

Ancient Murrelet season wraps up and Black Oystercatcher season is in full swing!

Ancient Murrelets

We have completed another season of Ancient Murrelet monitoring work. The last chick was weighed and sent on its way in Cabin Cove on June 2. Monitoring ended on June 4, after two nights with no chicks captured in the cabin funnels. We left the funnels set up for another week to see if we could capture any photos of late chicks using our infrared wildlife cameras, but not more chicks showed up. The total number of chicks caught and weighed in the Cabin Cove funnels this season was 112. This is fewer than last year (136), but comparable to 2012 (110) and 2011 (106). We also monitored the one remaining North Cove funnel, number 4, again this year using an infrared camera. While last year we saw 41 chicks depart this funnel, this year's total was drastically lower, with only 10 Chicks heading to the ocean. The North Cove colony area was heavily impacted by the 2010 blowdown and it appears that the birds breeding in that area are relocating elsewhere.



Blowdown area on East Limestone Island



Ancient Murrelet eggs

In other murrelet news, we went to Reef Island to check up on 25 burrows where the Canadian Wildlife Service & LBCS deployed geolocators at the end of April. We found evidence of hatched eggs at 23 of the 25 burrows – a good sign as breeders tend to return to burrows where they successfully hatched chicks. When the devices are recovered next season they will have valuable information on where Ancient Murrelets spend the rest of the year...something that we know very little about. One of the birds that received a geocator was banded as a chick on Limestone Island (F4 North Cove) in 2002...An unexpected and interesting find!

Donations are much appreciated !

They can easily be made through our website www.laskeekbay.org

Black Oystercatchers

We completed the first of two Gwaii Haanas surveys for Black Oystercatchers last week. We were again lucky enough to have perfect weather for the trip. The survey involves monitoring territories and surveying the shoreline of many of the small islands around Lyell Island and in Juan Perez sound.



BLOY crew at work on Low Island

This year we stopped in at 120 breeding territories and checked to see how many eggs or chicks were present. At this time of year, as in the past we found mainly eggs, but did see 11 young chicks. Most territories are ones that have been identified in the past on other surveys, but each year there are new ones found. This year we found 6 new territories, which would either belong to birds that have moved, or to new breeders. Oystercatchers only begin breeding once they are 4-5 years old, and will generally return to the same territory year after year.

After completing the Gwaii Haanas BLOY survey, we have spent the past week surveying Laskeek Bay. We have found both eggs and chicks, but our very own ELI-2 territory has the oldest one found yet! This chick is already running around with its parents in the intertidal, and was big enough that we were able to band it on Wednesday. During a shoreline survey we came across a young BLOY that we had banded last year with our new alpha-numeric field readable bands, which is exciting as only 6 chicks were banded last year! It was foraging in the intertidal with a group of other young non-breeders. We were able to look up the band combination (A3) and determine that it was banded on nearby Kingsway Rock.



Oystercatcher banded last season as a chick

Visitors and Volunteers

We had a tour group from the Passing Cloud visit the island this week on their return trip from Gwaii Haanas. They came ashore for a walk and interpretive tour explaining our various monitoring programs.

Thanks to our hard working volunteers from the past two weeks: Maggie Stronge, Jesse Ashwell, Ellen Perkins, Pat McAllister and Margret Mackenzie. Also thanks to our Intern Emilee Chamberland, who has been with us since camp start-up and is now heading back to university in Halifax, and to Ellen Perkins our enthusiastic assistant biologist for weeks 2-4. Our second student intern, Sonya Pastran, arrived this past week and will be finishing up the season with us.



Margaret and Sonya sorting BLOY prey remains collected in Laskeek Bay

Invasive Mammal Monitoring



For the past 4 years we have been monitoring for raccoons on ELI using infrared cameras and bait in hopes that any raccoons swimming across from Louise Island will be photographed and their presence on island will be known. It is important to keep raccoons off the island because they cause great damage when they dig up burrows and kill breeding birds. Ground nesting seabirds such as Ancient Murrelets are especially susceptible to this introduced threat. This year, with the support of Bird Studies Canada, camera monitoring for raccoons, rats and other introduced predators has been expanded to include the other islands in the Laskeek Bay Important Bird Area. On Haswell island, where raccoons are known to be present, our camera has already caught many visits by raccoons, a good indication of the effectiveness of the technique.

A New Plant for Laskeek Bay... and East Limestone Island

Pat and Margaret, seasoned naturalists, discovered a small patch of Northern Starflower *Trientalis arctica* blooming in North Cove. On checking the plant list we found that it has not been recorded on any of the 10 islands in Laskeek Bay where extensive plant surveys have been carried out! Margaret also found Cooley's Hedge-Nettle *Stachys cooleyae* growing in crow valley. While this species is abundant on Reef Island, it is the first documented record for East Limestone Island.



Northern Starflower

Trivia Question:



What do you see in the mystery photo?

Answer to previous trivia:

Why might Northern Flickers and other songbirds living in high latitudes lay more eggs than those in lower latitudes?

Clutch size in many bird species tends to increase at higher latitudes because food resources tend to be more abundant due to the spring flush of vegetation and insects. Longer days at high latitudes in the spring also allow birds, which forage mainly in the day, to provide food for a greater number of chicks.

Join us this summer

@ Skidegate Days (July 19) & Edge of the World Music Festival (Aug 8-10)

Learn more about our research programs and volunteer opportunities.
We'll have games, trivia, t-shirts and cards for sale!