

It's been a busy two weeks with school groups, visitors, and chicks...



Ancient Murrelet Chick coming down North Cove funnel

Ancient Murrelets

Ancient Murrelet chicks are still arriving every night, with staff and volunteers on Limestone Island counting and weighing chicks as they make their way to the ocean. We have had many clear nights with bright moonlight, giving everyone a good view of the chicks as they paddle away across the tide pool in front of camp. Ancient Murrelets use light to help them navigate which means we are not able to keep lights on when we release chicks. The moonlight made for special viewing of the chicks running down the beach and swimming out to sea to meet up with their parents.

As of May 29th there have been a total of 129 chicks at the four funnels in Cabin Cove. Peak night was May 21st with 15 chicks, consistent with the average peak night of chick departures.

We are continuing to monitor the North Cove ANMU colony with two small funnels and cameras. We have captured photos of 41 chicks, indicating that even though the whole area had extensive blow-down the birds are still nesting there—an unexpected and exciting surprise.

Project Limestone

Project Limestone, which brings local school groups from all parts of Haida Gwaii to Limestone Island, was back up and running this year after students were unable to come last year. We were happy to have visits from four groups this year. The Juniors and Seniors came from Queen Charlotte Secondary School. Due to continued closure of Vertical Point, the usual camping spot, they camped across from West Limestone on Louise Island. They paddled Kayaks to ELI in the evening where we met them on the beach, showed them the island, and then assisted in the ANMU night work until 2:30am.



Living @& Learning students learn about wildlife trees

The Living and Learning School (Queen Charlotte) and Tidal Elements (Tow Hill/Masset) each stayed for one day and night on the island with us, where we showed them Lookout Point with Cassin's Auklet and Pigeon Guillemot nest boxes, showed them how to find and monitor wildlife trees, and taught them all about seabirds and the natural history of Limestone Island. They then stayed up with us to help with the night work. Everyone was lucky enough to see at least one chick.

Wildlife Trees and Other Birds

We are continuing to scour the island for cavity nesting birds every chance we get. We have many numbered trees that we monitor through our wildlife tree monitoring program, and any new trees we find with nests get added to the list. This year we are monitoring 37 trees that have been active in the past, and we have already added 6 new trees, not including the Raven nest which has been relocated once again. We have a total of 16 cavity nesters that we are watching. We keep a close eye on them at this time of year to determine the date when the chicks fledge. Many trees contain Red-breasted Sapsucker nests, and we are starting to hear very loud peeping from the chicks as they grow bigger. We have not re-sighted the Saw-whet Owl since it was spotted earlier this month.



Weighing an Ancient Murrelet Chick



Tidal Elements students heading home

We have had enough calm weather recently to complete several sea surveys. We travel by boat along pre-determined transects counting and recording birds along the way. We have had a few sightings of less common birds, including a large group of Whimbrels flying north, and Red-necked Phalaropes feeding in amongst large flocks of Sooty Shearwaters. There must have been a lot of good food out in Hecate Strait the day we were there; along with the Shearwaters it attracted large groups of up to 25 Cassin's Auklets, and at least 8 humpback whales. We even got a good look at an ANMU family, two parents and two chicks, swimming out to sea from one of the colonies in Laskeek Bay.

Visitors and Volunteers

We have had two visits from the sailboat the Island Roamer, and one visit from the Maple Leaf, who have stopped by to learn about the island on their way into Gwaii Haanas. We showed the groups around the island, explained our various monitoring programs, and told them about camp life. We had many keen birders who were excited to see Red-Breasted Sapsuckers, Pacific Wrens and Golden-crowned Kinglets, and they even caught a glimpse of a Brown Creeper coming out of its nest cavity. Our staff our happy to give interpretive tours of Limestone throughout the season – please contact our office in Queen Charlotte if you are interested.

Thanks to our volunteers these past two weeks: Lis Holzer (Denmark), Barrett Johnson (Tow Hill), and Andy Sirch (Germany).

Trivia: What makes Phalaropes unusual shorebirds?

Answer to last trivia: How many hours after hatching until the Ancient Murrelet chick gets to eat its first meal? Ancient Murrelet chicks hatch in burrows on land and must get to the ocean and swim far off shore before they are fed by their parents. They have a maximum of three days to get to the ocean before they are too weak, where they then then swim for up to 8 hours. That's a long time before their first meal!



**As a charitable organization we rely entirely on donations from our community and grants to run our conservation programs. Please consider making a donation to Laskeek Bay Conservation Society at Box 867, QC. BC. VoT 1So.*

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