

The Raven



The mission of Juneau Audubon Society is to conserve the natural ecosystems of Southeast Alaska, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

<http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org>

Volume 32 , Number 6

Juneau Audubon Society

February 2006

Dates to Remember

February 7th

Tuesday
Centennial Hall
7:30-9:00 PM

Photographing Alaska's Birds: 45 years worth

... Bob Armstrong

Sponsored by the Alaska Bird Conference.

February 7th - 9th

Tuesday - Thursday
See Program

11th Alaska Bird Conference & Workshops

www.abc2006.juneau-audubon-society.org/program.html

February 10th

Friday
UAS Eagan Library
7:30-9:00 PM

World in Pieces:

the Wondrous and Dire Implications of Biogeography

...David Quammen

co-sponsored by UAS & The Alaska Bird Conference--JAS

February 18th

Saturday
Salmon Creek
Wayside Parking Lot
10 A.M. ~ NOON

Saturday Wild - Bird Count

Meet at Wayside Park parking lot on Channel Drive, next to Glacier Marine barge dock. Bring binoculars, bird guides, and dress for the weather.

February 17th - 20th

Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a joint project of Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, returns for its ninth season. For more information go to: www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

February 24th

Friday
Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center
6:30 PM - 1st Show
8:00 PM - 2nd Show

Bald Eagles

...Mike Jacobson

The status and trends of bald eagles in Southeast Alaska and the positive and different interaction of eagles and people

. . .a Winter Fireside Series offering.


JAS Board Introduction

.....a New Feature

Wednesday Walks and Bird Song Jeopardy.....Beth Peluso

I joined the Audubon Board as the Education Chair this fall. One of my main goals is to introduce new people to birding and to offer opportunities for those who want to learn more. Some of you may know me from the Wednesday noon walks or virtually on **Eaglechat**.

WEDNESDAY WALKS

Last spring, Virginia Harris and I decided to experiment with the Wednesday walks. Both of us wanted to schedule some birding during the work week. So why not invite others? Some of the highlights included seeing the swallows return to downtown, close-up looks at redpolls in late winter, discovering a "warbler alley" (with a couple fox sparrows thrown in) just above downtown, and a wandering osprey. People from Juneau and all over the world joined us, including a Juneau grandmother 

wanting an activity to do with her grandkids and a couple from New Zealand traveling through Southeast Alaska on the ferries. It's amazing how many birds you can find downtown when you look. We're taking a break for the winter, but I'll be starting up again in the spring (Virginia took a job in Seattle--she'll be missed!), so stay tuned! If anyone would like to help lead trips, please contact me through the Juneau Audubon website.

BIRD SONG JEOPARDY AND MORE

Many people on the Wednesday walks wanted to know "What bird is that singing?" This spring I'll be organizing a Bird Song Jeopardy session or two, a fun way to start learning how to identify birds by sound. This is an invaluable skill in our dense rainforests.

Whether you're an expert or a complete beginner, it's good to go over songs before the spring concert starts.

The Saturday Wild walks will continue, and don't forget to check out the schedule of speakers coming up. Check out our website for more detailed information.



Saturday

Wild

Join us for a Saturday Wild walk to count birds together at low tide for the 9th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Everyone is invited, whether beginning birder or seasoned expert.

During the count, which takes place February 17-20 across North America, bird watchers tally up birds for as little as

15 minutes, or for as long as they like, keeping track of the highest number of each bird species seen together at one time.



Birds can be counted and reported from public lands and local parks as well as from backyards. Numbers are entered online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. Everyone can watch sightings maps, lists, and charts update as the count progresses. There is no fee or advance registration.

Last February, participants sent in more than 52,000 checklists, with a record-breaking 613 species and more than 6 million birds counted. These millions of sightings generate what would otherwise be impossible—information about where the birds are located across North America and how their numbers compare with previous years.

The GBBC is a joint project of National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. For further information see [http:// www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc)

Saturday Wild is coordinated by Juneau Audubon Society



Join us as we explore the wild side of Southeast Alaska. For more information on these free community walks, see www.juneau-audubon-society.org or e-mail saturdaywild@juneau-audubon-society.org.

WEEKLY WALKS WILL RESUME WITH SPRING MIGRATION.

Haines Report

As reported in the *Chilkat Valley News*, the data for the two Haines Christmas Bird Counts have now been consolidated and reported.

A total of 37 species were tallied this year. The rare sightings included a Northern Three-toed Woodpecker, a Snow Bunting, and a Harlan's Hawk.

Six birders participated in the Christmas Bird Count on New Year's Eve in the Bald Eagle Preserve. Tim Shields reported that 735 Bald Eagles were counted that day broken down to 591 mature adults, 142

immature, and 2 unknown. These are about average numbers. Forty-five seed-eating songbirds were observed, including grosbeaks, siskins, redpolls, and crossbills.

As of the week of January 15, the eagles are still noticeable in the trees at 19-mile driving along the Haines Highway. Also noticeable are about 20 swans still lingering in the Chilkat River in the same general area.

KETCHIKAN REPORT For JANUARY by Teri Goucher

January didn't surprise area birders with any new unusual sightings, but several lingering rarities continue to attract bird enthusiasts.

Western Meadowlark has remained north of town at the school which provides the largest expanse of open grassy area found on our island.

The Brewer's Blackbird frequents the high school neighborhood as do the relatively large numbers of wintering American Robins.

The airport area on Gravina Island produced 8 American Pipits and 7 Wilson's Snipe, which are rather high winter numbers for those species.

In Clover pass up to 32 Cassin's Auklets were seen by boat and 12 were seen from shore for several days mid-month. This small sooty gray alcid is usually found feeding in groups well offshore and occasionally is spotted during summer months around the inshore waterways.

The White Wagtail still makes weekly appearances around the mid-town waterfront. This is an extremely rare bird for our part of the world and continues to thrill those who can find it!

As our days lengthen, the patterns of upcoming seasonal migrations begin to stir the souls of feathered friends and those who seek them!!

Gustavus Report

November 21, 2005 - January 13, 2006

The spruce trees in Gustavus are alive with **White-winged Crossbills**. Their calling and singing (chattering) fills the air. Crossbill numbers increased sharply through December. **Red Crossbills** and **Pine Siskins** are around, but in much smaller numbers. No **Common Redpolls** have been reported to date.

We had an exceptional Christmas Bird Count in mid-December. See last month's Raven for a report or to view the full list visit: www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/.

Snowy Owls continued to be seen into December, and a juvenile was observed several times in early January. Of the more than a dozen Snowy Owl sightings this fall and winter, it is known there were at least five individual owls. Of these, three are known to have died. One from an eagle attack and two apparently from hunger. Short-eared Owls were seen regularly into early December. One **Great Horned Owl** was reported calling on 11/28. **Northern Hawk Owls** were seen on 12/28 and 1/7. **Northern Pygmy-Owls** were observed throughout the period.

Dunlins, Rock Sandpipers, and Sanderlings remained through the period with high counts of each species being nearly eighteen hundred Dunlins, three hundred Sanderlings, and five hundred Rock Sandpipers. Two Dunlins with colored leg bands were observed in December and were found to have been banded as juveniles this summer on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. One of the banded birds was re-sighted in early January. A juvenile **Black-bellied Plover** was seen in late November and on 12/2. A **Long-billed Dowitcher** was seen on 12/7. At least one **Greater Yellowlegs** has remained through the period.

Other observations of late birds included two **Savannah Sparrows** on 11/28, **American Robins** in December, a **Hermit Thrush** on 12/21, **Varied Thrushes** into January, and a **Lesser Scaup** on 1/8.

Thanks to Bruce Paige, Phoebe Vanselow, Larry Platt, and Kevin White for sharing observations. By Nat Drumheller. natdrumheller@hotmail.com

Clips from the Conservation Committee

The Conservation Committee welcomes involvement from all members. We are always keen to have new members who would like to follow an issue in the community and help keep other JAS members informed. If you have comments or would like to become involved, please contact the chair, Sari Saunders, at: conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org, or any other committee or Board member.

1. Juneau Access Project - Watch for the pending release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. There will not be public hearings at this stage of project analysis, so if you would like to submit comments, these must be in written form. You can keep an eye on the website through AK DOT http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/projectinfo/ser/juneau_access/index.shtml or check SEACC's website at www.seacc.org for announcement of the release.

2. Dog sledding in Sheep Creek Juneau - The Thane Neighborhood Association would like JAS members to be aware of a proposal put forward by Alaska Icefield Expeditions, Inc. (who do the glacier-based sledding trips) to develop a land-based operation in the Sheep Creek Valley. The public would meet sled dogs, ride in a wheeled rig, and learn about the history of dog sledding as it relates to the history of mining in Alaska. The company proposes to set up a facility in the Sheep Creek area at the end of the Sheep Creek Mine Road, and the tour

would operate during summer months beginning this season. There are potential issues of traffic on Thane Road, noise, waste (human and dog), and disruption to wildlife. Initial discussions with ornithologists familiar with this area indicate that disruption to the warbler population should be minimal, if dogs are kept to the existing road (as proposed). For example, see the following articles: Willson and Comet. 1996. Bird communities of northern forests. (Parts I and II). Condor 98: 337-349, Condor 98: 350-362. The Neighborhood Association indicates that it expects this application to go before the CBJ Planning Commission for review in Feb. JAS members can check when this comes up on the Commission's agenda through the "Agendas and Meeting Results" link on the Commission's website at: www.juneau.org/clerk/boards/default.htm.

3. Progress of the Juneau Coastal Management Plan (JCMP) and Juneau Wetland Management Plan (JWMP) – The CBJ Planning Commission approved at its meeting on Jan. 24 the Draft Plan amendments for the JCMP and the JWMP as prepared by the consultant on this project (associated with requirements due to amendments to the Alaska Coastal Management Plan). Materials associated with the latest versions of these policies and their interpretation or and revision can be found within the minutes of the planning commission at: www.juneau.org/clerk/boards/default.htm.

Environment Windows: A Clear Danger to Birds

by John Nielsen

Morning Edition, January 3, 2006.

No one knows what birds see when they look out at the world, says ornithologist Daniel Klem, but he's sure they don't see glass. He estimates that at least 1 billion

birds are killed by flying into windows every year in the United States.

"It's a very common phenomenon," said Klem. "Birds are deceived. They just don't see glass as a barrier and this is a problem for them." Klem, a professor at Mulhenberg college in Allentown, Pa., first learned about the "window hit" problem 30 years ago from a teacher.

Klem responded by marching into a forest and hanging a bunch of windows from the branches of the trees. Then he sat down and watched what he calls an "appalling" number of collisions. Some birds lived. Many did not. "I've learned very early on that a really short flight from an 8-foot perch can result in death," he said.

Later, Klem watched more than 100 birds hit the windows of a "typical" suburban home in the course of a single year. Then he studied shiny glass office towers, which can kill tens of thousands of birds in a year. It all adds up a yearly death toll of at least 1 billion, he argues, or roughly five percent of all the birds found in the United States each fall. Hardly anybody appreciates the size of the problem, he says.

"Nobody intentionally wants to see these birds harmed, and it's just so tragic to see this unintentional source of mortality being ignored," Klem said.

Attempts to find solutions to the window hit problem have been few and relatively modest, according to Klem. A major exception can be found on the campus of Swarthmore College. It recently agreed to turn a \$71 million science center into an experiment, by using it to test a new kind of glass designed to ward off oncoming birds.

Julie Hagelin, an ornithologist at Swarthmore, says the college has known for years that it has a bird-hit problem.

Hagelin is the unofficial keeper of bird carcasses found on campus.

"Typically they find them in the morning when they come to campus," she said. "They find a dead specimen, they wrap it up in whatever they happen to have, a napkin or a plastic bag, and they bring it to me and they say, 'We hear that you're supposed to do something with these.' " Inside her lab, a big metal cabinet holds a long line of bird corpses, ranging from migratory birds like the northern parula to local birds such as woodpeckers.

Many birds killed by windows get eaten by cats and other scavengers, she says. But even when there isn't any carcass it's possible to tell when there's been a collision. Most birds leave a distinctive smudge mark on the window.

In the mid-'90s, when Swarthmore decided to build a new science center on campus, it briefly seemed like those window marks were about to get a lot more common. The center featured a three-story meeting room made out of clear glass -- an "avian slaughterhouse," says Klem.

Alarmed ornithologists invited Klem to speak to the building committee. Carr Everbach, a member of Swarthmore's engineering faculty, says that speech and an unfortunate encounter with a bird helped change the building plan.

"We were about to have a meeting to talk about the problems of birds striking the windows," said Everbach, "and we heard a loud thump and we turned around and there was a bird flopping around on the pavement just outside the window."

The building committee agreed to pay for bird-friendly glass, if Klem and Everbach could come up with a design. The challenge was to find a kind of glass that birds could see and people could see through.

Everbach and Klem recommended using so-called "fritted" glass. It's etched with closely spaced rows of small circles. When standing right in front of it, the glass is hard to see through, but Everbach says from a slight distance, the dots don't obscure vision that much.

To find out whether the fritted glass is really bird friendly, Everbach outfitted some of the windows with video sensors, called "thumpers."

The thumpers have recorded just two bird hits since the center was finished five years ago, which doesn't prove anything conclusively, since the sensors aren't attached to every window. But Everbach says it's a pretty good hint that the fritted glass is working.

Everbach's dream is that one day a glass manufacturer will start selling bird-friendly glass, just as the fishing industry now sells cans of so-called "dolphin-safe" tuna.

Klem shares Everbach's dream, but after spending 30 years fighting this problem he's learned one crucial thing: "If you are going to come up with a solution to this problem, you are going to have to come up with one that doesn't muck up the way people look out their windows," Klem said. "You start doing that and people are going to be unsympathetic."

If nothing changes, Klem says it's certain that the problem of window hits will escalate. He notes that in the next few decades, millions of new homes and offices will be built in the United States alone.

www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5076012

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