



Photo: R. L. Steward

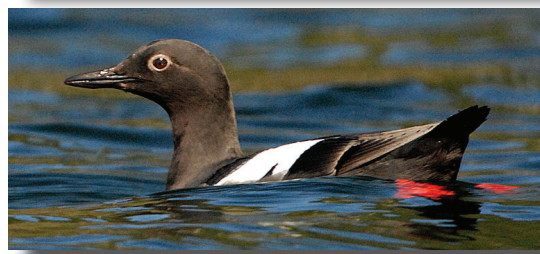
IDENTIFYING ALCIDS IN COASTAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

Several species of the Alcid family inhabit the nearshore and offshore zones of coastal British Columbia year round. As true seabirds, they come to land to breed in large colonies and then disburse to the open ocean for most of their lives. Alcids are relatively small, chunky birds that fly with rapid wing beats and use their wings to swim underwater. In groups, they tend to fly and swim in lines. On the water, they often hunker down and can be hard to see among the waves. Most have a smallish, pointy bill and a short, sometimes upturned, tail.

Pigeon Guillemot (PIGU)

- Locally common along rocky inlets and islands of coastal BC
- Winter plumage much whiter overall than murres and murrelets
- Compare head/bill shape to murres and murrelets
- Note bright red feet
- Breeding plumage is distinctive—black body with white wing patch

Wintering Pigeon Guillemot (above) (Photo: Mike Yip)
Breeding Pigeon Guillemot (below) (Photo: Mike Yip)



Common Murre (COMU)

- Larger and longer-winged than Pigeon Guillemot and murrelets
- Between September and March, most birds are in non-breeding plumage
- Long sharp bill, often held at an angle
- Uniform dark-brown above, whitish below

Wintering Common Murre (Photo: Tom Middleton)



Marbled Murrelet (MAMU)

- A small alcid; usually solitary or in pairs
- Often close to shore
- Rapid, buzzy flight
- Between and April and September, adults are mottled brown
- Non-breeding/juvenile plumaged birds have white underparts, white throat, and white scapulars

Wintering Marbled Murrelets (Photos: Mike Yip)

