

# 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>

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## **JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING 2006 WILDLIFE WALKS**

- May 13. Perseverance Trail. Meet at 9:00 am at the trailhead (end of Basin Road). Beth Peluso will lead the walk.
- May 20. Mendenhall Wetlands. Meet at 8:00 am at the end of Radcliffe Road. Marck Schwan will lead the walk.
- May 27. Outer Point Low Tide. Meet at 7:30 am at the old Outer Point Trail (Douglas Island). Carol Thelenius and Mary Lou King will be the leaders
- June 3. Dredge Lakes. Meet at 8:00 am in the parking area by the bridge over the Mendenhall River along the Back Loop Road. Matt Brooks will lead the walk.
- June 10. Amalga Trail. Meet at 8:00 am at the Amalga Trailhead. Jeff Sauer will lead the walk to the marsh where rails have been seen plus some mining history with Jim Geraghty.

## Saturday Wild 2006

### **2nd Saturday's June through October**

**June 10th Amalga Trail 27.9 Mile Glacier Highway – Final bird walk of the season and mining history in the area** – Leaders: Jeff Sauer and Jim Geraghty

**July 8<sup>th</sup> Alpine Birds and Flowers** 8:00 a.m. - noon, Mount Roberts Tramway downtown. Purchase special reduced price Tramway ticket at the Tramway office that morning.

**August 12 Mushrooms in our home town** 9 a.m., end of the road, North Douglas – Leader Dave Gregovich

**September 9<sup>th</sup> Hard rock Mines-Perseverance Mine Museum** Mining and the environment. 8:30 a.m. at the Perseverance trailhead

**October 14<sup>th</sup> To be Announced**

**Saturday Wild is coordinated by Juneau Audubon Society**

Join us any 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, weather or not, as we explore the wild side of Southeast Alaska. For more information on these free community walks, see [http:// www.juneau-audubon-society.org](http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org) or e-mail [saturdaywild@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:saturdaywild@juneau-audubon-society.org). Programs will also be announced through local news media.

**BOARD NEWS** by Brenda Wright, Juneau Audubon Society president

Hello and Happy Birding,

Thanks to all of you who were able to join us for our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Berners Bay cruises. Who knows what the crystal ball will decide for the cruise on May 6<sup>th</sup> but we certainly had a great day on April 15<sup>th</sup>. We saw oyster catchers, sea lions and harbor seals around Aaron Island, lots of sea lions on Benjamin Island and Dall porpoise played with our boat twice! Although the timing for congregation of sealife and birds in Berners Bay was off, we had a special visit of a pod of six Orcas that swam right up next to the boat. As the eulachon (hooligan) have not yet entered the bay as of now (5/1), perhaps the sailing on May 6<sup>th</sup> will get to see the large congregations of birds and sea mammals. In any case, hopefully everyone had a good time and the weather was cooperative.

We hope you can join us for the rest of the spring migration bird walks. This is such an interesting time of year to see many species of birds and 15 types of weather-all in the same day! We are also scheduling our Saturday Wild events for walks every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday from June through October. Please join us for trips into the alpine, history, and fungus.

Please keep an eye on the weekly schedule and the web page for updates on activities and meeting places ([www.juneau-audubon-society.org](http://www.juneau-audubon-society.org)). You can also get your local bird checklist and past newsletters on the web page. If you are interested in helping with responding to any conservation issue, please contact Sari Saunders, conservation chair ([conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org)).

**Eaglechat news:** Nina Mollett died early Saturday morning, April 29th, in Tucson, Arizona. She created "Eaglechat" that has provided what now could be considered an "essential" service to the birding community of Southeast Alaska and also to birders in other parts of the country. She was very active as a conservationist and will be missed. Bev. Agler [bev\\_agler@fishgame.state.ak.us](mailto:bev_agler@fishgame.state.ak.us) will continue to be the moderator for Eaglechat. Anyone wishing to join this great group should contact Bev.

**BAD MOUSE YEAR**—We must be having a bad mouse year on the Mendenhall Refuge. Northern Harriers are spending more of their time perusing the marginal bushes than the open flats-- look out little birds.

**Band-tailed Pigeons in Wrangell** By Bonnie Demerjian

Band-tailed pigeons are an uncommon sight in Alaska, even in most of Southeast Alaska, but they make an appearance in the southern part of our region and even breed here.

This large pigeon (13-16 inches long) resembles the introduced Rock Dove but is a native of the Western states, Central and South America. There are two populations in North America, both favoring woodlands. The Pacific coast population winters in central California and breeds as far north as the Stikine River, though it has been reported as a casual visitor as far north as Nome, says the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The interior population winters along the southern US border and Mexico, breeding in Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and western Texas.



*Photo By Sue St. Clair  
Wrangell*

Sue St. Clair has documented these pigeons in Wrangell where they frequented her feeder throughout the summer last year, beginning in April. By the end of the summer she reported 23 birds, the result of summer nesting in the nearby forest.

Band-tailed pigeons are dark overall with a distinctive white collar on the nape, lacking in juveniles, and bright yellow feet. The race likely to be seen in Southeast Alaska is dark and more richly colored, with a dark purple-gray head and dark reddish or pink/gray breast, than more southerly races. Their bill is yellow as well with a black tip. Band-tailed pigeons can be distinguished from the Rock Dove at a distance by their longer tail and more uniform gray color. Their call is said to resemble an owl's with repeated deep hooting coos. As they take flight, their wings will at times meet over the back and "clap", similar to Rock Doves.

The National Audubon Society says that band-tailed pigeon numbers have shown a steady decline of about 2½% a year since the 1960s though the reasons are not well understood.

**HAINES REPORT** By Georgia Giacobbe

Spring is begrudgingly slipping into the Chilkat Valley as many signs of the season slowly appear. One sign, of course, is the reappearance of the seasonal birds and the behavior of the "locals." Haines is still eagerly awaiting the arrival of hummingbirds, which according to local reports are late this year (as of April 25). At least two or three Marsh Hawks have been seen flying around on the McClellan Flats, and the local eagles are busily gathering nesting material and fending off new intruders to their territory. Many species of gulls have followed the herring run up Mud Bay the week of April 17. Can the hooligans be far behind next month? Tim Shields has commented that he has

read reports of Surf Scoters declining in the lower 48 and is paying careful attention to the Surf Scoter count here in Haines. He has also reported an unusual killing of a snow goose by a bald eagle, with the head and neck left behind. Birders have also been monitoring the build up of dabbling ducks beginning at 20, to 80, and now approximately 350 at the bottom of Cemetery Hill. The usual spring suspects of small birds, including the robins, have arrived, but no unusual sightings yet.

### **Skagway Bird Report - April 2006** By C. E. Furbish

In the first week of April, a long-time Skagway birder reported seeing red-winged blackbirds and robins fully one month earlier than he had previously recorded them. Our first big wave of avian visitors from the south came right around April 15th (tax-evaders?) Familiar birds who stay for the summer included landbirds: varied thrushes, ruby-crowned kinglets, northern shrikes, pine siskins, and rufous hummingbirds; and waterbirds: mergansers, greater scaup, great blue heron, mallards, American widgeons and goldeneyes. Raptors included: kestrel, merlin, red-tail hawk, Harlan's hawk, northern harrier and golden eagle. Also seen were birds which usually stop briefly in Skagway before continuing north: swans, Canada geese, and a real treat, ~25 mountain bluebirds. Rare sightings included ring-necked ducks, northern shoveller, brown-headed cowbird, greater white-fronted geese, and sandhill cranes. The cranes delighted all by landing in Dyea to give everybody a good look.



*ring-neck duck, photo by Andrew Beierly*

*Thanks to John McDermott, Joanne and Andrew Beierly, Mike Konsler, Cameron Eckert, Debbie Sanders, Jeremy Simmons, Kevin Payne and Gary Hansen for sharing their bird sightings this month.*

### **Clips from the Conservation Committee:** By Sari Saunders, Chair, Conservation Committee

Dear Members,

The Conservation Committee kept its collective eye on a number of topics this past year. Below is a short list of events members of JAS have followed and about which comments have been submitted. Many thanks to all the members who provided thoughtful input regarding these issues. Our JAS president, Brenda Wright, took a particularly strong role in conservation issues this year and initiated most of our comment letters. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to receive copies of submissions that Juneau Audubon has made.

The Conservation Committee is always keen to have new members who would like to follow events in the community and help keep other JAS members informed. If you have comments or would like to become involved, please contact me, at [conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org](mailto:conservation@juneau-audubon-society.org), or talk with any other committee or Board member.

## **A recap of events:**

**1. Call for ban on jet skis on Auke Lake** – JAS will be submitting a request that the CBJ consider a ban on jet ski use on Auke Lake. Research has indicated this type of recreation emits hydrocarbons that have been damaging fish habitat in the lake. Wakes erode nearshore habitat important for shorebirds and juvenile fish. Noise and physical presence of motorized boats and jet skis drive aggregations of birds off the lake. A number of species have apparently deserted the lake as motorized recreation has increased. Note that the trail alongside Auke Lake is one of the few that has been designated a “no dog” trail for purposes of protecting habitat and wildlife in the area, yet motorboats and jet skis remain unregulated on the open water. Steve Zimmerman has been following research and activities on the lake over the past number of years and is spearheading this effort.

**2. Support for development of a greenway along Duck Creek** in East Mendenhall Valley. This is a project that was proposed by a graduate student who then sought support from JAS when applying for funding. She proposed restoration of the Duck Creek watershed adjacent to Thunder Mtn. to connect open stream, wetland, riparian, and adjacent upland habitats, thus increasing the value of wildlife habitat and providing opportunities for wildlife viewing. Interpretive signage would be installed along a pathway. Initial funding has since been approved. The proponents are working on an environmental checklist, appropriate permitting, and the revegetation effort. SAGA work crews will be there in June and Trail Mix will be helping in July and August.

**3. Dog sledding venture in Sheep Creek** – JAS was encouraged by the response of the CBJ Planning Commission to its staff’s report on this venture, and the incorporation of concerns and suggestions from a number of local groups (including JAS) into the reports. JAS expressed concern regarding the effects of this initiative on the enjoyment of the trail and wildlife by hikers, and also impacts on the wildlife itself. We preferred to support a permit for a single year, initially. We further recommended that the companies involved support monitoring efforts to assist in determining whether this project deters or increases wildlife presence, or alters activity of wildlife traditionally using the area. You can take a look at the staff reports and final decision at [http://www.juneau.lib.ak.us/plancomm/documents/NOD\\_USE06-05\\_2.PDF](http://www.juneau.lib.ak.us/plancomm/documents/NOD_USE06-05_2.PDF). A conditional permit was granted with the stipulation that the company pay for relocation of part of Sheep Creek Trail, a yearly maintenance cost for the trail, and for noise monitoring, among other conditions. So, hike up the Sheep Creek Trail this summer and see what you think!

**4. Release of Juneau Access FEIS** - JAS reiterated its concerns regarding habitat loss associated with roaded Alternatives presented in the SEIS. We believe the cumulative and indirect effects of the road were not adequately addressed. We were especially concerned about edge effects, connectivity between summer and winter ranges, and loss

of estuary wetlands, and corridors for dispersal of small mammals and corridors for exotic plant species. We are also concerned about long term effects to wildlife populations from increased human interaction. Compensatory mitigation for impacts to wetlands is not a resolved issue; JAS encouraged AK DOT&PW to consider establishing a mitigation bank to mitigate the loss of wetlands any approved road may destroy or compromise.

**5. Sale of federal lands for secure rural schools funding** - JAS opposed reducing public acreage to provide relatively short term funding for schools. We need more public land not less. We noted, specifically, the proposed sale of 6 acres of Forest Service land in the vicinity of the Eagle and Herbert River confluences, near the trailhead of Boy Scout Beach Trail. The property is contiguous with recreational lands of the City and Borough of Juneau and development of the land presents a threat to recreational and ecological values of the area.

**6. Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, Haines** – Legislation presented by State House Representative Bill Thomas (HB 378) now reads, “An Act providing for selection of a member of the Haines Borough Assembly to serve as an ex officio member of the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve Advisory Council and removing the mayor of the City of Haines as an ex officio member of the council”, distinctly different from, “An Act designating a representative of Chilkat Snowburners, Inc. as an ex officio member of the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve Advisory Council and removing the mayor of the City of Haines as an ex officio member of the council”, and some subsequent derivations thereof. Concern was that a seat formerly held by a public representative would be replaced specifically with one held by a special-interest group, not serving the best interests of conservation of the eagles and their habitat. JAS submitted a letter indicating it did not support HB 378, or any decreases in the size of the preserve boundary (also being considered by Thomas in order to remove tour areas from protection). You can follow this legislation’s status at:  
[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB378](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?session=24&bill=HB378)

**7. Amendments to the Alaska Coastal Management Plan** - JAS supported Alternative 3 (not accepting the amendments) regarding the program amendments submitted by the State of Alaska to the OCRM. We indicated that the changes to the ACMP did not meet the requirements of the Coastal Management Zone Act and other federal statutes and that the proposed amendment to the ACMP should be sent back to the State of Alaska for further consideration. We felt the amendments (which were ultimately accepted) would limit local involvement; the ACMP will be primarily state implemented now, using state standards and state laws. JAS was concerned that the restriction on local community involvement would mean that subsistence and other uses may not get adequate prioritization in project planning.

### **Stuff to follow over the summer:**

**1. Juneau Access** – Keep your eyes and ears open as the initial phases of preparatory work for the road get under way. Just this week, the Juneau Empire had a front page article on work beginning in Berner's Bay (Wed. April 26).

**2. Gastineau Channel 2<sup>nd</sup> Crossing** – Watch for progress on the discussion of the best access points for the second crossing. This was also in the news recently (Juneau Empire, April 4 2006) and further opportunities for public comment may be forthcoming.

**3. Check out other groups in our area** and their activities:

a. (Re) establishment of the Juneau chapter of **Trout Unlimited** – TU has reappeared in Juneau and is proposing some interesting projects already, e.g., within the Montana Creek Watershed. We hope that partnering with this organizing will be an opportunity for JAS in the future. Check out the TU website at [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org) and the Juneau chapter's information by choosing the Alaska button.

b. **Sitka Conservation Society** – has recently released their groundtruthing report on past and proposed timber sales in SEAK

([http://www.sitkawild.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=58&Itemid=245](http://www.sitkawild.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=58&Itemid=245)). This involved momentous field and analytical effort. There are some interesting analyses and conclusions and good food for thought. Check out all the USDA Forest Service info on these sites too!

c. **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** – check out TNC's southeast AK involvement at their website,

<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/alaska/preserves/art14794.html>.

Also worth noting is TNC and TNC Canada's involvement in the establishment of the Great Bear Rainforest conservancy along the north and central coast of British Columbia (announced by the government of BC on Feb 7 2006). The announcement of this land use decision provides a terrific model for dialogue among conservation groups, industry, First Nations, governments, and other publics. The Great Bear will protect approximately 5 million acres, and establish ecosystem-based management as the basis for logging and other industrial activities across another 10 million over the next few years. TNC has supported the partners in this agreement and is targeting fundraising efforts towards a conservation endowment that will support science and stewardship jobs and activities in First Nation communities within the Great Bear. Check out the backgrounder from the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands at: [http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2005-2009/2006AL0002-000066-Attachment1.htm](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2006AL0002-000066-Attachment1.htm).

**THE NEXT ISSUE OF "THE RAVEN" WILL NOT BE UNTIL SEPTEMBER. WE TAKE THE SUMMER OFF.**

