

Biologists ask people not to disturb or pick up fledgling common murrelets on Oregon beaches

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Oregon coast visitors are seeing many dead and dying fledgling common murrelets right now on state beaches. Some commercial fishermen report also seeing this at sea.

At this time of the year, the young birds are trying to survive on their own for the first time. It's not uncommon to get reports of some sick or dying birds say Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists.

The severity of this year's event is uncommon and may be related to a combination of a large production year for common murrelets and extremely warm ocean conditions along the Oregon coast.

Warm ocean temperatures generally have a negative impact on the production of food in the lowest levels of the food web. That impact trickles up through the food web affecting many species, including common murrelets.

Biologists say most of the young birds they've seen appear to be starving or cold, however samples were sent to ODFW's Wildlife Population Health Lab for further examination. Without proper nutrition, the young birds cannot

maintain their body heat. And while ocean temperatures are warmer, the water is still below the average body temperature of these birds.

Biologists ask people to refrain from disturbing or picking up sick or dying birds to give them the best chance for survival. With a healthy and thriving population of common murre in Oregon, rehabilitation is not an option. People can report observations of sick or dead common murre to local ODFW offices.