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# The Oregonian

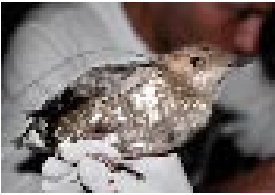
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## Marbled murrelet will keep federal protection

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By Matthew Preusch



The Associated Press

The federal government said Wednesday the marbled murrelet still deserves protection under the Endangered Species Act.

A grapefruit-sized seabird that nests in Oregon's coastal forests is still declining and merits federal protection.

That is the result of a review of the marbled murrelet that reverses a 2004 determination by the Bush administration that the birds in California, Oregon and Washington were no different from their more numerous relatives in Canada and therefore not deserving of protection.

The murrelet was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1992, slowing logging in some Northwest forests.

But the bird has continued to decline, and its status remains threatened, according to the review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today

"Our review concludes that the tri-state population of marbled murrelets is a valid Distinct Population Segment under the Endangered Species Act, in accordance with Service policy, and should remain protected as a threatened species," said Ken Berg, Supervisor of the Service's Washington State Fish and Wildlife Office.

The agency said the reversal was based on three things: the U.S. has far fewer birds than does Canada; the birds here are less successful at reproducing; and the differences between habitat conditions and regulations here and to the north.

"Science has won the day," said Noah Greenwald, biodiversity program director for the Center for Biological Diversity, which was among the environmental groups praising the decision. "The marbled murrelet is severely imperiled and needs the protections of the Endangered Species Act to survive."

The number of birds between California's Monterey Bay and the Canadian border fell by a third between 2001 and 2008, the agency's review found. The agency estimates that as of last year there were about 18,000 birds remaining in the region.

"Our review shows this remarkable bird remains in trouble," Berg said. "The Service is committed to working with our partners to stop this downward population trend and get this species on the road to recovery."

The report found that contributing to the birds' decline was the loss of old growth forests, as well as changes in food sources and dangers from fishing gear. The robin-sized birds spend most of their life at sea but seek out high perches in coastal forests to nest.

Last year the timber industry asked the agency to de-list the bird, which could speed logging in coastal forests.

No coastal old growth has been cut in five years, but the bird is still declining, said Tom Partin, president of the American Forest Resource Council.

"We feel there's plenty of nesting habitat out there. Land conditions are good. It looks like it's the ocean conditions that are causing the decrease," Partin said.

The agency said Wednesday it is expected to rule on the industry's request in coming months.