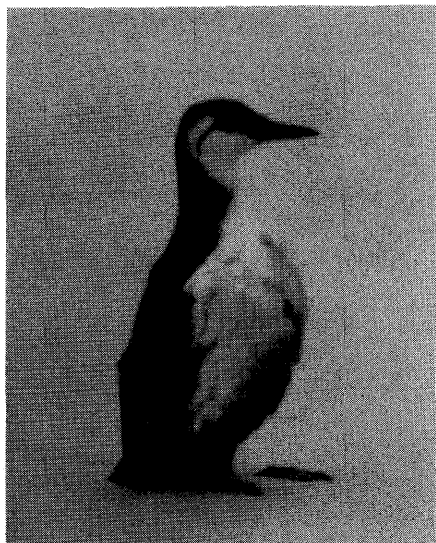


## PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES

### 7. Common Murre



Photograph by Daniel Rafferty  
Short Beach, Nassau Co., 26 January 1965

The Common Murre (*Uria aalge*) is Holarctic in distribution. In the New World the nominate subspecies breeds south to southern Newfoundland and the Magdalen Islands, Quebec (Tuck, *The Murres*, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa, 1961). There may also be a resident population breeding off the coast of Maine or on islets in the Bay of Fundy (Fisher, *Linn. News-letter*, vol. 18, no. 5, Oct. 1964 & vol. 19, no. 4, Sept. 1965).

An offshore species, the Common Murre regularly winters south to Maine, but rarely to Massachusetts. The species is unknown south of New Jersey except for the proximal portion of a left humerus from a Florida Indian midden dated at about 1000 B.C. (Brodkorb, *Auk*, 77:342, 1960).

New York State records have recently been summarized by Bull (*Birds of the New York Area*, Harper & Row, N.Y., 1964, p. 261) who lists eight Long Island reports from Montauk Point, Suffolk Co. to Long Beach, Nassau Co. All, except one seen offshore, were of oiled birds, most either caught alive or found dead. Dates of occurrence range from 23 December to 4 April. None is prior to 1936.

The only other records I have to add are: 1) a bird observed in perfect light at a distance of about 50 yards on 22 February 1946 in Reynold's Channel, back of Long Beach, by Dr. Edward Fleisher, Malcolm A. Jacobson, and Walter W. Sedwitz (Sedwitz, *in litt.*), and 2) the bird in the above photograph, seen on 26 January 1965 by Daniel Rafferty and Walter Friton at Short Beach, Nassau County (*Kingbird*, 15(2):130, May 1965). Mr. Rafferty kindly supplied the following details for this report:

"January 26, 1965 was a cold day with a strong southwest wind. As we left the West End parking field, heading for Jones Inlet, we noticed a penguin-like figure standing on the beach about 200 yards ahead of us. At 100 yards we could clearly make out the black line on the white cheek of a Common Murre. The bird was preening an oil stain which covered its breast and belly. As we approached to take some photographs the bird backed into the water, eventually skimming out over the waves and dropping into the surf. It apparently had difficulty keeping afloat.

A few moments later the bird was back on the beach. Looking back we saw a runner in a hooded sweatshirt trotting along the shoreline. This time, however, the murre did not take flight. The runner stopped directly in front of the bird, bent over with his hands on his knees, and was obviously talking to it. After a couple of minutes, the runner continued on his way, the murre still standing its ground.

This was the last we saw of the bird. An extensive search the next day failed to reveal any trace of it, either dead or alive."

According to Bull (*op. cit.*) apparently none of the New York Common Murre specimens are extant. However, the species has been photographed in the state on at least two other occasions. The Common Murre photograph taken by Dr. Heathcote M. Kimball, at Oak Beach, Suffolk Co., on 16 January 1938 was published in *Bird-Lore*, 40:300, 1938, while numerous local observers have seen George Komorowski's 16mm footage of a bird present at Jones Beach, Nassau Co., 23 December 1951.

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