

KITTLITZ'S MURRELET TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Kittlitz's Murrelet Technical Committee (KMTC) was formed in 2008 out of growing public and government concerns related to the status and conservation of this rare seabird. In 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) included the Kittlitz's Murrelet (KIMU) as a new candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The KIMU remained on the candidate list until 2013, when the USFWS announced a 12-month finding that listing the KIMU was not warranted at that time. The purpose of the KMTC is to: (1) act as a technical authority on the status, distribution, and life history of the KIMU; (2) identify, encourage, and facilitate research; (3) address conservation problems related to the KIMU; and (4) act as a liaison between research and management.

SURVEYS AND RESEARCH

In 2022, most at-sea surveys were able to resume without modifications, following limitations in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. In 2022, the USFWS (Labunski and Kaler) and Pole Star Ecological Research (Cushing) continued at-sea seabird surveys in spring, summer, and fall in the northern Gulf of Alaska (Long-term Ecological Research Project), the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas, and the central Arctic Ocean. The USFWS (Kaler) also completed summer surveys in Prince William Sound (PWS), and the USFWS (Labunski) and the Alaska SeaLife Center (Hollmen) continued their 5-year project in Kachemak Bay, the Kenai Fjords, and Resurrection Bay. Marine bird surveys were conducted in PWS in March and November by the PWS Science Center (Schaefer) and in September by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS; Arimitsu) as part of their Integrated Predator Prey surveys. The USGS (Arimitsu and Piatt) also conducted marine bird surveys and hydroacoustic transects in Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay in July 2022. The National Park Service (NPS) and the USGS conducted surveys in Kenai Fjords in April 2022 (Esler and Coletti) and the NPS conducted their annual KIMU survey in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve in July 2022.

The USFWS is working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to address incidental take of seabirds in fisheries.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ISSUES, and UPDATES

(1) The KMTC last met virtually on 22 February 2022 in conjunction with the Pacific Seabird Group meeting. Twenty-two members participated.

(2) Meeting highlights:

Robert Kaler and Liz Labunski (USFWS) provided updates on marine bird surveys offshore of the Gulf of Alaska as part of the Long-term Ecosystem Research Project. Tuula Hollmen (Alaska SeaLife Center/University of Alaska Fairbanks) and Liz Labunski discussed their project focusing on Kittlitz's and Marbled murrelets in Kachemak Bay and the Kenai Fjords. Brandt Meixell (U.S. Forest Service) described Kittlitz's Murrelet space use in Columbia Bay, Prince William Sound based on their satellite tagging study. Mayumi Arimitsu (USGS) shared results from a joint spatiotemporal model to predict seabird densities at sea, highlighting changes in Kittlitz's Murrelet distribution and abundance over time in Cook Inlet. Michelle Kissling (University of Montana) provided updates on her PhD project, including four main projects with *Brachyramphus* murrelets, as well as a plumage study with Bob Day, and a nesting study in northwest Alaska. Jamie Womble (NPS) outlined the murrelet monitoring program at Glacier Bay National Park. Steve Hoekman

(Wild Ginger Consulting) shared updates on his recent publication (2021) detailing methods for estimating uncertain species identification of *Brachyramphus* murrelet surveyed in Glacier Bay.

At the next KMTC meeting, we will meet both in person and virtually to (1) identify and summarize KIMU research projects currently underway, to (2) open lines of communication up between committee members to discuss any relevant/emerging issues in KIMU research or conservation, and to 3) discuss electing a new committee chair. I appreciate the opportunity to coordinate this committee on behalf of the Pacific Seabird Group. For more information, please contact Sarah Schoen (sschoen@usgs.gov).