

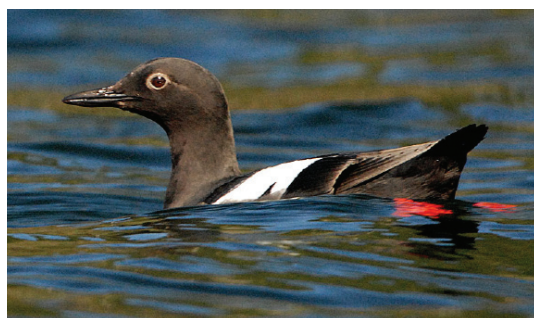
IDENTIFYING ALCIDS IN COASTAL BC IN WINTER

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 disperse 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, from March to September

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



Common Murre (COMU)

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

Wintering Common Murre (above) (Photo: Terry Thormin)
Breeding Common Murre (below) (Photo: Catherine Jardine)



IDENTIFYING ALCIDS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA IN WINTER

Rhinoceros Auklet (RHAU)

- Larger than Pigeon Guillemot, murres and murrelets
- Drab greyish above, whitish belly
- Stout yellowish bill
- Brighter in breeding plumage

Wintering Rhinoceros Auklet (Photo: Mike Yip)



Ancient Murrelet (ANMU)

- A small alcid; usually in groups
- Usually offshore
- Grey back, white undersides
- Black face, white neck, short pale bill
- Between January and September, adults have black throat (in breeding plumage)

Wintering Ancient Murrelet (Photo: Eric Ellingson)



Marbled Murrelet (MAMU)

- A small alcid; usually solitary or in pairs
- Often close to shore
- Black back with white bars, white undersides
- Black cap, white neck, dark bill
- Between April and September, adults are mottled brown (in breeding plumage)

Wintering Marbled Murrelets (Photos: Mike Yip)

