

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Washington Fish and Wildlife Office  
510 Desmond Drive  
Lacey, WA 98503  
Phone: 360/753-9440

# News Release



October 4, 2011

Contact: Doug Zimmer, 360-753-4370

11-147

## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Revision of Marbled Murrelet Critical Habitat**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced a revision of critical habitat for the marbled murrelet, a threatened species protected under the Endangered Species Act. The revision removes approximately 189,671 acres of forest land in northern California and southern Oregon from the 3,887,800-acre 1996 critical habitat designation. Approximately 95 percent of the 1996 designation remains in place. The marbled murrelet is a small seabird that spends most of its time in the marine environment and nests in forests along the Pacific Coast.

The Service is also finalizing a taxonomic revision of the scientific name of the marbled murrelet from *Brachyramphus marmoratus marmoratus* to *Brachyramphus marmoratus* to reflect a change in the recognition of the North American marbled murrelet as a separate species from the Asiatic marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus perdix*). The two were previously classified as sub-species.

Intensive surveys conducted since 1997 have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the species' biological needs and the specific areas that are essential for the recovery of the species. Accordingly, we have determined that the areas being removed are not essential to the conservation of the species and do not meet the definition of critical habitat. The habitat in these areas does not contain elements of the physical or biological features in an appropriate quantity and spatial arrangement that are essential for the conservation of the species.

Critical habitat is a term in the Endangered Species Act that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection. Designation as critical habitat does not affect land ownership, establish a refuge or

preserve and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits.

Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

The revision of critical habitat was published in today's Federal Register. The final rule, maps and descriptions of the areas proposed for critical habitat can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/wafwo/>.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov). Connect with our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/usfws](http://www.facebook.com/usfws), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfwshq](http://www.twitter.com/usfwshq), watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>*

**-- FWS --**