



Pacific Seabird Group

Dedicated to the Study and Conservation of Pacific Seabirds and their Environment

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March, 22, 2018

Dear Sirs:

In February 2018, photographs of dead seabirds for sale as food were posted on social media in China. See Figures 1 & 2. It appeared that murrelets and loons were caught in nets and the key concern was that Japanese Murrelets (*Synthliboramphus wurmizusume*) were among the birds for sale at Lianyungang, Jiangsu, China. The event was reported to the police by an active member of the China Coastal Waterbird Census, but the photos were from the police who was still trying to catch the boatmen so they requested that the posts be deleted.

Later the police caught the boatmen, and got the GPS coordinates from the boatmen, which found the site to be closer to Korea than to China. The boatmen said they have been doing this business for 4~5 years. This bird death is by-catch which is why they were selling them at such low price--2CNY (US\$ 0.32 based on the current exchange rate on 15 March, 2018)/murrelet.

Without wanting to expose the source, China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF) got involved. CBCGDF identified the dead birds as Ancient Murrelets (*S. antiquus*) and Arctic Loons (*Gavia arctica*). These two are locally common birds close to Lianyungang, and in adjacent Shandong. They are seen regularly on winter pelagic trips, while Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*) and Yellow-billed Loon (*G. adamsii*) are much rarer. Ancient Murrelets breed on Dagong Island, Qianli Rock, and Lingshang Island, Qingdao, China (Ma 1990), and all of these birds are subject to accidental drowning in fishing nets."

Additionally, the location of the breeding colonies of Japanese Murrelets are close to the by-catch area (Fig. 3), especially the largest colony in Korea, Gugul Island is (Otsuki et al. 2017). GPS coordinates from the Japanese Murrelet bred at Biro Island, Miyazaki Prefecture, Japan also indicates that the murrelet stayed on the west coast of Korea in January 2014 too (Yamaguchi et al. 2016). So it's possible to find them as victims in this by-catch.

Birds in the sea should be managed by State Forestry Bureau, which was changed to Forestry and Steppe recently at the national conference in Beijing. Since the initial posting, there is no reported progress, in part because no one is qualified to identify the dead birds and submit the report to the police and judge. We ask that you investigate this damaging seabird by-catch. We stand ready to answer any of your questions about these rare seabirds.



Figure 1: Ancient Murrelet By-Catch



Figure 2: Dozens of Dead Murrelets and Loons

Photographs by Xiakou Police Station, Ganyu District, Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province, China. Police Station is □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark J. Rauzon".

Mark J. Rauzon
Vice-Chair for Conservation
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References:

- Otsuki, K., Carter, H. R., Yamamoto, Y. & Park, C U. 2017. Summary of breeding status for the Japanese Crested Murrelet. In: Otsuki, K., H. R. Carter, Y. Minowa, V. M. Mendenhall, M. Takeishi, S. K. Nelson, D. L. Whitworth, H Y. Nam and P N. Hébert. 2017. Status and Monitoring of Rare and Threatened Japanese Crested Murrelet. Publication of the Marine Bird Restoration Group, Fukushima-shi, Fukushima-ken, Japan.
- Ma, J. 1990. Some Information on Breeding Status of Ancient Murrelet in China, Sichuan Journal Zoology 1990 9 (4): page 36.
- N. M. Yamaguchi, T. Iida, Y. Nakamura, H. Okabe, K. Oue, T. Yamamoto & H. Higuchi. 2016. Seasonal movements of Japanese Murrelets revealed by geolocators. Ornithological Science 15: 47–54.



- : colonies of Japanese Murrelet.
- : colonies of Ancient Murrelet.
- : colonies of both Japanese Murrelet and Ancient Murrelet
- ✕ by-catch area
- *: including breeding records of Long-billed Murrelet in Dagong Island, Qianli Rock, Lingshan Island, and Niushan Island

Figure 3. By-catch area and locations of nearby murrelet colonies