



September 28, 2025

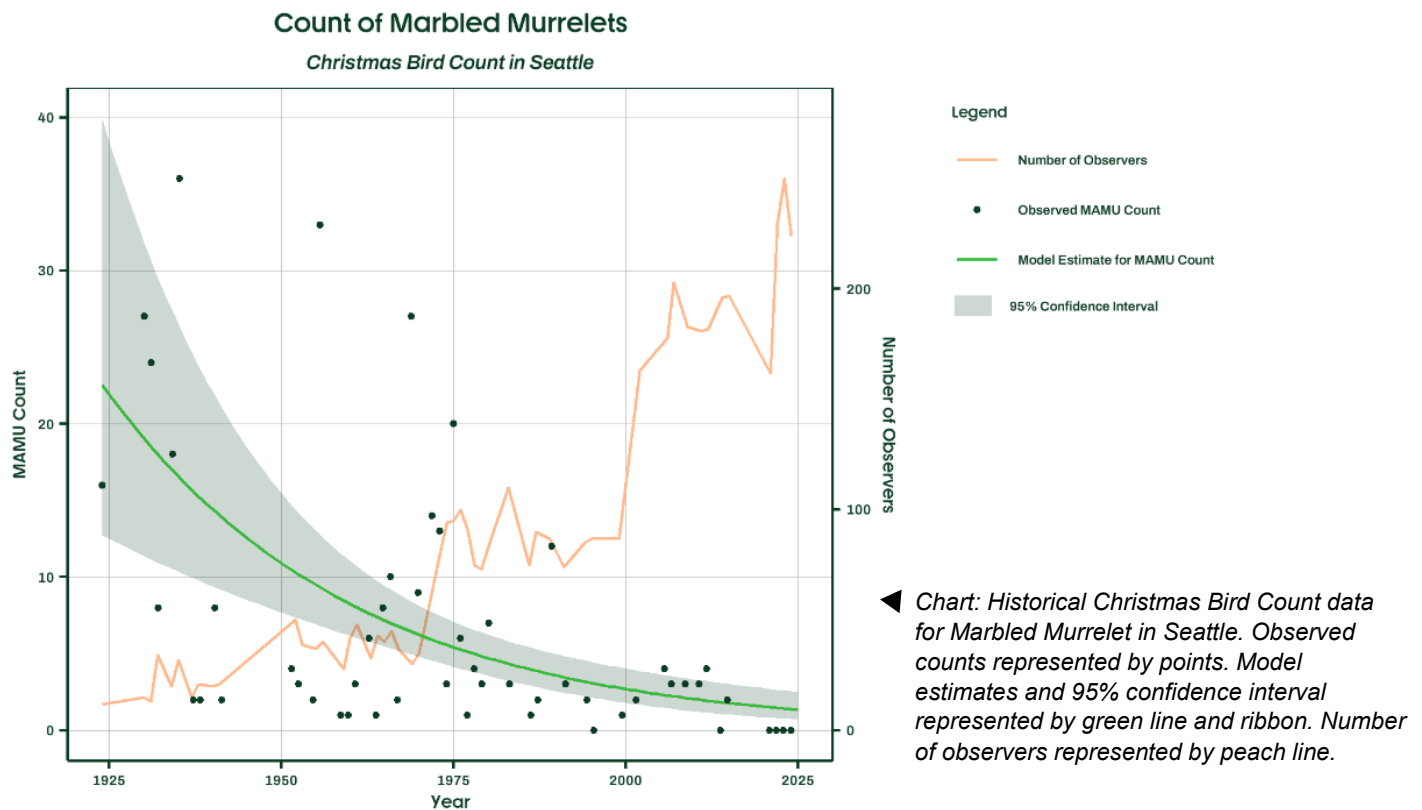
Taylor Cotton  
Conservation Assessment Section Manager  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Via email to [tandepubliccom@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:tandepubliccom@dfw.wa.gov)

**RE: Retain State “Endangered” Status for Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*)**

Taylor Cotton:

Birds Connect Seattle is an environmental conservation organization that advocates and organizes for cities where people and birds thrive. We thank Jen Mannas and others at Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for the excellent work presented in the draft 2025 Periodic Status Review for the Marbled Murrelet in Washington (Mannas, 2025). Given the species’ significant and continuing population decline in Washington, **we concur with the recommendation to retain state “Endangered” status for the Marbled Murrelet.**

Birds Connect Seattle has additional data to support this recommendation. Marbled Murrelets occur in Puget Sound year-round, with some known areas of winter concentration (Speich & Wahl, 1995). This seasonal pattern may make local historical Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data of interest to WDFW. The CBC is the longest-running community science project in history (National Audubon Society, 2025). Counts have occurred every December for more than a century, with volunteer surveyors conducting a systematic count of all birds within a given area. Our organization has coordinated the CBC in Seattle since our founding in 1916. Participants conduct both boat- and shore-based counts to ensure seabirds like the Marbled Murrelet are documented.



Historical CBC data for Seattle show counts of Marbled Murrelets steeply declining (see chart above). We observe these declines despite steadily increasing observer participation over the years. Statistical modeling suggests that CBC Marbled Murrelet counts have declined at an average rate of -2.75% per year [95% CI: -3.79% to -1.71%], representing a cumulative decline of 94% between 1924 to 2024. The data and code for this analysis are available at: [github.com/BirdsConnectSeattle/cbc\\_mamu](https://github.com/BirdsConnectSeattle/cbc_mamu)

The precipitous population declines published in the scientific literature and a century of community observations show that Marbled Murrelets in Washington remain in serious peril. Without continued legal protection and increased conservation investment, the outlook will worsen. We commend WDFW for recognizing the critical nature of the situation and we fully support maintaining the Marbled Murrelet's state "Endangered" status.

Sincerely,



---

**Joshua Morris**  
Conservation Director

## References

- Mannas, J. (2025). *Periodic status review for the Marbled Murrelet* (p. 28). Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- National Audubon Society. (2025). *The Christmas Bird Count Historical Results* [Dataset]. [christmasbirdcount.org](https://christmasbirdcount.org)
- Speich, S. M., & Wahl, T. R. (1995). *Marbled Murrelet Populations of Washington—Marine Habitat Preferences and Variability of Occurrence*.