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# AN INLAND NEST RECORD FOR THE KITTLITZ'S MURRELET

EDWARD C. MURPHY
DAVID G. ROSENEAU
AND
PETER M. BENTE

The 14 nesting records of the Kittlitz's Murrelet (*Brachyramphus brevirostris*) in Alaska were summarized by Day, Oakley, and Barnard (Condor 85:265–273, 1983). Here we give the details of a nest record that they reported as the "Chukchi Sea" record. On 28 June 1978, two geologists, P. Metz and M. Robinson of Fairbanks, discovered the nest of an unidentified bird in the De Long Mountains (68°04′20″N, 162°50′00″W, see Fig. 1). We visited the site on 29 June 1978 and identified the adult as a Kittlitz's Murrelet (Fig. 2).

The murrelet did not flush until we were within a few meters of the nest-site. It had been incubating a single egg that measured 39 × 58 mm. We departed several minutes later, and the adult returned to the nest as we withdrew.

The nest-site was located about 300 m above sea-level on a north-facing barite talus slope, devoid of vegetative cover. The nest was simply a slight, relatively flat depression in the talus slope (see Fig. 2). Linear distance to the nearest stream was 200–250 m. The nest-site was 75 km (straight-line distance) from the coast, indicating a minimum round-trip distance of 150 km to foraging areas for adults. This nest-site is considerably farther inland than others previously reported (ranging from 0.25 km to 30 km from the nearest coast—see Day et al. 1983). Thompson, Hines, and Williamson (Auk 83:349–351, 1966) found another nest site in this region (see Fig. 1), in a depression on a "*Dryas*-covered fellfield slope," 23 km straight-line distance from the Chuckchi Sea.

Bailey (Condor 75:457, 1973) visited the nest that he discovered every few days. He believed that the chick left the nest-site when it was between 13 and 24 days of age, shortly after the appearance of ensheathed remiges, i.e., before sustained flight would be possible. For a chick to fledge directly from the nest we examined, it would have to be capable of long distance flight. Alternatively, leaving the nest before sustained flight was possible would entail a traverse of 200–250 m of talus rubble to the nearest stream and a downstream journey of about 110 km to the sea. Sea-going in the Kittlitz's Murrelet remains a mystery but apparently is an arduous task in at least some instances.

The geologists reported sighting a "similar bird" in the same area. We dragged a 30-m rope across several hectares of similar habitat in the vicinity of this sighting, as well as near the nest-site that we had examined, but we flushed no additional Kittlitz's Murrelets. Presumably Kittlitz's Murrelets nest at low densities throughout the western De Long Mountains and the Lisburne Hills in northwestern Alaska, where the extensive, sparsely vegetated talus slopes offer well-concealed nest-sites for this remarkably cryptic and secretive species.

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*LGL Alaska Ecological Research Associates, P.O. Box 80607, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708. Present address of first author: Institute of Arctic Biology, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701. Present address of third author: S.R. Box 50576, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.* Received 13 August 1983. Final acceptance 20 January 1984.

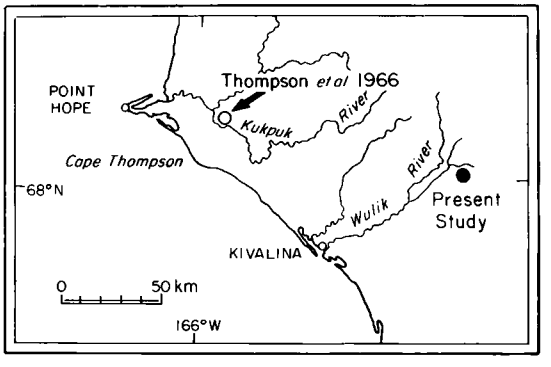


FIGURE 1. Nest records of Kittlitz's Murrelets in the region between Kivalina and Point Hope, northwestern Alaska.

FIGURE 2. Adult Kittlitz's Murrelet incubating its egg.