

Mon Sep 30, 1991

Submission to THE CONDOR of the Cooper Ornithological Society.

DISCOVERY OF MARBLED MURRELET NEST

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On 29 June 1991 at 1600 hours Rice flushed an adult Marbled Murrelet (Brachyramphus marmoratus) from a nest site on the west side of Northwestern Lagoon (59°44'30"N, 149°59'W) in Kenai Fjords National Park. The nest site lies about one kilometer from the sea at an elevation of 30 meters above sea level (Figure 1). The nest was in a depression beneath a boulder on the northwest facing side of the outwash plain below Sunlight Glacier. The egg lay directly on gravel and sand. Dried alder leaves, apparently wind blown to the nest site, were scattered around beneath the boulder. The lime-green egg had chocolate brown splotches which were more dense toward the large end of the egg (Figure 2.). The adult flew toward the sea and did not return to the nest while we were in the vicinity.

On 30 June 1991 we revisited the site and observed an adult Marbled Murrelet on the nest for about 30 minutes from a distance of 30 meters using 7 X 50 binoculars. The shape, markings, color, bill shape and attitude were distinctly those of a Marbled Murrelet. The bird remained stark still during our observations. We decided not to approach closer to prevent disturbing the bird. The site has not been revisited.

This site was ice-covered in 1950 according to U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle map Blying Sound C-8. NASA Alaska High Altitude Photography color infrared photographs (Line 122, accession 2659, frames 6554 and 6555) and maps given by Austin Post (USGS Open-file Report 80-414) show the area deglaciated by 1978.

Though 23 Marbled Murrelet nests have been discovered in the limbs of old growth trees to date, and most of those in the last three years (Quinlan and Hughes, *The Condor*: 92: 1068-1073; Singer et. al., *The Condor*: 93:330-339 and Kathy Kuletz, pers. comm. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Anchorage, Alaska), many nests have been discovered on the ground (Day et. al., *The Condor*: vol. 85, no. 3, pp 265-273, August 1983 and Johnston and Carter, *The Wilson Bulletin*: vol. 97, no. 1, pp 1-3, March 1985). This particular ground nest site may have the lowest elevation yet recorded.

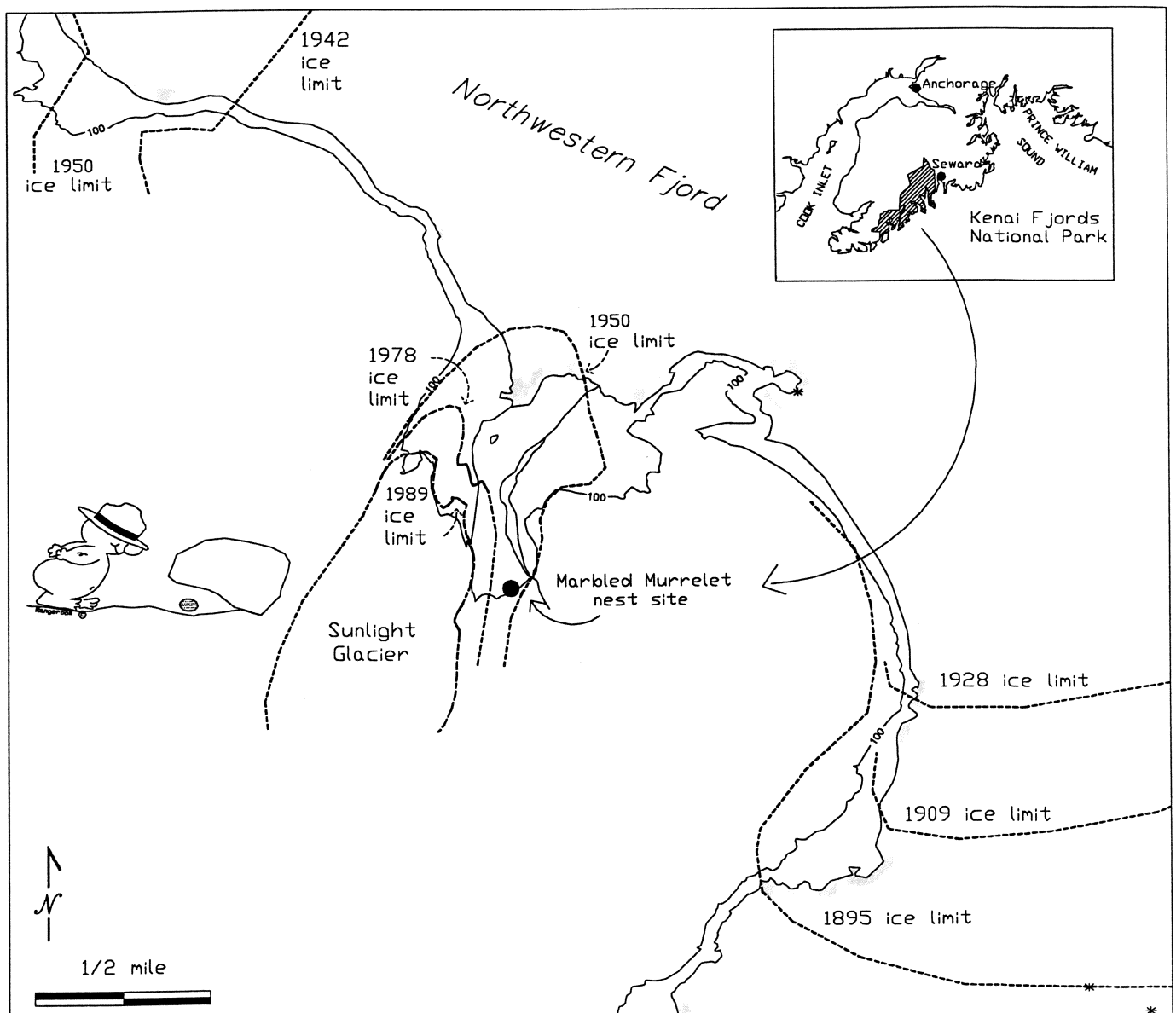


Figure 1. Location of marbled murrelet nest.