

From Forest's Edge to the Edge of Extinction

Sheltered in a soft nest of moss and ferns, a marbled murrelet chick waits silently atop a massive redwood branch high above the forest floor. Its parents spend their day at sea, diving for small fish, returning at dusk to feed their solitary offspring. Like the fog that shrouds the forest, a murrelet's life is connected to both forest and sea.

Nearby, a Steller's jay hops along the forest floor scavenging for any morsel of food. Aggressive and incredibly intelligent—they can remember hundreds of different food locations—jays and their fellow corvids (ravens and crows) flourish at the ecologically-rich edges of the redwood forest. The edges of this once unbroken forest have

increased a hundred-fold in a hundred years. Highways, logging, cities, campgrounds, and picnic areas open broad boulevards into the heart of the redwood forest. Thus exposed, murrelet chicks and eggs make easy meals for crafty corvids. As the forest edge expands, the marbled murrelet lives today on the edge of extinction.



The marbled murrelet is the only seabird that nests in the old-growth conifer forest. They fly at 60-98 miles per hour in search of a limb that's like an airstrip, wide enough to land. The limb must also have enough downy moss and ferns for a ready-made nest. The fledgling has one chance to fly to the sea, whether the nest is two or thirty miles into the forest. Top to bottom: Murrelet egg (photo by Thomas Hamer/Vireo), murrelet chick, adult murrelet at sea (photo by Rick and Nora Bowers/Vireo).

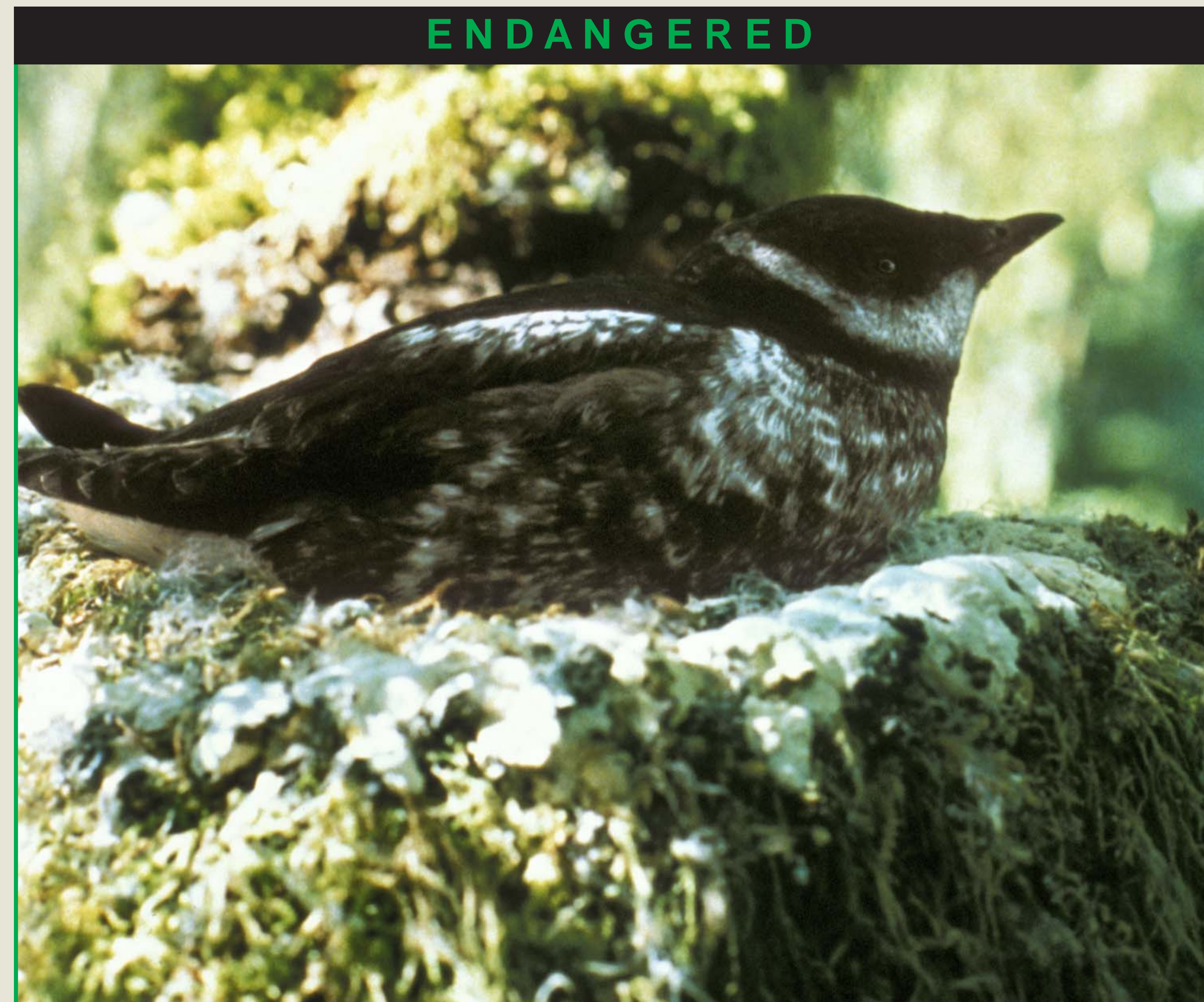


Photo by Thomas Hamer/Vireo



Top to bottom: Raven, Steller's jay, and crow. These birds circle high above the trees cruising sites where they have found food before, most often places where humans left food scraps. During flight, they may see movement in a murrelet nest. That spells doom for the egg or chick.

An increase in food sources means more cunning corvids on the look out for tasty tidbits—and more murrelets facing peril. **You can help!** Please keep campsites, picnic areas, and trails free of food snacks. Please do not feed any birds. Raven/crow photos by Steven Dowlan.