

The final report for 1991 on the activities of the Laskeek Bay Conservation Society at the Limestone Island field camp.

Ancient Murrelet Activities

Four weeks of funnel monitoring ended with zero chicks on the night of June 6/7. This is a week earlier than last year. A total of 571 chicks were banded from the six funnels, which is down 36% from last year's total of 873. Odd chicks were heard through the following week and the last chick was seen on June 11/12.

Over the season a total of 340 adults were captured, of which 65 were previously banded birds. Seven bands were recovered from dead birds.

Non-breeders were seen and heard chortling in pairs in burrows and they continued to visit the colony until our departure. The last night of relatively high activity was June 11/12, when 26 adult non-breeders were caught.

In the study plot, the tunnels and nest cups of all 54 monitored burrows were explored to determine nest occupancy. Twenty-six of the 31 occupied burrows successfully fledged. One of the five unsuccessful burrows was dug up by a raccoon and three were disturbed by our activities.

On June 11, 154 burrows were investigated in the study plots on the north slope of Reef Island. Several blowdown trees from last winter's storms had destroyed 8 burrows and 7 hatchcovers had been removed - presumably by crows and ravens, since no diggings were found and no raccoons are known to be on Reef. One late incubating bird remained on a single egg, not yet starved.

Raccoons

On June 11 to 13, MOE Conservation Officers Mark West and Frank Guillon worked with Derek to eliminate the raccoons from Limestone. All three adult raccoons were sighted at different times in the intertidal at night, but only Becky was shot. Efforts to shoot the remaining two continue.

During one nighttime circuit, Gordo was seen taking a pigeon guillemot from the nesting rocks south of the cabin, and a headless carcass was found soon after. This was the first visual observation of the raccoon's interaction with seabirds and the final evidence that all four species of nesting seabirds on Limestone (ancients, cassins, pigeon

guillemots and fork tailed storm petrels) have been killed by raccoons.

On the early mornings of June 6, 7 and 8 a total of 14 fresh headless carcasses of nonbreeding ancient murrelets were found in site investigation after nighttime fixes on a raccoon.. These were collected, measured and banded and then replaced at the site in the predawn the next morning. They were then watched until removed. They were generally taken by crows and eagles and often close to dawn. Bands were later recovered in Crow Valley.

Skincuttle Inlet

The final camp of 6 people moved off George Island with the help of the Shearwater on June 7. During the three weeks, 766 adult ANMU were banded with no capture of previously banded birds. This may indicate that Laskeek Bay birds do not visit the southerly colonies, but results are probably inconclusive, since Skincuttle populations are much greater and a relatively small area was sampled. Moira Lemon directed the monitoring of 9 permanent plots, established in 1985 for ANMU and CAAU. Initial results from this work indicate a population increase on some islands, at least.

An extensive shoreline Marbled Murrelet survey located concentrations in Poole Inlet, Swan Bay and Collison Bay.

Bird and Mammal Sightings

The morning songbird chorus was slowly overtaken by the strident calls of nestling crows and sapsuckers. The Swainson's thrush was first heard on June 6 and the red-tailed hawk was seen several times. Flickers, not present on the island last year, were seen daily and a nest with three young was located.

Unusual bird sightings for Laskeek Bay included a sooty shearwater and a parasitic jaeger, seen between Skedans Rock and Low Island.

Marbled Murrelet surveys continued in June for a total of 6 inshore and 5 offshore surveys over the season. The highest numbers were in early May when groups of up to 80 were seen. Numbers declined into June as birds took up nesting duties and usually only pairs or small groups were seen.

Nine sapsucker nests were identified, marked and mapped. Hairy woodpeckers were seen but a nest site was not found. The peregrine falcons moved their eyrie from last year, and 3 nestling young were seen in the new location.

Of the three Oystercatcher nests, one had been depredated and two were still incubating three eggs each. Six BLOY nests were found on Reef, Low and South Low. Gull nests were also counted on these islands and at Kingsway Rocks.

On two more occasions orcas passed close to the cabin - a female and a calf, and a group of 2 females, a male and 2 young. This makes a total of 4 different orca groups seen over the year.

Volunteers

Mary Morris and Vincent O.K. Blewu visiting from Ghana helped with the final week of banding. With flowers blooming, Mary was inspired to begin a comprehensive plant list for Limestone, which was originally proposed as an Ecological Reserve because of its rare flora. Vincent watched for chicks at the cabin station, where the stove attempted to keep him warm in temperatures 10 degrees colder than he had ever experienced in tropical Ghana.

Penny Richardson assisted with all the plots on Reef Island, located sapsucker nests and helped to catch a 40 pound halibut. Jean-Louis Martin and Keith Moore joined us during the last week with Jean-Louis completing a list of songbirds on the island. Two inflatables, their full loads of gear and motors and 4 people jumped aboard Keiths pickup for the final ride to town on June 14.

Acknowledgements

At the end of an enriching season, where much valuable information has been gathered to help us understand and protect island habitats, we at camp extend special thanks to:

- Tucker Brown and Doug Burles for skippering the Shearwater on people and grocery runs
- Keith Moore and Charlotte Husband for the logistical support in town
- all the volunteers in town and in camp, from the Charlottes and afar who give untiring enthusiasm to the work
- all the island creatures who, without choice, share their spaces with us.

Andrea

Final note - A great year end dinner for volunteers and friends was held on Sunday, June 22, at Diane Richardson's house. Thanks Diane for a great time and great food.