



Project Limestone educational program wraps up

Log #2 May 16-30: The month of May has flown by on Limestone – Ancient Murrelet nightly chick departures are well underway, Project Limestone has wrapped up for the season and the field staff has just found the first Black Oystercatcher nests with eggs.

Ancient Murrelets: Since May 12th chicks have been departing burrows on their amazing journey to sea. To date, 106 chicks passed through the funnels (as of the night of May 27th) which is a low compared to previous years with the exception of 1999 and 2007. The verdict for this year's chick numbers is still up in the air – it really depends on the length of the season and how the numbers are distributed across nights, stay tuned...

We know departing chicks face a good deal of adversity in the early days, including the threat of predators that prey on chicks at land and sea. An interesting report from the s/v Maple Leaf highlights this fact – the story goes that careful examination of a freshly caught halibut's stomach revealed the remnants of an Ancient Murrelet chick!

Volunteers: Over the past two weeks we have hosted an exceptional crew of volunteers, consisting of three LBCS directors: Betsy Cardell, Maggie Stronge and Keith Moore. Your assistance has been much appreciated, thank you.

Project Limestone: During the busy chick period local schools visit Limestone to learn about the island's ecology and to share in the amazing Ancient Murrelet experience. LBCS would like to thank groups from the GM Dawson, (Masset), Living and Learning School (QCC), Queen Charlotte Secondary (QCC), and ALM (Sandspit) for assisting with night chick capture work.

Project Limestone has been going since 1991 and this year some of the students were boasting expert status with 8 years participation! It really is amazing to share this place with young people and to think about how this program has affected the lives of so many students over the years. At this time our thoughts go out to one of the LBCS former board members who was integral to making this program come to fruition, Charlotte Tarver. Charlotte suffered a stroke and just recently relocated to Vancouver to receive treatment. We are thinking of Charlotte and wishing her well from Laskeek Bay.

Visitors: Other visitors to Limestone included two groups from the s/v Island Roamer.

Visit to Kingsway Rock: The field crew paid an early visit to Kingsway Rk.'s Glaucous-winged Gull colony to determine the breeding status of nesting birds. Many gulls were loafing on the island but no nests have been established so far. Black Oystercatcher's however, have already established nests and three pairs are busy incubating eggs at this site.

Wildlife trees: The number of active cavity nesters is climbing and so far we have counted seven nests occupied by Red-breasted Sapsuckers and two by Hairy Woodpeckers. It's still early in the season and no doubt, there are a handful of active trees waiting to be discovered.

Near Shore Surveys: The first near shore survey was done May 19th. Harlequin and Long-tailed Ducks, Black and White-winged Scoters, Herring Gulls and Common Murres were spotted. Nearshore surveys comprise a series of transects laid out within the Laskeek Bay area and take about six hours to complete. During these trips marine mammal observations are recorded including whales, seals and sea lions – the Reef Island haul-out kept us busy counting 537 Steller's sea lions. Humpbacks abound once again this year. In the past two weeks we have noted daily counts of at least 10 whales visible from the cabin area. Jen and Keith counted 63 Humpbacks from the Lookout during a sea watch on May 28. On calmer days whales tail slapping and vocalizing can be heard from the tents. That's all for now from Limestone Island. More updates will follow in two weeks time.



Students from Queen Charlotte secondary enjoy the view from Lookout Point at Limestone Island. (Photo date incorrect)



LBCS board directors, Betsy Cardell, left and Maggie Stronge assist field staff with a boat survey. Shown in the middle is Jake Pattison, ELI's assistant biologist.