



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Candidate Conservation in Southeast Alaska

In southeast Alaska, only one species, the Kittlitz's Murrelet (*Brachyramphus brevirostris*), for which U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has management authority, is listed as a candidate under the Endangered Species Act. However, the naturally fragmented landscape of the Alexander Archipelago in southeast Alaska has resulted in numerous endemic species and isolated populations. Regional (e.g., forest management) and global (e.g., climate change) threats have raised concern for many of the island endemic and rare species of southeast Alaska. Therefore, in addition to preparing for a Kittlitz's Murrelet listing proposal, the focus of the Candidate Conservation Program in southeast Alaska is to evaluate at-risk species and to work with partners to conserve these species and their habitats.

Kittlitz's Murrelet

The Kittlitz's Murrelet is a small alcid endemic to coastal Alaska and eastern Russia. The current global population estimate is less than 20,000 birds, which is smaller than the world estimates of Spectacled and Steller's Eiders, and is similar to Polar Bear. The majority (roughly 90%) of the global population occurs in Alaska where declines of up to 18% per year have been documented. If the current rate of decline continues,



Photo by S. Lewis /ADFG

Queen Charlotte Goshawk nestlings on Prince of Wales Island, southeast Alaska, June 1999.

Kittlitz's Murrelets may be extirpated in some core areas of its range as early as 2030. Despite alarming declines, restricted distribution, and small global population, this species does not benefit from federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. With roughly 50% of the Alaska population of Kittlitz's Murrelets occurring in southeast Alaska, this species is a major focus of our conservation efforts in this region (see additional factsheet).

Island Endemics

Taxonomic classifications and distribution of many of southeast Alaska's island endemics,

particularly small mammals, are complex and unknown. With limited dispersal potential among islands, small mammals represent the majority of endemic species in southeast Alaska. Many state and federal agencies and universities are cooperating on field and laboratory efforts to inventory small mammals across the archipelago. These studies and collections are ongoing, as well as evaluating the status of especially rare and island endemic species that may be in need of immediate conservation action.

The Prince of Wales Spruce Grouse (*Falci pennis canadensis*)



Photo by N. Hatch/USFWS

The Western Toad has presumably disappeared from areas in southeast Alaska. Declines have been correlated with disease, urban expansion, and habitat degradation due to changes in climate.

isleibi) is limited to a few islands in southern southeast Alaska. Insufficient information is available to determine population status for this species. Concerns and potential threats to population persistence include hunting pressure, road mortality, barriers to dispersal, and forest management. In cooperation with state and federal agencies and universities, several of the highest priority information needs for the Prince of Wales Spruce Grouse have been addressed in recent years. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to formally assess the status of this species in FY2009-2010 when final data collection and reporting are completed.

Isolated populations of Pacific Marten (*Martes caurina*) occur on two islands in southeast Alaska where populations total roughly 2,000 individuals. On Admiralty Island, population trend is likely stable because most of the island is designated as a national monument. However, the small

population on Kuiu Island (<300 individuals) has most likely declined as a result of timber harvesting and the introduction of *M. americana*, which is known to interbreed with *M. caurina*. It's unknown whether *M. caurina* has been disproportionately affected by timber harvesting or trapping, or whether this species is being out-competed by *M. americana* for important resources (e.g., habitat, prey). Ongoing studies are providing important information necessary to evaluate the status of this species.

In addition to those described above, a few endemic species have been the center of major conservation concern within the last 20 years and are conservation-dependent. These include the Queen Charlotte Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis laingi*; see additional factsheet), Price of Wales Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus griseifrons*) and the Alexander Archipelago Wolf (*Canus lupus ligoni*).

Other At-Risk Species

Several species that occur in southeast Alaska are in decline or considered at-risk in adjacent regions, but, in most cases, limited information exists to evaluate their status in southeast Alaska. These species include the Western Toad (*Bufo boreas*), Keen's Bat (*Myotis keenii*), Western Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra richardsoni*), Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*), and Marbled Murrelet (*B. marmoratus*). A recent status review of the Marbled Murrelet in Alaska, suggests an overall population decline of about 70% in the last 25 years. Roughly 45% of the global population of this species occurs in southeast Alaska. Fortunately, most conservation efforts for the Kittlitz's Murrelet benefit the Marbled Murrelet.

Workload Prioritization

Although the Kittlitz's Murrelet is likely to remain the focus of the Candidate Conservation Program until recovery efforts are underway, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will host a 1-day workshop in FY2009 to identify and prioritize at-risk species in need of attention in southeast Alaska. From this effort, we will produce a document outlining guidance for the Candidate Conservation Program in southeast Alaska for the next five years.

For More Information

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Fisheries and Ecological Services
3000 Vintage Blvd., Suite 201
Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 780-1160
www.alaska.fws.gov/
August, 2008