

c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Alaska Fish and Wildlife Research Center, 1011 E. Tudor Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

March 21, 1988

President  
Pacific Southwest Forest and  
Range Experiment Station  
U.S. Forest Service  
1960 Addison Street  
Berkeley, California 94704

Dear Sir:

The Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) is a professional association of research and management biologists whose specialty is seabirds. We have become seriously concerned about the status of the Marbled Murrelet (Brachyramphus marmoratus), a small auk that breeds from southcentral Alaska to northern California. All populations are very small except that Alaska's is moderate in size; current estimates are 2,000 birds in California, 5,700 in Oregon, 3,000-8,000 in Washington, and 250,000 in Alaska.

We are concerned about effects of current forest harvesting practices on populations of the Marbled Murrelet. The species is unique among seabirds in that it nests on branches of large conifers in coastal regions. Evidence of nesting habitat includes a small number of nests that have been fully described, observations of juvenile birds, breeding behavior, and centers of activity. All evidence indicates that the great majority of Marbled Murrelets nest only in mature and old-growth conifers. Most remaining stands of mature and old-growth forest in all four Pacific Coast states are scheduled to be logged in the near future. Some forest planners are considering impacts on several species of birds and mammals that depend largely on these forest habitats. However, Marbled Murrelets are not being considered specifically in any forest.

More information on habitat needs and population trends of Marbled Murrelets is currently being gathered by several biologists. However, rates of logging of mature and old-growth forest make it urgent that interim management be applied to protect the species until detailed information is available.

The PSG urges the following measures:

1. Survey every stand of old-growth and mature conifers within 60 miles of the coast for Marbled Murrelet activity before scheduling harvest.
2. Identify suspected nesting sites of Marbled Murrelets.
3. Postpone logging of old-growth and mature stands where use by Marbled Murrelets is known or suspected until impacts on the species can be evaluated.
4. Address potential impacts on Marbled Murrelet populations of logging each mature or old-growth stand before leasing is allowed. Include in this evaluation the cumulative impacts of logging in all stands that are not currently protected.
5. Address Marbled Murrelet in forest management plans and environmental impact statements. Include evaluations of the potential impacts of logging on this species, monitoring of populations offshore of leased areas before and after logging, and protection of selected mature and old-growth stands where Marbled Murrelet use has been demonstrated or suspected.
6. Propose "sensitive species" status for the Marbled Murrelet under U.S. Forest Service regulations.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. The PSG will gladly assist your agency, if you wish, by providing published information, suggesting contacts with local experts, or recommending management methods.

We are looking forward to hearing from you regarding management of the Marbled Murrelet.

Sincerely,



Scott A. Hatch, Chair