

## Marine Birds – Ancient Murrelet Colonies

### description

The Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) is a black, grey and white marine bird with a black head, a pale bill and white belly. Ancient Murrelets nest in small colonies located on islands or in coastal forests, mostly in the northern Pacific. They place their nests at the bases of large trees in burrows under the roots, or under grass tussocks. British Columbia hosts approximately 50% of the world breeding population of Ancient Murrelets.

This atlas page depicts active and historic Ancient Murrelet colonies in terms of their relative importance, a value that corresponds to the number of “nest pairs” estimated at any one site during the most recent survey year. This value was compared to the total BC population, which was determined by summing the estimated number of individuals at all colonies during the most recent survey year. Using these values, relative importance was determined as follows:

- High: colony has >5% of the species’ total BC population.
- Moderate: colony has 1-5% of the species’ total BC population.
- Low: colony has <1% of the species’ total BC population.

These categories correspond with the 1% threshold that has been applied at global and national levels by Bird Studies Canada (and other groups around the world) to identify Important Bird Areas.

Sites have been included regardless of whether breeding had been previously confirmed at a particular site. Attributes for each site also include the date that breeding was last confirmed and the most recent survey results. Colony locations were buffered to represent some of the marine habitat used by these birds adjacent to each colony, based on the distances employed in the creation of the Canadian Wildlife Service’s Marine Bird Areas of Interest dataset.



PHOTO: RYAN MERRILL

### data sources

- Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service) – British Columbia Seabird Colony Inventory
- Parks Canada – Nesting Seabird Colonies

### data resolution

- 1:250,000 (some points have been adjusted to match the 1:20,000 TRIM coastline)

### data collected

- 1977-2006 (years breeding was confirmed)

### date compiled

- 2008

### reviewers

- Harry Carter, Consultant
- Peter Davidson, Bird Studies Canada
- Representatives from Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service

### reviewer comments

- A colony should be added on the Moore Islands as a nest was found there, though the population was not estimated (Campbell et al. 1990).
- Triangle Island is a historic colony for Ancient Murrelets that may have been extirpated by introduced mammals (Carter and Sealy. 2008).
- Very recent evidence suggests one or more breeding colonies may exist along the west coast of Vancouver Island.

### caveats of use

- Gaps in the extent of this feature should not be inferred to be an absence of the species, but rather an absence in survey effort.
- Buffer distances do not represent the entire foraging area of the birds.
- Sites of low relative importance may include extirpated sites or sites where the most recent survey did not obtain a count for breeding birds. Not all colonies are surveyed each year and colonies that were active in the past may or may not still support breeding populations. Therefore, these sites are still deemed important by the experts.
- Possible breeding sites are sites where breeding is suspected but has not been confirmed or counted. This information is only available for the Parks Canada dataset for Haida Gwaii.
- Recommended date of expiry for use of these data in a marine planning context: None provided.

### map, feature data and metadata access

- Visit [www.bcmca.ca/data](http://www.bcmca.ca/data) for more information.

### references

- Campbell, R. W., N. K. Dawe, I. McTaggart-Cowan, J. M. Cooper, G. W. Kaiser and M. C. E. McNall. *The Birds of British Columbia*. Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria. 1990
- Carter, Harry R., and Spencer G. Sealy. *Ancient Murrelets breeding at Triangle Island, British Columbia, in 1949*. *Wildlife Afield* 5. 2008. 201-211.
- Species description contains material from:
- B.C. Conservation Data Centre. *Species Summary: Synthliboramphus antiquus*. BC Ministry of Environment (MoE) 2010. 21 Sep. 2010 <http://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/eswp/>
- Seattle Audubon Society. *BirdWeb – Seattle Audubon’s Guide to the Birds of Washington*. Revised 2008. [www.seattleaudubon.org/birdweb](http://www.seattleaudubon.org/birdweb)



**BCMCA Atlas**  
**Marine Birds**  
**Ancient Murrelet Colonies**

**Legend**

**Relative Importance**

(range in nest pairs)

- High (13,739-70,300)
- Moderate (2,748-13,738)
- Low (6-2,747)
- Historic/Possible Sites

Notes:  
 - Polygons of high relative importance have been drawn last and may overlap polygons of lesser importance.  
 - Colonies have been buffered by 5 kilometres.

**Data Sources:**

Environment Canada  
 (Canadian Wildlife Service),  
 Parks Canada

**Base Data:**

ESRI Base Data, GeoBase, GeoBC,  
 NOAA, Natural Resources Canada,  
 USGS, Washington State Government

**Thematic Data:**

For more information on data sources  
 and methods please refer to the  
 facing page to this map

**Projection:** BC Albers NAD83

0 25 50 75 100 125 150

Kilometres

0 25 50 75

Nautical Miles

1:4,250,000 \*

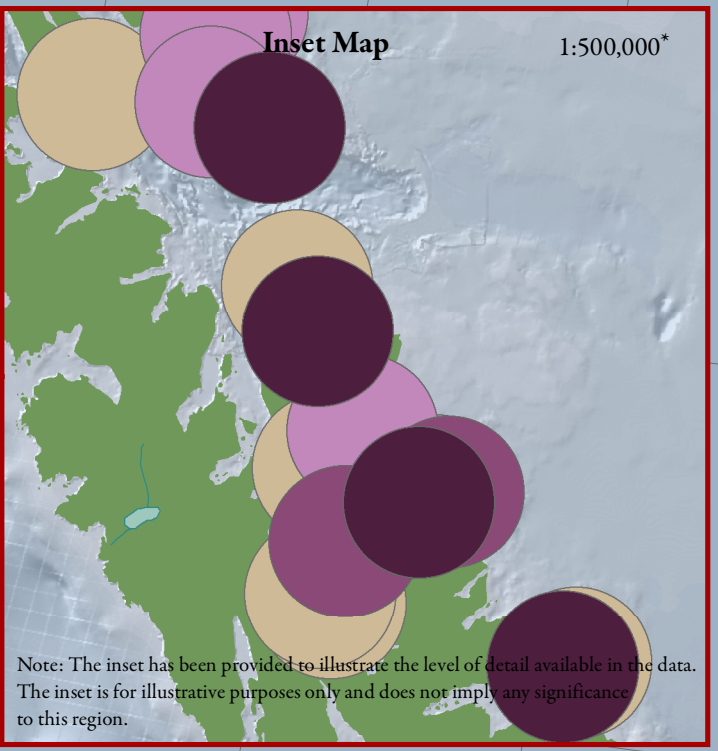
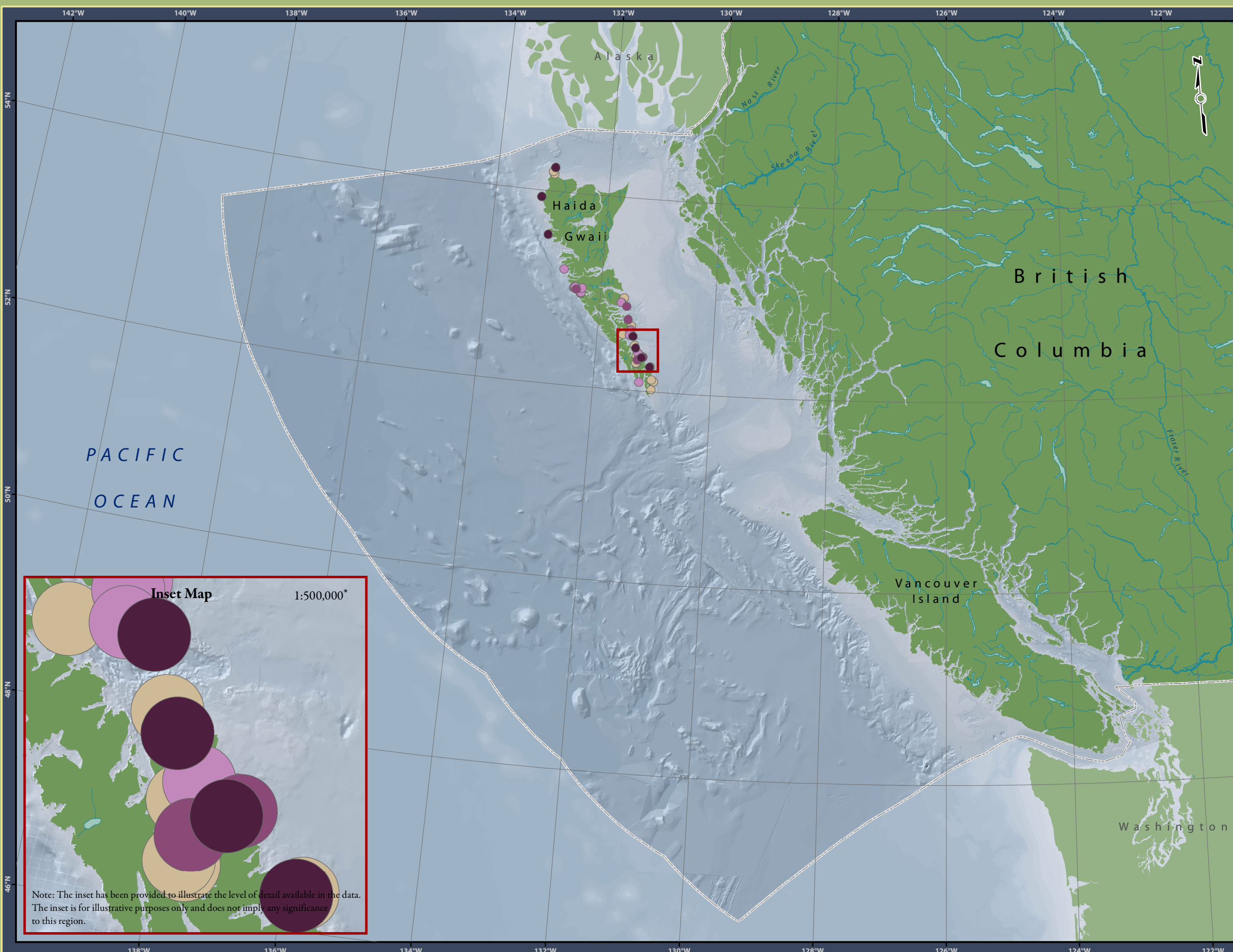
\* Written scales are approximate and  
 are based on a 11 x 17 inch paper size.

Prepared for:



Map template by Caslys Consulting Ltd.

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Note: The inset has been provided to illustrate the level of detail available in the data. The inset is for illustrative purposes only and does not imply any significance to this region.