

Breeding along the northern Pacific coast from British Columbia to Japan, this little known bird dwelt in relative obscurity until it became the focus of a conservation debate which has resulted in a new National Park in the Queen Charlotte Islands, where half the world's population breeds. It made the headlines again when a lost, lone bird suddenly appeared at Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel, England, in May 1990 and again in April 1991. The Ancient Murrelet and its three congeners are unique amongst seabirds in that their young are entirely precocial, leaving the nest as soon as they hatch to grow up at sea. Tony Gaston has carried out the only detailed study of the bird, in the fine mature coastal forests of the Queen Charlotte Islands. His work has revealed their complex social behaviour, the song behaviour of the males and the species response to the variety of predators which they face - from Peregrines to Deer Mice. His story is set against a survey of the species worldwide and the grandeur of the northwest Pacific coast. The illustrations of Ian Jones, who also assisted with the research, capture the bird and its environment beautifully.

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