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Times
Sept 10
1982



This marbled murrelet was found on the McLain Flats road, and died at the Hallam Lake wildlife sanctuary after attempting to eat oatmeal fed to it by rescuers. A marine bird that inhabits the Alaska

islands, the murrelet has never been found this far inland. Anyone with information on it should contact the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies.

Marbled murrelet dies after flying to Aspen

A marbled murrelet, reportedly the only bird of its kind ever found this far inland, winged its way to Aspen, where it died in late August.

The rare bird was found on McLain Flats Road on Aug 23, and

was taken by rescuers to the Hallam Lake wildlife sanctuary that also houses the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies.

The murrelet was released on the lake, where it preened, swam underwater, and drank. It seemed dehydrated, according to ACES naturalist Tom Cardamone.

The bird was found dead the following morning. ACES staff said that rescuers had tried to feed it oatmeal, which might have blocked its digestive tract.

According to Charles Chase, curator of the Denver Museum of Natural History, marbled murrelets have never been found as far inland as Colorado.

The bird's name refers to mottled or irregular spots or streaks of summer plumage. Murrelets are usually about 10 inches long, with short necks and slender bills.

The murrelet usually summers on the Alaskan islands and on the mainland as far south as California, and is known to eat small fish, mollusks and marine crustaceans.

It usually breeds on mountains near the coastline. It has also been found in Asia, from Kamchatka to Japan.

ACES naturalists are guessing that the bird caught an air current that headed it in the direction of Aspen.

Anybody with any information about the bird is asked to call ACES at 925-5756.