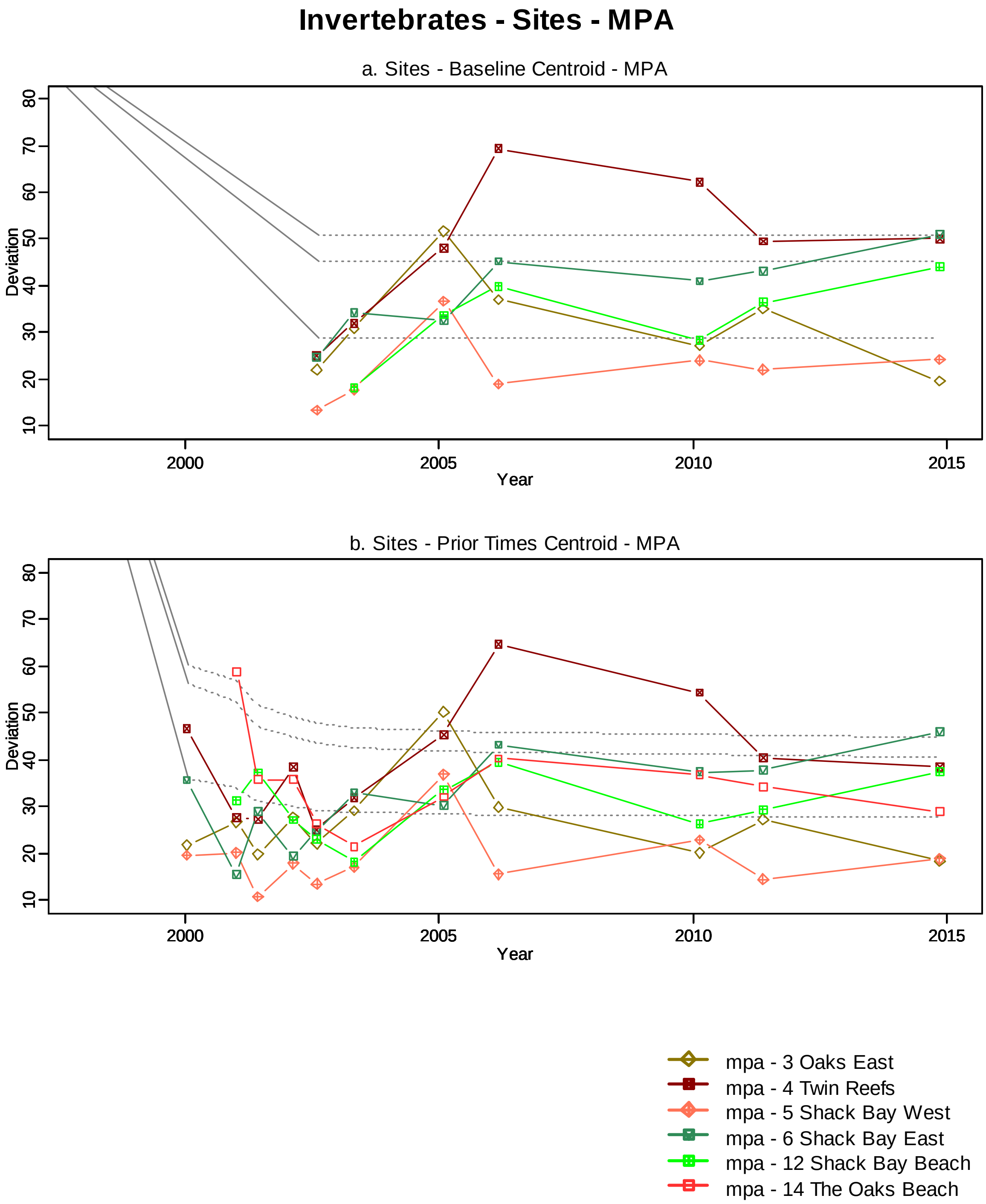


Figure 3.8. Control charts of invertebrate assemblage structure at Bunurong.

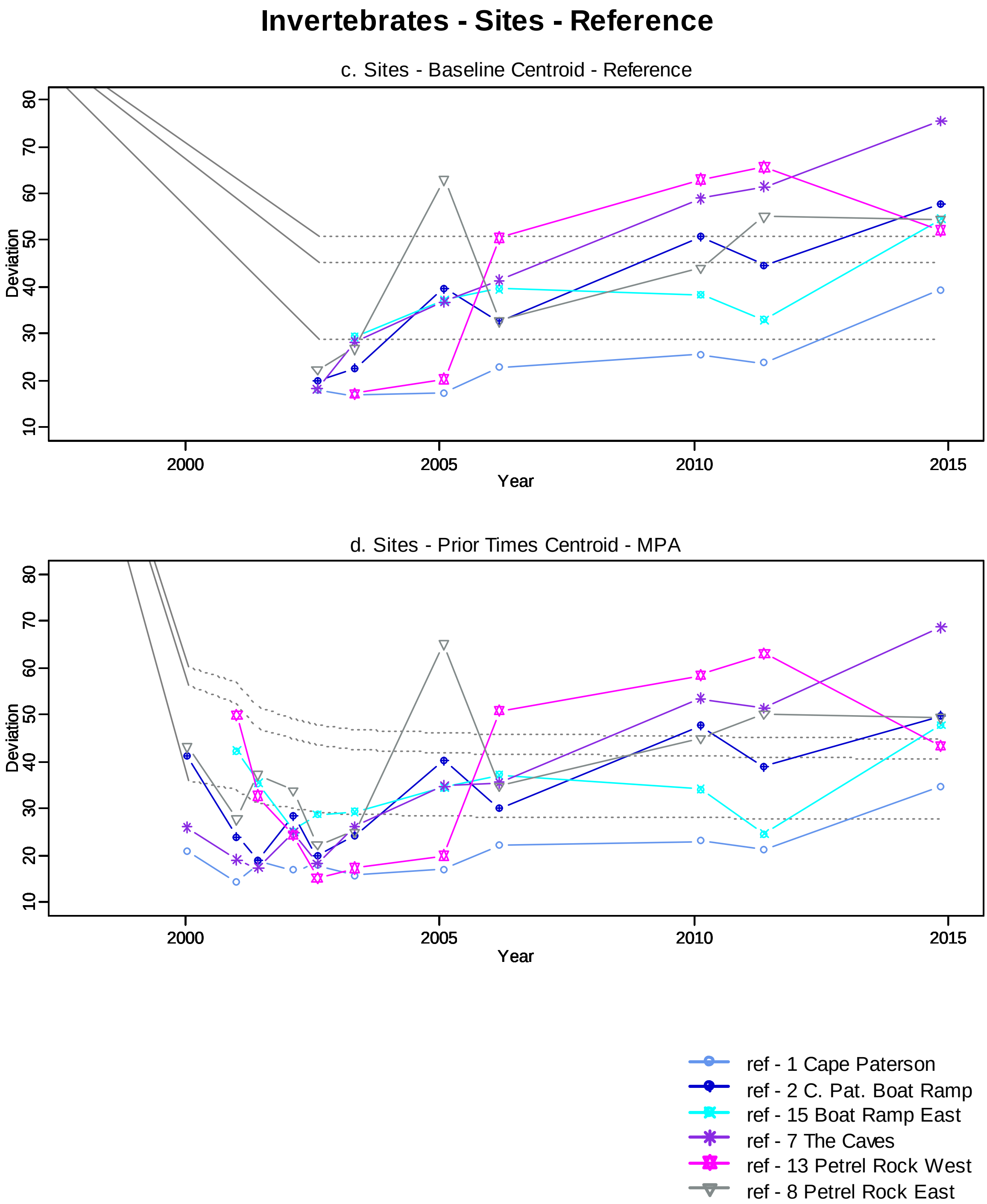


Figure 3.8 (continued). Control charts of invertebrate assemblage structure at Bunurong.

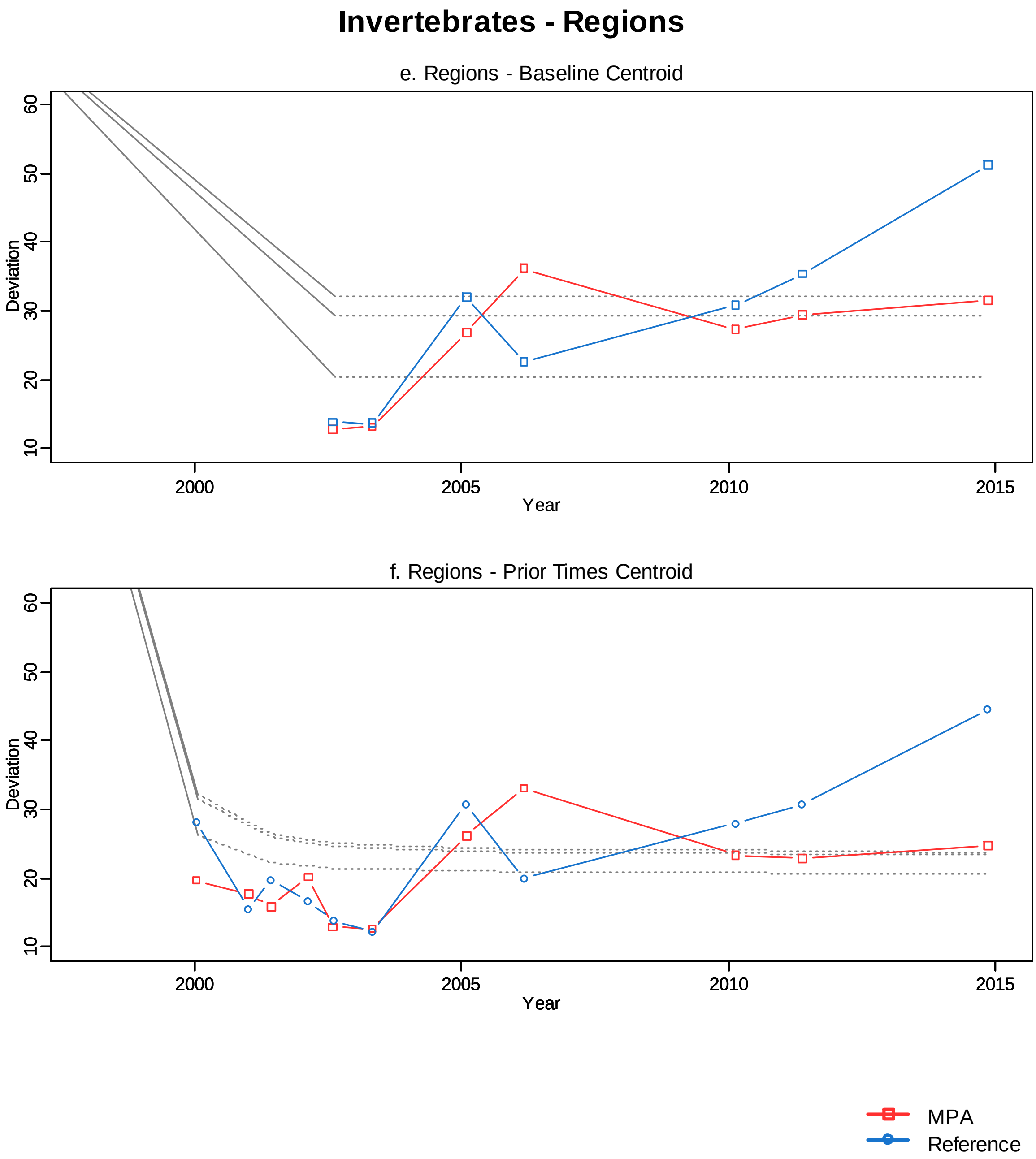


Figure 3.8 (continued). Control charts of invertebrate assemblage structure at Bunurong.

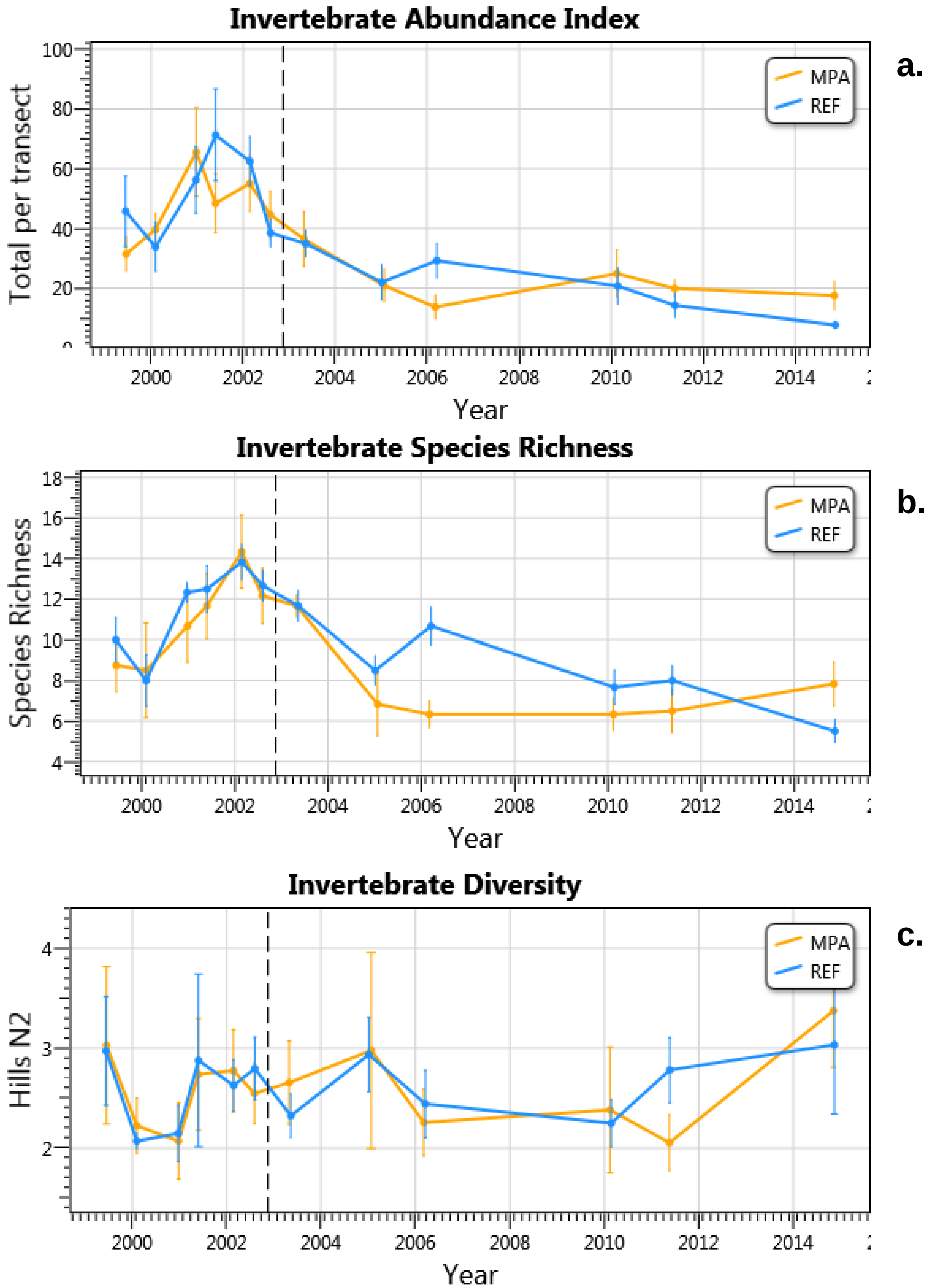


Figure 3.9. Invertebrate species diversity indicators (± Standard Error) for MNP and reference sites at Bunurong.

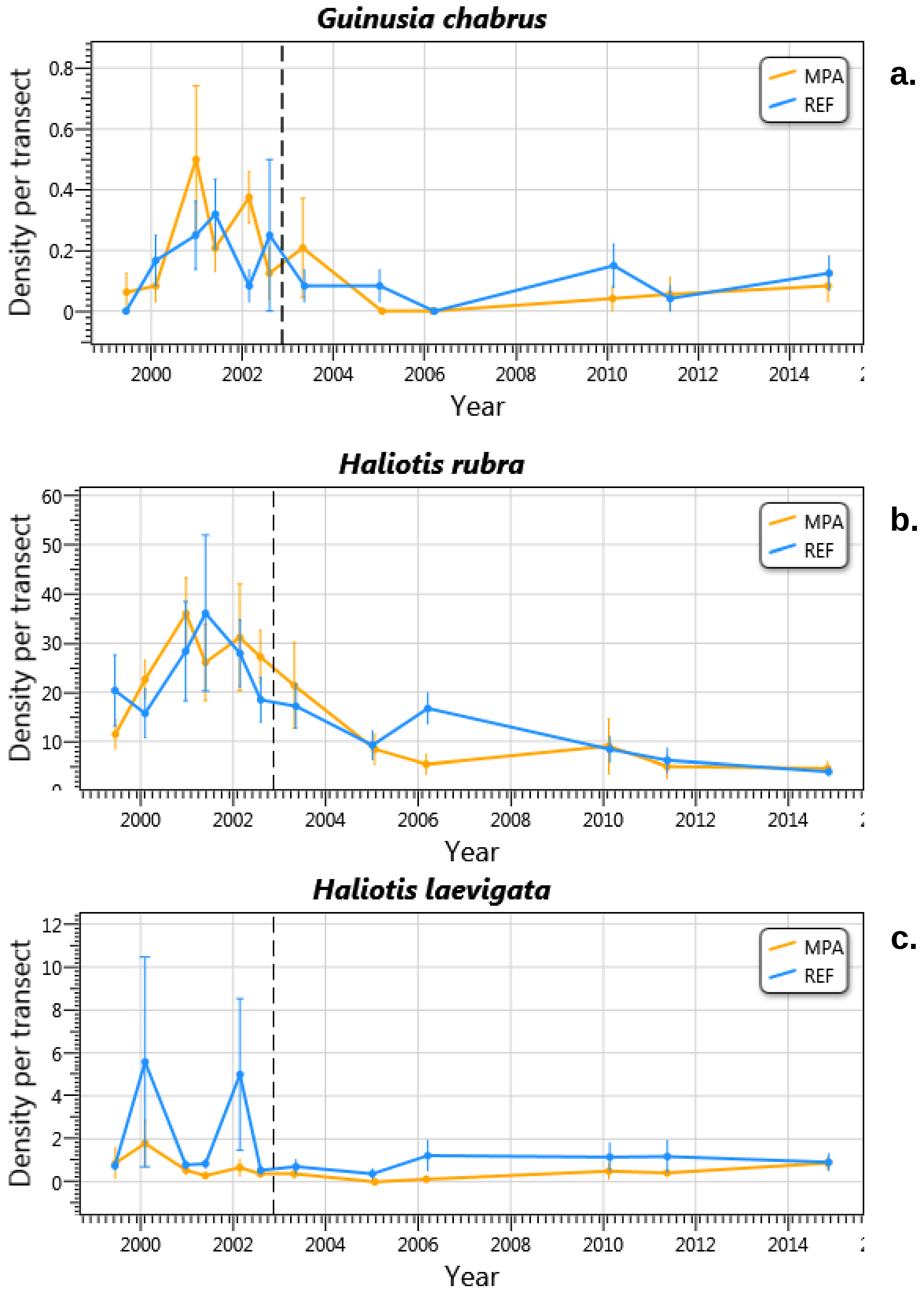


Figure 3.10. Density of invertebrate species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

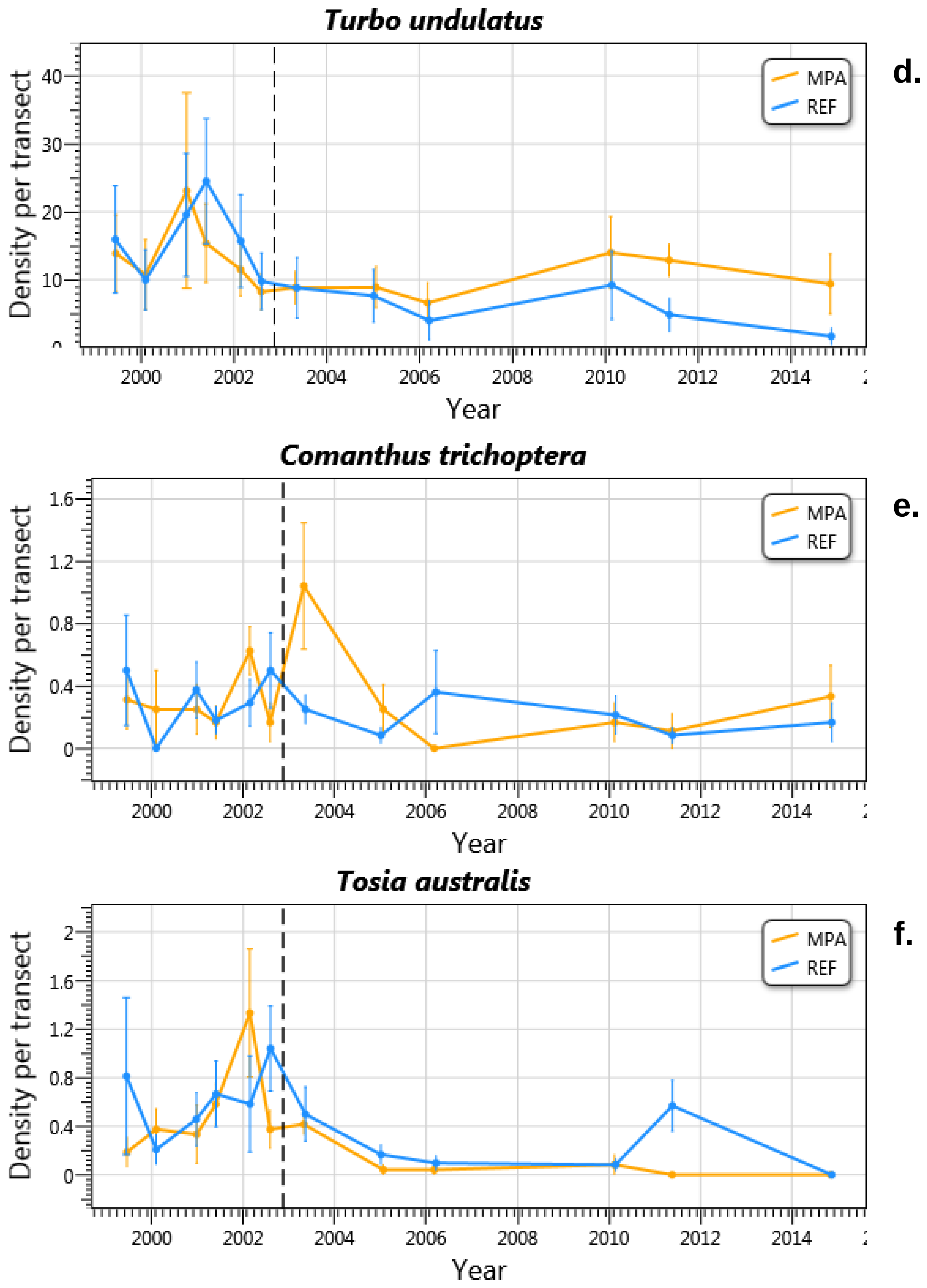


Figure 3.10 (continued). Density of invertebrate species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

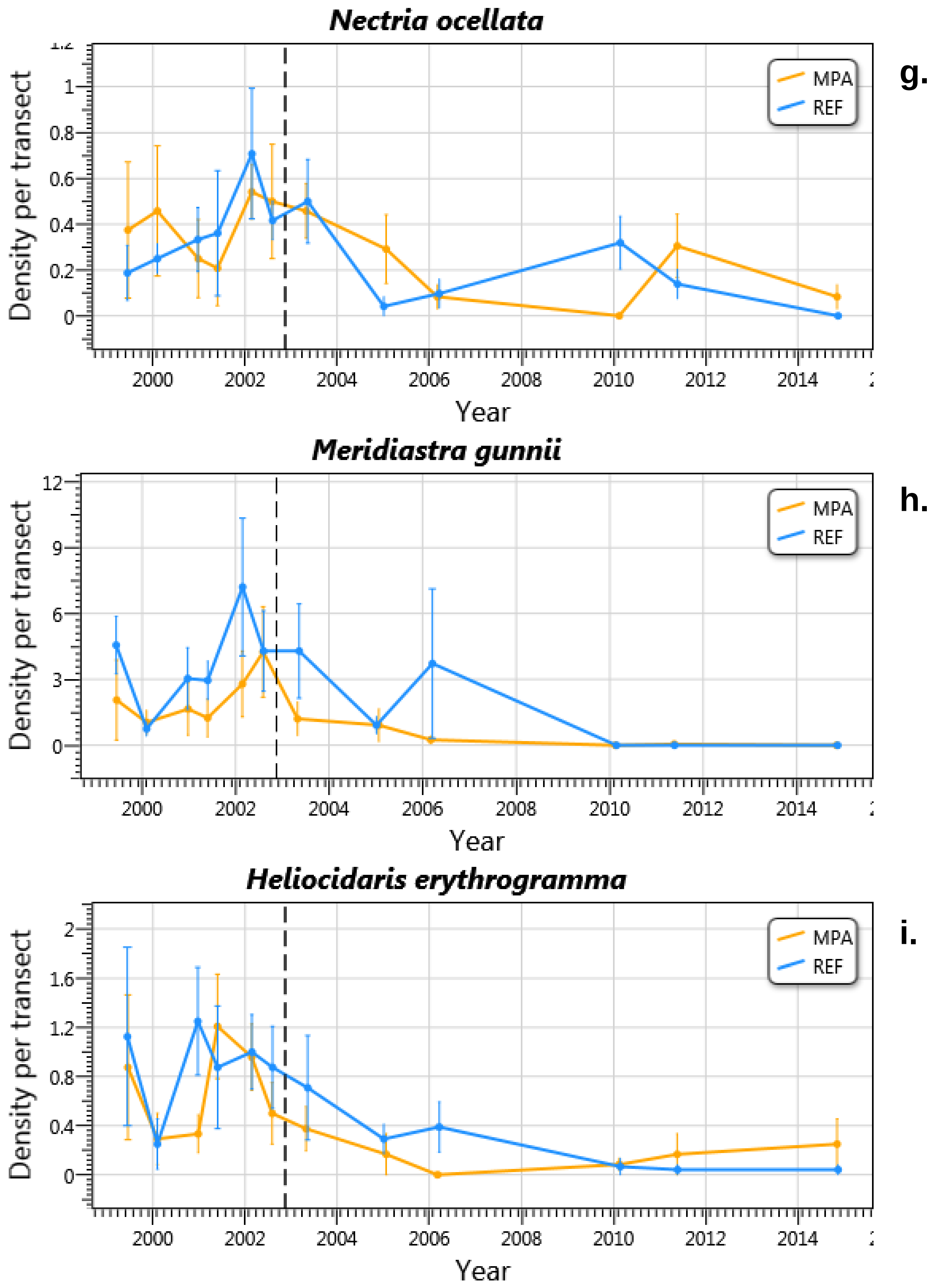


Figure 3.10 (continued). Density of invertebrate species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

3.3 Fishes

3.3.1 Fish Community Structure

The fish assemblages in the Bunurong region were generally characterised by blue throated wrasse *Notolabrus tetricus*, purple wrasse *N. fucicola*, senator wrasse *Pictilabrus laticlavius* and sea sweep *Scorpis aequipinnis*. Other common species included the scaly fin *Parma victoriae*, magpie morwong *Cheilodactylus nigripes*, herring cale *Olisthops cyanomelas*, zebra fish *Girella zebra* and a variety of monacanthids (leatherjackets).

There was no clear discrimination of fish assemblages between sites with considerable overlap in trajectories through time (Figure 3.11).

The fish assemblages at Shack Bay Beach, The Oaks Beach and Boat Ramp East were the only ones to fluctuate significantly from baseline conditions (Figure 3.12). Fluctuations were evident in the combined regional data, with no significant departure from baseline conditions during 2011 and 2014 (Figure 3.12e and 3.12f).

3.3.2 Fish Species Richness and Diversity

Total fish abundance and fish species rich varies markedly from year-to-year, with values in 2011 and 2014 being at the lower end of the range (Figure 3.13a). Similar temporal patterns were observed in fish diversity however the range of variation was comparatively lower (Figure 3.13c).

3.3.3 Common Fish Species

The initial six-monthly surveys indicated considerable within-year variability in fish abundances. This variability was not well correlated with season, time of year or other fish species (Figure 3.14).

Zebra fish *Girella zebra* were in very low abundances between 2005 and 2010, both inside and outside the MNP (Figure 3.14a).

The abundances of sea sweep *Scorpis aequipinnis* were consistently higher inside the MNP (Figure 3.14b). Conversely, old wives *Enoplosus armatus* were more abundant outside the MNP (Figure 3.14c).

There was a notable increase in abundance in rosy wrasse *Pseudolabrus rubicundus* inside the MNP, from 2010 to 2014 (Figure 3.14f).

Blue throat wrasse *Notolabrus tetricus* and herring cale *Olisthops cyanomelas* abundances have remained within baseline period ranges (Figures 3.14g and 3.14j).

Abundances of purple wrasse *Notolabrus fucicola*, senator wrasse *Pictilabrus laticlavius*, horseshoe leatherjacket *Meuschenia hippocrepis* and six-spined leatherjacket *M. freycineti* have generally been low since 2005 (Figures 3.14h, 3.14i, 3.14l and 3.14m).

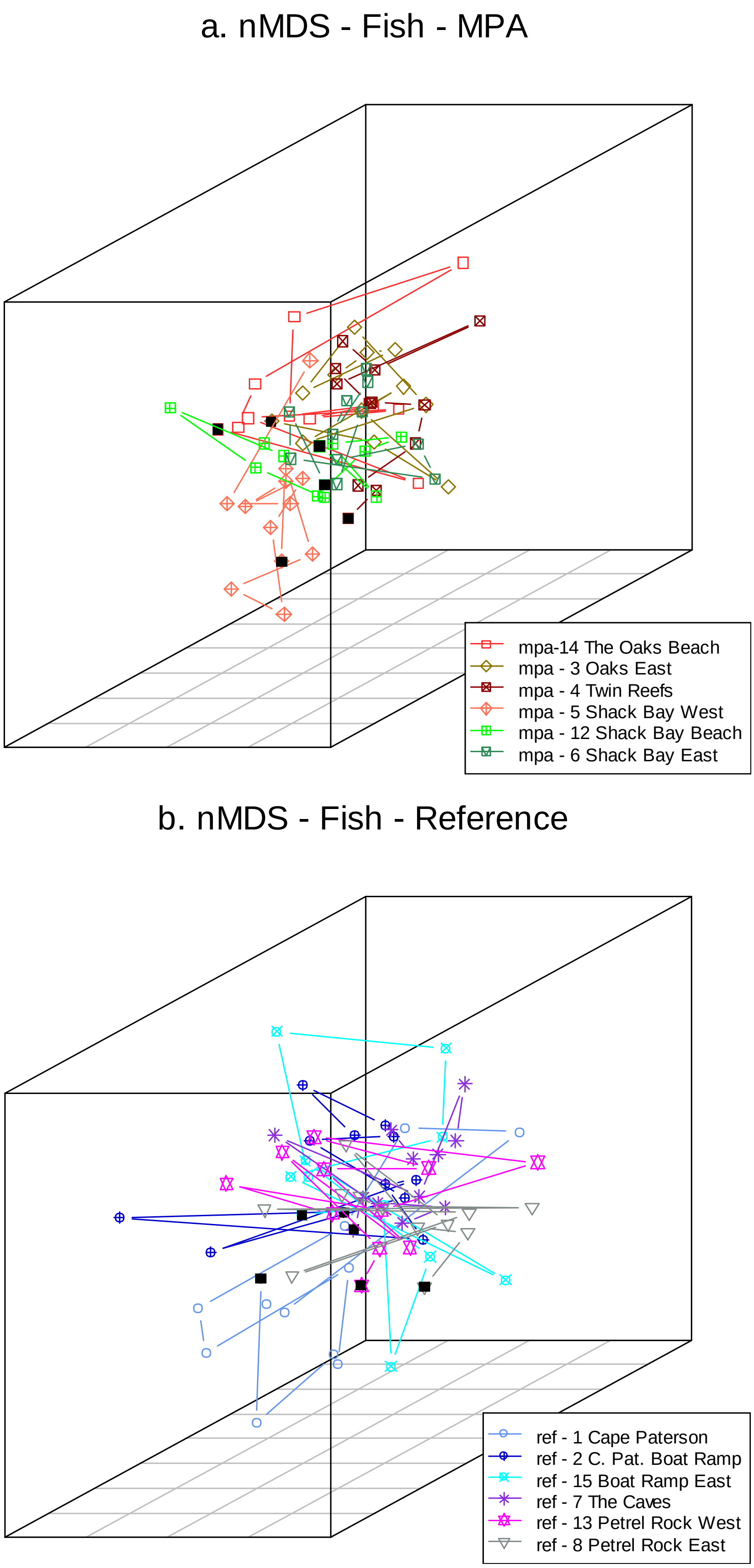


Figure 3.11. Three-dimensional nMDS plot of fish assemblage structure at Bunurong. Black, filled shapes denote the first survey time. Kruskal stress = 0.18.

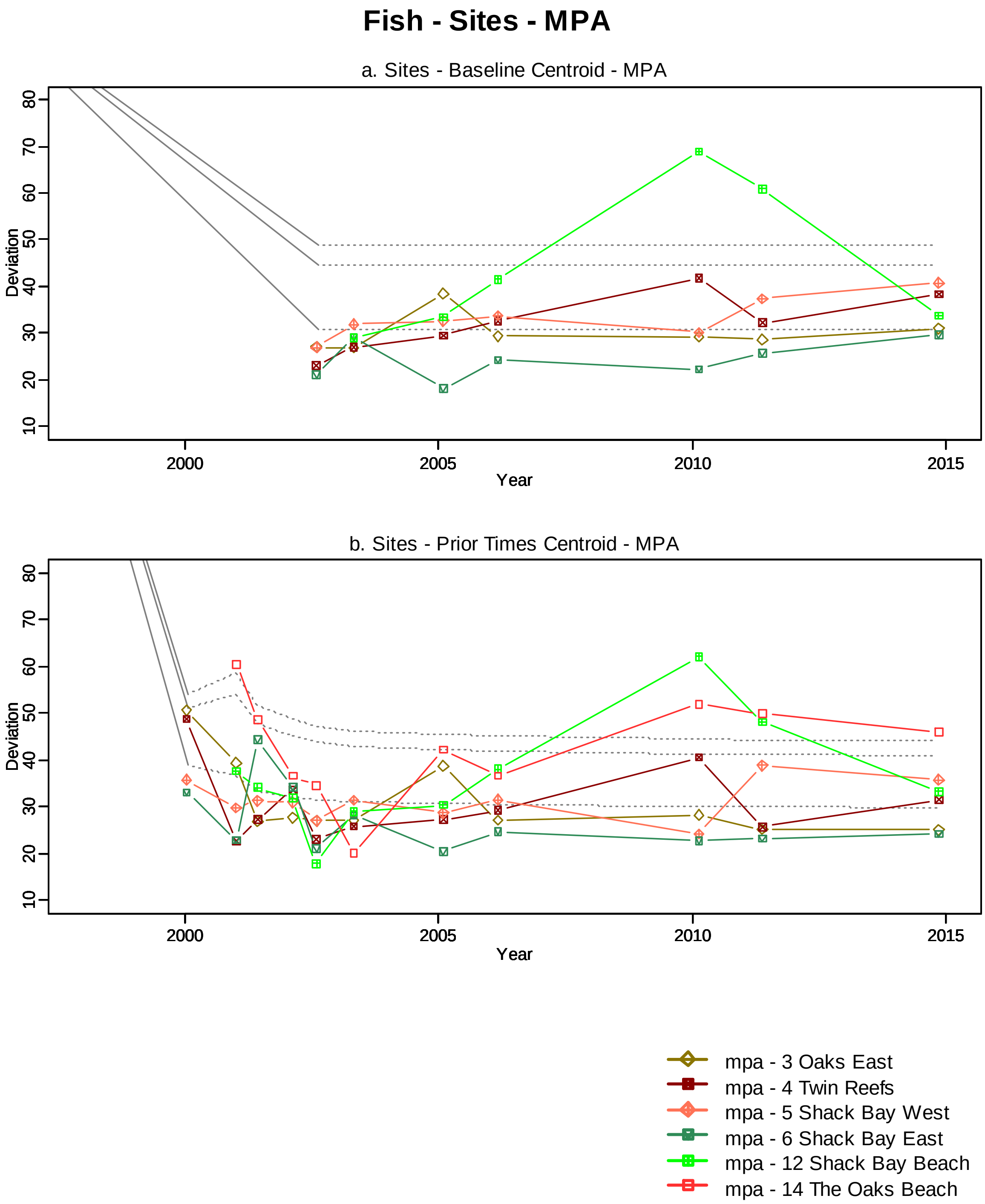


Figure 3.12. Control charts of fish assemblage structure at Bunurong.

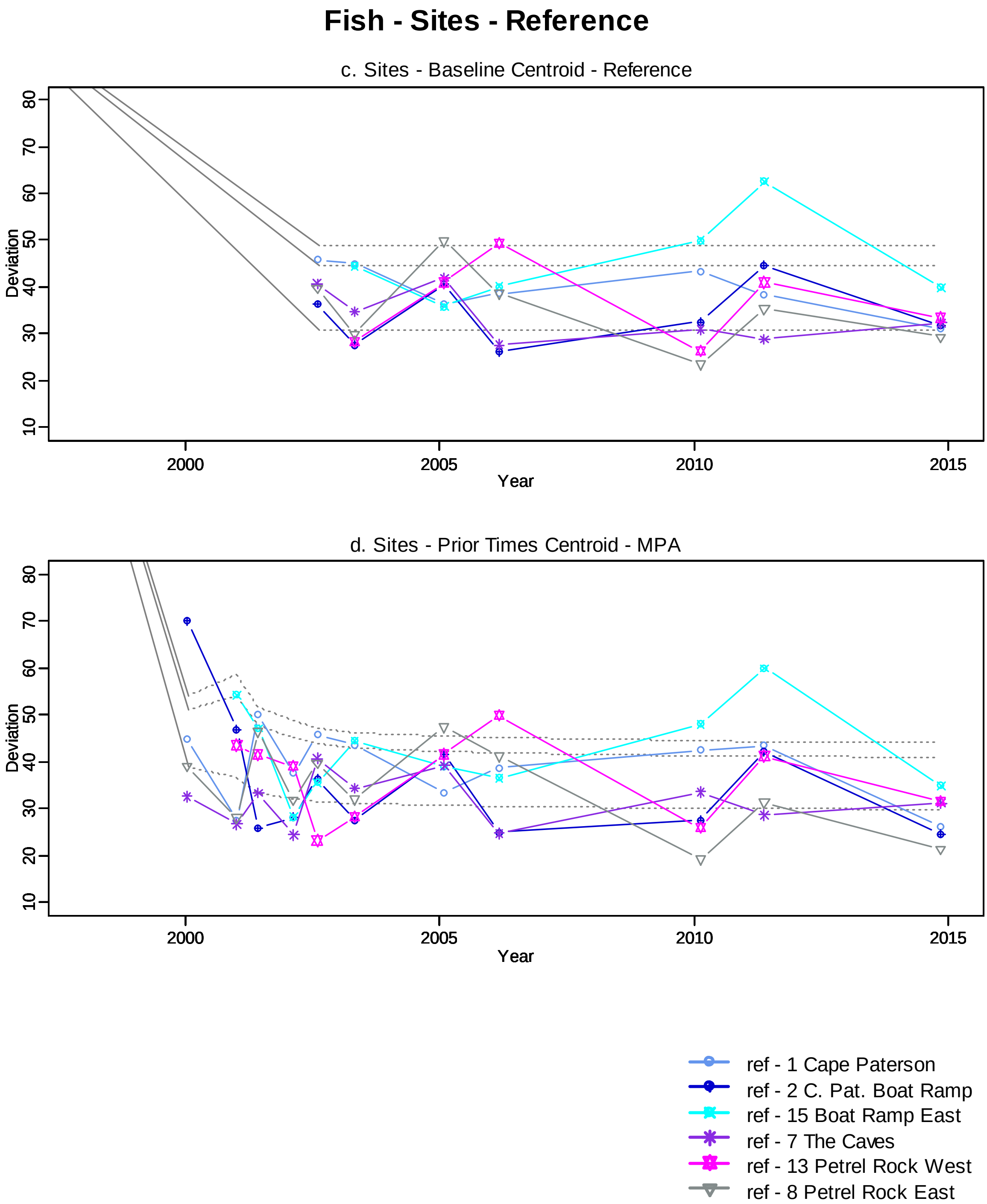


Figure 3.12 (Continued). Control charts of fish assemblage structure for regions inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

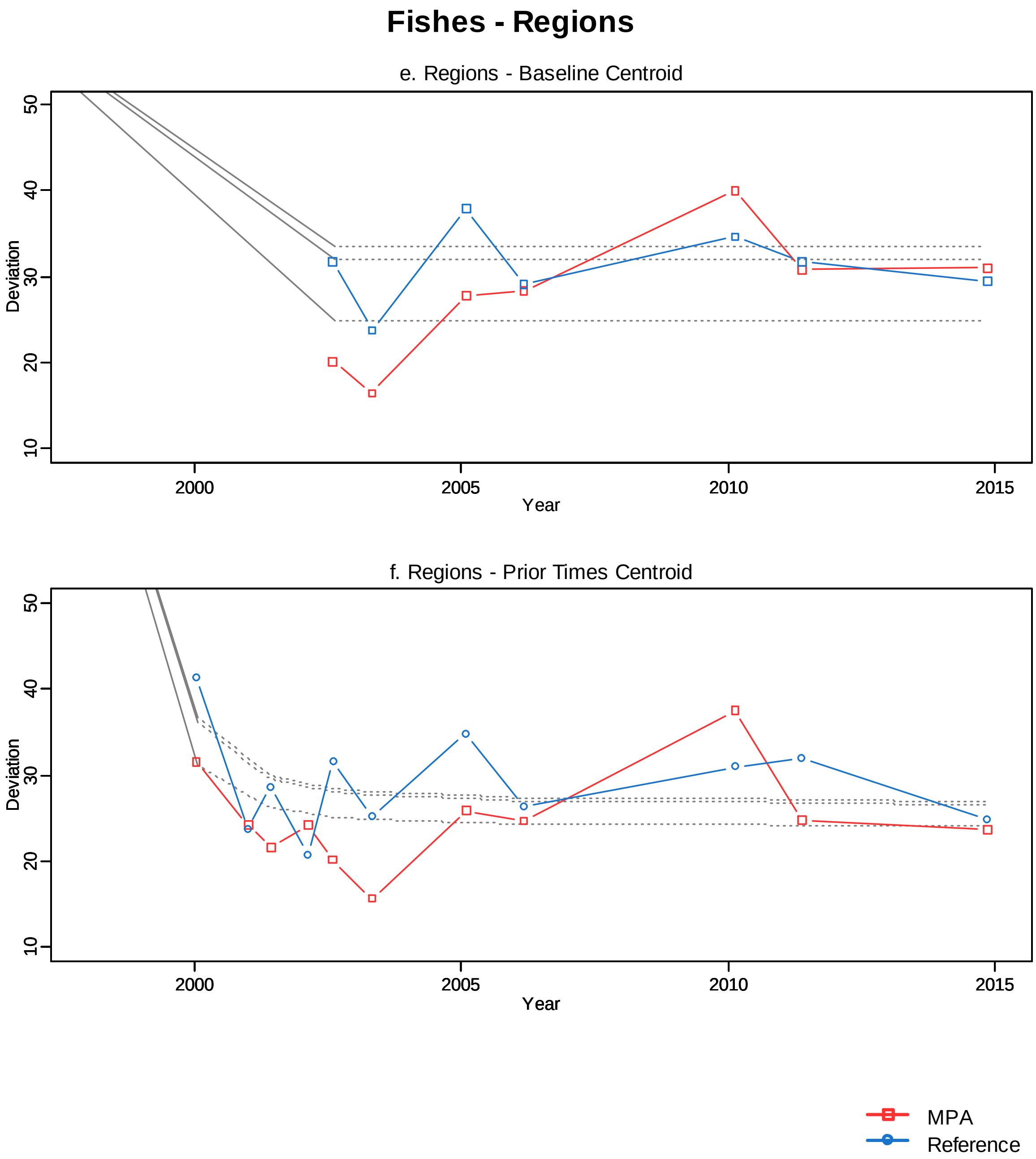


Figure 3.12 (Continued). Control charts of fish assemblage structure for regions inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

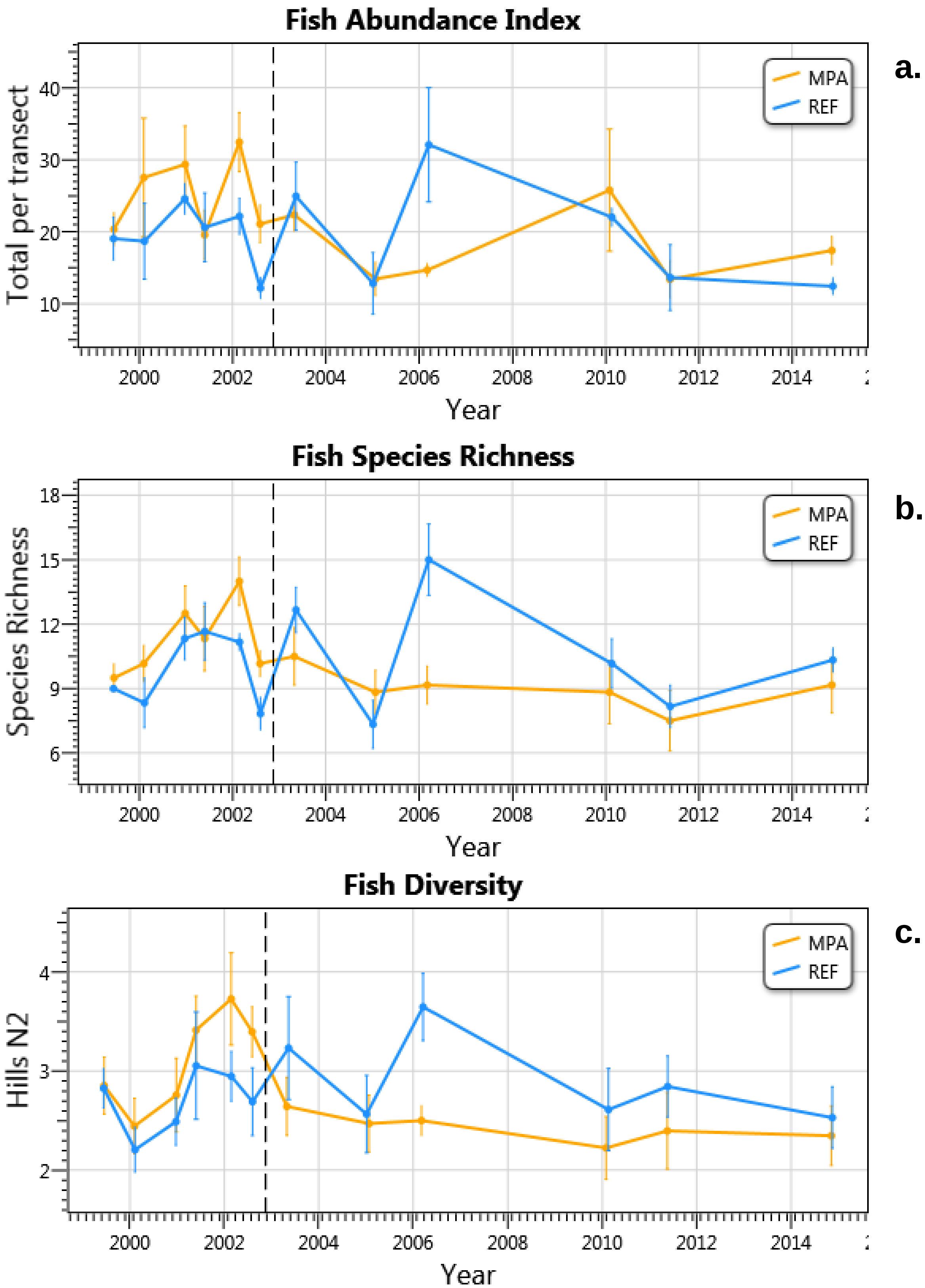


Figure 3.13. Fish species diversity indicators (± Standard Error) for MNP and reference areas at Bunurong.

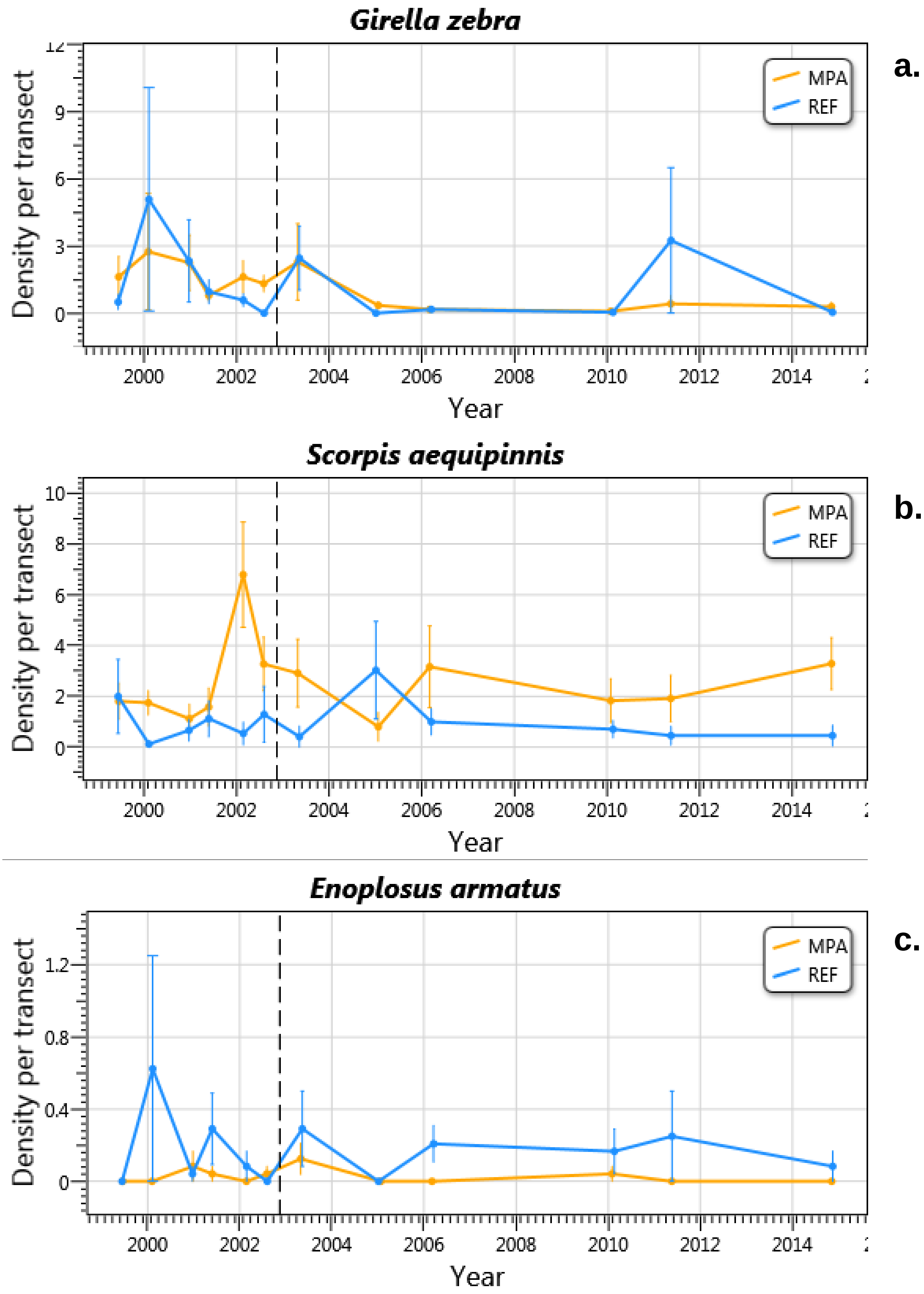


Figure 3.14. Density of fish species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

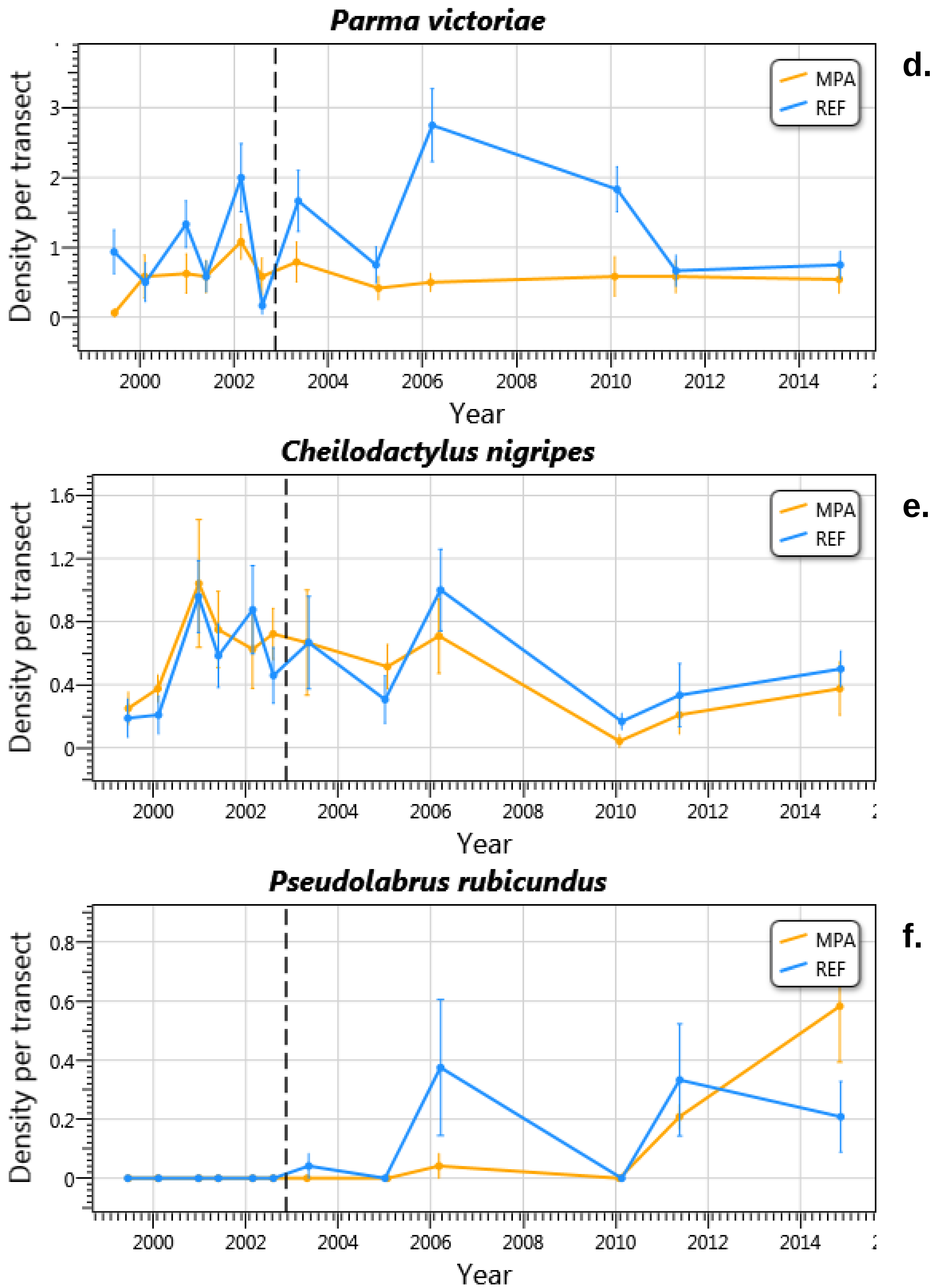


Figure 3.14 (continued). Density of fish species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

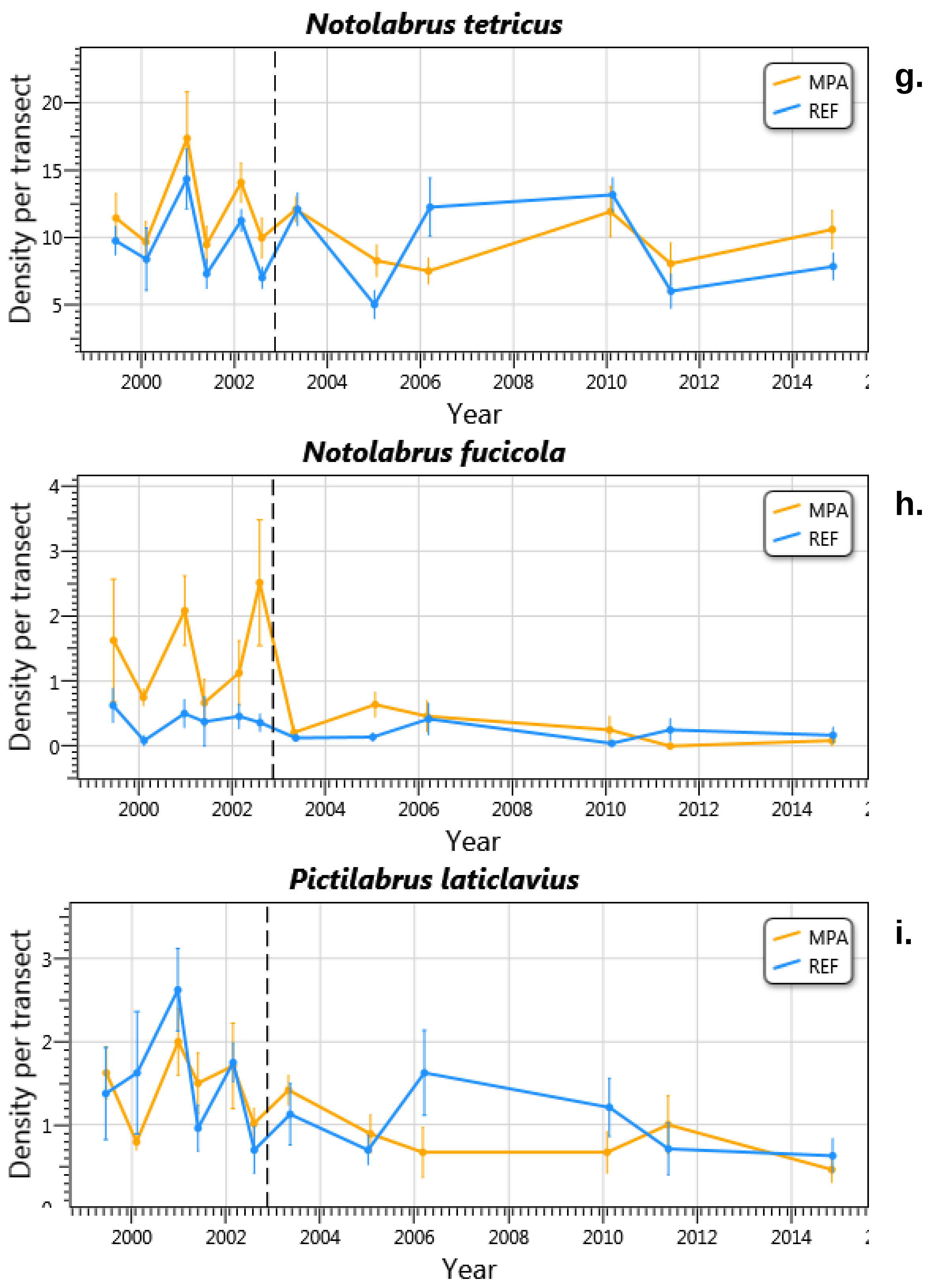
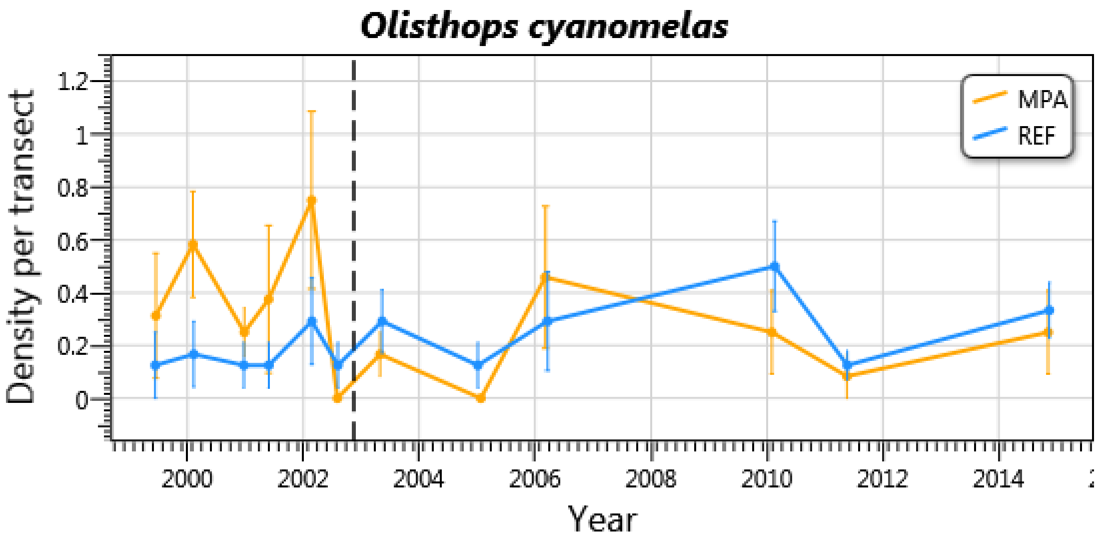


Figure 3.14 (continued). Density of fish species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.



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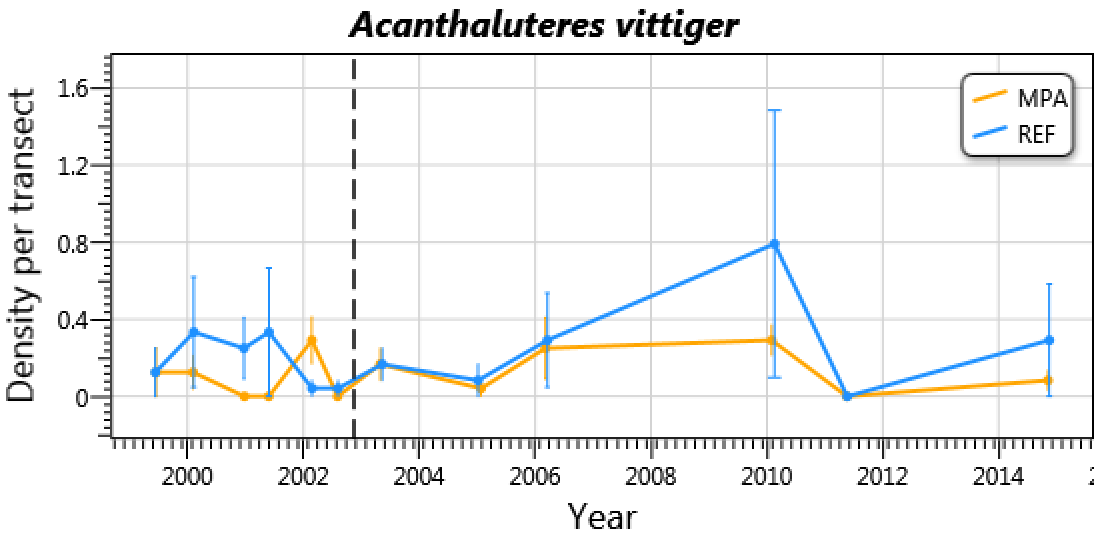

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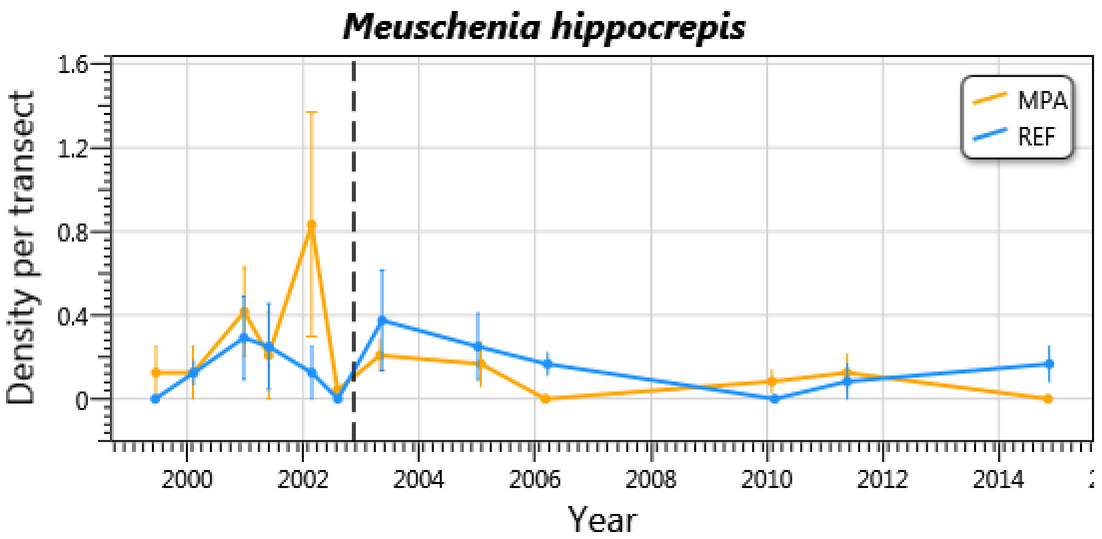

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Figure 3.14 (continued). Density of fish species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP**.**

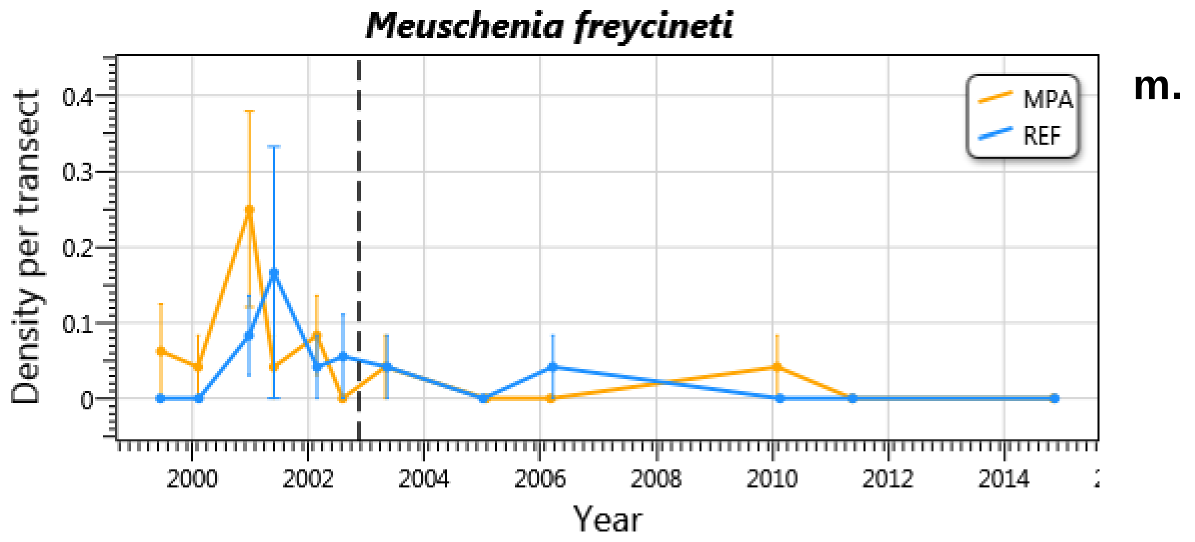

Figure 3.14 (continued). Density of fish species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

Figure 3.15. Male senator wrasse *Pictilabrus laticlavius* in a reef-seagrass assemblage of seaweed *Amphibolis antarctica* and brown alga *Cystophora monilifera*. Petrel Rock East (Site 3008), 13 November 2014.

3.4 Ecosystem Functional Components

3.4.1 Habitat and Production

The macrophyte functional groups include canopy formers, understorey brown algae, understorey thallose red algae, understorey erect coralline algae, crustose coralline algae and seagrass. All of these groups had temporal patterns that were similar inside and outside the MNP. The abundances of canopy browns and thallose red algae were consistently higher inside the MNP (Figures 3.16a and 3.16c). Most of the macrophyte functional groups were at low levels during the 2014 survey. Two exceptions were green algae and seagrass *Amphibolis antarctica*, which were at relatively high levels (Figures 3.16f and 3.16g).

3.4.2 Sediment Cover

Sediment cover had a peak in 2004 and changed little from 2006 to 2014 (Figure 3.17).

3.4.3 Invertebrate Groups

There were no discernible trends in abundances of filter feeders (Figure 3.18a).

There was a peak in invertebrate grazer abundance in 2001 with a subsequent decline to 2006 and remaining low to 2014 (Figure 3.18b).

Invertebrate predator and seastar groups were low in abundance from 2004 to 2014 (Figures 3.18c and 3.18d).

3.4.4 Fish Groups

Fish foragers and fish grazers were variable with no long term trends over the monitoring period (Figures 3.19a and 3.19b).

There were no discernible patters of fish hunters or planktivores (Figures 3.19c and 3.19d).

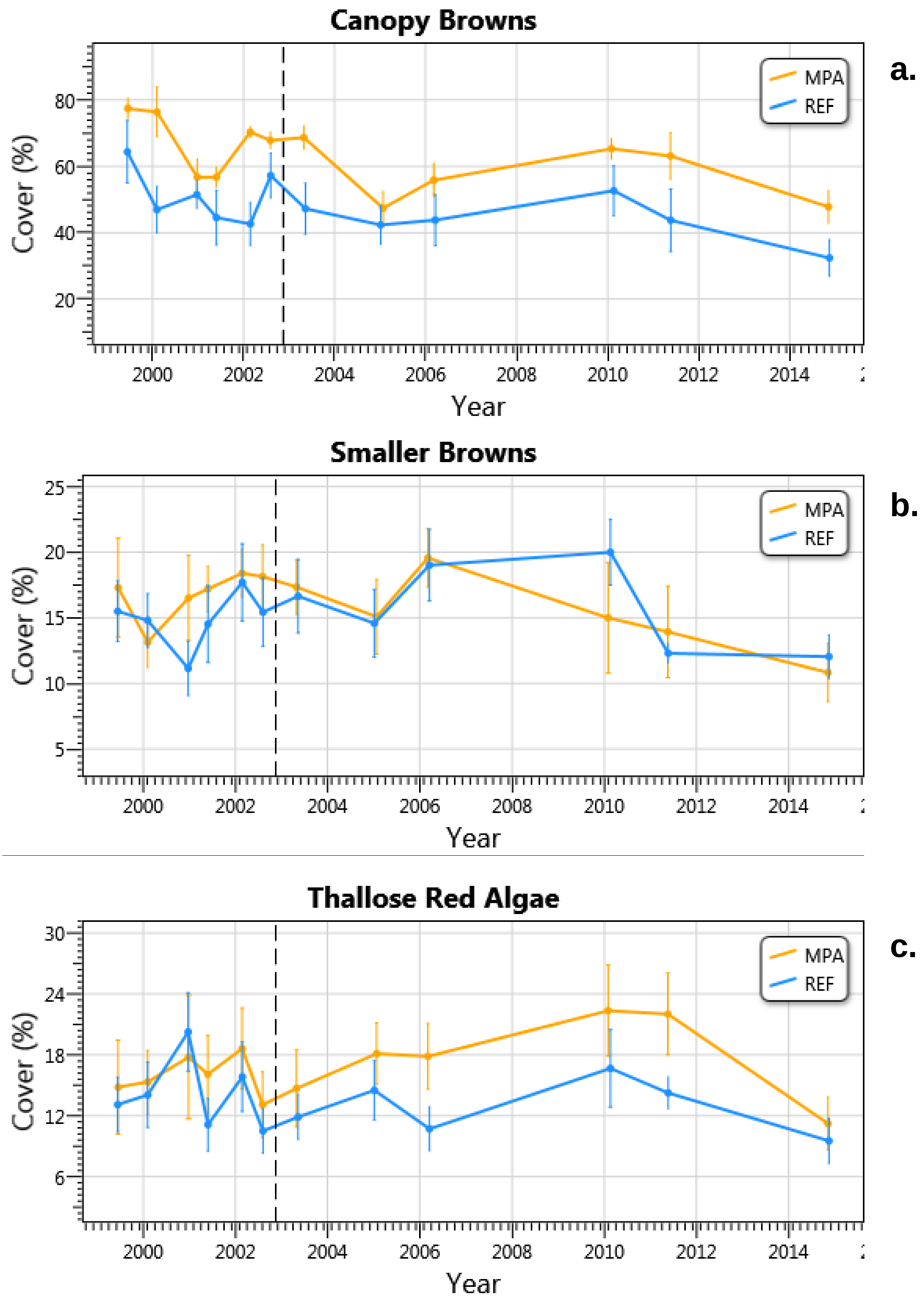

Figure 3.16. Percent cover of macrophyte functional groups (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

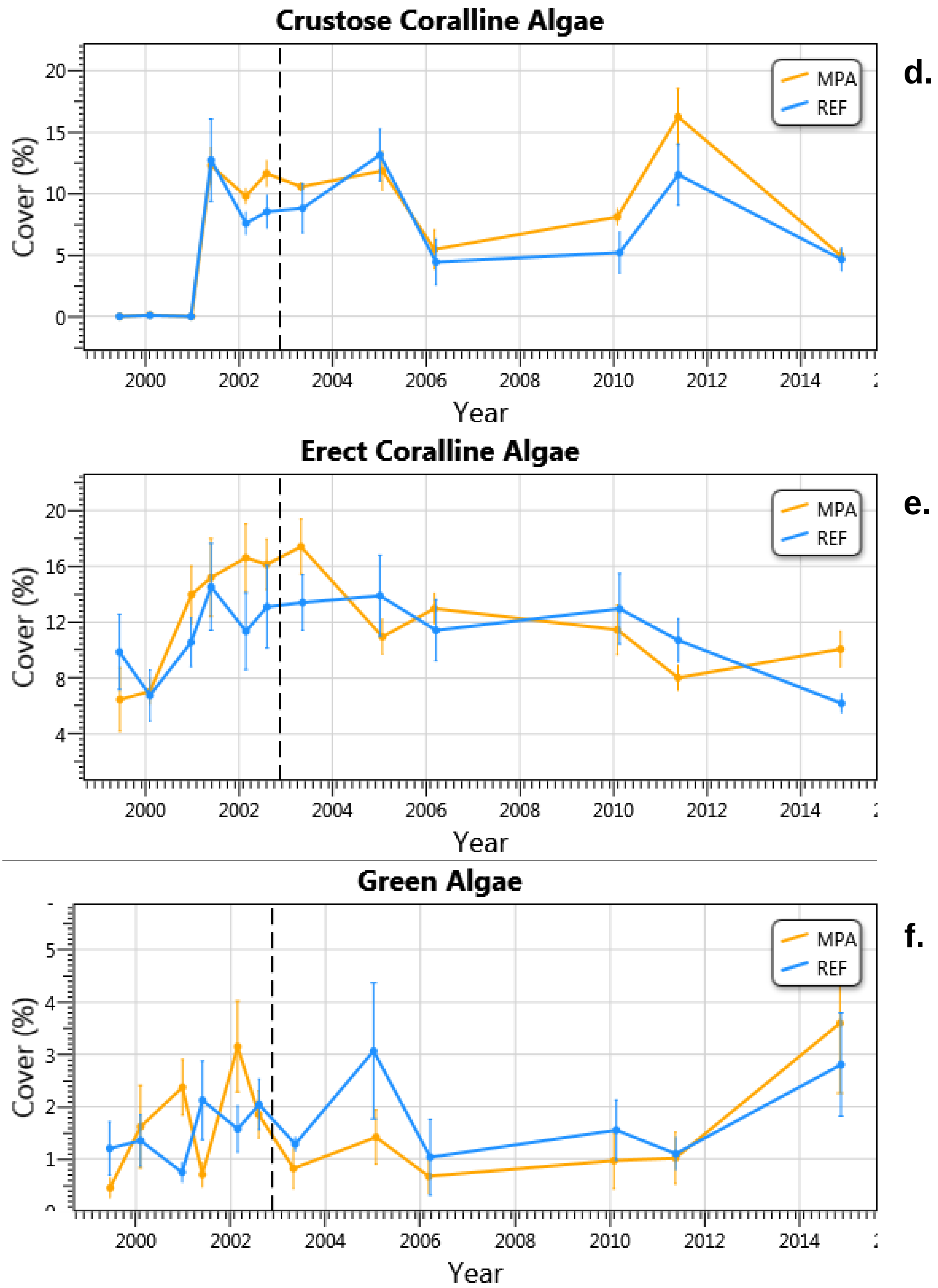

Figure 3.16 (continued). Percent cover of macrophyte functional groups (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

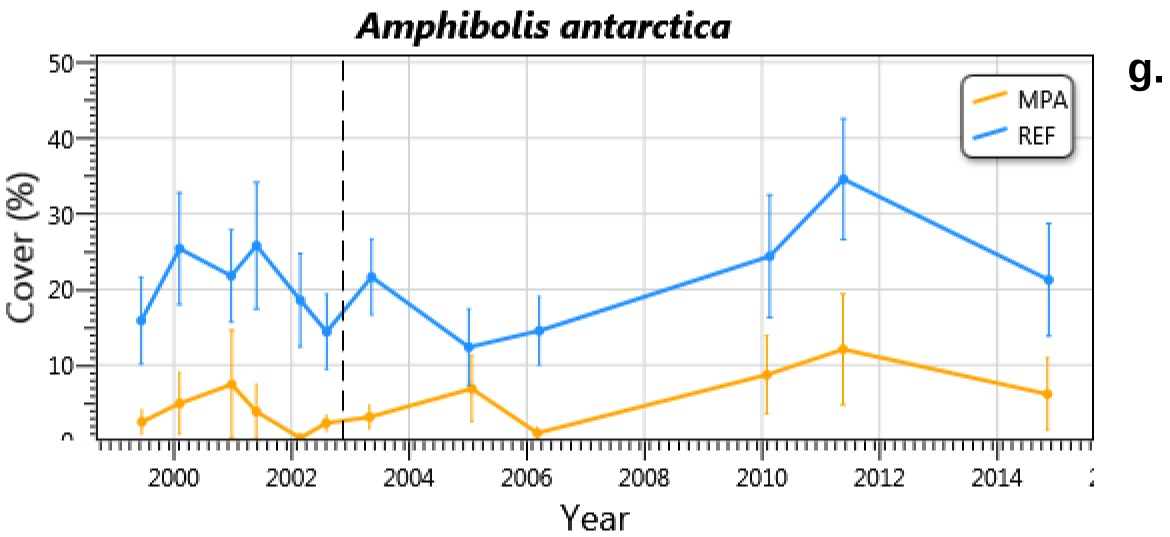

Figure 3.16 (continued). Percent cover of macrophyte functional groups (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

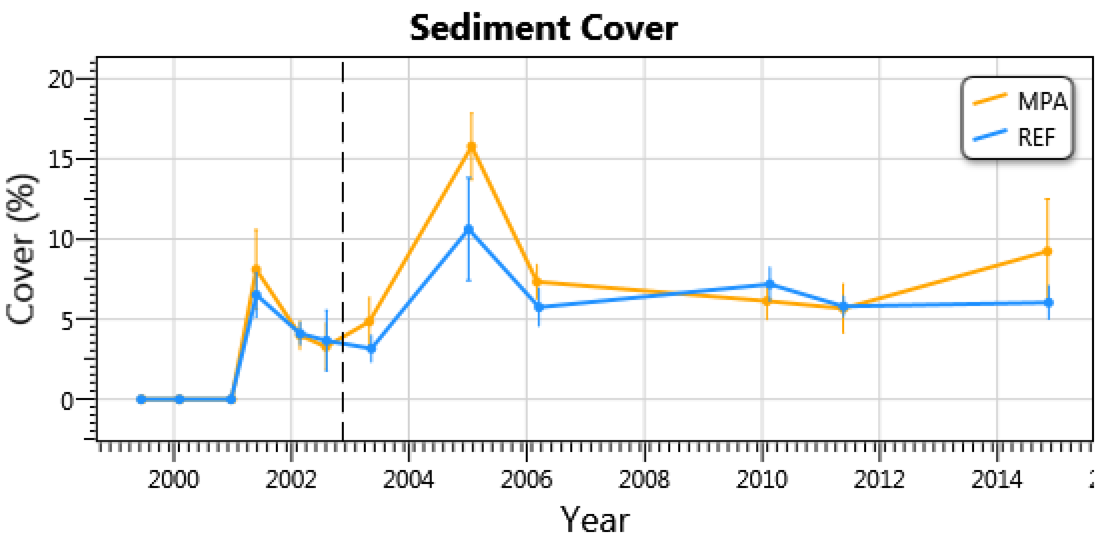

Figure 3.17. Sediment functional group percent cover (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

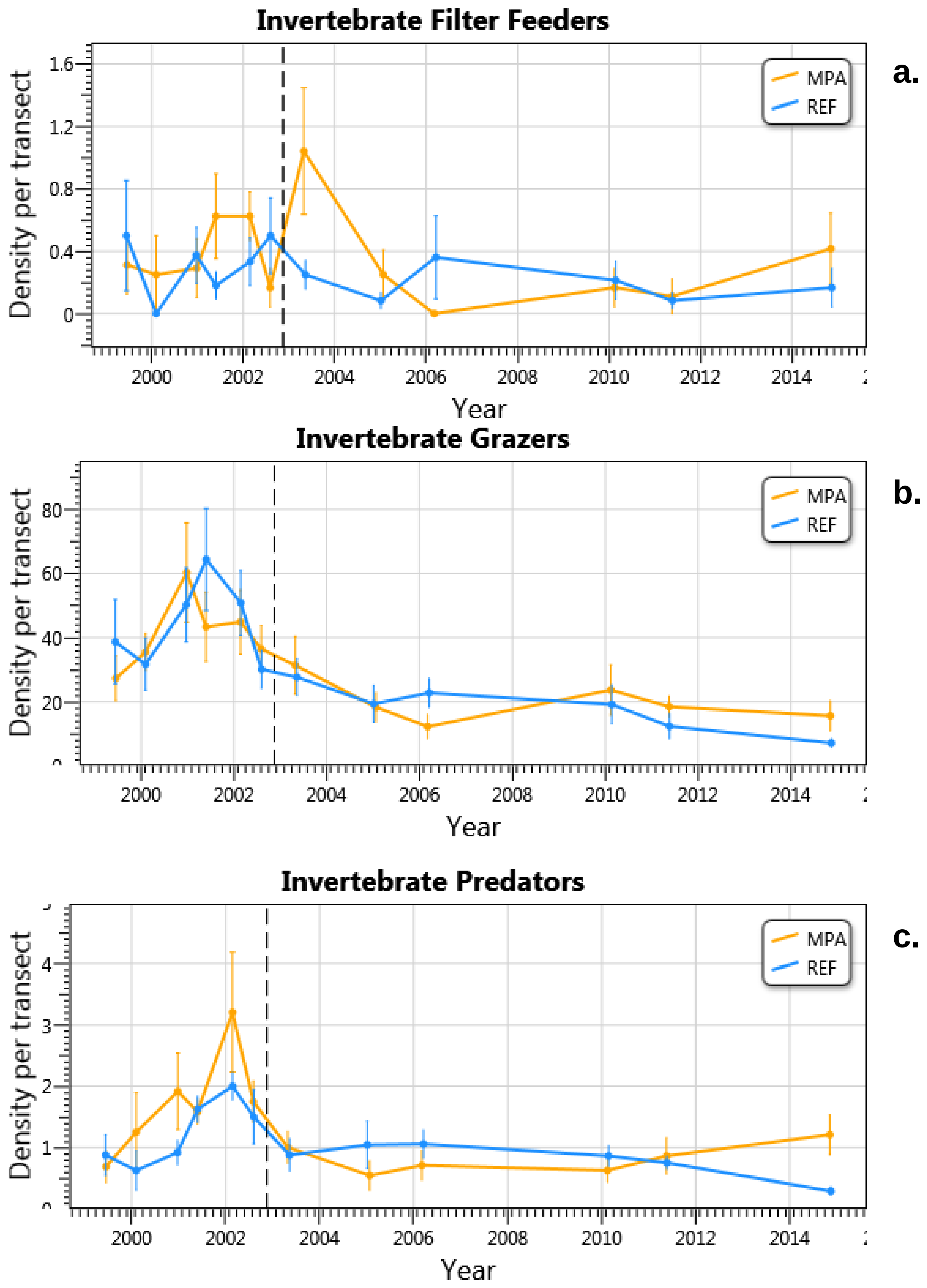

Figure 3.18. Invertebrate functional group densities (± Standard Error) inside and outside Bunurong MNP

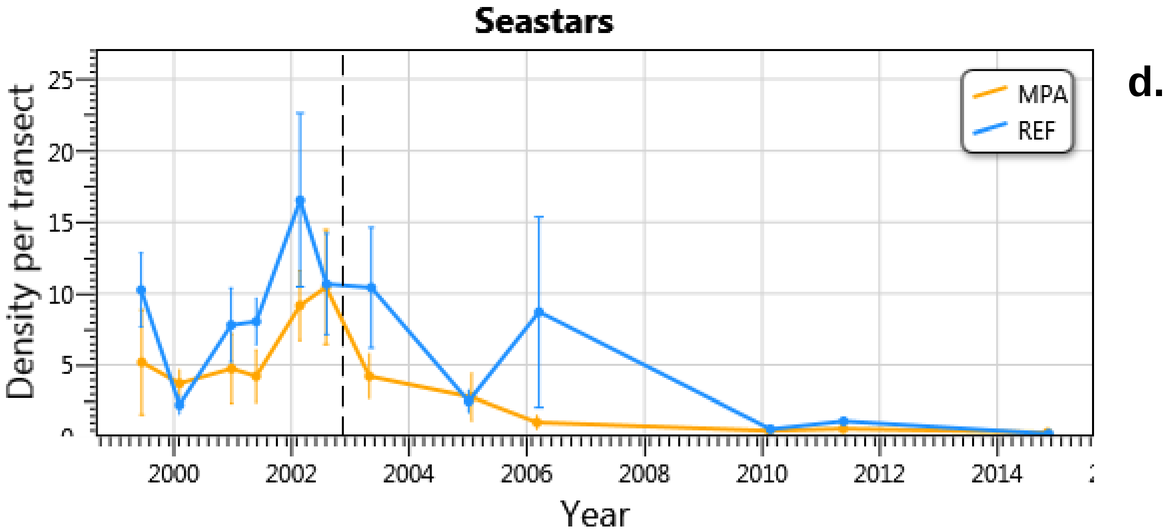

Figure 3.18 (continued). Invertebrate functional group densities (± Standard Error) inside and outside Bunurong MNP.

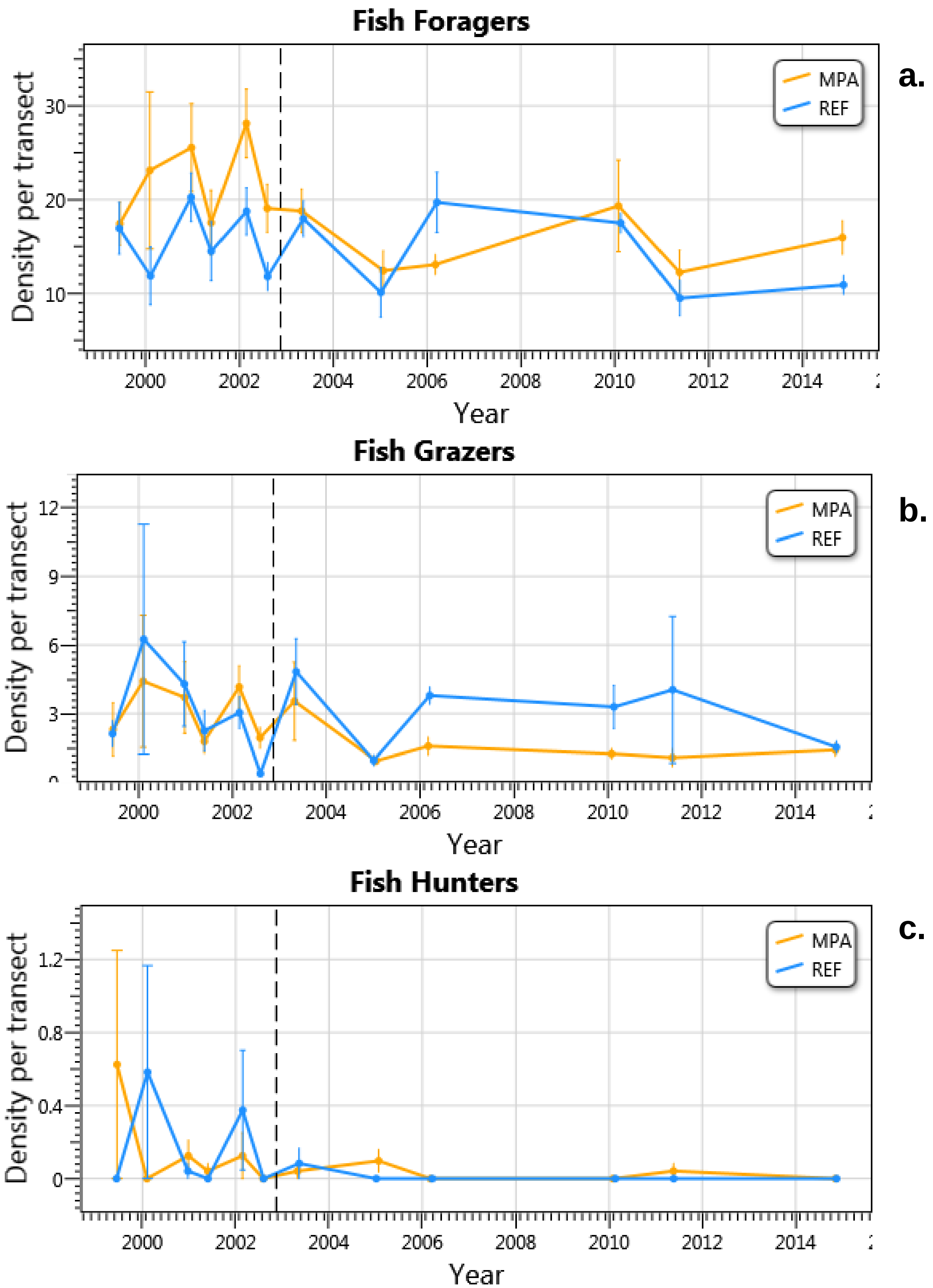

Figure 3.19. Fish functional group density (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

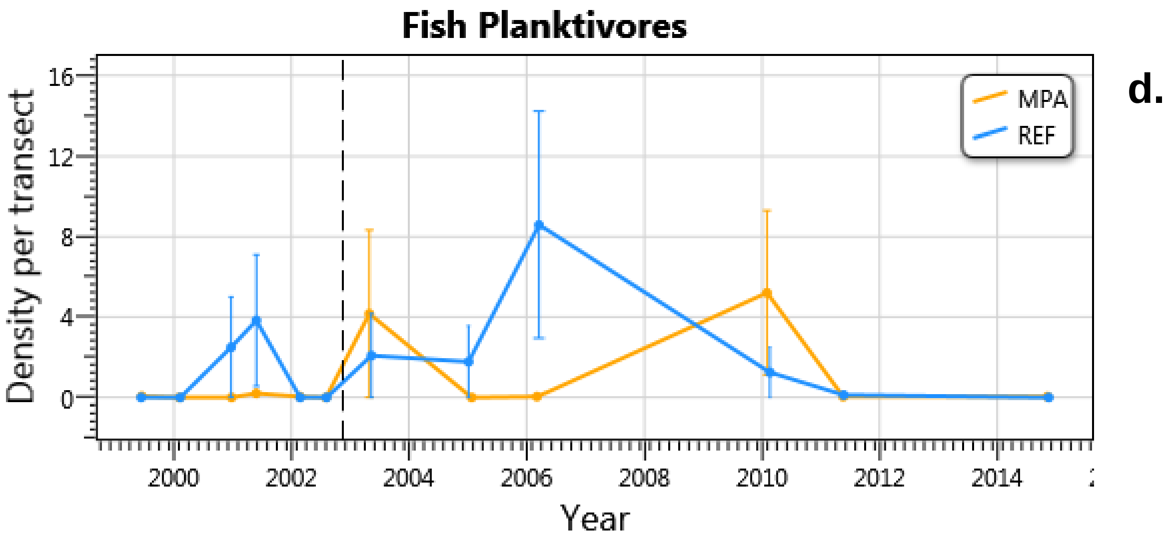

Figure 3.19 (continued). Fish functional group density (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

3.5 Introduced Species

No introduced species were observed at the Bunurong monitoring sites during any of the surveys to date.

3.6 Climate Change

3.6.1 Species composition

Cold water, Maugean algal species richness and total abundance is consistently higher in the MNP sites throughout the monitoring period. There were no apparent trends in abundance or species richness of Maugean or eastern associated species (*e.g.* Figures 3.20 and 3.21). Bunurong and Cape Liptrap are at the western limit of many species of seaweeds and fish and future analyses may benefit from an examination of frequency of observations of these species over time.

3.6.2 Macrocystis pyrifera

The giant string kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera* once formed small patches of vertical forest structure at Bunurong. There was a decline in frequency of observation and measured abundance of *M. pyrifera* between 1999 and 2003, with virtually no plants observed subsequently using both the quadrat method (Method 3) and the belt transect method (Method 4). This decline occurred concurrently with declines throughout Victoria and Tasmania and is consistent with climate change influences on nutrient supply via cold water influxes.

3.6.3 Durvillaea potatorum

The bull kelp *Durvillaea potatorum* is considered to be of high susceptibility to range contraction or reduced gene flow because of climate change (Wernberg *et al.* 2009). Its range has already contracted considerably down the New South Wales coast. *Durvillaea potatorum* does not occur at the Bunurong monitoring sites, but is present within the Bunurong MNP.

3.6.4 Centrostephanus rodgersii

The long-spined sea urchin *Centrostephanus rodgersii* is an eastern, warmer-water species. Its incursion westward not only indicates changes in climate, but also presents threats in terms of grazing and creating urchin-barren habitat. No *C. rodgersii* was observed during any of the Bunurong surveys.

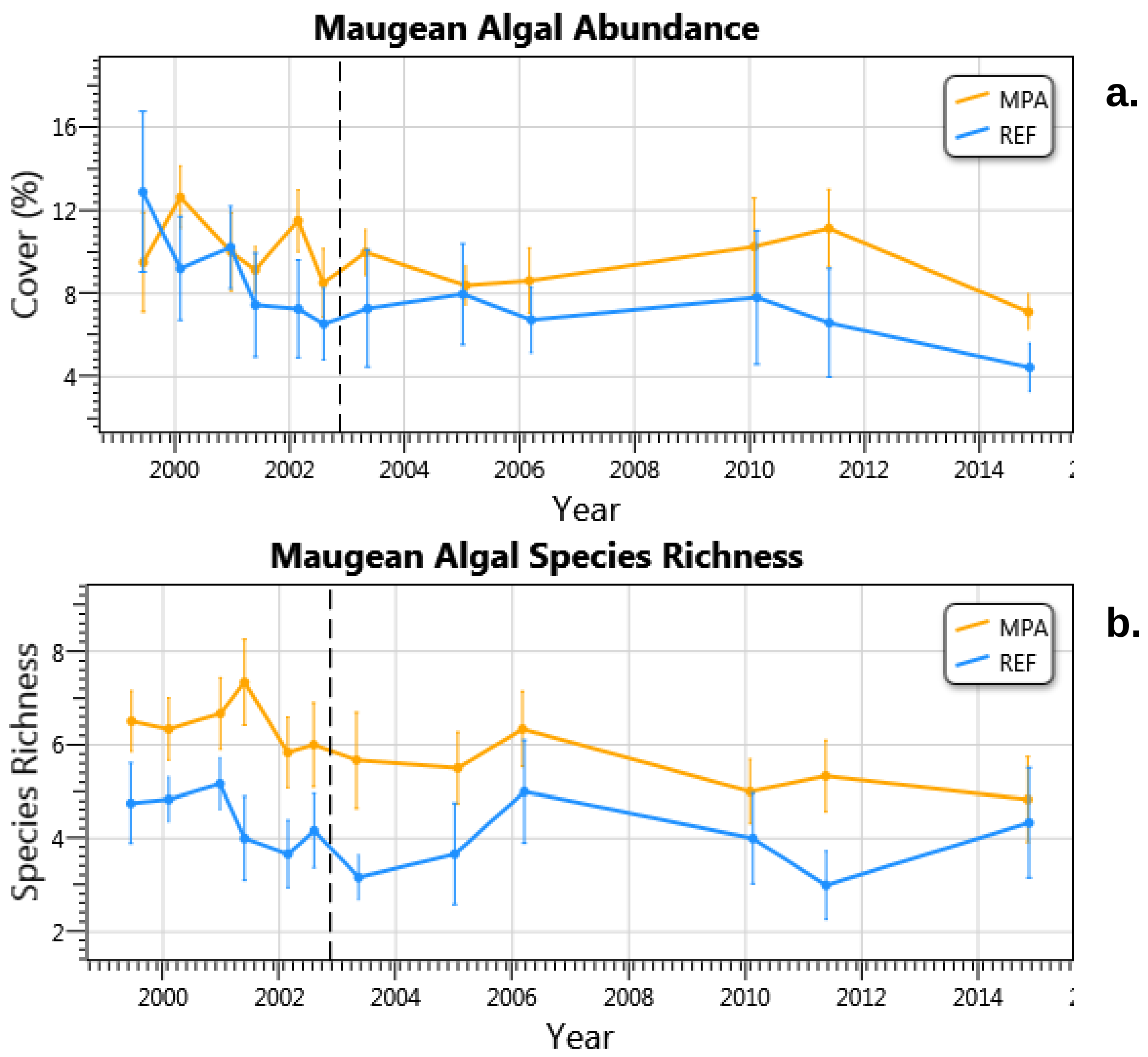

Figure 3.20. Abundance and species richness of cold water, Maugean algal species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

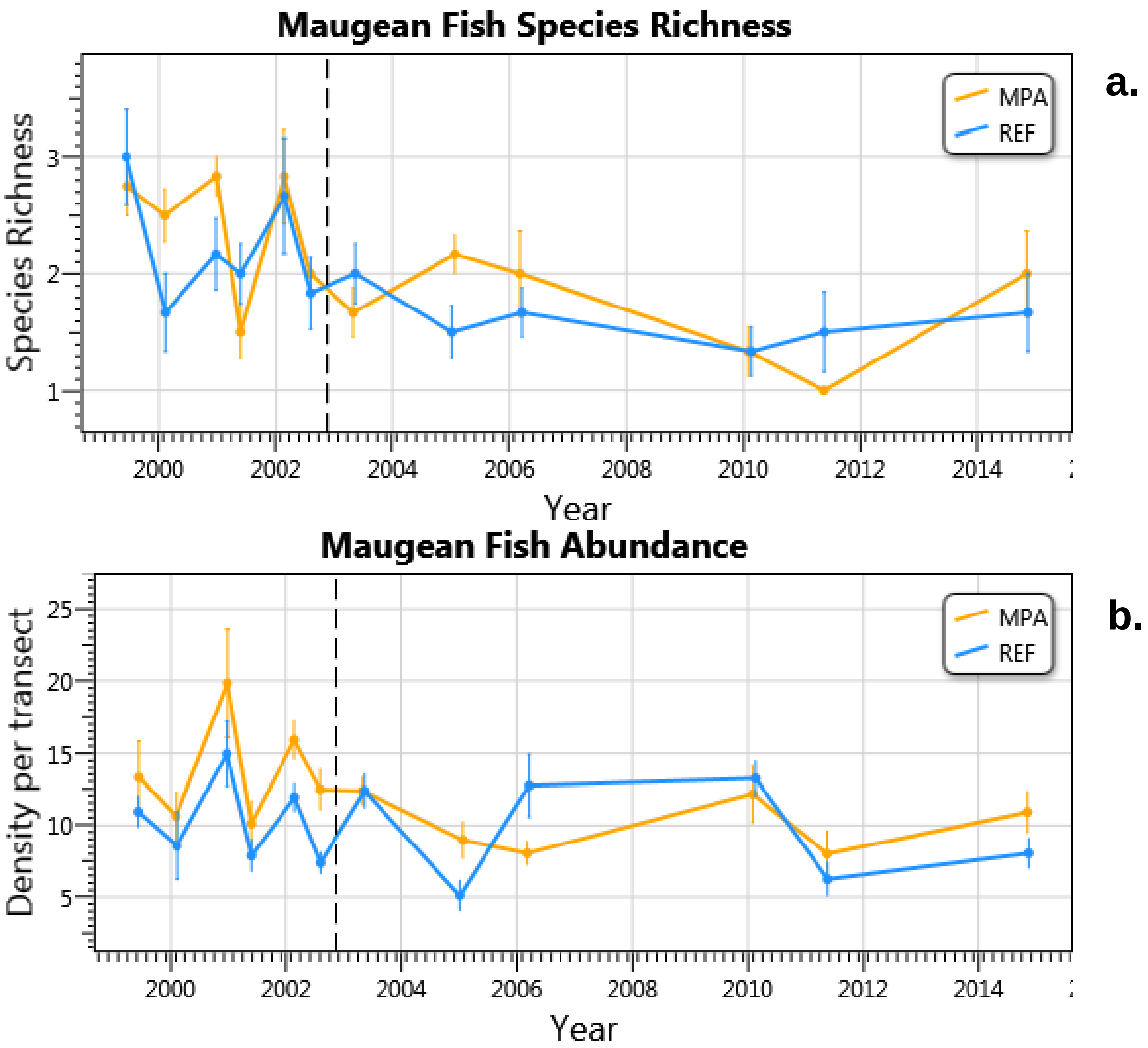

Figure 3.21. Abundance and species richness of cold water, Maugean fish species (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

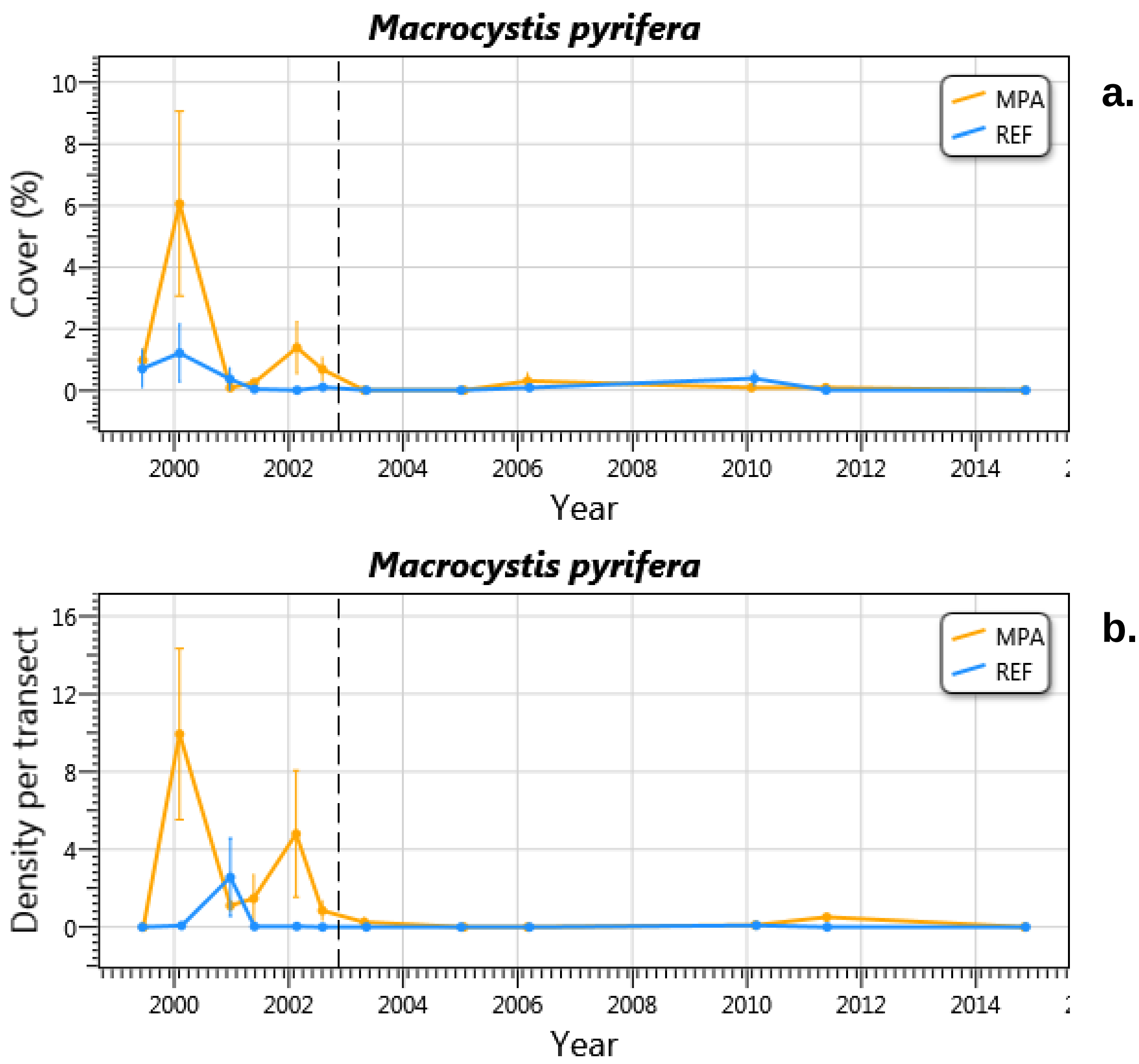

Figure 3.22. Abundance of giant kelp *Macrocystis pyrifera* inside and outside Bunurong MNP using two methods: (a) Method 3 – quadrat points-cover; and (b) Method 4 – density per 10 x 10 m transect section.

3.7 Fishing

3.7.1 Abalone

The abundance of blacklip abalone *H. rubra* has declined substantially both inside and outside the MNP and is presently at record low abundances. It is difficult to determine the level of fishing impacts that contributed to these changes. Given similar changes in other crevice-associated invertebrates, including red bait crab *Guinusia chabrus* and sea urchins *Heliocidaris erythrogramma*, it is likely there was an ecosystem-wide event occurring to some degree (which may or may not be related to fishing). During 2011, there was a notable decrease in the mean size of observed abalone, suggesting a fishing impact (Figure 3.23). There was a notable increase in mean size inside the MNP to 2014, suggesting the MNP has reduced fishing pressure (Figure 3.23).

3.7.2 Rock Lobster

The transects at each monitoring site were largely placed on habitats with few crevices suitable for lobster habitats. The southern rock lobster *Jasus edwardsii* was observed sporadically and in low numbers at the monitoring sites. Known lobster habitat occurs in both the MNP and the adjacent conservation zones.

3.7.3 Fishes

The biomass of commonly fished fishes was largely represented by the larger size classes, over 200 mm in length, *i.e.* of legal minimum length (Figure 3.26). The biomass of fished species was considerably low in 2010 and 2011, but was within normal ranges in 2014 (Figure 3.26).

The fish size spectrum slope indicator (Figure 3.27a) indicated a general increasing trend for a larger proportion of larger fish. There was an exception of a pronounced reduction during 2006 and 2010 (Figure 3.27a). This temporal pattern was also observed in the mean sizes of blue throated wrasse and sea sweep. The mean size of blue throated wrasse *Notolabrus tetricus* was very similar inside and outside the MNP throughout the monitoring program (Figure 3.28). The mean size was at relatively high levels in 2014 (Figure 3.28). The size of sea sweep *Scorpis aequipinnis* was persistently higher inside the MNP since 2002 and were the highest recorded in 2014 (Figure 3.29).

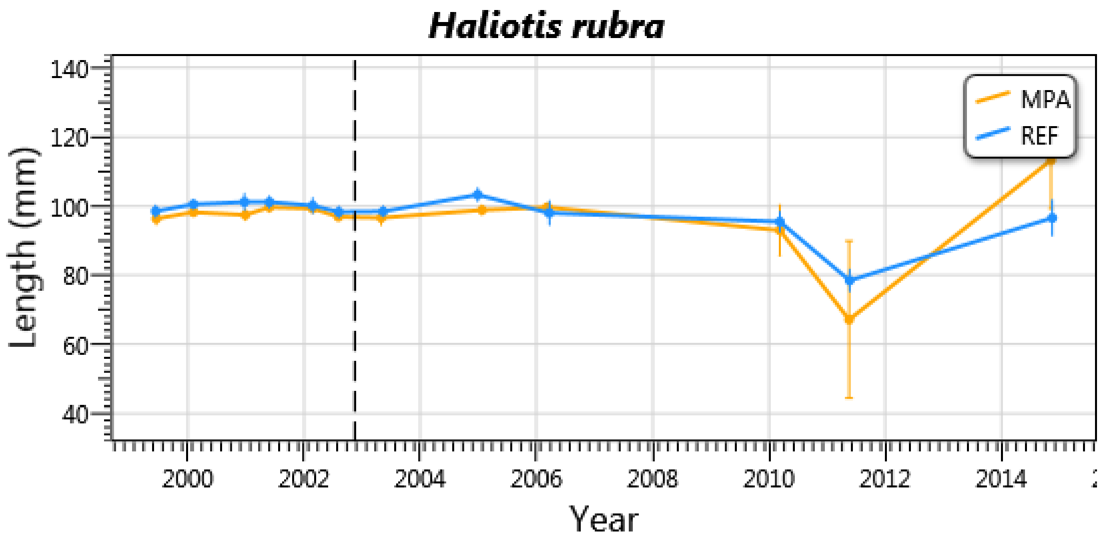

Figure 3.23. Mean size of blacklip abalone *Haliotis rubra* (± Standard Error) inside and outside Bunurong MNP.

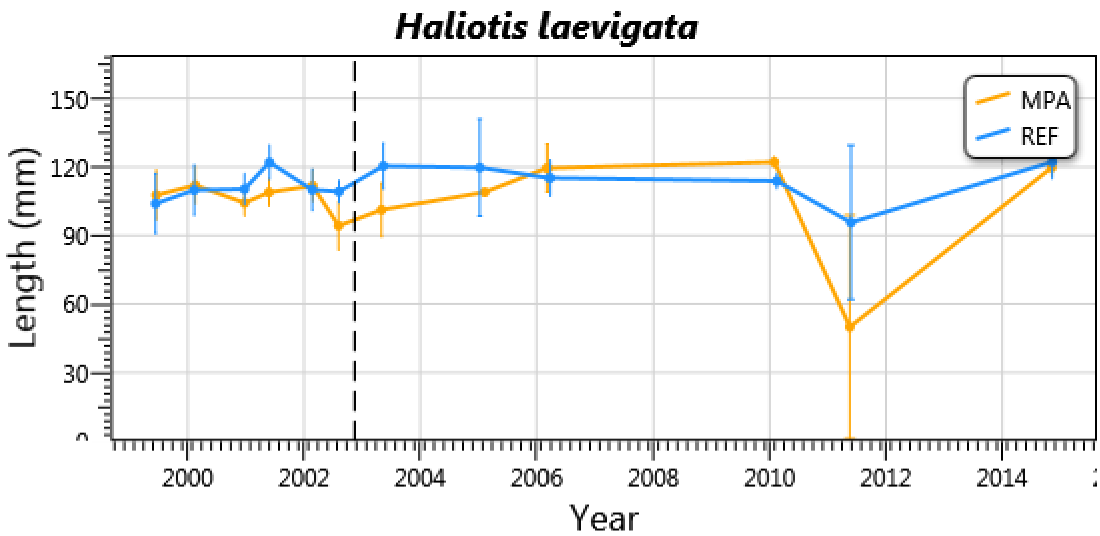

Figure 3.24. Mean size of greenlip abalone *Haliotis laevigata* (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

Figure 3.25. Southern rock lobster *Jasus edwardsii* within observed within seaweed assemblage during the fish census. Petrel Rock East (Site 3008), 13 November 2014.

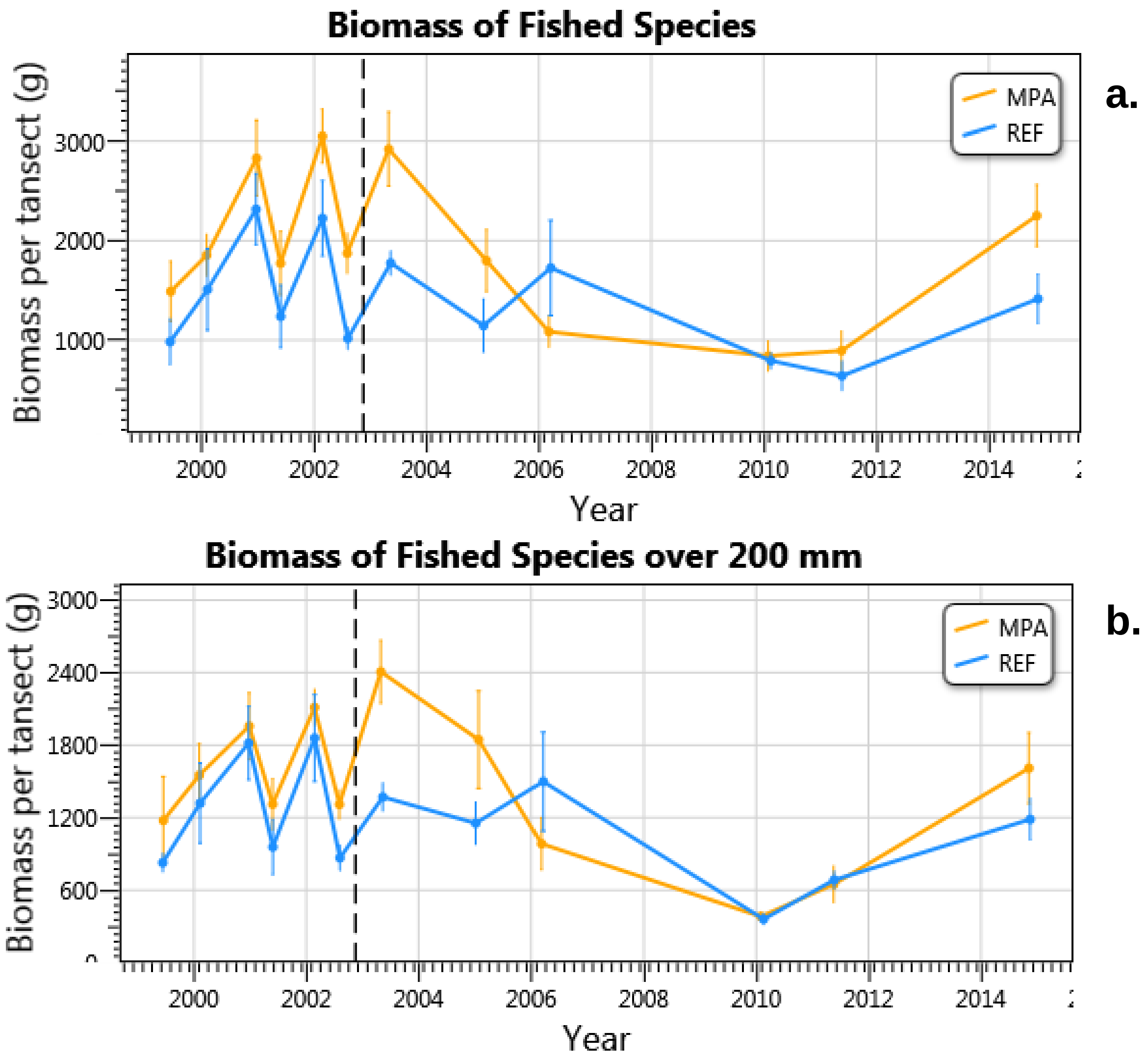

Figure 3.26. Total estimated biomass of fished species and estimated biomass of fished species over 200 mm (± Standard Error) inside and outside Bunurong MNP.

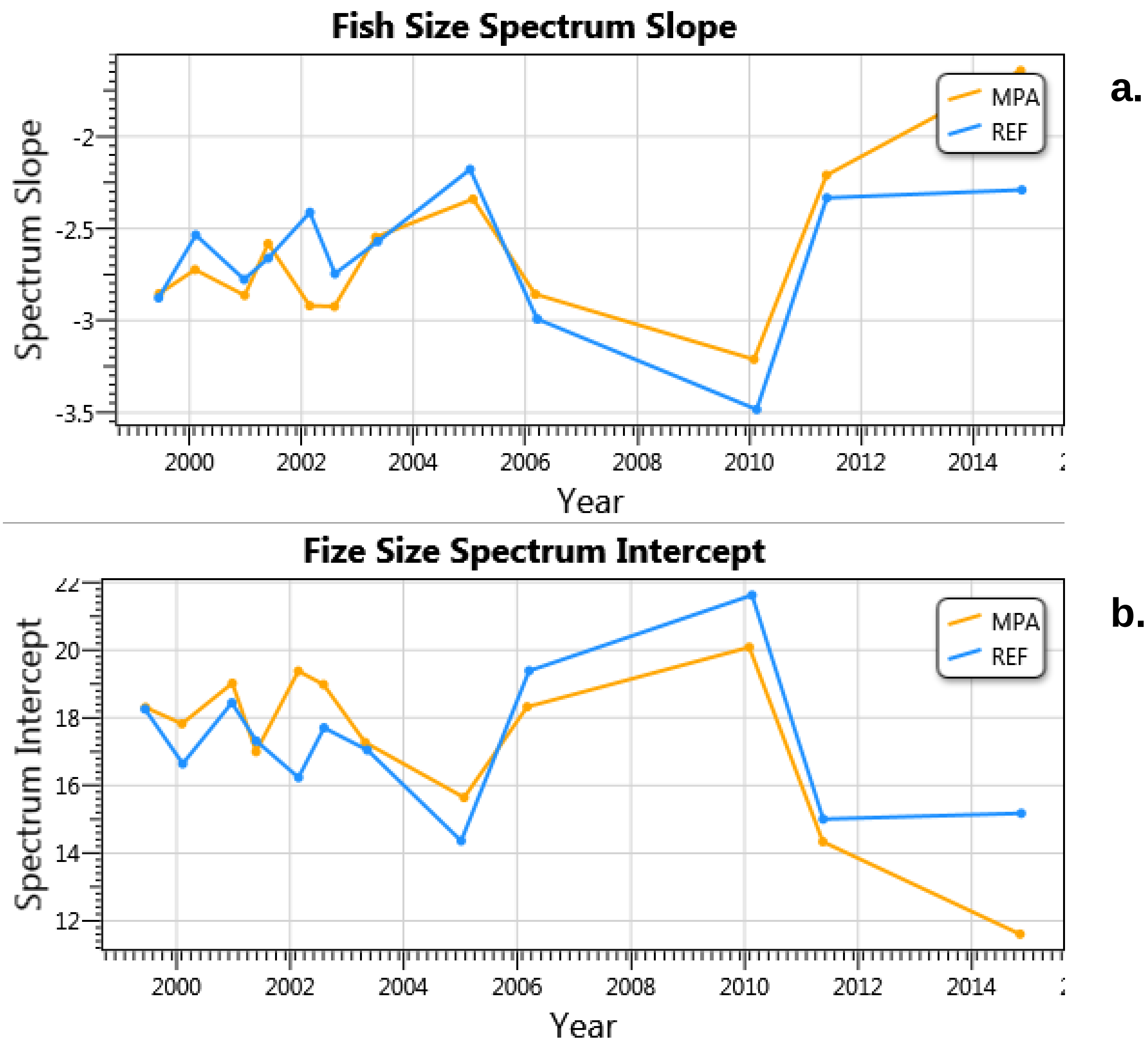

Figure 3.27. Size spectrum parameters for fished fish species inside and outside Bunurong MNP.

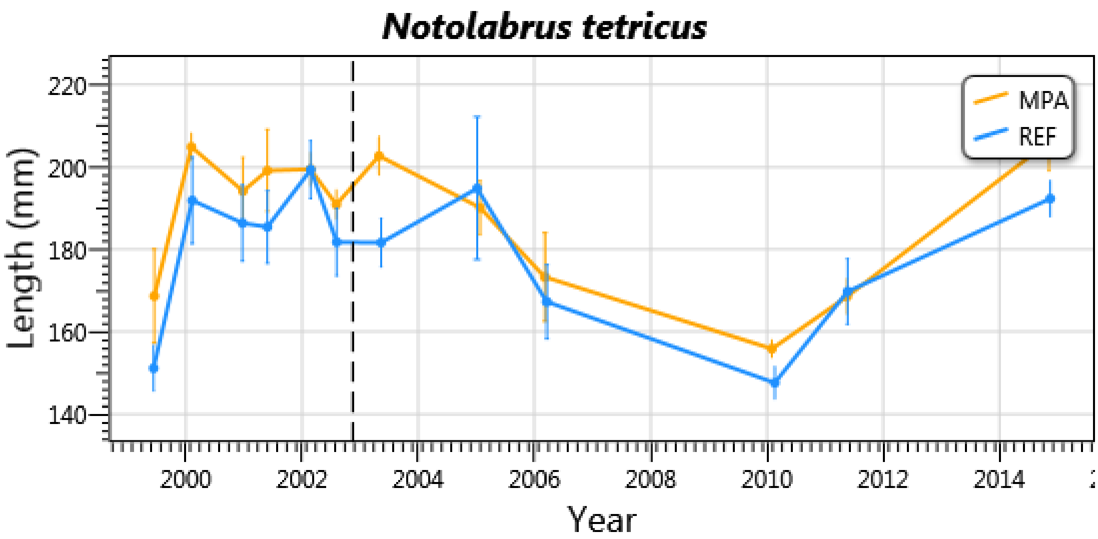

Figure 3.28. Mean size of blue-throat wrasse *Notolabrus tetricus* (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

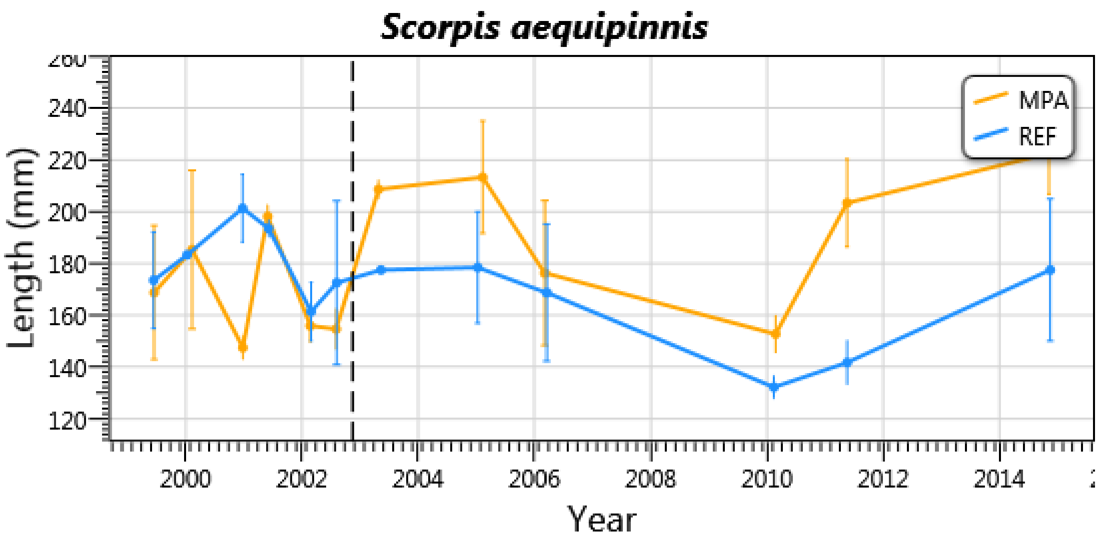

Figure 3.29. Mean size of sea sweep *Scorpis aequipinnis* (± Standard Error) inside and outside the Bunurong MNP.

3.8 Manufactured Debris

The 2014 survey was the first year to include manufactured debris. There was no debris observed.

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