

**FIRST RECORD OF ANCIENT MURRELET
(*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) FOR FLORIDA**

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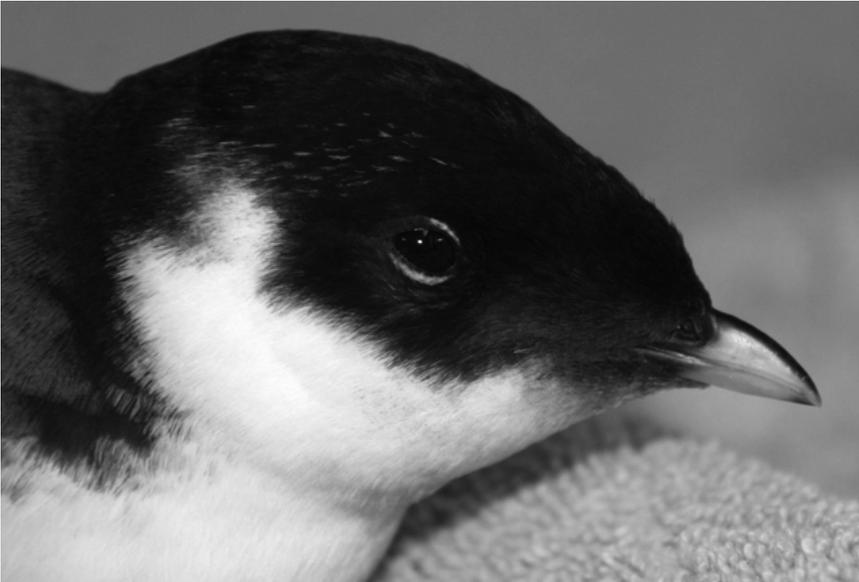
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The core range of the Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*), a small alcid, encompasses the frigid waters of the north Pacific Ocean. In North America, it breeds coastally from the Aleutian Islands in western Alaska south to British Columbia; in eastern Asia it breeds from the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia south to northern Japan (AOU 1998). The Ancient Murrelet winters regularly offshore throughout its breeding range and south to central California and southern Japan and Taiwan. Curiously given this localized distribution, the species occurs sporadically in interior North America, with records east to the Great Lakes region, southern Quebec, and Massachusetts, and south to southeastern California, Nevada, Utah, northern New Mexico, central Colorado, Nebraska, Louisiana, central Illinois, northwestern Indiana, northern Ohio and Pennsylvania, with one record from the British Isles (Munyer 1965, AOU 1998, Petersen 1998). Although there are plenty of far-flung records, there had been none from the Atlantic Coast of North America south of New England, and the species did not seem to be a likely vagrant to Florida.

On 15 December 2009, the staff of the wildlife rehabilitation hospital at the Marine Science Center, in Ponce Inlet, Florida, received a live small alcid and tentatively identified it as an Ancient Murrelet. They quickly phoned the director of the center (MB) who confirmed the identification. The bird had been found by Steven Bell and John Brooks entangled in algae at the foot of the boat ramp in Ponce Inlet, only 100 m from the Center's hospital. The bird did not survive the night, and the specimen was sent to AWK at the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH), where he prepared a round skin, partial skeleton, and spread wing (UF 47280). This record has been accepted by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee (FOSRC #2010-788), and constitutes the first record and specimen for Florida.

The specimen and photographs of the live bird show the typical round head, thick short neck, round body, short rounded wings, webbed



Figures 1 and 2. Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) found 15 December 2009 at Ponce Inlet, Volusia County, Florida. First state record.

feet, and black upperparts and white underparts of an alcid. The black-and-white plumage, small size, and unmarked dark scapulars indicate the genus *Synthliboramphus*. Within this genus, only the Ancient Murrelet in basic plumage shows a plain black crown, face, and neck con-

trasting with a gray back. Japanese Murrelet (*S. wumizusume*), the sister species of Ancient (AOU 1998), is similar, but shows a broad white supercilium in all plumages. Craveri's Murrelet (*S. craveri*) and Xantus's Murrelet (*S. hypoleucus*) have backs that are black like the crown; both these species also have black bills, while the bills of Japanese Murrelet and Ancient Murrelet are paler.

The specimen was sexed as a male by examination of the gonads (testes 3×1 mm). The bird was aged as a hatch-year by the restricted amount of black in the throat (Pyle 2008) and the presence of the bursa of Fabricius (9×4 mm), found only in young birds. The specimen was emaciated (weight at death = 111.6 g); the average weight of nonbreeders ($N = 924$) is 184.6 g (Gaston 1994). The very low weight indicates that this bird may have been present in the area for some time before washing ashore.

The Ancient Murrelet is the second species of north Pacific alcid to be found in Florida. The Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*) has been recorded five times in the state (Bowman and Greenlaw 2006). That species, with a restricted breeding distribution in eastern Asia, also is prone to wandering inland to continental North America. The reasons why these two alcid species, both short-distance migrants with restricted North Pacific distributions, are prone to wandering 1000s of km away from their core distributions remain unknown. Severe Pacific Coast storms were linked with inland records of the Ancient Murrelet (Munyer 1965), but such storms do not seem plausible for driving a bird to fly all the way to Florida. Nonetheless, the Pacific Northwest was "slammed by a powerful storm" with heavy rain and wind gusts on 19 November 2009 (NOAA 2009).

Florida was also visited by two Atlantic alcid species during the 2009-2010 winter, which is curious given that members of this family seldom reach the state. Individual Atlantic Puffins (*Fratercula arctica*) were found beached at the Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge (Martin County) on 29 January 2010 (specimen to FLMNH; UF 47309) and at Patrick Air Force Base, Brevard County, on 4 February 2010 (specimen to University of Central Florida); there are only two previous records for the state (Bowman and Greenlaw 2006). And on 2 February 2010, a Razorbill (*Alca torda*) was found dead at Cocoa Beach, Brevard County (specimen to FLMNH; UF 47787). There are 12 previous records of Razorbill for Florida (Kratler 2010).

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