

Common Murre Mortality Fact Sheet

Who

Common Murres, *Uria aalge*, are a medium-sized fish eating seabird that breed in large colonies on sea cliffs throughout the northern hemisphere. Resembling penguins, with an upright posture and black and white coloration, Common Murres are long-lived, up to 2 decades, and produce one egg per year. The western North American population is 4-8 million birds.

On the Pacific Coast of North America, Common Murres breed from Monterey County, California to Cape Lisburne, Alaska. Closer to the Salish Sea, murres breed on islands off the Washington and Oregon coasts. Although murres can be seen throughout the year in the Salish Sea, there is an annual influx of murres into the Salish Sea in June and July, thought to be driven by the migration of birds from Washington and Oregon following the breeding season.

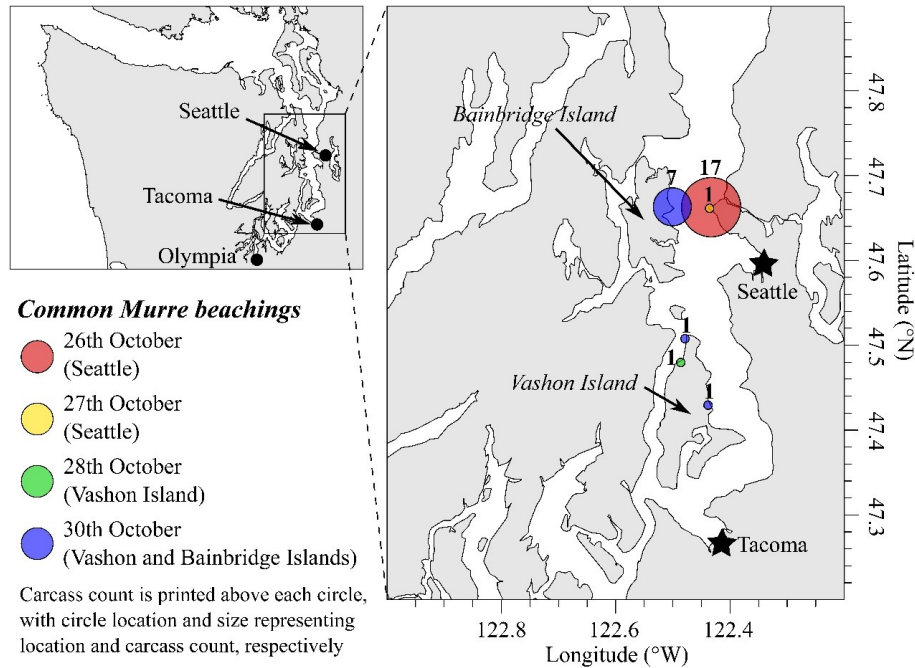
What, Where and How Many:

On October 26, 2017, the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) at the University of Washington received several reports of bird carcasses at Discovery Park from members of the public.

Over several days, other reports of murres on the beach came from the public for Vashon Island and Bainbridge Island.

Seabird strandings are uncommon in Puget Sound, with an average of 1 bird encountered per 10km of beach each month. Common Murres beachings, in particular, are very rare, with carcasses encountered only once every 100km on average.

Observations of Common Murre beachings in Puget Sound (October 2017)



Beached common Murres in Central Puget Sound, October 2017. Locations and dates are shown on the map.

What we are doing:

Following the initial report, COASST staff visited Discovery Park on October 26th & 27th to identify and collect carcasses along the shoreline.

COASST staff also alerted program participants and agency officials within the region. Carcasses from Discovery Park were collected by COASST staff, and sent to the Slater Museum of Natural History and National Wildlife Health Center (USGS) for an evaluation of cause of death.

Cause of death:

Necropsy results from the National Wildlife Health Center indicate traumatic injuries that are consistent with suspect entrapment in a gill net. No other significant abnormalities were present.

What You Can Do:

- Report dead or moribund bird sightings to COASST at coasst@u.washington.edu
Please include date, time, number, species and condition of birds (dead, moribund, fresh, decayed), and photographs along an approximate length of beach.
- Consider participating in regular monthly surveys through COASST. Visit www.coasst.org to learn more and find out about upcoming trainings in your area.
- Please don't touch or collect sick or dead birds. Birds tagged with colored zip-ties are part of ongoing monitoring, and have already been reported.
- Report dead or moribund marine mammals to the West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network at

www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/protected_species/marine_mammals/washington_gismap_2017.pdf

Authors:

Hillary Burgess and Tim Jones, COASST program & Nathalie Hamel, Puget Sound Partnership.

Contact information: coast@uw.edu, or [206.221.6893](tel:206.221.6893)